Author's Preface

Originally written in Malayalam and serialized in the Deshabhimani Daily, this book was brought out first in four volumes in 1977. A second edition in single volume appeared subsequently. I am glad that through the efforts of Sarvashri B. B. Nayar, K. T. Zacharias, P. K. Sivadas and C. P. Narayanan who translated it into English, this edition is now coming out. My thanks are due to the four translators as well as to Shri Atmanand Bhat and Dr. K. M. N. Menon who edited and prepared the matter for the press and to Smt. M. S. Aleyamma who prepared the Index. It was good of the Social Scientist Press at Trivandrum who undertook the job of printing and publishing the book.

As the reader will see, the volume ends with 15th August 1947. The last few chapters narrate the story of Indian partition creating the two new states of Indian Union and Pakistan. This in its turn culminated in the most extensive slaughter of human beings and destruction of property. The joyous occasion of the victorious end of freedom struggle in other words ended in the biggest tragedy in human history.

Over two decades before I started the serial articles which were subsequently collected and brought out in book form, I had covered almost the same ground in my review of Tendulkar’s eight-volume biography of Mahatma Gandhi. Originally written for and serialized in the New Age Monthly, they were brought together in a volume, entitled The Mahatma and the Ism. Confining itself to a review of the Mahatma’s life, that volume traced the evolution and
final collapse of Gandhism as a philosophy and a programme of political action. That volume ends as the same note as the last few chapters of the present volume. The only difference is that this is not confined, as the Mahatma was, to the evolution of Gandhism. This deals with bourgeois nationalism as a whole and, of course, includes the philosophy and political programme of Gandhism. The two volumes may therefore be considered companion volumes, though this is written with a much broader canvas.

In between the publication of The Mahatma and the Ism and the first edition of this volume in Malayalam, a furious debate raged in the undivided Communist Party of India in which I was naturally an active participant. Among the various notes and articles produced for nearly a decade for purposes of inner-party discussion, I also wrote a fairly large volume under the title Economics and Politics of India's Socialist Pattern. This was a major attempt for my own self-education and for discussions among the members and friends of the Party on various problems connected with the class character and policies of the Congress Government which took over the reins of administration from the British in 1947.

Thus being the basic character of that volume, it naturally contained many things which, after clarification of ideas which led to the formation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), I found no more valid. I therefore rejected the suggestions made by friends that a second edition of that volume be brought out. The material contained in the book, however, was used in writing two smaller volumes brought out in the 1970s. Indian Planning in Crisis was the title of one and Conflicts and Crisis was of the second. The former dealt with the development of the economic crisis of the post-Independence years and the latter bringing up-to-date the political crisis which, in fact, had first made its appearance in 1947. The two smaller volumes thus constituted a new edition of the bigger Economic and Political Crisis of Socialist Pattern. They contained as sharp a critique of the economic and political policies of the Indian bourgeoise after it became the
ruling party as the earlier published volume on the *Mahatma* and the present volume on the *Freedom Struggle* are of the bourgeoisie's role before 1947.

The critique of the philosophy and plan of political action of the Indian bourgeoisie which, under the charismatic personality of Mahatma Gandhi, stood at the head of the freedom movement, contained in the four volumes referred to above is of topical importance today. The leadership of the ruling Congress Party organized last year on a mass scale the celebration of the Centenary of that organization. The pronouncement made on that occasion in December 1985 by the Prime Minister who is also the President of the Congress (I) indicates the deep crisis which has engulfed that party today. While taking pride in the centenary of Congress development, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi played another role—a severe critique of the doings of the party, its prominent leaders and governments headed by them. Did he himself or any other top-ranking leader of that party care to consider why the Congress which stood at the head of freedom struggle for 62 years since its formation came to such a pass during the next 38 years that the President himself has to take up the job of openly criticizing it?

The answer will be found in the three sections in the last chapter, titled 'The Scheme of Partition', 'The Surgical Operation', and 'Leaders of Freedom Struggle in Power'. The Mountbatten plan which was the culmination of the prolonged negotiations undertaken by Mahatma Gandhi and other Congress leaders contained within itself the seeds of all that was painful and humiliating for many Congress leaders including Mahatma Gandhi. That was the bitter fruit of the astute strategy and tactics elaborated by the bourgeois leadership under Mahatma Gandhi—the strategy and tactics of *mass action for negotiations with the British*. It was this that enabled the British rulers to quit India as demanded by the Congress but after performing a cruel surgical operation which brought into being two hostile States.
One argument likely to be advanced in this context is that there is no use of crying over the split milk; the point is, it may be urged, to deal with the present and the future. But are the two things—review of the past, deciding the present and planning the future—so opposed to each other? I would, in fact, humbly plead that the economic and political crisis through which the country has been passing for nearly 39 years and is passing today should be traced to the past—the class character of the bourgeois leadership which stood at the head of the freedom movement. As a matter of fact, the Communist movement in the country, which, of course, was too weak taking the country as a whole, had pointed out as early as in the years of the Quit India struggle that the freedom won on the basis of bargaining with the rulers would not take the country anywhere. After the country attained Independence, the undivided Communist Party to begin with, and the CPI (M) subsequently, persisted in projecting such general policies as alternatives to the policies of the bourgeoisie (ruling as well as Opposition bourgeois parties).

The line of criticism made by the undivided Party to begin with, and by the CPI (M) later, has been explained in the two volumes which I wrote in the 1970s—Indian Planning in Crisis and Conflicts and Crisis. I hope that the story narrated in this volume will give the readers a better idea of the content of the criticism made in the two volumes.