ABSTRACT

Radical Nationalism in India, 1930-42: The Role of The All India Congress Socialist Party

(thesis submitted for the degree of D.Phil. in the Faculty of Modern History, University of Oxford, Michaelmas Term 1976)

The central problem to which this thesis addresses itself is the attempt of the All India Congress Socialist Party (CSP) to establish itself as a radical nationalist alternative to both the Gandhian leadership of the Indian National Congress and the Communist Party of India (CPI). The problem has two main dimensions: one, the role of the CSP as a left-wing of the Congress, in relation to its leadership and rank and file; the other, the CSP's role as an autonomous party outside the Congress, in its relations with the Communists and other radical groups in non-Congress mass organisations.

Owing possibly to a scarcity of sources at the time, previous research on the CSP has concentrated on the first aspect[1]. This emphasis has tended to exaggerate the CSP's oppositional role within the Congress, while under-estimating its importance as an auxiliary of the Congress in labour, peasant and youth organisations. It has also been unable to explain adequately the disintegration of the CSP in 1939-40 and the alliance of its founder-leaders with Mahatma Gandhi. The present study treats the CSP's role within and outside the Congress as an integral process of development.

The ambivalent nature of the CSP's role poses the following questions: What were the pressures, within and outside the Congress, which led Congress radicals to differentiate themselves in an All-India opposition party committed to the goal of a socialist programme and leadership for the nationalist movement? How homogeneous and cohesive was the party thus formed, and how did it reconcile the conflicting

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1 Thomas A. Rusch, 'Role of the Congress Socialist Party in the Indian National Congress, 1931-42', Ph.D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1955, on microfilm, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

demands of nationalism and socialism in its theory and practice? How dependent was the CSP's mass organisational base on the party's alliances with rival left-wing groups? Was the CSP leadership's growing coalescence with the existing Congress leadership a sign of strength or of weakness? What were the CSP's differences with other left-wing groups in conflicts between the Congress and labour and peasant militancy? And finally, how far was the internal crisis of the CSP and its eventual dissolution inherent in the contradictions of the party and the radical nationalism it represented? The thesis attempts to answer these questions through a broadly chronological study of the CSP's evolution.

Chapter 1, a brief survey of the origins of Congress radicalism in the period 1920-30, summarises the early attempts of the Congress to broaden its mass base, paralleled by the efforts of the infant CPI to penetrate the nationalist movement, leading up to the emergence of a recognised Congress left-wing on the question of complete independence versus dominion status.

Chapter 2 traces the radicalising effects of the Congress civil disobedience movements of 1930-33 and the factors responsible for the formation of the CSP in 1934. Particular attention is paid to the radicalisation of Congress cadres in the course of civil disobedience, the overlapping of civil disobedience with violent terrorist activity and peasant economic agitation, and the ideological propaganda of the Roy Group of dissident Communists. The emergence of the CSP is seen as a militant nationalist reaction to the failure of the civil disobedience campaigns and the return of the Congress to parliamentary politics.

Chapter 3 examines the heterogeneous composition, programme and structure of the All India CSP at the time of its inauguration and identifies the main internal conflicts already evident at its inaugural conference. In particular, the chapter discusses the CSP's ambivalent attitude to its parent organisation, involving a firm personal loyalty to Gandhi and organisational commitment to the Congress, coupled with a strident, oppositional role at the Bombay Congress session of October 1934.

Chapter 4 considers in some detail the CSP's search for an independent mass base outside the Congress, its entry into the labour and peasant movements and its relations with its left-wing rivals, the Roy Group and the CPI. The chapter seeks to demonstrate that the Popular Front of left-wing groups which emerged in 1936 was an inherently unstable network of tactical alliances, in which the CSP's temporary hegemony lacked a firm basis.

Chapter 5 is concerned with the CSP's parallel and largely unsuccessful efforts to convert the Congress to a radical programme, the moderation of the party's oppositional role, and its decision in April 1936, under Jawaharlal Nehru's influence, to share office and responsibility with Gandhian leaders in the All India Congress Working Committee.

Chapter 6 examines the functioning of the left-wing Popular Front between 1936 and 1939 in organisations like the All India Trade Union Congress, the All India Kisan Sabha and the All India Students' Federation, with a view to explaining the intense rivalry between Congress Socialists, Communists and Royists. The growing isolation of the CSP leadership both within the party and in various mass organisations is explained by the party's inability to reconcile its Congress loyalty with the requirements of militant labour and peasant organisation, especially after the advent of Congress ministries in 1937.

Chapter 7 relates left-wing dissension to the gradual neutralisation of the CSP in Congress politics during the same period. The CSP's neutrality in the struggle for leadership of the Congress early in 1939 is located in the internal crisis of the party and its paralysis by the cleavage between its founder-leaders and pro-Communist elements. The CSP's inability to resolve this crisis is seen as leading to the disintegration of the party, with its All-India leadership openly aligning itself with Gandhi, while major sections of its following split away to join the CPI and Subhas Chandra Bose's new Forward Bloc. The CSP leadership's disagreement with other left-wing groups regarding a campaign against the British war effort in the period 1939-41 is

interpreted as the outcome of pre-war party rivalries. The dissolution of the CSP in August 1942, on the eve of the Quit India movement, is seen as a delayed recognition of the organisational and ideological demise of the party.

The main argument of the thesis may be summarised as follows. Congress radicalism originated in the need of the nationalist movement for mass mobilisation to strengthen its demand for independence. The short-comings of Gandhian civil disobedience, followed by a return to constitutional politics, drove Congress radicals to form the CSP as an All-India opposition party within the Congress. Though the ideology of this party drew substantially on the rhetoric of socialism, it was essentially a militant nationalist revolt which the Congress leadership was able to contain and assimilate. Despite the CSP's impressive short-term progress, conflicts between the Congress and various left-wing groups eventually disrupted the party's unity. The CSP's failure to resolve its identity crisis prevented it either from sustaining itself in opposition to the Congress leadership or from establishing itself as the dominant group in the Congress and led eventually to the collapse of the party as a distinctive third force in Indian politics.

RADICAL NATIONALISM IN INDIA, 1930-42:
THE ROLE OF THE ALL INDIA CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY

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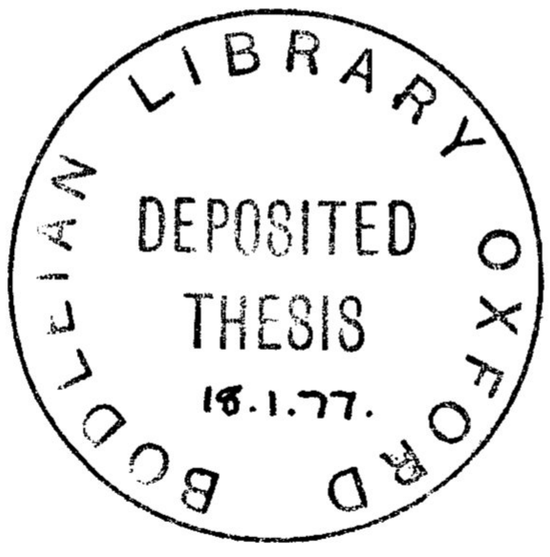

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PREFACE

Indian nationalism developed in response to the nature of foreign domination and the level of internal development. Its ideological content and methods of political mobilisation were conditioned as much by the desire of indigenous socio-political élites to consolidate or expand their dominance as by the need for mass resistance to colonial rule. If nationalism may be likened to an ambivalent Janus, one face looking back to an atavistic tradition, the other forward to a rational and scientific modernity, the progressive face of Indian nationalism is epitomised by the radicalism that took shape in the late 1920's, reached its zenith in the 1930's, and merged with its parent nationalism, represented by the Indian National Congress, in the early 1940's.

This thesis does not claim to be a comprehensive survey of radical nationalism in India. It is concerned primarily with the Congress Socialist Party (hereafter CSP). Though not the sole repository of radical nationalism in India, the CSP was its most ideologically and organisationally developed manifestation. There is no other instance of an All-India party attempting over a significant period of time to offer an alternative ideology and leadership to the nationalist movement. The role of the CSP therefore provides a unique opportunity to examine both the contribution and the contradictions of radical nationalism in India.

Though conceived within the Indian National Congress, Congress Socialism differentiated itself from the dominant Gandhian ideology of the Congress in three main ways. Firstly, as opposed to Gandhi's willingness to negotiate with Britain for constitutional concessions and his emphasis on non-violent, passive resistance, Congress Socialists demanded uncompromising and, if necessary, violent resistance to colonial rule. Secondly, while Gandhi's mass

appeal depended on a semi-religious invocation of India's rural and pre-industrial tradition, Congress Socialism recognised the existence of class differentiation and advocated nationalist mobilisation on the basis of mass economic demands. Thirdly, while the Gandhian picture of independence required no material change in the existing social and economic order, other than a revival of pre-industrial modes of production, Congress Socialism envisaged the building of a modern and industrialised nation-state, through centralised State planning, the elimination of princely and feudal obstacles to development and a more egalitarian distribution of resources.

This is not to suggest that Congress Socialism was a discrete, alternative form of nationalism, irreconcilably opposed to Gandhism. If Congress Socialism and Gandhism were the two faces of Indian nationalism, it must also be remembered that they shared a common head. Their mutual differences were never sufficient to produce a rupture in the nationalist movement; and their common ties were always strong enough to unite them against attacks from both the colonial power and the Communists. Gandhism and Congress Socialism were never mutually exclusive; and by the 1940's the two had resolved their conflict in a synthesis which would be the dominant ideology of the post-independence Indian state.

The theoretically antithetical relationship of nationalism and Marxist socialism was expressed during this period in the chronic rivalry of the Congress, with its aim of national unity based on class-collaboration, and the Communist Party of India (hereafter CPI), with its commitment to the Third International and to proletarian revolution. This does not imply that the nationalist and Communist movements in India were water-tight compartments. Their shared opposition to colonial rule and the similar social background of their leaders facilitated temporary alliances and some exchange of personnel. It was in these points of contact that Congress Socialism had its origins as a mediatory attempt to reconcile nationalism with socialism.

Though Congress Socialism was influenced by Marxism and adopted its rhetoric, it is treated in this thesis as an essentially nationalist phenomenon. This is because its differences with revolutionary socialism, then represented by the CPI, were always far more fundamental than its opposition to Gandhism. While the CPI's theoretical commitment to proletarian internationalism took the form of subordination to the Moscow-dominated Comintern, the CSP's world view was determined by its militant nationalism. Whereas the CPI's aim of proletarian dictatorship was reflected in its preoccupation with militant labour organisation under its own leadership, the CSP's definition of socialism included the urban and rural middle classes, excluding only big capitalists and landlords from a share of power. While the Communists, at this time, saw the Congress as a bourgeois organisation, and therefore ultimately a counter-revolutionary force, Congress Socialists were firmly loyal to their parent organisation and envisaged the possibility of the Congress itself leading a socialist revolution.

Since the main focus of this thesis is on the triangular relationship of radical nationalism with orthodox nationalism and orthodox Communism, it does not attempt a detailed narrative of the role of the colonial power. It does, however, summarise the main features of Congress policy towards the British Raj and its constitutional framework, inasmuch as these affected the internal politics of the nationalist movement.

As its title indicates, the thesis is primarily concerned with national politics, and therefore with the role of the CSP leadership at the All-India level. Since no study of Indian politics can be complete without reference to regional pressures, the thesis does seek to identify and explain the main provincial variations, particularly in Bombay, the U.P. and Bihar, where the CSP was an important factor in provincial politics.

Local politics, however, definitely fall outside the scope of this thesis. The CSP, which consciously avoided primary organisation and mass membership, did not, except

in a few scattered instances, possess a party organisation at the local level, functioning instead as a provincial and national platform for various leadership groups. Since the thesis is concerned with the role of the CSP as an organised party, it does not explore the local activities of individual Congress, Communist, Royist or other members of the CSP, except where these have a significant impact on provincial or national politics.

My thanks are due to the following: to the various former Congress Socialist and Communist leaders who gave me access to new sources and information; to my supervisor, Professor J. A. Gallagher; and to Sarah Graham-Brown and Homi Bhabha for their help with the usual last-minute problems.

CONTENTS

	Page
Preface	i
Abbreviations	vi
Chapter 1 - Origins of Radical Nationalism (1920-30)	1
Chapter 2 - Emergence of the Congress Socialist Party (1930-34)	25
Chapter 3 - Nature of the Congress Socialist Party (1934)	73
Chapter 4 - The Making of the Popular Front (1934-36)	98
Chapter 5 - The CSP and the Congress Leadership (1934-36)	160
Chapter 6 - Socialist Unity (1936-39)	201
Chapter 7 - Left-Wing Leadership and Congress Unity (1936-42)	263
Conclusions	301
Bibliography	306

ABBREVIATIONS

AICC:	All India Congress Committee
AIKC:	All India Kisan Congress
AIKS:	All India Kisan Sabha
AIRF:	All India Railwaymen's Federation
AISF:	All India Students' Federation
AITUC:	All India Trade Union Congress
BCSP:	Bombay Congress Socialist Party
BHS:	Government of Bombay, Home Department (Special)
BLP:	Bengal Labour Party
BPCC:	Bombay Provincial Congress Committee
BPKS:	Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha
BPTUC:	Bombay Provincial Trade Union Congress
CID:	Criminal Investigation Department
C.P.:	Central Provinces
CPGB:	Communist Party of Great Britain
CPI:	Communist Party of India
CSP:	Congress Socialist Party
DCC:	District Congress Committee
DIB:	Director, Intelligence Bureau, Government of India
GKU:	Girni Kamgar Union
HSD:	Hindustani Seva Dal
HSRA:	Hindustan Socialist Republican Army
IIL:	Independence for India League
Inprecor:	International Press Correspondence
IOR:	India Office Records, Public and Judicial Papers
JNP:	Jawaharlal Nehru Papers
J.P.C.:	Joint Parliamentary Committee
JPP:	Jayáprakash Narayan Papers
LCC:	Left Consolidation Committee
MP:	M. R. Masani Papers
NA:	National Archives of India, Home Department (Political)
NBS:	Naujawan Bharat Sabha

NFTU:	National Federation of Trade Unions
PCC:	Provincial Congress Committee
PCJA:	P. C. Joshi Archive
RPIWC:	Revolutionary Party of the Indian Working Class
RTUC:	Red Trade Union Congress
TCC:	Town Congress Committee
U.P.:	United Provinces or Uttar Pradesh
UPKS:	United Provinces Kisan Sangh
UPPA:	United Provinces Police Abstracts

Chapter 1

ORIGINS OF RADICAL NATIONALISM (1920-30)

The emergence of the Congress Socialist Party (hereafter CSP) in 1934 marked the culmination of radical nationalism as a distinctive political force with a programme and organisational base of its own. The founding of the CSP was the outcome of a process of differentiation within the nationalist movement in the course of the previous decade. Originating in the expansion of the Congress into a mass organisation during a period of deepening economic crisis, radical nationalism had emerged by the late 1920's as the recognised left-wing of the Congress, distinguished from the latter's Gandhian and parliamentarian leaders by a more militant emphasis on national independence, by a tentative socio-economic programme and by an as yet embryonic organisational autonomy. Since the CSP derived its programme, cadres and methods of mobilisation largely from the radical groupings of the 1920's, the character of the party and its future development cannot be explained without an introductory survey of its origins.

The economic background of the 1920's was one of growing economic depression, first industrial and later agrarian. Owing to increasing Japanese competition in the world textile market, Indian industry experienced a serious recession well before the world depression of 1930. By the late 1920's, urban labour was being seriously affected by lock-outs, closures, redundancy and wage-cuts. In the important Bombay textile industry, for instance, employment fell from 154,398 in 1927 to 105,271 in 1934, its lowest level since 1911[1]. At the same time, wages fell from 298.2 points in 1926 to 246 points in 1937, which was lower than the 1920 level[2]. Growing unemployment also affected the

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1 Morris David Morris, The Emergence of an Industrial Labour Force in India (California, 1965), p. 214.

2 Ibid., p. 223.

educated middle classes. It was not accidental, therefore, that the same period witnessed a noticeable growth in labour and student militancy.

Although the agrarian depression did not reach its peak until the early 1930's, falling prices in the world market were having an adverse impact on the production of cash crops by the mid-1920's. Falling prices combined with long-term factors such as the decline of cottage industries and control of the tenancy and revenue system by big zamindars and moneylenders to produce a steady increase in rural indebtedness and landlessness. In 1930, the Central Banking Enquiry Committee estimated rural indebtedness at Rs. 900 crores, a figure which was held by nationalist sources to have risen to Rs. 1500 crores by 1937[1]. The rate of interest was reported to have varied between 12 and 75 per cent and in some cases to have been as high as 300 per cent[2]. There is evidence to show that defaulting tenants and debtors were being evicted in large numbers. According to the reports of the Bombay Land Revenue Administration from 1926-27 to 1936-37, 20 per cent of the land passed into the hands of moneylenders during this period, while the number of cultivating owners fell by about 9 per cent[3]. Between 1921 and 1931, the percentage of landless labourers in the country is estimated to have risen from 20.6 to 31.3[4]. In these circumstances, the peasantry, from the middle landowner downwards, was an obvious source of mass support for political groups which were willing to campaign for the reduction of rural rents and debts and for security of tenure.

Despite the conservatism of its leadership, the Congress had recognised at an early stage the advantages of mass support for its political demands; and Gandhi's appearance on the political scene had produced cautious efforts in this direction. The Gandhian constructive

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1 Z. A. Ahmad, Some Economic and Financial Aspects of British Rule in India (All India Congress Committee, 1937), pp. 41-42.

2 Ibid.

3 Bhowani Sen, Evolution of Agrarian Relations in India (Delhi, 1962), pp. 146-7.

4 Ibid.

programme, with its emphasis on Swadeshi and village industries, was based on an awareness, however inadequate, of the need for an economic programme which would win mass support. In 1917 and 1918, before he had succeeded in capturing the Congress platform, Gandhi personally led satyagraha campaigns by the well-to-do farmers of Champaran (Bihar) and Kaira (Gujerat) against increases in land revenue[1]. In 1918, he also led a successful, though carefully moderated, strike in the Ahmedabad textile industry, out of which sprang the Gandhian Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association[2]. Two years later, the inaugural session of the All India Trade Union Congress (hereafter AITUC or TUC) was chaired by Lala Lajpat Rai, the veteran Congress leader[3]. G. L. Nanda, a Gandhian labour organiser, summed up the Congress attitude to urban labour when he wrote: '. . . we cannot disassociate the industrial questions from the political movements of the country. The political agitator knows that a powerful army of town labourers would be an asset of no mean value to his cause.'[4] In recognition of this political reality, the Gaya Congress session of December 1922 appointed a Congress Labour Sub-Committee[5].

By this time, the inadequacy of the Gandhian programme of mass contacts had emerged as a major point of criticism by the Swarajist opposition to Gandhi. The Swaraj Party, described by Subhas Bose as 'a rationalist revolt' against Gandhi, brought together a heterogeneous mixture of radicals and constitutionalists on a platform of opposition to Gandhi's brand of non-co-operation and his constructive programme[6]. C. R. Das, the party's leading organiser, had a substantial following among terrorist youth groups in Bengal, many of

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1 P. Sitaramayya, The History of the Indian National Congress, Vol. I (Bombay, 1935), pp. 138-40.

2 Ibid., p. 144.

3 J. P. Haithcox, Communism and Nationalism in India (Princeton, 1971), p. 32.

4 G. L. Nanda, 'Labour Unrest in India', Indian Journal of Economics, Jan. 1921, quoted in Morris, op. cit., p. 180.

5 Haithcox, loc. cit.

6 S. C. Bose, The Indian Struggle, 1920-42 (London, 1964), p. 115.

whose members joined the Congress at his initiative, nominally accepting its creed while retaining their objections to Gandhian non-violence[1]. Foreshadowing the tactics of the CSP, Das also sought labour support in his rivalry with Gandhi. The Bengal Congress, under his leadership, had directed the Assam-Bengal Railway strike during the non-co-operation movement[2]. In 1924, Das was elected president of the AITUC and also served for some time as president of the Tata labour union at Jamshedpur[3].

The Swarajist revolt, however, did not long sustain the expectations of radical adherents like Bose. After Das's death, the party's growing pre-occupation with parliamentary politics alienated its radical following, while its conservative elements drifted rapidly towards constitutionalism and communalism[4]. It was in this context of the collapse of Swarajist radicalism at a time of growing economic unrest that the Communist Party of India (hereafter CPI) made its first serious attempt to enter the nationalist movement and provide a radical alternative to its existing programme of parliamentary politics and Gandhian social work.

The CPI's policy towards the Congress and Indian nationalism had first been defined at the Second World Congress of the Comintern in 1920, with the adoption of Lenin's colonial thesis advocating a Communist united front with national liberation struggles[5]. M. N. Roy, a Bengali ex-terrorist who was to be India's leading radical ideologue until the 1950's, had been put in charge of the Comintern's Asian section. For the next eight years, Indian Communists made a sustained effort under Roy's supervision to win leadership of the infant trade union movement and to penetrate the Congress.

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1 Bose, op. cit., p. 60.

2 Ibid., p. 56.

3 Ibid., p. 81.

4 Ibid., pp. 116-17.

5 G. Overstreet and M. Windmiller, Communism in India (California, 1959), p. 27 et seq.

In December 1921, Roy issued the first in a series of Communist manifestos to the Congress, calling upon the latter to develop Gandhian non-co-operation into a mass revolution through a programme of labour and peasant organisation[1]. Roy's appeal influenced some prominent Congressmen. Among them, was Maulana Hasrat Mohani, a well-known U.P. Congressman and Muslim Leaguer, who moved an unsuccessful resolution in favour of complete independence at the Ahmedabad Congress session of December 1921[2]. Also converted was Singaravelu Chettiar, a veteran Madras Congressman, who became one of Roy's chief organisers and was elected to the Congress Labour Sub-Committee in 1923[3]. In Bombay, the Communists secured the patronage of Vithalbhai Patel, the Swarajist leader[4]. Roy also succeeded in recruiting Communist cadres from militant, non-Congress nationalist groups such as the Sikh Ghadr Party, the Bengali Anushilan and Jugantar terrorist societies and the Muslim Khilafat exiles[5]. By the end of 1922, Roy's emmissaries had established Communist groups in all the major urban centres[6].

Though the Congress leadership ignored Roy's programme, Communists participated in the non-co-operation movement, while attacking Gandhi's emphasis on non-violence[7]. After the withdrawal of the campaign in February 1922 on the issue of non-violence, Communists in the Congress did their best to utilise and direct radical nationalist disillusionment with Gandhi's leadership. Approaches were made to oppositional leaders like C. R. Das and Swami Sampurnanand (later a founder of the CSP), with a view to forming a radical

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1 R. Palme Dutt, India Today (London, 1940), p. 321.

2 Bose, op. cit., p. 69.

3 M. N. Roy, Origins of Radicalism in the Congress (Lucknow, 1942), pp. 16-17, 74.

4 Bose, op. cit., p. 88.

5 Haithcox, op. cit., pp. 29-30; and M. R. Masani, The Communist Party of India (London, 1954), p. 21.

6 Overstreet and Windmiller, op. cit., p. 43.

7 Bombay Criminal Investigation Department (hereafter CID), 'Political Who's Who', on S. A. Dange, S. S. Mirajkar and R. S. Nimbkar.

opposition bloc within the Congress[1]. These efforts, however, proved premature. Though a Communist contingent attended the Gaya Congress session in December 1922, their emphasis on violent revolution appears to have frightened off Das, then Congress President, and other Congress sympathisers, and the Communists were unable to win any support for their programme of social and economic reform[2].

The prosecution of their leaders in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case of 1924 underlined for the Communists the necessity of a legal cover under which they could function. In view of the rebuff they had received from Das and his followers, they now began independent efforts to organise provincial Workers' and Peasants' Parties (hereafter WPP) within the Congress. These provincial groups, which included radical Swarajists, ex-terrorists and other anti-Gandhian elements, were conceived as legal platforms for an illegal and underground Communist Party. The first of these groups, the Bengal WPP, arose out of the Labour Swaraj Party founded in November 1925 by some Swarajist radicals and ex-terrorists[3]. In January 1927, the Bombay WPP was formed, with several prominent non-Communist labour leaders among its members[4]. These two groups expanded rapidly in influence and numbers. By the beginning of 1928, the Bengal WPP, which had started with 40 members, claimed an affiliated membership of over 10,000[5]. Similar parties had also been founded in Madras and Ajmer in 1927 and in Punjab and the U.P. in 1928[6]. By December 1938, the organisation of these provincial groups was considered sufficient to warrant the inauguration of an All India WPP.

Despite their choice of name, the peasant organisation of these parties was negligible, except in Punjab where the Kirti Kisan Party was active in kisan agitation[7]. The main

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1 Overstreet and Windmiller, op. cit., pp. 47-8.

2 Ibid., pp. 49, 57.

3 WPP of Bengal, A Call to Action (Calcutta, 1928), p. 9.

4 Haithcox, op. cit., pp. 55, 157.

5 WPP of Bengal, op. cit., p. 50.

6 Palme Dutt, op. cit., p. 378; and Haithcox, op. cit., p. 57.

7 Bose, op. cit., p. 34.

thrust of Communist efforts at mass organisation was directed at the labour movement. The Communists were active in the Bombay textile strikes of 1924, 1925 and 1927 and led the major textile strike of 1928[1]. They were also active in strikes in other industries, notably the railways and the Calcutta jute industry[2].

The same period witnessed a sustained Communist bid for leadership of the AITUC. In 1925, the Communist group secured the election of its nominee as TUC president[3]. The TUC session of November 1927 saw the emergence of the Communists as a major faction whose influence was evident in the resolutions adopted and in the election of its members to several TUC offices[4]. At the next TUC session in December 1928, the Communists secured the affiliation of the AITUC with the Comintern-sponsored League Against Imperialism and won most of the key posts in the TUC executive, though they had to acquiesce in the election of Jawaharlal Nehru as TUC president[5]. Working in alliance with Nehru and other radical Congressmen, the Communists were able to give the TUC an increasingly militant orientation, leading in 1929 to the secession of its pro-Liberal wing[6]. Communist influence in the TUC rested upon a strong organisational base provided by the powerful Bombay Girni Kamgar Union (hereafter GKU) and G.I.P. Railwaymen's Union. Both unions had been founded by the Bombay WPP in 1928 and had expanded by 1929 into the two largest trade unions in the country[7].

Despite these successes in the labour movement, the Communists were unable to make a serious impact on the Congress organisation. The CPI's inaugural conference in May 1927 had called upon all Communists to enrol in the

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1 David N. Druhe, Soviet Russia and Indian Communism (New York, 1959), pp. 70-71, 85-7.

2 Ibid., p. 86.

3 Ibid., p. 71.

4 Ibid., p. 85.

5 Haithcox, op. cit., pp. 106-7.

6 Ibid., p. 162.

7 Ibid., pp. 103-5.

Congress and co-operate with radical elements against the Congress leadership[1]. According to the CPI's annual report for 1927, Communists were active in the Bombay Congress, of which K. N. Joglekar, a member of the CPI executive, was joint secretary[2]. The CPI also claimed a majority in the Ajmer Congress Committee. Elsewhere, however, Communists were unable to win offices in the Congress and could only claim two representatives in the All India Congress Committee (hereafter AICC), both from Bombay[3].

Though constituted within the Congress, the WPPs were too closely identified with official Communism and too overtly hostile to Gandhi to secure the enrolment of large numbers of Congress cadres or the adherence of prominent radical leaders like J. Nehru and Bose. The main achievement of the WPPs within the Congress was therefore ideological rather than organisational. The parties functioned as articulate propagandist groups, urging Congressmen towards a more radical programme. A Communist manifesto to the Gauhati Congress session in December 1926 outlining such a programme foreshadowed the platform of the future CSP. Condemning the Swarajist programme of council-entry as a betrayal of the Congress rank and file by its capitalist-landlord leadership, the CPI called for the replacement of the existing Congress leadership by a 'Republican People's Party'. The immediate demands listed in the programme included civil liberties, agrarian reforms to abolish landlordism and reduce peasant debts and rents, and industrial reforms to guarantee an eight-hour day, a minimum wage and the right to unionise and strike[4].

In particular, Communist propaganda in the Congress emphasised the need for mass agitation against the Simon Commission instead of the official Congress policy of passive boycott. In December 1927, a message from the Bengal WPP

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1 CPI, Constitution and Programme (no place (n.p.), 1927) P. C. Joshi Archive (hereafter PCJA).

2 CPI, Annual Report (Bombay, 1927), PCJA.

3 Ibid.

4 CPI, Manifesto to the All India National Congress (London, 1 December 1926), PCJA.

to the Madras Congress session condemned the Swarajist demand for a Round Table Conference, called instead for a sovereign constituent assembly and demanded a mass boycott of the Simon Commission through a no-tax campaign and a general strike[1]. Though the Congress session rejected a Communist resolution on these lines, the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee (hereafter BPCC) adopted a motion in favour of mass action[2]. The Communists participated in the anti-Simon demonstrations of 1928, especially in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras where there were vident outbreaks[3].

Though unwilling to moderate their hostility to Gandhi, the Communists continued their efforts to influence other Congress leaders, who were also approached by the Comintern via the Communist Party of Great Britain (hereafter CPGB) and the League Against Imperialism. Overtures were made to moderate trade unionists like N. M. Joshi and Diwan Chamanlal, while special attention was paid to Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru attended the Comintern-sponsored Congress of Oppressed Nationalities in February 1927. On his return to India, he moved a resolution at the Madras Congress which reflected the Comintern's position on the war danger. Nehru also secured the affiliation of the Congress with the League Against Imperialism and served as a member of the League's executive until 1931[4].

The Communists also undertook considerable ideological propaganda among Indian intellectuals generally and among students in particular. By 1926, Shapurji Saklatvala, the CPGB leader, had established a number of Marxist study circles among Indian students in Britain[5]. These groups encouraged a radical, if not Communist, orientation among the younger members of several prominent Indian families. In India, too,

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1 Bengal WPP, Manifesto of the Workers' and Peasants' Party to the Indian National Congress, Madras (Calcutta, December 1927), PCJA; and Bombay WPP Executive, Manifesto on the Royal Commission (Bombay, 1927), PCJA.

2 Overstreet and Windmiller, op. cit., p. 123; and Druhe, op. cit., p. 84.

3 Ibid.

4 Overstreet and Windmiller, op. cit., pp. 94-6.

5 Masani, op. cit., pp. 46-7

Marxist study circles were formed in the major cities and efforts were made to influence the nationalist youth movement[1]. In 1928, the Bombay WPP leafleted the Bombay Presidency Youth Conference with an appeal to Indian youth to join the Congress and overthrow its 'feeble' leadership[2]. According to Government intelligence, the proceedings of the conference, presided over by J. Nehru, revealed considerable Communist influence[3]. The Government also attributed to Communist influence the organisation of a Calcutta Socialist Youth Conference about this time[4].

Communist propaganda was able to build on a spontaneous fund of nationalist admiration for the Russian Revolution and subsequent Soviet achievements. In the course of the 1920's, Moscow received visits from prominent non-Communist Indians like Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru, Srinivasa Iyengar and Rabindranath Tagore, the latter three returning home with highly favourable reports[5]. While the Bolsheviks' initial repudiation of Czarist imperialism contrasted favourably with Britain's desire to cling to her empire, the success of the Russian revolution and rapid Soviet industrialisation were an obvious alternative model for those disillusioned by the inadequacies of the Gandhian programme. Not all admirers of Soviet Russia were socialists; neither were all who called themselves socialists adherents of Marxism. Most Indian radicals remained essentially nationalist; and many derived their socio-economic ideas as much from the Fabian Society and the British Labour Party as from Marxism. Nevertheless, Communist activity undoubtedly played a major role in the propagation of socialist ideology.

The percolation of socialist ideas during this period was reflected by 1928 in the emergence of an ideologically

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1 H. Lester Hutchinson, Conspiracy at Meerut (London, 1935), p. 7 et seq.

2 Bombay WPP, Manifesto to the Bombay Presidency Youth Conference (Bombay, 1929), PCJA.

3 National Archives of India, Home (Political) Department (hereafter NA), file 179/29.

4 Druhe, op. cit., p. 110.

5 Druhe, op. cit., pp. 88-9; and Overstreet and Windmiller, op. cit., pp. 112-13.

distinctive Congress left-wing. The revival of opposition to Gandhi in the late 1920's was based on the issue of complete independence versus Dominion Status. The Madras Congress of December 1927 had adopted J. Nehru's resolution for complete independence. A few months later, however, the Motilal Nehru Report resiled from this position with its proposal of Dominion Status[1]. Srinivasa Iyengar, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose and other Congress radicals thereupon formed the Independence for India League (hereafter IIL) as an All India propagandist body within the Congress, with branches in the U.P., Bengal, Bombay and Punjab[2]. Among its organisers were former Swarajists and future Congress Socialists like Acharya Narendra Dev and Sri Prakasa[3].

Though its main objective was propaganda for complete independence, the IIL's programme included social and economic reforms, similar to those advocated by the WPPs, though more moderate. Its industrial demands included an eight-hour day, insurance against unemployment, sickness and old age, cheap loans, workers' participation in management and profit-sharing, nationalisation of transport and key industries, and taxation of private capital. Its agrarian programme called for a moratorium on rural indebtedness and abolition of landlordism with compensation[4]. The Communists, while condemning the IIL's programme as a travesty of their own, conceded that it marked 'a hesitating and as yet confused move on the part of the petty bourgeoisie towards a revolutionary policy, with perhaps on the part of some the idea of exploiting the revolutionary mass movement for the attainment of independence for the middle classes'[5].

The IIL was not conceived as a political party; and even as a propaganda society its activities were virtually non-existent outside the U.P. and Bengal, the home-provinces

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1 The report was an attempt to supplement the boycott of the Simon Commission with a nationalist constitutional blueprint acceptable to all sections of opinion in India.

2 Bose, op. cit., p. 153.

3 Narendra Dev to J. Nehru, 9 Feb. 1929, J. Nehru Papers (hereafter JNP).

4 WPP, Proceedings of the Conference of the All India Workers' and Peasants' Party (Calcutta, 1928), PCJA.

5 Ibid.

of Nehru and Bose respectively. In the absence of an organisational base of its own, the IIL relied mainly on the support of nationalist youth organisations. From 1928 onwards, Nehru and Bose led a major campaign to organise youth leagues and recruit younger and more radical cadres into the Congress as a means of strengthening the position of its pro-independence wing.

The youth movement had made its political *début* during the anti-Simon demonstrations of 1928. In February 1928, Yusuf Meherally (later a founder of the CSP) formed the Bombay Provincial Youth League[1]. By the end of the year, the latter claimed to have established close contact with 26 local youth leagues in Bombay Presidency and to be carrying on radical propaganda in 39 different towns[2]. In December 1928, Nehru presided at the first annual conference of the Bombay Youth League; and its next conference in 1929 was chaired by Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya, later founder-leader of the CSP[3].

The Bombay example was soon followed by most other provinces[4]. In August 1928, Nehru presided over the first All-Bengal Conference of Students, which was followed by the formation of local branches throughout the province[5]. In December 1928, at the time of the Calcutta Congress, K. F. Nariman, the anti-Gandhian Bombay Congress leader, presided over the first session of the All India Youth Congress[6]. An All India Youth League was formed at the time, with Meherally as general secretary and a programme which combined the demand for complete independence with socialistic reforms[7]. In 1929, Nehru presided over a Maharashtra

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1 Praja Socialist Party, Silver Jubilee Souvenir (Bombay, 1959), p. 17.

2 NA, loc. cit.

3 Ibid.; and Bose, op. cit., pp. 164-5.

4 Praja Socialist Party, loc. cit.

5 Bose, op. cit., p. 153.

6 Bose, op. cit., pp. 154-5.

7 Praja Socialist Party, loc. cit.

Youth Conference, while Bose chaired a series of similar conferences in Punjab, the Central Provinces (hereafter C.P.) and Berar. A provincial youth conference was also held in Madras, and an All India Congress of Students was organised to coincide with the Lahore Congress of December 1929[1]. Bose later commented on this mushroom growth of youth organisations:

> 'The Youth Congress was important in as much as it indicated the emergence of a new factor in the public life of the country and gave expression to a mentality somewhat different from that which prevailed within the precincts of the National Congress.'[2]

Communist influence on the youth movement has already been mentioned. Equally important were the close contacts which developed between Congress-sponsored youth leagues and non-Congress terrorist groups, a relationship which is exemplified by the Naujawan Bharat Sabha (hereafter NBS) or Young India Party. The NBS was founded in 1926 as a revolutionary nationalist youth organisation by Bhagat Singh, leader of the terrorist Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (hereafter HSRA), and Munshi Ahmed Din, future leader of the Punjab CSP[3]. Despite its terrorist origins, the NBS developed close links with Congress radicals; and the trial and execution of Bhagat Singh in the Lahore Conspiracy Case aroused considerable indignation in the Congress[4]. Through its contact with the Punjab Kirti Kisan Party, the NBS developed rapidly in a socialist direction. At the All India NBS Conference in March 1931, at the time of the Karachi Congress, the Punjab delegation publicly rejected terrorism in favour of mass action on socialist lines[5].

Starting in 1928, recruitment to the newly-formed Congress Volunteer Corps or Hindustani Seva Dal (hereafter HSD)

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1 Bose, op. cit., pp. 164-5.

2 Ibid., pp. 154-5.

3 Praja Socialist Party, loc. cit.

4 Bose, op. cit., p. 160.

5 Bose, op. cit., p. 161.

resulted in the entry of large numbers of radical youth cadres into the Congress. A Bengal Volunteer Corps, with Bose as its commanding officer, had been formed in 1928 for the Calcutta Congress and went on to form local branches in the province[1]. Shortly after, the HSD was organised on a national scale under the supervision of Bose and J. Nehru, then General Secretary of the AICC[2]. Its purpose was to provide the Congress with a disciplined mass cadre in anticipation of an anti-Government agitation such as the Congress left desired. Its composition reflected both the radicalisation of Congress youth and the growing politicisation of the educated lower middle classes[3].

Most of the provincial and local organisers of the HSD had been active in pro-Congress youth leagues; some were ex-terrorists or had terrorist contacts; many combined executive posts in the HSD, the youth leagues and the NBS; and a substantial number later graduated from the Congress into the CSP. This pattern is exemplified by Swami Sampurnanand, who had a background of close contact with prominent Communists and terrorists, acted simultaneously as the chief provincial organiser of the U.P. Youth League, NBS and HSD, and was later a founder-leader of the U.P. CSP[4].

Although their attention centred on the youth movement, IIL leaders also made efforts to secure a labour following, at first in alliance with the Communists and later in open rivalry with them. In December 1928, Nehru was elected TUC president; and a year later, a Congress - Communist alliance won control of the AITUC. The latter now committed itself to a boycott of the Round Table Conference and of the Royal Commission on Labour and adopted the goal of a 'Socialist Republican Government of the Working Classes'[5]. Under

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1 Bose, op. cit., p. 162.

2 Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 359.

3 See Chapter 3, p. 76 - for further details regarding the social background of the new Congress and CSP cadres.

4 Bombay CID, 'Political Who's Who', on S. P. Limaye; and U.P. Police, Political Who's Who (Lucknow, 1936) on the following: Kedar Nath, N. K. D. Vashishta, K. D. Malaviya, K. N. Ramanna, G. S. Chaube, P. Y. Deshpande, R. P. Gupta, Thakur Malkhan Singh, Gopinath Sinha, Ranvir Singh, Surendranath Pande, C. B. Kantak, Chandrashekhar and Sampurnanand.

5 Haithcox, op. cit., p. 162.

Nehru's patronage, a Labour Research Department of the AICC was set up in 1929[1]. At its head was Bakar Ali Mirza, General Secretary of the Bengal Jute Workers' Union, who played a prominent part in the Calcutta jute strike of that year[2]. He was succeeded in 1930 by Jayaprakash Narayan, until recently a member of the American Communist Party and future General Secretary of the CSP[3]. Meanwhile, Bose succeeded Nehru as TUC president and was able, in alliance with the newly-formed Roy Group, to oust the Communists from its leadership[4].

The Congress left's bid for leadership of the TUC was accompanied by growing interest in labour disputes, with an eye to the possible use of strikes in nationalist agitation. In January 1929, the Bengal PCC, owing to the influence of Bose and the WPP, passed a series of radical resolutions calling for the organisation of workers and peasants on the basis of class struggle[5]. The Bengal Congress actively supported the Calcutta jute strike of 1929; and both its rival faction-leaders, Bose and J. M. Sengupta, were active in sponsoring new unions and supporting strikes in other industries[6]. In July 1929, Bose was also reported to be actively involved in the Golmuri tin-plate workers' strike in Bihar[7].

Alongside this interest in the strike movement, the Congress left made efforts to mobilise labour support for its nationalist demand. The Calcutta Congress found itself invaded by a procession of 8,000 workers expressing their solidarity with the demand for complete independence[8].

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1 Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 345.

2 NA, file 257/1 & K.W.: Director, Intelligence Bureau, Government of India (hereafter DIB), 'Note on Congress and Labour', 9 Oct. 1929.

3 Interview with J. P. Narayan, New Delhi, May 1973.

4 See p. 22.

5 DIB, loc. cit.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 DIB, loc. cit.; and Bose, op. cit., p. 158.

Calcutta labour also played a prominent part in the anti-Simon demonstrations of January 1929[1]. A few months later, Government intelligence warned that whereas previous Congress labour activity had amounted to little more than a 'pious resolution', for the first time 'something concrete' was being attempted. The Congress left, according to this source, was working towards a political general strike scheduled for 1 January 1930[2].

Official circles, however, were not unduly alarmed by these activities, predicting accurately that Congress labour organisation would be handicapped by Communist opposition and by 'the lack of any bond of interest or sympathy between the Congress members as a class and the workers'.[3] 'It remains to be seen', Government intelligence commented sceptically, 'how some of the Congress leaders will reconcile their capitalist interests with the proposals that the labour movement should be directed in the path of class-war and that peasants should be organised and directed against Zamindars and landlords.'[4]

Though agrarian demands were included in the platform of the Congress left, the latter's interest in urban youth and labour was not matched at this stage by any comparable agrarian agitation. It was not until the early 1930's that the Congress civil disobedience campaigns converged with the peak period of agricultural depression to produce a significant kisan or peasant movement. Meanwhile, Congress kisan activity remained under Gandhian control. In 1928, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel led a carefully moderated satyagraha campaign by the ryots of Bardoli (Gujerat) against revenue enhancement[5]. About the same time, a Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha (hereafter BPKS) was founded by Swami Sahajanand, then an orthodox Congressman and a Hindu divine, though famous by the late 1930's as the most radical kisan leader in the

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1 DIB, loc. cit.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Bose, op. cit., p. 148.

country. The BPKS at this time was a moderate propagandist body, formed with the participation of the Bihar Congress leadership, to canvass against the Government's new pro-Zamindar tenancy legislation[1].

The mass base of the Congress left was thus restricted, not only by the organisational weakness of the IIL, but by its predominantly urban appeal which concentrated mainly on middle class youth, and, to a lesser degree, on organised labour. Despite these limitations, the IIL was able in the short-term to rally impressive support for its independence demand within the Congress. At the Calcutta session of December 1928, an amendment in favour of complete independence, moved by Bose and supported by J. Nehru, got as many as 973 votes against 1,350 for Gandhi's original motion[2].

Emboldened by this evidence of its growing strength, the left prepared for a major confrontation at the Lahore Congress a year later. In November 1929, Bose won control of the Bengal Congress, becoming PCC president[3]. In the same month, Bose, S. Kitchlew (Chairman of the Reception Committee for the Lahore Congress) and Abdul Bari (a Bihar labour leader and later a founder of the CSP) published a manifesto opposing Gandhi's offer to the Government to accept Dominion Status and a Round Table Conference[4].

Although the lines seemed to be drawn for a major trial of strength at Lahore, Gandhi adroitly averted a challenge to his leadership by sponsoring Jawaharlal Nehru for the Congress presidentship and by conceding the demand for complete independence. The left opposition was thus deprived at one stroke of its most popular leader and its chief raison d'être. While committing the Congress to mass civil disobedience for the attainment of independence, the Lahore session left the timing and scope of the campaign entirely to Gandhi's discretion and rejected Bose's

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1 Walter Hauser, 'The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, 1929-42: A Study of an Indian Peasant Movement', Ph.D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1961, p. 10.

2 Bose, op. cit., p. 157.

3 Ibid., p. 172.

4 Ibid.

resolution on behalf of the left calling for the organisation of workers, peasants and youth with the aim of establishing a parallel government[1].

Nehru's role as Congress President proved largely ornamental, and it was Gandhi who chose the new Congress Working Committee. Incensed by their exclusion from the latter, Bose, Srinivasa Iyengar and some others announced the formation of a Congress Democratic Party on a platform of complete independence, democratisation of the Congress constitution, direct representation in the Congress for workers, peasants, youth and State peoples, and increased representation for minorities[2]. Owing to the launching of civil disobedience shortly after, the new party was still-born and lapsed quietly along with the IIL. For the next three years, until the failure of Gandhi's second civil disobedience campaign, the Congress left as a distinctive political force ceased to exist at the All-India level. While this eclipse was largely due to its own organisational weakness and Gandhi's success in stealing its nationalist thunder, the Congress left also suffered from the breakdown of its alliance with the Communists and the ensuing split in the trade union movement.

Despite their apparent agreement on the need for a mass movement for independence, Communists and radical nationalists had from the outset approached the question of mass mobilisation from divergent points of view. While the Communists, based in the labour movement, aimed at utilising nationalist sentiment to promote militant labour demands, left-wing Congressmen were mainly interested in mobilising mass economic unrest to buttress their political demand for independence. This basic contradiction, which was to be a constant factor through the various twists and turns of Congress-CPI relations, was further complicated by the international affiliations of the CPI and its almost total

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1 Bose, op. cit., p. 174.

2 Ibid.; and All India Congress Committee Papers (hereafter AICC), Jan. 1930.

subservience to the erratic policy changes of the Russian-controlled Comintern. This was to become only too obvious from 1928 onwards.

For reasons which arose partly from the internal power politics of the Soviet leadership and partly from the recent betrayal of the Chinese Communist Party by the Kuomintang, the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern in 1928 announced a drastic reversal of Lenin's colonial policy of united front with bourgeois nationalism. With reference to India, the new colonial thesis characterised the nationalist movement as reformist and compromising, called upon the CPI to dissociate itself from both the Congress and its left-wing, and dismissed the WPPs as 'petty bourgeois groups' which must be replaced by 'a single, illegal, independent and centralised' CPI[1].

The Comintern's instructions arrived, ironically, in the midst of the inaugural conference of the All India WPP, at the very moment when the policy of united front appeared to be maturing in the emergence of a friendly Congress left. The Communists, by this time, had won considerable sympathy and respect in nationalist circles, as witnessed by Congress opposition to the Government's anti-Communist measures. The introduction of the anti-Communist Public Safety Bill of September 1928 had revealed that even conservative nationalists were ready to suspend their hostility to Communist activities to the extent that the latter embarrassed the Government. The Bill was defeated by Congress opposition in the Central Legislative Assembly, with prominent leaders like Lajpat Rai, Motilal Nehru, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Srinivasa Iyengar and N. M. Joshi speaking against it[2].

A few months later, the arrest of Communist and other militant labour leaders in the Meerut Conspiracy Case aroused widespread nationalist sympathy for the accused, eight of whom were AICC members[3]. The Congress Working Committee made the unprecedented gesture of voting a sum of money for

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1 Overstreet and Windmiller, op. cit., pp. 119-20.

2 Ibid., p. 124.

3 Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 343.

the defence of the Meerut prisoners, and a legal committee for this purpose included prominent Congressmen like J. Nehru, M. A. Ansari, K. N. Katju and C. B. Gupta[1]. The contrast between this support and Congress indifference during the Kanpur Conspiracy Case of 1924 is an index of the goodwill the Communists had built up during the intervening years.

It is therefore not surprising that the Comintern's new line encountered considerable resistance from within the CPI and that two years passed before it was fully implemented. In defiance of the Comintern's directives, the WPP conference of December 1928 decided to continue with the formation of an All India WPP, to carry on with fraction-work inside the Congress and to form a united front with the IIL. As a concession to the Comintern, however, the political thesis of the WPP was modified to make it more critical of the Congress. The conference attacked the Congress leadership for moving to the right, citing as examples the Motilal Nehru Report, the 'betrayal' of the Bardoli peasant struggle, Congress neglect of and opposition to labour strikes, the lukewarm opposition of Congress parliamentarians to the Government's Trade Disputes Bill, and the pro-Zamindar bias of the Bengal Swaraj Party on the question of tenancy legislation. In view of this 'decisive retreat' of the Congress leadership and the 'consolidation of the whole bourgeois class . . . into a single reactionary bloc, completely divorced from the masses', the political thesis declared that 'the old relationship between the Workers' and Peasants' Party and the Congress, with the former working as a left-wing of the latter', could no longer be maintained. The WPP must henceforth play a more independent role, only utilising the Congress platform to recruit cadres and expose the Congress leadership[2].

While this emphasis on the organisational independence of the WPP was partly an attempt to reassure the Comintern,

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1 Ibid.; Overstreet and Windmiller, op. cit., p. 135; and U.P. Police, loc. cit., on C. B. Gupta.

2 WPP, Proceedings of the All India Workers' and Peasants' Party (Calcutta, Dec. 1928), PCJA.

it was also necessitated by the fact that the emergence in 1928 of a distinctive, non-Communist Congress left required a reappraisal of Communist tactics. It was significant, therefore, that the most victriolic rhetoric of the WPP conference was reserved, not for the Congress, but for the IIL, which was viewed as a spurious and potentially dangerous rival on the left. Sohan Singh Josh's presidential address to the conference condemned the IIL as a 'bourgeois manoeuvre'; and the political thesis accused the IIL leaders of opposing strikes, criticised the decision to confine IIL membership to Congressmen, prohibited WPP members from enrolling in the IIL, and condemned 'its fundamentally bourgeois, even fascist character, and ultimately counter-revolutionary role'[1].

How the divergence between Moscow and the CPI over the future of the WPP might have resolved itself is impossible to predict. The Government effectively decided the question by arresting most of the party's leaders in March 1929; and those who remained free were compelled increasingly to organise underground[2]. The arrest of the front-rank Communist leaders was also instrumental in smashing the party's infant organisational base by giving a free rein to factious and disruptive regional groups within it[3].

Although the WPP conference had not terminated the policy of united front with radical nationalists, it had implied a shift from the tactic of united front 'from above', i.e. with Congress leaders, to the tactic of united front 'from below', an appeal to the nationalist rank and file against their leaders. In practical terms, this policy took the form of strong Communist opposition to Congress entry into the trade union movement. In October 1929, the Director of Government intelligence observed:

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1 WPP, loc. cit.; and WPP, Presidential Address of Sohan Singh Josh to the First All India Workers' and Peasants' Party Conference (Calcutta, 21 December 1928), PCJA.

2 Overstreet and Windmiller, op. cit., p. 135.

3 Communist Parties of China, Great Britain and Germany, 'Open Letter to the Indian Communists', May 1932, PCJA.

> '. . . until comparatively recently those who have been actively influencing Labour in both Calcutta and Bombay, have been antagonistic to the Congress as a bourgeois organisation which was scarcely less hostile to the interests of Labour than British Capitalism itself. . . . I am clear, therefore, that whatever efforts the Congress may make, it will meet with very active opposition on the part of those leaders of a Communist complexion who heretofore seem to have exercised by far the most considerable influence over Labour. This I believe to be true of Calcutta and to be still more true of Bombay.'[1]

By November 1929, Congress involvement in the Calcutta jute strike had provoked the Communists to the point where they publicly described Nehru and Bose as 'agents of the nationalist bourgeoisie in the labour movement' and accused them of breaking strikes in Indian-owned enterprises while allowing them where British capital was involved. Nehru was also criticised for having accepted the AITUC presidentship at the request of right-wing trade unionists and in opposition to a Communist candidate[2].

In accordance with the Comintern's instructions, the CPI did not participate in the Congress civil disobedience movement of 1930 and also did its best to keep the trade union movement out of it. The result was major splits in the GKU and the G.I.P. Railway Union, the effect of which was a drastic decline in the strength of the trade union movement as a whole[3]. In mid-1931, when a Congress-Royist alliance led by Bose won control of the AITUC executive, the Communists seceded and formed their own Red Trade Union Congress (hereafter RTUC)[4]. For the next three years, the dissensions of the three rival trade union centres, the pro-Congress AITUC, the Communist RTUC and the moderate National Trade Union Federation (hereafter NTUF), effectively

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1 DIB, loc. cit.

2 Abdul Halim, Acting General Secretary, Bengal WPP, Tasks of the Left Wing Trade Unions of India (Calcutta, 25 Nov. 1929) PCJA.

3 Haithcox, op. cit., p. 181.

4 Bose, op. cit., pp. 42, 263-4.

paralysed the trade union movement as a political force, denying both the Congress and the Communists access to a strong labour base.

The breakdown of the Communist-nationalist united front was formally endorsed in December 1930 by a new CPI thesis, drafted by the Comintern but eventually accepted by Indian Communists, despite their reservations[1]. The thesis stated:

> 'The most harmful and dangerous obstacle to the victory of the Indian revolution is the agitation carried on by the "Left" elements of the National Congress . . . Some of the "Left" national reformists . . . who realise that the masses are becoming disillusioned in the Congress, have cleverly put forward the advice to "win" the National Congress from within. Nominally their object is to revolutionise the Congress, in reality it is to restore the prestige of the Congress by replacing the old treacherous leaders by new leaders who are no better than the old. The exposure of the "Left" Congress leaders, who may again undertake to set up a new party or organisation like the former League of Independence, in order once again to bamboozle the mass of the workers, is the primary task of our Party.'[2]

While boycotting Gandhian civil disobedience, the Communists continued to appeal 'from below' to the Congress ranks against the political compromises of the Congress leadership. A CPI manifesto issued on the eve of the Karachi Congress of March 1931 condemned the Gandhi-Irwin pact and called upon Congressmen to revolt against 'this betrayal' by forming an Anti-Imperialist League which should meet before the Congress session and draw up a militant programme[3]. Nevertheless, the CPI's isolation from the recent civil disobedience campaign and its abusive propaganda against radical Congress leaders acted as insuperable barriers to Communist efforts to mobilise radical discontent within the Congress.

Coinciding with the organisational collapse of the Congress left, Communist withdrawal from the nationalist

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1 Haithcox, op. cit., p. 178.

2 Draft Platform of Action of the Communist Party of India: Main Task of the Indian Revolution (December 1930), PCJA.

3 CPI, Manifesto on the Round Table Conference to the rank and file of the Indian National Congress (1931), PCJA.

movement left a political vacuum which would become increasingly obvious between 1930 and 1933. Now that the World Depression was in full swing, Congress civil disobedience would run parallel to intense urban and rural economic unrest. Despite some overlapping between the nationalist campaigns and peasant and labour militancy, the conservatism of the Gandhian leadership ruled out any systematic effort to integrate the political campaign with radical mass demands, an omission which would work to the detriment of both the Congress and non-Congress economic agitations. As the disadvantages of such separatism became evident, there would be a growing awareness of the need for a more clearly defined radical nationalist platform, organised on a national scale, to provide the necessary link. The radicalisation of Indian politics in the 1920's had prepared the ground for such an organisation; and the civil disobedience movements would complete the process, leading to the formation of the CSP in 1934.

Chapter 2

EMERGENCE OF THE CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY (1930-34)

The foundations of radical nationalism in India had been laid in the 1920's. The Congress civil disobedience movements of 1930 and 1932 were to carry Congress radicalism to the final stage of its development as an ideologically and organisationally autonomous political force. The period 1930-34 witnessed the rise of new radical groups within the Congress. While they derived their cadres and their militant nationalism from the more amorphous Congress left of the 1920's, these groups would be distinguished by their closer links with the infant kisan movement, their overt ideological emphasis on socialism, and their deliberate choice of party organisation as the appropriate vehicle for promoting their aims. Starting with the simultaneous but unco-ordinated appearance of such parties in certain provinces, the process of differentiation within the Congress would reach its peak in 1934 with the inauguration of the CSP as an All India opposition party within the Congress.

Coinciding as it did with the worst period of the economic depression, civil disobedience demonstrated that it was impossible to mobilise and sustain effective mass support for a nationalist programme which did not include mass economic demands. While the overlapping of the Congress campaigns with independent terrorist and kisan activity had a radicalising impact on Congressmen, it also emphasised the limitations of Gandhian ideology and methods of mobilisation. Especially in the labour movement, the conservatism of the Congress leadership militated against any sustained co-ordination of political and economic agitation. Meanwhile, civil disobedience necessitated a rapid expansion in the numbers and influence of younger and more radical Congress cadres, widening the composition of the Congress and shifting its organisational balance to the advantage of radical leadership groups. Finally, the failure

of the Gandhian leadership to secure its political aims either through agitation or through negotiation, and the collapse of civil disobedience in 1933, made the creation of an alternative leadership an urgent priority for a substantial number of frustrated nationalists.

It was indicative of the radicalisation of Indian politics in the late 1920's that the civil disobedience movement coincided with a considerable amount of violent nationalist activity, some of which was associated with the Congress. Starting in Bengal with the Chittagong Armoury Raid of April 1930, a new wave of terrorism had soon spread into the U.P. and Punjab. Also in April 1930, the Khudai Khidmatgars, a Congress organisation, took control of Peshawar in the North West Frontier and held the city for ten days. During the next two months, British control of Peshawar continued to be threatened by armed Afridi tribals in alliance with the local people. In May 1930, Gandhi's arrest was the signal for violent rioting in Sholapur, a militant textile labour centre, where a local movement managed to take over the administration for a few days in the name of the Congress.

Although revolutionary groups acted independently of the Congress, which disclaimed responsibility for their activities, there was an inevitable overlap of the Congress and terrorist movements in time, place and personnel. Government policy was partly responsible for this. The Government's response to violent eruptions was to impose martial law in the affected areas. And in the country as a whole, a series of emergency laws and ordinances armed the authorities with special powers which fell little short of martial law. Especially after the proscription of all Congress organisations in 1932, the distinction between violent and non-violent underground activists became blurred. Government action against the Congress often provoked violent reprisals, while Congressmen could not fail to be affected by the Government's policy of penalising entire districts for terrorist attacks by levying collective fines and quartering troops on the local population[1].

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1 See Bose, op. cit., pp. 185 et seq.

In these circumstances, there was considerable solidarity between militant Congressmen and violent revolutionaries, many of whom had worked together in the past. Several non-terrorist Congressmen were also found willing to shelter and aid absconding terrorists. The arrest of large numbers of Congress volunteers for civil disobedience activities and their detention in the same prisons as terrorists and Communists encouraged the growth of fraternal links and a common outlook among the political prisoners. The entry of large quantities of Marxist literature into the prisons facilitated the formation of socialist study-circles and the emergence of an ideological synthesis which rejected both Gandhian non-violence and individual terrorism in favour of some form of socialism.

The extent of Congress sympathy for terrorist heroes was demonstrated by the widespread indignation at the execution of Bhagat Singh on the eve of the Karachi Congress. Gandhi was blamed for not having interceded strongly enough with the Viceroy and was met at Karachi by hostile demonstrations organised by the Naujawan Bharat Sabha (NBS). Protest meetings were organised all over the country by radical Congress and youth leaders. Feelings ran so high that Gandhi felt compelled to placate his critics by allowing an official resolution of condolence for Bhagat Singh at the Karachi session. Even so, one of the main criticisms of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact by the Congress left at Karachi was that the amnesty it provided did not include prisoners accused of violent or terrorist activities[1].

Congress-terrorist contacts in the course of the civil disobedience campaigns led inevitably to a questioning of the efficacy of Gandhian methods, and especially of Gandhi's semi-religious emphasis on non-violence. This tendency was particularly pronounced in Bengal, Punjab and Sind. In Bengal, according to a Government source, terrorists and ex-terrorists were already well established in the PCC and in the Calcutta Corporation by 1930; and the enrolment

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1 Bose, op. cit., pp. 205, 207.

of large numbers of student volunteers in the course of civil disobedience provided these elements with greatly expanded opportunities[1]. Referring to Sind, an official report noted: 'There has been a recent tendency . . . for the movement to pass from the hands of the several Congress and ostensibly non-violent bodies who have failed to make any real progress into those of a more violent set of organisations, of which the Naujawan Sabha is the chief'[2].

The challenge to Gandhian leadership did not remain at the tactical level, i.e. the question of violence versus non-violence, but rapidly acquired a socio-economic content, as the conservatism of the Congress leadership led Congress radicals to develop independent contacts with militant class organisations.

Labour militancy continued to increase in the early thirties, despite the fragmentation of the trade union movement. In 1932 there were 129 industrial disputes involving 140,000 workers and a loss of over 19,000 days. By 1933, the number of disputes had risen to 154, while the number of men involved and days lost had doubled[3]. Nevertheless, the Congress leadership proved incapable of mobilising effective labour support against the Government.

In March 1930, Jayaprakash Narayan, then Secretary of the Congress Labour Department, had written to S. V. Deshpande, the Communist Secretary of the AITUC, recognising the latter as the 'central organisation' of the working class[4]. The Congress now made efforts to enlist labour in the civil disobedience campaign, despite Communist opposition. On 19 July, the decision of the GKU executive to support the Congress programme precipitated a split in

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1 NA, file 4/40/32.

2 NA, file 498/30: Home Secretary, Bombay, to Government of India, December 1930.

3 S. C. Banerji, 'Presidential Address to the Joint TUC', Congress Socialist, 23 April 1938.

4 AICC, file 6: J. P. Narayan to S. V. Deshpande, March 1930.

that union, with Khandalkar, the pro-Congress president, opposed by S. V. Deshpande, the Secretary, and a Communist minority[1]. In August 1930, a Congress Labour Week was organised in Bombay to win over workers who had been thrown out of employment by the closure of some cotton mills[2].

In 1931, the AITUC came under pro-Congress leadership, following the secession of the Communists. Even so, the omission of any labour demands from Gandhi's Ten-Point Programme for the first civil disobedience movement, along with the complete neglect of trade unionists in the political amnesty conceded by the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, militated against an active alliance between the Congress and labour organisations. The TUC session of July 1931, which was dominated by Bose and the Royists, passed a resolution strongly opposing the Delhi Pact because it offered no amnesty to the Meerut prisoners and others arrested for strike activities[3].

During the second civil disobedience movement, the AITUC adhered to a line of passive support for the Congress, confining itself to the adoption of resolutions of solidarity on the questions of civil liberties and national independence. In May 1932, when the TUC Executive decided to observe a nation-wide Protest Day to condemn Government repression, R. S. Ruikar, the AITUC President (then a Royist sympathiser and later in the CSP) found it necessary to explain the decision as follows:

> 'A sinister attempt is still being made by the interested parties to create an impression in India and abroad that the Indian working class is neutral and indifferent so far as the present repressive campaign of the Government is concerned. With a view to nail this baseless lie to the counter, the Trade Union Congress has decided to observe the 26 May 1932 as an All India Labour Protest Day. The time has now come when Indian labour in its own interest can no longer afford to sit with folded hands and be a passive spectator of the present repressive campaign against Labour

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1 Fortnightly Report for the second half of July 1930, Bombay Government, (hereafter Bombay Fortnightly Report), India Office Records, Public and Judicial Papers (hereafter IOR).

2 Ibid., for the first half of August 1930.

3 Bose, op. cit., pp. 232-33.

and the National Congress movement. . . . It is clear that the Indian working class is neither committed nor is a party to the programme of Civil Disobedience started by the Indian National Congress, but as an ardent champion of the fundamental and elementary rights of freedom of speech, association and press, no Trade Unionist can afford to ignore the present happenings in the country.'[1]

At public meetings organised by the AITUC on the above Protest Day, the following resolution was adopted: 'This meeting . . . while not committing itself to the programme of Civil Disobedience started by the Indian National Congress, and while not ignoring the fundamental differences of ideals and programmes which exist between the Trade Union Congress and the Indian National Congress, enters its strong and vehement protest against the repressive policy of Government against the National Liberation Movement and the Indian National Congress.'[2]

At its Madras session of September 1932, the AITUC went a step further and resolved to 'support and actively participate in the struggle for National Freedom from the point of view of the working class'[3]. An exchange of letters between Jayaprakash Narayan and Ruikar in June 1932 reveals that the two were working together to bring about a general strike on the railways and were trying to pressurise Jamnadas Mehta, the moderate President of the AIRF, in this direction[4]. Nevertheless, owing partly to the reluctance of the Congress to patronise radical labour demands and partly to the divisions between nationalist, moderate and Communist trade union leaders, efforts to secure the active

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1 AICC, file 6, 1932: Circular letter from R. S. Ruikar, 16 May 1932, 'An Appeal to the Indian Trade Unions'.

2 AICC, file 6, 1932.

3 'Resolutions of the AITUC session, Madras, 10-11 September 1932', Jayaprakash Narayan Papers (hereafter JPP).

4 AICC, file 6, 1932: Correspondence between J. P. Narayan and R. S. Ruikar, June 1932.

participation of the labour movement in the Congress campaign failed to materialise.

Congress radicals achieved greater success in establishing links with the kisan movement. The latter had its origins in the economic grievances of smaller landlords and tenant farmers who were finding it increasingly difficult to meet revenue and rent demands at a time of falling agricultural prices. The initial aims of the kisan movement were therefore purely economic, being confined to demands for remission and reduction of land revenue, and it was led by well-to-do tenants and smaller landlords. As the economic crisis deepened, however, the movement began to assume a mass character, including demands for reduction of tenancy rents and rural indebtedness, and a political dimension which blamed British imperialism and its zamindar allies for the prevailing economic distress.

Despite the conservatism of official Congress agrarian policy and the reluctance of the Congress leadership to alienate its zamindar supporters, the Congress could not afford at a time of nationalist agitation to ignore acute economic discontent in rural areas. In May 1930, the Congress Working Committee authorised a no-tax campaign against the Government in ryotwari areas, while avoiding a no-rent campaign which would affect Indian landlords[1]. Radical Congress kisan workers unofficially extended this campaign to include rent demands in zamindari areas. Thus, in the U.P., Narmada Prasad Singh, Mohanlal Gautam (both future founders of the U.P. CSP) and other Congressmen were reported to be waging an active no-rent campaign in February 1931[2].

Even after the Delhi Pact, the severity of the economic crisis made it impossible for the Congress to abandon peasant demands. The extent of Congress involvement in kisan agitation varied from one province to another. According to official reports from the Punjab and Madras, Congressmen continued to be active in agrarian agitation after

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1 Sitaramayya, op. cit., pp. 397-8.

2 U.P. Police Abstracts (hereafter UPPA), Lucknow, 28 Feb. 1931.

the termination of the first civil disobedience movement[1]. In the U.P., where the agrarian crisis was at its worst, Congress-Kisan organisers like Mohanlal Gautam and B. D. Tripathi (later a founder of the U.P. CSP) formed a separate Kisan Sangh (hereafter UPKS) in May 1931, on the ground that the Congress was not paying enough attention to the Kisan problem. Among its district organisers were prominent U.P. Congressmen like S. K. D. Paliwal, Damodar Swarup Seth (a future leader of the U.P. CSP), Algurai Shastri (also to be a member of the U.P. CSP), Narmada Prasad Singh and Sitla Sahai[2].

A series of district conferences were organised by the UPKS, at which tenants were advised to pay only half their rents[3]. By November 1931, the U.P. PCC found itself under considerable pressure from some of its district units (e.g., the Unao DCC, of which B. D. Tripathi was President) to authorise an official no-rent campaign on behalf of the Congress[4]. Owing largely to Jawaharlal Nehru's influence, the U.P. PCC agreed in December 1931 to permit an open no-rent campaign in certain districts[5]. In Bihar, however, similar pressure was rejected by the PCC, and the Bihar Congress Enquiry Committee on Kisan grievances strongly advised peasants not to refuse rents[6].

Despite the reluctance of the Congress leadership to identify itself with the Kisan movement, the latter continued to grow under the pressure of economic distress. By 1934, the UPKS was reported to be very strong and closely linked with left-wing Congressmen, while kisan organisation had also made considerable headway in Bengal, Central India, Andhra, Gujerat (where it remained under Gandhian control) and the Punjab (where it was led by the pro-Communist Kirti Kisan Party)[7]. In Bihar, soon to become the most militant

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1 Punjab Fortnightly Report, 15 June 1931; and Madras Fortnightly Report, 15 September 1931, IOR.

2 UPPA, 16 May 1931.

3 Ibid., 13 June 1931 and 27 June 1931.

4 Ibid., 28 Nov. 1931.

5 U.P. Fortnightly Report, 15 December 1931, IOR.

6 Hauser, op. cit., p. 48.

7 Bose, op. cit., pp. 33-4.

centre of Kisan agitation, Swami Sahajanand reorganised the BPKS in 1933 to oppose the tenancy legislation of the Zamindars' United Party. Though the Bihar Congress leadership itself belonged to the zamindar class, it supported the revival of the BPKS as a means of countering the influence of the new Zamindars' Party[1].

The emergence of the Kisan movement - in many areas under the auspices of Congress activists - inevitably radicalised Congress attitudes to the agrarian question, despite the absence of official Congress patronage for no-rent campaigns in provinces other than the U.P. The need for new methods of rural mobilisation became increasingly clear to militant Congressmen as support for civil disobedience began to wane among the trading and landlord classes. Naba Chaudhuri (a Congress kisan organiser and future leader of the Orissa CSP) was expressing the view of a large number of Congress radicals when he wrote to Nehru in September 1933:

> 'The upper and middle classes - the propertied classes - are unwilling to go further than what they did in 1930, for fear of losing their properties. . . . They alone cannot wrest power from the foreign power; the active co-operation and participation of the masses is necessary. As for the masses, . . . it is impossible to stir them to action for purely political ends. . . . If they would rise against British rule, they would do so only on the understanding that they must sweep with it the rule of the indigenous Zamindars and Capitalists. To rouse them to action, Congress must have a comprehensive socio-economic programme - a programme of direct action organised against the foreign political rule and at the same time the iniquitous economic and social order of things. This will certainly mean that the upper and middle classes will openly array themselves against the Congress. When it is impossible to win the battle with their sympathy only, and that too mere lip sympathy, and when on the other hand the participation of the masses is indispensable, we must be ready to pay the price for the latter; that is, we must be ready to alienate the upper classes in order to enlist the co-operation of the masses in our struggle.'[2]

As the above letter indicates, the decline of civil disobedience and the weakness of the nationalist movement were attributed by the Congress left to the conservatism of

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1 Hauser, op. cit., p. 62.

2 N. Chaudhuri to J. Nehru, 8 September 1933, JNP.

official Congress ideology and the reluctance of the existing leadership to experiment with radical techniques of mass mobilisation. This view was to find a ready response from younger and more recently recruited sections of the Congress rank and file.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, political developments during the late 1920's had broadened the composition of the Congress and increased competition among its leadership groups. The youth movement, linked on the one hand with Communist and terrorist groups and on the other with the Congress Volunteer Corps, had played a key role in this process, introducing younger cadres into the Congress and strengthening the position of its radical leaders. This trend was greatly accelerated by the particular exigencies of civil disobedience.

In the first place, the arrest of large numbers of orthodox Congressmen necessitated the enrolment of new cadres, mainly militant nationalists from youth and student organisations, who were drawn to the Congress by the fact that it was at last engaged in mass direct action against the Government. Many of these new recruits had former terrorist or socialist affiliations; and their entry into the Congress was bound to strengthen radical opposition to the Gandhian leadership. Secondly, the arrest of front-rank Congress leaders created temporary vacancies at various levels of Congress leadership, and these tended to be filled by younger and more militant Congress activists. It was from these radical cadres and leadership groups that the CSP derived its membership, a pattern which is apparent from the biographical evidence available.

Of the CSP's national leaders, Jayaprakash Narayan, acted as General Secretary of the AICC in 1932[1]. In Bombay, M. R. Masani, Yusuf Meherally, Asoka Mehta and Achyut Patwardhan - the nucleus of the Nasik Group which launched the CSP - were all active in civil disobedience and were convicted for their activities. Of the future leaders of the Maharashtra CSP, N. G. Gore and S.P. Limaye had both served as secretaries of the Poona Youth League and were

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1 M. R. Masani, 'J.P. - Through Thirty Years', 25 Oct. 1962, typed article, Masani Papers, (hereafter MP).

prominent in the civil disobedience movements, while S. M. Joshi made his political _début_ in the 1930 civil disobedience, in which he was arrested[1].

In the U.P., one of the main organisers of the 1930 civil disobedience was Acharya Narendra Dev, a Marxist, Principal of the Kashi Vidyapith (described by the U.P. Police as 'the nursery of Congress and revolutionary workers') and future leader of the All India CSP. The following founder-leaders of the U.P. CSP were also prominent in the civil disobedience campaigns: Swami Sampurnanand, who had at one time been close to the Communists, was Secretary of the Benares Congress Committee and chief organiser of the provincial Congress Volunteer Corps and youth movement, and played a key role in the Congress civil disobedience. Sri Prakasa, a veteran provincial Congress leader, was prominent in the no-rent campaign of 1932. C. B. Gupta, a member of the U.P. PCC and the AICC and President of the Lucknow Town Congress Committee (hereafter TCC) organised the anti-Simon boycott in Lucknow, was convicted twice for civil disobedience and was elected Provincial Dictator of the Congress in 1932. Damodar Swarup Seth, who had been convicted in the Benares Conspiracy Case of 1915 and accused in the Kakori Conspiracy Case, became Provincial Dictator in 1932 and later helped to found the UPKS. Sardar Narmada Prasad Singh, a kisan organiser and future President of the Allahabad CSP, was elected Provincial Dictator in February 1933. Bishambar Dayal Tripathi acted as Provincial Dictator in 1932 and was also a founder-leader of the UPKS. N. K. D. Vashishta, reported to have 'revolutionary associations', was one of the main organisers of the U.P. Congress Volunteer Corps and was active in the 1930 civil disobedience[2].

At the district level, too, there are many instances of the merging of youth league, terrorist, kisan and future CSP affiliations among those active in and arrested for Congress activities in the U.P.[3] Kedar Nath, President of

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1 Bombay CID, 'Political Who's Who'.

2 U.P. Police, _Political Who's Who_.

3 The choice of the U.P. for this survey of Congress and CSP personnel is due partly to the representative character of

the Fyzabad NBS, was active in the civil disobedience movement. Thakur Malkhan Singh, a member of the NBS with former terrorist associations, was President of the Aligarh District Congress Committee (hereafter DCC), a member of the U.P. PCC and the AICC and an organiser of the Congress Volunteer Corps, and presided over the U.P. Political Conference of June 1932. Raghubar Dayal Mishra, future district organiser of the U.P. CSP, acted as Dictator of the Bulandshahr DCC in 1930. Krishna Chandra Sharma, a former terrorist who joined the CSP in 1934, participated in the Congress civil disobedience while maintaining contacts with various Communist leaders. Bansi Dhar Mishra, a kisan organiser who later joined the CSP, was active during civil disobedience as President of the Lakhimpur-Kheri DCC. Parvati Devi, suspected of terrorist contacts, was active in Agra, served as a member of the PCC and was arrested in 1930. Govind Sahai, a follower of Nehru's and future district organiser of the CSP in Rohilkhand, was arrested thrice for civil disobedience. Farid Ansari, future leader of the Delhi CSP, organised the anti-Simon demonstrations in Delhi in 1928 and was convicted in the 1930 civil disobedience.

The cities of Benares and Allahabad, with their important universities, and the industrial centres of Kanpur and Meerut were particularly fertile recruiting-centres for Congress radicals during this period. In Benares, Tarapada Bhattacharji, who had former terrorist associations, was active in civil disobedience as Secretary of the Benares DCC and later became Secretary of the Benares CSP. Parmanand Trivedi, a prominent youth leaguer, collected

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the province and partly to the availability of sources. As a rural province which provided the largest of the CSP's provincial units, the U.P. presents an instructive contrast with Bombay, where the CSP remained a small group of leaders drawn from the urban, middle class intelligentsia. The U.P. was also the only province for which the writer could find sufficient biographical information about local CSP cadres to justify generalisations about the party's rank and file. The information that follows is based on the U.P. Police, Political Who's Who. See p. 76 for the social background of the following individuals.

funds for the defence of the accused in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, distributed leaflets for the HSRA in February 1930 and participated in the Communist League of Bombay in 1934. K. N. Ramanna, a youth organiser, and Ram Gati Ganguli, both of whom had terrorist contacts, were active in the Congress civil disobedience.

In Allahabad, Mohanlal Gautam, implicated in the Benares Conspiracy Case, was active in the Congress no-rent campaign and was a founder-leader of both the UPKS and the U.P. CSP. K. D. Malaviya, who had been a prominent member of the Allahabad Youth League in the late 1920's, started an Allahabad branch of the NBS in 1931, became Captain of the Congress Volunteer Corps in the same year and Secretary of the Allahabad TCC in January 1933, was Secretary of the local Kisan Sangh, attended the All India Socialist Conference at Patna in May 1934 and was a founding member of the U.P. CSP. Devendra Mani Tewari, a Congressman with Communist leanings, was a member of the HSRA and harboured other members, was responsible for bomb attacks in Allahabad in February 1932 and was later involved in arms-smuggling. Sheoshankar Prasad Bhartiya, convicted for Congress activities, joined a terrorist group on his release.

In Kanpur, Ajoy Ghosh, a former associate of Bhagat Singh and future leader of the CPI, was active in the Kanpur Youth League, the Mazdur Sabha, the NBS and the U.P. Trade Union Congress, attended the Karachi Congress session and was later arrested in a Congress demonstration. Hariharnath Shastri, who had been in contact with the Workers' and Peasants' Party and had reorganised the Kanpur Mazdur Sabha in 1927, was active in the Congress civil disobedience and became President of the AITUC and a leading member of the CSP in 1934. Rajaram Shastri, also active in the labour movement, was convicted in 1933 and later joined the CSP. Abdul Qadir Azad Subhani, who had been a Communist in the twenties, was engaged in Congress khaddar propaganda in 1931, but also 'preached communism' in the labour movement. Chail Beharilal Kantak, who was to become Secretary of the Kanpur CSP, was an organiser of the Kanpur Youth League and was convicted twice for civil disobedience. Surendranath

Pande, arrested in 1929 in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, revived the Kanpur Youth League and merged it into the NBS in December 1931, tried to win control of the Kanpur TCC, through his position in the Kanpur Mazdur Sabha and was convicted during the 1932 civil disobedience. Gopinath Sinha, a member of the NBS and the Mazdur Sabha, became President of the Kanpur Youth League in January 1930 and was convicted four times for civil disobedience. Ganga Sahai Chaube, a future member of the U.P. CSP Executive, was Secretary of the Kanpur Congress Volunteer Corps and Assistant Secretary of the Kanpur TCC, was convicted thrice for civil disobedience and also had terrorist contacts which led to his arrest in the Kanpur-Dehra Dun Conspiracy Case.

In Meerut, Algurai Shastri, who was arrested thrice for civil disobedience, later founded the Meerut CSP and became its President. Thakur Singh, who also joined the CSP, was arrested in the 1930 civil disobedience, organised a revolutionary group on his release and participated in the Jakhera armed raid of May 1932. Mohanlal Rank, later in the CSP, also had terrorist contacts. Shyam Lal joined a revolutionary group in January 1932 and later joined the CSP. Ratan Prakash Gupta, a youth activist, had terrorist contacts. Rajendra Pal Singh, a local Congressman, was closely connected with the Meerut prisoners, harboured absconders accused in the Delhi Conspiracy Case, organised secret meetings of the HSRA of which he was Financial Secretary, took part in the Jakhera raid, was the leading organiser of the Delhi-Meerut revolutionary group and was reported to be interested in Communism. Bishambar Sahai Bismil was also associated with the HSRA and joined an agitation organised by the NBS and the Kirti Kisan Party in Delhi. Ram Gopal, later in the CSP, was reported to have both Communist and terrorist associations. Chandra Shekhar, a future CSP member, was active in the Youth League and the Congress Volunteer Corps. Jairam Sharma organised meetings for the Delhi Kirti Kisan Party, became President of a newly-formed Meerut Kisan and Mazdur Sabha early in 1934 and was believed to have connections with the Punjab Ghadr Party.

Ranvir Singh, an active youth leaguer, was a member of the Central Committee of the HSRA and engaged in terrorist activities in 1931.

That the radicalisation of Congress cadres in the U.P. was not a unique phenomenon is confirmed by the following report on Kerala by E. M. S. Nambudripad, the CSP and Communist leader:

> 'The national struggles of 1930 and 1932 gave rise to a new type of Congress cadres which ultimately developed into the leadership of the new peasant movement. The social composition of the Congress volunteers in Malabar was predominantly rural middle class. . . . The great majority of satyagrahis were connected with land as tenants. They were, however, junior members of their families who had some elementary education, were either unemployed or had some job as local school-teachers. They were in consequence connected with the peasantry but were not themselves working peasants. They did understand the problems and feelings of the peasants but had risen sufficiently above the ordinary peasant to think more of national than of agrarian problems. The course of the national struggle outside, the heated discussions over it inside the jail, the earnest study of political questions and the close contact with some revolutionaries, made these satyagrahis into convinced revolutionaries by the time they came out of jail. . . . It was the same tendency as was observed all over India . . . . This proved adequate material for the building up of the Congress Socialist Party. Almost the entire ranks of the satyagrahis joined the Party and became its active workers. And their social composition made it inevitable that they turn their main attention to the peasant problem.'[1]

The radicalisation of Congress cadres and their growing impatience with Gandhian leadership were encouraged and articulated by the socialist propaganda of new ideological pressure groups within the Congress, the earliest and most formative of which was the Roy Group.

Following his expulsion from the Comintern in 1928, M. N. Roy had carried on active propaganda abroad against the isolationist line prescribed by the Comintern for the Indian Communists. Roy's alternative was embodied in a manifesto issued from Berlin in July 1930. It stated that

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1 E. M. S. Nambudripad, A Short History of the Peasant Movement in Kerala (Bombay, 1943), p. 10.

'the immediate task' was 'not the realisation of the maximum programme of Communism' and outlined a minimum anti-imperialist programme, which included items such as the abolition of princely states and zamindari, reduction of land rent, liquidation of agricultural indebtedness, nationalisation of public utilities, labour welfare legislation and civil liberties. As an alternative to the CPI's aim of a Soviet Republic, Roy proposed what was to become the important rallying point of the Congress left - the demand for a Constituent Assembly elected by local committees of delegates from various class organisations. In opposition to the anti-Congress line of the official Communists, Roy's manifesto asserted:

> '. . . as the organ through which the proletariat will exercise hegemony in the struggle for national freedom, it /the CPI/ must also work inside the nationalist mass organisations - the National Congress, Youths' League, Students' Organisations, Volunteer Corps. The local Congress Committees particularly will provide a very fruitful field for the activities of the Communist Party. . . . The Communists should agitate for the broadening of the social basis of the local Congress Committees through their election by these popular bodies including trade unions.'[1]

Roy's chief lieutenant, Tayab Shaikh, was a young Congress radical who had participated in the Bardoli no-tax campaign and who, as a member of the executive of the Bombay Youth League, had helped to organise the anti-Simon demonstrations of 1928. Shaikh's Group of Oppositional Indian Communists in Berlin was in touch with Nehru and won recognition as a German affiliate of the Indian National Congress[2]. In August 1930, Shaikh returned to India as Roy's emissary and contacted various Congress radicals, obtaining the signatures of about a hundred active Congressmen and youth leaguers to Roy's July manifesto[3]. Royist articles began to appear in various nationalist journals,

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1 M. N. Roy, Organise the Communist Party: A Manifesto (Berlin, 15 July 1930), PCJA.

2 Haithcox, op. cit., pp. 164-7.

3 Ibid., pp. 169, 175.

including The Vanguard, edited by Yusuf Meherally, then a Congress youth leader and later a founder of the CSP[1]. By November 1930, Shaikh had established direct contact with Nehru, who issued a public statement supporting Roy's programme and his proposal for a Constituent Assembly[2]. By the time Roy arrived in India in person in December 1930, a loyal Royist nucleus had already been established.

During the next year, the Royists worked hard to organise on two levels - one, the short-lived League of Indian Independence, was designed as a broad front organisation which would work within the Congress, while the second, the Revolutionary Party of the Indian Working Class (hereafter RPIWC) was intended as a secret, underground Communist Party. The League of Independence, which anticipated the CSP and sought to fill the vacuum created by the recent demise of the Workers' and Peasants' Party and the IIL, was able to establish small units in Calcutta, Bombay, Ahmedabad and some other places; but it was soon disbanded on the ground that its existence would divide and weaken the Congress organisation which ought to be democratised and reactivated[3].

The Royist line of united front with the Congress was successful in countering Communist influence in the labour movement. Roy corresponded with the Meerut prisoners and found most of them unexpectedly sympathetic to his line. According to one source, S. A. Dange, a founder-leader of the CPI, defected temporarily to the Roy Group[4].

The Royists also worked within the Congress Labour Committee to link the trade union movement with the civil disobedience campaign. They joined in the Congress-sponsored Bombay Labour Week in August 1930, advancing the slogan: 'The workers and peasants are the arms and feet of the National Congress'[5]. As noted before, a Royist-

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1 Haithcox, op. cit., p. 171.

2 Ibid., p. 175.

3 Ibid., p. 176.

4 Bose, op. cit., p. 33.

5 Haithcox, op. cit., p. 181.

nationalist alliance was able to split and capture the Communist-dominated GKU, the G.I.P. Railway Union and eventually the AITUC itself. The Royists followed up these successes with a campaign to unite the non-Communist labour federations - the AITUC, the moderate NFTU and the AIRF - on a platform of class struggle and support for the nationalist movement. Though unsuccessful at this stage, Roy's draft Platform of Unity was to be the basis of future efforts in this direction undertaken by the CSP[1].

In the months that followed the Karachi Congress session, Roy also ventured into the field of Kisan agitation in the U.P. and was regarded as an important influence on the newly-formed UPKS[2]. Nevertheless, despite its initial success, the long-term effectiveness of the Roy Group was seriously reduced by its excessive dependence on Roy's personality. After Roy's arrest in July 1931, his Group ceased to count for much in national politics, and the tasks outlined by Roy were to be undertaken by new leaders who, though ideologically indebted to Roy, felt no obligation to offer him their allegiance.

The socialist propaganda carried on by the Royists and others in the Congress appeared increasingly to be vindicated by the political failures and compromises of the nationalist leadership in the course of the two civil disobedience campaigns. By relating the political failures of the Congress to the economic crisis, socialist ideology was able to appeal to the frustrated nationalism of large numbers of Congress militants. Whereas the pre-civil disobedience Congress left had largely confined itself to the question of complete independence, the opposition to Gandhi now began to take an increasingly socialist form, especially after the Delhi Pact of March 1931.

When the Karachi Congress met in April 1931, opposition to the leadership focussed on Gandhi's compromise with the Viceroy. Bose later observed: 'The politically trained section of the people could analyse the terms of the Pact

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1 Haithcox, op. cit., pp. 201 et seq.

2 Ibid., p. 194.

and to them it was a great disappointment. Youth organisation in the country . . . were also dissatisfied.'[1] The main criticism of the Pact was that the Congress, in agreeing to participate in the second Round Table Conference on terms decided by the first Round Table Conference, which it had boycotted, was effectively conceding the failure of its recent civil disobedience campaign. The Viceroy's concessions appeared largely symbolic; and the proposed amnesty did not include the Meerut prisoners or any of those accused of revolutionary or terrorist conspiracy. Gandhi's acceptance of the principle of federation, as defined to exclude Congress intervention in the princely states, and of constitutional safeguards was seen by Congress radicals as a nullification of the Congress aim of complete independence.

Gandhi, nonetheless, succeeded in projecting the Pact to Indian public opinion as a victory for Congress. Its opponents found themselves in a small minority at the Karachi session, a fact which Bose attributed to the superior organisation and financial backing of the Right-wing and to the 'defection' of Nehru and other left-wing leaders[2]. Although Jamnadas Mehta, the moderate labour leader, moved an amendment on behalf of the Roy Group, the amendment was ruled out of order and the official resolution endorsing the Pact was carried by 300 votes to 2[3].

This overwhelming victory for the Congress leadership was largely due to the moderation shown by Nehru and Bose, both of whom decided at this juncture to put nationalist unity before nationalist militancy. Presiding over a session of the All India Naujawan Bharat Sabha, which was held simultaneously with the Congress session, Bose, while supporting a resolution condemning the Delhi Pact, opposed anti-Congress trends among militant youth leaders. He later

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1 Bose, op. cit., p. 202.

2 Ibid.

3 Haithcox, op. cit., pp. 188-9.

wrote: 'At that time there was a distinct tendency among the youths in Punjab and Sindh to break away from the Indian National Congress and run a separate organisation. I pleaded strongly against this viewpoint and urged the capture of the official Congress machinery in place of boycott.'[1] When the Subjects Committee of the Congress met to consider the Delhi Pact, Bose made a statement ' to the effect that the Left Wing of the Congress did not approve of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, but that in view of the circumstances prevailing at the time, they would refrain from dividing the House.'[2]

Nehru, despite his strong reservations about the Pact, went even further than Bose and moved the official resolution endorsing it in the open session. As the price for Nehru's support, Gandhi agreed to his draft for a resolution on Fundamental Rights. Though Nehru drafted the resolution in consultation with Gandhi, Roy, who was in close touch with Nehru, is believed to have had a radicalising influence on it[3]. With the passing of the resolution, the Congress for the first time committed itself to a comprehensive programme of social and economic reform, including items such as public ownership of key sectors of the economy, agrarian reform and labour welfare. Although the resolution included enough safeguards for the property rights of landlords and industrialists to negate its more radical provisions, Bose later confirmed that it 'was meant to placate the Socialist elements in the Congress'[4].

Insofar as the immediate political situation was concerned, the Karachi session was undoubtedly an overwhelming victory for the Gandhian leadership. Gandhi's nomination as the sole representative of the Congress at the forthcoming Round Table Conference completed his triumph. The Congress left had shown itself singularly incapable of utilising the frustrated militancy of Congress youth cadres and the prevailing labour and agrarian unrest to mount a serious offensive against the leadership. To a

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1 Bose, op. cit., pp. 207-9.

2 Ibid., p. 206.

3 Haithcox, op. cit., p. 191.

4 Bose, op. cit., p. 207.

large extent, its impotence arose from and emphasised its weak organisational base and its excessive reliance on popular individuals like Nehru and Bose. The lesson appears to have been taken. Before Karachi, the Congress left had been content to function as a loose and amorphous bloc; but henceforth there would be increasing emphasis on the need for a more organised and ideologically distinct power-base from which opposition to the leadership could be better mobilised and sustained.

This increased awareness of the need for alternative organisation on the left manifested itself in the formation soon after the Karachi session of provincial socialist parties which sought to harness militant nationalism to a socialist programme. In July 1931, a merger of the Kirti Kisan Party, which had been active in Kisan agitation, with the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, which was closely connected with the terrorist and the Congress youth movements, produced the Punjab Socialist Party[1]. One of its leading figures was Munshi Ahmed Din, the future CSP leader, and the party was later absorbed into the CSP[2]. In the same month, the Bihar Socialist Party was founded by Jayaprakash Narayan, Professor Abdul Bari and some other Congressmen, all of whom would later be among the founders of the CSP[3]. The main aim of the Bihar Socialist Party was to exert pressure on the provincial Congress, similar to that of U.P. Congress leftists, for a no-rent campaign among the kisans; but the party's brief venture into peasant agitation in November 1931 was terminated by the arrest of most of its leaders[4]. Also founded in 1931 was the Bengal Labour Party, which was initially close to the Congress left, but later came under Communist control[5].

Representing a fusion of disgruntled Congress militants

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1 Punjab Fortnightly Reports, 15 June & 30 July 1931, IOR.
2 Praja Socialist Party, op. cit., p. 17.
3 Bihar Fortnightly Report, 30 July 1931, IOR.
4 Hauser, op. cit., pp. 57, 72.
5 Praja Socialist Party, loc. cit.

in search of an alternative platform with kisan and labour activists, who wished to link their economic demands to the political appeal of nationalism, these provincial parties were the precursors of the CSP. The conditions for the emergence of an All India oppositional platform on these lines were soon to be created by the failure of the second civil disobedience movement.

Congress radicals had regarded the Delhi Pact as no more than a short breathing space, and in the following months they intensified their agitation for a renewal of civil disobedience. The Pact was condemned by sessions of the U.P. Naujawan Bharat Sabha in May 1931 and of the AITUC in July, both presided over by Bose[1]. In December 1931, the Maharashtra Youth Conference, again with Bose in the chair, passed a resolution calling on the Congress Working Committee to resume civil disobedience[2]. In Bengal, terrorist groups, who had gained nothing from the Delhi Pact, launched a new wave of revolutionary activity with a view to discrediting the agreement. The Government, in turn, retaliated with severe repression, thereby provoking the Bengal Provincial Conference to meet in a special session in December 1931 and pass resolutions blaming the Government for violation of the Delhi Pact and calling for a renewal of civil disobedience. Bose later explained: 'It was hoped that the revival of the civil disobedience movement would divert the energy of the youths and thereby help to stop the terrorist campaign in the province.'[3]

The main focus of left-wing activity, however, was on the agrarian crisis in the U.P. In a bid to consolidate its hold on the peasantry, the Congress had been mediating with the Government to secure a reduction of land revenue and rent. Congress radicals, and especially the leaders of the UPKS, were utilising these official Congress activities to promote their own propaganda for the abolition of zamindari. In November 1931, attempts at a negotiated settlement of the agrarian problem having failed, the UPKS

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1 Bose, op. cit., p. 232.

2 Ibid., p. 243, note 2.

3 Ibid., p. 236.

threatened to launch its own no-rent campaign unless the Congress took the lead[1]. Afraid of losing its peasant base, the U.P. PCC agreed to a limited no-rent campaign. The ensuing confrontation with the Government, coupled with Gandhi's failure to secure any tangible gains at the Round Table Conference, had led by January 1932 to the formal repudiation by the Congress of the Delhi Pact and the resumption of civil disobedience.

Left-wing pressure had played an important part in pushing the Congress into the second civil disobedience movement. Nevertheless, the movement was conducted under largely the same leadership and according to the same methods as the campaign of 1930, a fact which was later held responsible for its collapse. Bose, for instance, blamed the Gandhian leadership for neglecting to prepare for the offensive with new tactics that would have taken the Government by surprise[2]. Gandhi's orthodox methods of passive resistance, his penchant for negotiation and his emphasis on open as opposed to secret organisation were held responsible for enabling Government intelligence to plan and execute an effective counter-offensive. Gandhi's famous fast of November 1932 on the question of separate electorates for Untouchables in the Communal Award was seen by the Congress left as an eccentric, and irrelevant gesture which side-tracked the civil disobedience movement and diverted nationalist energy and funds to the anti-Untouchability campaign[3].

It was against this background of disillusionment, with the Congress drifting from civil disobedience to Gandhian constructive work, that renewed opposition to the Congress leadership began to take shape in 1933. This opposition was not at first exclusively left-wing, but included a wide cross-section of disgruntled Congressmen, ranging from constitutionalists and communalists to socialists and militant nationalists, all of whom agreed on the need to

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1 UPPA, 28 Nov. 1931.

2 Bose, op. cit., p. 244.

3 Ibid., pp. 244, 249.

revive Congress political activity which had been superseded by Gandhi's emphasis on social work. As in 1923, the idea of a new party within the Congress had wide currency, and was mooted both by the left and by former 'Pro-Changers' of the 1920's. In May 1933, Subhash Bose joined with Vithalbhai Patel, the former Swarajist, in issuing a manifesto from Vienna regarding the collapse of civil disobedience which asserted: 'The time has . . . come for a radical reorganisation of the Congress on a new principle and with a new method. For bringing about this reorganisation, a change of leadership is necessary . . . . If the Congress as a whole can undergo this transformation, it would be the best course. Failing that a new party will have to be formed within the Congress, composed of all radical elements'.[1]

A month later, addressing a conference in London, Bose elaborated on this theme and called for the formation of a Socialist Party within the Congress[2]. In another statement issued in February 1934, Bose defined the main task of this proposed new party as being the transformation of the Congress into 'an organ of the masses' by radicalising its constitution and composition and the provision of adequate representation to youth, labour and peasants[3]. There appears, nonetheless, to have been a good deal of loose thinking regarding the nature of such a party and whether it should take a socialist or merely vaguely oppositional form. In November 1933, Swami Govindanand, a Congress militant in Sind, was able to write to S. Satyamurti, the arch-constitutionalist Madras leader, suggesting the revival of the 'left wing' of the old Congress Democratic Party to overthrow the Gandhian leadership[4].

The process of differentiation and polarisation, which by April 1934 was to leave the CSP as the sole representative of organised opposition to Gandhi's leadership, was the result of two factors; the refusal of the Gandhian

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1 Bose, op. cit., p. 357.

2 Ibid., p. 378.

3 Bombay Chronicle, 19 Feb. 1934.

4 Ibid., 15 Nov. 1933.

leadership to accommodate the demands of its radical opponents, paralleled by its conspicuous willingness to come to terms with the Swarajist or constitutionalist opposition.

In July 1933, Gandhi issued a statement condemning the secrecy which had crept into the functioning of Congress organisations and blaming this factor for the corruption of the Congress and the failure of the civil disobedience movement. Shortly after this, all Congress organisations were formally dissolved at Gandhi's instance, ostensibly to purge them of corruption[1]. With the liquidation of existing Congress bodies, many of which had been functioning underground under left-wing direction, Congress radicals were compelled to organise themselves in informal, and later formal, groupings of their own. Faced with an apparent drift towards constitutionalism and with the prospect of exclusion from the Congress by a Gandhian-Liberal alliance, the left now had little option but to build an alternative platform, first at the provincial and later at the national level.

Meanwhile, the increased politicisation of the peasantry and industrial labour owing to the Depression was creating independent pressures in favour of the formation of a new party based on their economic demands. These pressures threatened, in the absence of an initiative by the Congress left, to throw up rival political organisations outside the Congress. Reporting to Nehru on his efforts to form socialist groups in Kerala, C. K. Narainswami (later a founder-member of the Bombay CSP) wrote in November 1933: 'The present seems to be an opportune time to begin work in that direction. There is great discontent among the tenantry and I learn that attempts are being made to organise them. So far as I am aware, the lead is being taken by those who are either reactionaries or people of confused thinking.'[2]

The labour movement was also growing restive in the face of long-standing neglect, and the idea of an independent Labour Party was being voiced by both the moderate

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1 Bose, op. cit., p. 263.

2 C. K. Narainswami to J. Nehru, 25 Nov. 1933, JNP.

NFTU and the Royist-dominated AITUC. In October 1933, soon after his release from prison, Nehru was approached by the NFTU leaders to preside over the formation of a new Labour Party, but declined on the grounds of his reluctance to be identified with the moderates[1]. In April 1934, an All India Working-Class Political Conference at Jabalpur, under the auspices of the AITUC, resolved to establish a Socialist or Working-Class Party which could co-operate with radical Congressmen[2]. With the release of most of the Meerut prisoners in November 1933, Communist labour leaders were also back in the field and were energetically rebuilding their trade union base. Their revived strength was to be demonstrated in the Bombay textile general strike of April 1934. The return of the Communists and their rival efforts represented a threat to Congress leftists, who were anxious to establish their own credentials with the labour movement.

In the absence of Bose abroad and of Nehru in prison, the task of articulating and organising left-wing opposition to Gandhi's suspension of civil disobedience devolved upon a group of young Congress radicals based in Bombay. The idea of a Congress Socialist Party was first conceived in Nasik Prison by Jayaprakash Narayan, M. R. Masani and some other prisoners during the period 1932-1933[3]. The Nasik Group, as this founding nucleus came to be known, also included Charles Mascarenhas, Asoka Mehta and Achyut Patwardhan. As a group, they were representative of the social and political origins of the CSP leadership. All five were Congressmen of relatively recent standing who had been active in civil disobedience, and with the exception of Narayan were hitherto unknown in national politics. Their average age - 29 - marked a wide generational gap with the existing Gandhian leadership. Jayaprakash Narayan, a former Communist, had been active in Congress labour and kisan work, while Mascarenhas, a former Royist,

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1 J. Nehru to V. V. Giri, 28 Oct. 1933, JNP.

2 Bombay Chronicle, 29 April 1934.

3 Masani, op. cit., p. 53.

was influential in the Calcutta labour movement. Both remained revolutionary Marxists, despite their Congress allegiance. The other three had no experience of labour or kisan organisation and shared strong ideological reservations about Marxism, adhering instead to the democratic socialism of the British Labour Party and the Fabian Society[1]. While Narayan came from a rural middle class family in Bihar, the rest were urban, middle class intellectuals who belonged to prosperous professional or commercial families.

In the course of 1933 the Nasik Group established contact with sympathisers outside, winning their support for its plans. When the Conference of Congress Leaders at Poona in July 1933 endorsed Gandhi's suspension of mass civil disobedience, a group of Congressmen who were in favour of continuing the campaign met separately and elected a committee to draft a constitution and programme for a new Congress Socialist Party. The Drafting Committee consisted of Purshottamdas Tricumdas, Yusuf Meherally and Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya, all of whom were based in Bombay. The Poona meeting was also attended by some prominent Congressmen from other provinces, such as Narendra Dev from the U.P. and D. P. Mishra from the C.P.[2]

The programme which emerged from the Poona meeting was drafted in consultation with the Nasik Group and was described by Tricumdas as a proposed 'basis for co-ordinating the activities of all socialists in the Congress, with a view to radicalise it'[3]. The draft was completed early in October 1933 and was circulated among like-minded Congressmen in other provinces to obtain their reactions[4]. Copies were distributed at the Berar Youth Conference in

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1 Masani, op. cit., p. 53.

2 Thomas A. Rusch, 'Role of the Congress Socialist Party in the Indian National Congress, 1931-42', Ph.D. thesis, Chicago, 1955, p. 148.

3 P. Tricumdas to J. P. Narayan, 1933, JPP.

4 Bombay Government, Home (Special) (hereafter BHS), File 800(75)A: P. Tricumdas to Sri Prakasa, 12 Oct. 1933, p. 1.

October, presided over by Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya[1]. The Roy Group appears already to have been associated with the draft programme, the printing of which was handled by V. B. Karnik, the Bombay Royist labour leader[2].

The Poona draft was to be the basis of the future CSP creed and therefore deserves to be examined in some detail. Entitled Draft Proposals for the Formation of a Congress Socialist Party, it dwelt at some length on the inadequacy of the economic programme embodied in the Karachi Congress resolution on Fundamental Rights. It went on to state the two main ideological premises underlying the formation of the CSP, one nationalist and the other socialist:

> 'Firstly, . . . the clarification of the economic aims of the Indian masses is necessary for the purpose of developing and intensifying their struggle against British imperialism. . . . It is felt that the Karachi resolution did not go far enough so as to attract the masses into the national struggle. Secondly, and this is the most important consideration, unless the Congress is clear in its mind as to what sort of economic and political organisation of society is likely to be in the best interests of the masses and unless the Congress lays down beforehand the principles on which it would build up such an organisation of society, there is every reason to expect . . . that after the masses have won their political independence from imperialism they might still remain the victims of economic exploitation.'

The draft therefore declared that 'Congress workers and the masses of the country must be educated in and organised according to the theory and practice of socialism' and that 'Socialism must become the creed of the Congress'. It went on to state: 'It has now become imperative for those who accept this point of view to bring themselves together by the formation of a Congress Socialist Party in order to hasten the conversion of the Congress into a socialist body. . . . While there was always a need for such a move, the present political situation offers a most favourable opportunity for it.' According to the proposed

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1 BHS, loc. cit.: Commissioner of Police to Home Secretary, Bombay, 17 Oct. 1933.

2 Ibid.

'Plan of Action', the conversion of the Congress to socialism was to be achieved partly by propaganda and partly by contesting Congress elections as a party with a view to capturing Congress bodies, though eschewing office in those Congress organisations where the party did not have a majority. The party would 'participate only in those struggles led by the Congress which are based on the demands and grievances of the masses and which it is expedient in the interests of the masses to take up'. It would also oppose any compromise between the Congress and the British on the constitutional issue[1].

Although the proposals emphasised the need to organise labour, peasants and various sections of the petty bourgeoisie in class organisations, they did not mention specific class demands. Concrete demands were confined to relatively uncontroversial issues such as civil liberties, war resistance and the Royist slogan of Constituent Assembly[2].

Nehru's temporary release in October 1933 and his campaign against constitutionalist trends in the Congress helped the Socialists to popularise their programme. A meeting of U.P. Congress workers in Allahabad, at which Nehru presided, passed a series of radical resolutions and was attended by prominent Congress leftists such as Sri Prakasa, Narendra Dev, H. N. Shastri and Sampurnanand (the nucleus of the future U.P. CSP)[3]. Nehru joined other U.P. socialists in delivering a series of lectures on socialism at Allahabad and Benares and was prominent at the Kanpur session of the AITUC in December 1933[4].

Despite his propagandist activities on behalf of socialism, Nehru was equivocal on the question of forming a socialist party with the avowed aim of ousting the Gandhian leadership of the Congress. Reporting to Sri Prakasa on a meeting between Nehru and the Bombay Socialists

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1 BHS, file 800(75)A: Draft Proposals for the Formation of a Congress Socialist Party, no date.

2 Ibid.

3 UPPA, 1933, p. 817, n.d.

4 Ibid., 1934, p. 1, n.d.

in October 1933, Tricumdas complained:

> 'I must confess that I was rather disappointed. He /Nehru/ is trying to reconcile two totally incompatible positions, i.e. the emotional, spiritual, nationalistic programme of Gandhiji with the rational and practical programme which he has been adovcating since his release. He feels that the leadership of Gandhiji, with all its implications and vagaries, is essential to the cause. In this not only myself but most of us on this side profoundly disagree. Sentimental grounds apart, we feel that a clear enunciation of our points of view and the break away from the official Congress policy is absolutely essential to any systematic planning on different lines for the future.'[1]

Nehru's reservations acted as a temporary brake on plans to launch a socialist party[2]. For the moment, the Socialists decided to continue as an informal group which would publish propaganda pamphlets entitled the Congress Socialist Series. The importance attached to Nehru's patronage was emphasised by their decision to start the series with three articles by him entitled Whither India[3].

The Socialists also made efforts to win the support of K. F. Nariman, the most prominent Congress leader in Bombay, who was known for his anti-Gandhian views. Though openly critical of Gandhi's individual civil disobedience campaign, Nariman proved unwilling to align himself with the Socialists, owing to his reluctance to alienate the business community, and favoured instead a return to parliamentary activity[4].. The Bombay Socialists were themselves divided on the question of what attitude they should adopt towards Gandhi's programme. While Tricumdas wanted an immediate and open denunciation of individual civil disobedience, the dominant view was that there should be no open attack on Gandhi and that Socialist opposition should be expressed tacitly by alternative action[5].

The release of J. P. Narayan and M. R. Masani about

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1 BHS, file 800(75)A: P. Tricumdas to Sri Prakasa, 12 Oct. 1933.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.: C. Mascarenhas to J. Nehru, 21 Nov. 1933.

4 C. K. Narainswami to J. P. Narayan, 21 Nov. 1933, JPP.

5 Ibid.

this time provided an added stimulus to Socialist organisational efforts, which had made little headway since July. While Narayan sought to revive the old Bihar Socialist Party, Masani tried to organise a Socialist Group in Bombay. These provincial groups were expected to prepare the way for an All India party to be launched in the near future. In December 1933, Masani visited Nehru and succeeded in securing his support in the form of an exchange of letters which were later published in the press. On behalf of the Bombay Socialists, Masani assured Nehru that they were merely following the lead given by him and stated:

> 'The Group it is proposed to form would carry out the purpose you have in view by placing before the Congressmen and the public of our province . . . a programme that would be Socialist in action and objective. The Group would do Socialist propaganda among rank-and-file Congressmen with a view to converting the Congress to an acceptance of Socialism. We would also carry on propaganda among the workers (and peasants) at the same time participating in their day-to-day economic struggles.'[1]

Nehru replied that he 'would welcome the formation of Socialist groups in the Congress to influence the ideology of the Congress and the country'. He warned, however: '. . . it is not enough to talk merely in terms of an academic ideology, especially at a moment when our country is in the midst of a struggle for freedom. This ideology must be tacked on to action, and this action . . . must be related to the Congress struggle. Otherwise the Socialist Group will become an ineffective, academic and sterile study centre'. In an oblique reference to Communist hostility, Nehru concluded:

> '. . . I have had sad experience of individuals and groups putting on the colours of Socialists and advancing a brave ideology and then doing nothing, or what is worse, just criticising and condemning others who are carrying on the struggle. If a group is meant to give shelter to such persons, it is obvious that little can be expected from it. It has become the fashion for some people to cover their own ineffectiveness by strong criticism of the Congress activities. Although ideologically backward, the Congress is undoubtedly today the

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1 M. R. Masani to J. Nehru, 19 Dec. 1933, MP.

> most advanced effective revolutionary organisation in action in India. It must be strengthened, and at the same time, directed towards newer channels.'[1]

Although Nehru's qualified support generated considerable optimism in the Socialist camp, it soon became clear that he had no intention of joining the Socialists in a frontal attack on the Gandhian leadership. His return to prison in 1934 left the Socialists again dependent on their own resources. In March 1934, Mascarenhas wrote to Narayan:

> 'Unfortunately Panditji felt that the present policy of the Congress could be utilised by the radical elements inside the Congress to carry on their own activity and develop in the country. . . . I feel that if Jawaharlal Nehru had led the revolt against the Gandhian leadership it would have created the conditions inside the Congress for an alternate leadership. . . . Now that he has been arrested . . . the only alternative left is to spread the ideology in the rank and file of the Congressmen and prepare them for the advent of a new leadership in the future.'[2]

Despite these limitations, Nehru's support gave the Socialists a legitimacy and respectability which proved valuable. Nehru's letter of endorsement greatly strengthened Masani's efforts to organise the Bombay Congress Socialist Group. The Group was formally launched on 25 February with a statement signed by 17 Congressmen from Bombay Presidency including Masani, the General Secretary of the Group, P. Tricumdas, S. Batliwala (a Communist sympathiser and future member of the All India CSP Executive), M. Shetty (a Royist), Kamlashankar Pandya (later Secretary of the Gujerat CSP), Achyut Patwardhan, N. G. Gore and S. Limaye[3].

The Bombay Group's statement pointed to the inadequacy of the Gandhian constructive programme and called for 'the development of Congress ideology and policy along lines which are implicit in the Independence Resolution of the Lahore Congress and the preamble to the Fundamental Rights

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1 Free Press Journal, Bombay, 1 March 1934.

2 C. Mascarenhas to J. P. Narayan, 16 Jan. 1934; and C. Mascarenhas to J. P. Narayan, 22 March 1934, quoted in Rusch, op. cit., p. 149.

3 Bombay Chronicle, 28 Feb. 1934.

Resolution of the Karachi Congress'. The Royist slogan of a Constituent Assembly elected on a functional basis figured prominently in the Group's programme. The other demands listed in the programme closely resembled the united front programmes put forward by the WPP in 1928 and the Royists in 1930, including civil liberties, nationalisation of key industries, abolition of landlordism, cancellation of peasant and labour debts, substantial reduction of land rent and revenue, labour welfare legislation and other 'National Democratic' reforms. The Group announced its intention of organising and participating in labour and peasant unions and in organisations of youth, women and the petty bourgeoisie. Although it offered to co-operate with other socialist organisations, its membership was to be confined to Congressmen[1].

Correspondence between Mascarenhas and J. P. Narayan indicates that even at this early stage there existed an important cleavage between Marxist and non-Marxist elements in the Bombay Group. Mascarenhas informed Narayan in March 1934: 'Out of the 15 persons who form the Bombay Group, there are nearly half a dozen who owe allegiance to our ideology and who definitely believe in the dictatorship of the proletariat and the working class leadership for the anti-imperialist movement. . . . If this nucleus crystallises in the process of active work, it will undoubtedly be a section of the future Communist Party of India.'[2] The conflict between these Marxist elements and the moderate leadership centred on two questions: the nature of the Group's relations with the Communists and Royists and the nature of its own organisation. While Mascarenhas advocated closer co-operation with other Marxist groups and the opening of membership to them, Masani stipulated that this must be preceded by a united front agreement. While Mascarenhas favoured a secret and underground organisational structure for the Group, Masani insisted on an open and

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1 Bombay Chronicle, 28 Feb. 1934.

2 C. Mascarenhas to J. P. Narayan, 22 March 1934, quoted in Rusch, op. cit., p. 151.

legal organisation. On both questions the moderates had their way[1].

Once established, the Bombay Group expanded rapidly. On 17 March a Gujerat Congress Socialist Group was established at a meeting of young Congress workers at Baroda and passed resolutions endorsing the programme of the Bombay Group and affiliating itself to the latter[2]. The Sholapur textile strike of March 1934 followed by the Bombay textile strike in April gave the Socialists an opportunity to enter the trade union field. On 11 March, Masani issued a statement supporting the Sholapur strike and attacking the Government for raising the 'Communist bogey'[3]. Although the Socialists as yet had no labour following and the Bombay strike was led by Communists and Royists, the Bombay Group, in co-operation with the Royists, organised a public meeting in support of the strikers[4] and K. K. Menon, one of the Group's founding members, was arrested for strike activities[5].

Meanwhile, efforts continued to organise similar Socialist Groups in other provinces. The Bihar Socialist Party had been revived by Narayan, with Abdul Bari, the Jamshedpur labour leader, as its president and himself as secretary. The absence of the word 'Congress' in its title reflected the stronger separatist tendency in this province. In October 1933, there had been press reports that U.P. Congress leftists were planning to form their own party; and in March 1934 it was reported that left-wing Congressmen in the C.P., led by D. P. Mishra, were planning a conference at Jabalpur to form a local CSP[6]. The trend towards separate Socialist organisation was hastened by the decision

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1 C Mascarenhas to J. P. Narayan, 22 March 1934, quoted in Rusch, op. cit., p. 151.

2 Bombay Chronicle, 20 March 1934.

3 Ibid., 11 March 1934.

4 Ibid., 30 April 1934.

5 Ibid., 29 April 1934.

6 Free Press Journal, 1 March 1934.

of the Delhi Conference of Congressmen in March 1934 to revive the former Swaraj Party and contest elections to the legislatures.

The Socialists were initially not opposed to council entry. The Draft Proposals of October 1933 had provided for the use of legislatures and local bodies to further the Socialist programme[1]. In the immediate aftermath of the suspension of civil disobedience, council entry, as a means of continuing the political campaign had even appeared preferable to Gandhi's pre-occupation with non-political constructive work. Although the Swarajist revival was led by well-known conservatives like M. A. Ansari and B. C. Roy, the Swarajist and Socialist camps were by no means mutually exclusive; and council entry as an anti-Government tactic was favoured by many radical Congressmen opposed to Gandhian obscurantism. The Swarajist Conference at Ranchi in May 1934 was therefore attended by a Socialist contingent led by Masani. On behalf of the Socialists, Masani assured the conference:

> '. . . the Congress Socialist Group has no hard and fast policy of boycott of the Councils. On the contrary, the Group believes in using every weapon in the anti-imperialist armoury. We therefore look upon the question of contesting any particular elections as one to be considered purely on its merits as an incident in the struggle against Imperialism as and when the occasion arises.'[2]

Nevertheless, after the refusal of the Swarajists to radicalise their programme and Gandhi's endorsement of council entry, opposition to the Swarajist line became the main plank in the Socialist platform. Parliamentary activity under a restricted franchise was bound to favour the right-wing and reinforce its control of the Congress machinery with legislative influence and patronage. In view of this, the emerging Gandhian-Swarajist alliance was seen by the Socialists as a consolidation of the Congress right and a formidable threat to the left opposition in the Congress. Convinced more than ever of the necessity for an All India platform of their own, the Socialists now

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1 BHS, file 800(75)A: Draft Proposals for the Formation of a Congress Socialist Party.

2 M. R. Masani, 'Speech to the Swarajist Conference, Ranchi, May, 1934', MP.

advanced the alternative slogan of boycotting the legislatures unless parliamentary activity was conducted by the Congress organisation itself on the basis of a socialist programme. The Socialists thus sought to mobilise under their banner large numbers of uncommitted Congressmen who were alarmed by the Swarajist revival.

In reply to the Swarajist call for an AICC session to ratify council entry and Gandhi's statement recommending the formal termination of civil disobedience, the Bombay Congress Socialists issued a statement on 12 April demanding a special plenary session of the Congress 'to enable the rank and file of the Congress who have made the biggest sacrifices to determine the future policy and programme of the Congress'[1]. The statement argued that 'an AICC which was elected in 1931 and which has, therefore, by now become thoroughly unrepresentative, can have no authority to take any final decision that would bind the Congress to the Swarajist or any other programme'. A few days later, the Bihar Socialist Party followed suit with a similar call for a special Congress session 'because it considers the constructive programme as recommended by Mahatma Gandhi and as adumbrated by some Congressmen who are anxious to revive the Swaraj Party to be wholly inadequate, and also because . . . those who have taken part in the struggle are entitled to express their views on the political situation through their duly elected representatives'[2].

The lines of battle were drawn. The Socialists appear to have calculated that the idea of fresh organisational elections would be popular with the Congress rank and file and that their following among the new Congress cadres would secure them substantial representation at a plenary session. By championing the cause of inner-party democracy in the Congress, the Socialists sought to mobilise wide support for their efforts to check the right-wing and form a strong All India party. The demand for a full Congress

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1 Bombay Chronicle, 13 April 1934.

2 Ibid., 19 April 1934.

session now became the main point in the Socialist campaign.

At a conference of U.P. Congress workers at Lucknow on 15 April, the left was strongly represented under the leadership of Narendra Dev, Sampurnanand, Sri Prakasa and C. B. Gupta and was able to secure the support of non-Socialist leaders like Purshottamdas Tandon. In a compromise resolution, the conference reiterated its confidence in Gandhi's leadership and endorsed his suspension of individual civil disobedience, but called for a full Congress session and for the adoption of a socialistic economic programme. In another resolution which marked a decisive victory for the left, the conference termed the revival of the Swaraj Party inopportune and opposed council entry[1]. In May 1934, the first step in the formation of the U.P. CSP was taken with the establishment of a Benares Congress Socialist Group, with Sampurnanand as its president, Kamlapati Tripathi as secretary and Narendra Dev and Sri Prakasa among its members[2].

In Bombay too, the Socialist stand won considerable support. On 21 April, at a conference of Bombay Congressmen, the official resolution accommodated the Socialist demand for a Congress session, stating that while the AICC should meet as soon as possible, no final decision should be taken without a full Congress session[3]. At another conference of Bombay Congressmen in May, convened by Sarojini Naidu and K. F. Nariman, Masani moved the following amendment to a right-wing resolution calling for the lifting of the boycott of legislatures:

> 'Provided that such boycott prescribed by the Lahore Congress can be rescinded only by an open session of the Congress . . . and provided that such rescission should be in furtherance of a programme of National Independence as indicated by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru having as its objective the establishment of a Socialist State in which power would be transferred to the masses through the organisation of peasants and workers and participation in their struggles with Imperialism

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1 UPPA, 18 April 1934.

2 UPPA, 1934, pp. 241-300, n.d.

3 Bombay Chronicle, 22 April 1934.

and the Indian vested interests allied with it.'[1]

The amendment was carried by 36 votes to 17, indicating considerable support for the Socialist stand. Another amendment, moved by S. A. Brelvi and K. F. Nariman and supported by the Socialists, was carried by an overwhelming majority. It stipulated that council entry must be conducted by the Congress itself and not by an autonomous Swaraj Party[2]. The conference indicated that the Socialist stand had been successful in isolating the Swarajists and winning broad support from militant nationalists in the Congress, including some senior leaders.

The Socialists had also succeeded in carrying the battle into the Swarajist camp itself. The Socialist presence at the Ranchi Conference was designed to expose the radical pretentions of the Swarajist leadership. Masani's amendment to the official policy resolution called on the Swaraj Party to undertake 'the organisation of peasants and workers for the purpose of participating in the struggle against Imperialism and the Indian vested interests who are allied with it.'[3] The amendment was defeated by 40 votes to 26, indicating an unexpected degree of support for the Socialists even within the Swarajist fold[4]. Nevertheless, on his return from Ranchi, Masani announced that, in view of the refusal of the Swaraj Party to adopt a genuinely anti-imperialist programme, 'Socialists in the Congress have only one course open and that is to rally round the All India Socialist Conference at Patna on 17 May and to try to get the AICC and, failing that, the open session of the Congress, to adopt the Socialist programme which would also include electoral activity.'[5]

The All India Socialist Conference which met at Patna, on the eve of the AICC session, was convened for two main

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1 Bombay Chronicle, 13 May 1934.

2 Ibid.

3 Bombay Chronicle, 4 May 1934.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., 6 May 1934.

purposes. Its immediate aim was to unite and prepare the Congress left for the impending confrontation with the Swarajists in the AICC. Its larger purpose was to promote to the All India level the process of Congress Socialist organisation which had been going on in some provinces and especially in Bombay. The conference was attended by 100 delegates from 5 provinces, the largest contingent being from the U.P.[1] It brought together a heterogeneous collection of Congress dissidents. In addition to the recognised Congress Socialist nuclei which had formed in Bombay, the U.P. and Bihar, the conference attracted Royists, non-party labour and kisan leaders and a number of Congressmen who, though not socialists, came in response to the Swarajist threat. The proceedings of the Socialist Conference revealed serious differences of opinion and emphasis among these several groups.

The Royists were opposed to the idea of forming a Socialist Party within the Congress, arguing instead that left-wing Congressmen should function as a loose bloc in the Congress, co-ordinated by a revolutionary socialist group organised as a secret, underground party outside the Congress. When the official resolution proposing the formation of an All India Congress Socialist Party was moved, Mrs Rajani Mukherji moved a Royist amendment to the effect that the party be formed outside the Congress. Her amendment, though defeated, received 22 votes as against 58, indicating substantial support among the delegates for the Royist line[2].

The conference also revealed differences on the pressing question of council entry. While most of the delegates were opposed to the Swaraj Party, not all were in favour of boycotting legislatures[3]. The conference mandated Socialist members of the AICC to oppose the lifting of the Congress boycott unless council entry was approved by an open session of the Congress, conducted by the Congress itself instead of the Swaraj Party, and based on a socialist

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1 Interview with M. R. Masani, Bombay, March 1973.

2 P. L. Lakhanpal, History of the Congress Socialist Party (Lahore, 1946), p. 23.

3 Ibid., p. 12.

programme. The fact that many of the delegates were not reconciled to this line was to be indicated by their subsequent defection on this question. These defections included three members (Abdul Bari, Abdul Alim and N. G. Ranga) of the Organising Committee appointed at the Patna Conference and Sri Prakasa, one of the leading U.P. Socialists.

Despite the above differences, the conference proceeded to elect a committee to draft a constitution and programme for the proposed All India party, which was to be launched at another conference before the next Congress session. The members of the Drafting Committee were: Narendra Dev (President), J. P. Narayan (Secretary), M. R. Masani, Purshottam Tricumdas, Abdul Bari, Sampurnanand, Dr. C. C. Banerji, F. H. Ansari, R. M. Lohia, Dr. Abdul Alim and N. G. Ranga[1]. In his presidential address to the conference, Narendra Dev conceded that enough ground had not yet been covered to justify the immediate formation of an All India party, as there were so far only two organised provincial groups - those of Bombay and Bihar - and two recently formed local groups in Benares and Delhi[2]. The conference therefore appointed regional secretaries to organise provincial and local parties prior to the formal inauguration of the All India CSP.

When the AICC met shortly after the Socialist Conference, the Gandhian-Swarajist alliance secured the passage of resolutions terminating civil disobedience and authorising council entry. A Socialist amendment was defeated by 86 votes to 35. On two points, however, the Socialist stand was successful. The necessity for ratification of council entry by a plenary session was conceded and it was decided that the parliamentary programme should be undertaken by a Parliamentary Board responsible to the Congress and not by the Swaraj Party. The Socialists could also take courage from the fact that they had been able to rally one-third of the AICC behind their amendment. Their hopes now focussed

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1 AICC, file G-23, 1934.

2 'Presidential Address to the First All India Socialist Conference, Patna, May 1934', Navendra Dev, Socialism and the National Revolution (Bombay, 1946), p. 25.

on the Congress session scheduled for October; and they were confident that their platform would win greater, and possibly even majority, support in a newly-elected session which reflected the radicalisation of the previous three years.

Till May 1934, the Socialists had functioned as the nuclei of loose and informal groupings in the Congress, first at the provincial and subsequently at the national level, mobilising support on specific issues from a substantial number of free-wheeling militant nationalists. In the following months, however, the lines of confrontation, both ideological and organisational, between the Socialists and the Congress leadership were to be more sharply drawn. This process followed naturally from the Patna decision to organise an All India party, and it was accelerated by the increased group rivalry that arose from the Congress organisational elections.

On 18 June, the Congress Working Committee took the offensive against the Socialists with a resolution condemning 'loose talk' about class war and confiscation of private property and declaring it contrary to the Congress creed of non-violence[1]. The resolution was generally interpreted as an attempt to discredit the Socialists within the Congress and to dissociate the Congress from propaganda which might damage its prospects in the forthcoming elections to the Central Legislative Assembly. The resolution provoked an angry response from the Socialists, who saw it as a bid to stigmatise them as rebels and drive them out of the Congress. In a strongly-worded rejoinder to the resolution, Narayan asserted: 'It shows how reactionary the present leadership of the Congress has become. For us Socialists it can only mean one thing - the redoubling of our efforts to overthrow the leadership. . . . Let us accept this challenge and put forth our utmost energy to have this reactionary resolution rescinded and our programme adopted by the Bombay Congress.'[2] Similar

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1 AICC, file G-29, 1934.

2 Bombay Chronicle, 23 June 1934.

defiance was expressed in a joint statement issued from Benares by Narendra Dev, Sri Prakasa and Sampurnanand[1], in a statement from Bombay issued by Masani[2] and at various public meetings organised by the Socialists[3].

Strenuous efforts followed to pressurise the Working Committee into withdrawing the offending resolution. Narayan wrote to Gandhi asking him to persuade the Working Committee to amend its resolution, and a Socialist deputation led by Narendra Dev and Sri Prakasa discussed the matter with Gandhi in Benares in July[4]. As a result of these efforts, the Working Committee passed a further resolution on 30 July, clarifying that its previous resolution had not been intended as a reflection on the CSP, but on 'individuals engaged in loose talk'[5].

Nevertheless, relations between the Socialists and the Congress leadership continued to deteriorate. In September, Gandhi issued a statement in the course of which he warned: 'If they /the Socialists/ gain ascendancy in the Congress, as they well may, I cannot remain in the Congress. For me to be in active opposition should be unthinkable. . . . I have never accepted that position.'[6] He went on to outline a series of constitutional amendments which he considered essential to 'purify' the Congress organisation. These included a change in the Congress creed from 'peaceful and legitimate' to 'truthful and non-violent' means and the introduction of a spinning and khaddar-wearing franchise for Congress membership and elections. While Gandhi's statement was interpreted as an ultimatum to the Congress that he would only remain in it on his own terms, his constitutional proposals were seen by the Socialists as a plan to tighten Gandhian control of the Congress organisation and purge it of their influence[7].

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1 Leader, Allahabad, 23 June 1934.
2 Bombay Chronicle, 22 June 1934.
3 Free Press Journal, 22 June 1934.
4 Bombay Chronicle, 28 July 1934.
5 Times of India, 31 July 1934.
6 Times of India, 18 Sept. 1934.
7 Bombay Chronicle, 19 Sept. 1934.

The offensive launched by Gandhi and the Working Committee lent greater urgency to the efforts of the Organising Committee appointed at the Patna Socialist Conference. At a meeting of Maharashtra Socialists in Poona in July, Tricumdas referred to the Working Committee's attack and stressed the need to form a Maharashtra CSP to contest the forthcoming elections to the Maharashtra PCC[1]. A Maharashtra CSP was accordingly formed. An Ahmedabad Congress Socialist Group had been formed in June at a meeting of young Congressmen[2], and in July it expanded into a Gujerat CSP, announcing that it hoped to capture 20 per cent of the Congress seats from Gujerat[3].

In June 1934, the Bombay Congress Socialist Group had converted itself formally into a political party. Its preparations for the Congress organisational elections seem to have impressed right-wing leaders. S. K. Patil confided to K. M. Munshi: 'We have to face a greater opposition this time than ever before. Unless we square up our Labour and Socialist friends, the odds are very much against a Gandhian Congress. I am hoping that there won't be much difficulty in squaring these people since there is a lot in common between them and us.'[4] The main threat anticipated by Patil was in the labour wards of Bombay City, where the Socialists were reported to be enrolling unemployed workers to the Congress and paying their membership dues[5].

The Bombay CSP (hereafter BCSP) was also active in enrolling students as Congress members. A public meeting for this purpose adopted a resolution calling 'upon the students to vote for the candidates put up by the Congress Socialist Party in the forthcoming election to the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee.'[6] In the organisational

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1 BHS, file 800(75)A: Intelligence Note, 4 July 1934.

2 Bombay Chronicle, 15 June 1934.

3 BHS, file 800(75)A: Intelligence Report, 14 July 1934.

4 S. K. Patil to K. M. Munshi, 15 June 1934, K. M. Munshi Papers.

5 Ibid.

6 Bombay Chronicle, 25 July 1934.

elections that followed, the Socialists won 13 seats in the Bombay PCC[1], while a Royist-CSP alliance captured the executive of the Byculla or E Ward DCC[2]. Holding the balance between the Nariman faction and the Munshi-Patil group, the Bombay CSP occupied an important position in Bombay Congress politics.

In the U.P., the Benares Congress Socialist Group had organised active student branches in the Benares Hindu University and the Kashi Vidyapith[3]. New local units were launched in Allahabad (president: Narmada Prasad Singh, and secretary: Feroz Gandhi) at the end of May and in Kanpur in June 1934[4]. On 13 June a meeting of leading U.P. Socialists, attended by Narendra Dev, Sri Prakasa and Sibnath Banerji (Secretary of the AITUC and a former Meerut prisoner), appointed the following district organisers to prepare the ground for a U.P. CSP: Damodar Swarup Seth, Sampurnanand, C. B. Gupta, Narmada Prasad Singh, K. D. Malaviya, B. D. Tripathi and V. N. Tewari[5]. At a meeting of district delegates at Kanpur in September, the U.P. CSP was formally launched with Narendra Dev as president, C. B. Gupta as secretary, Sri Prakasa as treasurer and the following executive: K. D. Malaviya, Govind Sahai, Bishwanath Mukherji, Dr. Atal, R. S. Pandit, H. N. Shastri, Sampurnanand, Balkrishna Sharma, H. S. Vidyarthi, C. B. Kantak, S. L. Saxena, T. P. Saxena, Narmada Prasad Singh, S. C. Shastri, Badan Singh, Ganga Sahai Chaube, Damodar Swarup Seth, B. D. Tripathi and N. K. D. Vashishta[6].

The above list indicates that the U.P. Socialist nucleus had been able to gather wide support from prominent provincial Congressmen, including close followers of Nehru. When the U.P. PCC executive met in June 1934, the CSP group had a

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1 BHS, file 800(75)A-1: BCSP, 'Annual Report of the Bombay Congress Socialist Party', 11 Oct. 1934.

2 Bombay Chronicle, 1 Oct. 1934.

3 UPPA, 15 Sept. 1934.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., 15 June 1934.

6 Ibid., 15 Sept. 1934.

majority which was reflected in the composition of the newly-elected National Service Board and the list of district organisers appointed to reactivate the Congress organisation. Five of the ten Congress organisers so chosen were the same individuals chosen by the U.P. CSP to organise its own district units; and according to Government intelligence, the new Congress organisers were really working under cover to organise the CSP[1]. The U.P. Socialists also demonstrated their strength by capturing almost every position in elections to the Lucknow TCC in July and by capturing the Allahabad and Kanpur TCCs soon after[2].

This rapid growth of the U.P. CSP was based on the enrolment of a number of temporarily disgruntled Congressmen who were far from being convinced socialists. Government intelligence commented on the expansion of the Kanpur CSP: 'Those in charge appear to be aiming at quantity rather than quality'[3]. The same source remarked upon the organisation of a CSP unit in Ballia by Sri Prakasa's followers: 'None of these understand anything about Socialism and the nucleus exists in name only'[4]. Paradoxically, the numerical influence of the U.P. Socialists in the provincial Congress organisation would soon present an obstacle to the efforts of the CSP's All India leadership to organise the party as a disciplined opposition whose members were required to boycott Congress parliamentary activities and abstain from holding Congress offices in an individual capacity. As it became clear that the CSP could not expect to capture the Congress in the near future, several prominent U.P. members, including Sri Prakasa, R. S. Pandit and K. D. Malaviya were to abandon it before the All India party was formally launched.

Meanwhile, CSP units continued to spring up in various other provinces. A Delhi CSP was formed in June[5]. In September, a Bengal Congress Socialist Conference attracted

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1 UPPA, 1934, p. 368, n.d.

2 Ibid., 8 Sept. 1934.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Leader, 23 June 1934.

300 district delegates and appointed a provincial Organising Committee with Ajoy Mukherji as secretary and several Royists among its members[1]. The same month saw the formation of a Berar CSP[2].

On 1 October, 22 delegates representing 9 provincial parties met at Benares to prepare for the inauguration of the All India CSP. Among those present were Narayan, Narendra Dev, Masani, Mascarenhas, Sampurnanand, R. M. Lohia, C. B. Gupta, Mohanlal Gautam, Sri Prakasa, Shankar Lal (Delhi), Naba Chaudhuri (Orissa), S. M. Joshi, Achyut Patwardhan, Ajoy Mukherji, B. P. Sinha (Bihar) and Ganga Sharan Sinha(Bihar)[3].

The main function of the Benares Conference was to finalise the draft programme and constitution to be submitted to the All India Congress Socialist Conference in Bombay later that month. The draft prepared and circulated by the organising committee was accepted with a few modifications, such as the incorporation of the Royist slogan of Constituent Assembly[4]. The draft had been based on the programme adopted by the Bombay CSP and its acceptance was regarded by the Bombay leaders as a victory for their line, which was also dominant on other questions[5].

Two major policy decisions were taken at the Benares meeting. Firstly, the meeting called upon all Socialists to resign their offices in Congress bodies, except where the party was in a majority or where the body concerned had accepted the party's immediate programme. Secondly, the meeting called on Socialists to decline nomination as candidates for election to the central legislature, to withdraw if already nominated and to boycott the central and provincial Congress Parliamentary Boards and other election committees. Other resolutions appointed a committee to prepare amendments to the Congress constitution 'to make

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1 Congress Socialist, 29 Sept. 1934.

2 Ibid., 6 Oct. 1934.

3 Ibid.

4 'Draft Constitution of All India Socialist Party', n.d., JPP.

5 BCSP, loc. cit.

it more democratic' and condemned the formation by Hindu communalists of a Congress Nationalist Party[1].

In a press interview on 8 October, Mascarenhas explained the Benares decisions as 'a first step towards the purification of the party with a view to consolidate it. Persons who have joined the party to take advantage of it as a rising force in this country will drop out as a result of the attitude of the party towards holding offices in the Congress and participating in the Parliamentary activity of the Congress'[2].

The Benares decisions certainly cost the CSP substantial numerical support. Resistance to the party line was particularly pronounced in the U.P., owing to the provincial CSP's dominant position in the U.P. Congress and its close links with the Nehru faction. Government intelligence estimated that the implementation of the Benares decisions in the U.P. would require the withdrawal of 5 candidates for the Central Legislative Assembly and the resignation of one member of the Congress Nationalist Party, 2 members of the Central Congress Parliamentary Board, 7 members of the U.P. Congress Parliamentary Sub-Committee and various district Congress office-bearers. The position regarding the PCC was uncertain, as the Socialists had a majority in the executive but not in the main body. According to the same source, the U.P. Socialists were showing no signs of complying with these rules and were treating them as mere recommendations[3].

It was clear, therefore, that there were serious divisions within the Socialist camp even before the All India party conference assembled in Bombay on 21 October to launch the All India CSP prior to the Congress session. The preceding months had revealed important divergences in the course of the organisation of provincial parties and their federation in a centralised, All India organisation. These differences went beyond mere growing pains or tactical disagreements and included major differences among the party's founders about the nature of their socialism, about

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1 Congress Socialist, 6 Oct. 1934.

2 Bombay Chronicle, 9 Oct. 1934.

3 UPPA, 6 Oct. 1934.

the correct attitude to the nationalist leadership, on the one hand, and revolutionary Marxist parties, on the other, and about the character of the party organisation and its role within the parent body.

Chapter 3

NATURE OF THE CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY (1934)

The formation of the CSP represented the coalescence of a heterogeneous collection of nationalist groups, including disgruntled Gandhians, former terrorists, Royists, Fabians and Marxists. These diverse elements had been drawn together by the unusual circumstances of the period 1930-34. Their highest common denominator was a militant nationalist antipathy to the cautious Gandhian leadership of the Congress coupled with a desire to espouse the immediate economic grievances of the peasantry and industrial labour. The origins of the CSP were naturally reflected in its composition and structure and in the controversies that surrounded its programme and strategy. It is proposed in this chapter firstly to analyse the composition, ideology and organisation of the party at the time of its inauguration; and secondly to examine the extent to which the CSP, as the organised expression of radical nationalism, differentiated itself from the Congress leadership and the nationalist movement as a whole.

Composition

In his presidential address to the Patna Socialist Conference of May 1934, Narendra Dev had described 'the democratic intelligentsia' as 'the social foundation' of Congress Socialism. Conceding that Congress Socialism was confined to middle class intellectuals and did not as yet include labour and kisan representatives, he had warned against the dangers of intellectual élitism and neglect of mass organisation[1].

These fears were amply justified by the composition of the CSP leadership, which consisted almost exclusively of middle class intellectuals drawn from the country's key urban and academic centres. The dominant nucleus of the

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1 Narendra Dev, Socialism and The National Revolution (Bombay, 1946), pp. 23-4.

central leadership was an extension of the original Nasik group, consisting of Jayaprakash Narayan and the Bombay Socialist leaders. The latter were all younger representatives of the nationalist intelligentsia of Bombay City, including M. R. Masani, Asoka Mehta, Yusuf Meherally, Purshottam Tricumdas, Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya and Achyut Patwardhan. They saw themselves as 'a gay, fraternal group . . . . A happy band of political comrades and personal friends'[1]. The three other prominent founder-leaders, Narendra Dev, Sampurnanand and Sri Prakasa, who belonged to the U.P., conformed to the same social pattern as representatives of the Benares group of nationalist intellectuals.

Although the All India CSP's constitution envisaged a centralised but democratic federation of provincial parties, the Bombay leaders exercised a dominance out of all proportion to their numerical following. In its more general aspects, the hegemony of the Bombay group was a reflection of the leading, metropolitan role of Bombay City in the country as a whole. The economic and cultural factors which had given the city this position are beyond the scope of this study; and it should be sufficient to note here that Bombay was also the national headquarters of the Communists and the Royists and a key centre of the Congress.

It was no accident that the Bombay Congress Socialist Group was the first provincial unit of the CSP to start functioning, that the programme and constitution of the All India party were based on those of the BCSP and that the views of the Bombay leaders were dominant in deciding the party's strategy[2]. The advantages of urban organisation were an important asset to the Bombay leaders, enabling them to co-ordinate their political activities in a manner that was not possible in rural provinces like the U.P. and Bihar. It was in this context that the inaugural conference of the All India CSP was hosted by the Bombay CSP

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1 Masani, 'J.P. - Through Thirty Years', 25 Oct. 1962, MP.

2 BHS, file 800(75)A-I; BCSP, 'Annual Report', 11 Oct. 1934.

and that publication of the official party organ, the Congress Socialist, was shifted from Calcutta to Bombay. Masani, secretary of the Bombay CSP, was also the most senior joint secretary of the All India CSP and handled most of its business, thereby making Bombay the de facto headquarters of the CSP's national executive. Masani and Asoka Mehta, editor of the Congress Socialist, had similar political views, and together they dominated the editorial policy of the party organ.

The strength of the Bombay Socialists was reflected in the composition of the first All India Congress Socialist Conference at Bombay in October 1934 and in the National Executive it elected. The Conference brought together delegates from 13 provincial CSP units. Though the U.P. delegation was the single largest, numbering 28, Bombay City, Maharashtra and Gujerat, i.e. Bombay Presidency, accounted for 45 of the total of 137 delegates[1]. The conference elected the following central executive: General Secretary, J. P. Narayan; Joint Secretaries, M. R. Masani (Bombay City), Mohanlal Gautam (U.P.), N. G. Gore (Maharashtra), E. M. S. Nambudripad (Kerala); Members: Narendra Dev (U.P.), Sampurnanand (U.P.), Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya (Karnatak), P. Tricumdas (Bombay City), P. Y. Deshpande (C.P., Berar), R. M. Lohia (Bengal), S. M. Joshi (Maharashtra), A. Patwardhan (Maharashtra), A. P. Mitra (Bengal), C. Mascarenhas (Bombay City), N. K. Chaudhuri (Orissa); Substitute Members: Y. Meherally (Bombay City), S. Batliwala (Bombay City), Rohit Mehta (Gujerat), F. H. Ansari (Delhi), R. Benipuri (Bihar).[2]

Two of the four joint secretaries and 7 of the 16 full members of the executive, a near majority, were members of the original Bombay Congress Socialist Group. Though some of them now represented rural provinces like Maharashtra and Karnatak, in practice they continued to be bound to Bombay City by ties of education, personal friendship and, in certain instances, actual residence.

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1 All India CSP, Constitution, Programme and Resolutions of the First Conference of the Party and Report of the Organising Secretary (Bombay, 1934), MP.

2 Congress Socialist, 2 Dec. 1934.

The provincial and local cadres of the CSP reflected an amalgam of the various radical and oppositional tendencies which had appeared in the Congress ranks during the civil disobedience movements. The new Congress cadres on which the CSP drew were broadly distinguished from the old by their social background and political experience. Unlike its central leaders who, like the rest of the nationalist leadership, came from prosperous middle class families, the party's rank and file belonged generally to the educated lower middle class.

A sample of 44 provincial and district organisers of the CSP in the U.P. reveals the following characteristics. Only 6 of the 44 came from well-to-do landed or commercial families. The rest included the sons of a local school-teacher, a railway station-master, a government clerk, a railway engineer, a grocer and a small farmer. While the CSP's national-level leaders from the U.P. were mostly Kayasths, 20 of these 44 local cadres were Brahmans, 8 were Vaish, 4 Khatris, 2 Thakurs,2 Tagas, 2 Kayasths, 1 Jat and 1 Sunar. There was only 1 Muslim and 1 woman among the 44. Three were described by the police as being of 'low status' and 'poor education'. All the rest had received a secondary education, while 20 had been to university, 17 were graduates, 5 had taken Masters degrees and 5 had additional law degrees. Six were graduates of nationalist educational institutions like the Kashi Vidyapith, Benares, and the Tilak School of Politics, Lahore. Seven were or had been employed as school teachers, 6 as insurance agents, 5 as lawyers, 3 as paid workers of the Servants of India Society, 3 as municipal, revenue or bank clerks, 2 as Hindi journalists, 1 as a magistrate in a princely state, 1 as a small-town physician and 1 as a compounder. Only 4 had lucrative occupations; a soda-water factory owner, the manager of a chemist's firm, the manager of a sugar-mill and a wealthy zamindar-cum-moneylender. Their ages ranged from 61 to 21, with an average of 35.[1]

The political background of these 44 members was

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1 See pp. 35-9 for names.

indicative both of the predominantly Congress background of CSP cadres and of the radicalisation of Congress ranks in recent years. Thirty-five of them had a previous record of Congress work, 20 had joined the nationalist movement during or on the eve of the civil disobedience movements of 1930-33, and 27 were habitual wearers of Khadi. Six had entered nationalist politics via the Congress Volunteer Corps, 5 through the Youth Leagues, 5 through the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, 2 via the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army and 1 from the Punjab Ghadr and Kirti-Kisan parties. Twenty-two had direct or indirect terrorist contacts, 8 had former Communist associations, 12 had been active in the Kisan movement and 9 had some experience of labour organisation[1].

Despite their exposure to radical influences, few of the CSP's rank and file had any serious understanding of socialist ideology, whether of the Marxist or Fabian variety. Narendra Dev lamented in September 1934:

> 'If we critically examine the ideology of the rank and file of the party, we shall find that many who have joined us and who swear by Socialism today have not yet broken with the old forms of thought and have not yet even thoroughly grasped the constitution and programme of the party in all its details. Some think that the new superstructure of Socialism can be built on the old foundations and that a synthesis is possible between the old ideology and the new. Some again have joined us simply because Socialism is just now a fashionable commodity in the political market.'[2]

The CSP leadership had aimed from the outset at a cadre-based organisation rather than at mass membership, and provincial units had been instructed to recruit only those who were already politically active and committed. Nevertheless, the Bombay Socialist conference found J. P. Narayan, the party's Organising Secretary, complaining:

> '. . . there is a good deal of looseness of organisation and discipline in most of the parties that exist. Many of them . . . have to be reconstituted with a better appreciation of the fundamentals of our movement and its tasks. I have found that in

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1 U.P. Police, op. cit.

2 Narendra Dev, 'The Task Before Us', Congress Socialist, 29 Sept. 1934.

> enrolling members some of our parties have been anxious merely to increase their numbers . . .'[1]

Indiscriminate enrolment, however, was inevitable so long as the party remained an all-embracing opposition in the Congress. Masani commented in March 1935: 'At its first appearance on the scene, it /the CSP/ became at once His Majesty Gandhi's Opposition! It became the leader and rallying centre for all those who were dissatisfied with the decisions of the /Congress/ Working Committee. All sorts of local grievances and unheeded complaints and causes were brought to the party leaders for advocacy and redress.'[2]

Although the CSP, according to Masani, 'aspired to be something more than a mere disgruntled left-wing in the Congress like the youth leaguers and the Independence League', its composition was not significantly different from that of previous left-wing groupings in the Congress. For a party which claimed to represent revolutionary socialism, its membership provides some curious examples. At the national level, one finds Swami Sampurnanand, whose socialism did not exclude the practice of Tantric Yoga and an active concern for the cause of cow protection, and Sri Prakasa, a wealthy landlord who soon abandoned the CSP for parliamentary politics[3]. The party's provincial and local cadres provide some even more incongruous instances. The CSP's chief organiser in Meerut (U.P.) was the owner of a soda-water factory who had been dismissed from a Congress Khaddar shop in 1920 for falsifying accounts and convicted in 1926 for the attempted murder of a police constable[4]. Another district organiser in the U.P. had campaigned for the Hindu Mahasabha in the 1920's and joined an agitation in 1934 against the destruction of stray cows[5].

It was also significant for a party which hoped to make good previous Congress neglect of the labour movement

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1 All India CSP, op. cit.

2 M. R. Masani, 'No Deviations - Right or Left', Congress Socialist, 10 March 1935.

3 UPPA, 22 Feb. 1933.

4 U.P. Police, Political Who's Who.

5 Ibid.

that the CSP's trade union following was negligible at the time of its formation. Though several Royist and independent trade unionists subsequently joined the party, their allegiance to it was nominal and could not compensate for the lack of a genuine trade union base of its own.

To sum up, the composition of the CSP was not substantially different from that of the Congress as a whole. Like the Congress, the party drew its leadership from the Western-educated, middle class intelligentsia, while its rank and file reflected the growing political role of the lower middle classes in a period of greater mass mobilisation. The most noticeable difference between the CSP and Congress cadres was the relative youth of the former, most of whom were recent recruits to the nationalist ranks, and their greater exposure to the radicalising influence of youth, terrorist and kisan organisations. More than any ideological commitment to Congress Socialism, what had brought together these diverse elements was their desire for an alternative platform within the Congress. Once the CSP had served their immediate ends, many of its cadres would find no difficulty in abandoning it, some as new recruits to the Communist fold and others to return to the Congress mainstream.

Ideology and Organisation

From the moment of its inauguration, the CSP was to be an arena for serious ideological and organisational disputes, which arose from the basic contradiction between the party's immediate nationalist aims and its long-term objective of revolutionary socialism. By the time the first party conference convened in Bombay in October 1934, it was already evident that there was considerable controversy and confusion within the CSP regarding its objectives and strategy. The two main questions that arose were those of the party's relations with the Congress leadership, on the one hand, and with rival socialist groups, on the other. The Bombay Conference decided both questions in accordance with the line advocated by the dominant Bombay group.

The main theoretical premises of Congress Socialism had been stated by Acharya Narendra Dev, the party's chief ideologue, in his presidential address to the Patna Socialist Conference of May 1934. The interdependence of the nationalist and socialist revolutions in a colonial situation was proclaimed as the CSP's ideological raison d'être. In reply to criticisms that a genuine socialist party ought to be independent of a middle class organisation like the Congress, Narendra Dev argued that 'the present stage of the Indian struggle' was 'that of the bourgeois democratic revolution', that political independence was 'an inevitable stage on the way to socialism' and that it was un-Marxian for socialists to isolate themselves from an anti-imperialist movement. To opposite objections from the right, that a socialist party which raised class issues was disruptive of nationalist unity, he replied that nationalist unity had already been broken by the alliance between the Indian upper classes and the British Raj, that the nationalist movement could only be intensified by broadening its mass base, and that this could only be achieved by espousing the economic demands of the masses. '. . . the leaders of the political struggle', he asserted, 'are more and more coming to realise that the upper classes are making a united front with British imperialism against the national movement and are therefore being forced by the exigencies of the situation to enlist the sympathies of workers and peasants'.

Narendra Dev argued that, in spite of Congress neglect of the working class, labour militancy had in the past been a reliable index of political consciousness in the country. 'All the great national struggles . . . conducted by the Congress,' he pointed out, 'have been preceded by strikes and other forms of industrial unrest. It is only when the two struggles have synchronised with each other that the national struggle has reached its highest water-mark. If the two forces could be consciously brought into relationship with each other, the struggle could be carried on with greater effectiveness and speed and for a longer time.'

This, then, was the main task of the CSP: the harnessing of labour and peasant militancy to the political wheel of the Congress.

Narendra Dev further argued that in India, one of the countries 'where the chain of imperialism is weakest', it was possible for the socialist and nationalist revolutions to be carried out simultaneously. Socialists in the Congress should therefore 'make ceaseless efforts to give it a socialist direction'[1].

While the above generalities were regarded as fundamental to the CSP creed, there was little attempt to translate them into a coherent strategy before the party's inaugural conference in October 1934. The question of how far socialist aims could be subordinated to the objective of political independence was completely ignored, while the organisational relationship of the party to the Congress remained the subject of dispute.

The programme adopted at the Bombay conference was a vague document which side-stepped controversial questions, declaring the party's objective to be 'the achievement of Complete Independence in the sense of separation from the British Empire and the establishment of a Socialist Society'. Party membership was to be confined to Congress members, and the first point in the party's 'Plan of Action' was 'work within the Indian National Congress with a view to secure its acceptance of the object and programme of the party'[2]. In accordance with this firm commitment to Congress membership, the chairman of the conference ruled out of order a resolution moved by Dinkar Mehta, later a prominent Communist, proposing that the CSP should secede from the Congress if its programme was not accepted by the next Congress session[3]. The organic connection between the CSP and the Congress was categorically affirmed by the leadership when the restriction of membership to Congressmen

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1 Narendra Dev, op. cit., pp. 3-29.

2 All India CSP, op. cit.

3 BHS, file 800(75)A-I; CID 'Report on the Proceedings of the A.I.C.S. Conference, Bombay, October 1934'.

was attacked by pro-Communist elements. J. P. Narayan declared:

> 'The critics from the Left have been singularly lacking in appreciation of the real issues involved. Socialism and Congress are said to be a contradiction in terms. Far from contradicting each other they are interdependent in the peculiar conditions of India. . . . I have not the slightest doubt . . . that it is possible for us to influence and change the Congress so as to make it a real anti-Imperialist body. Those who do not entertain this belief have clearly no place in this movement.'[1]

Attacks on the CSP leadership's policy towards the Congress organisation came not only from the left, but also from those sections of the party who were eager to assume office in Congress bodies, if necessary in alliance with right-wing Congressmen. Between these two extremes, the leadership occupied the middle ground, advocating disciplined but loyal opposition to the Congress leadership as against secession, on the one hand, and opportunistic co-operation, on the other.

The Benares Conference of Provincial CSPs, under the influence of the Bombay leaders, had already prescribed a boycott of Congress offices, except where the party was in a majority or its programme was accepted. This hard-line, oppositional role met with considerable resistance from party units in those provinces where CSP members already held or were likely to secure offices in the Congress. The central leadership argued that, if the CSP was to remain true to its objective of providing the Congress with an alternative leadership and programme, it must preserve its organisational independence within the Congress. Holding of Congress offices by individual CSP members would make the party a springboard for opportunist elements who were out to secure positions of influence in the Congress, compromise the independence of the individuals concerned and divert them from party work. The opposite and more pragmatic view was that, if the CSP divided the Congress into two mutually exclusive camps, it would split nationalist

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1 M. R. Masani, 'The Congress Socialist Party', typed article, 1938, MP.

unity, isolate itself from strategic positions in the Congress and condemn itself to the role of a permanent minority. The latter view was optimistically echoed by the Director of Government intelligence, who advised the Home Secretary against proscribing the CSP for the moment on the ground that it was 'a welcome disruptive force within the Congress'[1].

Opposition to the Bombay group's line was spearheaded by the U.P. CSP which decided unanimously, on the eve of the Bombay conference, to accept office in Congress bodies[2]. When the Socialist conference met at Bombay, there was an open confrontation between the two sides. The pro-office group, who belonged mainly to the rural provinces, and especially the U.P. where several Socialists held high office in the Congress, urged that the question be left to the discretion of provincial units[3]. The central leadership, however, had its way, and a resolution was passed calling on CSP members to resign executive positions in Congress bodies, except where the latter adopted the party's immediate plan of action[4]. Three members of the U.P. CSP executive thereupon announced their resignation from the party[5], and there were press reports that the entire U.P. CSP, led by Sampurnanand, might secede en bloc[6]. In the event, the central leadership had to accept a compromise, whereby party members were permitted to hold office in Congress committees which accepted a commitment, however vague, to socio-economic reform on the lines of the Karachi Congress resolution and to organisation of peasants and labour. In practice, this formula was to mean that CSP members in provinces like the U.P., Orissa and Kerala retained their Congress offices[7].

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1 NA, file 7/13/34: DIB to Home Secretary, 7 Aug. 1934.

2 Times of India, 3 Oct. 1934.

3 Bombay Chronicle, 21 Oct. 1934.

4 All India CSP, op. cit.

5 Bombay Chronicle, 24 Oct. 1934.

6 Free Press Journal, 24 Oct. 1934.

7 See p. 168.

While the debate on the CSP's organisational links with the Congress and its leadership ended on an inconclusive note, the party's attitude to the Congress programme was more easily defined and remained more or less constant. Although the CSP programme spoke of converting the Congress to socialism, this was regarded from the outset as a vague and remote possibility. The main thrust of the CSP's alternative programme lay in the direction of militant nationalism, which was natural enough in view of the party's origins and the impetus underlying its formation.

In its appeal to the Congress rank and file, the CSP had sought from the outset to differentiate itself from cautious, compromising and constitutionalist trends within the Congress on the independence question. At the Bombay conference, the party's militant nationalism took the form of three major resolutions which were to be its main points of difference with the Congress leadership in the following years. These were 1) the rejection of any constitutional concessions from Westminster which fell short of a sovereign constituent assembly; 2) resistance to Indian involvement in a British war and the utilisation of a war crisis for the achievement of independence; and 3) the extension of the nationalist movement to the Native States with the aim of abolishing princely rule[1].

Though the last two issues found the CSP unanimous, there was some disagreement on the constitutional issue, especially in regard to council entry. Under Royist influence, the founders of the party had allowed initially for the use of legislatures as a revolutionary tactic. The Benares conference, however, had determined on a boycott of the Congress election campaign for the Central Legislative Assembly, on the ground that it was not based on a militant programme. As in the case of Congress offices, opposition to the Benares line was led by the U.P. CSP, whose leaders were well poised to control Congress parliamentary activity in their province. On the eve of the Bombay conference, the U.P. CSP took a majority decision to allow individual members to contest Assembly elections[2]. The boycott policy

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1 All India CSP, op. cit.

2 Times of India, 3 Oct. 1934.

was also opposed by Royists and others who saw it as a romantic throwback to the Gandhian 'No-Change' mentality of 1922 and found it inconsistent with the CSP's initial decision to use legislatures for its own purposes. P. Y. Deshpande, Secretary of the Berar CSP expressed this view in a public statement in October 1934[1], and it was echoed by the Kerala CSP two months later[2].

The question of council entry emerged as a major controversy at the Bombay Socialist conference. The official resolution called for the withdrawal of the Congress from the forthcoming Assembly elections and provided for disciplinary action against CSP members who violated the boycott. An amendment moved by R. K. Khadilkar, a Royist and later secretary of the Maharashtra CSP, was supported by R. M. Lohia and Mascarenhas, both founder-leaders of the party, indicating that the central leadership itself was divided on the issue. The boycott policy was defended by Narayan and the Bombay leaders, and also by S. Batliwala, spokesman for the pro-Communist group. The amendment was defeated, and another resolution instructing party members to abstain from any participation in the Congress election campaign was also carried despite opposition[3]. Nevertheless, the decision cost the CSP three of its most prominent figures, Abdul Bari, Sri Prakasa and N. G. Ranga, who resigned from the party to contest Assembly seats. In defence of his action, Sri Prakasa later wrote to Narayan: 'Even Narendra Devji . . . said that I was not wrong, for the party has decided against standing for elections, not on any principle, but because it was anxious not to be regarded as hankerers after loaves and fishes of office.'[4]

The platform adopted by the CSP at its Bombay conference thus committed it to playing the role of an uncompromising, ultra-nationalist opposition in the Congress. As originally interpreted by the party's dominant leadership

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1 Free Press Journal, 6 Oct. 1934.

2 Congress Socialist, 13 Jan. 1935, 'Party News'.

3 All India CSP, op. cit.

4 Sri Prakasa to J. P. Narayan, 20 Feb. 1959, Jayaprakash Narayan Commemoration Volume (Delhi, 1963), p. 171, JPP.

group, this oppositional role treated the Congress as a sort of National Assembly in which the CSP was to function as a constitutional opposition, remaining out of office until it had displaced the existing leadership and secured the acceptance of its own programme. In practice, such a role was to prove unworkable. The Congress Socialists were too closely tied to other Congressmen by personal and political associations to remain for long a discrete opposition group. Their ideological revolt against Gandhism was at best half-hearted; and their belief that the Congress could be converted to socialism owed more to sentimental, Gandhian ideas of 'change of heart' than to any socialist appraisal of the nationalist movement.

Although Congress Socialism was posed as an alternative to Gandhism, for many CSP members the distinction between the two ideologies was far from clear. While the CSP was strongly opposed to Gandhi's attempt to introduce a khadi franchise into the Congress constitution, some of its own members were advocating a similar franchise for CSP membership. At the Bombay conference, the CSP's chief organiser in Andhra moved an unsuccessful amendment which would have confined party membership to those who contributed 5,000 yards of handspun yarn per annum[1]. This was not an individual eccentricity; a similar requirement was actually incorporated into the constitution of the Bihar CSP and was only deleted after the personal intervention of J. P. Narayan[2].

At the Bombay conference, the central leadership had secured the nominal acceptance by provincial units of the slogan of alternative leadership with its implications on the holding of Congress offices. Nevertheless, it was already clear that the central leaders were themselves ambivalent in their attitude to Gandhian ideology and leadership. In a series of articles entitled 'Why I am a Congress Socialist', which were published in the party organ, J. P. Narayan, M. R. Masani and A. Patwardhan, despite mutual differences of emphasis, made it clear that they were

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1 BHS, file 800(75)A-I: CID Report, 9 Nov. 1934.

2 J. P. Narayan to Secretary, Bihar CSP, 2 Jan. 1935, JPP.

Congressmen first and socialists second, if at all. All three described socialism as a 'method' or 'technique' of mass organisation which would strengthen the nationalist movement, rather than as an end in itself[1]. Patwardhan went so far as to describe socialism as a 'new strategy which works out the grandest feature of Gandhism (the god of hunger, Daridranarayan) from an objective and realist point of view', announced his willingness to co-operate in Gandhian social insurance projects and asserted that the Congress was 'too precious an institution to be condemned and discredited by unintelligent /Marxist/ shibboleths'[2]. Equally un-Marxian was the dichotomy made by Masani and other Congress Socialists between the political and economic aspects of a revolution. Nationalism was identified with a political revolution, socialism with an economic revolution and Congress Socialism with a fusion of the two, the implication being that a socialist revolution could be accomplished under the political leadership of the Congress[3].

The CSP's faith in an eventual synthesis of socialism and Gandhian nationalism was not surprising, given the existing ideological confusion and disagreement within the party leadership regarding the nature of its socialism. Some of the party's leading figures, like J. P. Narayan and Narendra Dev, claimed to be revolutionary Marxists. Owing to their influence, CSP resolutions and literature often borrowed Marxist terminology, to the extent that British intelligence found them 'strongly reminiscent' of CPI documents[4]. Nevertheless, a majority of the central leadership rejected the Marxist concept of proletarian dictatorship and was committed to some far more populist or gradualist

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1 J. P. Narayan, 'Why I am a Congress Socialist', Congress Socialist, 6 Jan. 1935; A. Patwardhan, 'From Montagu to the Daridranarayan', ibid., 27 Jan. 1935; M. R. Masani, 'Why Am I a Congress Socialist?', ibid., 10 February 1935.

2 A. Patwardhan, loc. cit.

3 M. R. Masani, loc. cit.; and B. P. Sinha, 'Why Am I a Congress Socialist?', Congress Socialist, 10 March 1935.

4 BHS, file 800(75)AB: Home Department note on the Bombay CSP, 1934.

form of Social Democracy[1]. This cleavage between Marxists and Social Democrats was not confined to the ultimate objective. It had a direct and immediate bearing on the CSP's international line, its attitude to the working class and its strategy in regard to other labour and socialist organisations.

In the international sphere, the admiration of radical nationalists in India for the Russian Revolution and for Soviet economic development has already been mentioned. The Congress Socialists shared this general approval of the Soviet Union, and party literature was replete with glowing references to Soviet achievements. Nevertheless, by 1934 news of Stalinist repression coupled with the Comintern's anti-nationalist line had given rise to serious reservations regarding Russian hegemony over world socialism. In his presidential address at Patna, Narendra Dev, while lavishing praise on the Soviet Union, added significantly: 'It is not necessary that other countries should traverse all the stages Russia has passed through, nor is it necessary that we should implicitly follow the Soviet policies in every little detail. The policies can only be adjudged with reference to the particular circumstances of each case . . .'[2]. Non-Marxist members of the CSP were more outspoken in their criticism of the Moscow line, citing the isolation and sectarianism of the CPI as one of the main reasons for the formation of a new socialist party. In view of equally strong objections among CSP Marxists to the 2nd International, the question of international affiliation was shelved for the time being.

In domestic politics, the cleavage between CSP Marxists and non-Marxists and the dominance of the latter was illustrated by the differences that arose over the party's programme and strategy. The programme adopted at the Bombay conference avoided any reference to Marxist concepts of class struggle and proletarian dictatorship. Instead it defined socialism as 'the transfer of all power

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1 See Masani, op. cit., p. 53.

2 Narendra Dev, loc. cit.

to the producing masses', a term which could be interpreted to include the middle classes[1]. Attempts by pro-Communist delegates to radicalise the programme were strongly resisted by the leadership. Batliwala's amendment, seeking to substitute the words 'Workers' and Peasants' Republic' for the party's objective of 'a Socialist Society', was defeated in the open session by 32 votes to 7. Another amendment moved by Batliwala to substitute the words 'peasants and workers' for 'producing masses' was lost by 10 votes to 29[2].

The concrete political and economic demands listed in the CSP programme were vague and moderate enough to be acceptable to any Social Democrat or radical nationalist. They included the release of political prisoners, the right of labour to unionise and strike and to social security, abolition of feudal landlordism, liquidation of peasant debts, sharp reductions in land rent and revenue, state planning of the economy and socialisation of key industries[3]. Batliwala's attempt to amend the 'Plan of Action' to include the organisation of peasants and workers for a political general strike and no-tax campaign was opposed as being likely to invite government repression and was lost by 2 votes to 37[4].

Though eager to secure labour participation in the nationalist movement, the CSP leadership refused to accept the Marxist view of proletarian leadership in a socialist party. Narayan asserted categorically in his report to the Bombay conference: 'The Congress Socialist Party is not the party of any one class. It is not the party of the working class alone. It is a political party uniting on its platform all anti-imperialist elements and its task is to lead such elements to the overthrow of British Imperialism and the establishment in India of real Swaraj

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1 All India CSP, op. cit.

2 BHS, file 800(75)A-I: CID Report, 9 Nov. 1934.

3 All India CSP, op. cit.

4 BHS, loc. cit.

for the masses.'[1] This was a frank admission that the CSP, though socialist in name, intended to remain nationalist in composition and programme.

The CSP and the Congress

In accordance with the above view of its multi-class, anti-imperialist character, CSP activity at this stage concentrated almost exclusively on propaganda among the Congress rank and file. Although the main point in the party's propaganda was the necessity for a change of leadership, for reasons that were as much emotional as tactical a distinction was made from the outset between Gandhi himself and Gandhism, the latter being identified with the right-wing Congress leadership. Early in October 1934, an editorial in the party organ declared:

> 'The Congress Socialists believe that in their appreciation of the historic role which Mahatmaji has played in the Indian struggle they would not yield an inch to those who allow their judgements to be clouded by personal considerations. . . . An immediate activity of the Congress Socialist Party will . . . be directed to exposing the spoof that Gandhism is a body of Gandhiji's doctrines and not an amorphous group . . .'[2]

This distinction allowed for close personal contacts between Gandhi and the CSP leaders. The latter kept Gandhi regularly informed of their decisions and did their best to secure his support, or at least tolerance. Immediately after the Patna AICC session of May 1934, Masani accompanied Gandhi on a walking tour and tried to convert him to the resolutions adopted by the Patna Socialist conference. Gandhi agreed to study the resolutions and to communicate his views in a letter which the CSP could publish. The experiment proved abortive, however, with Gandhi rejecting the CSP programme as fundamentally unsound because of its infringement of property rights and its assumption of class conflict. Gandhi's reply was so hostile that Masani was unable to publish it. 'I felt that to publish what you had sent in that form', he explained

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1 All India CSP, op. cit.

2 Congress Socialist, 6 Oct. 1934.

to Gandhi, 'would have two results. First, it would make hundreds of young Congressmen feel that you were irreconcilably hostile to their ideals and would strengthen the tendency which already exists on the part of socialists to leave the Congress. Secondly, it would encourage attacks on us by Congressmen of the right wing.'[1]

Gandhi responded to Masani's appeal to reconsider his opinion with a shorter and more conciliatory letter, in which he welcomed the rise of the CSP but again expressed strong reservations about its programme[2]. Two months later, in a letter to Narendra Dev, Gandhi strongly criticised the draft programme of the CSP, objected to the use of the name 'Congress Socialist Party' as implying an organisational link with the Congress, and suggested instead that the party call itself the All India Socialist Party of Congressmen[3].

Despite this generally negative attitude, Gandhi continued to maintain that he was open to persuasion by the Socialists and that his difference with them was one of timing rather than principle. In a letter to Nehru defending the Working Committee's hostile resolution about socialism, he wrote:

> 'Greatest consideration has been paid to the socialists, some of whom I know so intimately. Do I not know their sacrifice? But I have found them as a body to be in a hurry. Why should they not be? Only if I cannot march quite as quickly I must ask them to halt and take me along with them. That is literally my attitude.'[4]

While Gandhi was careful not to alienate the CSP leaders and saw them as impatient young men who could in time be assimilated into the Congress leadership, the Socialists for their part made the most of his personal cordiality to establish their respectability among uncommitted

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1 M. R. Masani to M. K. Gandhi, n.d. (May-June 1934), MP.

2 M. K. Gandhi to M. R. Masani, 14 June 1934, MP.

3 BHS, file 800(77)B-II: M. K. Gandhi to Narendra Dev, 2 Aug. 1934.

4 M. K. Gandhi to J. Nehru, 19 Aug. 1934, JNP.

Congressmen and to fend off the attacks of right-wing leaders like Sardar Patel. At a public meeting in Bombay to boost the CSP's Congress enrolment campaign, a Socialist speaker announced on the basis of Gandhi's letter to Masani: 'Mahatma Gandhi himself supports the Socialist Party and even wishes that the Socialist Party take control of the Congress on the right lines.'[1]

These attempts by the CSP leadership to achieve a modus vivendi with Gandhi proved unpopular with certain sections of the party who saw it as a sign of vacillation and subservience. Royists and other thorough-going Marxists in the party had always been sceptical of the extent to which the leadership had 'purged itself of the taint of Gandhism'[2]; and even an anti-Communist like Purshottam Tricumdas later confessed that he had initially disliked J. P. Narayan because of the latter's habit of 'running up to Gandhiji for guidance at every stage'.[3]

While opposing separatist trends within the party, the CSP leadership also attempted to refute attacks from the right. In a long reply to the Working Committee's resolution of June 1934, with its implication that Socialism was inconsistent with the Congress creed, J. P. Narayan pointed out to the Working Committee that the Congress creed spoke of 'peaceful and legitimate means', not of non-violence, that the CSP programme in any case did not advocate the use of violence and that confiscation of private property had been accepted by the Congress itself to the extent that the Karachi resolution provided for state ownership of key industries and railways[4].

On the question of the Congress constitution, Narayan and Masani negotiated with Gandhi and succeeded in persuading him to retain proportional representation in Congress elections, against the wishes of the majority of the Working Committee[5]. Armed with this concession, they were

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1 Bombay Chronicle, 25 July 1934.

2 Interview with Maniben Kara, Bombay, March 1973.

3 Jayaprakash Narayan Commemoration Volume, p. 26.

4 J. P. Narayan to the General Secretary, AICC, 20 July 1934, JPP.

5 Interview with M. R. Masani, Bombay, March 1973.

able to moderate separatist pressures at the Bombay Socialist conference. The official resolution embodying the CSP's constitutional proposals for the Congress accepted Gandhi's proposal to reduce the size of Congress sessions from 6,000 to 1,000 delegates and conceded that the method of election suggested by Gandhi would result in 'greater efficiency and fairer representation'. The party's own proposals were confined to suggestions for democratising the Congress by abolishing the office of president, making the Working Committee an elective and purely executive body, and strengthening the power of subordinate committees down to the primary level. An amendment to the leadership's proposals, which called for representation of trade unions in Congress committees, was opposed and withdrawn on the ground that trade unions should make their own demands[1].

The inaugural conference of the All India CSP had been held deliberately on the eve of the Bombay Congress session in order to rally the Congress left against the parliamentary programme of the Congress leadership. The main issue before the Bombay Congress of October 1934 - the first plenary session since Karachi - was to define the Congress attitude to the Government's new constitutional proposals as embodied in the report of the Joint Parliamentary Commission (hereafter JPC). More specifically, the session had been convened to ratify the AICC's decision to contest elections to the Central Legislative Assembly. Though the CSP had contested the Congress organisational elections on a platform of alternative leadership, the party leadership appears to have abandoned hopes of capturing the Congress in the immediate future. Narendra Dev warned in September 1934:

> 'The Congress as it is constituted will not accept Socialism today. . . . The socialist element that has recently been introduced into its composition is numerically weak and is not yet organised. . . . Under these conditions, it would be idle to expect that we can carry the Congress with us this year. On this score a defeat is dead certain. It will require patient and hard toil for many years before we may be able to convert the Congress to the socialist viewpoint.'2

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1 BHS, file 800(75)A-I: CID, 'Report on the Proceedings of the A.I.C.S. Conference, Bombay, Oct. 1934'.

2 Narendra Dev, 'The Task Before Us', Congress Socialist, 29 Sept. 1934.

In the meanwhile, the CSP's task, according to Narendra Dev, was to develop the Congress in an anti-imperialist direction by radicalising the Congress constructive programme, opposing the constitutionalist policy of the Congress Parliamentary Board, democratising the Congress constitution and opposing the more obscurantist of Gandhi's proposed amendments[1]. This strategy was endorsed by the Socialist conference and was put to the test immediately afterwards at the Congress session.

In view of the forthcoming elections for the central legislature, the Bombay Congress found the leadership determined not to alarm the small propertied electorate by making any concessions to the Socialists. While rejecting the JPC Report and calling instead for a Constituent Assembly, the Congress made it clear that it had no intention for the time being of resorting to extra-parliamentary agitation. On all major issues, the CSP's militant line was rejected by the Congress, and the party's resolutions and amendments were defeated by large majorities. A Socialist amendment seeking to expunge the Working Committee's anti-socialist resolution of June 1934 was defeated in the AICC by 100 votes to 28. Socialist resolutions regarding Congress parliamentary activity, the JPC Report, revision of the Karachi programme, war resistance and abolition of princely states were all referred by the AICC to the discretion of the Working Committee, and the Socialists were thereby pre-empted from moving their resolutions in the open session[2].

On the question of the Congress constitution, the official resolution for a manual labour franchise was opposed by the CSP on the ground that it was sentimental in character and an additional burden to peasants and workers who did manual labour for a living. The official resolution passed the Subjects Committee only by a narrow majority of

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1 Ibid.

2 NA, file 3/15, 1934: Secret Report on Annual Session of Congress, Bombay, Oct. 1934.

85 to 76. Nevertheless, an appeal from the CSP executive to the Working Committee to drop the proposal was rejected, and the resolution was passed by a large majority in the open session. The plenary session also rejected by a large majority a Socialist amendment to the clause regarding Khadi-wearing by Congress office-bearers[1]. The Socialists managed to secure the retention of proportional representation by single transferable vote in Congress elections - a sine qua non of their own representation in the Congress - but only by a personal appeal to Gandhi, who interceded with the Working Committee on their behalf. In return for this concession, the CSP agreed to drop its own constitutional amendments in the Subjects Committee and acquiesced in Gandhi's proposals[2].

According to Government intelligence, the CSP tried hard to secure at least one seat on the new Congress Working Committee, and there was a possibility of Rajendra Prasad, the new Congress President, nominating Narendra Dev in order to accommodate the Socialists[3]. This proposal is not confirmed by any other source, and it was certainly not consistent with the slogan of alternative leadership and the policy of boycotting Congress offices to which the CSP had just committed itself. Whether or not such a proposal was made or considered, nothing came of it; and the CSP remained unrepresented in the Congress High Command.

The Bombay Congress session was a major landmark in the CSP's development, setting in motion a re-definition and clarification of party strategy. According to government intelligence, a private meeting of CSP leaders at the end of the session expressed grave disappointment with the party's performance and despondency about its ability to make headway in the Congress while Gandhi's personality remained dominant[4]. Sampurnanand expressed the CSP

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1 BHS, file 800(86)C-I: pp. 33, 120, n.d.

2 M. R. Masani to S. C. Bose, 31 Jan. 1936, MP.

3 NA, file 3/15, 1934: loc. cit.

4 Ibid.

leadership's feelings in an angry article condemning the 'machiavellian' tactics by which the parliamentary wing of the Congress had won the day and asserting that the amended Congress constitution, with its manual labour and khadi franchise, had virtually outlawed the CSP, barring it from access to Congress committees and facilitating disciplinary action against it[1].

Within the CSP, the leadership's Congress strategy came under fire from two opposite view-points, both of which had already been evident at the party's recent conference. On the one hand, separatist and pro-Communist elements in the party argued that, if the CSP was serious about its programme, it must now secede from the Congress and work independently in alliance with other left-wing groups. On the other hand, it was argued that the organisational form of the CSP - that of an opposition party within the Congress - was an obstacle to the propagation of its programme among non-party Congressmen, and should therefore be abandoned in favour of a loose Left Bloc. The latter view was expounded, predictably, by those who had argued at the Bombay conference for a more flexible approach to Congress offices and parliamentary activity. It was also supported, though for different reasons, by the Roy Group[2].

Between these two extremes, the CSP leadership sought to evolve a compromise which would preserve intact the organisational integrity of the party, while accommodating its strategy to the new situation. This new consensus, which was to reach its culmination at the time of the next Congress session in April 1936, had three main features. In the first place, it recognised that under the existing Congress constitution the CSP could not hope to secure a majority by mere propaganda. An urgent emphasis was therefore placed on developing the party's mass influence through class organisations outside the Congress and on strengthening the Congress left by affiliating these mass organisations to the Congress. Secondly, the need for mass organisation

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1 Sampurnanand, 'The Straw', Congress Socialist, 30 Dec. 1934.

2 See p. 118.

outside the Congress increased the importance for the CSP of alliances with other left-wing groups, and especially with the Communists, and of securing if possible their unification under its own banner. Finally, within the Congress, the CSP's desire to avoid isolation would moderate its tactics, leading it to confine its oppositional role to nationalist rather than socialist issues, to co-operate closely with non-party Congress leaders and to accept strategic offices in the Congress organisation.

Chapter 4

THE MAKING OF THE POPULAR FRONT (1934-36)

The tactic of Popular Front, as enunciated by the Comintern in 1935, was a response partly to the adverse effects on various Communist parties of the 'ultra-left' line of 1928 and partly to the international isolation of the Soviet Union and the threat to the latter from Nazi Germany. The underlying impetus was the urgent need of international Communism, as represented by Moscow, and of its national sections for new allies. At the international level, this was expressed by the Soviet desire for an anti-fascist alliance with the Western 'bourgeois democracies'. At the national level, it meant a 'four-class strategy' involving a united front of the proletariat, peasantry, petty bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie. While in Europe the Popular Front was to be an anti-fascist alliance between Communists and liberal and social democrats, in colonial countries it was to be an anti-imperialist alliance between Communists and bourgeois nationalists.

This drastic change of colonial strategy was dictated partly by the recent successes of the Chinese Communist Party, which were ascribed to its assumption of a nationalist role, and partly by the need of Soviet foreign policy to mobilise the broadest possible pressure on the colonialist governments of Western Europe. In India, these new imperatives of the Comintern coincided with the advantageous situation created by the rise of radical nationalism and its political differentiation in the form of the CSP.

By the end of 1934, the CSP's search for a mass base outside the Congress was leading it towards a policy of alliances with other left-wing political and class organisations. The most important of these non-Congress organisations was the CPI. Although the Indian Communists did not accept the full implications of a Popular Front until the

middle of 1936, when they eventually did so they were able to build their own edifice on the organisational infrastructure prepared by the CSP and to utilise the latter as their main lever for this purpose.

The CSP-CPI alliance of April 1936, coinciding with the co-option of the CSP leadership as a junior partner in the Congress High Command, would make the CSP the linchpin of a broad anti-Government alliance, extending from the CPI to the Congress leadership. What was the CSP's role in the forging of this 'anti-imperialist front'; what were the interests and pressures that united its various constituents; and what were the conflicts and contradictions underlying the formal unity thus achieved? These are the questions which will be examined below.

The CSP and Class Organisations

Immediately after the Bombay Congress, the CSP executive took up the question of mass contacts by establishing three separate sub-committees for Labour, Peasant and United Front activity. A circular to provincial units called on party members to begin labour work in 'politically strategic' industries. The main emphasis, however, was on kisan work. Party members in rural provinces were instructed to identify issues for kisan agitation, including any agrarian legislation that might be pending, in order to establish 'a foothold in the countryside'[1]. Another circular issued in January 1935 elaborated on these points. The goal of labour organisation was to be a political general strike, as desired by left-wing members at the Bombay conference, and first priority was to be given to politically strategic areas such as railways, mines and heavy industries. The circular reiterated that peasant organisation 'is really our most important work' and that the CSP's task was 'to create' live issues and develop agitations around them. Particular attention was to be paid to seasonal labour in sugar mills who would provide access to the rural masses[2].

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1 BHS, file 800(75)A-I: General Secretary, A.I.C.S.P., Circular No. 2 to Provincial Secretaries, 13 Nov. 1934.

2 General Secretary, A.I.C.S.P., Circular to Party Members, Jan. 1935, published in Pioneer, Lucknow, 5 July 1935.

It is understandable that the main thrust of the CSP's mass activity was directed at the kisan movement. The latter had as yet no organic connection with the Congress and had arisen without direct Congress initiative in response to the agrarian economic depression of the early 1930's. A nationalist newspaper had observed in 1932:

> 'A noteworthy feature of the peasant movement in the U.P. is the fact that the peasants are becoming their own leaders . . . that the peasant movement to an ever increasing extent takes place at the initiative of the peasants themselves, that they have identified themselves with the Congress because they could not get assistance from other organisations.'[1]

The kisan movement, neglected by the Communists and the Congress leadership alike, was therefore an obvious and largely untapped source of mass support for the CSP. The party was particularly well poised for the task of kisan organisation in view of the rural middle-class background of many of its cadres, some of whom had played a leading role in the formation of kisan unions in the U.P. and Bihar. From 1934 onwards, CSP policy towards the kisan movement had three main aims: the formation of kisan unions and entry into those existing by CSP members with a view to establishing party leadership over the kisan movement; the radicalisation of the kisan movement by shifting it from purely economic demands to a programme of militant opposition to the Government and the big zamindars; and the unification of scattered, provincial kisan organisations in a centralised, national organisation which would be a valuable ally for the Congress and a potent lever in the hands of the CSP.

By the end of 1934, the Socialists were already well entrenched in the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha (BPKS). In April 1934 the leaders of the Bihar CSP had joined the BPKS and had been co-operating with Swami Sahajanand, its founder, in an agitation against the zamindar-drafted Bihar Tenancy Bill. The Socialists had soon acquired a majority in the BPKS executive, with 8 out of 15 of its members. The party's influence was also reflected in the

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1 Bombay Chronicle, 7 Jan. 1932.

BPKS programme. Though marginally more moderate, the programme adopted by the BPKS in January 1935 was closely modelled on the agrarian demands adopted by the Bihar CSP a month earlier. The BPKS committed itself to agitation on the issues of rural indebtedness, rent reduction and higher prices for sugarcane growers and also adopted a political resolution rejecting the JPC Report as 'an attempt of British Imperialism to carry on the exploitation of peasants and other poorer classes in alliance with the zamindars and other vested interests'[1]. From a largely propagandist body, the BPKS now developed rapidly into a mass movement with a district-level organisation[2]. Its programme now excluded big zamindars and made it the representative of the tenantry and petty zamindars who composed its own leadership and that of the Bihar CSP[3]. The new constitution of the BPKS, which defined a kisan as anyone whose primary means of livelihood was agriculture, was also interpreted to include landless labourers[4].

At the first meeting of the BPKS executive after their entry, the Socialists had secured the adoption of a resolution for the abolition of zamindari. In deference to the wishes of Sahajanand, who feared that it would alienate smaller zamindars and therefore threatened to resign, the resolution had been temporarily withdrawn. The Socialists continued, nonetheless, to agitate for abolition of zamindari at district and village kisan meetings. By the time the BPKS session was held in November 1935, Sahajanand had been converted to the CSP's view and the demand for abolition of zamindari without compensation was incorporated into the BPKS programme[5].

During the next two years, the Bihar CSP and the BPKS

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1 A. P. Sinha, 'The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha', Congress Socialist, 24 Feb. 1935.

2 Ibid.

3 Hauser, op. cit., p. 76.

4 Ibid., p. 17.

5 Ibid., pp. 99-100.

were virtually synonymous. Instead of building a separate party organisation of their own, the Bihar Socialists worked mainly through the BPKS. A. P. Sinha, Peasant Secretary of the All India CSP, was Secretary of the BPKS; Kishori Prasanna Singh, Secretary of the Bihar CSP, was a member of the BPKS executive; while Ramnandan Mishra, R. M. Benipuri and Ganga Sharan Sinha were prominent in both organisations[1].

In the U.P., the CSP's drive for kisan leadership encountered stronger resistance from right-wing Congressmen. The draft constitution of the U.P. Kisan Sangh (UPKS) provided for 'just compensation' for expropriated zamindars, despite the CSP's call for abolition without compensation[2]. While Mohanlal Gautam, Secretary of the UPKS, was a joint secretary of the All India CSP, the President of the UPKS, P. D. Tandon, though sympathetic to the CSP, was unwilling to accept its more radical agrarian demands. When the UPKS Conference met at Allahabad in April 1935, Vallabhbhai Patel was elected chairman, despite vociferous opposition from a CSP contingent led by Narayan and Sampurnanand. CSP resolutions regarding kisan agitation in the princely states, war resistance and boycott of the royal silver jubilee were disallowed by the chair. All the CSP's amendments in the Subjects Committee were defeated, including one in favour of the abolition of zamindari without compensation. Government intelligence remarked with relief: 'The speeches throughout were practically unobjectionable . . . . The Congress Socialists had little success, and this despite the fact that they had made special efforts to be well represented for the occasion.'[3]

The CSP also undertook kisan work in Kerala, Orissa, Gujerat and, to a lesser extent, Maharashtra. The Kerala CSP showed particular energy, securing a base among the

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1 Ibid., p. 76.

2 'Central Peasant Congress', Congress Socialist, 27 Jan. 1935.

3 NA, file 7/5/35: District Magistrate's report on Kisan Conference, Allahabad, 27-28 April 1935.

Moplah Muslim tenantry and being cited by the General Secretary as a model for other provincial units[1]. In Orissa, where the CSP had secured the acceptance of its immediate agrarian programme by the PCC, a Provincial Kisan Sangh was formed in June 1935 under CSP auspices and adopted resolutions embodying the party's position on zamindari, rents, debts and tenancy legislation[2].

In December 1934, the Maharashtra Socialists were reported to be studying the prospects for kisan agitation in the economically distressed district of Nasik. In January 1935, the Maharashtra CSP resolved to form peasant unions on a class basis[3]. Nevertheless, there was little evidence of independent kisan organisation, and the Maharashtra Socialists worked mainly through the PCC for remissions of revenue. They secured the appointment of a Peasant Enquiry Committee by the PCC with three Socialists among its six members. Following the return of Indulal Yagnik, a pro-Communist kisan organiser, from Europe in October 1935, kisan activity in Maharashtra and Gujerat began to gather momentum. In alliance with the CSP, Yagnik launched an agitation in Gujerat for non-payment of revenue, began organising the landless Bhil tribals of Dohad district and made preparations for a conference of kisan representatives from Maharashtra, Gujerat and Karnatak[4]. The Dohad unit of the CSP, which controlled the local DCC, was particularly active in tenants' agitations for remission of rent[5]. The Dohad Socialists also organised a local kisan conference attended by 3,000 Bhils and presided over by Yagnik. Out of this conference emerged a Dohad-Jhalod Peasants' Union, the first in Gujerat, with a

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1 'Party News', Congress Socialist, 13 Jan. 1935; and General Secretary, A.I.C.S.P., Circular to Party Members, Jan. 1935, Pioneer, 5 July 1935.

2 'Party News', Congress Socialist, 7 March 1936.

3 'Resolutions of Executive Committee, Maharashtra C.S.P., 14 Jan. 1935', Congress Socialist, 27 Jan. 1935.

4 BHS, file 800(53)-II: Weekly Letter No. 51, 22 Dec. 1934; and Bombay Chronicle, 5 June 1936.

5 Congress Socialist, 27 June 1936.

CSP leadership and programme[1].

The end of 1935 found the CSP making efforts to sponsor a national federation of existing kisan unions under its own hegemony. The party's view of such a federation as a militant class organisation, closely linked with the Congress, was as distinct from that of separatist elements within the kisan movement, who favoured the formation of a separate kisan party, as it was from the economic conservatism of the recently formed Congress Kisan Sub-Committee.

In December 1935, the CSP reacted sharply to the proposal of N. G. Ranga, the Andhra kisan leader, for the formation of a peasant party to contest the provincial elections under the new constitution. The Socialists objected that the kisan movement must work for the incorporation of its demands in the Congress election manifesto and that a new kisan party would merely foster diversionary and constitutionalist illusions[2]. The party was equally critical of attempts by conservative Congressmen to organise peasant unions and argued that kisan organisations ought to represent poor tenants and landless labourers. The party journal asserted:

> 'Peasantry in India is a heterogeneous mixture of various elements. . . . The main difference . . . is between the rich and the poor peasants. There are peasant moneylenders and their lust for land often makes them more avaricious than any village Shylock. The Kisan Sangh cannot represent such an agglomeration indiscriminately. . . . The richer peasants, thanks to their position, will try to annex the kisan organisation. An organisation manned by them may for a time show some strength, but it must suffer from inherent weaknesses and must inevitably succumb to them. Only an organisation that has evoked and enlisted the allegiance of the struggling peasants can achieve the objective our kisan leaders have in mind.'[3]

The above statement overlooked the fact that rich peasants were as much in evidence in the leadership of CSP-sponsored peasant unions. In the U.P., for instance, one finds B. D. Tripathi, one of the CSP's leading kisan

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1 Congress Socialist, 9 May 1936.

2 Ibid., 28 Dec. 1935.

3 Ibid., 7 March 1936; and ibid., 18 Jan. 1936, 'The Kisans Organise'.

organisers, publicly urging petty zamindars to join the kisan movement[1]. The real difference between the CSP and its rivals in the kisan movement lay, not in the definition of 'struggling peasants', but in the acceptance of the CSP's political leadership and programme by the kisan movement. This became clear at an All India Kisan conference convened by the CSP during its annual session at Meerut in January 1936 under the presidency of Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya, a member of the CSP executive. While Ranga and Gautam asked for the immediate formation of an independent All India Kisan Sabha, the CSP leadership deferred the proposal for fear that such an organisation would be captured by kisan parliamentarians and right-wing Congressmen. It was decided instead to wait until provincial kisan unions had been more widely established and consolidated[2]. Meanwhile, an Organising Committee controlled by the CSP was appointed to co-ordinate provincial activities and prepare for an All India Kisan Conference to coincide with the next Congress session. Two of the Committee's three secretaries were CSP leaders, and 4 of the 5 new provincial organisers appointed by the Committee were party members[3].

The CSP was thus able to claim most of the credit for organising the first All India Kisan Conference which assembled at Lucknow in April 1936 with 1,000 representatives from 11 provinces. The conference passed a series of resolutions which reflected the CSP's line, not only on economic demands, but on political issues like the abolition of zamindari, kisan participation in the nationalist movement, opposition to the new constitution, war resistance, abolition of princely states and civil liberties. The conference elected an All India Kisan Committee to organise an All India Kisan Congress, the word 'Congress' symbolising the organic links between the kisan movement, the CSP and the

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1 UPPA, 25 May 1935.

2 BHS, file 800(53)B, p. 427: Intelligence Note, n.d.

3 Times of India, 20 Jan. 1936.

Congress[1]. The CSP emerged as the single largest group in the new organisation. Mohanlal Gautam was one of the three secretaries of the All India Kisan Committee, while 20 of its 80 members were Congress Socialists, the remainder being unaffiliated Congress and kisan leaders and a few Communists from the Punjab and Bengal[2].

Although the CSP had rejected the concept of proletarian dictatorship, and its mass base was predominantly urban and rural lower middle class, it attempted, nonetheless, to secure a following among industrial labour. The formation of the CSP had coincided with a renewed strike wave, resulting from industrial recession and retrenchment. As we have seen, the party leadership had recognised from the outset the political potential of radical trade unionism. It was also obvious that CSP leaders, in major industrial centres like Bombay, could hardly claim to speak for the masses so long as they lacked any standing in the labour movement. It was accepted, however, that the party would have to co-operate initially with established labour leaders in order to secure a foothold in the trade unions. Few CSP members had any experience of labour work, and Narendra Dev had freely conceded in September 1934: 'We can . . . in the beginning only co-operate with and act as auxiliaries of the veteran labour leaders'[3]. Thus, paradoxically, it was in Bombay, where the CSP leadership was most staunchly anti-Marxist, that united front relations first developed with labour organisations and their Royist and Communist leaders.

The Bombay Congress Socialist Group had from the beginning co-operated with the pro-Royist AITUC in joint demonstrations and public meetings. The CSP had supported the Sholapur and Bombay textile strikes of March-April 1934 and the Calcutta Dockworkers' strike of October 1934, though its assistance had been largely verbal[4]. The AITUC had

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1 N. G. Ranga, Kisans & Communists (Bombay, 1949), p. 3.

2 Congress Socialist, 25 April 1936.

3 Narendra Dev, 'The Task Before Us', Congress Socialist, 29 Sept. 1934.

4 Congress Socialist, 6 Oct. 1934.

reciprocated in August 1934 with a resolution of qualified welcome for the newly-formed CSP[1]. Nevertheless, a stable united front had yet to emerge. The rival socialist party floated by the AITUC nominally continued in existence, while the CSP itself had yet to formulate a coherent labour strategy. The Bombay CSP's annual report conceded in October 1934 that the party had not directly organised any trade unions[2]. So far, the CSP's labour contacts had been channelled almost exclusively through the Roy Group, and particularly via Mascarenhas, the pro-Royist CSP leader. It was to bridge this gap that the Bombay Socialist conference had authorised the party executive to appoint United Front and Labour Sub-Committees[3].

Relations between the CSP and the three existing trade union federations - the AITUC, the Communist RTUC and the moderate NFTU - now developed rapidly. On 26 October, Mascarenhas persuaded the AITUC executive to appoint a committee to negotiate with the CSP for a full-fledged united front[4]. By 1 November a united front had been verbally agreed, subject to formal, written confirmation. Under its terms, the CSP recognised the AITUC as 'the central organisation of the working class', while the latter agreed to co-operate with the CSP as an 'anti-imperialist bloc' in the Congress. Unions organised by the CSP were to affiliate to the AITUC, though the CSP reserved the right to work in rival unions which already existed, a concession to the party's desire for a united front with the Communist and moderate labour organisations. The AITUC undertook to assist the entry of CSP members to affiliated unions and to consider favourably the CSP's request for liquidation of the AITUC-sponsored socialist party[5].

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1 Ibid., 29 Sept. 1934.

2 BHS, file 800(75)A-I: BCSP, 'Annual Report', 11 Oct. 1934.

3 All India CSP, op. cit., MP.

4 NA, file 3/15, 1934: Secret Report on Annual Session of Congress, Bombay, Oct. 1934.

5 BHS, file 800(75)A: Intelligence Report, 6 Nov. 1934.

The immediate result of the above agreement was the entry of several prominent trade unionists into the CSP, especially in Bombay. By December 1934, Harihar Nath Shastri, the AITUC President, R. A. Khedgikar, the Royist President of the G.I.P. Railway Workers' Union and future General Secretary of the AITUC, and D. L. Pathak, the Bombay Secretary of the AITUC, had joined the party[1]. The CSP could now also claim control of the influential Bombay Dockworkers' Union, most of whose office-bearers were Royist recruits to the Bombay CSP[2].

Though formally ratified in December 1934[3], the united front met with resistance within the AITUC from sections which saw it as a threat to the independence of the labour movement and their own position within it[4]. Sibnath Banerji, General Secretary of the AITUC and a CSP member, feared an open attack on the united front when the AITUC annual session met in April 1935, especially in view of the failure of any CSP unions to affiliate to the AITUC[5].

The CSP leadership had anticipated some opposition to its entry into the AITUC, and an inner-party document emphasised the need for a concerted counter-offensive. 'As in the Indian National Congress,' the memorandum stated, 'the Party should try to secure the best representation it can on the Executive of the T.U.C. There is no question at present of trying to capture the T.U.C., but it is necessary that the Party should see that those who are in possession of the machinery of the T.U.C. should not be such as will impede the work of party members in the Trade Unions.' The document warned that certain trade union officials had been showing 'an undisguised hostility' to the CSP and must therefore be excluded from AITUC offices. The CSP must also persuade the AITUC session to disaffiliate both sections of the faction-riven Girni Kamgar Union or

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1 Congress Socialist, 16 Dec. 1934.

2 Ibid.

3 D. L. Pathak to J. P. Narayan, 31 Dec. 1934, JPP.

4 J. P. Narayan to President, AITUC, 1 Jan. 1935, JPP.

5 Sibnath Banerji to J. P. Narayan, 24 Jan. 1935, JPP.

GKU for one year, thereby facilitating 'an independent attempt' to organise 'a genuine mass union' in the Bombay textile industry and making it impossible for the existing factions 'to sit upon the machinery of the unions and use it purely for personal, fractional uses'.[1]

When the AITUC session met at Calcutta in April 1935, Banerji had to concede in his report as General Secretary that the practical results of the united front with the CSP had not been significant, though he stressed the future potential of the alliance as a means of radicalising the Congress[2]. The CSP was also attacked at the session for partiality to the moderate Kandalkar faction of the GKU, a charge which the party vehemently denied[3]. Despite these attacks on the CSP, the session ratified the united front and the CSP was well represented on the new AITUC executive. R. A. Khedgikar, the new general secretary, was already a party member; and R. S. Ruikar, the new AITUC president, joined the CSP in June 1935[4].

The CSP's labour strategy had two main aims: to make the CSP the political organ of the trade union movement and its link with the Congress; and to re-unify the rival labour organisations on a platform of radical nationalism. Although this strategy centred on the AITUC, the CSP also sought united front relations with the RTUC and the NFTU and worked for their merger into the AITUC.

A policy statement issued by the CSP's Labour Sub-Committee in January 1935 explained that the CSP had recognised the AITUC because it was the mother-organisation from which the other two factions had split away and because its programme was similar to the party's. The RTUC was

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1 M. R. Masani, note regarding AITUC's 'Agreement with Party', n.d. (1935), MP.

2 Report of General Secretary to AITUC Session, Calcutta, 20 April 1935, JPP.

3 Statement of the Executive Committee of the Bombay CSP, 22 May 1935, MP.

4 R. S. Ruikar to J. P. Narayan, 6 June 1935, JPP.

described as being 'too exclusively linked up with a particular political programme for it to allow other Trade Unions with different political views to work in it', while the NFTU's moderate line was seen as 'unsuited to the problems arising from the imperialist and capitalist exploitation of Indian labour'. Nevertheless, the CSP declared that it would not allow its alliance with the AITUC to stand in the way of unity with other organisations[1].

Accordingly, negotiations were launched with the RTUC and the NFTU. In the case of the former, agreement was delayed by Communist suspicions of CSP bona fides and by the AITUC's demand that the RTUC should re-affiliate with itself and not be treated as an independent organisation[2]. In the interim, however, the RTUC joined with the Bombay CSP and the Bombay branch of the AITUC (hereafter BPTUC) in public meetings called to protest against the Government's ban on Communist organisations and to advocate war resistance. The NFTU also agreed in December 1934 to participate in a joint meeting to demand M. N. Roy's release[3]. By January 1935, a series of meetings between Communist, Royist and Congress Socialist representatives produced a tripartite verbal agreement between the RTUC, the AITUC and the CSP which was to be ratified after a three-month trial period[4]. By February, a similar verbal agreement had been concluded with the NFTU[5].

These agreements, subsequently confirmed in writing, were eventually embodied in a four-way pact between the CSP, the AITUC, the RTUC and the NFTU for joint action on specific issues like the war danger, government repression and the JPC Report. Such joint action was to take the form of meetings and demonstrations, observance of 'days' and anniversaries, and the issuing of statements and literature.

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1 Congress Socialist, 6 Jan. 1935.

2 BHS, file 800(75)A-II, pp. 15, 29, 47: CID reports, n.d.

3 Congress Socialist, 16 Dec. 1934.

4 BHS, file 800(75)A-11, pp. 15, 29, 47: CID reports, n.d.

5 'Report of United Front Committee, A.I.C.S.P.', J. P. Narayan to Secretary, Gujerat CSP, 25 March 1935, JPP.

The following cease-fire conditions were to be observed at joint functions: a cessation of mutual criticism and aspersions, prior agreement on resolutions, slogans, banners and leaflets, 'no advocacy of violence or non-violence', and no partisan appeals or membership enrolment. The bilateral agreement between the CSP and the RTUC included an additional clause, reserving to each party 'the right of genuine and honest criticism of the political principles and policies of the other from its independent platform'.[1]

The above pact constituted the basis of the CSP's united front policy. Provincial party units were now instructed to set up local united front committees to implement joint action[2], while the CSP and the AITUC made efforts for a full merger of the three labour federations. In January 1935, the All India Press Workers' Conference issued an appeal to the RTUC, the AITUC, the NFTU and the All India Railwaymen's Federation (AIRF) to join it in a united front[3]. The AITUC followed this up by drafting a unity platform which reflected the influence of the CSP. It included acceptance of the principle of class struggle, non-affiliation to any foreign organisation, annual decision of the question of I.L.O. representation, acceptance of the principle of a single union in each industry, and recognition of the AITUC as 'the Central Organisation of the Indian working class'.[4]

After two unity conferences, sponsored by the CSP and the AITUC respectively, the RTUC agreed in April to a merger with the AITUC. In August, an All India Joint Labour Board was also established to co-ordinate the activities of the AITUC and the NFTU. Its general secretary, R. S. Ruikar, and two of its six members were CSP members[5].

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1 Quoted in Masani, The Communist Party of India, p. 54.

2 J. P. Narayan to Secretary, Gujerat CSP, 25 March 1935, JPP.

3 Congress Socialist, 13 Jan. 1935.

4 Congress Socialist, 27 Jan. 1935, Report of D. L. Pathak, Secretary, AITUC.

5 AICC, file L-I, 1936: Circular of All India Joint Labour Board, 11 Jan. 1936.

According to government intelligence, the AITUC leadership was now particularly eager for a merger with the NFTU in order to offset the renewed Communist presence in its ranks and to block a possible Communist bid for leadership[1]. For the time being, however, the NFTU proved unwilling to offer more than fraternal co-operation, and it was not till 1938 that a full-fledged merger took place.

Even though the labour unity achieved under CSP auspices remained partial, it was enough to cause considerable alarm in official circles. The head of government intelligence observed in August 1935 that the Communists had 'obtained a considerable footing in the AITUC' and that 'an alliance between all three bodies, the Red TUC, the AITUC . . . and the NTUF, would be dangerous and would . . . spell disaster to moderate trade unionism in India'[2].

CSP influence on the expanded AITUC was reflected in the active political role which the latter now began to play in the nationalist movement. In January 1935, the AITUC executive resolved to launch a nation-wide agitation against the JPC Report 'in alliance with other anti-imperialist groups . . . such as the Congress Socialist Party and the Congress'[3]. During the following months, the AITUC joined with the CSP in a series of mass demonstrations and meetings to mobilise opinion against the constitutionalist trend in the Congress leadership.

In accordance with the CSP's policy of linking class organisations with the Congress, the AITUC initiated negotiations with the Congress for an anti-imperialist alliance. The AITUC's economic and labour demands on the Congress were closely modelled on the 'Immediate Demands' listed in the CSP programme and emphasised the urgency of protecting workers from wage-cuts and redundancy[4]. The AITUC's position on the constitutional issue also resembled the CSP's, stressing the danger of the Congress forming

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1 NA, file 7/4/35: DIB, 'Report on Trade Union Movement', 6 Aug. 1935.

2 Ibid.

3 Congress Socialist, 13 Jan. 1935.

4 AICC, file L-I, 1935: Statement by R. S. Ruikar, AITUC President, 23 May 1935.

provincial ministries under the new Constitution, reiterating the slogan of a constituent assembly and warning against Congress support for a future imperialist war[1]. The AITUC urged the Congress to form a comprehensive alliance with it on terms which included an electoral pact for the next provincial elections, the formation of united front committees from the national down to the local level, and recognition of itself as the sole representative of labour[2]. Shortly before the Lucknow Congress session, the AITUC, in consultation with the CSP, drafted a scheme for collective affiliation and representation of trade unions in the Congress[3].

The Congress leadership, however, was unwilling to accept the TUC's terms. It refused to confer on the AITUC the exclusive recognition that the latter desired, and instead appointed a Labour Sub-Committee to negotiate with the Joint Board of the AITUC and the NFTU[4]. The Congress Parliamentary Party refused to espouse labour demands in the Central Legislative Assembly, remaining indifferent to the Government's Payment of Wages Bill and refusing to bring a motion of censure against retrenchment and wage-cuts in the G.I.P. Railway, despite urgent requests from the AITUC[5].

The resulting breakdown of talks between the Congress and the AITUC provided a set-back for the CSP's line in the AITUC and encouraged separatist elements. When the AITUC executive met at Nagpur in January 1936, the idea of a separate Labour Party was mooted to contest the provincial elections on a platform independent of the Congress. This was a direct challenge to the CSP's policy of Congress-

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1 AICC, file L-I, 1935: R. S. Ruikar to Rajendra Prasad, 23 Aug. 1935.

2 Ibid.: R. A. Khedgikar, General Secretary, AITUC, to Rajendra Prasad, 31 May 1935; ibid.: R. S. Ruikar to Acharya Kripalani, General Secretary, AICC, 28 Aug. 1935; and Maniben Kara, Acting President, AITUC, to J. Nehru, Congress President, 9 April 1936, JNP.

3 AICC, file L-I, 1936: R. A. Khedgikar, 'Circular from General Secretary, AITUC, to Affiliated Unions', 3 March 1936.

4 AICC, file L-I, 1935: Rajendra Prasad to R. S. Ruikar, 3 Sept. 1935.

5 K. Pandya, 'Scrap the Congress Parliamentary Board', Congress Socialist, 4 April 1936.

labour unity, and the party leadership condemned it as a 'constitutionalist' and 'reformist' move. The party organ reminded the AITUC:

> 'The radicalisation of the ideology and leadership of the National Congress is the immediate task. That task can be performed only by a party that is organically connected with the Congress and as such can influence it most effectively. . . . The correct tactics for the working class is to evolve through association and participation a socialist leadership to the anti-imperialist movement. The CSP shows the way and trenches the path.'[1]

Although the CSP had its way and a new Labour Party did not materialise, the proposal was an indication of the problems facing the CSP's labour strategy. The AITUC leadership was a coalition of Congress Socialists, Royists and Communists, in which the CSP could legitimately claim to be the largest single group. Nevertheless, the CSP's numerical strength in the AITUC was not an accurate index of the party's labour following, depending as it did on the nominal allegiance of Royist and other trade union leaders who had joined the CSP as an access route to the Congress. The CSP's position in the labour movement depended mainly on its capacity to deliver the goods within the Congress; and CSP hegemony in the AITUC was bound to be challenged in proportion to the reluctance of the Congress leadership to accommodate labour demands.

CSP activity in the trade unions during this period illustrated the problems of riding two horses at once and of reconciling the party's Congress loyalty with the requirements of a popular labour base. The Gujerat and Kerala CSP units, which were predominantly Marxist, attempted to organise labour militancy and build a genuine trade union base for the party. As a result, both units found themselves in a situation of open confrontation with local Congress leaders.

In January 1935, the Gujerat CSP joined the Communists in leading a strike of 35,000 Ahmedabad textile workers to protest against a 20 per cent wage-cut. Owing to the opposition of the Gandhian Textile Labour Association, the

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1 Congress Socialist, 4 Jan. 1936.

strike failed. Radical CSP and Communist labour leaders thereupon decided to form a rival and militant Mill Kamdar Union. The Ahmedabad branch of the CSP also organised a powerful municipal sweepers' union with a membership of 1100[1]. In April 1936, the Gujerat CSP's support for a strike by sweepers of the Broach municipality aroused the ire of local Congress leaders who controlled the municipality, and the latter enlisted the intervention of Sardar Patel[2].

In Kerala, the CSP, led by Nambudripad, already a Communist sympathiser, was active in labour organisation in Calicut. The Labour Sub-Committee of the Kerala PCC was controlled by the CSP, and the latter's labour programme was initially accepted by the PCC. The Labour Sub-Committee of the PCC accordingly launched an agitation against wage-cuts and succeeded in forcing certain employers to maintain the old wage-rate[3]. In February 1935, a strike by 700 workers of the Malabar Spinning and Weaving Company received active support from the Socialist-controlled Congress Labour Sub-Committee. Socialist labour agitation appears, however, to have caused serious concern to right-wing Congressmen in the province. A few months later, another strike in the same company was the cassus belli for a major feud between the Kerala CSP, which was backing the strike, and the PCC executive. Although the Socialists had a majority in the PCC, the right-wing controlled its executive and withheld financial support to the strikers. The dispute triggered off a successful offensive by the right to deprive the Socialists of their majority in the PCC and disaffiliate the CSP-controlled Malabar DCC[4].

Except in Gujerat and Kerala, the CSP had little direct impact on trade union activity. In the leading industrial centres of Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Kanpur, the party's role was nominal, being mediated by well-established trade

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1 Congress Socialist, 9 May 1936.

2 Dinkar Mehta to J. Nehru, 26 April 1936, JNP.

3 Congress Socialist, 10 March, 1935.

4 E. M. S. Nambudripad, 'Deadlock in Kerala Congress', undated article (1936), MP.

unionists who had recently joined it for their own purposes. In Bengal, various Royist members of the CSP were active in trade unions in their individual capacity; but the party organ confessed that the CSP per se had virtually no standing in the labour movement[1]. In Madras, a Congress Socialist Group was convened in March 1935 by the General Secretary of the M.S.M. Railway Employees' Union[2], but showed no signs of activity till it was joined by the Communists a year later. In the U.P., the CSP's labour work was entrusted to H. N. Shastri, the AITUC President who had recently joined the party[3], while CSP founder-leaders like Narendra Dev and Sampurnanand concentrated instead on the re-organisation of the Benares student movement and the provincial Congress Volunteer Corps[4].

To sum up, during the period between October 1934 and April 1936, the CSP devoted increasing attention to kisan and labour contacts as a means of building a following outside the Congress. Its efforts, however, were necessarily circumscribed by the limited experience and range of its Congress-oriented cadres and by the problems inherent in its strategy of acting as the link between a reluctant Congress, on the one hand, and militant class organisations on the other. Owing to these limiting factors, the CSP by 1936 had undertaken little direct kisan or labour activity, relying instead on alliances with the established leaders and organisations of these classes.

By the time the Lucknow Congress session met in April 1936, the CSP had achieved considerable success in unifying the kisan and labour movements, in recruiting well-known kisan and labour leaders to party membership and in committing kisan and labour organisations to its platform of radical nationalism. As the largest single group in the All India Kisan Committee and the AITUC, the CSP could claim to act as their spokesman in the Congress. Nevertheless, this

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1 Congress Socialist, 16 May 1936.

2 Ibid., 10 March 1935.

3 UPPA, 16 Feb. 1935.

4 Ibid., 29 June, 13 July, 27 July, 3 Aug. and 10 Aug. 1935.

success could only be temporary; and there were already signs of opposite tendencies within these class organisations. In the long run, alliances at the top and fragile, paper majorities could not compensate for the CSP's confusion of aims and its lack of grass-roots organisation. The CSP's hegemony in these class organisations ultimately depended on the party's utility as an umbrella organisation for the individuals and groups who possessed effective control of their machinery. Particularly crucial were the CSP's relations with its two Marxist rivals, the Roy Group and the CPI, who controlled between them most of the radical trade unions in the country.

The CSP and the Roy Group

The CSP's relations with the Roy Group dated back to the earliest stages of the party's formation. Though in prison from 1931 to 1936, M. N. Roy remained a figure of awe and reverence in left-wing circles, and his writings had considerable ideological influence on Congress Socialists like J. P. Narayan. Charles Mascarenhas, an ex-Royist, had been one of the three who drafted the original Nasik programme for a Congress Socialist Party, incorporating Roy's minimum programme. Though expelled from the Roy Group about this time, Mascarenhas had retained a strong personal loyalty to Roy and acted as the CSP's main link with the Royists and the trade union movement[1]. At Mascarenhas's initiative, the Calcutta Royists had joined the CSP soon after its Patna conference and had been active in organising its Bengal unit[2].

In Bombay, the Roy Group had held a number of joint demonstrations and rallies with the CSP between March and October 1934. The CSP's Bombay conference in October had been attended by several Royist observers, and had adopted, despite opposition from pro-Communist elements, the Royist demand for a constituent assembly 'elected by local committees of deputies of workers, peasants and other

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1 Interview with C. Mascarenhas, Bombay, March 1973.

2 Haithcox, op. cit., pp. 227-8.

exploited classes'[1]. Government intelligence was quick to perceive that the Royists were functioning as an effective 'ginger group' within the CSP[2].

While the CSP leadership regarded these early relations with the Royists as a preliminary to the merger of the latter into the CSP[3], the Royists from the outset harboured strong reservations about the structure and programme of the party. These were discussed at some length in a secret Royist document of 1934. The 'ultra-left' line of the CPI and its characterisation of the CSP as 'social fascist' was firmly rejected as 'insane'. The Royist thesis argued instead that 'genuine Left tendencies within the reformist ranks must always be supported as against the right'. The CSP was described as 'a radical tendency within the Congress' which must be 'supported and brought under our influence'. The emergence of the party was identified with a 'petty bourgeois revolt within the Congress', and its proper function was defined as work in and through Congress committees for the transformation of the Congress into an anti-imperialist, as distinct from a socialist, organisation. The tendency within the CSP leadership towards a discrete organisation, which would function as an independent party outside the Congress, was sharply criticised as a hindrance both to nationalist unity and to the organisation of a genuinely revolutionary socialist party. The thesis asserted:

> 'It /the CSP/ must be kept as a loose mass organisation within the Congress itself and must not be allowed to grow into a solid party governing all the activities of its members, must not be allowed to usurp the role of the Communist Party or obscure the necessity of its formation and active work. . . . The efforts to set up Congress Socialist parties as rivals to . . . local Congress Committees are misdirected and will lead to isolation of the radical elements.'

Thus, the task of Royist members of the CSP was to control and develop the party as a loose Left Bloc within

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1 All India CSP, op. cit.

2 NA, file 7/20/34: Home Secretary, Government of India, 'Note on Royist Organisations', 5 Oct. 1934.

3 J. P. Narayan, 'Problems of Socialist Unity', Towards Struggle (Bombay, 1946), p. 161.

4 AICC, file G-23, 1934: no title, n.d.

the Congress and to prevent its emergence as a rival either to the Congress or to revolutionary socialism as represented by the Roy Group[1]. This line followed logically enough from the refusal of the Royists to recognise the CSP as a socialist party. But it was hardly compatible with the CSP leadership's view of itself or with the latter's desire to build a disciplined and centralised party organisation extending down to the local level and the trade unions. Here lay the seeds of future discord which would culminate in the bitter rupture of 1937. The CSP-Royist alliance was dependent on the continuance of the CSP as a broad radical platform at the All India and provincial level, which the Royists could hope to dominate and utilise as a pressure-group in the Congress. As the CSP attempted to strengthen its organisational base, especially in the trade unions, its relations with the Roy Group were bound to decline.

The Royists, organised as a secret, underground party, worked as a disciplined fraction within the CSP[2]. Their aim was to use the CSP as a convenient access-route to national and provincial Congress politics, while resisting any attempts by the party leadership to interfere with their independent activity. The Royist view of the CSP as a broad platform rather than a political party made the Roy Group a natural ally of those local and provincial Congress Socialists who were opposed to the centralised organisational line imposed by the CSP leadership at the Bombay conference. The Royists were soon demanding that the CSP abandon its Utopian aim of converting the Congress to socialism and its counter-productive efforts to function as a discrete opposition party within provincial and local Congress bodies. In May 1935, in her presidential address to the Kerala Labour Conference, Maniben Kara, a prominent Bombay trade unionist, openly voiced this view when she asserted: 'If the CSP drops the false colours of socialism and works as a radical left-wing of the Congress and not as

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1 Loc. cit.

2 Haithcox, op. cit., p. 250.

a separate party, it will be able to play a creditable role'[1].

About this time, a manifesto issued by the Royist RPIWC officially welcomed the rise of the CSP as 'a hopeful symptom' and 'a tendency in the right direction', while maintaining that the CSP had made 'a false start'[2]. It pointed out that the CSP's aim of persuading the Congress to accept socialism 'pre-supposed the Gandhist faith that social transformation, or even transfer of political power, can be brought about by persuasion'. It followed from the milti-class composition of the Congress that it could only be converted to 'revolutionary nationalism', not socialism. 'The peasantry', the manifesto warned, 'will be the major factor in the /revolutionary nationalist/ movement; and the peasants do not love socialism. They want to own the land they cultivate. Creating a class of peasant proprietors is not socialism.'

Comparing the CSP programme to European Social Democracy, the Royists argued that the CSP's 'conscious selection of the name "Socialist" as against "Communist"' had 'a distinct political significance', implying 'negation of the necessity of revolution - of the capture of power by the working class'. The CSP was therefore asked to drop this 'ill-chosen label' and address itself to its legitimate task of radicalising the Congress. Meanwhile, all genuine socialists and communists were asked to join in a united socialist party, 'the consciously revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat', the organisation of which had already been undertaken by the Roy Group[3].

By July 1935, Royist pressure had contributed towards a partial change in the CSP's Bombay line. In its 'Benares Statement of Policy', the CSP executive abandoned the aim

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1 Free Press Journal, 28 May 1935.

2 RPIWC, Manifesto of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Party of the Indian Working Class (The Communist Party), n.d., submitted to the 7th World Congress of the Communist International, 1935, PCJA.

3 Ibid.

of converting the Congress to 'full-fledged Socialism' in favour of an anti-imperialist programme of 'full economic and political freedom for all the exploited classes of the country'[1]. Nevertheless, while moderating the party's Congress strategy, the statement, in deference to the desire of CSP Marxists for unity with the Communists, simultaneously proclaimed the CSP a Marxist party.

The Royist-controlled Maharashtra CSP reacted sharply to these Marxist claims in a counter-statement describing the Benares line as 'a fundamental alteration in the character and role of the Party' and an attempt to give it the misleading appearance of a communist party[2]. The Royist statement stressed that a genuine Marxist party must exist independently of the Congress, that the 'social composition and ideological outlook' of the CSP's members made it essentially a 'petty bourgeois' organisation, and that 'a major surgical operation' would be required to transform it into a communist party. Even if these conditions were met, the Royists argued, a new left bloc would have to be created to carry on the CSP's present task of radicalising the Congress. To avoid unnecessary confusion and duplication, therefore, the logical task of Marxists in the CSP must be to preserve the party as 'the radical, anti-imperialist organisation of all left elements in the Congress', while joining with other Marxist groups outside the CSP to build 'an independent mass Communist Party'.

While dismissing the CSP's Marxist pretensions, the Royist statement welcomed the Benares decision 'that the CSP should in the Congress strive for the adoption of an anti-imperialist programme and not a Socialist one'. This should set at rest, the Royists commented, 'the doubts entertained by a number of comrades and put a brake on the leftist deviations alienating a large number of Congressmen. This recommendation . . . reduces the declaration that the CSP is a Marxist socialist party to a mere academic statement.

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1 Bombay Chronicle, 7 Aug. 1935.

2 Bombay CID, file 2/CSP/34: 'Statement of Policy of the Maharashtra CSP', n.d. (1935).

Differences on the Benares statement should not, therefore, lead to any serious differences in practical action. . . .'[1]

The dispute over the CSP's Marxist character, however, proved to be more than a minor academic debate. Though the CSP leadership had tacitly accepted the logic of Royism in its revised attitude to the Congress, Royist aspersions on the party's Marxist credentials were unpalatable at a moment when the CSP was trying to establish its bona fides with the Comintern and the CPI[2]. Royist criticism was therefore attributed to sectarianism and interpreted as a threat to the very existence of the CSP. In August 1935, provincial party units were instructed that 'in view of the policy of the Roy Group . . . to enter the Party with the purpose of liquidating it, no individual known to be a member of that group should be admitted into the Party'[3]. Those Royists who were already CSP members were to be asked to account for their group's policy[4]. In Bombay, these tensions resulted in the temporary expulsion from the party of M. R. Shetty, a prominent Royist trade unionist[5].

The Royists responded with a long theoretical thesis addressed to the CSP executive at the time of the party's second annual conference at Meerut in December 1935[6]. The thesis lamented the conflict of the previous months, promised that in future the CSP's Royist members would, despite their reservations, loyally abide by the official CSP line, and welcomed - tongue in cheek - the CSP's conversion to Marxism. It then proceeded to point out the logical implications of this conversion and the contradictions arising from the CSP's existing programme and structure.

The immediate task of the CSP, the Royists pointed out, remained, as it should be, the creation of an alternative leadership for the Congress. But this task could only

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1 Loc. cit.

2 See pp. 143-4.

3 J. P. Narayan to Secretary, Bihar CSP, 31 Aug. 1935, JPP.

4 Ibid.

5 Bombay Chronicle, 24 Dec. 1935.

6 Roy Group to CSP executive, 21 Dec. 1935, MP.

be performed on a 'platform of democratic anti-imperialism by an organised left-wing of the Congress, acting as such with no other party label'. For a revolutionary proletarian party to attempt to capture the Congress was a contradiction in terms. Such an attempt would involve either the dissolution of the Congress as a multi-class, nationalist organisation or the betrayal of revolutionary socialism for 'reformism' of the social democratic variety. If, therefore, the CSP was serious about its commitment to Marxism, it should take the following concrete steps: refrain in nationalist politics from using a party label, merging instead into a broad-based Congress left; establish its own party organisation independently of the Congress, instead of functioning as an adjunct of the latter; and create a secret, underground apparatus to implement its revolutionary objectives.

Pointing to government repression against the CPI, the Royists argued that a revolutionary socialist party could not hope to function openly and legally. If the CSP retained its present organisational form, it would either be destroyed by government repression or degenerate into the 'reformism' of European Social Democratic parties. The CSP was therefore reminded that a revolutionary ideology necessarily required a revolutionary organisational structure.

For the immediate future, the Royist thesis pleaded the urgent need for a coherent alternative programme to combat the strong ministerialist trend in the Congress. The CSP leadership was urged to reconsider its rejection of a series of draft resolutions published by the Roy Group for this purpose. The Royists expressed particular concern that the CSP had 'grown rather lukewarm' about the slogan of a constituent assembly. To resolve these tactical differences and organise a Left Bloc in the Congress, the CSP was asked to participate in a Radical Conference of Congressmen to coincide with the next Congress session.

The Royist thesis was logical enough in its analysis of the CSP's contradictions, and especially in its criticism of the CSP's desire to play simultaneously the conflicting

roles of a revolutionary socialist party and a broad-based Congress opposition. Nevertheless, the Royist proposals could hardly have been accepted by the CSP leadership. The ideology and composition of the latter made it inconceivable that it would seriously consider converting the party into an underground organisation. At the same time, the proposal that the party become an anonymous constituent of a wider left platform in the Congress was a direct repudiation of the CSP's claim to be the chief spokesman of the Congress left. In these circumstances, the Royist proposals were at best dismissed as the impractical and academic formulations of a small, sectarian group with an 'inflated creed', or at worst condemned as a sinister ploy by the Roy Group to convert the CSP into 'a left platform which it could animate and dominate'[1].

In the absence of Roy in prison, his followers were themselves divided between moderates like Mascarenhas, who favoured a merger of the group into the CSP, and hard-line, labour militants like Maniben Kara and V. B. Karnik[2]. In view of these differences, the Royists were unable to play an effective role at the Meerut Conference of the CSP. When the party's national executive met at Meerut, its two Royist members repudiated the Royist critique of the CSP cited above and opted instead for the official political thesis drafted by the CSP leadership[3]. The latter accommodated the Royists to the extent of reiterating the Benares revision of the party's Congress strategy. But it categorically reaffirmed the CSP's claim to be a Marxist party and rejected any suggestions that it should function as a left bloc[4].

In the conference itself, most of the Royists voted for the official thesis, though a few moved an amendment to the party's programme, explicitly stating the party's task within the Congress to be the development of the latter

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1 Narayan, op. cit. p. 162.

2 Interview with C. Mascarenhas, Bombay, March 1973.

3 Narayan, op. cit. p. 162.

4 'Statement on Party's Nature, Task & Programme', AICSP, Meerut, 20 Jan. 1936, Congress Socialist, 29 Feb. 1936.

'into a real anti-imperialist organisation', in place of the original aim of converting the Congress to 'acceptance of the objects and programme of the Party'[1]. The amendment, which was regarded by the CSP leadership as a veiled attempt to revert to the repudiated Royist thesis, was overwhelmingly defeated.[2]

The decline of the Royists' influence in the CSP was related to the weakening of their trade union base following the revival of CPI activity in 1934. By the end of 1935 the CPI posed a serious threat to Royist control of important unions like the GKU[3]. The CPI was also in touch with sympathetic elements in the CSP leadership, and its influence was reflected in the Marxian formulations of the Meerut thesis.

Following this set-back, the Roy Group seems to have recognised the limitations of its position and moderated its tactics accordingly. For the next few months, the Royists worked harmoniously with the CSP leadership, despite some factional disputes in the Bombay labour movement[4]. In March 1936, in an article in the Congress Socialist, Mascarenhas warmly endorsed the Meerut thesis as a welcome clarification both of the CSP's commitment to Marxism and of its anti-imperialist Congress strategy[5].

Soon after the Meerut conference, a group of prominent Royist trade unionists in Bombay, led by Maniben Kara, announced their desire to join the CSP 'as a radical left-wing within the Indian National Congress' and 'to strengthen this anti-imperialist wing in order to convert the Congress into a powerful anti-imperialist organisation'[6]. This statement fell far short of an acceptance of the Meerut thesis and the socialist claims of the CSP; and it was

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1 'Amendments to Party Constitution & Programme', n.d. (1936), JPP.

2 Narayan, loc. cit.

3 Haithcox, op. cit., p. 210.

4 Narayan, loc. cit.

5 C. Mascarenhas, 'The Meerut Thesis', Congress Socialist, 28 March, 1936.

6 Bombay Chronicle, 27 Jan. 1936.

interpreted in some sections of the press as a Royist move to 'subvert' the CSP from within[1]. The CSP leadership, however, was sufficiently encouraged by it to believe that the Roy Group intended to merge into the party; and the ban on admission of Royists was accordingly lifted[2].

Royist entry into the CSP, despite objections to its structure and programme, paid dividends by bringing some important organisational posts under Royist control. Though their representation on the CSP's All-India executive was limited to two sympathisers, Royist influence was considerable in certain provincial units. In Bengal, Rajani Mukherji, general secretary of the provincial CSP, was a Royist, as were a majority of the provincial executive[3]. Royist fractions were also active in the Maharashtra, Gujerat, Kerala, Punjab and Sind units of the CSP. In Maharashtra, the Royists were especially prominent in the Poona and Sholapur branches of the CSP. V. M. Tarkunde, later one of Roy's most trusted deputies, and R. K. Khadilkar were secretaries of the Maharashtra CSP. In Gujerat, the Royists had a sizable following in the Ahmedabad CSP, based on their position in the Mill Kamdar Union, and were represented by Thakoreprasad Pandya on the executive of the Gujerat CSP. In Kerala, A. K. Pillai, a founder-leader of the provincial CSP, was a staunch Royist[4].

By April 1936, most members of the Roy Group had enrolled in the CSP. Nevertheless, it was already clear that this was a tactical expedient, which utilised the CSP as a legal propaganda forum and recruiting-ground and as a spring-board within the Congress.

The CSP leadership, for its part, remained unwilling, despite its proclaimed desire for a merger, either to admit the Royists to positions of All India leadership in the party or to accept the implications of a fully Royist line. While the Royists were able indirectly to exert a considerable

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1 Bombay Sentinel, 24 Jan. 1936.

2 Narayan, loc. cit.

3 Haithcox, op. cit., p. 228.

4 Ibid., p. 229.

formative influence on the CSP's nationalist programme and strategy, their influence was never formally recognised and was firmly resisted where it challenged the party's organisational structure and socialist claims. By the end of 1935, Royist influence in the CSP was being further curtailed by the latter's development of united front relations with the CPI. The latter had always been more hostile to Royism, viewed as a betrayal from within, than to the Congress leadership itself. The Communists, as we shall see below, identified Royism with the 'right-wing' of the CSP, and their line within the CSP directly contradicted that of the Roy Group in certain important respects.

By the time of the Lucknow Congress session, it was becoming evident that there were serious tactical differences between the CSP leadership and the CPI, on the one hand, and the Royists, on the other, regarding the concrete 'anti-imperialist' demands to be placed before the Congress. In particular, these differences turned on the questions of collective affiliation of class organisations to the Congress and acceptance of office by the Congress under the 1935 constitution. While the CSP and the CPI favoured collective affiliation as a means of radicalising the Congress and opposed office acceptance as a means of countering its right-wing, the Royists were moving in an opposite direction.

Roy's plan for democratising the Congress emphasised the necessity of reactivating its primary units and utilising them to secure control of the organisation[1]. Initially, when the CSP first considered the question of collective affiliation, Roy had agreed to the proposal as an adjunct to individual enrolment[2]. Nevertheless, within a year, Roy was strongly opposing the proposal as a measure which would fragment and weaken the Congress organisation[3]. Roy's change of mind derived not merely from a concern for nationalist unity, but from his strong objections to a

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1 Haithcox, op. cit., p. 226.

2 M. N. Roy to the CSP, May 1934, in Roy, Letters by M. N. Roy to the Congress Socialist Party (Bombay, 1937), p. 17.

3 Ibid., p. 17n.

separate class organisation of the peasantry, whose desire for property rights in land he considered a dangerous obstacle to proletarian leadership of a socialist revolution[1]. On the question of office acceptance, the Royist position dated back to Roy's advocacy in April 1934 of the adoption of council entry by the Congress left as a means of stealing the Swarajist platform and giving it a radical content[2]. As noted previously, the CSP, though initially receptive to this idea, had committed itself in October 1934, to the boycott of council entry. While suspending its objection to electoral activity in 1935, the party was now leading a campaign against office acceptance. Roy, on the other hand, was soon to dissociate himself from this stand, arguing that office acceptance should be utilised by Congress radicals to strengthen their position in the Congress organisation and expose the compromises and failures of right-wing Congress ministries[3].

These differences remained, for the moment, beneath the surface. But following Roy's release in November 1936, they were to become public disputes on which the Royists would align with right-wing Congress constitutionalists against the CSP, the CPI and the rest of the Congress left.

The CSP and The Communists

J. P. Narayan, the CSP's leading Marxist and the architect of the CSP-CPI united front, later identified as follows the fundamental differences between the two parties at the time of the CSP's inauguration: while the CPI was a section of the Third International, the CSP's 'very birth was in opposition to the line of the International'; while the CPI considered the Congress a bourgeois organisation which must be combatted, the CSP saw the Congress as 'a mass national organisation which socialists must enter and develop along their own lines'; and while the CPI saw itself as 'the only true socialist party with a right to exist', the CSP stood for a policy of immediate co-operation with other

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1 Haithcox, op. cit., pp. 261-4.

2 M. N. Roy, 'Whither Congress?', 15 April 1934, Roy Papers.

3 Haithcox, op. cit., p. 274.

socialist groups leading to the re-unification of the trade union movement and the eventual emergence of a united socialist party[1]. M. R. Masani, who represented the non-Marxist section of the CSP leadership, has mentioned a fourth and even more basic difference which he calls 'temperamental'[2]. This difference, according to Masani, accounted for the 'ambivalent attitude' of the CSP to Moscow, involving admiration for the Soviet Union 'without wanting to be bound to her for anything more than inspiration', and for the fact that CSP leaders 'without being able to formulate it, . . . were - despite their allegiance to Marxism - deeply and increasingly influenced by Gandhism'.

In view of these differences, it is not surprising that the formation of the CSP was strongly condemned by the CPI and the Comintern. In a blistering attack on the CSP programme, R. Palme Dutt pointed out that it ignored basic Marxist concepts of class struggle and dictatorship of the proletariat, likened the Congress Socialists to the Nazis and identified the party with a 'manoeuvre of the bankrupt Congress leadership' whose real aim was 'the subordination of the working class and peasantry to the political leadership of the bourgeoisie'[3]. Ben Bradley, in a similar diatribe, quoted the CSP leadership's reply to the Congress Working Committee's resolution on class war to show that the CSP was firmly committed to the Gandhian creed of non-violence[4]. Nevertheless, by October 1934 when the Bombay Socialist conference met, joint action by Socialists and Communists had already begun on certain specific issues, and preparations were under way for a more comprehensive and formal united front agreement.

To explain these developments, it is necessary to outline the evolution of Communist strategy since 1931.

The arrest of the front-rank Communist leadership in the Meerut Conspiracy Case of 1929 had seriously weakened Communist organisation. Soon after this, the

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1 Narayan, op. cit., p. 168.

2 Masani, op. cit., pp. 53-4.

3 R. Palme Dutt,'"Congress Socialism": A Contradiction in Terms', Indian Forum, Oct. 1934, PCJA.

4 B. Bradley, 'What the Congress Socialists Want', International Press Correspondence (Inprecor), 1934, PCJA.

implementation of the Comintern's 'ultra-left' line had isolated the CPI from the Congress rank and file and further undermined its position in the trade union movement. A document issued by the Bombay unit of the CPI conceded that 'in the minds of the workers there grew an opinion that we are doing nothing and that the Congress is the only organisation which is carrying on the fight against imperialism, and therefore workers began to follow the lead of the Congress'[1].

By May 1932, the Comintern was sufficiently alarmed by the collapse of its Indian section to initiate a serious attempt at reorganisation. An 'Open Letter to the Indian Communists' described the CPI as 'a small number . . . of weak groups, often isolated from the masses, disconnected with each other, politically not united and in some places not clearly differentiated from national reformism, adopting a conciliatory policy towards it'[2]. Though reiterating the anti-Congress line embodied in the 'Draft Platform' of 1930, the 'Open Letter' conceded: 'The biggest mistake made by Indian Communists consists of the fact that in reality they stood aside from the mass movement of the people against British imperialism'. To rectify this error, the CPI was asked to revive the tactic of united front 'from below', an appeal to the nationalist rank and file against its leadership.

Explaining this tactic in some detail, the 'Open Letter' stated: 'It is necessary to participate in all mass demonstrations organised by the Congress, coming forward with our own Communist slogans and agitation; . . . constantly criticising the Congress leaders, especially "left", and calling on the masses for higher forms of struggle'. The CPI was instructed to agitate for a nationwide no-tax and no-rent campaign and for a political general strike. Referring to the possibility of a new radical nationalist organisation being formed in opposition to Congress participation in the Round Table Conference, the 'Open

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1 Quoted without date in 'Open Letter to the Indian Communists', Communist Parties of China, Great Britain and Germany, May 1932, PCJA.

2 Ibid.

Letter' condemned such 'Left manoeuvres' as an attempt 'to fool the masses once more and organise if necessary a "safety valve" like the former League of Independence'. The CPI was reminded of the need for 'the sharpest differentiation, criticism and exposure of "Left" national reformism'.

Although the Comintern had instructed the CPI to restore its contacts with the nationalist rank and file, in practice such contact was impossible while the Communists remained isolated within the trade union movement and the latter as a whole kept aloof from the Congress. By the end of 1933, therefore, another 'Open Letter' was exhorting the CPI to abandon its uncompromising hostility to other labour groups and to work within non-Communist trade unions[1].

The CPI was also warned against confining its activity to labour disputes. While reiterating the need to expose 'Left National Reformists', the second 'Open Letter' described the CPI's task as being the creation of 'a united front of workers, peasants, students and urban poor' which would link the economic struggle with the struggle against the Constitution. The main points in such a united front campaign were to be a general strike, non-payment of rents, debts and taxes and the release of political prisoners. The last, of course, was a matter of primary concern for the CPI which had been debilitated for the last four years by the imprisonment of its most able leaders. In order to build the united front, the Communists were instructed to approach the Congress ranks and seek 'to attract all democratic groups capable of marching together with the working class along even part of the path against the imperialists'. While Communist unity with the nationalist movement would continue to be 'from below', the CPI was given permission to establish a full-fledged united front with other labour organisations, even to the extent of merging its own trade unions into 'mass national reformist trade unions'.

Most of the Meerut prisoners had been released by this

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1 'Open Letter to the Indian Communists' Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Inprecor, 1933, PCJA.

time; and they now engaged in strenuous efforts to reorganise the CPI in accordance with the Comintern's directives. The first step towards united front relations was taken at the All India Textile Workers' Conference of January 1934, at which the three rival trade union factions agreed to join in a textile general strike in Bombay. In the strike which followed in April 1934, Communists worked with Royist and other trade unionists in a joint strike committee. Following the arrest of the front-rank labour leaders, however, internal faction-fighting was responsible for the sudden collapse of the strike, a development for which the AITUC blamed 'the strike-splitting tactics of the Reds'[1]. Meanwhile, in the U.P., P. C. Joshi and A. K. Ghosh, the CPI leaders, were reported by Government intelligence to be working closely with H. N. Shastri (then President of the AITUC and soon to become a prominent member of the CSP) in the Kanpur labour movement and joined with him in June 1934 to form a Kanpur Workers' Socialist Party under AITUC auspices[2].

The moderation of Communist hostility to rival labour organisations did not at this stage extend to rival political parties. On the contrary, the emergence of radical groups within the Congress was seen as a serious threat to the CPI, stealing the latter's socialist rhetoric, obstructing its approach to the Congress rank and file and competing with it for control of the trade unions. Indeed, the Congress left, which challenged the CPI on its own ground, was regarded as a more dangerous opponent than the Congress leadership. A CPI manifesto issued in March 1933 admitted as much when it declared: 'The representatives of the left, Jawaharlal, Bose are even worse than the right and its representative, Gandhi, for the latter is at least frank

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1 'General Secretary's Report to the A.I.T.U.C. Session, Calcutta, 20 April 1935', JPP; and Congress Socialist, 16 Dec. 1934, 'Report of the AITUC's Committee of Enquiry into the causes of the failure of the Bombay Textile Strike'.

2 UPPA, 1934, pp. 157, 363, n.d.

in his confession that he is against the peasants and the workers'[1]. The Comintern, for the moment, shared this view. In December 1933, Inprecor, referring to Bose's proposal for a new socialist party, described radical nationalist leaders as 'agents of the bourgeoisie' and accused them of obstructing the development of a genuine revolutionary movement[2].

In March 1934, however, an article in Inprecor, which discussed the tactics appropriate to the newly-formed provincial CSPs, indicated that the Comintern line was softening. While rejecting the Royist policy of supporting or joining 'reformist' parties, the article stated that such parties and the Congress itself might be joined by Communist-controlled mass organisations, though not by the CPI itself, as a means of reaching the nationalist rank and file. The Communists were advised to adopt a flexible policy towards the infant Congress Socialist parties. 'The Communists should judge these parties by their deeds', the article stated, 'and accordingly determine their attitude towards them. These "Left" parties may appear revolutionary, but they will never go farther than the National Congress people. The Communists will have to show the masses the half-heartedness of these parties and point out the Communist path . . .' If the CSP called a general strike against the new constitution, the CPI was to support the strike and use it to advance new demands for the release of Communist prisoners, universal suffrage and the withdrawal of British troops. The Communists were not to oppose any anti-British measures launched by the CSP, even if they were limited to purely nationalist gestures like the boycott of British goods. Communist speakers were to participate in anti-Government public meetings, and the CPI was to join anti-Government demonstrations with its own slogans and banners[3].

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1 'Indian Revolution & Our Task: Manifesto of the Communist Party of India', Calcutta Committee of the CPI, March 1933, PCJA.

2 'The New Party of Bose and What Should be Our Attitude to it', Inprecor, 1 Dec. 1933, PCJA.

3 Orgwald, 'A Conversation with Indian Comrades', Inprecor, 29 March 1934, PCJA.

This new pragmatism soon became apparent in Bombay. Though openly hostile to the CSP programme and leadership, prominent Communists addressed public meetings organised by the Congress Socialists and the Royists on issues such as unemployment and the release of political prisoners. In the course of 1934, renewed Government repression against the CPI served to increase its reliance on legal platforms of this kind.

Several leading Communists were arrested during the Bombay textile strike of April 1934. In July the CPI was officially declared an unlawful association, and a few months later its various front organisations in Bombay were also proscribed[1]. Though willing for the present to tolerate the CSP, the Government, alarmed by the recent revival of Communist activity, appeared determined to isolate the CPI and crush it once and for all. In August 1934, the Director of Government Intelligence advised the Home Secretary:

> 'I feel that at the present time such propaganda should be directed only against Communist organisations. Provided that they are isolated, they will have few friends; but if we combine the attack on them with an attack on the Congress Socialist Party, we will have the whole of Congress ostensibly against us. . . . I do not for a moment suggest that the Congress Socialist Party should not be the subject of attack in future; but I do think that it is unwise to attack it now.'[2]

The CSP, occupying a relatively sheltered position beneath the Congress umbrella, afforded a legal platform from which the Communists, most of whom had now been driven underground, could continue to reach a mass audience. After their bitter experience of repression in previous years, the Communists were unlikely to spurn the possibilities of such legal activity, even if the Comintern had not been urging them in a similar direction. In response to these new imperatives, the CPI, by October 1934, had advanced to the position of offering the CSP a full-fledged united

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1 'Statement of the Government of Bombay to the Bombay Disturbances Enquiry Committee', 1938, Munshi Papers.

2 NA, file 7/13/34: DIB to Home Secretary, Government of India, 7 Aug. 1934.

front, provided the latter agreed to function independently of the Congress.

On 6 October, Communist leaders like S. V. Ghate, S. S. Mirajkar and Jamaluddin Bukhari attended a public meeting held by the Bombay CSP to discuss the issues before the forthcoming Congress session[1]. Three weeks later, a Communist contingent, which included Mirajkar, K. N. Joglekar and Philip Spratt, attended the Bombay Conference of the CSP[2]. The Communists took this opportunity to distribute a printed manifesto to the Congress Socialist delegates from the CPI leadership, calling for a genuinely anti-imperialist united front independent of the Congress[3].

The manifesto argued that Congress Socialism was a contradiction in terms and that the CSP was attempting the impossible. So long as the party remained a minority in the Congress, its role would inevitably be confined to 'socialism in words and Gandhism in deeds'. Nor could it hope, in view of the capitalist character of the Congress, to obtain a majority on the basis of a genuinely revolutionary programme. By accepting the existing Congress creed and constitution, the CSP was therefore condemning itself to the role of an impotent constitutional opposition within the Congress and eschewing independent anti-imperialist action. The Communists appealed to the CSP to join in 'an anti-imperialist conference of all the revolutionary elements' to draft a united front programme. The main points in such a programme would be complete independence, 'the establishment of a Workers' and Peasants' Republic' and various other demands similar to those proposed in the CSP programme. The immediate task of the united front would be the organisation of a nationwide campaign for a political general strike and non-payment of rural rents, taxes and debts. If this offer was accepted, the Communists

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1 BHS, file 800(75)A-I: CID report, 8 Oct. 1934.

2 BHS, file 800(75)A-I: CID 'Report on the Proceedings of the A.I.C.S. Conference, Bombay, Oct. 1934'.

3 Central Committee of the CPI, Comrades, Socialists and Revolutionary Youths (1934), PCJA.

would agree to 'a cessation of mutual criticism during the period of the United Front'.

While the Communist blue-print for a united front resembled in many respects the programme adopted by the CSP, there remained one major and as yet irremovable hurdle. While the CSP, like the Royists, was firmly committed to converting the Congress itself into the anti-imperialist front, the CPI proposed explicitly to exclude the Congress and required the formation of a rival Anti-Imperialist League. A Communist leaflet issued about this time declared:

> 'The workers, peasants and revolutionary middle class youth must combine on an <u>independent</u> united front platform to organise the fight against British Imperialism, and one of the main tasks of the united front will be to <u>expose</u> and <u>counteract</u> the treacherous manouevres of the Congress and its leadership.'[1]

Although CSP leaders later claimed that they had from the beginning 'passionately wooed' the Communists, with the latter remaining stubbornly hostile[2], on this occasion it was the CSP which rejected Communist overtures and refused to participate in the proposed Anti-Imperialist Conference. Government intelligence attributed this decision to the CSP's fear that its participation in such a venture would result in a major breach with the Congress leadership, while also exposing the party to Government repression[3]. This interpretation of the CSP's reluctance was shared by the CPI leadership, which complained:

> '. . . the leaders of the Congress Socialist Party, on being approached in this connection, said "We will have nothing to do with any such underground Anti-Imperialist Conference; we do not wish to endanger the very existence of our Party by associating with an underground conference. Had the conference been held openly, we could co-operate; but that too on condition that no organisation should emerge from the Conference, because . . . organisationally we belong to the Congress."'[4]

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1 'Call a Conference of all Genuine Anti-Imperialists to Launch the Anti-Imperialist League', signed '"Overground" Communists of Bombay', n.d. (1934), PCJA.

2 Masani, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 54; and Narayan, <u>op. cit.</u>, pp. 167, 170.

3 BHS, file 800(75)A-I: CID report, Poona, 13 Oct. 1934.

4 'To the Congress Socialists & Anti-Imperialist Revolutionaries' Provisional Central Committee of the CPI, n.d. (1934-35), PCJA.

So long as the anti-Congress line of the CPI remained unaltered, there was clearly no possibility of the CSP agreeing to a full-fledged united front. Meanwhile, the anti-Communist section of the CSP remained dominant. Communist-sponsored amendments were defeated or ruled out of order at the Bombay CSP conference[1]; and the rules framed by the party's newly-elected national executive specifically instructed provincial units not to admit Communists to party membership[2].

In its leaflet to the CSP conference, the CPI had posed as follows the question of the CSP's future strategy in the likely event of its programme being rejected by the forthcoming Congress session: 'Are you going to split away from the Congress with a strong protest to carry on independent anti-imperialist action, or serve as constitutional volunteers to further the programme of inaction, surrender and betrayal . . .?'[3] A few days later, the overwhelming rejection of the CSP programme at the Bombay Congress session justified Communist predictions and gave substance to their criticisms of the CSP's policy of constitutional opposition within the Congress.

Although the CSP leadership, despite its reverses at the Bombay Congress, continued to stand firm on the question of Congress membership, it could no longer ignore the need for new bases of support outside the Congress. The search for such support was bound to strengthen the arguments of those sections of the party who favoured an alliance with the Communists. At the same time, the Communists themselves were moving slowly towards a more flexible attitude to the Congress, driven in this direction by the Comintern's new 'Popular Front' line. It was not till April 1936, however, that these developments within the two parties had converged sufficiently to produce a formal alliance.

Although the Popular Front line was not formally adopted

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1 See p. 89.

2 BHS, file 800(75)A-I: General Secretary, All India CSP, Circular No. 2 to Provincial Secretaries, 13 Nov. 1934.

3 Central Committee of the CPI, loc. cit.

till the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern in August 1935, it is likely that the Indian Communists had been forewarned of the impending change of line and had begun to revise their strategy accordingly[1]. International considerations apart, the CPI had good reasons of its own to seek a legal mass platform from which it could evade government repression. Now that the CPI had softened its line to the extent of offering a united front to the CSP, formerly reviled as 'social fascist' and a greater threat than the Congress right-wing itself, it could only be a matter of time before the party modified its attitude to the Congress as a whole.

The Anti-Imperialist League mooted in October 1934 was the CPI's first concrete attempt at building a Popular Front. While including radical Congressmen, the League was designed to be independent of the Congress and sponsored by the Communists themselves. Despite the refusal of the CSP to participate, a Communist-sponsored Anti-Imperialist Conference was held towards the end of 1934 and was attended by sympathetic Congress Socialists from Bombay, Sholapur, Poona and Ahmedabad. The conference resolved to found an All India League against Imperialism, 'under the banner of which all the anti-imperialist groups, organisations and parties in India could unite'[2]. The League's programme embodied the CPI's minimum demands for a united front[3], and its manifesto strongly attacked the CSP for its quixotic slogan of capturing the Congress and its adoption of the Royist demand for a constituent assembly[4].

Pointing to the compromising attitude of the Congress to the new constitution, its vacillation regarding the war danger and its indifference to government repression against

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1 Masani, op. cit., p. 54.

2 Provisional Central Committee of the CPI, 'To the Congress Socialists & Anti-Imperialist Revolutionaries', n.d. (1935), PCJA.

3 Ibid.

4 Provisional Committee, Anti-Imperialist League, 'Manifesto of the Anti-Imperialist Conference, 1934', PCJA.

Communist and other revolutionaries, the CPI now called on the CSP leadership 'to find out methods of extra-legal cooperation with the All India League against Imperialism to forge a mighty united front of all revolutionary anti-imperialist forces in India'[1]. At the same time, the CPI applied pressure 'from below', appealing to the CSP's rank and file. The Communists ridiculed the desire of the CSP leadership 'to remain within the Congress at all costs' and its 'anxiety "not to endanger the existence of the party" by undertaking any serious revolutionary tasks'. They warned of a possible rank and file revolt within the CSP against this policy and cited the example of the party's Punjab unit, recruited largely from the pro-Communist Kirti Kisan Party, which had recently seceded from the CSP on the ground that it did not wish to be bound by Congress discipline[2].

The CSP leadership, meanwhile, sought to counter Communist criticism by a resort to competitive radicalism, attacking the CPI's united front programme for being too moderate. In his presidential address to the Gujerat Congress Socialist Conference in June 1935, Narendra Dev scornfully declared:

> 'I understand the ultra-leftists have produced a minimum programme of anti-Imperialist action and they want to make it the basis of their united front activities. The programme is not at all a fighting programme and is grossly inadequate for achieving success in the anti-imperialist struggle. There is no mention of organising the masses against their native exploiters. The economic demands of the workers and peasants that are incorporated in the programme are of a trivial nature and of a reformist character and large masses cannot be mobilised for the anti-imperialist struggle on the basis of such petty demands.'[3]

The real issue underlying this ideological warfare, however, was the question of Congress affiliation. A comparison of the Communist united front programme of October 1934 with the immediate programme adopted by the

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1 Provisional Central Committee of the CPI, loc. cit.

2 Provisional Central Committee of the CPI, loc. cit.

3 Narendra Dev, op. cit., pp. 76-7.

Bombay CSP conference reveals that the only concrete difference was the Communist goal of 'A Workers' and Peasants' Republic' as opposed to the Royist-CSP demand for a constituent assembly[1]. For the rest, Communist-Socialist disagreement concerned not the programme of a Popular Front but its organisational form, and in particular the role of the Congress in it. This point was emphasised by Narendra Dev in the above address when he inveighed against the CPI's subservience to Moscow and its consequent inability to appraise realistically the role of the Congress in Indian conditions.

Although this deep cleavage regarding the Congress ruled out for the time being a CSP-CPI alliance at the political level, it had not precluded a partial united front in the labour sphere. Early in 1935, the CSP took the initiative in negotiating an agreement with the RTUC and in promoting the re-affiliation of the latter with the AITUC[2]. In accordance with this agreement, the Bombay Communists participated in public meetings organised by the CSP and the AITUC regarding the new constitution, the war issue, Government repression and the ban on Communist organisations[3]. In November 1934, at a public meeting held jointly by the Bombay CSP and the 'E' Ward Congress Committee on the war issue, S. S. Mirajkar, the CPI leader, actually seconded and spoke for the official resolution[4]. CSP-CPI cooperation was also evident in labour disputes in Ahmedabad and Calicut in the early months of 1935[5].

Though not included in the provisions of the CSP-RTUC united front agreement, joint activity was also evident in the Kisan movement, in which the Communists were keen to acquire a foothold. A Communist contingent led by

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1 Central Committee of the CPI, loc. cit.; and All India CSP, op. cit.

2 See p. 111.

3 BHS, file 800(75)A-I: Commissioner of Police, Bombay, 10 Nov. 1934; Bombay Chronicle, 15 Jan. 1935; and BHS, file 800(75) A-II: CID Report, 4 Sept. 1935.

4 BHS, file 800(75)A-I: CID Report, 12 Nov. 1934.

5 See pp. 114-15.

H. D. Malaviya attended the annual conference of the UPKS in April 1935, distributing its own leaflets but voting with the CSP against the Congress right-wing[1]. Communist-Socialist cooperation in the peasant movement gathered momentum in the latter half of 1935, after the Seventh Congress of the Comintern. In Gujerat and Maharashtra, the two groups worked together under the leadership of I. Yagnik[2]. In Andhra, too, the secretary of the provincial CSP reported that there had been, since February 1935, 'an earnest effort . . . to join hands with socialist friends who are remaining outside the Congress', and that, following a rapprochement in October 1935, the two groups had been working smoothly together[3].

While joint activity at the provincial level was generally favourable to the development of a full-fledged All India alliance, it occasionally gave rise to considerable inter-organisational friction, especially in Bombay where the CSP was controlled by firmly anti-Communist elements. In March 1935, S. V. Ghate, General Secretary of the RTUC, complained to J. P. Narayan that the united front was not being respected by the Bombay CSP, which had announced a public meeting to observe a Detenu Day without prior consultation of the RTUC. Ghate urged the necessity for establishing joint committees to prevent such occurrences and implement the agreement[4]. The CSP, on the other hand, blamed the CPI for not honouring its part of the agreement. Narayan later commented on the CPI's role: 'In its secret propaganda, its attacks on the Party continued; and even at joint public functions it showed little regard for the clause in the agreement that said that no party should utilise a joint function for partisan propaganda.'[5] CSP-CPI rivalry in Bombay came to a head in September 1935 over the holding

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1 NA, file 7/5/35: District Magistrate's report on Kisan Conference, Allahabad, 27-28 April 1935.

2 See p. 103.

3 'Party News', Congress Socialist, 2 May 1936.

4 S. V. Ghate to J. P. Narayan, 1 March 1935, JPP.

5 J. P. Narayan, op. cit., p. 167.

of a provincial political conference.

The proposal for such a conference originated in a meeting of Communists and Royists and was conceived as a means of mobilising public opinion on the question of war resistance and on the danger of office acceptance by the Congress. The CSP was urged to participate[1], and a few days later the Bombay CSP agreed to take up the proposal[2]. Having tried and failed to persuade the Bombay PCC to sponsor the conference, the CSP decided to convene the conference itself without official Congress patronage[3], but to restrict attendance to Congress members. The latter proviso meant the exclusion of the Communists; but the CSP soon found itself under strong pressure from various Communist unions and front organisations to be allowed to participate. On 9 October, the Communist faction of the GKU resolved to march in procession to the conference and demand entry[4].

Meanwhile, the CSP organisers found themselves under even stronger pressure from the Congress leadership to abandon the conference altogether. On the eve of the conference, the Bombay PCC condemned it as a breach of Congress discipline, called upon all Congressmen to boycott it and threatened disciplinary action against those who participated[5]. Under fire from both right and left, the CSP decided at the last minute to cancel the conference and hold a public meeting instead. The meeting was disrupted by a Communist demonstration which denounced the CSP for its capitulation tc the PCC[6]. A few days later, the Communists and Royists decided jointly to organise a 'Radical Political Conference' of their own to make up for the CSP's failure to do so[7].

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1 BHS, file 800(75)A-II: CID Report, 4 Sept. 1935.

2 Times of India, 9 Sept. 1935.

3 Bombay Chronicle, 18 Sept. 1935.

4 BHS, file 800(75)A-II: Report of Commissioner of Police, 12 Oct. 1935.

5 Times of India, 11 Oct. 1935.

6 Times of India, 14 Oct. 1935.

7 BHS, file 800(75)A-II: Intelligence report, 18 Oct. 1935.

The above episode highlights the conflict inherent in a CSP-CPI united front. While the CPI saw the Congress at best as a tactically expedient platform, the CSP's organisational allegiance lay firmly with the Congress in any clash of interests. Also significant is the fact that on this occasion the Communists and Royists were both sufficiently incensed by the CSP's stand to suspend their own mutual animosity and work together. The same alignment was evident at the annual session of the U.P. Trade Union Congress in March 1935 where a resolution condemning Congress constitutionalism, moved by A. K. Ghosh, the CPI leader, was opposed by Sampurnanand and Rajaram Shastri, the CSP representatives, resulting in an outbreak of disorder[1].

Frustrated in its efforts to break down Communist hostility to the Congress, the CSP leadership attempted an indirect approach via the Comintern and the CPGB. In the summer of 1935, M. R. Masani visited London and Moscow as the CSP's representative. In London, Shapurji Saklatvala, the CPGB leader, put him in touch with a group of pro-Communist Indian students. The latter included individuals like Sajjad Zaheer and G. P. Hutheesing who offered to join the CSP on their return to India, provided the Comintern line changed as expected at the forthcoming World Congress. At J. P. Narayan's behest, Masani was also present in Moscow during the Comintern Congress on a mission to persuade the Comintern to transfer its support from the CPI to the CSP[2]. The CPGB leaders, Harry Pollitt, R. Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley, were deputed by the Comintern to negotiate with Masani regarding the possibilities of co-operation with the CSP. As instructed by Narayan, Masani took the position that the CSP would adopt associate, but not affiliate, status with the Comintern provided the Comintern disaffiliated the CPI or compelled it to merge into the CSP. Although the Comintern was unable to accept these terms, insisting that it must retain an affiliated section in India, the talks were friendly and ended with agreement on the need for maximum co-operation[3].

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1 UPPA, 16 March 1935.

2 Interview with M. R. Masani, March 1973.

3 Ibid.; and Overstreet & Windmiller, op. cit., p. 159.

Masani's Moscow visit appears to have caused considerable speculation and some apprehension among rival socialist groups in India. 'Angling for gold!' was M. N. Roy's cynical comment on the purpose of Masani's trip. 'And in their present mood of all-embracing liberalism', he complained 'the Moscow gods will be quite likely to bark up /sic/ the S.P. /CSP/. That would make our position more difficult.'[1] The Royists, who had themselves been making unsuccessful efforts for re-admission to the Comintern and for reunification with the CPI, certainly had no cause to welcome the CSP's independent initiative in this direction[2]. The 'official' Communists, however, had even greater cause for concern. In the following months, the CSP's independent contacts with the Comintern representatives was to increase pressure on the CPI to moderate its tactics; and the CSP's propaganda against CPI 'sectarianism' was able to quote liberally from the pragmatic pronouncements of the CPGB leaders with whom Masani had fraternised.

The resolutions adopted by the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern marked a drastic reversal of the colonial thesis of 1928. With reference to India, the new line meant the participation of the CPI with the Congress in a Popular Front against imperialism and a Communist alliance with the Congress left for this purpose. The Comintern's resolution on India attributed the impressive growth of Indian Communism between 1924 and 1928 to its espousal of nationalism and accordingly instructed the CPI:

> 'In India the Communists have to support, extend and participate in anti-imperialist mass activities, not excluding those which are under national reformist leadership. While maintaining their political and organisational independence, they must carry on active work inside the organisations which take part in the Indian National Congress, facilitating the process of crystallisation of a national revolutionary wing among them . . .'[3]

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1 NA, file 38/10/35: M. N. Roy to 'friends', 25 Nov. 1935.

2 RPIWC, Manifesto of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Party of the Indian Working Class (The Communist Party) n.d., submitted to the 7th World Congress of the Communist International, 1935, PCJA.

3 As quoted in NA, file 7/7/37: DIB, 'Review of the Recent Communist Activities in India', n.d. (1937).

The decisions of the Comintern Congress were warmly acclaimed by the CSP leadership as a vindication of its own line and a rejection of the strategy followed by the CPI during the last five years. In an article in the Congress Socialist, Masani pointed to the speeches of the Indian and Chinese delegates at the Seventh Congress 'which admitted that among other parties the Communist Party in India had followed a mistaken policy of "ultra-Leftist sectarianism"'.[1] He also referred to the speech by Palme Dutt 'in which he admitted that they had been guilty of calling people "Social Fascists" who were not Fascists at all and of thus confusing the workers and preventing them from recognising their real enemies'. 'To the Congress Socialists', Masani ironically commented, 'this speech must be particularly gratifying because among those whom Rajni Palme Dutt himself had labelled "Social Fascist" was the Congress Socialist Party in this country!'

The concrete application of the new Comintern line to India was discussed openly in Inprecor[2]. While continuing to criticise the CSP as a 'new and more cunning' weapon of the Congress left to combat Communist influence, the Comintern warned the CPI against 'sectarianism'. Revolutionary organisations, while preserving their independence, should join the Congress on a collective basis to fight for an anti-imperialist programme which would include boycott of the councils and a mass struggle against the new constitution. 'The National Congress', wrote the Comintern, 'presents not only a certain field for legal activity . . .; it presents also a political arena in which the different groupings of the Indian exploiting classes take definite form. . . . it is necessary that organisations which really represent the workers, peasants and petty bourgeois youth utilise this arena in their own interests'.

The above injunctions were confined to Communist participation in the Congress through the collective affiliation of Communist-controlled class organisations and

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1 M. R. Masani, 'A United International?', Congress Socialist, 21 Dec. 1935.

2 'Problems of the Anti-Imperialist Struggle in India', Inprecor, 1935, PCJA.

continued to stress the 'bourgeois' class character of the Congress and its left-wing. A few months later, however, the 'Dutt-Bradley Thesis' went several steps further in its advocacy of Communist unity with the nationalist movement. The thesis took the form of an article by Palme Dutt and Bradley, the CPGB leaders, addressed initially to the CPI and shortly after to the CSP and the Congress left[1]. The article laid down the creation of a 'United Anti-Imperialist People's Front' as 'the key need of the present situation'. It went on to make the remarkable admission that the Congress was 'the principal existing mass organisation of many diverse elements seeking national liberation'. While pointing out that the existing constitution, programme and leadership of the Congress would have to be altered to make it genuinely representative of the masses, Dutt and Bradley conceded the possibility that the Congress 'by the further transformation of its organisation and programme, may become the form of realisation of the Anti-Imperialist People's Front'.

The Dutt-Bradley proposals for radicalising the Congress closely resembled those of the CSP. They called for collective affiliation and delegate representation of class organisations in the Congress and, pending the necessary changes in the Congress constitution, the establishment of a united front between the Congress and 'all existing mass organisations'. The proposed changes in the Congress programme were similar to the immediate demands of the CSP, including the demand for a constituent assembly - so far condemned as a Royist heresy - as 'a central rallying slogan for the whole movement'.

In sharp contrast to previous Comintern warnings against the dangerous 'manoeuvres' of the Congress left, the article called for a united front of 'all left wing elements in the Congress' to fight for the above changes. The need for such an alliance was explained as follows:

> 'In the past there has been much dispersion of effort, division and mutual sniping between the left-wing forces, thus playing into the hands of the domination of the right wing leadership. Congress

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1 R. Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley, 'Towards a New Clarification', Congress Socialist, 14 March 1936.

> Socialists, Trade Unionists, Communists and Left Congressmen should all be able to unite on the essentials of a minimum programme of anti-imperialist struggle. . . . The Congress Socialist Party can play an especially important part in this as the grouping of all the radical elements in the existing Congress. It is of the greatest importance that every effort should be made to clarify questions of programme and tactics in the Congress Socialist Party.'

At first sight, therefore, the Dutt-Bradley thesis required a major volte-face on the part of the CPI. The existing policy of boycotting the Congress and organising a rival anti-imperialist platform was to be abandoned; the Congress itself was to form the basis, and perhaps even the organisational realisation, of the Indian Popular Front; and the CPI was to work in close alliance with the Congress left, and in particular with the CSP, for the radicalisation of the Congress. It was hardly surprising, then, that the CSP leadership welcomed the article as suggesting 'a striking, almost a revolutionary departure from the accepted tactics of our friends on the extreme left'.[1]

The implicit difference between the Dutt-Bradley thesis and the CSP's line was the relative importance of the Congress in a Popular Front. Dutt and Bradley were ambivalent as to whether the Congress could itself be transformed into a Popular Front or whether it should be merely a major component in a wider alliance including non-Congress organisations. The CSP, on the other hand, remained adamant that the Popular Front must concentrate exclusively on the Congress and eschew any separatist tendencies. The party organ commented on the Dutt-Bradley thesis:

> 'The attitude of being in the Congress and out of it is unfortunate. A People's Front must necessarily include the Congress. But Congress will not offer that instinctive allegiance to an ad hoc Front Populaire. The easiest way of achieving such a Front is to work through the Congress for its remodelment. We do not differ in the methods suggested for changing the Congress, but we differ in the spirit of the approach. Anti-Imperialist Fronts and Anti-Imperialist Conferences are not in keeping with the new spirit that ought to permeate our activities. By concentrating our efforts on the Congress, by enlisting the

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1 'A Welcome Orientation', Congress Socialist, 14 March 1936.

> sympathy, admiration, and ultimately allegiance of Congressmen, we will achieve our goal earlier - but that means hard, solid work _in_ and _for_ the Congress.'[1]

The Indian Communists, not surprisingly, had some difficulty in adjusting to the advice of their British mentors and the changes it required in their current tactics. The new line encountered some resistance from 'ultra-left' elements in the CPI, compelling Dutt and Bradley to appeal over the latter's head to the Congress left. The Dutt-Bradley thesis, in the form of 'An Open Letter to Indian Patriots', was thus communicated to the CSP leadership which published it in the _Congress Socialist_ in March 1936[2]. Strong pressure from the CPGB combined with the leadership of P. C. Joshi, the young and pragmatic new General Secretary of the CPI, soon secured the formal adoption of the new line by the CPI[3]. Nevertheless, important sections of the CPI reserved their objections to it; and in practical terms the change of line was never as drastic as a formal comparison of the Comintern theses of 1928 and 1935 might suggest.

The Dutt-Bradley thesis, in any case, was ambiguous on questions such as the preservation of Congress unity, the inclusion of the Congress right-wing in the Popular Front and the extent to which the Communist tactic of united front should operate 'from below'; _i.e._ appealing to the rank and file of the Congress and the CSP against their leaders. This ambiguity would allow the more militant sections of the CPI to stay outside the Congress and the CSP and maintain their opposition to these organisations. Significantly, _The Communist_, the underground organ of the CPI, was quick to point out that the CSP had published a bowdlerised version of the Dutt-Bradley thesis, omitting those portions which were critical of Congress policy and which threatened Congress organisational supremacy[4]. Whether

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1 _Congress Socialist_, _loc. cit._

2 Masani, _op. cit._, p. 59.

3 Overstreet & Windmiller, _op. cit._, p. 162.

4 _The Communist_, March 1936, JPP.

this expurgation originated with Dutt and Bradley themselves or with the CSP leadership is not clear. The full text of the thesis, as published by The Communist, included an assertion of the special role of the CPI in the building of the Popular Front; a call for the establishment of united front committees from the national to the local level, with representatives from the Congress, labour, peasant and youth organisations, the CSP and other groups; a demand for the deletion of non-violence from the Congress creed; an explanation of the slogan of a constituent assembly as a tactical stepping-stone to a Soviet Republic; and a more explicit emphasis on the need to resist British war preparations.

Following his return to India in November 1935, Masani had continued to correspond with the CPGB leaders whom he had met in London and Moscow[1]. It is reasonable to assume that these contacts helped to moderate the Comintern line and encouraged the CPGB to apply pressure on the CPI. In return, however, the Communists were able to exercise increasing influence on the development of the CSP programme in the latter half of 1935. Despite the official hostility between the two parties in India, their leaders were in constant touch[2]. J. P. Narayan later conceded: 'These contacts were very useful to the Party's /CSP's/ point of view'[3]. Communist influence was evident both in the Benares 'Statement' of the CSP executive and in the Meerut thesis, adopted by the CSP's second annual conference in January 1936. Both documents attempted a compromise with and between mutually contradictory Royist and Communist criticisms of the CSP; and both tilted towards the Communist view. While the Royists secured at best a partial revision of CSP tactics within the Congress, the Communists managed to introduce in the CSP programme a new ideological emphasis on revolutionary Marxism and a corresponding practical emphasis on unity with the CPI.

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1 IOR, file L/P & J/7/4246, 1936: 'Brief Note on Masani'.

2 J. P. Narayan, op. cit., p. 169.

3 Ibid.

The Benares 'Statement' of July 1935 described the CSP's membership as 'those Congressmen who had come under the influence of, and had accepted, Marxian Socialism'[1]. The formation by these Congress Socialists of a new socialist party was explained by the isolation of existing socialist groups from the Congress. Otherwise, it was asserted, there would have been 'a fusion of the emerging Congress Socialist Party with the groups previously existing'. 'Given the adoption of correct and sensible tactics by all the parties concerned', it was optimistically predicted, 'there is every likelihood of such a fusion taking place at a later stage'. While stating that the CSP's task within the Congress was to convert it into a genuinely anti-imperialist organisation, the statement declared that this task could only be performed 'by a body of conscious and ideologically sound revolutionaries'. 'A Party member', it therefore stipulated, 'must understand and accept the full Marxist programme. Otherwise the Party would become synonymous with the anti-imperialist body (the future Congress) and lose its identity and its role of leadership.'

The Meerut Thesis, which was a more developed reiteration of the Benares Statement, reflected the increase in Communist influence by articulating in even clearer terms the CSP's Marxist character[2]. The party's anti-imperialist task within the Congress was defined as being 'to wean the anti-imperialist elements in the Congress away from its present bourgeois leadership and to bring them under the leadership of revolutionary socialism'. Though the CSP, in accordance with Royist advice, would place only an anti-imperialist and not a 'full Socialist' programme before the Congress, it would carry on vigorous socialist propaganda from its own independent platform. The thesis therefore asserted:

> 'It follows that the Party's own programme must be a Marxist one; otherwise, the party will fail to

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1 Bombay CID, file 2/CSP/34: 'Benares Statement of Policy of the A.I.C.S.P.', 27 July 1935.

2 'Statement on Party's Nature, Task & Programme', A.I.C.S.P., Meerut, 20 Jan. 1936, Congress Socialist, 29 Feb. 1936.

> fulfil its task and leadership. Marxism alone can guide the anti-imperialist forces to their ultimate destiny. Party members must, therefore, fully understand the technic of revolution, the theory and practice of the class struggle, the nature of the state and the processes leading to the socialist society.'

In its characterisation of the Congress leadership as 'bourgeois' and its assertion that a genuinely anti-imperialist movement required the replacement of the existing Congress leadership by a revolutionary Marxist vanguard, the Meerut thesis advanced more than halfway towards the CPI's position. This shift did not go unchallenged within the CSP. As noted previously, the Royists had consistently rejected the CSP's socialist credentials. More important, within the closely-knit founding group itself there was a serious ideological cleavage on the question of Marxism. The meetings of the CSP's national executive at Meerut found the central leadership divided, with J. P. Narayan's pro-Communist line being resisted by Masani, Meherally and other non-Marxists. The latter succeeded in excluding from the thesis any reference to Leninism, which would have meant unequivocal acceptance of dictatorship of the proletariat. Although the non-Marxists acquiesced in the rest of the thesis, they retained their objections and their allegiance to Marxism never extended beyond lip-service[1].

At the organisational level, too, there had been a softening of the CSP's anti-Communist Bombay line. In July 1935, the Benares meeting of the party executive discussed the possibility of lifting the ban on enrolment of Communists and admitting non-Congress elements to the Party, though no decision was reached[2].

Secret negotiations between CSP and CPI leaders on the eve of the Meerut conference caused press speculation that the CSP constitution would be amended to permit enrolment of non-Congress members and therefore, by implication, a merger with the CPI[3]. The report was promptly denied by Narayan[4];

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1 Interview with M. R. Masani, March 1973.

2 J. P. Narayan to Secretary, Bihar CSP, 31 Aug. 1935, JPP.

3 Bombay Chronicle, 23 Dec. 1935.

4 Bombay Chronicle, 26 Dec. 1935.

and the amendment, if indeed contemplated, failed to materialise. Even so, the decisions of the Meerut conference did involve important concessions to the Communists other than those embodied in the Meerut thesis itself.

In the organisational sphere, the ban imposed in October 1934 on the enrolment of Communists was finally lifted by a unanimous decision of the CSP's national executive on the recommendation of the general secretary, J. P. Narayan. Narayan later stated that 'this was entirely an unilateral decision taken at the Party's own initiative. It was based on the belief that important elements in the Communist Party accepted the main ideas of the Party, and that, by admitting them into the Party, we would be furthering the cause of socialist unity'[1].

The pro-Communist trend was also reflected in the adoption by the CSP conference of resolutions calling for a united front of 'all the anti-imperialist forces in the country', for collective representation of labour, peasant and youth organisations in the Congress and for a policy of active war resistance[2]. It is significant, however, that the chair disallowed a pro-Communist resolution calling on local CSP units to form united front committees with the representatives of class organisations on the basis of a minimum anti-imperialist programme[3]. The CSP leadership, despite its desire for a united front, was evidently not willing to countenance any new organisational apparatus which might develop, under Communist influence, into a rival to the CSP or the Congress.

The CPI had been represented at Meerut by A. K. Ghosh, a leading member of its Politbureau, who addressed a public meeting in the CSP'pandal' on the need for united front[4]. Ghosh maintained close contact with the CSP leaders and reported back to his colleagues on the proceedings of the conference[5]. There followed a long dissertation in the

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1 Narayan, op. cit., p. 170.

2 'Resolutions of the Meerut Conference', Congress Socialist, 1 Feb. 1936.

3 'The Meerut Conference of the A.I.C.S.P.', The Communist, March 1936.

4 UPPA, 25 Jan. 1936.

5 Narayan, op. cit., p. 170.

Communist organ in which the CPI leadership conceded that the Meerut conference marked 'the growth of rank and file discontent against the reactionary leadership of the Congress to a higher level than before' and 'the partial crystallisation of a more or less conscious anti-imperialist group within the Socialist Party'[1]. The Meerut thesis was contrasted with previous policy statements adopted by Congress Socialist conferences at Patna and Bombay in 1934 'as an unmistakeable indication of the process of growing radicalisation'. It was noted that the CSP had for the first time characterised the Congress leadership as 'bourgeois', accepted the overthrow of this leadership as 'an essential part of the anti-imperialist struggle', and recognised the necessity for 'the coordination of all revolutionary forces in the country'.

These ideological advances were ascribed by the CPI to the development of the left-wing of the CSP into its 'dominant section'. 'The centre of gravity within the Party has shifted from the Right to the Left', the Communist leaders remarked optimistically. 'Ideological influence of Royism, though by no means shattered, has considerably waned. Within the Left a genuine Marxist group is in the process of formation.' This 'radicalising process' had made the CSP 'a radicalising force in our body politic' instead of a mere 'left manoeuvre of the bourgeoisie'. On the much-disputed question of Congress membership, the article marked an even more drastic revision of the CPI's previous position, condemning suggestions that genuine anti-imperialists should secede from the Congress as playing into the hands of its right-wing[2].

Nevertheless, a distinction was made between radical and moderate sections of the CSP. 'It would be a serious blunder', the CPI leaders warned, 'to think . . . that the process of radicalisation has converted the whole C.S.P. into a genuine anti-imperialist group, that Royist ideology has completely lost its hold over the Party, or that the Party today represents a conscious revolutionary group -

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1 The Communist, loc. cit.

2 Ibid.

conscious of all the implications of the national struggle and its class nature.' It was pointed out that collective affiliation of class organisations with the Congress was not, as defined by the CSP, enough to radicalise the Congress. The CSP had ignored the 'revolutionary dynamics' of the demand for collective affiliation 'as a step towards isolation of the bourgeoisie and the strengthening of the revolutionary forces within the Congress and their consolidation under the revolutionary leadership of the proletariat'. The CSP's resolution on this issue had also failed to mention the need for class organisations so affiliated to 'retain complete organisational and ideological independence' from the Congress. The speeches at the Meerut Conference in favour of collective affiliation had shown little appreciation of its revolutionary significance: 'Some supported it as a concession to the workers and one socialist on the ground that workers being too poor cannot pay four annas subscription of the Congress over and above their union dues'. The CPI also criticised the Marxist group in the CSP for its 'tailist' and 'passive' role at Meerut and, in particular, for its failure to sponsor a concrete united front programme involving joint committees with representatives of CSP units and class organisations[1].

The above article was clearly an attempt by the moderate section of the CPI leadership, represented by P. C. Joshi, to make the new policy of cooperation with the CSP and the Congress palatable to the Communist rank and file. It sought to justify the CPI leadership's abrupt change of tactics in terms of the radicalisation of the CSP in the preceding year. In the process, it undoubtedly exaggerated the degree of differentiation between Marxist and non-Marxist sections of the CSP and over-estimated the strength of the former. That the authors of the article were aware of this contradiction is evidenced by their attempt to attribute the continuing organisational dominance of non-Marxists in the CSP to the apathy and inertia of its left-wing.

Despite this desire to prepare the ground for an alliance

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1 The Communist, loc. cit.

with the CSP, the CPI leadership stopped far short of recognising the latter as a genuine socialist party. The proposed united front was to be simultaneously 'from above' and 'from below', involving both an alliance with the CSP leadership against the Congress right and an appeal to the CSP rank and file against its own 'reformist' leadership. Even that section of the CSP which was recognised as being Marxist would not be spared sharp, though fraternal, criticism.

During the months following the Meerut conference, negotiations continued for a CPI-CSP united front; and agreement was eventually reached at the time of the Lucknow Congress session in April 1936[1]. The Lucknow Agreement, as it was known, emerged as a compromise between the Communist and Socialist unity proposals of the previous year. While the Communists dropped their objection to Congress membership as a condition of entry into the CSP, the CSP leadership withdrew its insistence on a full-fledged merger requiring the liquidation of the CPI as an independent party. The result was a two-tier arrangement involving both a united front between the two separate parties and the entry of individual Communists into the CSP[2]. Inherent in this system of dual membership were serious ideological and organisational contradictions which could not fail to produce conflict in the near future.

The united front 'from above' between the two parties was based on a minimum platform of demands adopted by the CPI in March 1936 'for approaching the radical, petty bourgeois organisations like the Congress Socialist Party, Youth Leagues, etc.'[3] This was a radical programme of national independence, including labour and peasant demands similar to those listed in the CSP's immediate programme. Although there was superficial agreement on these demands, there were to be considerable differences in action, especially when the interests of militant labour and peasant organisations clashed with those of the Congress ministries

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1 Narayan, op. cit., p. 170.

2 Masani, op. cit., pp. 67-83.

3 The Communist, March 1936.

formed in 1937. In view of fundamental differences in regard to long-term goals, the enrolment of Communists by the CSP was to result not in a merger but in the emergence of a Communist fraction inside the CSP. The CPI leadership certainly had no illusions on this score. The refusal of the CSP to affiliate with the Comintern made a genuine fusion of the two parties inconceivable for orthodox Communists. Entry into the CSP could only be a tactical expedient designed, like the former Workers' and Peasants' Party, to provide the CPI with a legal platform and access to the Congress[1].

Although the rules framed by the CSP national executive at Meerut in January 1936 required the express permission of the national executive for the admission of individual Communists to provincial CSP units, in practice this provision was ignored[2]. In the course of the next sixteen months, a substantial though unrecorded number of second-rank Communists, some known and other unidentified, joined the CSP, most noticeably in the southern provinces. Also significant was the entry into the party of a substantial number of pro-Communist sympathisers who, though not actual members of the CPI, owed their primary allegiance to it. Several prominent Marxist intellectuals belonging to the Progressive Writers' Association, some of whom had been active in Communist student groups in England, now joined the CSP and worked closely with the Communist fraction inside it[3].

The Lucknow Agreement also produced an immediate change in the attitude of the pro-Communist Punjab Socialist Party and Bengal Labour Party towards the CSP. The Punjab Socialist Party had seceded from the CSP a year back in response to Communist opposition to Congress membership. In May 1936, the same party, composed of more or less the same elements, re-named itself the Punjab CSP and sought re-affiliation with the All India CSP[4].

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1 Interview with Dr. G. M. Adhikari, 3 May 1973, Delhi.

2 Narayan, op. cit., p. 171.

3 Masani, op. cit., pp. 47, 68.

4 Congress Socialist, 16 May 1936.

The Communist-controlled Bengal Labour Party (hereafter BLP) led by N. Dutt Mazumdar, who had been active in the CPGB's student movement, had initially been hostile to the CSP, attempting in September 1935 to disrupt the session of the Bengal Congress Socialist Conference[1]. In May 1936, however, the BLP resolved to enter the Congress with the aims of strengthening its left-wing, pressing for collective affiliation of trade unions, ousting its right-wing leadership, and transforming it into a 'mass popular front against Imperialism, War and Fascism'. At the same time, the BLP, while affirming its own independent, proletarian character, welcomed the radicalisation of the CSP, expressed its desire for 'the closest possible alliance and unity' between the two parties and called on its members to function 'as a solid phalanx' with the CSP inside the Congress[2]. A month later, with the Communist precedent in mind, the BLP proposed that this alliance should take the form of the BLP's Congress representatives enrolling as CSP members, in view of the similarity of their aims inside the Congress[3].

Some years later, J. P. Narayan, commented retrospectively on the Lucknow Agreement:

> 'That was a moment of great satisfaction to us. We thought that we were well on our way towards socialist unity. The Royists were already with us, and we hoped the communists too would now gradually come in, so that very soon, as in the course of joint work differences would wear off and mutual confidence would increase, the united socialist party of India would emerge into being.'[4]

Asoka Mehta, editor of The Congress Socialist and a non-Marxist member of the CSP leadership, took a less sanguine view than Narayan. In a 'Rejoinder' to the Dutt-Bradley thesis, Mehta warned that the sudden conversion of Communists in India and abroad to the previously much-reviled slogan of Constituent Assembly, might be 'a matter of temporary

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1 Times of India, 23 Sept. 1935.

2 AICC, file 21, 1936: 'Resolutions of the Bengal Labour Party, 1 May 1936'.

3 Ibid: K. Sircar, Bengal Labour Party, to General Secretary, CSP, 14 June 1936.

4 Narayan, op. cit., pp. 170-171.

tactics' and predicted: 'A tactical cooperation when it is known as such is rarely lasting and yields meagre results.'[1] Socialist unity, he asserted, required 'a policy of persuasion and education in the process of struggle and not the attitude of "the liquidation of rival leaderships".' He warned: 'Very often united fronts are sought to gain organisational advantage by one of the uniting parties. This move forces the other uniting parties, from self-defence, to countercheck the move - and fissiparous tendencies are let loose. Any effective united front demands the eschewing of such tactics.' Referring to reports in the international press of the imprisonment of hundreds of dissident Hungarian and other foreign Communists in Russia, Mehta concluded: '"Co-operation today and concentration camp tomorrow" has often been the tactic in the past, and has proved to be a stumbling block in any developing united front. And this "unfortunate tactic" still persists, with disastrous results.'

Mehta's apprehensions reflected the views of a majority of the CSP's central leadership and emphasised the problems underlying the fragile edifice of socialist unity. Despite Communist optimism about the recent radicalisation of the CSP, effective control of the party's All India executive remained in the hands of the same leadership group that had been dominant at the time of the party's inauguration. That group's desire for united front with the CPI arose neither from an abstract attachment to the ideal of socialist unity, nor from a genuine conversion to Marxism, but from an immediate and practical need for new allies and new bases of support. As the Communist alliance became an embarrassment to the CSP leadership's role in holding the delicate balance between an increasingly constitutionalist Congress and increasingly militant class organisations, that alliance would cease to be an asset. And once it became clear that the Communist presence inside the CSP posed a threat to its existing leadership, Communist fraction-work would not be tolerated.

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1 A. Mehta, 'The Rejoinder', Congress Socialist, 25 April 1936.

It was significant that the Lucknow Agreement coincided in time and place with the CSP's decision to join the Congress leadership as a junior partner in the Working Committee. The party's failure to anticipate the problems of riding two horses at once was a comment on the confusion and instability of its united front policy. The Popular Front which had developed in the period 1934-36 was not a coherent unity but a patchwork alliance of class organisations, left-wing groups and radical Congressmen. Though these diverse elements had been drawn together by immediate exigencies, domestic and international, their mutual rivalry was only thinly veiled. The radical nationalism that was their common programme could not reconcile the fundamental differences in their long-term aims. The CSP, which formed the pivot of the Popular Front, epitomised its ideological and organisational contradictions. And the CSP platform would be the main battleground for the internecine conflicts which gathered momentum as the Popular Front staggered its way through the next three years.

Chapter 5

THE CSP AND THE CONGRESS LEADERSHIP (1934-36)

The CSP's poor performance at the Bombay Congress session in October 1934 had opened a serious inner-party debate on the party's role within the Congress. There was general agreement among CSP leaders that the party had failed to rally nationalist opinion to its side, had been out-manoeuvred by the Congress parliamentary wing, to whom it had lost some of its leading members, and was in danger of becoming an isolated and largely academic pressure-group. Many of the CSP's early sympathisers in the Congress had grown impatient of its socialist rhetoric and alarmed by the divisive effect of its party organisation on Congress unity and discipline. Thus, S. A. Brelvi, editor of the influential nationalist daily, The Bombay Chronicle, which had given CSP activities regular and sympathetic press publicity, complained to Nehru in November 1934:

> '. . . they /the CSP/ have adopted wrong tactics in attacking Congress programme wholesale, and particularly Gandhiji and the present leaders of the Congress, in the way they have been doing. . . . The Congress Socialists by their wrong tactics have not only provoked active hostility of men like Vallabhbhai Patel and Bhulabhai Desai, but have also antagonised the rank and file of Congress and the public generally who were favourably inclined towards Socialism by their manner of attacking Gandhiji and his philosophy. I claim to be a Socialist, but I believe that circumstanced as we are, we must carry the whole Congress with us as far as it can go and that we cannot afford to divide the Congress on the sole issue of Socialism.'[1]

In response to such criticisms from moderate Congressmen, the CSP's tactics became increasingly pragmatic. In January 1935, a circular from J. P. Narayan warned party members:

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1 S. A. Brelvi to J. Nehru, 2 Nov. 1934, JNP.

> 'Nothing should be done which may antagonise the genuinely nationalist elements and drive them to join hands with the compromise-seeking right wing. Nothing can be worse than adopting such tactics as may divide the Congress into hostile camps: socialists and anti-socialists. We should, on the contrary, try to take the militant nationalists with us and divide the Congress into the latter and compromising moderates. . . . It is true that there is hardly anything in the present programme of the Congress which is of interest to us. However, in all those activities with which we have no disagreement, such as enrolment of Congressmen, the campaign regarding the Karachi Resolution, celebration of Independence Day, propaganda against the Joint Parliamentary Committee Report and agitation regarding the Constituent Assembly, we should take part.'[1]

This policy of dividing the Congress only on nationalist and not socialist issues had the active backing of the Royists, who had always regarded the CSP's proper role as that of a radical nationalist bloc in the Congress, and also of moderate CSP members and sympathisers who were anxious to avoid a confrontation with the Congress leadership.

The opposing view, which was closer to that of the Communists, was voiced by Sampurnanand in a memorandum to the CSP executive in reply to Narayan's circular[2]. Sampurnanand argued that the CSP could not hope to capture the Congress by playing the role of a constitutional opposition within it. Instead, the party must prepare for a mass agitation by organising labour and the peasantry and leaving 'no stone unturned to expose the follies and reactionary policies of the Congress High Command, without deliberately irritating the rank and file'. In so doing, the CSP must be willing to risk being disowned by the Congress and proscribed by the Government. The division of the Congress into socialists and anti-socialists, against which Narayan had warned, was 'hardly avoidable', said Sampurnanand, 'now that we are no longer a diffused group but a well organised party'. After some months of mass

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1 General Secretary, A.I.C.S.P., Circular to Party Members, Jan. 1935, in Pioneer, 5 July 1935.

2 Swami Sampurnanand, Our Role in the Congress (Benares, Feb. 1935), AICC.

organisation, the CSP should be ready to launch an agitation based on an important labour or kisan issue. Such action might lead to the temporary suppression of the party, but it would re-appear in due course at the head of a revolutionised Congress which would be 'a Soviet of the representatives of the revolutionary classes'.

The urgency of resolving this inner-party debate was intensified by the prospect of Nehru's impending release and his ambivalence towards the CSP. Sampurnanand warned that Nehru's return to the political arena was bound to produce 'a small storm in Indian Politics and particularly in our Party'[1]. The CSP, he urged, must anticipate this and decide its tactics 'unswayed by personal considerations and in a calm atmosphere'.

A meeting of the CSP executive in February 1935 discussed Sampurnanand's arguments, but decided tacitly in favour of the moderate line advocated by Narayan. The meeting's resolutions were concerned almost exclusively with the formulation of a militant nationalist platform on which the party could rally non-socialist Congressmen. The main features of this platform were a civil liberties campaign, centring on the release of the Bengali terrorist detenus, and a militant campaign to 'wreck' the new constitution of 1935. 'To this end', the CSP executive resolved, 'the Indian National Congress should . . . make the operation of that constitution impossible by capturing the Legislatures set up . . . and by refusing to accept ministerial offices, followed by persistent obstruction, compelling the Government to suspend the sham constitution, and by preparing for direct action.' Provincial units were instructed 'to agitate in Congress organisations and in the country generally for the acceptance of the above policy by the Congress'[2].

The unpopular boycott of legislatures had thus been abandoned and the focus had been shifted to the question of office acceptance. For the next two years, CSP activity would focus almost exclusively on the 'Anti-Ministry'

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1 Ibid.

2 Congress Socialist, 24 Feb. 1935.

campaign. This pre-occupation with the constitutional issue inevitably entailed neglect of party work in other spheres, such as labour and peasant organisation, which were delegated to the CSP's new allies in the trade union and kisan movements. Two tactical considerations determined this choice of priorities. Firstly, by taking its stand on the boycott of ministerial office, the party hoped to project itself to nationalist public opinion as the most staunch opponent of any compromise with the Raj, and therefore as a reliable nationalist alternative to the vacillating Congress leadership. Secondly, the party feared - with some justification - that the formation of Congress ministries was bound to favour the Congress right-wing, strengthening the latter's organisational hold through access to government patronage and encouraging greater moderation in Congress policy-making.

While the constitutional question now became the main plank in the CSP's platform, the latter included certain subsidiary demands consistent with a militant nationalist strategy. These were demands for civil liberties and release of political prisoners, resistance to Indian involvement in a British war, expansion of the nationalist movement into the princely states with a view to the abolition of princely rule, democratisation of the Congress constitution, and radicalisation of the Congress programme to provide for labour and peasant organisation. Considered as a whole, this programme amounted to a broad-based invitation to non-socialist Congress militants to join forces with the CSP.

The above strategy was endorsed in the 'Statement of Policy' adopted by the CSP executive at Benares in July 1935 and reiterated in the Meerut thesis of January 1936. The Benares statement asserted:

> 'The immediate task before us is to develop the national movement into a real anti-imperialist movement - a movement aiming at freedom from the foreign power and the native system of exploitation. . . . Consistent with its task, the Party should take only an anti-imperialist stand on Congress platforms. It should evolve for this purpose an anti-imperialist programme. It should be remembered, however, that any such programme

> is bound to be called by others a socialist programme. It is therefore not the word "Socialism" that has to be tabooed so much as a full socialist programme in the technical Marxian sense - because the latter becomes an exclusively working class programme and what we actually want is for the peasants and lower middle classes. . . .'[1]

The statement went on to prescribe the following tactics for the promotion of an 'anti-imperialist programme':

> 'The Party must bring under its influence all those Congressmen who genuinely desire the overthrow of British Imperialism and the abolition of the native system of exploitation. For this, much tact would be needed. It is recommended that in Congress elections we should not show keenness to capture committees or offices, nor should we form alliances with undesirable groups for the purpose. In criticising Congress leaders and its /sic/ programme, strong language should be avoided. The Gandhian constructive programme should not be obstructed or infringed with /sic/. It may be criticised, but inoffensively.'[2]

Throughout 1935 a sustained effort was made to popularise the CSP's militant nationalist programme in various provincial Congress bodies. By the time of the next Congress session in April 1936, the CSP could claim considerable success in these efforts. In the U.P., the PCC executive, on a motion by Narendra Dev and Sampurnanand, resolved in December 1934 'to organise peasants and workers on the basis of their class demands and to participate in their day to day struggle with a view to link it up with the movement for Complete Independence'[3]. The PCC appointed two sub-committees, in which the CSP was well represented, to formulate concrete plans for peasant, labour and youth organisation[4]. A few days later, the U.P. Political Conference, presided over by Sri Prakasa, then a CSP leader, passed a similar resolution and adopted a list of class demands almost identical to those in the CSP

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1 Bombay CID, file 2/CSP/34: 'Benares Statement of Policy of A.I.C.S.P.', 27 July 1935.

2 Ibid.

3 AICC, file P-20, 1934: 'Resolutions for Meeting of Council of U.P. PCC, Allahabad'; and Congress Socialist, 6 Jan. 1935.

4 Ibid.

programme. The conference also passed resolutions similar to those of the recent Bombay CSP conference, rejecting the J.P.C. Report and opposing Indian participation in an 'imperialist war'[1].

The Karnataka Political Conference in May 1935 was chaired by Sri Prakasa, while the Chairman of the Reception Committee was the CSP's provincial organiser, Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya. According to government intelligence, Kamladevi was able to engineer a disproportionately large attendance of 'hot-headed' youths from the Mangalore district, where Socialist influence was strong, thereby ensuring a majority at the conference for the CSP line[2]. The conference adopted a series of CSP-sponsored resolutions on the war issue, the wrecking of the constitution, fundamental rights, peasant and labour organisation, and abolition of the Congress manual labour franchise[3].

In the same month, the Kerala Political Conference passed a similar series of CSP-sponsored resolutions on the constitutional issue, war resistance, abolition of princely states, organisation of peasants and workers and deletion of the manual labour franchise[4]. The Kerala PCC, in which the CSP had a majority, had already adopted resolutions appointing a Labour Sub-Committee, endorsing the CSP's labour demands and its line on war resistance, and calling for the release of M. N. Roy and S. M. Joshi, a member of the All India CSP executive[5].

In Bihar, though the CSP was unable to secure the adoption of its programme by the PCC, the latter was persuaded to issue an appeal to its members to organise labour and peasant unions[6]. In Andhra, CSP pressure persuaded the PCC to recommend the adoption of the Socialist

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1 Congress Socialist, loc. cit.; and The Leader, 31 Dec. 1934.

2 BHS, file 800(75)A-II: 'Confidential Report on Karnataka Provincial Political Conference, Mangalore, 10-12 May 1935'.

3 Bombay Chronicle, 13 May 1935.

4 Ibid., 30 May 1935; and AICC, file 22, 1935.

5 Congress Socialist, 3 Feb. 1935.

6 M. R. Masani, 'No Deviations - Right or Left', Congress Socialist, 10 March 1935.

programme to the AICC[1]. At the Andhra Political Conference in February 1936, a diluted version of the party's anti-war resolution was passed unanimously. But the CSP was unable to defeat a motion in favour of office acceptance, even though it had the support of Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the Gandhian leader, on this issue[2].

The CSP's opposition was also responsible for the rejection by several PCCs of Gandhi's proposal to include 'truthful and non-violent means' in the Congress creed. Between December 1934 and February 1935, the CSP was able to secure the rejection of Gandhi's proposal by the U.P., Karnataka, Bombay and Maharashtra PCCs[3]. In the following months, the proposal was also rejected by the Sind, Mahakoshal and Delhi PCCs[4].

On the basis of these provincial activities, the CSP claimed in January 1936 to have secured the endorsement of several or all of its aims by the Congress organisation in six provinces - the U.P., Karnataka, Kerala, Orissa, Bengal and Berar[5]. Outside the Congress, too, the CSP claimed to have mobilised public opinion in favour of its immediate programme, often in alliance with local Congress Committees or with other groups like the AITUC, the Royists and, more recently, the CPI.

The CSP had sponsored a series of public meetings on the war issue, culminating in an Anti-War Day on the anniversary of the Armistice[6]. The party had also agitated for the release of the Bengal detenus, sponsoring an All

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1 Ibid.

2 Congress Socialist, 22 Feb. 1936.

3 AICC, file P-20, 1934-36: Assistant Secretary, U.P. PCC, to Secretary, AICC, 2 Jan. 1935; BHS, file 800(77)B-IV: CID Report, 21 Feb. 1935; ibid.: CID Report, 19 Jan. 1935; and ibid.: CID Report, 1 Feb. 1935.

4 Sampurnanand, 'Straws Galore', Congress Socialist, 10 Feb. 1935; and AICC, file P-29, 1935: 'Report of Delhi PCC', 25 Jan. 1936.

5 J. P. Narayan, General Secretary's Report to Second Annual Conference of A.I.C.S.P., 20 Jan. 1936, JPP.

6 J. P. Narayan, loc. cit.

India Detenu Day in March 1935[1]. Though unsuccessful in securing official Congress patronage for the Detenu Day, the CSP had secured the establishment of a Congress Detenu Fund for the relief of the prisoners[2]. In its efforts to focus attention on the international situation, the CSP had organised an Abyssinia Day in September 1935 to express solidarity with Abyssinian resistance to fascist Italy[3]. Government intelligence had noted apprehensively on this occasion that the CSP had been able to secure the participation of several 'orthodox' Congressmen, including Acharya Kripalani and Lal Bahadur Shastri in the U.P.[4] and S. D. Deo, the PCC president, in Maharashtra[5].

Considerable attention had also been paid to the nationalist youth movement, an emphasis which was natural enough in view of the CSP's origins. In the U.P., the CSP played a prominent role in the reorganisation of the Hindustani Seva Dal, which had been banned during the civil disobedience movements, with Sampurnanand and N. K. D. Vashishta, both members of the U.P. CSP executive, acting respectively as its commanding officer and organising secretary[6]. The CSP's appeal to nationalist youth was also evident in other provinces. A government intelligence report on the Gujerat Congress Socialist Conference in June 1935 noted that very few peasants or workers had attended and that the delegates were predominantly students and youths. The report commented: '. . . as a result of their extensive propaganda, they /the CSP/ have been able to make headway among the middle class, unemployed youths and the students of Gujerat and Kathiawar. The delegates . . . were mostly young men, the majority of whom had taken part in the last civil disobedience movement . . .'[7]

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1 Congress Socialist, 24 Feb. 1935.

2 J. P. Narayan, loc. cit.

3 Ibid.

4 UPPA, 7 Sept. 1935.

5 Bombay CID, file 2/CSP/34: p. 159, n.d.

6 UPPA, 29 June 1935, and Appendix no. 1, 27 July 1935, 'The Hindustani Seva Dal'.

7 BHS, file 800(75)A-II: Weekly Letter No. 26, 29 June 1935.

In the organisational sphere, the CSP was able during this period to register some impressive gains in Congress elections, improving on its performance in 1934. Early in 1935, the party secured about 20 seats in the new AICC[1]. In Bombay City, Yusuf Meherally, the CSP candidate, topped the list in the AICC elections, defeating S. K. Patil, the leader of the right-wing Congress faction[2]. The CSP was particularly successful in Kerala, where three out of a total of four AICC delegates elected were party members[3].

The ban on holding provincial Congress offices had been relaxed in the immediate aftermath of the Bombay Congress session; and by March 1935 CSP members were in control of the Kerala and Orissa PCC executives. In the U.P. PCC, the CSP shared office with the Nehru faction[4]. Though unable to wrest control of the Bombay PCC from the right-wing faction led by Munshi and Patil, the Bombay CSP was an influential minority in the PCC, securing 14 votes against 26 for its anti-war resolution of March 1935[5]. In Maharashtra, the CSP, though largely a paper organisation, had a following among the leading Congressmen of Satara district and worked in close cooperation with the 'orthodox' provincial Congress leadership. The annual report of the Maharashtra PCC noted:

> 'Relations between them /the Congress Socialists/ and the Congress have been so far of cordiality and the Congress Party has till now followed the policy of giving them representation in the Congress Committees, Mr. Gore being a member of the All India Congress Committee and he with Messrs. Achyut Patwardhan and others being members of the Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee. The Agricultural Inquiry Committee has three of them - out of five active members of the committee. The credit of /sic/ this mutual good relations goes to certain extent to our Socialist friends but mostly to Mr. Shankarrao Deo, the President of the M.P.C.C.,

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1 M. R. Masani, 'No Deviations - Right or Left', Congress Socialist, 10 March 1935.

2 Bombay Chronicle, 14 Jan. 1935.

3 Congress Socialist, 3 Feb. 1935.

4 Masani, loc. cit.

5 Times of India, 1 April 1935.

who has taken them in his confidence.'[1]

The CSP also participated in local politics, contesting municipal and district board elections. In December 1934, announcing its decision to contest the forthcoming municipal elections, the Bombay CSP had explained that it intended to espouse a programme of 'municipal socialism', utilising municipal office in the interests of the employees and tenants of the Corporation and of the urban poor generally, municipalising various public utilities which were still privately owned, and carrying on party propaganda in the course of day-to-day municipal work[2]. The Bombay CSP candidates, standing on a separate party ticket, won three of the 13 seats they contested, as against 23 won by non-CSP Congressmen[3]. The CSP corporators functioned as a separate group, refusing to accept the Congress whip[4], and used the Corporation as a forum for their militant nationalist demands[5]. The CSP also contested the municipal elections in Gujerat at the end of 1935, and swept the polls in the city of Bhavnagar[6].

In the U.P., where CSP leaders held office in the provincial Congress Civic Board, Congress Socialists contested the local elections at the end of 1935 as part of the general Congress slate of candidates. Among those elected were H. N. Shastri in Kanpur, Mohanlal Gautam in Allahabad, and B. D. Tripathi in Unao[7]. U.P. CSP leaders like Sampurnanand, C. B. Gupta and Gautam played a leading role in the Congress local election campaign in areas where they controlled the local Congress Committees[8].

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1 AICC, file P-29, 1935: 'Report of Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee', 9 Aug. 1935.

2 Congress Socialist, 16 Dec. 1934.

3 Ibid., 27 Jan. 1935.

4 Bombay Chronicle, 3 June 1935.

5 Congress Socialist, 21 Dec. 1935.

6 Ibid., 4 Jan. 1936.

7 UPPA, 7 Dec. 1935 and 4 Jan. 1936.

8 Ibid., 27 April 1935, 5 Oct. 1935 and 23 Nov. 1935.

The Benares statement of the CSP leadership had expressly called for conciliatory tactics which would avoid offending non-party Congressmen. Even so, the very existence of the CSP as an opposition party, however loyal and constitutional, was bound to produce friction and rivalry, challenging the dominance of existing provincial factions in the Congress and providing an alternative nucleus for dissidents. Such conflict soon became evident in Kerala, where it was predominantly ideological, and in Bombay, Berar and the U.P., where it was largely factional.

In Kerala, the CSP since 1934 had been the majority group in the PCC. All except one of the office-bearers and members of the PCC executive had been CSP members. In May 1935, however, the Kerala CSP, owing to the mediation of S. A. Brelvi, then President of the Kerala Political Conference, had agreed to placate the right-wing minority by handing over to the latter control of the PCC executive[1]. In return for this major concession, the Socialists were to be given a free hand in the Labour and Peasant Departments of the PCC. Almost immediately, however, this compromise was put under severe strain by the right-wing executive's attempts to obstruct the PCC's Socialist-controlled labour activities. Socialist emphasis on class struggle was condemned by the right-wing both on ideological grounds, as being anti-Gandhian, and on tactical grounds, as alienating politically influential capitalists. By June 1935, Nambudripad, the Kerala CSP leader, was complaining to Brelvi:

> 'Labour organisation work "in our way" embarrasses the Non-Socialists in their work. They want money. They want support in elections. Neither of these will they get if they associate themselves with us. . . . The question at issue is very fundamental.'[2]

Matters came to a head during the CSP-supported strike in the Malabar Spinning and Weaving Company, with the PCC executive withholding financial support to the strike in defiance of the Socialist majority in the PCC general body[3].

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1 Statement by S. A. Brelvi, May 1935, MP.

2 E. M. S. Nambudripad to S. A. Brelvi, 19 June 1935, S. A. Brelvi Papers.

3 E. M. S. Nambudripad, 'Deadlock in Kerala Congress', article, n.d. (1936), MP.

The confrontation ended in a victory for the right-wing. The reduction in the size of the PCC from 100 members to 10 under the revised Congress constitution worked to the advantage of the right-wing; and fresh organisational elections in February 1936 reduced the Socialists to a minority of one-third in the PCC, though they retained their majority in the larger Malabar DCC[1].

In Bombay, Congress-CSP relations overlapped with the factional competition between K. F. Nariman, the anti-Gandhian president of the Bombay PCC, and S. K. Patil, its right-wing secretary. The Bombay CSP had from the outset aligned with Nariman against the Patil-Munshi faction, thereby securing a measure of official patronage from the PCC. Thus, on the CSP's All India Detenu Day, Nariman had issued an appeal to the citizens of Bombay to donate generously to the CSP-sponsored Detenu Fund[2]. Patil and the right-wing thereupon retaliated with a memorandum to the Congress President, Rajendra Prasad, accusing the Bombay CSP of violating Congress discipline by carrying on activities inconsistent with official Congress policy[3]. In a letter to Prasad, Patil pleaded for disciplinary action by the Congress High Command against the CSP, on the ground that such action was not feasible at the provincial level. He complained:

> 'By far the biggest difficulty in our way is the encouragement that we have been giving to the "Congress Socialists" to commit acts of indiscipline and disobedience. This party is neither Congress nor Socialist. This hybrid combination of principles and persons has been a terrible weakening force in the Congress. How can there be an institution running parallel programmes and criticising every decision of the Congress? . . . We have too much pampered this party and the consequences of this pampering have been definitely detrimental to the Congress.'[4]

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1 Congress Socialist, 11 Jan. 1936.

2 M. R. Masani, interview with Bombay Sentinel, enclosed in M. R. Masani to Rajendra Prasad, 24 May 1935, AICC, file G-23, 1935.

3 Ibid.

4 AICC, file G-43, 1935: S. K. Patil to Rajendra Prasad, 24 May 1935.

Referring to the CSP's alliance with the AITUC, Patil asserted: 'There are more things common between them and the communists than between them and the Congress. They are pledged to capture the Congress and make it a tool in their hands for their propaganda.'[1]

In response to these complaints, Prasad, on a visit to Bombay in June 1935, lashed out at the CSP in a public speech, thereby adding to press speculation about possible disciplinary action against the party by the Congress leadership. According to government intelligence, the possibility of such disciplinary action was seriously discussed at a private meeting of the Bombay CSP. Masani was reported to have informed the meeting that Prasad's speech had demoralised several party members, some of whom were resigning and others retreating into inactivity. Masani also accused the Royists of joining hands with right-wing Congressmen to drive the CSP out of the Congress and the trade unions and concluded that the party might have to make good its losses by allying with the Communists[2]. A fortnight later, however, the crisis had blown over, with Prasad officially denying rumours about disciplinary action[3]. Prasad's decision to avoid a confrontation was attributed to his desire to await Nehru's release, in the expectation that the latter would moderate CSP activity[4].

In Berar, the organisation of a CSP unit coincided with a factional feud within the Congress and was further complicated by anti-Congress, Communist pressure. In June 1935, R. S. Ruikar, then President of the AITUC, had informed J. P. Narayan that he intended to organise a Berar Congress Socialist Conference[5]. The moment, Ruikar wrote, was particularly opportune in view of the closure of the Empress Mills, which had made 9,000 workers redundant. According to the provincial Congress leadership, however, the real

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1 Ibid.

2 BHS, file 800(75)A-II: CID Report, 11 June 1935.

3 Bombay Chronicle, 27 June 1935.

4 Bombay Chronicle, 13 June 1935.

5 R. S. Ruikar to J. P. Narayan, 6 June 1935, JPP.

impetus for the conference was provided by a dispute between the Nagpur PCC and the former office-bearers of the Nagpur TCC, which had been superseded and reconstituted by Sardar Patel[1]. As a means of countering the dominance of the PCC leadership, the dissident Congress faction joined with the CSP in its Detenu Day activities and in its subsequent effort to organise a provincial conference. The organisers of the proposed conference 'consisted of recalcitrant Congressmen, Socialists and Communists and others', the PCC president complained. 'There was only one common ground between them, viz. their antipathy towards the PCC and their desire to lower down /sic/ its prestige.'[2]

Owing to internal differences between these oppositional elements, with the Communists objecting to the calling of a 'Congress Socialist' conference, the original proposal was modified to a Nagpur Division Political Conference[3]. The PCC thereupon issued an appeal to all Congressmen to boycott the conference, asserting:

> 'There is hardly any similarity between the political complexions /sic/ of the organisers of the Conference. Erstwhile opponents, whose differences are still there, have come together only because of their common hatred of the PCC. . . . Persons who have broken Congress discipline but are still known as Congressmen have been trying for some time past to harm the Provincial Congress Committee's prestige and it is natural that other anti-Congress Political groups who have their own axe to grind should back them up by covert and overt means. . . . This is clear from the way in which Congressmen were studiously excluded in /sic/ a meeting convened to discuss the proposal. The Congress Socialist leaders have enjoined their followers not to do anything that will harm the Congress prestige, but it is difficult to say if local Congress Socialists will respect that injunction.'[4]

In this instance, the Congress High Command had no hesitation in intervening on the side of the PCC leadership; and the conflict was resolved by disciplinary action against

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1 AICC, file P-4, 1934: N. B. Khare, President, Nagpur PCC, to Rajendra Prasad, 20 July 1935.

2 Ibid.

3 'Manifesto of Nagpur P.C.C.', n.d., enclosed in ibid.

4 Ibid.

Ruikar and his group[1].

The factional aspect of Congress-CSP rivalry was most noticeable in the U.P. Ideologically, there was little to differentiate the U.P. CSP leaders from Nehru's provincial lieutenants. The two groups had at first worked in close alliance. Nevertheless, by the beginning of 1936, relations between them had reached breaking point, requiring the intervention of their respective national leaders to restore unity. The dispute centred on a struggle for control of the PCC executive.

With the support of Sri Prakasa, the U.P. PCC President, the CSP had exercised effective control of the PCC since 1934. By August 1935, however, Socialist control was causing considerable resentment among other factions, leading to the resignation of S. K. D. Paliwal, a senior right-wing Congress leader[2]. In a confrontation with R. A. Kidwai and the Nehru faction in October 1935, the CSP leaders lost control of the PCC executive and resigned in protest from their offices in the PCC, the Provincial Civic Board and the Provincial Congress Volunteer Board[3]. The U.P. Socialists, however, retained control of the Reception Committee for the Lucknow Congress, from which position they engaged in a major clash with the PCC executive. When Sampurnanand as Chairman of the Reception Committee refused to include Kidwai and his group on its executive, the latter faction staged a protest walk-out and retaliated by getting the PCC executive to cut off all funds to the Reception Committee[4].

A few days later, a compromise was attempted in the form of a Central Board consisting of G. B. Pant, Kidwai, Kripalani, P. D. Tandon and Sampurnanand, which temporarily took over the functions of the warring PCC and Reception Committee executives[5]. The conflict, however, continued,

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1 Rajendra Prasad to N. B. Khare, 12 Aug. 1935, AICC.

2 Times of India, 27 Aug. 1935.

3 UPPA, 26 Oct. 1935.

4 Ibid., 9 Nov. 1935.

5 Ibid., 16 Nov. 1935.

owing to the U.P. CSP's reluctance to accept Kidwai as the new PCC president. In March 1936, when the dispute threatened to undermine the All India CSP's alliance with Nehru, the U.P. Socialists, under pressure from Masani, finally acquiesced in Nehru's choice of Kidwai as PCC president[1]. Even so, tension continued and the U.P. CSP remained undecided about whether to co-operate with Kidwai by joining the new PCC executive[2].

These instances of organisational conflict in Bombay, Berar and the U.P. suggest that there was a general tendency for Congress-CSP relations at the provincial level to get inextricably entangled with more long-standing factional rivalry, producing conflicts which were liable to escalate to the All India level. This convergence of ideological and factional rivalry was probably inevitable, given that the CSP had drawn many of its provincial leaders from pre-existing Congress factions, which continued to function more as amorphous dissident groups than as cohesive party units. Kerala, in this context, was the exception that proved the rule. The unique predominance of the ideological factor in Congress-CSP conflict in Kerala derived largely from the fact that the Kerala CSP consisted almost entirely of new recruits to the provincial Congress, while the latter itself was a recent formation[3].

Under the constitution adopted by the party at Bombay in October 1934, the power of enrolment to the CSP lay with provincial party units[4]. The latter's eagerness to secure numerical majorities in Congress bodies had inevitably involved the enrolment of large numbers of dissident Congressmen whose ideological allegiance to the CSP was at best nominal. This trend was constantly lamented by the central leadership. Thus, the General Secretary's Report to the Meerut conference of the CSP complained: 'Members have not shown the spirit of discipline and loyalty

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1 Ibid., 21 March 1936.

2 Ibid., 28 March 1936.

3 Nambudripad, A Short History of the Peasant Movement in Kerala, p. 10 and passim.

4 All India CSP, loc. cit.

to the Party that Socialists are expected to possess for their organisation. Many members have shown an indifference enough to have justified their removal from the Party.'[1] A month later, a circular from Narayan to provincial CSP units stated:

> '. . . it has been felt that in several Provinces indiscriminate admission of members has resulted in the composition of the membership being of an unsatisfactory nature. The homogeneity and efficiency of the Party is bound to suffer if this weakness is not rectified. Also, the statement on the Party's nature . . . adopted at Meerut lays down certain standards for the equipment of members which may necessitate a more cautious enlistment of members. We do not seek mass membership as does the Congress, but consciously Socialist membership.'[2]

By the end of 1935, the CSP leadership was growing alarmed that a corollary of the party's success in winning provincial Congress offices was the weakening of its ideological distinctiveness and its involvement in provincial conflicts that were potentially embarrassing to its All India leadership. In a memorandum to the national executive, Masani advocated a public announcement that the CSP's aim was to win over the Congress by constitutional methods of persuasion and that the party disapproved of attempts to capture the Congress by snap votes and paper majorities[3]. Masani's memorandum cited the voluntary transfer of Congress offices by the Kerala CSP to the right-wing minority as a model of Congress discipline which should be emulated by other provincial units[4]. This advice was incorporated in the Meerut Thesis which stated:

> 'It being the task of the Party to bring the anti-imperialist elements under its ideological influence, it is necessary for us to be as tactful as possible.

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1 J. P. Narayan, General Secretary's Report to Second Annual Conference of A.I.C.S.P., 20 Jan. 1936, JPP.

2 Bombay CID, file I/CSP/36: General Secretary, A.I.C.S.P., Circular No. 2 to Provincial Secretaries, 10 Feb. 1936.

3 BHS, file 800(75)A-III: M. R. Masani, 'Memorandum to A.I.C.S.P. Executive', n.d., siezed by Bombay Police on 21 Nov. 1935.

4 Ibid.

> We should on no account alienate these elements by intolerance and impatience. The Congress constructive programme should, however, be scientifically criticised and exposed. In Congress elections, we should not show keenness to "capture" committees and offices, nor should we form alliances with politically undesirable groups for the purpose.'[1]

Nevertheless, the organisational anomalies arising from the conflicting aims of the CSP's All India and provincial leaders would persist, in the absence of effective measures to centralise the party organisation and restrict provincial membership.

Congress-CSP relations were also complicated by the cleavage evident at all levels of the CSP organisation regarding the correct attitude to Gandhi and his philosophy. The dominant section of the CSP leadership had maintained close personal relations with Gandhi and was opposed to aggressively anti-Gandhian tactics. Nevertheless, more militant sections of the party, including its Royist and pro-Communist members, were unwilling to moderate their hostility to Gandhism. This cleavage was illustrated in June 1935 at the provincial Congress Socialist Conference in the Gandhian stronghold of Gujerat. The conference was the scene of a heated debate on a resolution condemning Gandhi's All India Village Industries Association. Although Narendra Dev, the president of the conference, advised the withdrawal of the resolution, a large number of delegates objected, and the resolution was carried by a narrow majority of two votes[2]. In February 1936, a similar dispute surfaced in the Ahmedabad unit of the Gujerat CSP, with some members requisitioning a special meeting to consider the conduct of Royist and other members who had been openly attacking the Congress, as against the official line of maximum cooperation with the latter[3]. Tactical disputes of this sort were a reflection of deeper ideological differences. They were to become far more widespread following the entry

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1 'Statement on Party's Nature, Task & Programme', A.I.C.S.P., Meerut, 20 Jan. 1936, Congress Socialist, 29 Feb. 1936.

2 BHS, file 800(75)A-II: Weekly Letter No. 26, 29 June 1936.

3 Times of India, 1 Feb. 1936.

of Communists into the CSP, and acted as a major hindrance to the efforts of CSP leaders to achieve and preserve a modus vivendi with the Congress leadership.

As envisaged by the CSP leadership, the party's work at the provincial level was to be a means of mobilising rank and file opinion in the Congress and applying pressure from below on the Congress High Command. By the end of 1935, the CSP had undoubtedly emerged as an important factor in provincial Congress politics, constituting the majority faction in three Congress Committees - the U.P., Orissa and Kerala - and the major opposition group, holding the balance of power, in Bombay. Nevertheless, this apparent success in the Congress organisation, as in non-Congress class organisations, was based, not on a cohesive party following, but on temporary and shifting factional alignments which tended to obscure and compromise party aims. This weakness in the party's provincial base inevitably weakened the impact of its programme, preventing it from translating its numerical gains into effective influence on Congress policy at the national level.

At the Jabalpur AICC session in April 1935, the President's decision not to permit proportional representation in elections to the new Congress Parliamentary Board resulted in a boycott of the Board by the CSP, which was thus excluded from any direct voice in the making of Congress electoral and legislative policy[1]. At the same session, a CSP resolution on the war issue was ruled out of order[2]. At the Madras AICC session of October 1935, though the CSP pressed for an immediate decision against office acceptance, the Working Committee succeeded in getting the issue deferred till the Lucknow Congress session due six months later. CSP amendments to the official resolution, which declared against direct Congress intervention in the princely states, were defeated by 31 votes to 10. The CSP's only success at the Madras meeting was a minor amendment deleting the word 'successful' from a resolution congratulating Congress parliamentarians on

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1 Bombay Chronicle, 25 April 1935.

2 M. R. Masani, 'The Congress Socialist Party', 1938, typed article, MP.

their work in the Central Legislative Assembly[1].

The CSP leadership had from the outset strongly opposed proposals for a broad-based Left Bloc in the Congress as a threat to the party's own position as the spokesman of the Congress left. By the end of 1935, however, the CSP's obvious inability to arrest single-handed the move towards constitutionalism in the Congress had led it to reconsider its position in practice, though not in theory. The CSP's decision to join the Anti-Ministry Committee of Congressmen marked its de facto acceptance of a wider Left Bloc which it hoped to dominate.

The Anti-Ministry Committee was formed in February 1936 with Sardul Singh Caveeshar, a lieutenant of Subhas Bose, as its chairman and R. A. Kidwai, a Nehruite, and M. R. Masani, then Acting General Secretary of the CSP, as its secretaries[2]. The Committee's function was to prepare for an All India Anti-Ministry Day in March 1936, which would mobilise Congressmen for the Lucknow session[3]. In March, a Bombay Anti-Ministry Committee was also set up, consisting mainly of Congress Socialists, but including prominent Royists like Mascarenhas, Khedgikar, Karnik and Maniben Kara[4]. The Bombay Committee's manifesto stressed the Royist slogan of a Constituent Assembly as the alternative to office acceptance. The manifesto also emphasised the inter-dependence of the constitutional struggle and mass economic demands[5].

The Anti-Ministry campaign, in which the CSP took an active and often leading role, was able to organise several conferences against office acceptance, securing the attendance and support of a substantial number of unaffiliated Congressmen, including orthodox Gandhians. When P. Sitaramayya, a veteran Gandhian leader, issued a statement against office acceptance, the Congress Socialist

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1 Ibid.

2 Congress Socialist, 29 Feb. 1936.

3 Ibid.

4 BHS, file 800(75)A-III: CID Report, 16 March 1936.

5 Bombay Chronicle, 18 March 1936.

commented optimistically: 'The Anti-Ministry Committee of Congressmen is growing from strength to strength. It is enlisting the support not only of the rank and file of the Congress but also of some of its outstanding leaders.'[1]

The strength of the campaign varied according to the CSP's position in different provinces. In Maharashtra, the CSP had to abandon the idea of an Anti-Ministry conference for lack of sufficient support[2]. In the U.P., however, owing to the influence of Nehru and the CSP, the Anti-Ministry Day on 22 March was officially supported by the PCC, which also instructed its subordinate committees to participate[3]. The Day was also officially observed by several DCCs in other provinces. In Bombay, it was marked by a conference of 500 Congressmen who voted unanimously against office acceptance[4]. In Orissa, CSP pressure secured a unanimous decision by the provincial Congress Parliamentary Board not to accept provincial office[5]. CSP-sponsored resolutions against office acceptance were also adopted by class organisations like the AITUC, the BPKS and the All India Kisan Committee.

Nevertheless, the campaign's success proved deceptive. Many Congressmen who found it expedient to pay lip-service to militant nationalism by voting for Anti-Ministry resolutions in their PCCs and at unofficial conferences remained equivocal on the question of a binding All India decision to boycott offices. Sampurnanand drew attention to this anomaly when he commented cynically on a meeting of the central Congress Parliamentary Board in February 1936:

> 'Almost everyone prefaced his remarks by saying that he was personally opposed to acceptance of office; everyone ended by saying that public opinion in his province and his own reading of the political situation in the country imperatively demanded that offices must be accepted. The U.P. members, who in their PCC had solidly stood for

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1 Congress Socialist, 7 March 1936.

2 BHS, file 800(75)A-III: Weekly Letter No. 12, 21 March 1936.

3 Congress Socialist, 28 March 1936.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

> non-acceptance, were quite as definitely pro-office as their colleagues.'[1]

The Congress leadership, relying on the ephemeral and largely symbolic character of opposition to offices, shrewdly manoeuvred to postpone a decision on the issue until after the provincial elections due early in 1937. When the Working Committee succeeded in shelving the issue for the second time at the Lucknow Congress in April 1936, the Anti-Ministry Committee, conceived initially as a temporary and ad hoc body, attempted to institutionalise itself as a Left Bloc against constitutionalism.

A meeting of the committee in April 1936, at the time of the Lucknow Congress, appointed an organising committee to consolidate and expand its organisation. The organisers elected included CSP leaders like J. P. Narayan, Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya, Narendra Dev, Sampurnanand, Dinkar Mehta, Achyut Patwardhan, P. H. Patwardhan and S. C. Bannerji; kisan leaders like Sahajanand and Yagnik; unaffiliated Congressmen like Seth Govind Das and Sri Prakasa; and the Gandhian leader, Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Nine of the committee's 21 members and one of its three secretaries were CSP members. The committee decided to set up provincial and local branches and to prepare for a final confrontation at the next Congress session due in December 1936 by conducting a Congress enrolment campaign on the basis of opposition to office acceptance[2].

The CSP leadership appears by this time to have become aware of the disadvantages of concentrating so exclusively on the Anti-Ministry campaign. An article by R. M. Lohia, conceded that the CSP's pre-occupation with the constitutional issue had diverted its energies from the more long-term tasks of revolutionary, mass organisation and that the time had come for a more balanced set of priorities. 'The problem of the acceptance or non-acceptance of offices . . .', he confessed, 'seems to lack signally either in the capacity to organise the masses or to establish a correct ideological leadership over them.'[3]

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1 Sampurnanand, 'Shadows', Congress Socialist, 7 March 1936.

2 'Meeting of Anti-Ministry Committee of Congressmen, Lucknow, April 1936', n.d., unsigned, typed report, MP.

3 R. M. Lohia, 'Socialist Self-Criticism', Congress Socialist, 30 May 1936.

Nevertheless, Lohia went on to defend the 'mainly emotional, partly ideological' value of the Anti-Ministry campaign. Justifying the campaign on pragmatic grounds, he argued:

> 'The constitutional issue is instinct with an emotional significance owing largely to the character of our vocal elements. Anti-imperialism to the large majority of the professions, the smaller landlords, the clerisy and the intelligentsia, has uptil now been a question of emotions . . . It is these elements which decided the Lucknow Congress and which decide . . . the country's political lead. To them any controversy around a militant economic programme would have appeared involved and far-away . . . By meeting them on their own ground, the ground of emotional anti-imperialism and constitutional issues, the Party has become known, even if opposed . . . No more effective challenge could have been devised than to predominate the constitutional issue.'[1]

The rationale underlying the CSP's anti-ministry campaign was that it would win the party a wide nationalist following, isolate the existing Congress leadership and prepare the Congress, if necessary, for a split on the issue of constitutionalism versus militant nationalism. Such a split, the CSP leadership confidently expected, would secure for the party and its allies the allegiance of a majority of the Congress membership. Such a strategy had been implicit in the militant nationalist programme espoused by the CSP since the beginning of 1935 and had been clearly articulated in J. P. Narayan's presidential address to the Bengal Congress Socialist Conference of September 1935. Narayan had stated:

> 'The Congress, as it is constituted 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. The right wing will doubtless say that we are disrupting the Congress. But, in reality, it will be a ripening consolidation of anti-imperialist forces. The Congress has faced such splits before and has come out stronger each time. Another split would take it to another, and I expect, the last stage of its anti-imperialist existence.'[2]

The building under CSP leadership of a militant

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1 Ibid.

2 J. P. Narayan, 'Presidential Address at 1st Session of Bengal C.S.P. Conference, 21-23 Sept. 1935', Towards Struggle, pp. 130-131.

nationalist bloc which would eventually take over the Congress went logically enough with the party's decision to espouse a nationalist, as distinct from a socialist, programme in the Congress. This strategy and its practical application in the Anti-Ministry campaign thus marked a partial, though unacknowledged concession to Royist proposals for the merger of the CSP into a wider Congress left. Although the party tried to preserve its separate identity, contrary to Royist advice, its strategy of dividing the congress between constitutionalists and nationalists required an increasingly close and overt alliance with non-party Congress leaders who were opposed to acceptance of the new constitution.

Such an alliance had been implicit in the CSP leadership's early attempts to court Gandhi and in its close links with established Congress leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose, notwithstanding their refusal to join the party. Nehru's role in the formation of the CSP has already been discussed. Bose's initial response to the CSP was less friendly. Though absent abroad or in prison until March 1937, Bose expressed his criticisms in press statements and articles and in letters to the CSP leaders. In March 1935, J. P. Narayan found it necessary to make a public denial of Bose's allegation that the CSP was under Fabian influence and that its demand for a Constituent Assembly was inspired by parliamentary illusions[1].

In an article written in September 1935, Bose moved towards a qualified endorsement of CSP bonafides[2], conceding that 'the most important issue which faces the Congress of the future is that which has brought about the birth of the CSP'. But he added sceptically: 'I do not know if the members of the Congress Socialist Party are themselves conscious of the forces that have moved them up till now. . . . As one of those who have not felt in tune with the Congress leadership for some time past, I can understand to some extent the real significance of this revolt within

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1 Bombay Chronicle, 26 March 1935.

2 S. C. Bose, untitled, typed article, 2 Sept. 1935, for Patrika Annual, MP.

the Congress'.

In the same article, Bose outlined an alternative programme for the Congress which differed in important respects from that of the CSP. While criticising the 'reactionary' nature of the amended Congress constitution and the failure of the Congress to unite 'under its command' mass organisations like the AITUC, the Kisan Sabhas and the States Peoples Conference, Bose stressed the need for 'a one-party "national" organisation' which would establish 'a common front of all the anti-imperialist forces in the country' and for the 'modification of the present constitution of the Congress' for this purpose. Bose's conception of a one-party nationalist organisation certainly owed more to fascist theories of the corporate state than to democratic socialism of the Fabian variety or to class organisation on Marxist lines, between which the CSP wavered. This distinction was further emphasised by Bose's attitude to a Constituent Assembly. 'Problems relating to our national constitution and to our methods of activity', he asserted, 'can be solved only by a "national" organisation of this character and not by a Constituent Assembly of arm-chair politicians.' 'Will the Congress Socialist Party', he enquired, 'address itself to the above task instead of bothering about less important issues?'[1]

In a letter to Masani three months later, Bose elaborated on his criticisms of the CSP, while maintaining that he 'fundamentally' agreed with 'the party's stand' and that his criticisms were made in 'the most friendly spirit'.[2] Stressing the importance of 'a complete plan of action leading to the ultimate conquest of power', Bose asked whether the CSP had any such 'clear plan' and implied that the party's existing programme was confused and academic. He complained:

> 'I find that a lot of energy and time is wasted in talking uselessly of a Constituent Assembly. If you believe that your method of action is right and that you will succeed, then you must be prepared to produce your own Constitution. It is a fact of history

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1 Ibid.

2 S. C. Bose to M. R. Masani, 18 Dec. 1935, MP.

> that the party which wins the fight will be given a carte blanche to frame the Constitution. To talk of a Constituent Assembly today means only that there is a lack of self-confidence and the presence of an inferiority complex.'

Arguing that the CSP's anti-fascist stand on the Italian invasion of Abyssinia favoured British imperialism, Bose wrote:

> 'From these and other incidents I have the impression that the Socialist Party is swayed too much by sentimentalism. If you could help to shape the Party's policy on radical but practical lines, you will be doing a great service. In doing so you must have to prepare for taking over charge of the Congress machinery. . . . The Socialist Party has to take charge of the Congress and the sooner the better.'[1]

Bose went on to cite a report that the CSP had refused an offer by Gandhi to take over the Congress leadership from him and charged the party with ambivalence towards Gandhi's leadership. The CSP, Bose declared, must be prepared for an 'open conflict' with Gandhism and asked if its leaders were ready for such a confrontation. 'There are elements in the party,' he pointed out 'which were frankly Gandhiite and personally I do not know how they will act.'

Bose concluded with the observation that the CSP's choice of name had been 'rather unfortunate' in view of the conflicting interpretations of socialism current in Europe. Pointing to the fluid state of Russian domestic and foreign policy, he warned: '. . . we cannot follow the lead of any Socialist Party in any country. . . . There is no other option for us but to evolve our own Socialism, in theory and in practice'.

Despite these wide-ranging ideological and tactical differences between Bose and the CSP leadership, the latter made persistent efforts to win the former's support. In a patient and conciliatory reply to Bose's letter, Masani attempted to dispel Bose's doubts[2]. Without accepting Bose's strictures on the Constituent Assembly demand, Masani tried to reassure him with the news that the CSP had decided

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1 Ibid.

2 M. R. Masani to S. C. Bose, 31 Jan. 1936, MP.

to drop the slogan for the moment and had rejected a Royist amendment at Meerut seeking to incorporate it in the party's anti-ministry platform. On the question of Abyssinia, Masani assured Bose that the CSP's international line of war resistance was equally opposed to Italian fascism and British imperialism. Replying to Bose's criticism of the CSP's subservience to Gandhi, Masani explained that the party had been forced to acquiesce in Gandhi's constitutional amendments at the Bombay Congress in order to retain proportional representation. He also explained that Gandhi's reported offer to hand over to the CSP had been made facetiously to a group of local Socialists in Benares and could not possibly be taken seriously. '. . . surely you do not want us to accept the Congress leadership at the hands of Mahatma Gandhi!' Masani wrote. 'I quite agree that we should take charge of the Congress machine, but only when we have sufficient strength behind us to keep hold, and not, after a few months, to let Gandhiji come back with a smile saying "I told you so".'[1] About the same time, Yusuf Meherally also wrote to Bose, informing him of the CSP's position on various issues and asking him for his reactions[2].

The CSP leadership's tolerance of Bose's eccentric and sometimes misinformed criticisms of its policy was due largely to its eagerness to secure the cooperation of Bose and his substantial following in the Anti-Ministry campaign. While relations between Bose and the CSP would remain amicable until 1939, they would never reflect the same personal warmth or political agreement as the party's parallel relations with Nehru. Ultimately, this was because Nehru, more than any other Congress leader, shared the CSP's brand of radical nationalism, with its unique blend of Gandhian, Fabian and Marxist ideology and its genuine aversion to fascism.

Nehru's national popularity and prestige had from the outset been a vital element in the CSP leadership's hopes of capturing or splitting the Congress. Nehru's long

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1 Ibid.

2 BHS, file 800(75)A-III: CID Report, 5 Feb. 1936.

imprisonment through the greater part of 1934 and 1935 had deprived the CSP of its only ally in the Congress High Command, and his release and return to Congress politics had been eagerly anticipated. That this anticipation included an element of anxiety was natural enough, in view of the equivocal nature of Nehru's support for the CSP before his arrest and his long-standing loyalty to Gandhi's leadership. By the beginning of 1936, however, both Nehru and the CSP had overcome their mutual reservations and formed a close working alliance, the high point of which was the Lucknow Congress session of April 1936.

The end of 1935 found Nehru, despite his public opposition to office acceptance, being actively canvassed for the Congress presidentship by Gandhi and other right-wing leaders. This anomalous choice was explained by Nehru's unique qualifications for bridging the gap between left and right and thereby maintaining Congress unity in a pre-election year. While Nehru's mass popularity and left-wing affiliations were expected to improve Congress prospects in the future provincial elections, it was anticipated with equal confidence that his loyalty to Gandhi would take priority over his socialist leanings, making him a far more effective brake on the CSP and other left groups than an overtly right-wing president recruited from the Gandhian 'Old Guard'.

Soon after his release in September 1935, Nehru appears to have sounded the CSP leaders about the possibility of their joining him in a composite Working Committee which would represent all sections of the Congress. Since such a Working Committee was bound to have a large right-wing majority, it was not surprising that the CSP's initial response was unfavourable. Masani replied on behalf of the national executive that the CSP considered it 'undesirable' to participate in a 'mixed' Working Committee. He added, however, that the party would co-operate with the Working Committee provided that the latter was left free by the Congress to decide the question of office acceptance without the interference of PCCs and provided that the organisation of peasants and workers was adopted as the

main item in the Congress programme[1].

Although the CSP continued to hope that Nehru would be able to radicalise Congress policy, there were already misgivings within the party about Gandhi's motives in drafting Nehru as the new Congress President. In a letter to Nehru in January 1936, Masani quoted Sarojini Naidu as 'wondering whether it is fair to you to make you President this year'[2]. 'She said that . . . it would mean shifting the burden on to your shoulders', Masani reported, ' - part of the burden being to impede the advance of the Congress Socialist Party! That she said was the original idea of some of those who had supported your being President.' Masani went on to warn Nehru: 'Almost everyone assumes . . . that the Lucknow session will endorse the acceptance of ministerial offices. There is therefore a lot of misgiving as to how you can be President and carry out such a policy.' Nevertheless, Masani concluded optimistically: 'Though in a minority among political observers, I still feel that a strong lead from you from the chair for wrecking the Constitution and making peasant and labour organisation on an economic basis (i.e. class basis) the main job of the Congress for the year would meet with a response at Lucknow sufficient to give you a majority.'

The CSP leadership would certainly have preferred Nehru to join it in opposition, rather than accept the Congress presidency as Gandhi's nominee. As it became clear, however, that Nehru intended to accept the nomination, the party was quick to claim him as its own candidate. The Meerut conference of the CSP accordingly adopted a resolution welcoming Nehru's candidature[3]. Nehru reciprocated with a cordial message of support to the CSP conference, in the course of which he stated:

> 'The Congress Socialist Party, as its very name implies, stands for the Congress and for Socialism. . . . Any organisation that claims to represent these two ideas must always . . . have my goodwill,

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1 BHS, file 800(75)A-III: CID Report, 16 Dec. 1935.

2 M. R. Masani to J. Nehru, 10 Jan. 1936, JNP.

3 Congress Socialist, 25 Jan. 1936.

> quite apart even from the detailed programme it might advance. I find further that many of my old colleagues whose opinions I have valued are now in the ranks of the Congress Socialist Party.'[1]

Aware of the danger that Nehru's election as Congress President might strengthen the right-wing majority and isolate the left, the CSP attempted to pre-empt this by a policy which combined full support to Nehru with attempts to stiffen his resistance to right-wing pressure. In February 1936, the Congress Socialist, while welcoming Nehru's election as president and his stand on the constitutional issue, warned him of the immense difficulties of his task and implied that his induction to the presidentship had been premature. The editorial stated:

> 'To work continuously against the steady pressure of the Congress Parliamentary Board . . . is a task that on second thoughts seems well-nigh impossible. On second thoughts, it seems hardly fair to the Pandit to thrust the responsibility of controlling the Congress policies at such a time on his shoulders. He has just come out after a year's imprisonment, and ever since his release serious domestic anxiety has disturbed his mental peace. Besides he has hardly had any opportunity of a free and frank discussion with his older colleagues regarding the many problems ahead.'[2]

The editorial expressed strong doubts as to whether Nehru would be able to get his way with his 'Old Guard' colleagues and avoid making concessions to them. In an ambivalent reference to Nehru's 'personal courage' which had 'more than once landed him into prison at a critical time', the Congress Socialist reminded the new President: 'It is supremely important that he should exercise a very great restraint on himself and try to express his uncompromising resistance to things as they are not so much personally as in and through the Congress organisation itself.'[3]

Nehru, for his part, was anxious to reassure the Congress left, and the Lucknow Congress was the high water-mark of

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1 Congress Socialist, 18 Jan. 1936.

2 'The Task Before the President', Congress Socialist, 1 Feb. 1936.

3 Ibid.

his public espousal of socialism. While his right-wing colleagues in no way endorsed his opinions, their desire for pre-election unity facilitated Nehru's task of accommodating the CSP. Although the concessions Nehru was able to secure for the Congress left proved marginal and insubstantial, they were sufficient for the moment to satisfy the CSP leadership.

The CSP-Nehru alliance had its first concrete manifestation in the official resolutions of the Working Committee for the Lucknow Congress, issued on 25 March, two days after the publication of a series of CSP-sponsored resolutions based on the platform adopted by the party at Meerut. Though substantially different in content, the two sets of resolutions - published in parallel columns in the Congress Socialist - revealed a superficial similarity in phraseology[1].

The CSP's resolutions called for the adoption of peasant and labour organisation as the main point in the Congress constructive programme and for the amendment of the Congress constitution to provide for 'more adequate and direct representation' of 'organised workers and peasants'. The Working Committee, however, ignored the question of collective affiliation, though calling for 'closer cooperation with the organisations of peasants, workers and others' so as 'to make the Congress a joint front of all anti-imperialist elements in the country' and proposing a committee to suggest appropriate changes in the Congress constitution.

The CSP's resolution on the war issue mentioned the threat to the Soviet Union from Germany and Japan, opposed Indian participation 'in any war in which the British Government may be involved' and called for the launching of a national campaign to prepare the country 'to utilise the same for securing Swaraj'. The Working Committee's resolution, on the other hand, omitted any reference to the Soviet Union and confined itself to reiterating Congress opposition 'to the participation of India in any Imperialist War', thus leaving open the possibility of Indian

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1 'The Resolutions for Lucknow', Congress Socialist, 28 March 1936.

participation on Congress terms. Finally, a relatively minor CSP proposal for propaganda agencies abroad was echoed by a Working Committee resolution proposing to set up a Foreign Department of the AICC[1].

On the strength of these three Working Committee resolutions, the CSP leadership made the astonishing claim that its demands had been 'substantially conceded'[2]. While attributing the Working Committee's 'new orientation' mostly to Nehru's influence, the CSP also claimed some of the credit for itself. The Congress Socialist declared: '. . . Pandit Jawaharlal . . . would not have been able to bring about this orientation unaided. His work was facilitated by the constant agitation carried on by our party for the last 18 months.'[3]

The CSP's jubilant reaction to the Working Committee's resolutions can only be explained by the leadership's eagerness to show quick results for its alliance with Nehru and by an exaggerated estimate of its own influence. The concessions embodied in the Working Committee's resolutions were largely semantic; and the radical terminology in which they were couched was vague enough to avoid any immediate commitment to a more radical programme. Six of the ten resolutions published by the CSP for the Lucknow Congress had, in any case, been entirely ignored by the Working Committee. One of these was relatively minor, expressing solidarity with Abyssinia against Italy. But the remaining five embodied the main planks in the radical nationalist platform adopted by the CSP at Meerut. These included proposals for the radicalisation of the Congress programme as it stood in the Karachi resolution; wrecking of the 1935 constitution through refusal to form ministries and the creation of a constitutional deadlock; a radical election manifesto which would include labour and peasant economic demands and civil liberties; and control of the

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1 Ibid.

2 Ibid.

3 'The Congress Learns a New Language', Congress Socialist, 28 March 1936.

Congress parliamentary programme by the AICC and the Working Committee, instead of by a separate Parliamentary Board[1].

A series of proposed CSP amendments to the Congress constitution, published a week later, was similarly ignored by the Working Committee[2]. The amendments included proposals to delete the khaddar and manual labour franchise introduced in 1934; to double the number of delegates to the plenary session, to abolish the weightage given to rural representation; to replace the existing system of nomination of the Congress President by a system of direct election by PCCs on the basis of policy statements issued by presidential candidates; to allow PCCs to expand their numbers by co-option up to a maximum of 25 per cent of the elected membership; and to provide for the drafting of official resolutions for the Congress session by the in-coming Working Committee, instead of the out-going, and for the election of the new Working Committee by single transferrable vote in the newly-elected AICC, instead of the existing system of nomination by the President.

The real significance of the Nehru-CSP alliance lay, not in any concessions by the Congress leadership to the CSP's programme, but in less tangible factors such as Nehru's vigorous propagation of socialist ideology in his speeches, the personal patronage he extended to the CSP and its activities and the increased All India publicity and prestige which CSP leaders derived by association with a sympathetic Congress President. These gains were at best marginal and, based as they were on Nehru's shifting political stand, they were unlikely to prove enduring. Even so, they were sufficient at the time to produce a major re-definition by the CSP leadership of its original aim of alternative leadership for the Congress. By the time of the Lucknow Congress, the ground had been prepared for the CSP to shelve its goal of left-wing leadership of the Congress in the interests of immediate cooperation with Nehru in a 'composite leadership'.

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1 'The Resolutions for Lucknow', Congress Socialist, 28 March 1936.

2 'Party's Amendments to the Congress Constitution', Congress Socialist, 4 April 1936.

In view of the existing balance of forces in the Congress as a whole, such a composite leadership was bound to have a right-wing majority, Nehru's wishes notwithstanding. In the organisational elections that preceded the Congress session, the CSP and its Anti-Ministry allies had won roughly one-third of the seats in the AICC and the plenary session, leaving the Gandhians and parliamentarists in a majority.

The CSP could legitimately claim that its performance in the Congress elections marked a distinct improvement on its position in 1934, with particularly impressive results in Bombay and the U.P. In Bombay, all of the party's five candidates, including Masani, Meherally and Mascarenhas, were elected to the AICC, defeating an eminent left-wing independent like S. A. Brelvi. The latter had refused to endorse the Bombay CSP's four-point election platform which called for war resistance, 'wrecking' of the Constitution, abolition of princely states and collective affiliation of labour and peasant unions with the Congress[1]. In the U.P., Government intelligence reported that six of the nine members elected to the AICC and at least 21 of the 100 provincial delegates to the plenary session were Socialists[2].

Elsewhere, however, the CSP had less reason to be satisfied with the election results. The party's major set-back in the Kerala Congress elections was reflected in its All India representation from that province. In Orissa, where CSP leaders had previously controlled the PCC, the party was able to secure only one seat in the new 14-member PCC, pleading that its concentration on peasant organisation had been responsible for neglect of its numerical following in the Congress[3]. In Maharashtra, the CSP won only 7 out of 44 seats in the PCC and one out of four in the AICC, with the party organ complaining that these figures could easily have been doubled 'with a little

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1 M. R. Masani to J. Nehru, 10 Jan. 1936, JNP; and 'Manifesto of Bombay C.S.P. Candidates', Congress Socialist, 4 Jan. 1936.

2 UPPA, 1 Feb. 1936.

3 Congress Socialist, 21 March 1936.

more effort'.[1]

To rally left-wing support for its resolutions among non-party Congress delegates, the CSP, with Nehru's co-operation, sponsored a series of meetings at Lucknow on the eve of the Congress session. An Anti-Imperialist Rally on 9 April, at which J. P. Narayan presided, expressed the temporary unity of other socialist groups on the CSP platform, with the participation of Communists like K. M. Ashraf and Royists like Maniben Kara, the Acting President of the AITUC. On the next day, the CSP sponsored a more broad-based Anti-Constitution Conference, at which its resolution against office acceptance was adopted with the active support of non-party Congress radicals like R. A. Kidwai and S. S. Caveeshar[2]. From 11 to 13 April, Congress Socialists, Communists and unaffiliated Congressmen joined together in the All India Kisan Conference, presided over by Swami Sahajanand, which also passed a CSP-sponsored resolution against office acceptance. It was significant that Nehru visited the Kisan Conference and wished it success[3].

The proceedings of the Congress session itself were marked by close co-operation between Nehru and the CSP. The former's presidential address went further than any of his previous speeches in its unequivocal affirmation of his socialism, though qualified by the reminder that he spoke as an individual and not on behalf of the Congress leadership. The significance of Nehru's speech for the Congress left was summed up by Masani, who commented on behalf of the CSP: 'It was important because it represented a clear departure from the Gandhian philosophy and a fearless Socialist stand on every topic which it covered. It represented Nehru's break with Gandhism, though not with Gandhi. As such the President's Address provides a text which our members can use with great effect in their propaganda efforts.'[4]

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1 Ibid., 4 April 1936.

2 UPPA, 18 April 1936, Appendix: 'Report on the Lucknow Congress'.

3 Ibid.; and 'The All India Kisan Conference', Congress Socialist, 25 April 1936.

4 M. R. Masani, Foreign Newsletter No. 4, A.I.C.S.P. (Bombay, 9 May 1936), p. 281, MP.

Although Nehru openly dissociated himself from the Working Committee's stand on several issues and supported CSP-sponsored amendments and resolutions on office acceptance, collective affiliation and election of the Working Committee by proportional representation, his backing did not prevent the defeat of these and other CSP proposals. Socialist amendments to the official resolution on the constitutional issue, which postponed a decision on office acceptance until after the elections, were defeated by 44 votes to 23 in the Subjects Committee and 487 votes to 255 in the open session[1]. The only victory that the CSP could claim was the retention of proportional representation by single transferable vote in Congress elections. Though the Working Committee secured the abolition of this provision by a narrow majority of 37 votes to 32 in the Subjects Committee, the left was able to reverse the decision in the open session by 227 votes to 207[2].

Though unable to make any significant changes in the Congress programme, the CSP for the first time secured representation in the All India Congress executive. The party owed this success partly to Nehru's patronage and partly to the right-wing's desire for pre-election unity. Three CSP leaders - J. P. Narayan, Narendra Dev and A. Patwardhan - were included in Nehru's new Working Committee. Masani was elected to the Congress Labour Committee, Narayan to the newly-formed Congress Mass Contacts Committee and Narendra Dev to the Central Parliamentary Committee and later to the newly-appointed Congress Constitution Committee. R. M. Lohia was appointed Secretary of the newly-established Foreign Department of the AICC, while Z. A. Ahmad and K. M. Ashraf, both recent Communist entrants to the CSP, were put in charge of the Congress Political and Economic Research Departments[3].

The CSP leadership's acceptance of minority representation in a right-wing dominated Working Committee marked an

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1 Ibid.

2 Ibid.

3 M. R. Masani, 'The Congress Socialist Party', typed article, n.d. (1938), MP.

open departure from the oppositional line which the same leadership had imposed on reluctant provincial units at the party's inaugural conference in 1934. The factors responsible for this All India compromise were broadly similar to those which had led over a year back to the abandonment of the party's boycott of provincial Congress offices. In the course of 1935, it had become increasingly obvious that efforts to mobilise Congress rank and file support 'from below' were not capable of achieving the CSP's goal of an alternative All India leadership. Nehru's refusal to join the CSP in opposition and his acceptance of the Congress presidentship on Gandhi's terms had left the CSP leadership with two options: it could either continue in opposition and risk alienating Nehru, losing many of its own supporters and isolating itself permanently from All India Congress decision-making, or it could agree to share power as a junior partner of the right-wing majority, relying on Nehru to provide it with access to strategic positions in the All India Congress organisation. While the former course would have been consistent with the party's initial strategy of alternative leadership, the latter 'soft' option was implicit in the CSP's development, both in theory and practice, into an increasingly pragmatic and broad-based nationalist platform.

The CSP leadership's attempts to justify this choice on socialist grounds was symptomatic of the contradictory nature of the party's role. In view of the strong emphasis in the Meerut Thesis on the need to change the 'bourgeois' leadership of the Congress, the decision of its authors only four months later to join in a coalition with the same bourgeois leaders could not be easily explained. As Masani confessed, Nehru's invitation to the Socialists to join his Working Committee 'created a delicate situation for the Party and was given very careful consideration by the Party Executive. Could the Congress Socialists coalesce with the Gandhian and the Parliamentary leaders and yet retain their character of a rival leadership to that of the Right Wing and its uncompromising critics?'[1] A candid

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1 Ibid.

answer to this question could only have been negative. Nevertheless, the CSP leadership attempted a justification which denied any compromise of the party's original aims. This took the form of a highly misleading equation of personal loyalty to Nehru with loyalty to the cause of socialism.

'It was felt', Masani stated, 'that Nehru, by the inspiring manner in which he had identified himself with the Party's fight had earned the cooperation of the Party and that he should not be allowed to remain in isolation in his own Working Committee.'[1] In an article in the party organ, Meherally maintained that the Lucknow Congress had found Nehru 'in agreement with the stand taken by the Congress Socialists on the various issues' and that Nehru's presidential address was 'a landmark in our struggle'. 'For the first time in its history', Meherally asserted, 'the message of Socialism resounded in clear and unmistakeable accents from the presidential chair . . .'[2] A propaganda leaflet issued by the Bombay CSP about this time actually claimed Nehru as the leader of the CSP[3].

The CSP leadership's exaggeration of Nehru's commitment to itself is accounted for by the necessity of justifying its cooperation with him in the Working Committee. More surprising, however, was the enthusiastic endorsement of this view by the CPI. In an article in the Congress Socialist, B. T. Ranadive, a leader of the 'ultra-left' section of the CPI, observed:

> 'Pandit Jawaharlal's presidential address and his subsequent standpoint on every practical question facing the Congress marked his definite rupture with Gandhism. . . . In the past, on a number of occasions, the Pandit came into conflict with the political opportunism of Gandhism. He fought against it but often surrendered in the end, sanctioning the Gandhian practice in the name of unity. . . . Lucknow revealed another Jawaharlal who took up his stand against Gandhism as a reactionary system of outlook, thought and practice. . . . He criticised its outlook as middle-class, he came out against its organisational opportunism and he took his stand on the modern and progressive

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1 Ibid.

2 Y. Meherally, 'Jawaharlal Nehru', Congress Socialist, 16 May 1936.

3 Bombay CID, file 5/CSP/34, p. 143: Marathi leaflet, n.d. (1936).

> . . . thought-system of socialism - not the class-collaborating socialism of the British Labour Party but the scientific socialism of the U.S.S.R.'[1]

Ranadive argued that Nehru's open dissociation of himself from the Working Committee's resolutions, matched by the right-wing's equally firm refusal to accommodate his views, marked 'a first-rate crisis of national leadership', signifying the end of the traditional collective responsibility of the Congress leadership. Describing the rift between Nehru and his colleagues as 'an ideological crisis in an extremely sharpened form', Ranadive advised the CSP:

> 'This crisis at the top is bound to affect the political struggle deeply. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru occupies a unique position in the country. Centre of Radical aspirations for years, he comes second to Gandhi only in the eyes of the people as a whole. His words therefore are bound to produce a deep effect on hundreds of Congressmen. His disagreement with almost every resolution that the Congress has passed, coupled with his general stand against Gandhism and his advocacy of revolutionary socialism - all these can become in the hands of the Congress Socialists a mighty weapon to win the rank-and-filer to a radical programme and strengthen Pandit Jawaharlal's hand in the fight against the old leadership. . . . A failure to understand the depth of this crisis will lead to its dissipation at the top and . . . to the isolation of Jawaharlal himself.'

A week later, this view was echoed in an article by Dinkar Mehta, the Communist joint secretary of the CSP, who summed up the outcome of the Lucknow Congress as 'exposure of the reactionary . . . right-wing on the one hand and the growing hold of the revolutionary left wing on the other'[2]. Regarding the balance of forces in Nehru's composite Working Committee, Mehta wrote:

> 'The fact that three Congress Socialists are taken on it implies more than the mere recognition of the strength of the radicals. The middle, indefinite, vacillating elements have been dropped. Now in the Working Committee there are two clear sides; the socialists with Jawaharlal and Subhash Bose form one definite block, the rest form the opposite block.

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1 B. T. Ranadive, 'The Crisis in National Leadership', Congress Socialist, 25 April 1936.

2 Dinkar Mehta, 'Lahore to Lucknow - II', Congress Socialist, 2 May 1936.

> The president is in a minority, reflecting the minority in the present A.I.C.C. but confident of the growing strength of his side.'

This unexpected Communist support for Nehru and endorsement of the CSP's alliance with him was not as erratic as it might appear. Although Nehru had till recently been one of the main targets of Communist attack, talks between Nehru and the CPGB leaders, Palme Dutt and Bradley, at the beginning of 1936 had produced agreement to co-operate closely in the building of a Popular Front on the lines indicated shortly after in the Dutt-Bradley thesis[1]. The CPI's exaggeration of the strength of the Congress left and of the ideological cleavage between Nehru and his Gandhian colleagues is explained, therefore, by its need to justify and develop the alliances which its newly-adopted Popular Front line required.

According to the Communist view, the CSP's coalition with Nehru in the Congress Working Committee had extended the Popular Front into the Congress leadership itself, polarising the latter between left and right and opening the way for a formidable Left Bloc which would eventually take over the Congress. The CSP itself was less sanguine about these prospects. Masani, who had taken over from Narayan as General Secretary of the party, wrote in May 1936: 'The Party's policy had hitherto been to remain in opposition and to act as a driving force towards further radicalisation of Congress policy. We felt that we were called upon to share responsibility before we had sufficiently performed that task.'[2] The developments of the next three years were to demonstrate that this note of caution was more than justified.

The right-wing certainly had no illusions either about the outcome of the Lucknow session or about Nehru's commitment to the left; and its representatives gloated publicly over their victory at Lucknow[3]. While Satyamurti, a veteran

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1 See S. Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vol. I, (London, 1975), pp. 202-204.

2 M. R. Masani, Foreign Newsletter No. 4, A.I.C.S.P. (Bombay, 9 May 1936), p. 281, MP.

3 See Gopal, op. cit., p. 209.

constitutionalist, hailed the session as a triumph of Gandhism over socialism, G. D. Birla, the industrialist, welcomed Nehru's decision not to resign as being that of 'a typical English democrat who takes defeat in a sporting spirit'.[1] It is difficult, therefore, to explain left-wing optimism about the radicalisation of the Congress leadership, except in terms of the wishful thinking of Socialist and Communist leaders who needed to boost the morale of their followers and justify the pragmatic and contradictory alliances into which they had entered.

By their uncritical endorsement of Nehru's presidentship and the 'mixed' leadership that it represented, both the CSP and the CPI had accepted the maintenance of Congress unity on right-wing terms. The Communists, of course, remained outside the Congress High Command and were free to revert to pressure from below and to attack Congress policy when the occasion arose. For the CSP, the consequences were bound to be more enduring and far-reaching. The CSP leadership's agreement to an official partnership and joint responsibility with right-wing Congress leaders was not an aberration, but the culmination of the party's increasingly pragmatic development since 1934. That this step coincided with the CSP's espousal of revolutionary Marxism and the cause of socialist unity highlighted the contradictory nature of its radical nationalism. Confronted by growing tension between the Congress and militant non-Congress class organisations, the CSP leadership would find it increasingly difficult to reconcile the demands of radicalism with its more fundamental commitment to nationalism.

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1 Quoted in ibid.

Chapter 6

SOCIALIST UNITY (1936-39)

The CSP's Lucknow Agreement with the CPI, alongside the party's existing alliance with the Royists, had been envisaged by its leadership as laying the foundations of a united socialist party. Socialist unity had been conceived by the CSP, not as an end in itself, but as providing the Congress left with a stronger and wider mass base. By 1939, however, both socialist unity and left-wing leadership of the Congress had been revealed as chimeras, with the CSP unable to establish itself either as the dominant group in the Congress or as a cohesive left opposition to the Congress leadership. In order to explain the collapse of the Congress left, which will be dealt with in the next chapter, it is necessary first to examine the underlying instability of the socialist unity upon which its strength was based.

It had been clear from the outset that neither the CPI nor the Roy Group regarded their alliance with the CSP as more than a tactical necessity. Neither group recognised the CSP as a genuine socialist party with which a merger could ever be possible, while both saw it as a radical nationalist platform which should be utilised for their own immediate aims. Within the CSP leadership itself there were differences of emphasis between radical elements represented by J. P. Narayan and Narendra Dev, on the one hand, and the moderate Bombay leaders, on the other, over the precise priority to be given to socialist unity as against the party's Congress loyalties. Both sections, however, were distinguished from the Communists by their agreement on the necessity of Congress leadership of the nationalist movement. The founding leadership of the CSP was also united by its strong party loyalty and its resentment of Royist, and later Communist, advocacy of a wider Left Bloc.

The CSP - CPI United Front

The CSP-CPI alliance had been expected to operate on three main fronts; in the co-ordination of radical groups within the

Congress, in the building of strong mass organisations of workers, peasants and students and their affiliation with the nationalist movement, and in the expansion of the CSP itself as a double-edged lever for socialist unity and left-wing leadership of the nationalist movement. Judged by numerical strength, the alliance appeared to produce impressive results in all three spheres between 1936 and 1939.

Relations between the Congress left and the Congress leadership will be considered more fully in the next chapter. It is sufficient to note here that left-wing representation in Congress bodies continued to grow, despite the advantages derived by the right-wing from the formation of Congress ministries, until early in 1939 the left was in a position to make a serious bid for Congress leadership. Although the CSP's position in the All India Congress did not advance beyond the limited gains of the Lucknow session, Communist entry into the CSP and the Congress increased CSP representation in certain PCCs, enabling the party by 1938 to claim large contingents in the Bengal and Punjab PCCs and control of some DCCs in Andhra[1]. CSP influence in the Congress had previously been negligible in all three provinces.

The alliance also played an important role in securing the reunification of the divided trade union movement, the expansion of the peasant movement into a major All India political force and the federation of various provincial student organisations in an All India body. The CSP had visualised its united front with the Communists as involving a fair exchange of political advantages. While the Communists were offered access to the Congress and to kisan and youth organisations, the CSP expected to draw on Communist experience and support in the labour movement and to consolidate its position in the AITUC. Despite the mutual recriminations that were soon to follow, the immediate results seemed to justify these expectations.

In the trade union field, CSP support for labour militancy increased after the Lucknow Agreement, although Narayan conceded in December 1936 that these activities had not resulted in the

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1 S. Lahiri, 'Congress Elections in Bengal', National Front, 8 May 1938; 'Party News', Congress Socialist, 22 Jan. 1938; and P. Sundarayya, 'The Dimitrov Test', ibid., 26 March 1938.

building of mass trade unions by the CSP[1]. The CSP made efforts to unionise unorganised workers in provinces like the U.P.[2] and participated in a number of minor strikes, including a general strike in Delhi and textile strikes in Lucknow, Kanpur, Jalgaon, Dhulia, Calicut and Delhi[3]. In December 1936, the party gave its backing to the Bengal-Nagpur Railway strike and advocated a general strike in the railways, as against the moderate policy of the AIRF[4].

CSP-Communist cooperation was a new feature of the strike movement. In March 1937, the Communist-led Madras CSP organised a strike of 3,000 toddy-tappers in the course of which several of its leaders were arrested[5]. In the same month, the pro-Communist Ahmedabad CSP led a strike in the Rajkot mills, despite opposition from Gandhian labour leaders[6]. On 1 April 1937, the CSP and the CPI cooperated in organising a one-day political general strike against the new Constitution. In Calcutta, the CSP even attempted to outbid the Communists in its support for labour militancy. Early in 1937, CSP members of the Bengal Labour Association attempted to develop the Calcutta jute strike into a general strike, against opposition from local Communists. The jute strike lasted for 4 months and involved over 100,000 workers, with Sibnath Banerji, the CSP labour leader, playing a prominent role[7].

Although the formation of Congress ministries moderated CSP labour militancy, the party continued to support strikes in Ahmedabad, Dhulia and Bihar between 1937 and 1939. In the Ahmedabad textile strike of November 1937, in which 15,000 workers struck in protest against indirect wage-cuts, Congress Socialists and Communists cooperated against the Gandhian textile union[8].

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1 All India CSP, Report of the Third Annual Conference of the A.I.C.S.P. (Bombay, 1937).

2 UPPA, 11 July, 25 July, 15 Aug., 22 Aug. and 26 Sept. 1936 and 1 May 1937.

3 All India CSP, loc. cit.

4 Ibid.

5 Congress Socialist, 27 March 1937.

6 Ibid., 6 March 1937.

7 D. Sen, 'Fate of a General Strike', Congress Socialist, 20 Feb. 1937; and ibid., 24 April and 1 May 1937.

8 Congress Socialist, 20 Nov. 1937.

The strike received the backing of the Bombay CSP, which organised public meetings to condemn the Congress ministry's use of the Criminal Law Amendment Act against the strikers[1]. The Bombay CSP also endorsed the decision to develop the Dhulia textile strike into a general strike in the Khandesh district and appealed to Gandhi to secure the Maharashtra PCC's support for the strikers[2].

The AITUC annual session in May 1936 appeared to confirm the CSP's dominant position. The session endorsed the CSP's stand on the constitutional question, offered support to the Congress in the forthcoming provincial elections and congratulated the CSP on its 'firm opposition' to the 'reactionary' Congress leadership[3]. The TUC also adopted the CSP's scheme for collective affiliation with the Congress, which involved direct election of labour delegates by workers, instead of by trade union officials[4]. The Communists and Royists were persuaded to abandon a rival scheme which they had jointly prepared and to support the CSP's proposals[5]. Sibnath Banerji, the CSP labour leader, was unanimously elected president of the AITUC, while R. A. Khedgikar and Maniben Kara, both Royist members of the CSP, were elected vice-president and general secretary respectively[6]. A committee of six members appointed by the TUC to negotiate with the Congress comprised three Congress Socialists, two Royists and one Communist[7].

By the time of the next TUC session in December 1937, the CSP could no longer count on support from the Royists, with whom it was in open conflict. The session was therefore preceded by active canvassing to secure strong CSP representation in rivalry with both the Royists and the Communists[8]. These efforts

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1 BHS, file 800(75)A-VI: passim.

2 M. R. Masani to M. K. Gandhi, 24 March 1938, MP; Free Press Journal (Bombay), 24 and 25 March 1938.

3 IOR, file L/P&J/7/4246, 1936: Resolutions of the AITUC, May 1936.

4 Congress Socialist, 9 May 1936.

5 AICC, file L-I, 1935: General Secretary, AITUC, Circular, 3 March 1936, and passim.

6 M. R. Masani, 'One Step Forward, A Review of the TUC', Congress Socialist, 23 May 1936.

7 AICC, file L-I, 1935.

8 M. R. Masani to H. N. Shastri, 6 Dec. 1937; and Masani to J. P. Narayan, 9 Dec. 1937, MP.

secured the election of Suresh Banerji of the Bengal CSP as TUC president in preference to both M. N. Roy and S. A. Dange, the rival candidates[1].

The formation of Congress ministries had encouraged pressures for the reunification of the trade union movement in a single federation which could bargain more effectively with the Congress and coordinate the activities of labour legislators[2]. Following the affiliation of the NFTU to the AITUC in April 1938, the CSP lost its position as the largest group in the TUC[3]. Even so, the party was able to scotch the CPI's attempt to get its own nominees elected as president and general secretary of the united TUC, and Suresh Banerji, the CSP nominee, continued as president[4].

In the kisan movement, CPI support expanded peasant organisation in provinces like the Punjab, Bengal, Maharashtra and Gujerat, where the movement had previously been weak and fragmented. In March 1937, the Communists took the lead in organising a Maharashtra Kisan Committee, which was to play an active role in the agitation for the abolition of the Khoti system of landlordism[5]. From August 1937, Communists and Socialists worked together in the U.P. Kisan Committee, formed to radicalise the UPKS and secure its affiliation with the All India Kisan Congress[6]. In Bengal, where the Congress was identified with Hindu zamindars, the Communists enjoyed a major advantage over the CSP and were able by the end of 1937 to activate the Bengal Krishak Sabha as a political force independent both of the Congress and of Fazlul Haq's ruling Krishak Praja Party[7]. In the Punjab, the Communists, working through the CSP and in alliance with Mian Iftikharuddin, a left-wing Congress leader, organised a series of kisan conferences leading to the formation of a centralised Punjab Karza Committee[8]. The Communists also played a leading role in organ-

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1 Times of India, 5 Jan. 1938.

2 S. C. Banerji, 'Presidential Address to the Joint TUC', Congress Socialist, 23 April 1938.

3 Congress Socialist, 23 April 1938.

4 Ibid.; and Bombay Fortnightly Report, second half of March 1938.

5 Bombay Chronicle, 9 March 1937.

6 Congress Socialist, 21 Aug. 1937.

7 Ibid., 1 Jan. 1938.

8 Ibid.

ising the first Gujerat Kisan Conference in April 1939[1]. In the CPI stronghold of Andhra, the Communist-controlled provincial CSP in 1938 claimed leadership of the entire Andhra kisan movement, with its members as president and secretary of the Andhra Provincial Ryots' Association and in control of several of the latter's district branches[2]. As a result of these provincial activities, the All India Kisan Sabha (hereafter AIKS) founded in 1936, claimed by 1939 a membership of over 750,000 and had affiliated units in every major province[3].

Despite growing rivalry between CSP and Communist kisan organisers, the two parties had no major theoretical differences regarding the role of the peasantry. Both agreed that the AIKS should not be allowed to develop into a political party, the CSP because of its loyalty to the Congress and the CPI because of its belief in the subordination of the peasantry to proletarian dictatorship[4]. Thus, in April 1939, the CSP and the CPI joined together at the annual session of the AIKS to sponsor a resolution calling for a Congress-Kisan united front based on and within the Congress, rather than between the two independent organisations as desired by non-party kisan leaders[5].

The CSP and the CPI were agreed on the revolutionary potential of kisan demands for agrarian reform; and it was left to the Royists to point out the contradiction between peasant proprietorship and proletarian socialism. Both the CPI and the CSP defined kisans in the broadest terms to include small zamindars and prosperous tenant-farmers, and neither was willing to champion the cause of agricultural labour. Thus, the CSP and Kisan Sabha leadership in Bihar, the CSP's peasant stronghold, came predominantly from middle landowning families[6]. As president of the AIKS in 1939, Narendra Dev firmly rejected as premature attempts to differentiate between the interests of rich and poor peasants[7]. The Communists followed a similar strategy in their

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1 BHS, file 800(53)B-VI: Weekly Letter no. 14, 8 April 1939.

2 P. Sundarayya, 'The Dimitrov Test', Congress Socialist, 26 March 1938.

3 Congress Socialist, 26 March 1939.

4 Ranga, op. cit., p. 4.

5 National Front, 30 April 1939.

6 Hauser, op. cit., p. 78.

7 Narendra Dev, op. cit., p. 44, 'Presidential Address to the All India Kisan Conference, Gaya, 1939'.

own peasant stronghold of Andhra. Thus, in October 1938, the Communist-led Andhra CSP was strongly attacked by the Andhra Agricultural Labourers' Association for supporting rich peasants against strikes by agricultural labourers[1].

For the CSP and the CPI, both of which drew the bulk of their active cadres from the middle-class intelligentsia, the student movement represented an important reservoir of new members and also a major channel for influencing new nationalist cadres. Apart from a brief rupture early in 1938, the CSP and the CPI worked together in the All India Students' Federation (hereafter AISF) from its inception in August 1936 until 1940. During this period, Congress Socialists retained control of the key posts in the AISF leadership, while the Communists were prominent in student organisations in the southern provinces and Bengal. In general, the two parties functioned as disciplined fractions in the AISF, dividing executive positions by mutual agreement with each other[2].

Throughout this period, the CSP and the CPI maintained co-operation on the question of civil liberties and worked together in the Indian Civil Liberties Union recently established by Nehru[3]. The two parties organised several joint meetings to demand the repeal of repressive legislation, and especially the ban on the CPI, and the release of terrorist detenus, most of whom joined either the CSP or the CPI after their release. Both parties campaigned actively against the repressive policies of the Madras Congress ministry. Despite the growing tension between the CSP and the CPI after 1937, the former continued to demand the legalisation of the latter. The campaign for legalisation of the CPI received active support even from anti-Communists in the CSP, who hoped that the lifting of the ban would reduce Communist dependence on the CSP as a legal platform and encourage differentiation between the two parties. In 1938, and again in 1939, CSP and CPI leaders issued joint appeals for the celebration of 20 March, the anniversary of the Meerut Conspiracy Case, as 'CPI Legalisation Day'[4].

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1 Congress Socialist, 23 Oct. 1938.

2 Ali Ashraf to J. P. Narayan, 10 Jan. 1939, JPP.

3 Bombay Chronicle, 4 May 1936, and 3 Feb. and 4 Aug. 1937.

4 Congress Socialist, 19 March 1938 and 19 March 1939.

The entry of a substantial number of Communists into the CSP between 1936 and 1937, resulted in the numerical expansion of the CSP organisation in most provinces, with party membership increasing from 2,000 in January 1936 to 5,000 by 1938[1]. The most dramatic results were in Andhra and Tamilnad, where the CSP had previously had only a nominal existence. CSP membership in Andhra increased rapidly following the merger of the Communist Andhra Labour Protection League shortly after the CSP's Meerut conference. By 1938, the Andhra CSP had an active membership of 480 and several districts units[2]. Soon after the Meerut conference, P. Ramamurthy and P. Jeevandandam, both Communists, had been appointed to organise the Tamilnad CSP[3]. The Madras Communists were already in contact with the Self-Respect Socialist Party, a left-wing break-away from the anti-Brahmin Self-Respect Movement[4]. The Communist organisers of the Tamilnad CSP were soon able to overcome this group's anti-Congress sentiments and by November 1936 had secured its merger with the CSP[5].

Communist entry into the CSP also helped to consolidate the faction-ridden socialist movement in Punjab and Bengal. In Punjab, the Communists worked for the merger of the Punjab Socialist Party, the Punjab Radical League and the Kirti Kisan Party into the CSP, a process which was successfully completed by September 1936[6]. In Bengal, the united front took the form of a joint board to co-ordinate the activities of the Bengal CSP and the Communist-controlled Bengal Labour Party, with the aim of an eventual merger[7].

The CSP's united front with the Communists thus assisted the

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1 A. K. Ghosh, 'Lahore Conference of the Congress Socialist Party', New Age, May 1938.

2 J. P. Narayan, 'We are the Pioneers of Unity', Congress Socialist, 23 April 1938; P. Sundarayya, 'The Dimitrov Test', ibid., 26 March 1938; and CPI Politbureau, 'Plan of Work: C.S.P.', 9 May 1938, MP.

3 Congress Socialist, 26 Dec. 1936.

4 CPI Politbureau, 'Individual Enrolment to I.N.C.', 25 July 1936,MP.

5 AICC, file P-19, 1936: M. Ganapathy, 'Note on Self-Respect Movement in Madras', 18 Oct. 1936; Congress Socialist, 26 Dec. 1936; and ibid., E. M. S. Nambudripad, 'Socialist Movement in the South'.

6 CPI Politbureau, loc. cit.; and Congress Socialist, 12 Sept. 1936.

7 Bengal Labour Party, 'Greetings to the Members of the Bengal CSP', 3 Oct. 1936, MP.

growth of non-Congress mass organisations, and, in the short term, appeared to expand the CSP's following both in these organisations and in the Congress. By 1939, however, it was to become clear that these gains had involved the virtual demise of the CSP as an independent political force, distinct both from the Congress leadership and the Communists. By this time, the CSP would be a battleground for two clearly demarcated rival factions. One, led by the founder-leaders of the party, would be openly aligned with the Congress leadership, while the other would be a virtual extension of the CPI. This cleavage would eventually result in open splits in the CSP, in the mass organisations which it had helped to build, and in the left-wing coalition of which it had been the nucleus. The main issues in these various splits were epitomised in the rivalry of the CSP and the CPI, whose alliance constituted the basis of the Indian Popular Front.

The Lucknow Agreement had been intended as merely the first stage in a developing Popular Front which would eventually embrace all socialist and radical nationalist forces. Nevertheless, the organisational form of the Popular Front would advance no further than the fragile alliance formed at Lucknow. On the contrary, the functioning of the alliance and the practical experience of joint work would add fresh fuel to old rivalries, until by 1939 the Popular Front existed only in name.

In discussing CSP-CPI dissension during this period, it is possible to distinguish two main types of conflict: genuine policy differences regarding the long-term aims of the Popular Front, and factional rivalry geared towards short-term organisational gains. While the former predominated in the chronic disputes between the two parties in the labour movement, the latter was largely responsible for their rivalry in kisan and youth organisations. Both types of conflict converged in the struggle for control of the CSP itself.

Throughout this period, Congress Socialists and Communists disagreed fundamentally on issues such as the role of the Congress as an anti-imperialist Popular Front, the role of class organisations outside the Congress, and in particular of the trade union movement, and the proper function of a radical nationalist party like the CSP. Although both parties accepted the Dutt-Bradley thesis as the basis of their united front, the thesis itself had been ambiguous about the precise nature and scope of

the Popular Front. Although 'ultra-left' sections of the CPI, notably in Bombay, had attacked the very notion of Congress membership as a Royist and 'Right opportunist' deviation, the CPI politbureau committed itself to a via media which required the combination of Communist fraction-work within the Congress with independent mobilisation outside[1].

The differences between the Communist and Congress Socialist views of the Popular Front were aired at an early stage in a series of articles in the Congress Socialist in September-October 1936. The Congress Socialist view deprecated the formation of ad hoc united front committees as a dangerous expedient which would only weaken the demand for collective affiliation with the Congress, and instead defined the correct organisational form of the Popular Front as an 'integrated Congress' which included the representatives of class organisations. The CSP's view differentiated between a socialist united front and an anti-imperialist Popular Front. While the former would be 'a class platform' and would operate outside the Congress and through the CSP, the latter would be confined exclusively to the Congress[2].

The official CPI view, while rejecting 'ultra-left' advocacy of the Popular Front as a rival and hostile platform to the Congress, also condemned the CSP's desire to confine the Popular Front to the Congress as a legacy of outdated concepts of 'National Unity' and 'Congress prestige'. 'The Congress', it argued, '. . . can never be transformed into united front organisation of different classes, because it denies the existence of class conflict. The Congress, like the Corporate State, is based on the denial of classes, while the Front is an open alliance of the exploited classes, waging class-war against Imperialism and its allies'. The 'real front' was therefore defined by the CPI as an alliance between the Congress left and non-Congress class organisations, which would link the struggle outside the Congress with the struggle inside. While this definition excluded the Congress right-wing from the Popular Front, it was

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1 CPI Politbureau, loc. cit.; Nirmal, 'Anti-Imperialist United Front is not Royism', The Communist, June 1936; and 'The National Congress and the Immediate Task of the Communists', ibid., Aug.1936.

2 'A People's Front?', Congress Socialist, 5 Sept. 1936; and B. P. Sinha, 'Socialist Strategy', ibid., 24 Oct. 1936.

claimed that it ensured against 'a premature or forced split' in the Congress by allowing the Congress left to function in 'a wider field' and reducing the chances of a confrontation within the Congress[1].

The CPI's definition of the Popular Front undoubtedly allowed Communists far more room for manoeuvre than the CSP's inflexible commitment to Congress discipline. The CSP's position would become untenable when the interests of the Congress and non-Congress class organisations ceased to coincide; and the party would be compelled increasingly to align itself with the Congress leadership against labour and kisan militancy. The CPI, on the other hand, would manage quite successfully to ride both horses at once. While the Communists were quick to support and win leadership of mass agitations outside the Congress, and often in opposition to it, they were also careful within the Congress, to advocate only a nationalist programme. The CPI's economic demands on the Congress were far more cautious than the CSP's, provoking charges of 'reformism' from the latter[2]. Early in 1937, the CSP reacted sharply to a Communist suggestion that the Popular Front might include organisations of nationalist Indian capitalists[3].

By 1938, it also became clear that the CPI's concept of the Popular Front was flexible enough to include the Muslim League. While the CSP adopted a fundamentalist position on the communal question, dismissing it as an imperialist fabrication and opposing any negotiations with communal organisations, the Communists openly advocated Congress-Muslim League unity[4]. The result was a heated public controversy between the two parties over Communist participation in the Bengal Muslim League's Palestine Day demonstration[5].

Differences over the nature of the Popular Front arose, not merely from Communist pragmatism in nationalist politics, but

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1 D. K. Bedekar, 'People's Front and Congress', Congress Socialist, 3 Oct. 1936.

2 Hansraj, 'About Our Minimum United Front Platforms', The Communist, July 1936..

3 Tambe, 'On the Slogan of Constituent Assembly', The Communist, April 1937.

4 All India CSP, Foreign Newsletter, series 2, no. 2 (n.p., 8 June 1938), JPP; A. K. Ghosh, 'Negotiations versus Direct Approach', National Front, 19 June 1938; and National Front, 10 July 1938.

5 National Front, 2 Oct. 1938.

from basic theoretical disagreement over the class basis of socialism and its relationship to the nationalist movement. While the CSP's definition of socialism as 'the transfer of power to the producing masses' included the peasantry and salaried middle class, the CPI remained committed to the Marxist-Leninist view of the leading role of the working-class. The CSP's ideological subordination of socialism to nationalism was reflected in its organisational commitment to the Congress. For the Communists, however, it was unthinkable that the CPI, as the political party of the Indian working-class, could subordinate itself to the Congress, a bourgeois nationalist organisation. While the CSP differentiated between political and economic revolution, confining labour and other class organisations to the role of economic pressure-groups, the CPI was fiercely committed to maintaining the political independence of the trade union movement from Congress control.

These differences were soon reflected in the sharply divergent attitudes of the two parties to Congress-labour relations. The issue was raised within two months of the Lucknow Agreement by the hostility of Communist trade union cadres to the CSP's campaign to enrol workers as Congress primary members and thereby strengthen its representation in the next Congress elections. Replying to criticism from CPI leftists, who had resented Communist subservience to the CSP at the recent AITUC session, the CPI politbureau prescribed a compromise policy of conditional support to the CSP's campaign. Individual enrolment to the Congress was described as 'only one of the means to intensify the agitation . . . for collective affiliation from inside the I.N.C. platform in alliance with the I.N.C. rank and file and by mobilising them under our leadership on this and other allied immediate issues'. 'Our main emphasis', the politbureau stated, 'should be on demanding collective affiliation . . . by mobilising all anti-imperialist mass organisations outside the I.N.C.'. The Congress-labour united front, as envisaged by the CPI, was to function at two levels: within the Congress _via_ collective affiliation, and between the Congress and independent labour organisations through joint committees against retrenchment, wage-cuts and political repression[1].

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1 CPI Politbureau, _loc. cit._

To avoid isolation from the Congress left, the CPI leadership instructed its followers to form a pact with the CSP and the Royists for the enrolment of workers to the Congress on a joint platform of radical demands, exposing 'in a persuasive and not an abusive way' any illusions raised by the Congress left about the progressive character of the Congress. The politbureau stated:

> 'We must fight sharply against any effort to vulgarise our tactics of individual enrolment. The CSP and the Royists may ask workers to strengthen the Congress as already an anti-imperialist organisation. As against this we must explain to the workers the developing contradiction between the Left and Right in the I.N.C. and our platform as the lever to sharpen this contradiction . . . The Royists' and the CSP line is political movement exclusively under the Congress and through it, class organisations to confine themselves to economic questions only. As against this we ask workers to join the Congress to demand United Front movement both on the political and the economic front.'[1]

Despite the reluctance of the CPI leadership to force a confrontation with the CSP over Congress enrolment, by the end of 1936 a dispute over Congress-TUC relations led to a complete breakdown of the united front in Bombay with major repercussions at the All India level. The Bombay controversy was fuelled by the intense hostility between local Communists, who had shown the most resistance to the Dutt-Bradley line, and the Bombay CSP (hereafter BCSP), led by Masani, the CSP's most consistent anti-Communist. In its essential aspects, however, the Bombay dispute illustrated in a heightened form the more general incompatability of CSP and CPI attitudes to the conflict of interests between the nationalist and labour movements.

The question was first raised towards the end of 1936 by a noticeable difference in the attitude of the two parties to co-operation between the Congress and the AITUC in the forthcoming provincial elections. The Communists, like the Royists, attached no particular importance to the question of office-acceptance by the Congress and dismissed the CSP's obsession with the Anti-Ministry campaign as a sign of its 'Gandhian' and 'no-change' legacy. While supporting the Anti-Ministry campaign to avoid isolation from the Congress left, the CPI emphasised resistance to the new constitution, not by the boycott of legislatures or offices, but through their utilisation to develop mass agitation

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1 Ibid.

and promote radical demands, if necessary in opposition to Congress electoral and ministerial interests[1].

The Communists therefore threw their full weight behind attempts to make trade union and Kisan Sabha electoral support to the Congress conditional on the adoption by the latter of a radical election programme and of left-wing candidates. The CSP's position, on the other hand, was one of unreserved support for the Congress election campaign. In the course of 1936, the CSP, through its representatives on the Congress Labour Committee, worked for an electoral pact between the Congress and the AITUC[2]. At the same time, the CSP strongly condemned suggestions that the TUC might contest elections independently of the Congress if negotiations failed to produce agreement. An editorial in the party organ asserted:

> 'The TUC is not and must not become a political party . . . it is for political parties to contest elections and, in the absence of a working-class Party able and willing to contest elections independently, it is obvious that the I.N.C. is the Party . . . whose electoral platform should be utilised wherever possible by the working-class.'[3]

Following the failure of the Congress and the AITUC to agree on joint candidates in the labour centres of Bombay and Nagpur, the CSP's firm support for the Congress created a major breach in its alliances with both the Communists and the Royists. In a comprehensive critique, the CPI attacked the CSP for its insistence that TUC candidates must contest elections on the Congress ticket, as against the CPI's line that labour representatives must be free from Congress discipline[4]. The CPI also condemned the CSP's endorsement of the Congress election manifesto and its acquiesence in the Congress Parliamentary Board's choice of candidates, attributing these compromises to the CSP leadership's desire to please Nehru and retain its representation in the AICC and the Congress Working Committee, even at the cost of alienating its mass following. 'The CSP policy', the CPI later complained, 'was objectively that of political subordination of the working-

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1 'The Issue of Ministry Versus Anti-Ministry', The Communist, July 1936.

2 AICC, file L-I, 1935: Maniben Kara to Secretary, Congress Labour Committee, 23 July 1936; AICC, file L-7, 1936: M. R. Masani to J. B. Kripalani, 11 June 1936; and Kripalani to Masani, 13 June 1936.

3 'The Two Congresses', Congress Socialist, 16 May 1936.

4 'The Congress Socialist Party', The Communist, June 1937.

class to the existing Right Wing leadership of the Congress, and this attitude of the CSP towards the working-class is no mere Bombay phenomenon. It is the general attitude of the party'[1]. The CSP's entry into the Congress Working Committee was identified as the turning-point in its development, encouraging it to make 'agitational support' for Nehru a substitute for united front with class organisations. In the absence of active cadres, the CSP's united front with labour organisations had remained 'a purely top United Front', with the CSP confining its participation in joint demonstrations to the delegation of 'a few of its leaders to preside or speak'[2].

Turning to the CSP's trade union work, the CPI criticised the party for opening its doors to Royist and anti-Communist trade unionists in its eagerness to secure a labour following. The Communists complained:

> 'The CSP concentrated its attention not on the workers but on already existing T.U. leaders - mostly reformists of various shades. It did very little in popularising T.U. work in its own ranks or in the ranks of Congressmen, in explaining the importance of working class movement for the development of the national struggle, in supplying cadres for the T.U. movement. What the CSP has done is merely to enlist some T.U. leaders in the Party, and because of its desire to "dominate" the T.U. movement . . . it has paid little attention to the quality of the human material. . . . The CSP T.U. cadre consists of Ruikar, Hariharnath /Shastri/, Shibnath /Banerji/ and so on - veteran reformists who were in the T.U. movement long before the birth of the CSP . . . a heterogeneous lot whose one bond of unity is hatred of the Communists.'[3]

The formation of Congress ministries in July 1937 deepened the cleavage between Communists and Socialists in the labour movement. Although the CSP had opposed office acceptance by the Congress until the very end, once the ministries took office, the party showed a marked reluctance to embarrass the Congress by mass agitation. The CSP's policy of loyal opposition to the ministries was mostly confined to lobbying Congress ministers and legislators and to indirect pressure through Congress committees. The CPI, on the other hand, had no such inhibitions and was determined to utilise the greater political freedom provided by Congress rule to strengthen its own mass influence,

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1 'The Present Situation and Our Tasks', ibid.

2 'The Congress Socialist Party', ibid.

3 Ibid.

if necessary by exposing Congress conservatism and CSP vacillation.

In July 1937, a CPI resolution on the Congress ministries called for a mass struggle by the left to pressurise the ministries for civil liberties and labour and peasant demands. The resolution stated:

> 'We must explain to the masses that the Congress ministries do not mean the people's government. . . . Every strike struggle, every mass demand of the peasantry, every act of repression of the government official, must be made the object of mass demonstrations, of mass deputation to the ministers and to the council houses. . . . The period of Congress ministries must be utilised to quicken the tempo of struggle on all fronts. . ."Fulfill our demands, redress our grievances or resign". This must be the cry which must go up . . .'[1]

CSP-CPI policy differences regarding the Congress and the trade union movement were intensified by the organisational manoeuvres of local units of both parties. This rivalry became particularly pronounced after the formation of Congress ministries. While the CSP sought to utilise its Congress affiliations to negotiate on behalf of labour and peasant organisations, the CPI resorted increasingly to direct action. This overlap of ideological and organisational conflict and the escalation of local disputes to the All India level are well illustrated by conflicts in the labour centres of Bombay and Kanpur.

The long-standing hostility between the Bombay CSP and local Communists had not been significantly affected by the Lucknow Agreement. While the Communists accused the BCSP of a secret alliance with Kandalkar, leader of the anti-Communist faction of the GKU, the Bombay CSP leaders complained that the Communists were determined to bar them from access to the trade unions[2]. The cassus belli for a renewed outbreak of hostilities was provided by a wrangle over nominations for the assembly elections towards the end of 1936. Under Communist influence, the Bombay Provincial Trade Union Congress (hereafter BPTUC) refused to support the BCSP's efforts to secure Congress election tickets for mutually agreed candidates in the labour areas of Bombay city[3].

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1 'Resolutions of the CPI P.B.', The Communist, July 1937.

2 Bombay CID, file I/CSP/36-II: 'Dange's Reply', 8 Nov. 1936; and Masani, op. cit., p. 69.

3 A. Mehta to M. R. Masani, 14 Oct. 1936, MP; and Congress Socialist, 28 Nov. 1936.

In particular, the BPTUC refused to support Masani's nomination as a labour candidate and insisted instead on the Congress ticket for R. S. Nimbkar, the veteran Marxist labour leader. When Sardar Patel rejected Nimbkar's name, Maniben Kara, the Royist General Secretary of the AITUC, refused to suggest an alternative, and the Congress nominated its own candidate[1]. In a public statement, Maniben now attacked the CSP for refusing to support Nimbkar's nomination and, anticipating disciplinary action against herself, resigned from the party with a strong public indictment of its labour policy[2].

It was at this critical juncture that the Communists entered the fray. While the Royists had concentrated their fire on the CSP and were reluctant to force a confrontation with the Congress itself, the Communists secured a decision by the BPTUC to set up its own candidate in the E and F Wards constituency of Bombay in opposition to the Congress candidate.

The decision was endorsed by the AITUC executive, which voted by 43 votes to 8 to nominate Joglekar, the veteran Bombay CPI leader, as the TUC candidate, an index of Communist influence in the TUC[3]. The TUC executive also adopted a Communist resolution to the effect that all election propaganda must be strictly in accordance with the TUC programme. The most remarkable feature of the meeting was its unanimity on the controversy between the BPTUC and the BCSP. Communist, Royist and CSP representatives, including Sibnath Banerji, president of the AITUC and a CSP leader, unanimously adopted a resolution condemning the Bombay CSP's strictures on Maniben Kara and supporting her stand over Nimbkar's candidature[4].

The unpopularity of the BCSP's stand in labour circles was confirmed during the election campaign. Despite press statements by Narayan and the Bombay CSP requiring support to Congress candidates from all party members[5], prominent CSP trade unionists

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1 Congress Socialist, 31 Oct. 1936.

2 M. R. Masani to J. P. Narayan, 16 Nov. 1936, JPP; and Bombay Chronicle, 26 Nov. 1936.

3 BHS, file 800(75)A-II: intelligence report on A.I.C.S.P. Conference, Faizpur, Dec. 1936.

4 Ibid.; and New Age, March 1937.

5 J. P. Narayan, press statement, 11 Jan. 1937, JPP; and Bombay Chronicle, 13 Jan. 1937.

like R. S. Ruikar campaigned openly for Joglekar against the Congress candidate[1]. Ruikar's public attacks on the BCSP provoked Masani to issue a press statement denying that there was disagreement between the BCSP and the All India CSP over the election contest, calling for Joglekar's withdrawal from the contest and warning that the 'progressive' vote would otherwise be split to the advantage of 'the reactionary and communal candidate, Dr. Ambedkar'[2]. Masani's statement produced protests within the All India CSP, with Dinkar Mehta, the party's pro-Communist joint secretary complaining to Narayan that the Bombay dispute was 'assuming disturbing proportions' and that the BCSP had been unwise to demand Joglekar's withdrawal.[3]

In Bombay, the election contest marked the total breakdown of the fragile united front between the BCSP and the BPTUC. The Bombay CSP leaders now joined the Royists and Kandalkar in canvassing for the Congress candidate against Joglekar. S. D. Patil, a CSP member and secretary of Kandalkar's section of the GKU, issued a press statement accusing the BPTUC of a secret alliance with Ambedkar against the Congress. The BPTUC retaliated by threatening disciplinary action against Patil, Masani and Meherally in their capacity as office-bearers of affiliated unions[4].

As the election campaign advanced, CSP-CPI hostility bordered on violence. A public meeting held jointly by the BPTUC, the Congress and the BCSP ended in chaos when the chairman attempted to convert it into an election meeting for Joglekar[5]. The conflict reached its climax on polling day when Joglekar's supporters converted the CSP's Labour Centre into the BPTUC election office. Masani, who was in charge of the Congress volunteer force for the Bombay elections[6], attempted to evict the TUC volunteers. The result was a violent clash in which the centre was forcibly

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1 M. R. Masani to J. P. Narayan, 11 Feb. 1937, JPP.

2 M. R. Masani, press statement, Feb. 1937, JPP.

3 D. Mehta to J. P. Narayan, 12 Feb. 1937, JPP.

4 M. R. Masani to J. P. Narayan, 26 Jan. 1937, JPP.

5 BPTUC, 'Rupture of United Front Between T.U.C. and C.S.P. in Bombay', n.d., JPP.

6 M. R. Masani to J. P. Narayan, 11 Feb. 1937, JPP.

re-occupied by the Communists[1].

The election dispute was the beginning of what was to be a continuous feud between the BCSP and the BPTUC; and the national importance of the personalities and principles involved made Bombay the storm-centre of CSP-CPI relations at the All India level Although the BPCC soon agreed to bury the election dispute and restore co-operation with the BPTUC, Masani remained adamant that the BCSP could not consider joint action until the BPTUC made a public apology for its behaviour[2].

Finding himself in a minority in the BCSP executive, which voted to restore the united front, Masani referred the matter to the CSP's national executive, where he secured a decision calling on the BCSP to break off the united front until an apology was received[3]. The BCSP now refused to join the BPTUC in organising a 'Day of National Unity' on 24 April 1937, despite the participation of the BPCC, and also boycotted the May Day meeting jointly sponsored by the BPTUC, the BPCC, the NFTU and the All India Kisan Committee[4]. CSP members were even forbidden to join the May Day demonstration as individuals, unless they were trade union officials. The BPTUC, for its part, refused to apologise, reiterated its accusations about the BCSP leaders' alliance with Kandalkar and their 'opportunist and shameful' electoral policy, charged the CSP national executive with violating inner-party democracy by superseding the BCSP's decision to restore the united front, and attributed this 'bureaucratic' policy to a desire 'to pamper' Masani[5].

Following the formation of a Congress ministry in Bombay in July 1937, CSP-CPI rivalry in the city developed into open competition between the two groups in labour areas. The ministry's policy of restraining trade union militancy was actively resisted by the Communists, who were working for a general strike. The BCSP, on the other hand, warmly welcomed the ministry's labour

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1 M. R. Masani, 'Between You and Me and the Lamppost', Congress Socialist, 27 Feb. 1937.

2 BPTUC, loc. cit.

3 Ibid.

4 Bombay Fortnightly Report, first half of May, 1937, IOR.

5 BPTUC, loc. cit.

programme and joined Kandalkar and the Royists in opposing Communist militancy[1]. Despite Communist resistance, the BCSP organised a series of public meetings in labour areas to persuade workers to join the Congress and support the CSP within it[2]. 'The Communists are openly attacking us and the Congress', Masani informed Narayan in December 1937. 'But we are stronger today than we have ever been in the Labour area'.[3]

Strengthened by the patronage of the ministry, the BCSP made a concerted effort to establish an independent trade union base. Though most of its cadres continued to concentrate on Congress and student work, there was a noticeable increase in the party's labour activities by 1938. Of its 75 active members, 13 were officially engaged in trade union work and 8 in the running of its labour centre, whose activities had considerably expanded. The party claimed to have formed several new unions between 1937 and 1938 and to have enrolled a large number of new members to the GKU, despite the uncooperative attitude of the GKU leadership. The BCSP also claimed to have influenced the Bombay PCC's labour policy to the advantage of the trade unions[4].

By December 1937, the threat posed by the ministry's proposed labour legislation had combined with pressure from the CPI national leadership to moderate BPTUC hostility to the BCSP. The Bombay Communists now proposed a resumption of united front relations 'based on united mass action', instead of the previous procedure whereby the CSP had merely sent its speakers or lent its auspices to BPTUC rallies[5]. In March 1938, the BCSP accepted the olive branch, dropping its insistence on an apology, and joint action was resumed[6]. Its first manifestation was the presentation

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1 Bombay Fortnightly Report, second half of Dec. 1937, IOR; and Congress Socialist, 21 Aug. 1937.

2 BHS, file 800(75)A-II: Commissioner of Police, Bombay, weekly reports, 13 & 27 Sept. 1937; and Weekly Letter no. 34, 28 Aug.1937.

3 M. R. Masani to J.P. Narayan, 8 Dec. 1937, MP.

4 A. Mehta, 'Report on the Activities of the B.C.S.P. for the Year 1937-38', n.d., JPP.

5 'United Front with the C.S.P. in Bombay (for Contact Committee)', unsigned, 25 Dec. 1937, MP.

6 Bombay Fortnightly Report, first half of March 1938, IOR; and Congress Socialist, 12 March 1938.

by the BPTUC and the BCSP of almost identical memoranda to the ministry, proposing amendments to its labour bill[1]. Left-wing unity was also encouraged by the BPCC's decision to enter the labour arena itself and organise labour under the auspices of the newly-founded Gandhi Seva Sangh[2]. In June 1938, Masani reported to Narayan that relations between the BCSP and the BPTUC were 'of the best'. The two organisations were co-operating in collections for the Kanpur general strike and in the boycott campaign against Japanese goods, and Masani had been offered the post of treasurer of the BPTUC[3]. Within two months, however, this brief reconciliation would be shattered by renewed conflict over Congress labour policy.

Both the CSP and the Communists were agreed on the necessity of opposing certain features of the Congress labour bill, and in particular its bias in favour of unions which accepted arbitration and secured recognition from employers[4]. Both organisations interpreted these provisions as a denial of the right to strike and an attack on the very existence of independent trade unions; and their objections were shared by moderate trade unionists like Jamnadas Mehta[5].

Nevertheless, important differences of approach soon emerged. While the BCSP welcomed the bill as a whole and advocated constructive opposition through negotiations with the ministry and amendments in the legislature, the Communists advocated mass agitation[6]. Between March and September 1938, the BCSP leaders engaged in a series of talks with the Congress Premier and G. L. Nanda the Parliamentary Secretary for Labour, as a result of which the party claimed credit for certain modifications of the bill, including the deletion of compulsory arbitration and the reduction of the

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1 'An Unfortunate Chapter Closes', Congress Socialist, 12 March 1938.

2 'Statement of the Government of Bombay to the Bombay Disturbances Enquiry Committee', n.d. (1938), Munshi Papers.

3 M. R. Masani to J. P. Narayan, 15 June 1938, MP.

4 'Socialists State Workers' Case', Congress Socialist, 12 March 1938.

5 Ibid.

6 M. R. Masani, 'Socialist Criticism Tells', Congress Socialist, 6 Aug. 1938.

preference given to unions recognised by employers[1]. The BPTUC, on the other hand, voted overwhelmingly to reject the bill as incapable of improvement[2]. Led by an alliance of Communists, Liberals and Ambedkar's Independent Labour Party, the BPTUC announced a one-day general strike in protest against the bill. When the Bombay and Maharashtra PCCs threatened disciplinary action against Congressmen who supported the strike, the BCSP announced a boycott of the strike, on the ground that Communist 'ultra-leftism' had turned the agitation into an anti-Congress crusade[3].

Despite the CSP's opposition and the last-minute withdrawal of the Royists, the hartal received considerable mass support. According to the CSP's own estimates, over 50,000 workers struck, 15 mills shut down, while another 15 worked with less than half of their labour force. Asoka Mehta of the BCSP admitted: 'The strike showed that the government was ill-informed in dismissing the BPTUC as a negligible force. It proved to be a powerful demonstration and a stimulant to workers' militancy'[4].

While the Congress announced disciplinary action against Communist and other members involved in the strike[5], the BCSP issued a statement which equated the anti-Congress propaganda of the hartal's organisers with the use of police firing on the strikers by the ministry, thereby infuriating left-wing trade unionists[6]. The BCSP also condemned the BPTUC's decision to boycott a judicial enquiry by the ministry into police excesses and the Communist threat to organise another general strike if the verdict was unfavourable[7].

The situation was further complicated by the BPTUC's decision to put up Communist candidates against the Congress for

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1 Statement by the Secretaries, BCSP, Congress Socialist, 6 Nov. 1938; and 'Trade Disputes Bill', ibid., 13 Aug. 1938.

2 M. R. Masani, 'BPTUC's Volte Face', Congress Socialist, 16 Oct. 1938.

3 A. Mehta, 'Ruining a Good Cause', Congress Socialist, 6 Nov. 1938.

4 A. Mehta, 'Was the Hartal a Success?', Congress Socialist, 13 Nov. 1938.

5 BHS, file 950(A)-II: CID report, 26 Nov. 1938; and BHS, file 950 (A)-III: CID report, 14 Dec. 1938.

6 'Bombay CSP on the Industrial Disputes Bill', Congress Socialist, 20 Nov. 1938.

7 A. Mehta, 'Hartal - the Aftermath', Congress Socialist, 20 Nov. 1938.

the labour seats in the forthcoming municipal election. The BCSP accused the Communists of reverting to 'their pre-1935 position' of opposition to the Congress and of supporting Ambedkar in his bid to oust the Congress from control of the Bombay Corporation[1]. Under pressure from Masani, Suresh Banerji, the AITUC President and a CSP leader, made an attempt to secure the withdrawal of the BPTUC candidates, but failed to effect a compromise[2]. The victory at the polls of all four Communist candidates confirmed their strong labour following[3].

Although the direct protagonists in this conflict were the BCSP and the BPTUC, as in 1937 the Bombay dispute inevitably had All India repercussions. The Bombay labour bill, which had been intended as a model for other Congress ministries, was strongly condemned by the AITUC executive, the All India Kisan Committee and the left in general[4]. Equally significant in view of the developing split within the All India CSP, was the condemnation of the BCSP leaders' stand by a substantial number of their own party colleagues. In October 1938, the CPI leadership had openly appealed to CSP members not to allow their Bombay unit to 'disgrace' them by its anti-labour policy[5]. The pro-Communist Ahmedabad CSP had already endorsed the BPTUC's line; and its leader, Dinkar Mehta, had openly dissociated himself from Masani's position[6]. In October, the Ahmedabad CSP joined the Communist-controlled Mill Kamdar Union in preparations for a protest strike[7]. The BCSP's line was also criticised by non-Communist sections of the party. The Bombay labour bill was condemned by Congress Socialists in Karnatak and Kanpur[8]; and M. L. Dantwala, a non-

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1 Ibid.

2 M. R. Masani to S. C. Banerji, 12 Nov. 1938, MP; and Bombay Fortnightly Report, second half of Nov. 1938, IOR.

3 Bombay Fortnightly Report, first half of Feb. 1939, IOR.

4 'All India Kisan Bulletin', National Front, 9 Oct. 1938.

5 M. R. Masani, 'BPTUC's Volte Face', Congress Socialist, 16 Oct.1938.

6 National Front, 21 Aug. 1938; and D. Mehta, 'An Obnoxious Bill', Congress Socialist, 20 Aug. 1938.

7 National Front, 23 Oct. 1938.

8 Ibid., 30 Oct. 1938.

Communist founder-leader of the BCSP, strongly criticised Masani's handling of the dispute. While agreeing that the CPI was utilising the occasion 'for airing its long suppressed antagonism to the Congress', Dantwala argued that the correct policy for the BCSP was to support the agitation against the ministry's labour bill, while dissociating itself from anti-Congress elements. He complained that the BCSP's open attacks on the BPTUC had 'made the position of the CSP very vulnerable, undoing . . . the work of many comrades'.[1]

The dispute over the Bombay labour bill marked the permanent break-down of the CSP-CPI united front in Bombay. Although Masani's membership of the AITUC General Council made it impossible for the BPTUC to take disciplinary action against him, the BPTUC strongly censured his conduct as 'a calculated betrayal of the interests of the working class'.[2] Henceforth, CSP labour activity in Bombay would be overtly anti-Communist.

Though marked by similar political alignments, the Kanpur labour disputes of 1937 and 1938 present certain contrasts with those of Bombay. Whereas the Bombay CSP was a new-comer to a labour arena in which the Communists were already entrenched, in Kanpur the roles were reversed. The founder-leader of the Kanpur Mazdur Sabha, H. N. Shastri, was a loyal CSP member, while the Communists were a small minority until 1937. Unlike Bombay, which had a long tradition of hostility between Communists and Congress Socialists, in Kanpur the Communists had co-operated with Shastri since 1934. Despite these differences, the advent of a Congress ministry in the U.P. would be the signal for intense rivalry between labour leaders in Kanpur, resulting in the capture of the Mazdur Sabha by the Communists and the virtual exclusion of its CSP founders.

Communists and Congress Socialists had worked harmoniously in the Kanpur textile strike of September 1936[3]. The annual session of the U.P. TUC in March 1937, presided over by Dange, had been conspicuously free from the rivalries evident in Bombay[4].

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1 M. L. Dantwala to M. R. Masani, 26 Oct. 1938, MP.

2 'Disciplinary Action Against Masani?', Congress Socialist, 27 Nov. 1938; and ibid, 4 Dec. 1938.

3 UPPA, 19 Sept. 1936.

4 Ibid., 27 March 1937.

By May, however, tensions were developing, with the Congress Socialists resentful of the election of a Communist as secretary of the Kanpur Mazdur Sabha and the defeat of their own candidate[1]. In July, serious conflict emerged during the Kanpur jute strike. While the Congress Socialists preferred to rely on their influence with Nehru and the U.P. Congress to secure a favourable settlement by the ministry, the Communists strongly resisted the Congress Premier's mediation and demanded a general strike. Although the CSP leaders of the Mazdur Sabha succeeded in defeating the proposal by a threat of resignation, the Communists now launched a sustained campaign to win control of the Mazdur Sabha and launch a general strike[2].

The Kanpur dispute soon escalated to the national level, with R. D. Bharadwaj, a member of the CPI politbureau, appealing to Narayan for disciplinary action by the CSP against H. N. Shastri and other local trade unionists. Accusing the Kanpur CSP of siding with the mill-owners and disrupting the strike, Bharadwaj stated: '. . . this concerns our whole policy with regard to ministries. Are you willing to allow the ministries to become a lever to drag us to the right or are we to drag the ministries to the left?'[3] Commenting on the Kanpur dispute, the Communist journal, New Age, accused prominent CSP leaders of holding back mass struggles for fear of embarrassing Congress ministries[4].

In May 1938, the launching of a textile general strike by the Kanpur Communists created a fresh crisis. Despite the employers' rejection of the recommendations of the Textile Labour Enquiry Committee, the CSP had opposed direct action until the ministry had been allowed an opportunity to effect a compromise[5]. The Communists, however, were now in complete control of the mill committees and could claim impressive working-class support for their demand[6]. At a rally of 8,000 workers, H. N. Shastri, the CSP president of the Mazdur Sabha, and Balkrishna Sharma, president of the Kanpur TCC, were shouted down when they appealed for moderation and had to give way to the majority view[7]. Once

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1 Ibid., 22 May, 1937.

2 Ibid., 24 & 31 July and 7 Aug. 1937.

3 R. D. Bharadwaj to J. P. Narayan, 27 July 1937, JPP.

4 New Age, Sept. 1937.

5 A. Mehta, 'Cawnpore: The Storm Centre', Congress Socialist, 14 May 1938.

6 UPPA, 14 May 1938.

7 Ibid., 21 May 1938.

launched, the strike received the backing, not only of the Mazdur Sabha and the TCC, but of the PCC itself[1].

The credit for the success of the strike went, not to the Congress Socialists who officially led it, but to the Communists who were the driving force behind it. In August 1938, the Communists won a majority in the General Council of the Kanpur Mazdur Sabha[2]. In alliance with Balkrishna Sharma, the local Congress leader, and Muslim League elements led by Maulana Hasrat Mohani, the Communists were now able to oust the CSP from all the key posts in the union, replacing Shastri with a Communist president[3].

The impact of the Bombay and Kanpur disputes was felt increasingly in the politics of the AITUC. At the TUC session in January 1938, the performance of the Congress ministries came under severe fire[4]. By the end of the year, support for the CSP's pro-Congress line had dwindled even further. Although the CSP, in alliance with M. N. Roy, secured the adoption by the U.P. TUC of a resolution calling on workers to enrol in the Congress, a similar resolution was defeated by a Communist-Liberal combination at the All India Textile Workers' Conference[5]. The AITUC session of December 1938 was a complete debacle for the CSP. The Bombay labour bill was condemned by both the Communists and the Royists[6]. The TUC President, a CSP member, was forced to withdraw certain mild criticisms of the BPTUC's protest strike[7]. A TUC resolution threatening the Congress with an All India day of protest against the bill was regarded by the CSP as a major reverse for its attempt at a negotiated settlement[8]. In the election of the TUC delegate

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1 H. N. Shastri, '40,000 Win Their Way', Congress Socialist, 30 July 1938.

2 UPPA, 13 Aug. 1938.

3 Ibid., 27 Aug. 1938; U.P. Fortnightly Report, first half of Sept. 1938, IOR; 'Cawnpore Drops the Pilot?', Congress Socialist, 27 Aug. 1938; P. C. Joshi, 'Cawnpore Picks its Pilots', National Front, 4 Sept. 1938; and ibid., 11 Sept. 1938.

4 P. Tricumdas, 'The T.U.C.', Congress Socialist, 29 Jan. 1938.

5 National Herald (Lucknow), 24 Dec. 1938; National Front, 8 Jan. 1939; and 'Letter from a U.P. Socialist', Congress Socialist, 8 Jan. 1939.

6 National Herald, 23 Dec. 1938.

7 Congress Socialist, 1 Jan. 1939.

8 Ibid.

to the I.L.O., R. S. Nimbkar, the Communist candidate, defeated H. N. Shastri of the CSP by a large majority[1].

Commenting on the TUC session, the Congress Socialist attributed the CSP's isolation to an anti-Congress Liberal-Communist alliance in the TUC, following the affiliation of the NFTU. N. M. Joshi, the NFTU leader, was described as 'a virtual dictator', while the Communists were accused of currying favour with Joshi to secure the election of their nominee to the I.L.O.[2] While the reunification of the AITUC undoubtedly contributed to the decline of CSP influence, the Bombay and Kanpur disputes make it clear that the CSP's isolation in the labour movement and its breach with the Communists was the result of more fundamental differences over Congress labour policy.

The escalation of CSP-CPI conflict in the labour movement was accompanied by sympathetic rivalry in other mass organisations. Despite general agreement on policy in the All India Kisan Sabha and All India Students' Federation, Communist-Socialist relations in these organisations was marked by growing party rivalry.

At the All India Kisan Conference at Faizpur in December 1936, it became clear that the CPI had no intention of remaining a junior partner of the CSP in the kisan movement. The Communists put up their own candidate for presidentship of the All India Kisan Congress (hereafter AIKC) against Narayan, the CSP candidate, and were prominent in the organisation of the conference and of the kisan march scheduled for the Faizpur Congress session[3]. The conference resulted in a significant decline in the CSP's organisational control of the AIKC. Ranga, the non-party kisan leader, was elected president, defeating Narayan, and the CSP's share of offices was reduced to one joint secretaryship[4]. While the Communists were represented on the committee appointed to draft the AIKC constitution, the CSP was excluded[5]. It was also significant, in view of simultaneous developments in the TUC, that

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1 National Herald, 24 Dec. 1938.

2 Congress Socialist, 1 Jan. 1939.

3 Bombay Chronicle, 14 Dec. 1936; BHS, file 800(53)B: 'All India Kisan Bulletin', 6 Nov. 1936; and District Magistrate, Poona, Weekly Report, 22 Oct. 1936.

4 Bombay Chronicle, 2 Dec. 1936 and 26 March 1937.

5 BHS, file 800(53)B-I: intelligence report on Faizpur session of the All India Kisan Congress, 26-27 Dec. 1936.

the Communists strongly backed Swami Sahajanand's resolution on the Congress election campaign, making kisan support conditional upon the adoption of a radical agrarian programme. The defeat of the CSP's amendment to this resolution was followed by a procedural dispute, in the course of which the Congress Socialist group was evicted from the conference for disorderly behaviour[1].

During the next two years, the Communists made a sustained effort to establish a kisan base of their own. The importance of independent kisan organisation was emphasised at length in a CPI resolution in July 1937[2]. In Bombay Presidency, the Communists, in alliance with I. Yagnik, took the lead in kisan agitation for the implementation of the Congress agrarian programme, while the CSP in general remained indifferent. In September 1937, a Kisan Day organised by Yagnik's Bombay Kisan Propaganda Committee, the BPTUC and the GKU (Red Flag) was boycotted by the Bombay CSP, which also kept aloof from a Communist-led kisan march to the Bombay legislature in December 1937[3].

By the middle of 1938, the Communists were also benefitting from a growing cleavage within the Bihar kisan movement, hitherto the bastion of CSP mass influence. The Bihar CSP had initially co-operated with Swami Sahajanand's efforts to pressurise the Congress ministry for agrarian reform. By 1938, however, Narayan and the Bihar CSP were playing a moderating role, as against Sahajanand's call for direct action against the ministry's pro-zamindar tenancy legislation. In July 1938, the Bihar Governor referred to the existence of a definite alliance between Narayan and the ministry to restrain kisan militancy[4]. Narayan's moderating role was evident in his support for Congress efforts at a peaceful settlement between kisans and zamindars in the Gaya district, in his attempt to restrain the Reora agitation over the cropping of Bakashth lands, and in his rejection of Sahajanand's proposal to form a 1,000-strong Kisan-Socialist

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1 Ibid.; and Bombay Sentinel, 6 Jan. 1937.

2 'Resolutions of the CPI P.B.', The Communist, July 1937.

3 Bombay Chronicle, 2 Sept. 1937; Bombay Fortnightly Report, second half of Dec. 1937, IOR; BHS, file 950-I: CID report, 17 Feb. 1938; and BHS, file 800(75)A-VI: CID report, 24 Jan. 1938.

4 Governor's Report, Bihar, 28 July 1938, IOR.

volunteer corps[1].

While the CPI as yet had no formidable existence in Bihar, it could count on the sympathies of some prominent militants in the Bihar CSP and the BPKS[2]. In the Gaya district, for instance, a group of ex-terrorists broke away from the CSP in July 1938, in protest against Narayan's moderation, and formed an independent, pro-Communist party[3]. In December 1938, Karjanand Sharma, a pro-Communist kisan leader, was elected president of the BPKS. The BPKS now threatened the Congress with an open split and decided to launch a satyagraha campaign against the large-scale eviction of tenants by landlords[4].

These strains within the BPKS soon produced a close alignment between Sahajanand and the CPI at the All India level. It has been suggested elsewhere that Sahajanand's break with the CSP dates from 1939 on the issue of a Left Bloc against the Congress leadership[5]. The lines of division, however, were already clear by the time of the third All India Kisan Conference at Comilla (Bengal) in May 1938.

The conference, which was chaired by Sahajanand, marked a major set-back for the CSP, with the Communists predominant. Sahajanand's presidential address emphasised the basic conflict of interest between the Congress and the kisans, condemned the Congress creed of non-violence and advocated revolutionary methods of agitation[6]. Communist influence was symbolised by the flying of the red flag without the Congress tricolour and by a change of name from All India Kisan Congress to All India Kisan Sabha[7]. The CSP complained that the Communist-controlled Bengal Krishak Sabha had packed the conference; and the Bengal CSP refused to participate, in protest against Communist exclusion of the Krishak Praja Samiti, a break-away from Fazlul Haq's party[8].

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1 Bihar Fortnightly Reports, second half of July, first half of August and second half of December 1938, IOR.

2 Hauser, op. cit., p. 80.

3 Governor's Report, Bihar, 12 July 1938, IOR.

4 Bihar Fortnightly Report, first half of Dec. 1938; and Hauser, op. cit., p. 128.

5 Hauser, op. cit., pp. 105, 140.

6 Bihar Fortnightly Report, first half of May 1938, IOR.

7 'Comilla - A Different Story', Congress Socialist, 11 June 1938; and Ranga, op. cit., p. 4.

8 Congress Socialist, loc. cit.

Communist influence was also apparent in the pro-Soviet international line of the AIKS and in Sahajanand's public support for the CPI against Masani's strictures on Russian foreign policy[1]. In September 1938, P. C. Joshi, the CPI general secretary, became editor of the All India Kisan Bulletin, the official news-sheet of the AIKS, which was published henceforth in the National Front, the CPI organ, instead of the Congress Socialist[2].

Early in 1939, the affiliation of the pro-Congress UPKS and a temporary moderation of Communist tactics during the leadership crisis in the Congress produced a brief revival of CSP influence in the AIKS. In March 1939, Narendra Dev, leader of the U.P. CSP and president of the UPKS, was unanimously elected president of the AIKS[3]. Although the Communists had initially called for Sahajanand's re-election as president, the latter withdrew in the interests of unanimity and was elected instead as general secretary[4]. The AIKS session at Gaya in April 1939 produced a fragile compromise between the CSP and kisan militants, with the CPI occupying the middle ground. Narendra Dev's strong appeal in his presidential address for kisan unity with the Congress was endorsed with Communist support in the conference's political resolution[5]. Nevertheless, CSP efforts to moderate kisan militancy were unsuccessful. The conference condemned the Congress-zamindar agreement over tenancy legislation in Bihar and called for the formation of a strong kisan volunteer corps to intensify kisan agitation[6].

The tenuous unity of the AIKS at Gaya could not survive the rapid breakdown of left-wing co-operation in other spheres. The main mass base of both the CSP and the AIKS was the Bihar kisan movement, which accounted for more than half the entire membership of the AIKS[7]. Within months of the Gaya session, the split in

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1 M. R. Masani to Swami Sahajanand, 20 June 1938, MP.

2 Hauser, op. cit., p. 138.

3 Congress Socialist, 29 Jan. and 26 March 1939.

4 Bihar Fortnightly Report, second half of March 1939, IOR; National Front, 29 Jan. 1939.

5 Narendra Dev, op. cit., p. 44; and National Front, 30 April 1939.

6 NA, file 7/4/1940: intelligence report on All India Kisan Conference, Palasa; and Bihar Fortnightly Report, first half of April, 1939, IOR.

7 Congress Socialist, 2 April 1939.

the BPKS between the CSP, on the one hand, and Sahajanand and the newly-formed Forward Bloc, on the other, meant the demise of the AIKS as a serious political force, a process which was completed in 1941 when the CSP formally seceded from the AIKS in protest against its endorsement of the CPI's war policy[1]. While the Communists retained the peasant following they had won in the Punjab, Bengal and the western and southern provinces, the CSP's mass influence suffered drastically from the disintegration of the BPKS and AIKS.

Far less important in its national implications, though illustrative of the more factious aspects of CSP-CPI rivalry, was the split in the AISF early in 1938. At the annual session of the AISF in January 1938, a squabble between CSP and CPI student fractions escalated into a major confrontation owing to Masani's role as president of the AISF. While Masani was negotiating for an agreed list of office-bearers which would retain the post of general secretary for his nominee, matters were brought to a head by a procedural wrangle over a Communist-sponsored resolution of solidarity with the Soviet Union. The defeat of a CSP amendment was followed by a dispute over the voting rights of various provincial delegations. When the Communists refused to accept his list of office-bearers, Masani dissolved the conference on a constitutional point of order. The refusal of the pro-Communist faction to recognise his ruling led to an open split, with both sides claiming a majority of the delegates[2].

The propaganda of the Communist group focussed on Masani's role, accusing him of having abused his position as chairman to force his own protegés on the AISF and of raising 'the bogey of Communism' to justify his partisan behaviour[3]. The Bombay Communists took the lead in distributing thousands of leaflets attacking Masani's conduct[4]. Masani, on the other hand, emphasised the ideological aspect of the split and attempted to secure support from Nehru and Bose on the basis of an alleged Communist

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1 Ranga, op. cit., p. 4.

2 Madras Fortnightly Report, first half of Jan. 1938, IOR; and 'What Really Happened at Madras', Congress Socialist, 5 Feb. 1938.

3 Jashwant Thakar, press statement, n.d. (1938), MP; and Congress Socialist, loc. cit.

4 M. R. Masani to J. P. Narayan, 4 Feb. 1938, MP.

attempt to capture the student movement and exclude nationalist elements[1].

Nevertheless, the refusal of Bose, now Congress president, to take sides combined with the moderating influence of the CPI leadership to produce an early reunification of the AISF. The CPI leaders were reluctant to allow the AISF split to jeopardise their campaign for a majority at the forthcoming All India CSP Conference by discrediting their slogan of socialist unity[2]. Talks between Narayan, P. C. Joshi, Masani and Sajjad Zaheer produced a formula which restored unity while saving face for Masani. The latter received a public apology from the Communist student fraction and was formally requested to effect a compromise between the rival groups[3]. In March 1938, Masani announced an agreed list of office-bearers with his original nominee as general secretary[4].

By the time of the next AISF session in January 1939, the crisis in the Congress was acting as a temporary brake on left-wing rivalry in the student movement, as in the AIKS. The CSP delegates, functioning as a disciplined fraction, secured a majority on the new AISF executive by agreement with the Communists. Of a total of 20 seats, the CSP received 13, the Communists 5, and the Royists and Trotskyists 1 each. The CSP retained the general secretaryship and one joint secretaryship, while the Communists were allotted the remaining three joint secretaryships. Within the CSP group, anti-Communists were dominant and secured the election of M. L. Shah, Masani's protegé, as general secretary, in preference to Ali Ashraf, a pro-Communist member of the Bihar CSP[5]. The conference itself was marked by the greatest harmony, all controversial issues being avoided[6]. Congress Socialists and Communists continued to co-operate in the AISF until 1940, when Communist opposition to Gandhi's individual civil disobedience campaign precipitated a second and final split[7].

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1 M. R. Masani to J. Nehru, 4 Feb. 1938; Masani to S. C. Bose, 4 Feb. 1938; and Bose to Masani, 6 Feb. 1938, MP.

2 P. C. Joshi, 'Students' Unity', National Front, 13 March 1938.

3 M. R. Masani to J. P. Narayan, 4 Feb. 1938; and draft letter from Communist students to Masani, n.d. (1938) MP.

4 Congress Socialist, 5 March 1938.

5 Ali Ashraf to J. P. Narayan, 10 Jan. 1939, JPP.

6 M. L. Shah, 'On the Right Track', Congress Socialist, 15 Jan. 1939.

7 Overstreet and Windmiller, op. cit., p. 395.

CSP-CPI conflict in the above mass organisations was reflected far more intensely in the struggle for control of the CSP itself. Communist entrants to the CSP functioned as a disciplined fraction, with much the same aims within the party that the CSP had envisaged for itself within the Congress, an analogy which Gandhian Congress leaders could not resist pointing out[1]. By the end of 1937, it was clear that the Communist fraction in the CSP aimed, not only at radicalising the party's ideology and winning its members to revolutionary Marxism, but also at the organisational transformation of the party into a legal forum for the building of a future mass Communist party, By 1939, resistance to these aims by the CSP's founding leadership had produced an open split between pro-Congress and pro-Communist elements in the CSP, marking the end of the party's role as a third force between the Congress and the CPI. Although the conflict within the CSP was intensified by the external rivalry of the CSP and the CPI in other spheres, in its essential aspects the struggle for leadership of the CSP was the culmination of the ideological and organisational contradictions of Congress Socialism which had been evident at the CSP's inaugural session in October 1934, before the entry of Communists into the party.

Communist plans to capture the CSP developed gradually between April 1936 and August 1937, under the pressure of growing tension between the CSP's central leadership and provincial party units. A circular issued by the CPI politbureau in July 1936 makes it clear that the Communists initially visualised entry into the CSP as only one of several tactics for approaching the nationalist rank and file. In provinces such as Bengal, where the CSP was weak and its leaders conservative, Communists were told that they could by-pass the CSP and make a direct approach to Congressmen. On the other hand, in Madras and Punjab, where the Congress organisation was firmly under right-wing control and the CSP units amenable to Communist influence, local Communists were instructed to channel their Congress work through the CSP[2].

The experience of the next three years, however, was to convince the CPI that, so long as the All India CSP organisation

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1 J. P. Kripalani, 'Sauce for the Socialist Goose', Congress Socialist, 30 April 1938.

2 CPI Politbureau, 'Individual Enrolment to I.N.C.', 25 July 1936, MP.

was controlled by anti-Communists like Masani, Communist activity in provincial CSP units would not be allowed to develop unhindered. Organisational friction between Communist-controlled provincial units and the CSP's central executive would rapidly assume the character of a struggle for leadership of the All India CSP. Communist efforts to win control of the CSP would, in turn, undermine relations between the two independent parties, forcing even Marxist CSP leaders like Narayan and Narendra Dev towards co-operation with the Congress leadership against the Communists.

In May 1938, a confidential CPI review of the CSP claimed Communist majorities in six major provincial CSP units - Andhra, Tamilnad, Kerala, Orissa, Bengal and Punjab - with control of the provincial CSP leadership in the first three[1]. The Communists also claimed influential CSP fractions in the U.P., Delhi and Gujerat. The three CSP units led by Communists were described as the most active and best organised of the party units, in contrast to the 'minority' provincial units which suffered from organisational ills such as a lack of functioning district branches, factionalism and bogus membership.

Communist organisational gains in and through the CSP had involved intra-party conflict in Andhra, Bombay, the U.P., Punjab, Orissa, Gujerat, Bengal, the C.P. and Delhi. In all these cases, the CSP's central leadership intervened on behalf of provincial founder-leaders, whose position was threatened by Communist influence. In contrast, the Madras and Kerala CSP units, whose founder-leaders were themselves Communists, were conspicuously free from internal conflict.

Intra-party conflicts in Andhra and Bombay will be examined in some detail, both because of their mutual contrasts and their major repercussions on All India politics. While the Andhra CSP was a Communist-majority unit in a rural province, in Bombay City the Communists were a small minority in the CSP, though influential because of the location of the CPI's national headquarters in Bombay and the national importance of the Bombay labour movement. Both cases illustrate the complex interplay of local, provincial and national factors and the convergence of ideological, organisational and personal rivalries.

In Andhra, Communist entrants to the CSP were already in a majority by September 1936, having ousted the party's founding

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1 Idem, 'Plan of Work: C.S.P.', 9 May 1938, MP.

group from control of the provincial executive[1]. The latter group now joined forces with Masani in an attempt to prevent the Communist-controlled Guntur District CSP branch, supported by the Andhra CSP executive, from inviting Dange, the Bombay CPI leader, to chair the Guntur Congress Socialist Conference of October 1936[2]. The refusal of the Guntur CSP to cancel the invitation to Dange and of the provincial executive to take the disciplinary action desired by Masani, provoked a major confrontation[3].

The Andhra CSP leaders warned that disciplinary action would 'lead to serious consequences which will affect the party's interests permanently', condemned Masani's public statement on the dispute as 'hasty and ill-considered', 'unfair' to the Guntur branch, an 'insult' to the Andhra CSP and as 'playing into the hands' of the repressive Madras government, and threatened to resign from the CSP if the national executive endorsed Masani's position[4]. The Andhra leaders themselves organised Dange's tour of the province, maintained that his presence had been a great asset to the provincial CSP, questioned the merits of denying him the CSP platform when it was freely offered to other non-members like Nehru, and charged the Congress Socialist with a blatantly partisan bias[5]. On the advice of Dinkar Mehta, joint secretary of the All India CSP, the Andhra executive adopted a resolution protesting strongly against the suspension of the Guntur CSP office-bearers by the All India executive[6].

The national implications of the controversy were indicated by an editorial in the Congress Socialist, which condemned Dange

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1 Annapurniah, General Secretary, Andhra CSP, to J. P. Narayan, 30 Sept. 1936, JPP.

2 M. R. Masani to Rangasayi, 6 Aug. & 31 Aug. 1936, JPP; Masani to Annapurniah, 1 Oct. 1936, JPP; and Masani to Guntur CSP, n.d. (1936), MP.

3 D. V. Krishnamurthy, President, Reception Committee, Guntur District Congress Socialist Conference, to M. R. Masani, 29 Sept. 1936, JPP; and Annapurniah to Masani, 8 Oct. 1936, MP.

4 Annapurniah and K. Lingaraju to General Secretary, All India CSP, 17 Oct. 1936, JPP.

5 Rangasayi to J. P. Narayan, n.d.; Rangasayi, 'Open Letter' to Annapurniah, n.d., JPP; Annapurniah to M. R. Masani, 28 Oct. 1936; and Annapurniah, statement for the Congress Socialist, 29 Oct. 1936, MP.

6 M. R. Masani to Annapurniah, 7 Nov. 1936; Annapurniah to Masani, 10 Nov. 1936; and Annapurniah to General Secretary, A.I.C.S.P., 13 Dec. 1936, JPP.

for conniving at indiscipline in the Andhra CSP and asserted:

> 'This is not a solitary instance . . . Comrade Dange has been quite often viciously attacking the Party and the Congress. He has been following the VIth and VIIth Congress /of the Comintern/ lines as it suits his convenience . . . Unless Dange changes his attitude and follows a consistent and less unfriendly line, he is seriously jeopardising cordial relations between different radical groups in the country.'[1]

In the following months, the Andhra CSP continued to play an oppositional role in the All India party, tabling Communist-inspired resolutions for the CSP's annual conference of December 1936 and publicly condemning the Congress Socialist for its anti-Soviet line, its hostility to the AITUC and its pre-occupation with Masani's 'local squabbles' in Bombay[2]. With Masani's encouragement, the anti-Communist group in the Andhra CSP launched a counter-offensive, petitioning the national executive to intervene against the Andhra executive's anti-Congress activities[3]. The main evidence against the Andhra office-bearers was a Telegu pamphlet which supported the BPTUC's stand against the Bombay CSP in the Bombay election dispute and stated: 'We are Socialists first and Congressmen next. . . . Extremists cannot be under the discipline of moderates for all time. Mr. Jawaharlal's demand for such discipline is to the detriment of the movement'. Regarding the recent provincial elections, the pamphlet declared:

> 'We are being considered as part of the Congress. That we have not kept our individuality is no wonder when we neither had separate meetings nor had separate processions with our special emblems. We did not issue even a single leaflet on behalf of our Party. We went to the landlords and asked them to secure the votes of their men. The Mill-owners were similarly approached for the votes of the workers. . . . We worked hard for the Congress and got it success. It availed us nothing as a Party. . . . We should see, hereafter, it is echoed and re-echoed that the Socialist Party is no handmaid of the Congress. . .'[4]

Although the Andhra CSP, in a belated attempt to placate the central leadership, withdrew the pamphlet and rescinded its

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1 Congress Socialist, 24 Oct. 1936.

2 Bombay CID, file I/CSP/36-II: Draft resolutions of provincial C.S.P.s for Faizpur Conference; and Annapurniah to General Secretary, A.I.C.S.P., 10 March 1937, JPP.

3 M. R. Masani to Rangasayi, 17 April and 6 June 1937; Rangasayi to Masani, 10 April and 6 May 1937; and memorandum from Rangasayi and others to A.I.C.S.P. executive, n.d., MP.

4 M. R. Masani to Annapurniah, 5 July 1937, JPP.

resolution against the Congress Socialist, Masani's allegation of a Communist plot to capture the CSP convinced the All India executive of the need for disciplinary action[1]. In August 1937, the Andhra CSP executive was suspended, pending reorganisation of the provincial party. Since the reorganisation was entrusted to Nambudripad, joint secretary of the All India Party and by now a secret recruit to the CPI, the decision made little practical difference[2]. Despite Masani's protests, the annual conference of the Andhra CSP was convened in November with the same membership, resulting in the election of an exclusively Communist executive[3]. Following the elimination of the anti-Communist Andhra faction, the central leadership resigned itself to the inevitable. The Communists retained uninterrupted control of the Andhra CSP until 1940, when the entire provincial party openly seceded from the CSP and joined the CPI.

The conflict in the Bombay CSP dated back to the pro-Communist line adopted by S. Batliwala, a founder-leader, at the CSP conference of October 1934. Batliwala had resigned from the party soon after, in protest against its decision to ally with the AITUC instead of the RTUC, but rejoined it after the Lucknow Agreement and was put in charge of its Labour Centre. According to the BCSP leadership, Batliwala turned the centre into a meeting-place for the Communist Young Workers' League and encouraged its occupation by Joglekar's supporters during the Bombay elections[4]. In the conflict between the BCSP and the BPTUC, Batliwala and G. P. Hutheesing strongly opposed Masani's line within the BCSP executive and were largely responsible for the BCSP's decision to restore united front relations against Masani's wishes[5].

Batliwala's election to the CSP's national executive in December 1936 had made him an All India figure. He played a leading role on behalf of the Communists at the All India CSP Conference of April 1938 and supervised the Communist take-over of the Kanpur Mazdur Sabha later that year[6]. By this time his

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1 Annapurniah to M. R. Masani, 24 July 1937, JPP.

2 M. R. Masani to E. M. S. Nambudripad, Aug. 1937, MP.

3 M. R. Masani to J. P. Narayan, 13 Oct. 1937, JPP; and Madras Fortnightly Report, second half of Nov. 1937, IOR.

4 A. Mehta and C. Narainswami, Joint Secretaries, B.C.S.P., to General Secretary, A.I.C.S.P., n.d., JPP.

5 BPTUC, loc. cit.

6 UPPA, 27 Aug. 1938.

ideological conflict with Masani had assumed strong personal overtones which were manifested in a highly abusive booklet by him in reply to Masani's criticism of Russian foreign policy[1]. Matters came to a head in May 1938, when the BCSP executive suspended Batliwala from party membership, accusing him of a secret alliance with the Bhulabhai Desai faction to block Masani's election to the AICC[2].

The outcry that greeted Batliwala's expulsion was indicative both of the national importance of Bombay disputes and of widespread sympathy for Batliwala among non-Communist radicals. The left-wing Bombay Sentinel saw the decision as the beginning of a purge of all dissenters by the BCSP leaders[3]. The president of the F Ward DCC publicly attributed the decision to the CSP leadership's jealousy of Batliwala's popularity; and the DCC elected Batliwala its joint secretary to demonstrate its solidarity with him[4]. Within the BCSP, F. M. Pinto, a founder-member, and 16 other members rejected the charges against Batliwala, complained about the undemocratic conduct of the BCSP leadership and demanded an independent inquiry[5]. This demand was supported by prominent non-Communist CSP leaders like Manzar Rizvi, a founder of the Bihar CSP, and Munshi Ahmed Din, leader of the Punjab CSP, along with Communist members like Hiren Mukherji, joint secretary of the Bengal CSP[6]. The central executive, while upholding Batliwala's suspension, announced that it would consider re-instating him at a future date . But in August 1938, the question lapsed when Batliwala himself resigned from the CSP in protest against continuing attacks on him in the party organ[7].

The Andhra and Bombay conflicts exemplify the tangled web of policy differences, party rivalry and personal animosity which

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1 M. R. Masani to Swami Sahajanand, 20 June 1938, MP.

2 A. Mehta, Acting Secretary, BCSP, 'Circular to Members', 6 May 1938, JPP.

3 Bombay Sentinel, 9 May 1938.

4 Ibid., 12 May 1938.

5 F. M. Pinto to J. P. Narayan, 21 May 1938; and 17 BCSP members to General Secretary, All India CSP, May 1938, JPP.

6 M. Rizvi to M. R. Masani, 3 May 1938, MP; M. Ahmed Din to J. P. Narayan, 6 May 1938, JPP; and H. Mukherji to J. P. Narayan, 7 May 1938, JPP.

7 S. Batliwala to General Secretary, A.I.C.S.P., 6 Aug. 1938, JPP; Times of India, 15 Aug. 1938; and Congress Socialist, 30 July 1938.

was characteristic of inner-party conflict in other CSP units. By the middle of 1937, similar conflicts were apparent in Gujerat[1], the U.P.[2], Punjab[3] and Bengal[4]. By the beginning of 1938, these provincial disputes had escalated into a major confrontation in the All India party.

At the Faizpur conference of the All India CSP in December 1936, the Communists had been content to play the role of a friendly ginger-group. Narayan, who chaired the conference, was friendly to the Communists and accepted without a vote most of their amendments to the CSP's Faizpur thesis[5]. By agreement with Narayan, the Communists secured the election of three representatives on the CSP national executive and two of the party's four joint secretaryships.

The Communists optimistically welcomed the Faizpur thesis as a clarification of the CSP's 'avowed Marxist-Leninist base'[6]. Particularly encouraging from the Communist point of view was the endorsement in the thesis of the goal of a Popular Front, of the leading role of the working-class in it, and of the independent role of class organisations outside the Congress. The thesis called for socialist unity and for the consolidation of the wider left to provide an alternative leadership for the Congress. It also recommended a more rapid and uniform expansion of party membership[7]. The Communists, who had been facing difficulties in admission to certain CSP units, interpreted this as a decision to convert the CSP into a mass party. The CPI also welcomed the conference's resolutions on the new constitution and the war danger[8].

The next year was to demonstrate, however, that the Faizpur thesis, like other CSP policy statements, was ambiguous enough to allow for widely divergent interpretations. Within weeks of the Faizpur conference, Narayan was issuing circulars warning that

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1 Bombay CID, file 3/CSP/36: statement by Dinkar Mehta, n.d.

2 UPPA, 12 Sept. and 5 Dec. 1936, and 15 May and 5 June 1937.

3 R. D. Bharadwaj to J. P. Narayan, 27 July 1937, JPP; Punjab CSP, 'Weekly Newsletter No. 9', 19 Aug. 1937, JPP; and New Age, Oct.1937.

4 G. Mazumdar, Secretary, Bengal CSP, to J. P. Narayan, 5 March 1937, JPP.

5 New Age, Feb. 1937.

6 'At Faizpur', The Communist, Feb. 1937.

7 'The Thesis of the Congress Socialist Party', Congress Socialist, 9 Jan. 1937.

8 The Communist, loc. cit.

the call for expanded membership must be confined to active cadres loyal to the party line[1]. This position was endorsed by the national executive in April 1937[2].

The Communists now came forward as the advocates of a mass party, accusing the CSP leadership of organisational inertia and a desire to run the party as a closed and 'bureaucratic' preserve. In June 1937, The Communist complained:

> 'The CSP, in spite of its increased influence, has not gained proportionately in organisational strength. . . . Most of the basic organs of the Party, the district and town committees, are even today loose groups of individuals (many of whom - in Bombay at least 50 per cent - do not even attend party meetings). . . . Not only has the CSP not become a mass party, some of its leaders even deny the necessity of such a transformation.'[3]

Describing the CSP as 'more a left tendency than a left Party', the CPI warned that it was degenerating into a typical Congress faction:

> 'Instead of the CSP activising the Congress units, the CSP units themselves become proto-types of Congress organisations - non-functioning D.C.s, a few leaders acting for the Party in each locality, all initiative from /the/ top. . . . A good number of Congress organisations are today controlled by the CSP and its sympathisers. They function, however, exactly in the same way as Congress units under Right leadership.'[4]

In August 1937, this organisational debate converged with the Andhra and Bombay disputes to produce a major conflict. A Communist 'Statement on the CSP', which was submitted to the national executive for discussion, described the CSP as being 'dominantly petty bourgeois in composition' and as 'the organisational expression of left unity'[5]. The statement complained that the attempts of the CSP leadership to run the party as 'a legal "Marxist Working-Class Party" with a rigid discipline' were leading to the exclusion and expulsion of genuine Marxist elements. The CSP was asked to abandon this suicidal policy and adopt a mass organisational structure, consistent with its proper role as a party of left unity.

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1 BHS, file 800(75)A-II: General Secretary, All India CSP, Circulars no. 1 & 4 to Provincial Secretaries, 25 Jan and 31 March 1937.

2 Congress Socialist, 10 April 1937.

3 The Communist, June 1937, 'The Present Situation and Our Tasks'.

4 Ibid., 'The Congress Socialist Party'.

5 'Statement on the C.S.P.'. unsigned, n.d., MP.

The CSP leadership reacted sharply to this rejection of its own view of the party, describing it as a repudiation by the CPI of the Lucknow Agreement[1]. CSP leaders had been showing increasing anxiety about Communist and Royist fraction-work in the party since December 1936[2]. While Masani now advocated the expulsion of Communist members and the termination of dual membership, Narayan and other CSP leaders were reluctant to take such drastic action. Instead, the national executive unanimously decided to bar future admission to Communists[3]. Subsequent attempts by the Communists to justify their position on the basis of the Faizpur thesis were unsuccessful, and the CSP leadership refused to reverse its decision against further enrolment of Communists[4].

The developments of August 1937 set the stage for the next stage of the CSP's development, which involved a sustained effort by Communist fractions already in the party to win control of its national leadership. In practice, the decision to ban Communist enrolment made little difference to the expansion of Communist influence in the CSP, which had relied more on the conversion of CSP radicals to the Communist line than on entry by actual CPI members[5]. The CSP leadership's attempts to reorganise provincial units and exclude Communists in the U.P., Tamilnad and Andhra were hamstrung from the outset by the impossibility of assessing the membership and influence of an underground organisation like the CPI. Thus, the reorganisation of the Tamilnad CSP was entrusted to Jeevanandam, its Communist secretary, with Narayan happily assuring Masani that the Tamilnad party was 'as innocent of scarlet fever as you are - no trace of it'[6].

The months preceding the party's next annual conference at Lahore in April 1938 were marked by intense rivalry in various provincial units, as both sides competed for majority representation at the All India conference. Competition was particularly pronounced in the U.P., Delhi and Gujerat, with Masani actively intervening against the Communists. In December 1937, Masani

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1 'Statement of the Executive Committee of the A.I.C.S.P.', 9 Aug. 1937, MP.

2 J. P. Narayan, 'Regarding Party Discipline of Members', 1 Dec. 1936, MP; and Congress Socialist, 10 April 1937.

3 Narayan, op. cit., pp. 172-4.

4 CPI Politbureau to All India CSP executive, 23 Oct. 1937, MP.

5 Interviews with P. C. Joshi, Delhi, July 1973.

6 J. P. Narayan to M. R. Masani, 6 Dec. 1937, MP.

canvassed U.P. CSP leaders to ensure a non-Communist majority from their province and warned against the activities of Sajjad Zaheer, a Communist member of the national executive[1]. In Gujerat, Masani strongly backed Kamlashankar Pandya, the anti-Communist secretary of the provincial CSP, in his efforts to reduce the representation of the Communist-led Ahmedabad branch[2]. In Delhi, however, he was unable to prevail on Satyavati Devi, the local CSP organiser, to deny admission to pro-Communist elements. The latter secured the election of most of their delegates to Lahore, while F. Ansari, a founder-leader, could only secure election as a substitute delegate[3]. Masani secured the fixing of provincial quotas for the annual conference by the national executive to block the membership enrolment drive of Communist-controlled CSP units which wished to increase their representation[4]. The CSP leadership also deferred a request by the Communist-controlled Bengal Labour Party for an immediate merger in March 1938[5].

This jockeying for control of the party organisation was accompanied by a strident ideological debate in a series of articles in the Congress Socialist and the National Front, the CPI organ. The debate was opened by a new Communist statement on the CSP which abandoned the previous slogan of a 'party of left unity' for the demand that the CSP should be a party of socialist unity enrolling all genuine Marxists in the country on the basis of the Faizpur thesis[6]. The new Communist slogan of 'All Socialists Inside the CSP' implied the lifting of the ban on admission of Communists and the inclusion of the entire CPI within the CSP. This demand was supported and elaborated in articles by CPI leaders like S. Mahmuduzzafar and A. K. Ghosh, by prominent Communist members of the CSP like Sajjad Zaheer and Sundarayya, and by a resolution of the Bengal Congress Socialist Conference[7].

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1 Letters from M. R. Masani to H. N. Shastri, 6 Dec. 1937, and to R. M. Lohia, Narendra Dev and B. P. Sinha, 14 March 1937, MP.

2 M. R. Masani to Secretaries, Gujerat CSP, 8 Nov. 1937, JPP; Masani to K. Pandya, 13 Oct. 1937, MP; D. Mehta to Masani, 10 Dec. 1937, MP; and K. Pandya to D. Mehta, 24 Dec. 1937, MP.

3 M. R. Masani to 'Comrade Vats', 11 Nov. 1937, JPP; Masani to Satyavati Devi, 6 Dec. 1937 & 6 Jan 1938, MP; F. Ansari to Masani, 11 Dec. 1937 & 12 Feb. 1938, MP; and Masani to J. P. Narayan, 14 March 1938, MP.

4 M. R. Masani to J. P. Narayan, 8 Dec. 1937, MP.

5 Statement by General Secretary, BLP, National Front, 27 March 1938.

6 A. Mehta, 'Through Camouflage to Capture', Congress Socialist, 18 Sept. 1938.

7 S. Mahmuduzzafar, 'Socialist Unity', National Front, 10 April

(cont)

In reply to the Communist call for unity, CSP anti-Communists attempted to differentiate Congress Socialism as an ideology distinct from Communism, stressing fundamental disagreement over national and international policy. The role of the Soviet Union had become a major point of controversy by the end of 1937. In September 1937, Masani, despite the objections of some of his non-Communist colleagues, had insisted on publishing a pamphlet which condemned Soviet foreign policy and infuriated the Communists[1]. In reply to Communist unity proposals, Masani strongly attacked the 'Stalinist dictatorship' and its foreign policy of collective security, support for the League of Nations and alliance with 'Capitalist governments' as a deviation from 'the fundamentals of Marx and Lenin'. The Comintern's Popular Front tactic in Western Europe was condemned as a policy of 'class-collaboration' which implied the abandonment of colonial liberation struggles[2].

In domestic politics, Masani proclaimed two main differences with the CPI: 'the temperamental difference that comes of different political origins and . . . results in . . . different methods of working out even agreed policies' and 'the difference in approach and loyalty to the Congress'. While Congress Socialists were credited with 'an instinctive loyalty and affection for the Congress', the Communists were accused of retaining 'mental reservations' to Congress discipline. The Communist demand for a mass Congress Socialist Party was rejected as running 'counter to our Congress loyalty and . . . creating a potential rival to the Congress itself'. Citing the examples of Socialist-Communist united fronts in France and Spain, Masani maintained that co-operation could only be preserved between the CSP and CPI as independent parties and called for the termination of dual membership and the removal of Communist fractions from the CSP.[3]

Masani's position was supported by CSP anti-Communists in

1938; A. K. Ghosh, 'Socialist Unity', New Age, March 1938; S. Zaheer, 'Unity is Strength', Congress Socialist, 5 March 1938; and P. Sundarayya, 'The Dimitrov Test', ibid., 26 March 1938.

1 B. P. Sinha to M. R. Masani, 23 Sept. 1937; and Masani to Sinha, 27 Sept. 1937, MP.

2 M. R. Masani, 'A Lesson from France', Congress Socialist, 1 Jan. 1938.

3 Ibid.; and Congress Socialist, 2 April 1938.

Bombay, Bengal and Gujerat[1]; and the Bombay and Gujerat CSP executives tabled resolutions for the Lahore conference demanding a purge of Communists from the CSP[2].

The lines of battle for the Lahore conference were now clearly drawn, with the national executive openly divided between two rival theses proposed by the Communist and anti-Communist groups, each claiming to be the authoritative interpretation of the Faizpur thesis[3]. The two factions also proposed rival lists for the new party executive. Although Masani had desired the exclusion of Dinkar Mehta and S. Batliwala, his main opponents in Bombay and Gujerat[4], Narayan's list, around which the CSP's founder-leaders rallied, sought to maintain the status quo, leaving the Communists with one-third of the seats on the executive and two of the four joint secretaryships. The rival Communist list retained Narayan as general secretary, but gave the Communists a clear majority, replacing leading anti-Communists with pro-Communist representatives from Andhra, the U.P., Delhi and Bombay[5].

When the party conference met in April 1938, Masani took the offensive in his presidential address, attacking both Soviet foreign policy and CPI strategy in India[6]. The Communists, however, were strongly represented at the conference and would probably have won a majority if the location had not reduced attendance by southern delegates[7]. Fearing defeat in elections for the new executive, Narayan and other CSP leaders threatened to resign and split the party unless the official list was adopted. The threat proved effective; and the official list was accepted by a

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1 P. Tricumdas, 'What Price Unity', Congress Socialist, 12 March 1938; A. Mehta, 'Who Stops Unity', ibid., 19 March 1938; G. Mazumdar, 'Socialist Unity', ibid.; and K. Pandya, 'Two Voices, A Single Thought', ibid., 26 March 1938.

2 M. R. Masani, 'A Lesson from France', Congress Socialist, 1 Jan 1938.

3 Narendra Dev, Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya, A. Patwardhan and A. Mehta, Draft Thesis for Fourth Conference of the Congress Socialist Party, 1938 (Bombay, 1938); and S. Zaheer, D. Mehta and S. Batliwala, Draft Thesis for the A.I.C.S.P. Conference, Lahore (Bombay, 1938), CPI Library, Delhi.

4 M. R. Masani to J. P. Narayan, 14 March 1938, MP.

5 'New C.S.P. Executive', Congress Socialist, 23 April 1938.

6 M. R. Masani, 'Extracts from Presidential Address at Lahore Conference of C.S.P.', Congress Socialist, 23 April 1938.

7 Interviews with P. C. Joshi, Delhi, July 1973.

narrow margin[1].

On policy issues, the conference produced a fragile compromise. The two rival theses were shelved; and while the decision to bar admission to Communists was endorsed, the attempt to expel existing Communist fractions was abandoned[2]. Other resolutions reiterated the CSP's 'burning desire' for unity with the CPI and praised the international role of the Soviet Union, in an attempt to conciliate the Communist faction[3].

The CPI leadership, for its part, was clearly reluctant to force a split, preferring instead to bide its time and to rely on its growing mass influence to isolate the anti-Communist group. CPI tactics within the CSP were also moderated by international developments and by the developing crisis in the Congress. While Soviet fears of an Anglo-German alliance were reflected in the CPI's desire to preserve nationalist unity against the British, the offensive against the left by the ministerial wing of the Congress had made left-wing unity equally important.

These moderating pressures were reflected both in the CPI's friendly official response to the Lahore resolutions and in its secret instructions to Communist fractions within the CSP[4]. In May 1938, a confidential CPI circular[5] stressed that local and provincial disputes must not be allowed to affect the All India united front, which was to be maintained 'on whatever terms possible' and 'through whatever mechanism that is possible'. The demand for admission of Communists to the CSP would not be pressed from outside the party, in view of its counter-productive effect. Instead the CSP leadership would be taken at its own word and asked to implement joint action between the two independent parties.

The tactics of Communist fractions within the CSP were to vary according to whether or not they constituted a majority. In majority provinces, where it was still possible to enrol Communists to the CSP, this must be done 'without fail, and without

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1 'A Lahore Diary', Congress Socialist, 30 April 1938; and Masani, op. cit., p. 71.

2 A. Mehta, 'Through Camouflage to Capture', Congress Socialist, 18 Sept. 1938.

3 'Resolutions of the Lahore Conference', Congress Socialist, 23 April 1938.

4 S. Mahmuduzzafar, 'The Congress Socialist Conference at Lahore', National Front, 1 May 1938.

5 CPI Politbureau, 'Plan of Work: C.S.P.', 9 May 1938, MP.

making much noise about it', accompanied by 'systematic efforts . . . to recruit the advanced elements of the CSP' to the CPI. 'We should take particular care', the CPI politbureau warned, 'not to let other CSP members be banded into a group against us or create the impression that we are . . . exploiting our majority in any other cause except in strengthening of the CSP itself'. In minority provinces, 'great vigilance and elasticity in day-to-day work' was recommended, along with efforts 'to get as many of our new and unmarked comrades or sympathisers as possible inside the CSP, promptly . . . liquidate all sectarian mistakes and silently work towards a majority'.

Although the above circular aimed at isolating anti-Communists in the CSP by winning over wavering elements led by Narayan and Narendra Dev, its discovery and publication by Masani was responsible for a renewed drive by the CSP leadership to tighten central control over the party organisation[1]. In May 1938, the national executive announced a new set of organisational rules which deprived 'ordinary', as distinct from 'active', members of the right to vote and introduced strict central control and scrutiny of party membership, hitherto the preserve of provincial units[2]. These changes were explained as a decisive rejection of 'the slogan of a flabby mass party' open to all socialists and the creation of a 'more compact, closely-knit and homogeneous Party'[3].

Despite the moderating role of the CPI leadership, tensions continued to grow at the provincial level. In Bombay, Bengal and the U.P., existing rivalries were fuelled by the CSP leadership's attempts to impose centralised discipline and exclude Communists[4]. In Punjab and Orissa, however, the local Communists took the offensive. In the Punjab, the pro-Communist faction, claiming to represent 14 district units, set up a rival organisation. The Punjab Communists were closely allied with the dominant faction in the PCC and accused Ahmed Din, the CSP's founder-leader, of corruption and nepotism in collusion with the Satyapal faction in the PCC[5]. In Orissa, the provincial Communists had been warned

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1 M. R. Masani, Communist Plot Against the C.S.P. (Bombay, 1938), MP.

2 'General Secretary's Circular to Provincial Parties', Congress Socialist, 11 June 1938.

3 M. R. Masani, 'Why Only Active Members', Congress Socialist, 18 June 1938.

4 U.P. Fortnightly Report, 5 July 1938, IOR; UPPA, 27 Aug. & 5 Nov. 1938; and statement by G. Mazumdar, Congress Socialist, 11 June 1938.

5 'Petition to General Secretary from Punjab Members', n.d.; and 'Proceedings of Conference of dissident CSP units in Punjab', 4 Dec. 1938, JPP.

by the CPI leadership against driving Naba Chaudhuri, the CSP's founder-leader, into Masani's camp[1]. By March 1939, however, Chaudhuri was complaining to Masani that 'the deceitful tactics' of the local Communists had created 'the most extreme bitterness and suspicion', despite the absence of policy differences and the apparently sincere desire of the CPI's national leaders for socialist unity. Chaudhuri announced that 'after long waverings', he was now convinced of the necessity of purging Communists from the party, as advocated by Masani[2].

The CPI leadership, meanwhile, continued its efforts to moderate the activities of its provincial cadres. A circular issued in November 1938 firmly rejected suggestions for the formation of a rival socialist party by Communist-controlled local units of the CSP, some of which had been disaffiliated in the course of the anti-Communist disciplinary drive[3]. Warning that a split would merely play into Masani's hands and antagonise genuine radicals in the CSP, the CPI politbureau stated:

> 'Congress Socialism . . . represents the socialist trend that has grown in the ranks of the Congressmen as a result of their own experience in the national struggle. It is NOT a Communist (i.e. consistently Marxist, working-class) trend. Congressmen first imbibing socialist consciousness turn to Narendra Dev, Jayaprakash /Narayan/ and Patwardhan for the simple reason that these leaders have been in the thick of the national movement and are also known as socialists. By merely landing ourselves . . . into an independent Socialist Party we shall not be able to attract and absorb these socialistically oriented Congressmen. On the contrary, the fact that most of the leaders of the proposed . . . Party . . . have no Congress past and till recently were considered anti-Congress, will keep most Congressmen away from it.'

Maintaining that the CSP remained 'the best forum' for socialist unity, the politbureau therefore advocated cautious and conciliatory behaviour by Communists in the CSP to combat Masani's 'disruptive policy'. In February 1939, the CPI leadership's policy of socialist unity within the CSP was supported by public messages from the CPGB leaders, Palme Dutt and Bradley[4]. A month later, P. C. Joshi emphatically warned Communists against attempts

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1 CPI Politbureau, loc. cit.

2 N. Chaudhuri to M. R. Masani, 28 March 1939, MP.

3 CPI Politbureau, 'On the C.S.P.', Nov. 1938, Munshi Papers.

4 National Front, 12 Feb. 1939.

'to pay off old scores, weaken or in any way disrupt the CSP' by exploiting its internal differences over the Congress crisis[1]. In May 1939, A. K. Ghosh, a member of the CPI politbureau, again emphasised the need for unity and argued that the formation of a rival socialist party would only push the CSP further to the right[2].

The CSP leadership, meanwhile, vacillated between Masani's position of overt anti-Communism and the more conciliatory attitude of Narendra Dev and Narayan. In April 1938, Narendra Dev, taking the Communist slogan of socialist unity at face value, had called on the CPI to dissolve its independent organisation and merge with the CSP in a united socialist party[3]. In November 1938, Narayan renewed the offer. Explaining his motives to Masani, he wrote:

> 'I . . . believe that we . . . are only creating confusion in the ranks of the Nationalist Movement, and making ourselves the laughing stock of men like Bhulabhai /Desai/. I feel that it is up to us to make another serious attempt at unity. . . . I am above all anxious to avoid that suicidal division of the Socialist Movement which has brought ruin to the movement in the West. I believe that there are no internal circumstances . . . to justify such a division.'[4]

Narayan argued that even if such an initiative for unity failed, it would put the Communists in the wrong and clarify issues. The CSP could then purge itself of disloyal elements and establish a more coherent discipline and programme. In the event, the CSP's unity offer, which implied disaffiliation from the Comintern, was strongly resisted by the CPI leadership itself[5]. For the moment, however, a semblance of unity was maintained at the All India level by regular consultations between Narayan and P. C. Joshi, who issued a series of joint statements during the Congress crisis.

These final efforts at unity were accompanied by the strident anti-Communist propaganda of CSP leaders like Masani, Lohia and Asoka Mehta, who concentrated increasingly on exposing Stalin's purges in Russia and the subservience of the CPI to Moscow, stressing by contrast the importance of the Gandhian ethic of

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1 P. C. Joshi, 'No Disruption', National Front, 26 March 1939.
2 A. K. Ghosh, 'An All India Workers' Party?', New Age, May 1939.
3 Narendra Dev, Congress Socialist, 9 April 1938.
4 J. P. Narayan to M. R. Masani, 11 Nov. 1938, MP.
5 Interviews with P. C. Joshi, Delhi, July 1973.

non-violence[1]. In reply to Narayan's objections to anti-Soviet propaganda, Masani maintained that the Comintern's changed attitude towards colonial nationalist movements could not be ignored. 'There is such a terrible transformation there', he argued, 'that to ignore it would mean storing up trouble for the future. Perhaps you would say that these are aberrations . . . To me they appear . . . inherent in the whole mental and moral make-up of those who constitute the Communist International today. . . . Unfortunately the disease is spreading to our country also, and if some of us do not make a stand now we may have to do it in even more adverse circumstances later on'[2]. The CPI, on the other hand, attributed Masani's pre-occupation with the Moscow trials to his 'determination to hold up the process of socialist unity' in India and accused CSP anti-Communists of drawing 'inspiration from the arch-enemy of Socialism, Leon Trotsky'[3].

By the time of the Tripuri Congress session of March 1939, it was clear that the organisational stalemate which had emerged from the CSP's Lahore conference had worked to the advantage of the Communists. Despite continuing efforts by the CSP leadership to tighten central control over the Party[4], the Communists effectively controlled the party organisation and the CSP leadership was operating in a virtual organisational vacuum. In March 1939, Narendra Dev frankly admitted that the Communists were benefitting greatly from rank and file resentment against the CSP leaders' pro-Gandhi line at Tripuri; and he predicted that the next CSP conference would have a Communist majority[5]. Although the CSP leadership attempted to avert the inevitable by postponing the party's annual conference[6], a prolonged refusal to face its own rank and file was bound to erode its influence in national politics.

This leadership crisis within the CSP was closely related to the party's role in the parallel struggle for leadership of the

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1 e.g., R. M. Lohia, 'The Russian Trials', Congress Socialist, 7 May 1938.

2 M. R. Masani to J. P. Narayan, 30 July 1938, MP.

3 S. Mahmuduzzafar, 'Who Endangers Future of Socialism', National Front, 3 July 1938.

4 Congress Socialist, 19 March 1939.

5 Narendra Dev to M. R. Masani, 19 March 1939, Vallabhbhai Patel Papers.

6 Congress Socialist, 2 April 1939.

Congress. Anti-Communists like Masani argued that the only logical course for the founder-leaders of the CSP was to make a decisive break with the CPI and firmly ally itself with the Gandhian leadership of the Congress. Others like Narayan and Narendra Dev, however, drew back from such a drastic repudiation of the party's original aims and advocated instead an attempt to recover rank and file confidence through concessions to attempts by Bose and the CPI to form a Left Bloc in the Congress[1]. In May 1939, Masani, Lohia, Patwardhan and Asoka Mehta, the CSP's leading anti-Communists, resorted to shock tactics to win their more undecided colleagues to their line, announcing their resignation from the party's national executive.

The immediate cause of the resignations was a decision involving support for Bose at the Calcutta AICC session, which the CSP executive had adopted by the casting vote of Sajjad Zaheer, a Communist member, who had chaired its meeting. The resignations, however, raised fundamental issues concerning the CSP's relations with the Communists, on the one hand, and the Congress leadership, on the other. In a long letter to Narayan, Masani made it clear that the resignations were a protest against Communist influence within the CSP[2].

According to Masani, the Communists, through a 'process of permeation into the provincial units' of the CSP, had reached a position where they now controlled a majority in the All India party. The result had been 'completely to paralyse the working of the Party'. 'We have reached a stage', he complained, 'where we may not do a number of things which each of us . . . feels called upon to do for the simple reason that, if we did, we would be hurting or upsetting comrades in our Party'. He continued:

> 'If today a large part, undoubtedly a majority, of our rank and file, is dissatisfied with the stand we took at Tripuri and at Calcutta, it is very largely the consequence of having allowed them to be ideologically influenced and dominated by the Communists. The lack of faith in a great part of the Party leadership is very largely the result of the activity of the Communists in the last two or three years in sowing the seeds of suspicion and distrust which are now bearing fruit. It has really become impossible for some of us even to get a fair hearing or an open mind from a large section of comrades in our own Party.'

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1 J. P. Narayan to M. R. Masani, 11 Nov. 1938, MP.

2 M. R. Masani to J. P. Narayan, May 1939, MP.

In view of the reluctance of many of his colleagues to purge the party of Communists, Masani argued that the logical alternative was an immediate merger with the CPI:

> 'A Congress Socialist Party which agrees with the Communist Party in all matters and acts invariably in consultation with it has really no business to exist. In any case, being the less well-knit organisation and the financially poorer one, it is bound to be eaten up by the other. It is only if there are definite points of difference and these are clearly indicated that there is justification for having two separate parties. I have an idea that the majority of the CSP, as at present constituted would probably find no great difficulty in arriving at terms of merger with the Communist Party. I do not know whether this will be true also of a majority of the original group.'

Turning to policy differences with the CPI, Masani blamed the Communists for 'a persistent effort' since 1938 to foster a Left Bloc in the Congress, condemned such a move on the ground that it would disrupt Congress unity and described Narayan and P. C. Joshi's joint appeal for the formation of a Left Co-ordination Committee as the same idea in a new guise. 'The attitude and approach of the Communists to the Indian National Congress', he wrote, 'is, despite agreement on paper, very different from that of some of us'. He went on to affirm his own adherence to the Congress creed of 'peaceful and legitimate means', especially in the light of the Stalinist Terror in Russia, and charged the Communists with 'a purely temporary, tactical' acceptance of Congress methods. He also reiterated his objection to the Communist tenet of dictatorship of the proletariat, citing Stalinism as its 'inevitable result', and asserted his adherence to 'democratic socialism'.

With reference to the international situation, Masani condemned Stalin's regime for 'several acts and measures which are incompatible with Socialism or a Socialist State'. 'I cannot help fearing', he warned, 'that those who justify the destruction of the bulk of the Communist Party of Russia, the trials and mass execution and continuing Terror, would be parties to similar acts in this country should similar circumstances ever arise'. The Comintern and its national sections, including the CPI, he maintained, had become 'nothing but propaganda agencies of Stalin's Government'.

Masani described the Comintern policies of collective security, popular front and peace blocs as 'only various names for a diplomatic alliance between the USSR and leading Imperial

powers'. Citing the attitude of the French Communist Party to the subject peoples of the French empire, he argued that the Comintern had 'thrown over-board the cause of the national independence of the coloured and backward nations'. If the current negotiations for an Anglo-Soviet pact materialised, he predicted, the CPI would transfer support from the nationalist movement to 'Britain's War Machine'.

Masani's letter has been quoted at some length because it summarises the main conflicts underlying the united front and the issues on which an open split would soon occur. The unification of left-wing forces resulting from the alliance had clearly gone as far as it could. To the extent that this unity had encouraged the formation and expansion of mass organisations like the AITUC, the AIKS and the AISF and strengthened the Congress left as a whole, both the CSP and the CPI had benefitted from it. But the Communists, in addition, had won substantial control of the CSP organisation itself, thus emerging as the real beneficiaries of the united front.

The growing ideological and organisational polarisation of the CSP, and the gradual isolation of the founding leadership within it, had made a major split inevitable. Such a split was bound to have major repercussions on the CSP's position in the various class organisations and on its relations with the Congress leadership. The obvious corollary of Communist penetration of the CSP was the diversion of its founders from their original role of opposition to the Congress leadership to the struggle to preserve their authority within their own party. Masani's anti-Communism, his strong opposition to a coalition, left-wing leadership and his open preference for co-operation with the Gandhian leadership of the Congress were still too extreme for most of his colleagues in May 1939. But within five months, the rest of the CSP leadership had accepted the implications of Masani's position, a decision which would mark the end, both of the socialist united front and of the CSP's independent role within the Congress.

The Communists, on the other hand, emerged from the united front with their independent position greatly strengthened both within the Congress organisation and in class organisations outside, leading Government intelligence to comment in October 1939:

'Detailed examination of the personnel of provincial and local Congress Committees reveals a surprisingly large number of known Communists and active sympathisers . . . as secretaries and office-bearers. Throughout the CSP also Communists are in complete control of many of the subordinate Socialist groups; and Communists dominate the labour, peasant and youth movements. The reason for this ascendancy is to be found in the comparative apathy of the non-Communists as contrasted with the zeal and better organisation of the Communist workers.'[1]

The CSP and the Roy Group

By 1936 the Royists were being rapidly eclipsed as a political force. This decline was due to an accumulation of factors: the long absence of M. N. Roy in prison, the appropriation by the CSP of the Royist platform of socialist-nationalist unity, the return of the CPI to a united front policy, and the revival of Communist influence in the trade union movement. These factors had been reflected in the waning of Royist influence within the CSP, a process which was confirmed by the Meerut conference of the CSP and its alliance with the CPI.

The Roy Group was now faced with two alternatives, both of which required the liquidation of its separate existence. It could either merge into the CSP on the basis of its radical nationalist programme, or it could return to the orthodox Communist fold, in view of the Comintern's return to a united front line. In practice, however, Roy's personality proved an insuperable obstacle to either course; and the Royists chose instead to preserve their identity as a small but articulate pressure-group built round an individual. Reunification with the CPI had been ruled out in 1935, owing to the Comintern's refusal to entrust the leadership of the CPI to a former renegade, as Roy was regarded by orthodox Communists[2].

On the question of a merger with the CSP, the Royists had been divided in Roy's absence. Roy himself had attempted from the outset to differentiate his own brand of radicalism from the CSP's on questions such as the nature of CSP organisation, the demand for collective affiliation of class organisations with the Congress, the formation of independent kisan organisations, and council-entry and later office-acceptance by the Congress.

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1 NA, file 7/7/39: DIB, 'Communism in India - A Survey of Recent Developments', 31 Oct. 1939.

2 RPIWC, Manifesto of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Party of the Indian Working Class (The Communist Party), n.d. submitted to the 7th World Congress of the Communist International, 1935, PCJA.

After Roy's release and return to active politics in November 1936, these differences were increasingly publicised. The decisive factor, however, in the breakdown of the CSP-Royist alliance was the intense personal loyalty of the Royists to their leader and Roy's temperamental inability to work within a collective leadership with established CSP leaders like Narayan and Masani, whom he scorned as 'romantic adolescents'[1].

As in the case of CSP-CPI relations, Bombay was the storm-centre of the rupture between the CSP and the Royists. Reference has already been made to the role of Maniben Kara, the Royist general secretary of the AITUC, in the election dispute between the Bombay CSP and the BPTUC. Maniben's resignation from the Bombay CSP in November 1936 was the culmination of long-standing friction arising from Masani's attempts to impose centralised control on Royist labour leaders in Bombay. In her public statement of resignation from the Bombay CSP, Maniben strongly condemned the labour policy of its leaders and asserted:

> 'There has been a consistent endeavour on behalf of the Party to subordinate to itself the working class and the Trade Union movement. These misguided endeavours of the Party have led to a weakening of the Trade Union movement and the fostering of unhealthy splits, fractions and tendencies in the Trade Union movement. . . . The suicidal endeavours of the Party to monopolise for itself all the radical movements in the city have brought it into violent conflict with the other radical groups and organisations in the city, and prevented the unification of the radical forces on a common platform. The way in which the Party is managed is also open to serious objections. Bureaucratic tendencies have been rampant in the Party. Decisions regarding the internal affairs of Trade Unions are taken without previous consultation with the Party members working in those organisations, and are then thrust upon unwilling members under threats of disciplinary action.'[2]

The Bombay CSP, for its part, accused Maniben of deceitful manoeuvres to curry favour with local trade unionists at the expense of the Congress and the CSP[3]. The dispute carried over into the Congress organisational elections in Bombay, with the Royists defying the CSP whip. While Maniben stood for election to the PCC against a CSP candidate, M. R. Shetty, also a Royist and an official CSP candidate, withdrew at the last minute, thereby ensuring a walk-over for the right-wing candidate. In

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1 Interview with C. Mascarenhas, Bombay, March 1973.

2 Bombay Chronicle, 26 Nov. 1936.

3 Congress Socialist, 5 Dec. 1936.

elections for the AICC, Mascarenhas and Madan Shetty, both Royist members of the CSP, voted with the right-wing against Masani, the CSP candidate. In return, Maniben was co-opted to the Bombay PCC with Bhulabhai Desai's support. The CSP interpreted these manoeuvres as a calculated Royist conspiracy, in alliance with the Bhulabhai Desai faction of the Congress, to reduce CSP representation in the PCC and sabotage Masani's election to the AICC[1]. In March 1937, the Bombay CSP executive therefore announced the suspension of Mascarenhas, Madan Shetty and M. R. Shetty for their disloyal activities[2].

The Bombay dispute was particularly significant because it coincided with Roy's release and an attempt by the CSP leadership to persuade him to join the party. Roy, from the outset, was careful to avoid close identification with the CSP, refusing an offer of a welcome reception from its branch in Allahabad, where he was recuperating immediately after his release[3]. Early in December 1936, Mascarenhas acted as an intermediary and arranged talks between Roy and Narayan in an attempt to effect a merger[4]. Subsequent accounts of what transpired at the talks differ. Roy maintained that he had reiterated his fundamental ideological and organisational objections to the existence of the CSP. The CSP leaders, he said, had admitted the validity of his arguments, while pleading that they were now too deeply committed to retrace their steps[5]. Narayan, on the other hand, announced immediately after the talks that he had found Roy in far closer agreement with the CSP than he had previously expected. Roy, he stated, had 'the friendliest feelings' for the CSP and had agreed to co-operate in expanding the party[6]. According to Narayan, Roy had actually expressed his willingness to enrol in the CSP, while disapproving of its name[7].

Nevertheless, as the CSP executive itself admitted, Roy, during

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1 Congress Socialist, 6 March 1937.

2 Congress Socialist, 13 March 1937.

3 UPPA, 5 Dec. 1936.

4 Bombay Chronicle, 1 Dec. 1936.

5 Ibid., 1 July 1937.

6 Ibid., 7 Dec. 1936.

7 J. P. Narayan, 'We are the Pioneers of Unity', Congress Socialist, 23 April 1938.

his talks with Narayan, had been 'sceptical' about the CSP-CPI united front and had also repeated his earlier objection that an open socialist party within the Congress was both unnecessary and likely to degenerate into 'reformism'[1]. Despite these reservations, Mascarenhas had persuaded Roy to co-operate with the CSP[2]. The turning-point, however, came when Roy visited Bombay in December 1936. Maniben Kara and V. B. Karnik, the local Royist leaders, now succeeded in involving Roy in their feud with the Bombay CSP. According to Mascarenhas, Maniben arranged a meeting between Bhulabhai Desai and Roy, at which the former agreed to provide financial assistance to the Roy Group[3]. Roy, in return, sanctioned local efforts to block Masani's election to the AICC[4]; and his public speeches in Bombay assumed the tone of 'veiled' attacks on the CSP[5]. In his talks with Narayan and Masani in Bombay, Roy refused to join the CSP unless the post of party president was created for him, a proposal which the CSP leaders rejected[6].

Though unwilling to accept Roy's terms for a merger, the CSP leaders were still anxious to maintain friendly co-operation with him. At the CSP's Faizpur conference in December 1936, the leadership insisted on a resolution of greetings to Roy, despite strong opposition from the Communist group; and the Royists in return agreed to the unanimous adoption of the Faizpur thesis. In private discussions with the Communists over Roy's support for the Congress right-wing, the CSP leaders pleaded for patience and argued that, in view of his recent release, Roy should be allowed time to familiarise himself with the political situation[7].

It was clear, however, from the proceedings of the Faizpur Congress session that Roy intended to by-pass the CSP and strike an independent path in the Congress. As a member of the Congress

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1 'C.S.P.'s Reply to Roy', Congress Socialist, 28 Aug. 1937.

2 Interview with C. Mascarenhas, Bombay, March 1973.

3 Ibid.

4 Statement of the BCSP executive, Congress Socialist, 13 March 1937.

5 'C.S.P.'s Reply to Roy', Congress Socialist, 28 Aug. 1937.

6 Interviews with M. R. Masani, Bombay, March 1973.

7 BHS, file 800(75)A-II: intelligence report on A.I.C.S.P. Conference, Faizpur, Dec. 1936.

Mass Contacts Committee, Roy joined the right-wing in opposing the CSP's demand for collective affiliation and advocated instead the radicalisation of the Congress through the strengthening of its primary units. The result was an open clash at Faizpur between Roy and the right-wing, on the one hand, and Nehru, the CSP and the CPI, on the other[1]. An intelligence report on the Faizpur Congress noted: '. . . Roy has created much dissension in the Socialists' ranks and has had a disruptive rather than a unifying effect'[2].

The final parting between Roy and the CSP came in March 1937 over the question of office-acceptance by the Congress. At the Delhi AICC session of March 1937, Roy openly supported the official resolution in favour of office-acceptance, thereby rejecting what had become a sacred shibboleth of the CSP[3]. By this time, disciplinary action against Royist members of the Bombay CSP appears to have convinced Roy that his independent line could no longer be reconciled with Royist membership of the CSP. Rather than await expulsion by the CSP leadership, a secret meeting of the Roy Group in March 1937 decided to take the offensive, with Royist fractions in different provincial CSP units resigning successively in protest against CSP policies. Although news of this plan was leaked to the CSP leadership, the latter decided against pre-emptive action in the hope that Roy might have second thoughts[4].

The Bombay Royists had already resigned from the CSP in protest against the disciplinary action against them. In April 1937, 25 Maharashtra Royists announced their resignation on the eve of the Maharashtra Congress Socialist Conference[5]. In June, 5 Royists, including the secretary of the provincial CSP, resigned from the Sind CSP[6]. In July, 17 Royists including Rajani Mukherji, a founder-leader, resigned from the Bengal CSP[7], followed by

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1 Haithcox, op. cit., p. 264.

2 BHS, file 800(75)A-II: Deputy Inspector-General, CID, Poona, to Home Secretary, Bombay, 'Secret Report on Faizpur Congress, 1-4 Jan. 1937'.

3 M. R. Masani, 'General Secretary's Indictment of M. N. Roy', Congress Socialist, 26 June 1937.

4 Ibid.

5 Bombay Chronicle, 28 April 1937; and Times of India, 29 April 1937.

6 Congress Socialist, 26 June 1937.

7 G. Mazumdar to J. P. Narayan, 10 July 1937, JPP.

11 Royists in Gujerat[1] and 2 in the Punjab[2]. In each of these provinces, the resigning members issued long press statements reiterating Roy's main objections to the CSP[3]. The CSP, the Royists argued, had become an obstacle both to nationalist unity and Socialist organisation. The CSP's insistence on functioning as a socialist party, instead of a loose bloc, had made it a disruptive influence in the Congress and an obstacle to the building of a radical nationalist alternative leadership. The CSP's role as an open socialist party, functioning within the law, had also made it a 'reformist' influence in the labour movement, obstructing the formation of a revolutionary proletarian party.

In the course of the next two years, the gulf between Roy and the CSP continued to widen and was marked by intense personal acrimony. The Royists concentrated their activity on the youth movement, competing with the CSP for leadership of student organisations[4]. In the course of 1937, Roy toured the country, publicly advocating support for Congress ministries, criticising the CSP's efforts at kisan organisation outside the Congress as being both anti-Congress and un-Socialist and describing the abolition of zamindari as a remote issue[5].

The CSP leadership replied with a series of articles and statements maintaining that only an organised socialist party like itself could link the Congress with class organisations and thereby build a Popular Front and that an unorganised Congress left, on the lines advocated by Roy, would be as ineffective as similar groupings before 1934. Roy was accused of playing into the hands of the right-wing and betraying the left; and his emphasis on a secret and underground socialist party was ascribed to his personal ambition and his preference for an undemocratic caucus built around his own personality.[6]

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1 Times of India, 30 July 1937.

2 K. K. Sinha and Malik Asim, 'Open Letter to the A.I.C.S.P.', 12 July 1937, MP.

3 e.g., statement of Bengal Royists, Congress Socialist, 17 July 1937.

4 A. Patwardhan to J. Nehru, 1 Sept. 1937, JNP.

5 Madras Fortnightly Reports, second half of July, first half of Aug., and Sept. 1937, IOR; and 'C.S.P.'s Reply to Roy', Congress Socialist, 28 Aug. 1937.

6 Congress Socialist, loc. cit. and 11 Sept. 1937, 'The C.S.P. and its Critics'.

Despite his efforts to establish his bona fides with the parliamentary wing of the Congress and his championing of Congress discipline against alleged disruption by the CSP and the CPI, Roy was unable to establish his credentials with the Congress leadership. Although he invoked Congress discipline against the existence of the CSP, Roy refused in his speeches and writings to conceal his long-standing hostility to Gandhi and his growing contempt for Nehru. Individual antagonisms of this kind thwarted Roy's hopes of securing the key post of Congress general secretary[1]. At the same time, Roy's boycott of the kisan movement prevented the Royists from offsetting their decline in the labour movement with an alternative mass bass.

By mid-1938, the Royists' rapid political decline was producing second thoughts about their relations with the CSP. In May 1938, some of Roy's followers pressed him to make peace with the CSP leadership as a means of countering Communist influence[2]. Talks between Roy and Narendra Dev failed, however, to produce a reconciliation[3]. Reporting on these negotiations, Roy described the CSP as 'a conglomeration of all sorts of elements' which had yet to crystalise into a party of any sort, 'reformist' or otherwise. He dismissed the CSP leadership's mass following as 'insignificant' and attributed its influence to its access to Congress leaders and, in particular, to the patronage of Nehru and Bose. According to Roy, he had offered to unite with the CSP on the basis of its description of itself as a revolutionary socialist party. Narendra Dev, however, had rejected the offer and had refused to commit himself to anything. 'If they /the CSP/ really meant what they professed', Roy asserted, 'the difference would not be unbridgeable'. But the CSP, he maintained, were 'an opportunist lot' and declared: 'I had to part company with the CSP, not because it is too much to the Left, but because it is a camouflaged instrument of the right-wing'[4].

Roy complained, in particular, that the CSP, despite its 'public professions' had refused to co-operate with him in

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1 Haithcox, op. cit., p. 266.

2 H. K. Chakraverty tc Ellen Roy, 18 May 1938, Roy Papers.

3 M. N. Roy to H. K. Chakraverty, 27 June 1938, Roy Papers.

4 Ibid.; and M. N. Roy to A. N. Chattopadhyaya, 15 July 1938, Roy Papers.

radicalising the U.P. ministry's agrarian reforms[1]. Dismissing the CSP's support for Kisan Sabhas, Roy argued that separate kisan organisation played into the hands of the right-wing by siphoning off the peasantry from the Congress, thereby eroding the mass character of the Congress and leaving its ministerial wing free from mass control[2].

Following the failure of these negotiations, the Royists continued to plough a lonely furrow in nationalist politics, canvassing for Bose against Gandhi early in 1939, withdrawing their support from Bose's Left Bloc a few months later, and seceding from the Congress to co-operate with the war effort in 1940[3].

In August 1937, the CSP leadership had dismissed the Roy Group's secession from the party as being of little consequence in view of the small numbers involved[4]. While Royist resignations did not significantly affect the numerical following of the CSP, except in Maharashtra, it undoubtedly altered the balance of forces within the party, weakening the position of its non-Communist elements. This was particularly evident in Bengal and Gujerat, where the Royist resignations were followed by an immediate and marked accession of strength to Communist fractions in the CSP[5], a development which Government intelligence had accurately anticipated[6].

While the Communists were quick to utilise the Royist-CSP split to advance their own interests within the CSP, they refused to consider an alliance with the Royists against the CSP leadership. In March 1937, the conflict between the BPTUC and the Bombay CSP did not prevent the Communist secretary of the BPTUC from publicly disowning the four Royist trade unionists who had defected from the CSP in the Congress elections[7]. Two months

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1 M. N. Roy to Humayun Kabir, 4 Aug. 1938, Roy Papers.

2 Ibid., 15 Sept. 1938, Roy Papers.

3 M. N. Roy to A. N. Chattopadhyaya, 25 Jan. and 24 July 1939, Roy Papers; and Haithcox, op. cit., pp. 287 and 296.

4 'C.S.P.'s Reply to Roy', Congress Socialist, 28 Aug. 1937.

5 Atul Bose, General Secretary, Bengal CSP, to J. P. Narayan, 9 July 1937, JPP; G. Mazumdar to Narayan, n.d., JPP; and K. Pandya, Secretary, Gujerat CSP, to M. R. Masani, 9 Oct. 1937, MP.

6 BHS, file 800(75)A-V: passim.

7 Bombay Sentinel, 6 March 1937.

later, the CPI firmly defended the CSP against Roy's criticisms. The Communist condemned the Royists' 'unprincipled intrigues' with the right-wing to secure Masani's defeat in the AICC election, corroborated the CSP's allegations of a Royist conspiracy to subvert the party and declared: '. . . not for a moment could we dream of adopting such tactics. Not for a moment could we entertain any idea of an alliance with such a shabby lot.'[1]

In July 1937, a resolution of the CPI politbureau accused Roy of disrupting the Popular Front and identified the struggle against Royism as one of the main tasks of the CPI. According to the Communist analysis, Roy, having lost his working-class base to the CPI was now competing with the CSP for leadership of the radical petty bourgeoisie. Roy's advocacy of office-acceptance, his defence of Congress discipline, his opposition to collective affiliation, his criticisms of the Comintern and his disruption of the CSP were cited as evidence of his collusion with the Congress right-wing under the garb of 'pseudo-revolutionary phraseology'. 'In opposition to M. N. Roy', the politbureau declared, 'we must come forward as the defenders . . . of the CSP and must strive to strengthen it by overcoming its failings, by making it the organisational expression of left unity.'[2]

CPI support for the CSP against Roy derived partly from intense Communist hostility to Roy for his apostasy and partly from a tactical perception of the need to preserve the CSP both as a legal platform and as a base for activities in Congress and kisan organisations. Entering the CSP when the Royists were on the point of seceding from it, the Communists had rapidly developed a stake in the preservation of the party and in the expansion of their own leadership within it. Though as sceptical as the Royists about the CSP leadership's socialist credentials, the Communists used their influence to commit the CSP to a Marxist programme which they could utilise as the basis of their own criticism of Congress and CSP leaders. Though they too favoured the formation of a Left Bloc in the Congress, the Communists, unlike the Royists, envisaged such a bloc as an adjunct to the CSP, rather than a substitute for it. Thus, the most effective resistance to Roy's offensive came from Communist-controlled CSP

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1 'Royism in Action', The Communist, May 1937.

2 'Resolutions of the CPI P.B.', The Communist, July 1937.

units in Ahmedabad, Punjab, Andhra and Kerala[1].

The CSP leadership's conflicts with the Royists, on the one hand, and the Communists, on the other, created a fluid situation in which the alignments of left-wing groups in day-to-day politics shifted rapidly. While the CSP and CPI united against the Royists on issues such as collective affiliation of class organisations with the Congress and independent kisan organisation, Roy and the CSP leaders often combined against the Communists to promote a pro-Congress line in labour and youth organisations. For instance, at the U.P. Provincial Youth Conference of May 1937, presided over by Roy, the CSP, despite strong Communist opposition, supported a Royist resolution describing the Congress as the only mass anti-imperialist organisation in the country. At the same conference, the CSP backed a Communist resolution demanding collective affiliation, against equally vociferous Royist opposition[2].

The obvious corollary of the chronic feuds and unstable alignments of the Congress Socialists, the Communists and the Royists was the impossibility of sustained co-operation between these groups within the Congress, despite their apparent agreement on the need for left-wing unity against the Gandhian leadership. In view of the dominant role played by disagreements over the Congress in their bilateral relations, their attempts to maintain a common front within the Congress could hardly succeed after the collapse of their alliance in other spheres. The problems which thwarted the CSP's goal of socialist unity also undermined its aim of providing the nationalist movement with an alternative radical leadership.

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1 Bombay CID, file 3/CSP/38: report of Deputy Superintendant of Police, Ahmedabad, 12 Feb. 1938; AICC, file 41, 1936-37: Punjab CSP, Weekly Newsletters no. 4 (n.d.), no. 5 (4 July 1937) and no. 7 (n.d.); P. Sundarayya, 'A Reply to Mr. Roy', Congress Socialist, 16 & 30 Oct. 1937; and E. M. S. Nambudripad, 'Left Block versus Socialist Party', ibid., 14 Aug. 1937.

2 UPPA, 5 June 1937.

Chapter 7

LEFT-WING LEADERSHIP AND CONGRESS UNITY (1936-42)

The CSP's united front with other left-wing groups had been intended to operate both within and outside the Congress. Within the Congress, the CSP-CPI alliance acted until 1939 as the nucleus of an informal left-wing bloc which included, according to the issues involved, non-party labour and kisan leaders, individual Congressmen and the Roy Group. Left-wing co-operation in the Congress was originally envisaged as leading to the isolation of the right-wing and its replacement by a radical, alternative leadership, if necessary through a split on the issue of militant nationalism versus constitutionalism.

A left-wing bid for leadership of the Congress was encouraged by the formation of provincial Congress ministries, which intensified class antagonisms, associated Gandhian leaders with the governmental law and order machinery, and generated new tensions between the ministerial and organisational wings of the Congress. Nevertheless, in the resulting confrontation, it was the Congress left which would disintegrate, while the Gandhian leadership would succeed in maintaining Congress unity under its own control.

The collapse of radical nationalism as a potential alternative leadership of the Congress followed inevitably from the demise of the CSP, its most organised component. The CSP leadership had attempted to justify its entry into the Congress Working Committee in April 1936 as an experiment in combining constitutional opposition with constructive co-operation. The next three years were to demonstrate, however, that the decision to share office and responsibility in the Congress organisation, first at the provincial and then at the national level, had implied the abandonment of the oppositional role prescribed at the time of the party's inauguration and an unspoken commitment to the maintenance of Congress unity under Gandhian leadership. These realities had been temporarily obscured by the CSP's simultaneous alliance with the CPI and its formal conversion to Marxism. Although the CSP leadership continued to oscillate

between opposition to and co-operation with the Congress leadership, the dominant trend was that of loyal subordination to Gandhi. The Communist penetration of the CSP, far from arresting this trend, hastened it by polarising the party, threatening its founding leadership with isolation and denying the latter an independent organisational base. 'A General Staff without an army', as the Communists described them[1], the CSP leaders had to rely increasingly on alliance with the Congress leadership as the sine qua non of their political survival.

The period 1936-39 witnessed a protracted conflict within the Congress over a wide range of issues. The main points of dispute were the following: the Congress attitude to the new constitution, and in particular to its provision for responsible government in the provinces culminating in an All India federation with the princely states; Congress agarian and labour policy; the nationalist attitude to the approaching World War; and the structure and leadership of the Congress organisation. While the CSP was committed to policies which conflicted with those of the Congress leadership on all these questions, it was consistently unable to enforce its demands.

The main thrust of the CSP's campaign against the new constitution was directed at securing a boycott of provincial office, leading to a constitutional stalemate and the return of the Congress to extra-constitutional, mass agitation. Such an agitation, it was expected, would bring the left to the forefront, enabling it to take over the Congress organisation. The obvious weakness, however, of the CSP's anti-ministry campaign lay in its underestimation of the strength of pro-office elements in the Congress and in its reliance on a self-denying ordinance by the latter. While the Communists advocated mass agitation against the Constitution by the left-wing as the most effective means of barring the way to office-acceptance by the Congress[2], the CSP leadership firmly resisted Communist efforts in December 1936 to set up a united front machinery for this purpose. United front committees, the CSP argued, would develop into rivals to Congress Committees, divide the Congress and alienate potential

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1 A. K. Ghosh, 'Lahore Conference of the Congress Socialist Party', New Age, May 1938.

2 Central Committee, CPI, To All Anti-Imperialist Fighters (n.p., Dec. 1936), PCJA.

sympathisers[1].

Owing to the CSP's objections to a mass agitation, except under Congress auspices, the anti-ministry campaign confined itself to attempts to secure a majority within the Congress. The amendments of the Anti-Ministry Committee, backed by the CSP, were defeated at the Bombay AICC session of August 1936 and again at the Faizpur Congress; and the Working Committee succeeded in postponing a decision on office-acceptance until after the elections of February 1937[2]. The postponement of the decision meant the effective demise of the anti-ministry campaign. As CSP leaders admitted to each other, the long delay eroded the morale of their followers and, in the absence of any alternative action, made office-acceptance appear as the only way out of a sterile constitutional impasse[3].

Though Congress electoral activity was firmly controlled by the right-wing, with Sardar Patel as president of the central Congress Parliamentary Board, the CSP pledged itself to full and unconditional participation in the Congress election campaign and used its influence in the AIKS and the AITUC to secure valuable mass support for the Congress[4]. In return, the party received minority representation on the central and provincial Congress Parliamentary Boards[5]. The CSP was unable, however, to counteract the bias against leftists in the selection of Congress candidates. The exclusion of prominent Congress Socialists in favour of pro-office candidates compelled the CSP leadership to protest publicly and repeatedly that the desire to win majorities at any cost was leading to the nomination of former loyalists, who had the money to win elections, in preference to loyal Congressmen of the left[6]. The exceptions were the

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1 IOR, file L/P&J/117-C-41: Bombay CID, 'Secret Report on Faizpur Congress, 1-4 Jan. 1937'; New Age, Feb. 1937.

2 AICC, file 42, 1936: proceedings of the AICC, Bombay, 22-23 Aug. 1936; and IOR, loc. cit.

3 Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya to J. P. Narayan, 9 July 1937, JPP.

4 'Resolutions of the A.I.C.S.P. Conference', Congress Socialist, 9 Jan. 1937.

5 e.g., Narendra Dev was a member of the central Parliamentary Board and A. Patwardhan of the Bombay Presidency Parliamentary Board; and Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya was joint secretary of the Madras Presidency Parliamentary Board.

6 AICC, file P-15, 1936: A. K. Pillai, Kerala CSP, to J. Nehru, 18 Oct. 1936; resolutions of the All India CSP executive, Congress Socialist, 7 Nov. 1936; 'Opportunists on Congress Ticket', ibid., 21 Nov. 1936; and 'Resolutions of the A.I.C.S.P. Conference', ibid., 9 Jan. 1937.

U.P., where the CSP's influence in the PCC was able to secure the selection of its candidates[1], and Orissa, where N. Chaudhuri, the CSP leader, was elected leader of the Congress Legislature Party[2].

To placate the left for the move towards office-acceptance, the Congress election manifesto incorporated some of the CSP's proposals. Drafted by Nehru, the manifesto committed the Congress to ending the constitution, opposition to Indian participation in an 'imperialist war', a programme of labour welfare legislation and agrarian reform, and the establishment of civil liberties[3]. The manifesto's agrarian provisions, which included a moratorium on rural debts, reduction of land rent and revenue, and tenancy reform, were supplemented at the Faizpur Congress by a more detailed agrarian programme, drafted in consultation with CSP and kisan leaders[4]. Even so, the manifesto fell far short of the CSP's proposals, ignoring demands for the abolition of princely states and zamindari, nationalisation of key industries, a minimum wage for agricultural labourers and reduction of land revenue by 50 per cent[5].

J. P. Narayan had already resigned from the Working Committee 'for personal reasons'[6]. In view of the refusal of the Working Committee to incorporate their proposals in the election manifesto, the remaining two CSP representatives in the Working Committee had at first intended to resign on the issue and move amendments in the AICC[7]. Owing, however, to its reluctance to embarrass Nehru and its fear of exposing its own numerical weakness, the CSP decided instead to welcome the manifesto and claim the credit for its radicalisation[8]. Thus, at the Bombay AICC session of

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1 'The Party, the Congress and the Elections', Congress Socialist, 10 Oct. 1936.

2 M. R. Masani to J. P. Narayan, 12 Feb. 1937, JPP.

3 AICC, file 42, 1936: 'Congress Election Manifesto'.

4 IOR, loc. cit.; and 'The Faizpur Congress', Congress Socialist, 9 Jan. 1937.

5 BHS, file 800(106)-III: CID report, 22 Aug. 1936; and 'Kisan Supplement', Congress Socialist, 9 Jan. 1937.

6 Bombay Chronicle, 19 Aug. 1936.

7 BHS, file 800(106)-III: CID reports, 20 and 21 Aug. 1936; and BHS, file 800(75)A-II: report of Commissioner of Police, Bombay, 20 Aug. 1936.

8 'Full Steam Ahead' and 'Party News', Congress Socialist, 29 Aug. 1936.

August 1936, the manifesto was seconded by Narendra Dev on behalf of the CSP; and the party decided not to move amendments except on the issue of office-acceptance[1].

The manifesto, in any case, made little difference to the conduct of the Congress election campaign, in view of the right-wing affiliations of the great majority of the Congress candidates. While the more radical provisions of the manifesto were useful in securing kisan and labour votes, Congress election propaganda suppressed these items in areas where they were likely to alienate influential propertied interests. In Bengal, for instance, the Congress leadership refused to print or distribute the election manifesto or the Faizpur agrarian programme in Bengali, owing to its reluctance to alienate Hindu zamindars[2]. In Bombay, the Presidency Parliamentary Board, under pressure from the Maharashtra Khots' Association, refused to incorporate the demand for abolition of the Khoti system in its supplementary manifesto, even though the CSP had secured its inclusion in the Maharashtra PCC's recommendations[3]. In Andhra, an attempt by Ranga, the AIKS president, backed by the CSP, to pledge Congress candidates to agrarian reform, in return for Kisan Sabha support, was scotched by Sardar Patel's threat of disciplinary action[4]. In Kerala, the Malayalam translation of the Congress manifesto omitted the Faizpur appendix on agrarian reform[5]. Although the CSP had instructed its members to utilise the election campaign to propagate radical demands[6], a distinctive approach to the electorate was impossible in the absence of an electoral machine independent of the Congress.

As expected by the right-wing, the outcome of the elections, with the Congress winning majorities in seven of the eleven provinces, swung the tide overwhelmingly in favour of office-acceptance. Despite the CSP's protest that unconditional acceptance of office was preferable to a 'gentleman's agreement'

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1 AICC, file G-23, 1936: M. R. Masani, A.I.C.S.P. Foreign Newsletter No. 8 (Bombay, 19 Sept. 1936).

2 G. Basak, 'The Bengal Elections', Congress Socialist, 5 March 1937.

3 'Conclusions and Recommendations of the Peasants Enquiry Committee of the M.P.C.C.', Congress Socialist, 30 May 1936; AICC, file G-5, 1936: A. Patwardhan to J. Nehru, 22 Oct. 1936; and AICC, file P-16, 1936.

4 M. R. Masani, 'Between You and Me and the Lamppost', Congress Socialist, 30 Jan. 1937; and ibid., 6 Feb. 1937.

5 E. M. S. Nambudripad, 'On the Great Betrayal', ibid., 20 March 1937.

6 M. R. Masani, 'For Election Campaign', n.d., MP; and Congress Socialist, 23 Jan. 1937.

with the British[1], the AICC in March 1937 endorsed by 127 votes to 70 the Working Committee's formula of conditional office-acceptance and rejected by 135 votes to 78 a CSP amendment[2].

The open session of the Faizpur Congress had provided an unexpected success for the CSP by adopting its resolution for a hartal or general strike against the constitution on 1 April 1937, a proposal which had previously been rejected by the Working Committee and the Subjects Committee[3]. Nevertheless, the AICC's decision to accept office if the Governors' powers were not utilised reduced the Congress slogan of ending the constitution to a vague commitment to opposing the introduction of the All India federation. Although the Congress as a whole was committed to observing the 1 April hartal, the organisation of the hartal was left to the left-wing, with right-wing controlled Congress organisations showing conspicuous indifference to it[4]. Despite the obvious willingness of the majority of the Congress to work the constitution, the CSP continued to reject Communist proposals for a Left Bloc against constitutionalism or for an agitation which did not have the sanction of the Congress[5]. Instead, as the Communists pointed out, the anti-ministry campaign was now reduced to relying on the Government's refusal to grant the assurance required by the Congress[6].

The CSP's plea for direct action by the Congress was ignored by the Working Committee[7]; and the Congress preferred to resolve the constitutional deadlock by whittling down its conditions for office-acceptance. The formation of Congress ministries in July 1937 meant the decisive rejection of what had been the main plank in the CSP's nationalist platform during the previous two

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1 M. R. Masani, 'No Gentleman's Agreement', Congress Socialist, 13 March 1937.

2 AICC, file 42, 1936: proceedings of the AICC, Delhi, 17-18 March, 1937.

3 BHS, file 800(75)A-II: intelligence report on All India CSP Conference, Faizpur, Dec. 1936.

4 IOR, file L/P&J/117-C-41: R. Maxwell, Home Secretary, Govt. of India, 'Confidential circular to provincial governments', 16 March 1937.

5 BHS, file 800(75)A-II: General Secretary, All India CSP, 'Circular No. 4 to Provincial Secretaries', 31 March 1937.

6 'The Present Situation and Our Tasks', The Communist, June 1937.

7 'From Deadlock to Direct Action', Congress Socialist, 10 April 1937.

years. A policy of consistent opposition to the constitution would now have required that the CSP resign its position in the Congress Working Committee, dissociate itself from the Congress ministries and expose their inability to implement radical reforms. Instead, the CSP executive decided against resignation from the Working Committee and offered conditional co-operation to the Congress ministries on the basis of the reforms outlined in the Congress election manifesto[1].

Implicit in this policy was the assumption that the ministries would be able and willing to implement popular reforms, even though the CSP's refusal to allow its own members to accept ministerships ensured that the ministries would be mainly representative of the right-wing[2]. While recognising the danger of the Congress lapsing into constitutionalism, the CSP leadership appears to have felt that the necessary check on the ministries could best be maintained, not by mass agitation which would embarrass the Congress, but by friendly pressure through its All India alliance with Nehru and its influence in provincial Congress organisations[3].

During the next two years, the CSP attempted to mediate between the Congress ministries, on the one hand, and Communist and other labour and kisan militants, on the other. As it became clear that neither the ministries nor the Congress High Command, under whose supervision they functioned, had any intention of implementing radical reforms, the CSP's via media was to become untenable. The reluctance of the ministries to carry out the more radical provisions of the Congress election manifesto was matched by growing mass militancy, especially in the kisan movement. The attempts of the CSP, in alliance with Nehru, to bridge the gulf proved largely unsuccessful.

The main points of conflict between the radical and ministerial wings of the Congress were provided by labour and agrarian policy and the related question of civil liberties. The CSP's effectiveness in pressurising the ministries on these questions was marginal at best and varied according to provincial factors.

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1 General Secretary, All India CSP, loc. cit.; and resolution of the All India CSP executive, Congress Socialist, 14 Aug. 1937.

2 Congress Socialist, loc. cit.

3 Ibid.

These provincial variations are illustrated by the U.P., Bombay, Bihar and Madras.

In the U.P., the CSP in December 1936 had won control of the PCC, with three of its four joint secretaryships and Narendra Dev as its president[1]. The CSP was also a substantial minority in the Congress Legislature Party, 41 of whose 133 members were leftists[2]. In alliance with Nehru, the U.P. CSP leaders had secured a decision by the PCC against office-acceptance[3]. The All India decision in favour of office-acceptance and the formation of a Congress ministry did not seriously affect CSP-Congress co-operation in the U.P. Under Nehru's influence, the U.P. ministry showed itself willing to accommodate left-wing demands to an extent which occasionally alarmed the provincial Governor[4]. The U.P. ministry, unlike its counterparts in other provinces, implemented the Congress election pledge of a moratorium on rural debts, and in October 1937 released the terrorist detenus imprisoned in the Kakori Conspiracy Case[5]. Left-wing pressure was also responsible for the introduction of tenancy reforms, in the drafting of which Narendra Dev and other Congress Socialists played an important role. In July 1938, the CSP was able to radicalise the terms of the U.P. Tenancy Bill by pressure through the PCC[6].

The U.P. CSP, for its part, generally accepted Nehru's injunctions against embarrassing the ministry by mass agitation. The CSP's opposition to labour militancy in Kanpur was accompanied by similar moderation in the kisan movement. The U.P. CSP leaders in the UPKS dissociated themselves from criticism of the Congress by Swami Sahajanand, welcomed the ministry's agrarian legislation and advocated close co-operation between the UPKS and the Congress[7]. Early in 1938, at Nehru's instance, the UPKS twice cancelled a kisan march to the U.P. legislature to press for more radical reforms[8].

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1 AICC, file G-82, 1936.

2 UPPA, 20 Feb. 1937.

3 Ibid., 6 March 1937.

4 Governor's Reports, U.P., 7 Oct. 1937, 22 Jan. 1938 and 10 Jan. 1939, IOR.

5 UPPA, 23 Oct. 1937.

6 Congress Socialist, 16 July 1938.

7 UPPA, 15 Jan., 2 July, 15 Oct. and 31 Dec. 1938.

8 Ibid., 29 Jan. 1938; and AICC, file P-20, 1938: Damodar Swarup Seth to J. Nehru, 18 April 1938; and J. Nehru, press statements, 14 and 20 April 1938.

In Bombay, the CSP's intense rivalry with the Communists in the labour movement might have made it a logical ally of the provincial Congress leadership, had it not been for the extreme conservatism and factional exclusiveness of the latter. The Bombay CSP's efforts to lobby the ministry for the release of political prisoners met with an evasive and dilatory response; and the Bombay ministry continued to use repressive powers against labour militancy[1]. Thus, in November 1937, six members of the Ahmedabad CSP were arrested for distributing Communist literature at a public meeting addressed by Nehru[2]. In Maharashtra, CSP proposals to radicalise the Bombay ministry's agrarian policy were rejected by the PCC[3]. The CSP's support for the Bombay ministry's labour legislation has already been described. The Bombay CSP leaders at first co-operated closely with the ministry's labour advisers and actually sought financial support from the latter for their trade union activities. 'We feel that for the success of the /labour/ work', Patwardhan confided to Nehru, 'it would be better to have it under Socialist auspices, even though we want it to be a genuinely Congress activity'[4]. By 1938, however, the Bombay CSP's role as the unofficial labour wing of the ministry was terminated by the Bombay PCC's support for the newly-formed Hindustan Mazdur Sevak Sangh, the labour committee of the Gandhi Seva Sangh[5].

In Bihar, the only province where the CSP could claim a strong mass base, independent both of the Congress and the Communists, the party's role suffered increasingly from the conflict between the Congress, to which its leaders were fundamentally loyal, and the BPKS, upon which it depended for its mass cadres. In June 1937, the CSP had secured the adoption by the Bihar Provincial Political Conference of a resolution for the abolition of zamindari without compensation[6]. The Congress in

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1 M. R. Masani and D. Mehta to K. M. Munshi, Home Minister, Bombay, Bombay Chronicle, 23 July 1937; A. Patwardhan to J. Nehru, 1 Sept. 1937, JNP; and report of Annual Meeting of Bombay Civil Liberties Union, Times of India, 7 Aug. 1939.

2 Congress Socialist, 20 Nov. 1937.

3 Ibid., 25 June 1938.

4 Shantilal Shah to M. R. Masani, 21 Aug. 1937, MP; and A. Patwardhan to J. Nehru, 1 Sept. 1937, JNP.

5 'The Gandhi Seva Sangh', Congress Socialist, 27 Nov. 1937; and Hindustan Mazdur Sevak Sangh: An Explanatory Note (Bombay, 1945), MP.

6 Bihar Fortnightly Report, 17 July 1937, IOR.

office, however, proved itself staunchly pro-zamindar, as the Bihar Governor noted with satisfaction[1]. The ministry refused to implement a moratorium on debts and instead offered the zamindars full support in their efforts to recover arrears of rent and debt and to assert their control of Bakasht lands which had been acquired from defaulting tenants[2]. Though the ministry introduced legislation to establish security of tenure, its reforms fell far short of Congress election promises[3]. This modest legislation was watered down further in negotiations with the zamindars, leading even the Bihar Governor to observe that the zamindars had been accommodated in every way possible[4]. Far from alleviating kisan economic discontent, the immediate effect of Congress legislation was to intensify it, as the zamindars launched a concerted offensive to evict tenants and establish direct occupation of their estates before the Tenancy Act came into force[5].

In these circumstances, BPKS activity assumed a militant character, with Sahajanand advocating mass direct action by the kisans[6]. By the end of 1937, matters had come to a head, with the ministry authorising severe police repression against kisan agitation, while the PCC called on Congressmen to boycott BPKS activities[7]. Despite close personal relations between J. P. Narayan and Rajendra Prasad, the former was no longer able to maintain a modus vivendi between the Bihar Congress and the BPKS. In January 1939, the Bihar PCC's prohibition of local satyagraha campaigns by DCCs came as the final blow to the CSP's mediatory role, making it impossible for Socialist-controlled DCCs in Patna, Gaya and Bhagalpur to participate in kisan agitation[8].

The confrontation between the ministerial and radical sections

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1 Governor's Report, Bihar, 12 July 1938, IOR.

2 'Kisan Supplement', Congress Socialist, 7 Aug. and 4 Sept. 1937.

3 Congress Socialist, 22 Jan. 1938.

4 Governor's Report, Bihar, 20 Dec. 1937, IOR.

5 Hauser, op. cit., p. 128.

6 Bihar Fortnightly Report, first half of June 1937, IOR.

7 'Kisan Supplement', Congress Socialist, 6 Nov. 1937; and ibid., 25 Dec. 1937.

8 Bihar Fortnightly Report, 20 Jan. 1939, IOR.

of the Congress was most obvious in Madras, where the Rajagopalachari ministry consistently refused to make any concessions to the left. Unlike the Bihar and U.P. ministries, the Madras ministry publicly announced its determination to use repression against left-wing agitation[1]. Rajagopalachari worked in close liaison with the Madras Governor to suppress the kisan and labour activities of the Communist-controlled Tamilnad, Andhra and Kerala CSP units[2]. The arrest by the Madras ministry of several prominent CSP members, including visiting Bombay leaders like Meherally and Batliwala, made it the bête noire of the CSP-CPI campaign for civil liberties[3]. While the Tamilnad and Andhra PCCs firmly supported the ministry and obstructed the activities of CSP-controlled DCCs[4], in Kerala the CSP had regained control of the PCC by 1938, utilising the latter to mount attacks on the ministry's repressive policy[5].

Peasant agitation and government repression also strained Congress-CSP relations in the North-West Frontier[6]. Even in Orissa, where the PCC was officially committed to abolition of zamindari, the ministry's failure to implement even the moderate Congress election promises compelled the CSP-controlled Kisan Sangh to organise mass demonstrations in September 1937[7]. Commenting on the budget proposals of the Congress ministries in September 1937, the Congress Socialist warned that the ministries, by their 'prudence', were 'playing imperialism's game' and 'inviting popular discontent against the Congress, instead of against the constitution'[8]. The CSP's inability to arrest this trend placed it in the jaws of a nutcracker. While its criticisms, however loyal, were resented and mostly ignored by the ministries, its reluctance to risk an open rupture with the Congress

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1 'The Fire is Aflame', Congress Socialist, 31 July 1937; and The Hindu (Madras), 27 June 1938.

2 Governor's Report, Madras, 8 Oct. 1937, IOR.

3 Ibid., 5 Aug. and 23 Sept. 1937; and Madras Fortnightly Reports, first half of June, Sept. and Oct. 1937 and second half of Aug. 1938, IOR.

4 P. Sundarayya, 'Who Are The Usurpers?', Congress Socialist, 2 Oct. 1938.

5 Resolution of the Kerala PCC, 26 May 1938, JPP; and AICC, file G-28, 1938-39: AICC Inspector's report on Kerala, 20 Dec. 1938.

6 Congress Socialist, 10 Sept. 1938.

7 Resolution of Orissa CSP, n.d. (1937), JPP.

8 Congress Socialist, 18 Sept. 1937.

prevented it from leading extra-parliamentary agitations in Congress-ruled provinces and encouraged Communist efforts to win over its rank and file. These contradictions in the party's role were reflected in its growing impotence and vacillation in the developing confrontation in the All India Congress.

In January 1937, CSP leaders had expressed considerable satisfaction with the results of the Faizpur Congress session, claiming that the Congress leadership had shown far greater willingness to accommodate their views than at Lucknow[1]. As Government intelligence pointed out, however, the Congress High Command's concessions to the left owed more to a desire for pre-election unity than to any change of policy. The CSP was unable to secure any tangible gains at Faizpur. Its complaints about the selection of Congress election candidates were ignored. Its demand for functional representation of workers and peasants in the Congress was rejected by the Congress Mass Contacts Committee, having already been rejected by the great majority of PCCs, with the exception of U.P. and Mahakoshal, which voted in favour, and Punjab and Maharashtra, which were undecided[2]. The CSP's views were accommodated by official Congress resolutions on mass contacts, agrarian policy, the Bengal-Nagpur Railway strike, the boycott of the royal coronation and the war danger. But CSP leaders were aware by this time that the adoption by the Congress of radical resolutions bore little relation to their implementation, which depended on the PCCs. Thus, despite Narayan's presence in the three-member Mass Contacts Committee appointed at Lucknow, the Lucknow resolution on mass contacts, which had required close co-operation with labour and kisan organisations, had remained a dead letter[3].

The CSP leadership depended heavily on Nehru's role as Congress president to promote its demands in the All India Congress and to enforce the implementation of radical policies by provincial Congress organisations. Nehru, however, was neither able nor willing to perform this role. Following the

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1 IOR, file L/P&J/2517, 1935: M. R. Masani, A.I.C.S.P. Foreign Newsletter, (Bombay, 16 Jan. 1937).

2 IOR, file L/P&J/117-C-41: Bombay CID, 'Secret Report on Faizpur Congress, 1-4 Jan. 1937'; memoranda from PCCs to Congress Mass Contacts Committee, Aug. 1936, JPP.

3 BHS, file 800(106)-I: CID report, 13 June 1936.

threatened resignation of the Gandhian members of the Working Committee in June 1936 in protest against his partiality to the CSP, Nehru was careful to preserve a non-partisan image and to dissociate himself from anti-Gandhian propaganda[1]. Though Nehru continued to intervene in cases of blatant organisational discrimination against the Socialists, his influence in such provincial disputes was limited. While he was able to prevent the disaffiliation of the CSP-controlled Malabar DCC by the Kerala PCC in August 1936[2], Nehru's intervention on behalf of the Bombay Socialists on the question of organisational elections was angrily rejected by the Munshi-Patil faction[3].

The CSP had backed Nehru's re-election as Congress president in December 1936, in the hope that Nehru and the Socialist members of the Working Committee would be able to check the conservatism and constitutionalism of the parliamentary wing[4]. Under pressure from the CSP and Nehru, the Working Committee in August 1937 appealed to the ministries to do their best to expand civil liberties, but unequivocally ruled out a confrontation with the Governors on the issue[5]. Although CSP leaders like Narayan, Narendra Dev and Patwardhan protested continually to Nehru against Congress ministerial policy, Nehru was unwilling to take stronger action than addressing private appeals to Congress Premiers[6]. 'What is there to distinguish our governments from the non-Congress governments?' Nehru pleaded in a letter to G. B. Pant and Rajagopalachari. 'Not much so far as civil liberties are concerned.'[7]

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1 R. Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari, V. Patel, J. B. Kripalani, J. Doulatram, S. D. Dev and J. Bajaj to J. Nehru, 29 June 1936, JNP; and Congress Socialist, 25 July 1936.

2 M. R. Masani to J. Nehru, 9 Aug. 1936, MP; and AICC, file P-15, 1936: General Secretary, Kerala PCC, to J. Nehru, 21 Aug. 1936.

3 AICC, file G-58(iii), 1936: J. Nehru to S. K. Patil, 15 Dec. 1936; Patil to Nehru, 16 Dec. 1936; and Lilavati Munshi to Nehru, 16 Dec. 1936.

4 CSP manifesto for Congress elections, Congress Socialist, 7 Nov. 1936.

5 AICC, file 42, 1936: proceedings of Congress Working Committee meetings, Wardha, 14-17 Aug. 1937.

6 Narendra Dev to J. Nehru, 10 Dec. 1937; A. Patwardhan to J. Nehru, 10 Dec. 1937; and J. P. Narayan to J. Nehru, 23 Nov. 1938, JNP.

7 AICC, file I-14(ii)A: J. Nehru to C. Rajagopalachari and G. B. Pant, 24 Nov. 1937.

The ministerial wing's refusal to respond to such appeals, combined with the Communist threat to its own mass following, compelled the CSP leadership to revert temporarily to an oppositional role in the All India Congress. The main issues on which left-wing opposition now focussed were Congress policy on civil liberties, the princely states and the proposed All India federation.

By the time of the Calcutta AICC session of October 1937, the use of anti-sedition laws by the Madras ministry and its suppression of labour activity in Calicut had provoked considerable indignation. A CSP resolution criticising the use of repression by Congress ministries and calling for the immediate implementation of Congress promises of civil liberties won substantial support from non-party Congressmen. But the right-wing prevented its adoption by an amendment, carried by a narrow margin of 92 votes to 68, which referred the resolution to the attention of the Working Committee[1]. The latter's only response to the resolution was to congratulate the ministries on their efforts to expand civil liberties[2].

The controversy over Congress policy in the princely states was closely related to the question of federation. The Congress had from the outset committed itself to opposing the introduction of the federal section of the 1935 constitution, the provisions of which fell far short of responsible government at the centre. Particularly objectionable was the provision for Indian princes acceding to the federation to nominate the representatives of their states in the federal legislature. By September 1937, however, statements by Congress leaders like Satyamurti and Bhulabhai Desai suggested a willingness to compromise on the question, arousing left-wing fears that office-acceptance in the provinces had been merely the first step towards acceptance of the federation. The CSP now urged the Congress to make a categorical announcement that its ministries would resign in the event of federation being introduced[3]. The role of the princely states in the proposed federation was also advanced by the left as the final

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1 AICC, file 42, 1936: proceedings of AICC, Calcutta, 29-31 Oct. 1937; and 'Congress Week in Perspective', Congress Socialist, 6 Nov. 1937.

2 Congress Socialist, 15 Jan. 1938.

3 M. R. Masani, 'And Now "Federation"!', Congress Socialist, 11 Sept. 1937; and ibid., 16 Oct. 1937.

justification of direct Congress leadership of popular movements against the princes[1].

By July 1937, repressive action against the local Congress by the Mysore State Government had created a potentially explosive situation. While the Karnatak CSP was eager to launch a satyagraha campaign in Mysore, All India Congress leaders, including Nehru, threatened disciplinary action against Congressmen who engaged in civil disobedience[2]. At the AICC session of August 1937, the CSP scored a major victory with the adoption of its resolution calling for support to the Mysore popular struggle, defeating an attempt by P. Sitaramayya, the Gandhian president of the States Peoples' Conference, to refer the resolution to the Working Committee. On the question of federation, however, the party's amendment, calling for direct action to resist its introduction, was rejected by 160 votes to 68[3].

As the left had anticipated, the advent of Congress ministries strengthened right-wing control of the Congress through access to ministerial patronage. Right-wing factions supported by the ministries resorted increasingly to manipulation of the Congress organisation to reduce left-wing representation, and in a province like Bihar were even able to use the police force and magistracy against their opponents in Congress elections[4].

By the time of the Haripura Congress session in March 1938, the ministerial wing was in a position to take the offensive against its critics. The Congress elections early in 1938 had resulted in major reverses for the left in provinces like Bihar, Andhra and Bombay and in reduced representation for the CSP at the Haripura Congress[5]. The proceedings of the Congress session were a set-back for the left, which was unable to influence official

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1 Congress Socialist, 18 July 1936.

2 J. Nehru to Secretary, Congress Parliamentary Board, Bangalore, 26 Jan. 1937; Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya to M. R. Masani, 12 July 1937; and Nehru to Masani, 18 July 1937, MP.

3 'Congress Week in Perspective', Congress Socialist, 6 Nov. 1937.

4 M. R. Masani to J. Nehru, 6 Dec. 1937, MP; and J. P. Narayan to Sri Krishna Sinha, 11 July 1938, JPP.

5 Bihar Fortnightly Reports, 19 Jan. and 4 Feb. 1938; Bombay Fortnightly Report, first half of Jan. 1938; Madras Fortnightly Report, second half of Jan. 1938, IOR; A. K. Ghosh, 'Lahore Conference of the Congress Socialist Party', New Age, May 1938; and M. R. Masani, 'The Congress Socialist Party', 1938, MP.

policy on civil liberties, federation or princely states[1]. While the right-wing launched a major attack on kisan agitation as being inconsistent with the Congress creed and as a factious and disruptive influence, the left was itself divided, with the CSP and CPI moving separate resolutions and amendments[2].

It was significant that these reverses for the left coincided with the CSP's withdrawal from the Congress Working Committee. It has been suggested that this decision was the result of the CSP's reluctance to serve under Bose, the new Congress President[3]. The actual reasons, however, were less personal. Though closer to Nehru, the CSP had consistently courted Bose and had even hoped, after his release from imprisonment in March 1937, that he would join the party[4]. Talks between Masani and Bose had resulted in agreement to co-operate closely; and Bose had agreed not to sponsor a rival left-wing party in the Congress[5]. CSP leaders had actively canvassed Gandhi for Bose's election as Congress president[6]. According to Masani, Bose himself was eager to accommodate the CSP's representatives in his Working Committee. But agreement was prevented by Sardar Patel's objections to the inclusion of Masani, in view of possible repercussions on the balance of power in the Bombay PCC. The CSP leadership thereupon refused to participate in the Working Committee, on the ground that it could not permit the right-wing to dictate its choice of representatives[7].

It is also likely that the CSP's withdrawal was influenced by its reluctance to be officially identified with the Congress leadership at a time of growing anti-Congress sentiment among its own followers. Despite its long-standing aversion to any new organisation which would be a tertium quid between itself and the

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1 Bombay Fortnightly Report, second half of Feb. 1938, IOR; and Congress Socialist, 19 Feb. 1938.

2 AICC, file G-47, 1938: General Secretary's Report to Haripura Congress, Feb. 1938; and AICC, file G-103, 1938: resolutions for the Haripura Congress.

3 Rusch, op. cit., p. 373.

4 M. R. Masani to Stafford Cripps, 19 April 1937, MP.

5 M. R. Masani, interview with United Press Agency, 9 April 1937, MP; Bombay Chronicle, 12 April 1937; and Masani to S. C. Bose, 22 April and 15 June 1937, MP.

6 M. R. Masani to S. C. Bose, 7 Oct. 1937, MP.

7 Interviews with M. R. Masani, Bombay, March 1973.

Congress, the CSP leadership was under increasing pressure from the CPI and its own rank and file to join a Left Bloc, which would co-ordinate the activities of left-wing groups and counteract the organisational offensive of the ministerial wing. The proposal was first mooted by R. S. Ruikar, the AITUC leader and a CSP member, in October 1937[1]. The idea also had the support of Bose. In his presidential address to the Haripura Congress, Bose, while endorsing the CSP's aims, had described its proper role as that of a 'leftist bloc'[2]. By mid-1938, Congress equivocation on the constitutional question had encouraged Communist moves to launch an Anti-Federation Bloc on the lines of the former Anti-Ministry Committee. Although Narayan and other CSP radicals favoured the proposal, it was rejected owing to the opposition of the anti-Communist Bombay leaders, who argued that the Congress itself must be treated as the Anti-Federation Bloc[3].

Though it refused to commit itself to a Left Bloc, the CSP backed Bose in his confrontation with pro-federation elements in August 1938 and co-operated with the CPI in organising an Anti-Federation Day[4]. It was significant, however, that in Bombay, owing to local disputes, the two parties observed the day on different dates[5]. The CSP and CPI also co-operated in the State Peoples' movement, sponsoring a Mysore Day in May 1938 and sending volunteers to support agitations in Mysore and Hyderabad[6]. Although the Congress leadership had by now abandoned its policy of non-intervention in the states, it continued to oppose mass agitation against the princes. Control of Congress activities in the states remained firmly in moderate, Gandhian hands. Thus, the left was unable to prevent Patel's compromise with the Mysore Government in May 1938 or the Congress ban on the sending of

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1 M. R. Masani to S. C. Bose, 7 Oct. 1937; and Masani to R. S. Ruikar, 8 Nov. 1937, MP.

2 'President Subhas Bose on the C.S.P.', Congress Socialist, 26 Feb. 1938.

3 M. R. Masani to J. P. Narayan, 30 July 1938, MP; Masani to S. N. Banerji, 11 Aug. 1938, JPP; and Bihar Fortnightly Reports, second half of July and second half of Aug. 1938, IOR.

4 All India CSP, Foreign Newsletter, series 2, no. 4 (n.p., 1 Aug. 1938), JPP.

5 Bombay Fortnightly Report, second half of Sept. 1938, IOR.

6 Statement by J. P. Narayan and P. C. Joshi, Congress Socialist, 7 May 1938; and Bombay CID, 'Political Who's Who' on N. Gore and S. M. Joshi.

volunteers to Rajkot and Dhenkanal in December 1938[1].

It was in this context of the failure of Congress ministries to implement the Congress election manifesto and concede radical demands for civil liberties, trade union rights, agrarian reform and mass resistance to federation and the princes, that a major struggle for control of the All India Congress organisation took place. The organisational offensive of the ministerial wing against the left and its use of government repression against militant agitation was matched by a corresponding reliance by the left-wing on direct action through non-Congress organisations like the Kisan Sabhas and on the formation of an All India Left Bloc as an opposition platform which would either capture the Congress or provide an alternative to it. The resulting confrontation was to take the Congress to the brink of a split in the early months of 1939.

The CSP's role in the Congress crisis reflected the same contradictions as its parallel relations with other left-wing groups in non-Congress organisations. As in the latter case, the CSP leadership vacillated between left-wing unity and support for the Congress leadership, opting eventually for the latter course. While the CSP's defection proved decisive in preventing a left-wing take-over of the Congress, it also meant the abdication of the party's political independence, the alienation of its radical rank and file from its leaders, and ultimately the liquidation of its formal existence.

In September 1938, at the stormy Delhi AICC session, Gandhi took the offensive against the left with a resolution which accused the latter of promoting class war in the name of civil liberty and approved measures by the Congress ministries against kisan agitation as being necessary to maintain law and order. After the defeat of a CSP amendment by 100 votes to 55, about 50 left-wing representatives staged a walk-out. This unprecedented gesture of defiance indicated an unusual, though temporary, sense of solidarity on the left, with the CSP, CPI, Royist and Kisan Sabha representatives acting in concert[2].

The offensive of the Congress leadership, which included

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1 A. Mehta, 'Mysore Settlement: A Mistake', Congress Socialist, 14 May, 1938; and ibid., 11 and 18 Dec. 1938.

2 All India CSP, Foreign Newsletter, series 2, no. 6 (n.p., 15 Oct. 1938), JPP; and Congress Socialist, 9 Oct. 1938.

fresh proposals to abolish proportional representation in Congress elections[1], overshadowed the CSP leadership's distrust of the Communists and temporarily forced it to revert to its original slogan of alternative leadership. In October 1938, even an extreme anti-Communist like Masani announced, in reply to Gandhi's threat to retire from the Congress, that the CSP would be willing to accept the challenge and take over the Congress leadership[2]. Narayan, meanwhile, strongly urged Nehru to come forward as the leader of the left opposition[3]. In view of Nehru's refusal to assume such a role, the CSP reluctantly joined the Communists and Royists in sponsoring Bose as leader of the Congress left.

While rejecting Communist proposals for a Left Bloc to contest elections to the forthcoming Tripuri Congress session[4], the CSP threw its weight behind the campaign to re-elect Bose as Congress president, in opposition to Sitaramayya, Gandhi's nominee[5]. Left-wing co-operation in the Congress elections of January 1939 produced a temporary revival of CSP representation, with the party scoring some unexpected gains in Maharashtra, Gujerat, Punjab, Karnatak and Madras[6].

Though Bose's popularity among anti-Gandhian Congressmen was an asset to the CSP in the Congress elections, the party's leaders quickly toned down their support for Bose when it became clear that Gandhi intended to treat Bose's victory in the presidential election as a vote of no-confidence in himself. A series of articles in the party organ denied that Bose had been the candidate of the left, interpreted his victory as the choice of one individual over another, and argued strongly against proposals for a Left Bloc[7].

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1 AICC, file G-42, 1938: 'Report of Congress Constitution Committee', 24 Sept. 1938.

2 M. R. Masani, 'Victory of Rajaji over Gandhiji?', Congress Socialist, 23 Oct. 1938.

3 J. P. Narayan to J. Nehru, 23 Nov. 1938, JNP.

4 S. Lahiri, 'Preserve Unity', National Front, 23 Oct. 1938; and 'The Congress Election Campaign', ibid., 16 Oct. 1938.

5 Congress Socialist, 22 Jan. 1939; Times of India, 28 Jan. 1939; and BHS, file 800(75)A-VII: CID report, 4 Feb. 1939.

6 BHS, file 1023-I: Weekly Letter No. 5, 4 Feb. 1939; Bombay Fortnightly Report, 16 Jan. 1939, IOR; Bombay Chronicle, 20 Jan. 1939; 'Socialists for Tripuri', Congress Socialist, 15 Jan. 1939; and ibid., 22 Jan. and 5 Feb. 1939.

7 'A Left Bloc?', Congress Socialist, 15 Jan. 1939; 'Days of Decision', ibid., 5 Feb. 1939; P. Tricumdas, 'Marching Feet', ibid., 10 Feb. 1939; and 'No Left Bloc', ibid., 26 Feb. 1939.

The leadership crisis created by the resignation of 13 members of the Working Committee, including Nehru, found CSP policy diverging increasingly from that of other left-wing groups in its refusal to break with Gandhi. While Roy and the AIKS leaders urged Bose to appoint a left-wing Working Committee, even at the risk of a split in the Congress[1], the CPI advocated a middle course which sought to preserve Congress unity under a composite leadership, while also launching a Left Bloc to consolidate left-wing organisational gains and promote radical policies[2]. Though united in its rejection of a split in the Congress, the CSP leadership was divided between support for the Communist line and the Bombay leaders' advocacy of unconditional loyalty to Gandhi[3]. By February 1939, a temporary consensus had emerged, the main features of which were rejection of a Left Bloc as likely to split the Congress and strengthen the Communists, refusal to participate in a leftist Working Committee unless it had a CSP majority, and co-operation with the CPI to effect a compromise between Gandhi and Bose[4].

Although Narayan and P. C. Joshi worked together for a rapprochement beween Nehru and Bose[5], the rift between the two leaders had gone too far for these efforts to succeed[6]. Consultations between various left-wing groups were equally unsuccessful in producing an agreed line for the Tripuri Congress session in March 1939[7]. The two main issues before the Congress session were the Pant resolution regarding the formation of the new Working Committee and Nehru's draft resolution on the 'National Demand'. The former sought to negate Bose's election victory by requiring that his new Working Committee be appointed in accordance with Gandhi's wishes and was regarded by Bose as an implicit vote of no-confidence. Although Masani, Patwardhan, Lohia and

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1 Bihar Fortnightly Report, second half of Feb. 1939, IOR.

2 A. K. Ghosh to P. C. Joshi, n.d. (Feb. 1939); and G. Adhikari to A. K. Ghosh, n.d. (Feb. 1939), Munshi Papers.

3 A. Mehta to J. P. Narayan, 16 Feb. 1939, JPP.

4 National Herald, 21 Feb. 1939; Bombay Chronicle, 27 Feb. 1939; and resolution of All India CSP executive, Feb. 1939, JPP.

5 P. C. Joshi to J. Nehru, 28 Feb. 1939, JPP.

6 J. Nehru to S. C. Bose, 4 Feb. and 3 April 1939; and S. C. Bose to J. Nehru, 10 Feb. and 28 March 1939, JNP.

7 Times of India, 6 Feb. 1939.

Asoka Mehta, the pro-Gandhian CSP leaders, actually advocated support for the Pant resolution, the CSP executive decided by a majority vote on opposition[1]. The CSP joined other left-wing groups in moving amendments to the resolution and voting against it in the Subjects Committee at Tripuri. The resolution passed the Subjects Committee by 218 votes to 135, after the defeat of CSP and Royist amendments[2]. By the time it reached the open session, the CSP leadership had changed course, a majority of the party executive deciding in favour of abstention[3].

The CSP leadership justified its neutrality on the ground that the factious behaviour of Bose's followers threatened to disrupt Congress unity and retard the promotion of a genuinely radical programme. In support of this claim, the CSP cited Sarat Bose's opposition to the resolution on the National Demand, proposed by Nehru and Narayan[4]. The latter resolution did not go substantially further than previous Congress formulations[5]. It reiterated the demand for a sovereign constituent assembly, as against the government's scheme of federation, and threatened civil disobedience, but did not incorporate a CSP-CPI 'plan of action' and ignored Bose's demand for a six-month ultimatum to the Government[6]. The CSP leaders' exaggeration of the radical content of the resolution is explained by their desire to rationalise their own prevarications to their followers. The reality underlying the CSP's neutrality was the paralysis of its leadership by the stalemate between pro-Gandhian and pro-Communist elements.

Though the Communists at first considered joining the CSP in abstaining on the Pant resolution, they decided eventually to adhere to their original opposition, moving amendments to the resolution and voting against it in the open session[7]. The

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1 M. R. Masani to J. P. Narayan, May 1939, MP.

2 'Tripuri Preserves Congress Unity', Congress Socialist, 19 March 1939.

3 M. R. Masani to J. P. Narayan, May 1939, MP.

4 Congress Socialist, loc. cit.; J. P. Narayan, 'Neutrality - The Best Course', ibid., 26 March 1939; and B. P. Sinha, 'Was Tripuri A Success?', ibid.

5 Sitaramayya, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 112.

6 P. C. Joshi, 'Tripuri', National Front, 19 March 1939.

7 'Tripuri Preserves Congress Unity', Congress Socialist, 19 March 1939; and M. R. Masani, 'Turning Success into Defeat', ibid., 26 March 1939.

resolution was carried by 1400 votes to 800, with Bose claiming that the CSP's defection had been responsible for its adoption[1]. While there is no precise evidence about the CSP's numerical representation, it is unlikely that the party could have swung the vote, especially since a large number of CSP delegates - 60 per cent, according to a Communist estimate - defied the party whip and voted against the resolution[2].

For the future of left-wing unity, the significance of the Tripuri crisis lay in its demonstration that loyalty to Congress unity under Gandhi was no longer compatible with militant opposition to the ministerial wing. Despite CSP-CPI joint efforts for a compromise[3], Gandhi's refusal to co-operate with Bose in the formation of a coalition Working Committee, and Bose's resignation in April 1939, marked the end of left-wing hopes that the Congress could be gradually taken over by constitutional opposition from within. The Tripuri Congress was followed by a concerted organisational drive against the left, in which the CSP, despite its loyalty to Gandhi, was not spared[4].

In the following months, the Congress leadership, in the name of homogeneous and centralised discipline, initiated a series of measures to tighten its control of the Congress organisation and restrict left-wing influence in provincial Congress bodies. At the Bombay AICC session of June 1939, constitutional amendments to abolish proportional representation and ban members of opposition groups from holding elective positions in the Congress were dropped, owing largely to Nehru's opposition[5]. Fierce left-wing opposition was unable, however, to prevent the adoption of a resolution prohibiting satyagraha by Congressmen or Congress Committees without the sanction of the AICC. The resolution, which aimed at terminating participation by Congressmen in kisan agitation, threatened the AIKS with a split. While Narendra

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1 S. C. Bose to M. K. Gandhi, 31 March 1939, JNP.

2 Report of Secretary, Assam CSP, n.d. (1939), JPP; and BHS, file 800(75)A-VII: D. Mehta to J. P. Narayan, 29 Oct. 1939.

3 P. C. Joshi to J. Nehru, 16 April 1939, JNP.

4 Narendra Dev to M. R. Masani, 19 March 1939, Patel Papers; and 'Still in the Wood', Congress Socialist, 2 April 1939.

5 Bombay Chronicle, 9 June 1939; 'Drive Against Minorities?', Congress Socialist, 11 June 1939; and 'Minorities Must Remain', ibid., 25 June 1939.

Dev, the AIKS president, urged obedience to the Congress ban, Sahajanand, general secretary of the AIKS, openly advocated defiance[1]. Another AICC resolution struck at left-wing influence on the Congress ministries via the PCCs, by placing the ministries under the direct control of the Working Committee. In July, disciplinary action against Congress office-bearers who participated in the left-wing's day of protest against the AICC resolutions made it clear that open dissent would no longer be tolerated by the Congress High Command.

The above confrontation witnessed the rapid collapse of the CSP. The choice before the Party leadership now lay between co-operation with Gandhi on the latter's terms or participation in an oppositional Left Bloc led by Bose. Either course would involve the surrender of the party's independence. While an alliance with Gandhi would mean the open abandonment of the party's original platform, depriving it of its raison d'être, the submergence of the party in a wider Left Bloc would also compromise its independence. The CSP leadership's inability to resolve this dilemma encouraged the defection of its followers to its left-wing rivals.

While the Communists already controlled the CSP organisation in several provinces, the emergence of Bose's Forward Bloc as a new radical opposition party made serious inroads into the CSP's militant nationalist following. The party's neutrality at Tripuri had triggered large numbers of protests and resignations from party units and leaders in provinces like the U.P., Bengal, Assam, C.P., Maharashtra, Punjab, Gujerat and Karnatak[2]. A substantial number of former CSP members, including prominent leaders like B. D. Tripathi and R. S. Ruikar, now joined the Forward Bloc[3]. The latter also received the backing of AIKS leaders like Sahajanand, Ranga and Yagnik, thereby depriving the CSP of much

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1 Bombay Chronicle, 4 and 8 July 1939.

2 Mubarak Saghar to J. P. Narayan, 17 March 1939; G. Mazumdar to Narayan, 20 March 1939; C. Banerji to Narayan, 16 April 1939; 'Resolutions of C.P. and Berar CSP Executive', n.d. (1939); 'Statement of Noakhali Congress Socialists', 5 April 1939; report of Secretary, Assam CSP, n.d. (1939), JPP; BHS, file 800(75)A-VII: Weekly Letters no. II and 14, 18 March and 8 April 1939; Bombay Fortnightly Reports, second half of March and first half of April 1939; and Bihar Fortnightly Report, second half of March 1939, IOR.

3 BHS, file 1023-II: CID report, 8 July 1939.

of its influence in the kisan movement[1].

While the CSP leaders were rapidly losing their radical following, the party, despite its moderation, remained a target for attack by the Congress leadership. In March 1939, even Nehru, with whom the CSP leaders had hoped to link their fortunes, had publicly dissociated himself from the CSP, criticising the intemperance of its attacks on Congress leaders and charging it with having retarded the cause of socialism by its factious and opportunist attempts to capture Congress offices[2].

In an attempt to avoid isolation, the CSP leadership abandoned its unpopular neutrality and reverted to a more oppositional role at the Calcutta AICC session of May 1939, joining the CPI in a policy of conditional support to Bose's efforts at left consolidation. Large-scale resignations from the party had seriously alarmed leaders like Narayan and Narendra Dev. In March 1939, Narendra Dev had admonished Masani:

> 'You should not make matters worse by injudicious writings in the "Congress Socialist". . . . Undue condemnation of Subhas Bose and praise of the High Command should be ruled out. . . . Let us . . . realise that we cannot form our policies with reference to specific questions without taking into consideration the wishes and opinions of our members.'[3]

The launching of the Forward Bloc in May 1939 alarmed both the CSP and the CPI, threatening both parties with provincial defections. Thus, in June 1939, the Delhi CSP officially welcomed the formation of the Forward Bloc and called upon the CSP national executive to merge into it[4]. In the same month, the Bengal Labour Party split away from the CPI on the question of support for Bose and merged into the Forward Bloc[5]. While rejecting Bose's invitation to merge into the Forward Bloc[6], CSP and CPI leaders felt compelled to make concessions to Bose's slogan of left unity in order to stem defections from their own

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1 Ibid.: CID report, 15 May 1939; and Hauser, op. cit., pp. 144-5.

2 J. Nehru, 'Where Are We', National Herald, 2 March 1939; and 'Jawaharlal and the Party', Congress Socialist, 12 March 1939.

3 Narendra Dev to M. R. Masani, 19 March 1939, Patel Papers.

4 Satyavati Devi, General Secretary, Delhi CSP, report of Delhi CSP meeting on 21 June 1939, JPP.

5 New Age, July 1939.

6 K. F. Nariman to J. P. Narayan, 9 June 1939; and R. D. Bharadwaj to Narayan, 14 June 1939, Munshi Papers.

ranks. A joint statement by Narayan and P. C. Joshi, therefore, endorsed the need for left-wing co-ordination and proposed an All India Left Co-ordination Committee as a consultative forum for existing organisations, while rejecting the formation of the Forward Bloc as a misguided attempt to organise a 'sectarian' opposition party in the Congress[1].

Negotiations between Bose, the CSP, the CPI, the Royists and the AIKS took place during the All India Forward Bloc's inaugural conference at Bombay in June 1939[2]. While the Communists, the Socialists and the Royists offered to join the Forward Bloc as a consultative body, working within it as organisationally independent parties, Bose insisted that the Bloc must itself function as a party, taking decisions by majority vote[3]. The compromise which emerged involved the formation of a new Left Consolidation Committee (hereafter LCC) with Bose as convenor, including representatives of the Forward Bloc, CSP, CPI, the Royist League of Radical Congressmen and the AIKS[4]. The LCC was expected to function by consensus between these five organisations and was not to enrol members on its own behalf, though similar committees could be established at the provincial level[5].

The CPS's decision to join the LCC provoked the resignation of Masani, Patwardhan, Lohia and Asoka Mehta from the party executive[6]. These leaders were by now frankly pro-Gandhian and had been writing openly in the party organ about the radical potential of Gandhian ideology and the possibility of a synthesis of Gandhism and socialism[7]. Narayan's acceptance of the LCC, they argued, was a surrender to Communist pressure and an alignment with Bose in his factious crusade against Gandhi[8]. Though the

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1 Statement by J. P. Narayan and P. C. Joshi, Congress Socialist, 18 June 1939.

2 BHS, file 1023-II: CID report, 22 June 1939.

3 Ibid.; and National Front, 25 June 1939.

4 Bombay Chronicle, 24 June 1939.

5 BHS, loc. cit.

6 M. R. Masani to J. P. Narayan, May 1939, MP.

7 M. R. Masani, 'Gandhiji and Collective Ownership', Congress Socialist, 8 Jan. 1939; A. Patwardhan, 'On the Road to Socialism - Need for Restatement of Policy', ibid., 9 April 1939; and R. M. Lohia, 'Four-Point Basic Unity', ibid., 23 April 1939.

8 M. R. Masani to J. P. Narayan, May 1939, MP.

resigning leaders were temporarily in a minority in the party executive and therefore unable to enforce their objections, their pro-Gandhian line was supported by CSP leaders in provinces like Orissa and Bengal, whose position was threatened by a Communist take-over[1]. The CSP's participation in the LCC was therefore half-hearted at best; and within a few months the entire founding leadership would swing back, this time finally, to co-operation with Gandhi.

Despite apparent agreement on policy, the LCC was doomed from the outset by the mutual suspicions and dissensions of its constituents. The Committee claimed that its formation had been responsible for the Congress leadership's decision in June to drop the constitutional amendments opposed by the Left[2]. The LCC also attempted to co-ordinate left-wing preparations for the next Congress elections, organising public meetings to enrol primary members to the Congress on a common platform of left opposition[3]. On 9 July 1939, the LCC sponsored a day of protest demonstrations against the AICC resolutions of the previous month. It also decided to organise a 'National Struggle Week' in August to popularise issues such as the Tripuri resolution on the National Demand, communal unity, boycott of British goods, war resistance, and the organisation of a nationalist volunteer corps[4]. A meeting of the LCC in August decided unanimously to agitate for the reversal of Congress disciplinary action against Bose, to observe an All India Political Prisoners Day and to support the decision of the Bengal PCC to launch satyagraha for the release of political prisoners[5].

Despite the unanimity of the LCC on these issues, its first attempt at joint action ended in a fiasco and demonstrated the inability of its components to maintain a united front. The occasion was the 9 July Protest Day. On 6 July, a statement by Rajendra Prasad, the new Congress president, condemning the proposed protest as a violation of Congress discipline and

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1 N. Chaudhuri to M. R. Masani, 23 March 1939, MP; and G. Mazumdar, 'The Forward Bloc', Congress Socialist, 4 June 1939.

2 Bombay Chronicle, 24 June 1939.

3 BHS, file 1023-II: CID reports, 26 June and 2 July 1939; and BHS, file 1023: CID reports, 25 and 31 July and 21 Aug. 1939.

4 Bombay Chronicle, 30 June 1939.

5 Times of India, 16 and 18 Aug. 1939.

forbidding Congress office-bearers to participate in it, threw the LCC into immediate disarray[1]. While Bose, Sahajanand and the CPI decided to defy the ban, Roy publicly advocated obedience and the CSP was divided on the issue[2]. After Nehru's public condemnation of the Protest Day, Narayan and Narendra Dev issued an eleventh hour appeal to Congress Socialists to withdraw[3]. This did not prevent participation in the protest demonstrations by prominent CSP members in most provinces except Maharashtra[4]. In Delhi and Bihar, the day was organised by CSP members who held office in the provincial Congress organisation, thereby directly violating the Congress president's instructions[5].

The Congress Working Committee's disciplinary action against prominent left-wing leaders like Bose, Sahajanand, K. F. Nariman and K. P. Singh, secretary of the Bihar CSP, provoked considerable resentment in left-wing circles[6]. The CSP leadership, however, resisted Bose's attempts to intensify the campaign against the Congress leadership and instead advocated an apology by Congress office-bearers who had defied the ban. In a letter to P. C. Joshi, Narayan argued that the ban on participation by Congress office-bearers should have been observed and complained that the LCC was functioning as a 'super-organisation', compromising the independent judgement of its constituents[7].

While the Royists withdrew from the LCC in July in protest against Bose's policy of defiance[8], the CSP continued to attend LCC meetings until October 1939, co-operating with the CPI in efforts to moderate Bose's extreme oppositional line[9]. The CSP leadership's continuation in the LCC, despite strong objections to its increasingly anti-Gandhian policies, is explained by its

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1 Ibid., 7 July 1939.

2 Ibid., 8 and 10 July 1939.

3 Z. A. Ahmad to J. Nehru, 18 July 1939, JNP.

4 Bombay Chronicle, 10 July 1939; BHS, file 1023-II: CID report, 10 July 1939; and National Front, 16 July 1939.

5 Z. A. Ahmad to J. Nehru, 18 July 1939, JNP.

6 National Front, 10 Sept. 1939.

7 J. P. Narayan to P. C. Joshi, 17 Sept. 1939, JPP.

8 BHS, file 1023: CID report, 24 July 1939.

9 Bombay CID, file 1036/B: A. K. Ghosh, Congress Socialist Party and the War (Bombay, March 1940).

fear of losing its radical following to Bose, by Communist pressure within the CSP, and by the serious threat to the CSP's kisan activity in Bihar posed by the AICC's ban on satyagraha. In September 1939, the Bihar CSP followed the example of the BPKS and announced that it would not observe the AICC ban by withdrawing support from kisan agitation[1].

Participation in the LCC, however, was no solution to the CSP's internal crisis. So long as Bose and the Communists continued to outbid the CSP in their opposition to the Congress leadership, the CSP leadership could not hope to halt defections from the party or to retrieve its popularity with anti-Gandhian militants. Thus, Bose's public criticism of the CSP's moderation and his whirlwind tours of the U.P., Bihar, Gujerat, Maharashtra and Madras caused serious alarm to the CSP leadership and further undermined the latter's control over refractory provincial and local units[2]. The pro-Communist Ahmedabad and Madras CSP units, for instance, actively sponsored Bose's visits and identified themselves with his anti-Gandhian stand[3].

The CSP leadership, by virtue of its association with Bose in the LCC, also found itself increasingly embarrassed in Congress circles by Bose's co-operation with communal elements like the Democratic Swaraj Party and the Hindu Mahasabha, by his attacks on the Gandhian prohibition policy of the Bombay ministry and by his insistence on running the existing Bengal PCC as a rival to the new ad hoc PCC appointed by the Congress High Command[4].

While the Communists were willing to co-operate with the CSP in restraining Bose's excesses, it was becoming clear that their conception of Congress unity was also very different from that of CSP leaders. In the period 1938-39, the international isolation of the Soviet Union had required the CPI to maintain the broadest possible nationalist unity against the British, a compulsion which explains the lull in CSP-CPI rivalry and the temporary moderation of Communist hostility to Gandhi[5]. By the end of 1939, however,

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1 Bihar Fortnightly Report, 20 Sept. 1939, IOR.

2 Bombay Chronicle, 12 Aug. 1939.

3 Ibid., 11 July 1939; and Madras Fortnightly Report, 6 Sept. 1939.

4 Bombay Chronicle, 13 July 1939; and BHS, file 1023-II: CID report, 15 July 1939.

5 NA, file 7/7/39: DIB, 'Communism in India - A Survey of Recent Developments', 31 Oct. 1939.

the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact had freed the CPI from these constraints, allowing it to revert to an oppositional role within the nationalist movement.

The retirement of Masani and other anti-Communists from the CSP executive in May 1939 had been followed by a temporary improvement in CSP-CPI relations, with Meherally reporting in August 1939 that the relationship was 'one of complete friendliness' in Bombay, previously the main centre of hostilities[1]. Nevertheless, Communist proposals for a united socialist party continued to be rejected, owing to serious differences over the Soviet invasion of Poland and Finland and disagreement about the necessity of Gandhi's participation in a future mass struggle[2].

The outbreak of war in September 1939 brought to a head the CSP's differences with both the Forward Bloc and the CPI, resulting in the final breakdown of left-wing co-operation. Differences over the war, however, were the culmination of long-standing rivalries rather than the cause of dissension. On the face of it, there was little to distinguish the war policy of the CSP, the Forward Bloc and the CPI until the end of 1941, when the Communists swung over to conditional co-operation with the war effort after the invasion of Russia by Germany. Although the Royists were moving towards a policy of co-operation in an Anti-Fascist Front, Bose, the CSP and the Communists were all agreed in September 1939 on the necessity of utilising the war for a mass revolt against British rule. The inability of these three groups to co-ordinate their anti-war policies is explained partly by their failure to reconcile their mutual party rivalry and partly by their disagreement over the role of Gandhi and the Congress in a nationalist struggle.

For the CSP leadership, the outbreak of war appeared initially as an opportunity to resolve the dilemma of the previous months and recover its popular following by asserting its independence from both the Congress and the Communists. In September 1939, the CSP executive resolved to launch an independent satyagraha campaign against the war if the Congress failed to take the initiative[3]. The anti-Communist leaders who had resigned

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1 Y. Meherally to J. P. Narayan, 5 Aug. 1939, JPP.

2 P. C. Joshi to J. P. Narayan, 5 Sept. 1939, JPP; and Bombay CID, file 1036/B: P. C. Joshi, War Unveils All Parties (Bombay, March 1940).

3 General Secretary, All India CSP, 'Circular No. 2 to Secretaries of Provincial Parties and Party Members', 31 Dec. 1939, JPP.

earlier that year returned to the party executive; and the CSP temporarily closed its ranks[1]. In preparation for an independent campaign, the CSP co-operated with the Forward Bloc and the AIKS in organising anti-war public meetings and in propaganda in the student movement[2].

Within a month, however, the CSP was again plagued by rival counsels. The CPI, on the one hand, was urging the CSP to join its own anti-war campaign[3]. While the CPI proposed the formation of a united executive, with equal representation for the two parties, the Communist presence within the CSP itself would have meant effective Communist control of a united campaign. Nehru, on the other hand, was applying strong pressure on the CSP leadership to abandon its plan of independent satyagraha and to abide by the Congress policy of passive non-co-operation with the war effort, pending negotiations with the Raj. At the Wardha AICC session of October 1939, Nehru's wishes prevailed with the CSP executive and the Communist offer was rejected[4]. After its amendment seeking to commit the Congress to active non-co-operation was rejected by 181 votes to 64, the CSP reversed its decision to launch independent satyagraha[5]. CSP leaders hereafter co-operated loyally with the Congress leadership and confined their activities to anti-war propaganda and to attempts to alter the Working Committee's policy by friendly persuasion from within.

The abandonment of the CSP's independent war policy was responsible for further alienating militant sections of its own rank and file and for the final collapse of its relations with other left-wing parties. In a circular to party members explaining the decision, Narayan wrote:

> 'Many of you are restive and want us "to do something", meaning thereby to start civil disobedience. It would be unwise to do so now. The Congress itself is moving towards struggle, howsoever slowly.'6

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1 BHS, file 800(75)A-VII: D. Mehta to J. P. Narayan, 29 Oct. 1939.

2 Bombay CID, file 3/CSP/38-II: report of Superintendant of Police, Ahmedabad, 3 Sept. 1939; and Bihar Fortnightly Report, second half of Sept. 1939, IOR.

3 A. K. Ghosh, loc. cit.

4 Ibid.; and interviews with M. R. Masani, Bombay, March 1973.

5 General Secretary, All India CSP, loc. cit.; and National Front, 22 Oct. 1939.

6 General Secretary, All India CSP, loc. cit.

Nevertheless, the national executive's passivity was strongly criticised by previously loyal provincial units, including the Bihar CSP[1]. The Communists were the main beneficiaries of this rank and file discontent, securing the participation of militant provincial and local CSP units in their own anti-war campaign[2]. This open defiance of the CSP national executive's instructions by subordinate units made a split in the party inevitable.

In September 1939, the All India executive, in preparation for its anti-war satyagraha had suspended the party constitution, replacing the elected national and provincial executives with smaller 'War Councils'[3]. These emergency powers were now utilised to replace Communist office-bearers with centrally-nominated 'dictators' in provinces like Gujerat and Orissa, where Communist fractions were on the verge of taking over the CSP organisation[4]. In Kerala, Andhra and Tamilnad, however, complete Communist control of the CSP organisation ruled out central intervention, compelling the national executive to resort to amputation[5]. When the latter decided in March 1940 to expel all Communists from the party, the CPI condemned the CSP for a betrayal of socialism for Gandhism and appealed to all genuine socialists to resign from it[6]. The entire membership of the three southern units of the CSP and an unrecorded but substantial number of its Gujerat, Punjab, U.P., Bengal and Bihar members now seceded from the party and merged into the CPI[7]. All co-operation between the two parties now came to an end. After the adoption of the 'People's War' thesis by the CPI in November 1941, the CSP leaders moved towards a position of militant anti-Communism, until by 1947 Narayan was accusing Nehru and other Congress leaders of being too lenient to the Communists[8].

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1 Bihar Fortnightly Reports, 19 Dec. 1939 and 3 Feb. 1940, IOR.

2 Interviews with G. Adhikari and P. C. Joshi, Delhi, July 1973.

3 General Secretary, All India CSP, loc. cit.

4 Ibid.; Bombay CID, file 3/CSP/38-II: statement by D. Mehta, 31 Oct. 1939; and A. K. Ghosh, loc. cit.

5 AICC, file P-II, 1940-41: K. A. Damodara Menon, Secretary, Kerala Congress Gandhi Sangham, to Secretary, AICC, 3 June 1940.

6 BHS, file 800(75)A-VII: Y. Meherally, 'Circular to Provincial Parties', 30 March 1940; and P. C. Joshi, War Unveils All Parties.

7 Interviews with P. C. Joshi, Delhi, July 1973; and Masani, op. cit., p. 79.

8 J. P. Narayan, 'Report to the Congress Working Committee regarding Communists', 1947, Jayaprakash Narayan Commemoration Volume, p. 95.

In October 1939, an LCC meeting convened by Bose had failed to produce agreement on a joint programme of war resistance[1]. While Bose had advocated the launching of a militant campaign under left-wing leadership, the CSP had refused to participate in a campaign which did not have the backing of the Congress. The Communists, meanwhile, had strongly rejected any concessions to Gandhi, dismissed the idea of satyagraha and advocated an underground campaign which would take the form of guerilla war[2]. While the CSP and the Forward Bloc held back until the Congress decided its policy, the CPI had combined anti-war pressure within the Congress with the immediate launching of its own resistance campaign in the labour movement[3]. The Communist campaign opened with a protest strike in Bombay on 2 October 1939 and reached its peak during the Bombay textile general strike of March 1940[4].

The CSP had withdrawn from the LCC in October 1939; and in December the Communists followed suit, condemning the factious and opportunist policies of Bose's parallel PCC in Bengal[5]. The LCC now lapsed; and the Ramgarh Congress session of March 1940 found its erstwhile members in open conflict. The CSP remained numerically the largest left-wing group in the Congress, with 248 of the 3,111 delegates to the open session and 37 of the 376 members of the new AICC[6]. In view of the CSP's close co-operation with the Working Committee throughout the session, left-wing opposition was insignificant.

In the presidential contest between Maulana Azad, the official candidate, and M. N. Roy, backed by Bose, the CSP's support for Azad and the Communists' neutrality had ensured an overwhelming victory for Azad[7]. The CSP opposed the Ramgarh Anti-Compromise Conference organised by Bose and Sahajanand and also refused to co-operate with an alternative Communist-sponsored

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1 J. P. Narayan, 'Left Unity', n.d. (1939), JPP.

2 'Struggle or Death', National Front, 22 Oct. 1939.

3 'Delay Means Death', National Front, 8 Sept. 1939.

4 BHS, file 800(106)A-I: Home Department note on the CPI, June 1940.

5 Bombay CID, file 1036/B: P. C. Joshi, Whom, How and Why Does Bose Fight? (Bombay, March 1940).

6 NA, file 4/4/40: 'Results of Congress Elections in 1940'.

7 Bihar Fortnightly Report, 5 March 1940, IOR.

Labour-Kisan Rally, thereby rendering both occasions ineffective[1]. Instead, the CSP leadership offered unreserved support to the Working Committee's resolution, which committed the Congress to non-co-operation with the war, and decided against moving any amendments[2]. Gandhian leaders like Rajendra Prasad reciprocated by participating in a 'J.P. Day' at Ramgarh to protest against Narayan's recent arrest for an anti-war speech[3]. Although Narayan's draft resolution defining the socio-economic content of independence was not accepted by the Working Committee, Gandhi in his individual capacity expressed public approval of Narayan's proposals[4].

In the months following the Ramgarh session, the CSP dissociated itself from the independent no-tax campaign launched by the Forward Bloc and the AIKS in April 1940, while avoiding direct opposition to it[5]. Instead, the party opted for loyal support of the individual civil disobedience campaign launched by Gandhi in October 1940, despite objections to its largely symbolic character[6]. According to AICC reports, CSP members in Bombay, Bihar, Maharashtra, Gujerat, Orissa and Karnatak took the Gandhian satyagraha pledge and offered full co-operation to the Congress leadership[7]. In the U.P., too, several leading members of the party, including Narendra Dev, C. B. Gupta, Mohanlal Gautam and H. N. Shastri, were arrested for individual civil disobedience[8].

The CSP's efforts to secure the support of youth and kisan organisations for the individual civil disobedience movement met with strong opposition from the CPI, the Forward Bloc and militant kisan leaders, terminating the co-existence of these groups in

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1 Ibid., 2 April 1940; and G. Adhikari, 'Ramgarh - A Review and Evaluation', 1940, PCJA.

2 Y. Meherally, loc. cit.

3 Bihar Fortnightly Report, 19 March 1940, IOR.

4 Gandhiji on Jayaprakash's Proposal, Congress Socialist Tracts No. 3 (Bombay, 1940), MP.

5 BHS, file 800(75)A-VII: General Secretary, All India CSP, 'Circular No. 2 to Provincial Secretaries', 30 March 1940.

6 A. Patwardhan to J. Nehru, 18 Oct. 1940, JNP; and Times of India, 17 Sept. 1940.

7 AICC, files G-16 and G-5(IV), 1940.

8 UPPA, 4 Oct. and 13 Dec. 1940 and 17 Jan. 1941.

the AISF and AIKS. In November 1939, Sahajanand had severed his connections with the CSP and openly aligned himself with Bose[1]. Early in 1941, the BPKS formally split, and Sahajanand joined the Forward Bloc in organising a rival organisation[2]. The Bihar split was soon reflected at the national level, with the CSP seceding from the AIKS in 1941[3]. The drastic decline in the party's kisan following is evidenced by the fact that it could only secure the attendance of 42 delegates at the inaugural conference of its rival All India Kisan organisation[4]. By October 1942, the conversion of the original AIKS to a pro-war policy, under Communist influence, had led to the secession of the Forward Bloc and the Andhra kisan group led by N. G. Ranga[5]. Although Sahajanand and Yagnik co-operated with the pro-war policy of the CPI, by 1945 they too had retired from the AIKS in protest against Communist control[6]. From a powerful All India organisation with a large mass membership in 1939, the kisan movement thus rapidly disintegrated into a number of small, warring sects.

In an attempt to compensate for the erosion of its kisan base, the CSP concentrated its mass activity on the youth movement. In the course of 1941, CSP leaders in Bombay, Maharashtra, U.P. and Bihar were prominent in the organisation of the Rashtra Seva Dal, an autonomous youth volunteer corps[7]. By the end of the year, the CSP was also making efforts to capitalise on militant nationalist disillusionment with the CPI's conversion to a pro-war line. During his detention in Deoli Jail with Communist and terrorist prisoners, Narayan made systematic efforts to counteract Communist influence and win over small revolutionary groups like the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army and the Revolutionary Socialist Party[8]. In view of the CSP's own policy of inaction, however, the effect of these activities on the CPI's following was marginal[9]. Though Narayan also advocated an anti-Communist

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1 Hauser, op. cit., pp. 140-1.

2 Ibid., pp. 147-8.

3 Ranga, op. cit., p. 4.

4 UPPA, 29 Aug. 1941.

5 Ranga, op. cit., p. 19.

6 Ibid., p. 96.

7 BHS, file 800(75)A-VII: CID report, 21 June 1941; Bombay CID, 'Political Who's Who' on Asoka Mehta, N. Gore, Madhu Limaye and S. P. Limaye; and Janata, Delhi, 8 Sept. 1946.

8 Bombay Chronicle, 17 Oct. 1941.

9 Interviews with G. Adhikari and P. C. Joshi, Delhi, July 1973.

alliance with the Forward Bloc, close co-operation between the latter and the CSP was prevented by differences over the relative merits of Gandhi and Bose's leadership and by different attitudes to the Axis powers[1].

The CSP's role in Congress counsels during this period was to advocate unconditional resistance to the war and a mass campaign for independence, as against the Working Committee's willingness to co-operate with Britain in return for the introduction of responsible government at the centre[2]. The resignation of the Congress ministries in November 1939 had removed a major source of friction between the CSP and the Congress leadership. In the same month, the Viceroy informed the India Office that Narayan had 'to some extent swung over to the right-wing and is apparently in Gandhi's confidence'[3]. While eschewing an oppositional role in the AICC, the CSP leadership maintained friendly pressure on Gandhi and the Working Committee, and strongly resisted the constitutionalist trend represented by Rajagopalachari. Though they had consistently refused since the Tripuri Congress to accept offers of official representation on the Working Committee[4], CSP leaders like Narendra Dev, Narayan and Patwardhan regularly attended important Working Committee meetings by invitation[5].

It was indicative of the CSP leadership's pro-Gandhian evolution in recent years, that it now had more in common with Gandhi than with Nehru. Since 1939, the CSP, while decrying Nehru's inclination towards an Anti-Fascist Front, had drawn liberally on Gandhi's pacifist statements in its own anti-war propaganda[6]. At the Congress Working Committee meetings of April 1942, the CSP leaders strongly supported Gandhi's draft resolution,

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1 Bombay Chronicle, 17 Oct. 1941; and interview with J. P. Narayan, New Delhi, May 1973.

2 'Why Congress Must Resist War, A Political and Moral Necessity', Congress Socialist, 7 Oct. 1939.

3 IOR, file L/P&J/1324: telegram from the Governor-General, India, to Secretary of State for India, Nov. 1939.

4 Rajendra Prasad to Narendra Dev, 18 May 1939, Rajendra Prasad Papers; J. Nehru to A. Patwardhan, 11 May 1940; and A. Patwardhan to Maulana Azad, 20 May 1940, JNP.

5 Bombay Chronicle, 7 Oct. 1939 and 5 Aug. 1942.

6 R. M. Lohia, 'Not an Open Question', Congress Socialist, 9 April 1939; and M. R. Masani, 'Will Rajendra Babu Prove Wrong', ibid., 7 Oct. 1939.

rejecting the Cripps proposals and demanding the withdrawal of British troops, against the objections of Nehru and Rajagopalachari[1]. Although the Congress threat of civil disobedience owed far less to left-wing pressure than to British reluctance to concede Congress demands, the adoption of the Quit India resolution by the AICC in August 1942 was hailed by the CSP as a triumph for its policy of alliance with Gandhi[2].

The nature and conduct of the resistance movement launched in August 1942 are beyond the scope of this study. It is worth noting, however, in the context of the CSP's entente with Gandhi, that open differences over the question of non-violence did not prevent close co-operation between CSP and Gandhian leaders in the course of the campaign. The Central Directorate which led the movement after the arrest of the Congress Working Committee was a coalition of Congress Socialists and Gandhians, dominated by J. P. Narayan[3]. The period immediately preceding the AICC session of August 1942 had witnessed close consultations between Gandhi and CSP leaders regarding the form of the proposed movement[4]. While Gandhi later dissociated himself from the violent activity of Narayan's guerrilla bands, he did not contradict the claim made by several CSP leaders that, in his talks with them, he had sanctioned all forms of resistance short of actual killing[5].

In October 1939, Dinkar Mehta, the Communist joint secretary of the CSP, had warned Narayan:

> 'Some of our comrades . . . seem to think that the moment the Congress starts the struggle, we merge in the Congress as the Youth League of 1930. They think that our work ends when the Congress itself takes the path of struggle. That is certainly good nationalism. But socialism demands something more. Even during the course of the struggle, the voice of revolutionary Marxism has to be constantly raised.'[6]

It was indicative of the predominantly nationalist character of the CSP's radicalism, and of the purely formal nature of its

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1 Bombay Chronicle, 5 Aug. 1942.

2 Ibid., 9 Aug. 1942.

3 IOR, file L/P&J/117-C-27-MB: Secret Evidence on which the 'Report on the Disturbances, 1942-43' was Based (New Delhi, 1944), pp. 61 and 128.

4 Ibid., p. 10; and T. Wickenden, Report on the Disturbances, 1942-43 (New Delhi, 1944), pp. 28-9.

5 Secret Evidence on which the 'Report on the Disturbances, 1942-43' was Based, pp. 36 et seq., 46; and Supplementary Secret Evidence, Report on the Disturbances, 1942-43 (New Delhi, 1944), p. 20.

6 BHS, file 800(75)A-VII: D. Mehta to J. P. Narayan, 29 Oct. 1939.

commitment to Marxism, that the fulfilment of its nationalist demand by the Quit India resolution was regarded by its leadership as having made the party redundant. On 8 August 1942, the CSP national executive decided unanimously to dissolve the party, on the ground that its existence would be a hindrance to participation in the impending Congress campaign[1].

In organisational terms, the decision was a delayed recognition of the fact that, except in Bombay and Bihar, the CSP by the end of 1939 had virtually ceased to exist as an independent party organisation. The national executive, which could continue to meet as an informal caucus, therefore had little to lose by formally liquidating the party. The dissolution of the CSP thus drew the final curtain on a process of disintegration which had begun in March 1939. To the extent that this disintegration was precipitated by conflict between the Congress, on the one hand, and the Communists and left-wing militants, on the other, it was the outcome of an identity crisis inherent in the CSP and the radical nationalism that it represented.

The reorganisation of the CSP in 1946, its secession from the Congress in 1948, and its emergence in 1951 as a parliamentary opposition, the Socialist Party of India, belong to a new phase in which the Congress was converting itself from a nationalist movement into a party of government. The revival of the CSP by the 'August Group' would reveal certain similarities with the initial formation of the CSP in 1934. The Congress had returned to constitutional politics after a period of direct action; and the main objective of the new CSP was stated to be the prevention of a compromise with the British and the launching of a final struggle for independence[2]. Most of the party's founding leaders were veterans of 1934[3]; and the organisational impetus for their efforts was provided by the failure of the Congress to assimilate substantial sections of the new youth cadres who had participated in the Quit India movement[4].

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1 Secret Evidence on which the 'Report on the Disturbances, 1942-43' was Based, p. 36 et seq.

2 J. P. Narayan, To All Fighters for Freedom, Third Letter Bombay, 1946), MP.

3 A. Patwardhan, General Secretary, All India CSP, 'Circular No. 1 to Party Members', 2 Oct. 1946, JPP.

4 Idem, 'The New Congressman', Janata, 12 May 1946.

What clearly distinguished the new Socialist Party from its progenitor was the absence of any significant policy differences with the Congress leadership, once national independence had been conceded. With the party's open transition from Marxism to Social Democracy, there was little to distinguish its programme from that of the Nehru Government[1]. Its formation and secession from the Congress arose, not from differences with All India Congress leaders like Gandhi, Nehru or even Patel, with whom its relations were cordial, but from provincial rivalry with Congress factions in Bombay and Bihar, which combined control of the Congress organisation with a monopoly of governmental power[2]. Although the post-independence Socialists claimed to offer a national alternative to the Congress, they were no longer the representatives of an ideological alternative, but the first of several parliamentary opposition parties organised by dissident Congress factions.

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1 Aruna Asaf Ali, The Socialist Party: Its Rejection of Marxism (Delhi, n.d.), CPI Library.

2 Letters from M. R. Masani to Y. Meherally, 22 Feb. 1945, to Khurshedben Naoroji, 16 Feb. 1945, and to Vallabhbhai Patel, 26 May 1947, MP; V. Patel to Masani, 1 June 1947, MP; V. Patel to J. P. Narayan, 23 May 1947, JPP; and Janata, 1 and 23 June and 21 Dec. 1947.

CONCLUSIONS

The radical nationalism which reached its culmination in the CSP had already emerged as an amorphous but recognised left-wing of the Congress by the late 1920's. Its distinguishing features were a firm commitment to complete independence, as against dominion status; an as yet vague perception of class differences and of the need for radical socio-economic reform; a new interest in labour organisation, with a view to utilising strikes as a political weapon; and an as yet embryonic organisational base in the nationalist youth movement and allied terrorist groups. Though the Communists, under instructions from the Comintern, boycotted the Congress between 1929 and 1934, their propaganda had played an important part in the ideological development of the Congress left-wing, while their labour activities had demonstrated the political potential of militant trade unionism.

The radicalisation of the Congress was essentially a response to the inadequacy of Gandhian and Liberal methods of nationalist mobilisation. The process of radicalisation was accelerated by the Congress civil disobedience movements of 1930-33. Mass civil disobedience radicalised the composition of Congress cadres through the rapid entry of youth and ex-terrorist elements. Overlapping with agrarian agitations produced by economic depression, civil disobedience also extended the mainly urban mass base of the Congress left-wing into rural areas. At the same time, the conservatism of official Congress policy, the failure of the Congress leadership to secure even dominion status through Gandhian direct action or through negotiations, and the return of the Congress to parliamentary politics with the revival of the Swaraj Party, convinced frustrated Congress militants of the need for an organised, left-wing opposition party within the Congress. The latter tendency was reflected in the activities of the Roy Group and in the emergence of

provincial organisations like the Bihar and Punjab Socialist Parties and the Bombay Congress Socialist Group. The inauguration of the All India CSP was encouraged by the need of dissident leadership groups for an All India platform during the organisational elections for the Bombay Congress of October 1934, the first plenary session since March 1931.

Although the CSP claimed to reconcile nationalism with revolutionary socialism, it was clear from its inception that the party was essentially a militant nationalist opposition. Its heterogeneous composition was representative of the educated, lower middle-class youth who had entered the Congress in recent years; and its national leadership was dominated by a group of Fabian intellectuals based in Bombay. Its programme, which was vague enough to be acceptable to all militant nationalists, and its organisational structure, which bound it firmly to the Congress, both clearly reflected its subordination of socialism to nationalism. Even during the early months of the party's existence, when its attempt to define itself away from the Congress leadership was most pronounced, the CSP leadership maintained friendly ties with Gandhi and close co-operation with Nehru and other non-party Congress leaders.

Though the CSP's initial conception of its task had concentrated on winning a majority within the Congress, the overwhelming defeat of the party at the Bombay Congress session of 1934 necessitated a re-appraisal of its tactics, producing a new emphasis on the development of its mass contacts outside the Congress. The result was the entry of the CSP into trade union politics, the formation and federation under its auspices of various provincial peasant unions, and its development of united front relations with other left-wing groups. The Lucknow Agreement of April 1936, which provided for Communist membership of the CSP, marked the formation of a broad-based Popular Front, which included the CSP, the CPI, the Royistes and various non-party Congress, labour and peasant leaders. It was clear from the outset, however, that the Indian Popular Front was a fragile alliance in which the CSP's pivotal role derived, not from an

acceptance of its aims or from a strong organisational base, but from its tactical utility as a platform within the Congress.

The re-appraisal of CSP strategy after the Bombay Congress session had also involved the moderation of its oppositional role within the Congress. In an attempt to broaden its appeal for non-party Congressmen, the CSP abandoned its socialist demands on the Congress and confined its opposition to emotive, nationalist issues such as the question of provincial office-acceptance by the Congress. In the organisational sphere, the party compromised its initial disciplined opposition to the extent of sharing Congress offices with non-party Congressmen, first at the provincial and then at the national level. It was indicative of the contradictory nature of the party's role that its decision, under Nehru's influence, to join the Congress Working Committee coincided with its formal espousal of revolutionary Marxism and the opening of its doors to Communists.

The basic contradiction between the CSP's Congress loyalty and its revolutionary rhetoric was soon apparent both in its relations with the CPI and in intra-party conflict. CSP-CPI conflict involved a complex interaction of ideological, organisational and factional rivalry, in which disagreements over the role of the Congress predominated. Beginning with dissension over Congress-labour relations in Bombay, the conflict soon spread to the kisan movement, and eventually to the student movement as well. Meanwhile, friction between the Communist-controlled Andhra CSP and the anti-Communist Bombay leaders of the All India CSP had escalated by the end of 1937 into a struggle between Communist and anti-Communist factions for control of the All India party. Though this struggle resulted in a stalemate, the Communists by 1939 controlled the CSP organisation in several provinces and had a near-majority in its national executive. The CSP's founder-leaders, meanwhile, had responded to the Communist threat by moving rapidly towards a pro-Gandhian position.

The Royist split with the CSP in mid-1937 arose partly from long-standing tensions in the Bombay labour movement,

but mainly from the CSP's refusal to accept M. N. Roy's leadership as the condition for a merger. While the secession of the Royists made little difference to the CSP's mass following, it weakened the party's internal organisation and eased the way for Communist fractions. In view of the chronic and intense rivalry between Congress Socialists, Communists and Royists, the temporary unity and rapid growth of left-wing mass organisations like the AITUC, the AIKS and the AISF during this period rested on an inherently unstable foundation.

The mutual dissensions of left-wing groups were also reflected in their inability to provide a viable alternative leadership to the Congress. The polarisation of the CSP between its pro-Congress and pro-Communist factions made it impossible for the party to play a consistent role within the Congress. The confrontation between Congress ministries and labour and kisan militancy in 1937-39 soon rendered the CSP leadership's mediatory role untenable. Forced to choose between subordination to Gandhi or the Communists, the CSP's founder-leaders vacillated at first and eventually opted for the former. Under attack from the ministerial wing of the Congress and under pressure from its own rank and file, the CSP leadership temporarily joined Subhas Chandra Bose, the Communists and the Royists in a bid for left-wing leadership of the Congress. Nevertheless, the CSP's neutrality at the Tripuri Congress session of March 1939 marked the limits of its opposition to Gandhi and proved decisive in the decline of the Congress left-wing as a whole.

The CSP's participation in the Left Consolidation Committee proved a short-lived and half-hearted attempt to stem the tide of defection to Bose's Forward Bloc, which now challenged the CSP's claim to be the spokesman of the Congress left and won the allegiance of a substantial number of the CSP's anti-Gandhian members. The outbreak of World War II marked the final breakdown of left-wing co-operation, with the Royists moving towards open support of the war effort, the CSP acquiescing in the ambivalent policy of the Congress leadership, and the Forward Bloc and the CPI

launching independent anti-war campaigns. The war, however, was not the cause of left-wing disunity. The inability of the CSP, the CPI and the Forward Bloc to launch a joint anti-war campaign in the period 1939-40, despite agreement on the need for war resistance, was a measure of the intensity of their pre-war rivalries.

The CSP leadership's decision to abandon its initial plan of independent war-resistance marked its final surrender to the Congress leadership and its effective demise as an independent force. The CSP's final break with the Communists in March 1940 completed the process of disintegration which had begun with the formation of the Forward Bloc, with the CSP's three southern units and a substantial section of its following in other provinces splitting away to join the Communist anti-war campaign. By 1941, the CSP leadership's differences with the CPI and the Forward Bloc had also fragmented the kisan and student movements, depriving the CSP of a mass base outside the Congress, while the party's Congress following had merged into Gandhi's individual civil disobedience campaign.

Though the CSP retained a nominal existence until August 1942, its role after 1939 was that of a small, nationalist pressure-group closely allied with Gandhi. The formal dissolution of the party on the eve of the Quit India movement was both a belated recognition of its organisational collapse in most provinces and a tacit admission that there were no longer any major differences between Congress Socialism and the ideological synthesis represented by the partnership of Gandhi and Nehru.

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