CHAPTER 9

THE LEFT WING AND THE WAR

The interlude between Tripuri Congress and the Ramgarh Congress witnessed the outbreak of the second world war on September 3, 1939. The world had already been divided into two camps, the Allied and the Axis powers. Characterisation of the war gave rise to much confusion and controversy especially among the Left parties. What gradually gained ground was the nationalist approach put forward by the Congress. Following its Madras session (1927) the Congress had been harping on the danger of a second world war. It was apprehended that in the event of a world war, India’s manpower and resources would be utilised by the British imperialists and therefore the Congress declared that India could “be no party to it.”

But all the major Left parties namely the CSP, CPI, LRC and the FB were more or less restless on account of the vacillation and indecision of the Congress leadership on the issue of launching a movement against the British. The Left-wing parties continued propaganda in favour of rejecting any formula of conciliation offered by the Government and spread the idea of relentless fight against imperialism. But they were unable to move the AICC in October to accept their anti-war line. The FB had given a call for a “National Struggle Week” and “War Resistance Day” in September and convened an Anti-Imperialist Conference in October, which, however, went unheeded by the other Left Groups.

The Right-wing saw that the only alternative to an agreement with the Government was a CD, but Gandhi believed that the country was not prepared for a CD, and it would lead to indiscipline and factionalism inside the Congress, culminating into violence and civil war with the Muslim League. By the middle of November 1939 all the Congress ministries had resigned, as directed by the CWC which was
virtually committed to non-cooperation, although several ministers were reluctant to resign.

**ROY’S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE WAR**

Roy’s attitude towards the war evolved from “voluntary support” to “benevolent neutrality” and finally culminated in “unconditional support,” on corresponding changes in the war situation. In the first phase, he welcomed the British declaration of war against Fascist Germany. Later he saw that the war did not break out as he had expected, nor did he find any indication that military operations against Nazi Germany would be undertaken by the western powers. Despite serious setback suffered by Hitler in his design of aggression eastwards, the western powers, Roy observed, did not show any intention of undertaking serious military operations. He was thus led to believe that the war had evidently become a “useless and senseless affair” and had entered a “phony stage.” In this phase while changing his attitude from active support to neutrality, he was still opposed to any sort of war resistance. Alongside, believing that the war would stop before long, he advised the Congress not to “be stampeded into any commitment.” He was clearly opposed to any talk of resignation of the Congress ministries, which, in his opinion, could largely protect elementary civil liberties in India. To him there was no harm in taking advantage of the war by expanding trade and employment; moreover he feared that there might be restrictions on civil liberties and increased economic burden upon the masses in consequence of profiteering during the war. He wanted the Congress ministries to safeguard the interest of the people.

No matter whether the European war continued or not, Roy was convinced that the world as a whole was “entering upon a new era of wars and revolutions” and he, therefore, made a plea to the AICC that the opportunity had come “when India should be able to take up the final struggle for freedom and deal the last blows to her chains of slavery.” Thus, up to this phase he had no basic difference with other Left parties,
the difference remained only in the methods of struggle. In the main, Roy’s strategy in fighting imperialism did not include ministerial resignation. Therefore, when the Congress had withdrawn its ministries from the seven provinces, he cabled to the Congress President, cautioning against ruinous consequences if prestige and emotionalism overwhelmed realistic political considerations. His argument was that neutrality in war “did not necessarily mean withdrawal of Congressmen from office forthwith.” He proceeded from the assumption that “acceptance of office by Congressmen did not mean co-operation with imperialism.” The underlying idea “was to occupy strategic positions,” which could be “utilised for developing the struggle for freedom.”

In a letter (7 November) Roy tried to impress upon Gandhi that by “remaining in office, Congressmen would not be necessarily obliged to co-operate willingly and actively in war-like preparations.” Rather the Congress ministries could serve the very useful purpose of defending the maximum possible civil liberties against the operation of the Defence of India Act. Gandhi sharply reacted that “to remain in office after the discovery of their impotence would have been to court ignominy.” To retain office for the protection of civil liberty would have been to “mistake the wood for the tree.” Gandhi turned down Roy’s contention and retorted that “weakened ministers would have been poor guardian of civil liberty.”

Referring to the press statement of Lord Zetland, the then Secretary of State for India, advising the Congress leaders to descend “from idealism to realism,” Roy cautioned the Congress leaders that all those talks for Dominion Status should stop and the Congress should set itself to the task of winning independence through the capture of power by the organised might of the masses. He remarked that Gandhi’s dream of an honourable settlement had been dashed by Zetland.

While favouring neutral attitude towards the war, the Royists argued that the war had been “precipitated by an accident or a miscalculation,” because it was “not the outcome of a premeditated plan and had broken out owing to some
accidental cause.’ In summary their argument was that until the very last moment, neither party really believed that it would come to an armed conflict. Previous experience made the Nazis confident that in the last moment they would have their way. As a corollary, in the Royist view, the war at this stage was neither an imperialist war nor an anti-fascist war; because of the fact that it was not the culmination of a premediated plan of one imperialist power to weaken another. Nor was it the consequence of a scramble for colonies.

**Diverse Policy of the Left-Wing**

Ever since its formation, the CSP had pursued a strong line on the issue of war. In the policy-resolution adopted at its organising conference in 1934, the Party demanded that the Congress should declare its opposition to India’s participation in a war. Soon after the outbreak of the war, the National Executive of the Party declared (6 September) its attitude similar to that of the CPI. Its uncompromising opposition to India’s participation in the war was elaborated in the War Circulars published in the following three months. The tasks set forth by the Party consisted of (1) an intensive anti-war propaganda, (2) activisation of the Congress Committees for anti-war programme of work, and (3) enrolment of volunteers. The Party wanted an ‘immediate struggle without the formality of declaration of war aims and without negotiations and without bargaining.’ Unlike the Royists, the CSP welcomed the resignation of the Congress ministries and tried to persuade the AICC in October to this effect, which, however, was unheeded to. It declared that if the Congress did not give a call for struggle, the CSP would do so of its own accord and begin satyagraha, but for want of all out response, it decided to wait for a lead from Gandhi. Eager to start a struggle, the communists denigrated the socialists for “swing between the position of the Left nationalist revolt against the bourgeois leadership and a meek surrender before it.”

Narayan tried to justify the Party’s stand and argued that the issue was for “launching a national struggle against im-
perialism,” which needed unity in the Congress. This in his opinion did “not mean surrender to Gandhism.” Despite loyalty to Gandhi, Narayan declared his readiness to “part company with him and take the responsibility of the struggle.” Evidently, the Socialists were not free from inhibitions. Knowing well the “ineffectiveness of the Gandhian technique of struggle,” they believed that no nation-wide struggle was possible “unless Gandhi associated himself with it”; and unless he gave a call the “masses and the classes will not be drawn into it”; as such the socialists did not want “to start the struggle ignoring Gandhi.” They felt more for the need to concentrate on “work for unity” in the Congress. In fact, long before the Ramgarh Congress, the CSP had been agitating for preparation of satyagraha, which had been accepted in principle. But the Party could not reconcile itself with the conditional support offered by the AICC in its Poona Resolution (July, 1940). A conference of the CSP held in conjunction with the AICC meeting at Poona, urged immediate and unconditional resistance to the Poona offer, demanding implementation of the Ramgarh resolution on satyagraha.

After the signing of the Soviet-German Non-Aggression pact on the eve of the war, the CPGB, which always provided guidance to the CPI, suddenly changed its attitude towards Fascism, almost breaking away from the People’s Front.* The British Party characterised the war as imperialist war.† On behalf of the CPI, Joshi explained that the Allies were fighting the Germans, “who had refused to attack the Soviet Union,” while the latter, determined to maintain peace in her own interest, had concluded a Non-Aggression Pact with Germany.‡ The Pact was, however, expected to “end with a pact of real friendship between Soviet Union, Poland and Germany,” but with a “Soviet Poland and a Pepole’s or Soviet Germany.”§ The CPI declared that India could not remain neutral in the conflict and decided to make revolutionary use of the war

* On the outbreak of the war, Maurice Thorez, leader of the French CP, went to Germany to preach Leninist doctrine of revolutionary defeatism, and exhorted the French working class to rise in revolt against the bourgeois government.—M.N. Roy. Men I Met. Bombay, 1968. p.82,

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crisis by resorting to strikes in industries, no-rent and no-tax struggle, culminating into armed insurrection. This time, realising the utility of the slogan of CA as advocated by Roy, the Communists also gave a call to "popularise the CA as the organ of power, meeting as the culmination of triumphant revolution."¹⁰

Whereas the communist parties in Britain and France found themselves in an embarassing role of opposing the war efforts of their national governments, the CPI policy corresponded with a popular sentiment in India, as it coincided with the policies of the Congress and other Left parties. But the CPI was not satisfied with the passive and neutral attitude of the Congress towards the war. It wanted the Congress to make the people "realise the anti-war and democratic significance of the resignation of the ministries." They visualised that with the outbreak of the war and consequent sharpening of all conflicts, Gandhism had "entered into its last and most reactionary phase."¹¹ Unlike their earlier characterisation of the Congress as a bourgeois organisation in early 1930-s, the communists realised that the "Congress was the organ of people's struggle for freedom" and came to the conclusion that the proletariat would fail to become a national political force unless it succeeded in influencing the Congress and to maintain unity. Deprecating Gandhi's "restricted form" of individual satyagraha, the CPI found it necessary to wage "struggle against Gandhism by relentless battle" and "exposure" and also to "isolate and smash its influence" for revolutionary utilisation of the war crisis. Their scheme sought to bring about a revolution modelled after the Russian Party.

Although the Comintern was stressing the need for continuing the "tactics of the united People's Front" in China and the colonial countries,¹² the CPI took a position in November, 1939 to the left both of the Congress and the Comintern. The Party blamed the Congress leadership for seeking to restrict the mass struggle "so as to use it as a weapon of Compromise." It evidently sought to adopt "the technique of the proletariat" and felt the need of a "mass party of the proletariat" for
“political consolidation of the proletariat and consolidation of the existing socialist movement.” Along with maintenance of unity with the Congress the party continued to move on the path of resistance to war by “independent class action by the proletariat.”

In the foregoing perspective it was natural for the communists to decry Roy’s anti-fascist characterisation of the war as an “utter surrender to imperialism”. To them Roy’s slogan of transformation of the war into a civil war based on his contention that the war had broken out not because of the sharpening of imperialist rivalry, but because of an accident, was wrong. While denouncing Roy’s opposition to satyagraha after the outbreak of the war, the Communists declared that they were opposed to satyagraha if led by the CSP and the FB; they seemed to be convinced that mass satyagraha if launched by the Congress, the proletariat and the organised peasantry could transform it into a mass revolutionary movement. Hence they wanted the Congress to launch the mass satyagraha. The continued anti-war activities of the communists affecting the war preparations led to their sporadic arrests, which became more numerous from April 1940, and most of them remained in prison till 1942.

Among the Left-wing leaders, Subhas Bose maintained an outlook quite different from others in regard to foreign affairs. During his presidency of the Congress “he did not approve of any step being taken by the Congress which was anti-German or anti-Japan or anti-Italian.” An admirer both of Lenin and Mussolini, Bose propounded the theory of synthesis between Communism and Fascism. Soon after the outbreak of the war, the FB declared that it was an imperialist war. Without any apparent difference with other Left parties and in conformity with the Haripura resolution, Bose argued that an immediate struggle should be started to take advantage of this “golden opportunity.” When after meeting the Viceroy, Gandhi declared (September 1939) that India should co-operate with British in her peril, the FB reacted that “they did not want Britain to win the war, because only after the defeat and
break-up of the British empire could India hope to be free.”

As a special invitee to the CWC meeting at Wardha, (8 September) Bose gave expression to the view that the “struggle for freedom should begin at once,” and in case the Congress did not take steps, the FB would act as it thought fit. Bose believed that by postponing a final decision on the war issue, Gandhi, Nehru and others “helped the British Government indirectly.” Bose, though welcoming the resignation of the Congress ministries, could not regard it as a “sound tactics.” Like Roy, Bose wanted that Congress ministers “should have stuck to their posts” and should have rather “invited dismissal while discharging their legitimate duties.”

16 Criticising the weak and vacillating attitude of the AICC, which met in October 1939, the FB insisted that the Congress should “declare unequivocally its own war aims,” namely complete independence. It was the Party’s allegation that in order to “resist the mass pressure,” the Congress leaders had “cleverly side-tracked” the issue of Swaraj by raising the issue of CA. In tune with the CPI and CSP leaders, Bose held that the CA could be convened only after the conquest of power. It was Bose’s apprehension that the CA would become a “platform for intrigues and manoeuvres.” Bose anticipated that at the Ramgarh Session the Congress would attempt at a compromise with the British. To frustrate those efforts, he planned to hold an anti-compromise conference of the Left elements in conjunction with the Ramgarh Congress.

Before his suspension, from the Congress Bose had held the leaders guilty of abandoning the objective of independence and “giving up the method of non-cooperation and satyagraha.” For these “two crimes” he proposed to expel them or to force them to withdraw from the Congress, failing which he visualised the rise of “two Congresses.” This threat to form “another Congress,” if the leaders remained aloof from struggle, enraged and alienated the communists, who were one of the constituents of the LCC till this time and had an alliance with Bose for a joint course of action to start from January 26, 1940. But to their disappointment the communists found no serious prepara-
tion on the part of Bose for the struggle. They accused the FB as a "disruptive agency of the bourgeoisie" and remarked that "its words were Left, its practice was anti-struggle, anti-unity, and its aims remained settlement with imperialism."

Following the decisions of the anti-compromise conference at Ramgarh, the FB gave a call to intensify various local struggles by means of "vigorous propaganda" among the masses and by "organising councils of action" in every district, town and village on kisan, labour, student, youth and States' people's fronts; economic demands of different sections were to be linked up with the national struggle.

As it was, the FB could not make any headway to develop the much avowed countrywide struggle. Its position was nothing different from what was maintained by the CSP. All the bluster of the FB ended in criticising Gandhi. As a matter of fact both the parties looked forward to Gandhi to launch a struggle in the pattern of their choice. It therefore seemed to be a negative critique in which the FB viewed that Gandhi was "shrewd enough" to realise that a mass upheaval would endanger the reformist leadership of the Congress and would, therefore, strive for a "peaceful transference of power from the British bourgeoisie to the Indian bourgeoisie." Roy's thesis that imperialism was bound to go into liquidation after the war, was rejected by the FB as "wishful thinking." It exhorted Roy to "shed his personal extraordinariness and come down to the common level of the Congress."^17

**Congress Programme of Satyagraha**

The Ramgarh Congress had not clearly spelt out how the satyagraha programme would be put through. The Left-wing was led to believe that the CD was in the offing, while the Rightists warned that in the absence of loyalty to Gandhi's wishes the CD would end in disaster. Although satyagraha was to be the immediate programme of the Congress, Gandhi was "in no hurry" to start it. Gandhi's position could be gauged from his reproach: "I cannot be hustled into precipitating the struggle. They err grievously who think that I
can ever declare civil disobedience having been driven thereto by the so called leftists.” Though not aligned with any party, Nehru joined the chorus of the Left and pleaded for immediate mass action, while Gandhi, Azad and other Muslim leaders feared how the Muslim League would react to CD, forcing the British to concede to the Congress demands. Contrarily, other members of the CWC including Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Rajagopalachari believed that the Congress was yet to be ready for a CD. They were rather anxious to adhere to a clear-cut programme to sustain the morale of the rank and file of the Congress.

The Muslim League, which had received a jolt from the Ramgarh resolution, hardened its attitude towards the Congress and met at Lahore (March 22-24, 1940) where it declared that the Congress plan of drafting a constitution by a CA was impractical and unacceptable to the minorities. It was in this session that the League advanced its counter-maneuuvre of the demand for a separate state called Pakistan. Up to March 1940 the political tangle in India remained unaffected by the fortunes of the war and nothing suggested that India would be directly involved in the war. But by the middle of April the war took a turn for the worse; the German blitzkrieg broke on Norway and Denmark; in quick succession Holland, Belgium and France capitulated. Hitler declared on June 24 that war in the West was over. One of the earliest consequences of this catastrophe was the reconstitution of the Government in Britain. In May, Chamberlain was replaced by Churchill as Prime Minister and Lord Zetland was succeeded by L.S. Amery as the Secretary of the State for India.

This new turn of the situation gave rise to a mixed reaction among the Congress leaders. Gandhi declared that he did not seek “independence out of Britain’s ruin” and he was prepared to wait till the war subsided.18 Taking the cue from Gandhi, Rajendra Prasad commented that though India had her grievances, he wished that England and France should win the war. But Nehru was ambivalent in his remarks that while India was “completely opposed to the idea of the triumph of
Nazism,” it was no good asking her to come to the “rescue of a tottering imperialism.” Nehru exhorted the people to “dissociate” themselves from the war and “not help in any way.” When the fate of France was settled, the CWC revised its position in June, “favouring a restricted application” of non-violence in opposition to non-violence “without compromise.” Unable to go the full length with Gandhi, the CWC recognised that he should be free to pursue his ideal in his own way and decided to absolve him from leading the Congress. The sudden apathy of the CWC towards pacifism perhaps originated from two psychoses. First, the CWC members saw the possibility not only of invasion, but also of an internal upheaval in a period of transition, which would follow, evidently apprehending—the “collapse of the British rule.” Secondly, they were at odds with Gandhi because of the proposals mooted by a section of Congressmen for the restoration of ministerial governments in the Congress provinces and the entry of the Congressmen in the Central legislature. True to his own position, Gandhi was opposed to the proposal of office acceptance and consequential involvement in the war efforts, his only object being to adhere to the creed of non-violence. Ironically, when the CWC resolved that they could not support Gandhi’s pacifism, the latter decided to sever all connections with the Congress.

The question of the Congress attitude to use military force was not mere a moral issue; because if it condemned the use of violence for national cause, then it would appear impractical for the Congress to co-operate with the Government, in case an opportunity came. In fact, such an opportunity appeared possible when after assuming the office of the Secretary of State for India, L.S. Amery tried for a plan to make a new offer to the Indian politicians. At the end of June, Viceroy Linlithgow had talks with Gandhi and Jinnah, clarifying Britain’s intentions in India; he renewed his offer to them of participation in the Viceroy’s Executive Council. But Gandhi stuck to the Ramgarh resolution for complete independence, while Jinnah refused to accept any proposal which might compromise Pakistan.
Meeting again (July 3 to 7) the CWC made a conditional offer, declaring that if a provisional national Government was constituted at the Centre, the Congress would “throw its full weight into the efforts for the effective organisation of the defence of the country.” This resolution, which was subsequently ratified by the AICC at Poona (July 24), was neither acceptable to the Muslim League nor to the Government. Jinnah was less concerned with the impact of the war than with the fate of the Muslims in India; he accepted the Viceroy’s offer to enter the Executive Council, but Gandhi rejected it.21

All the efforts to reach an agreement having thus failed, the Viceroy made (August 8) three new proposals: (1) an immediate expansion of the Viceroy’s Executive Council by appointing a number of representative Indians; (2) the establishment of a war Advisory Council to consist of representatives of British India and the Indian states to meet at regular intervals; and (3) the promotion of practical steps to arrive at an agreement among Indians in the form which the post-war representative body should take.22

As it was, the Viceroy’s ‘August offer’ had been accepted in principle by the Hindu Mahasabha and the liberals, and not turned down by the Muslim League. The Congress leaders like Nehru, Patel, Azad and Rajagopalachari, who had pinned so much hope on co-operation, now found no way for advance, because of the reluctance of the Government on acceptance of the Poona offer; they resumed their allegiance to Gandhi for leading a CD. “To non-cooperate in every way with the war effort,” was the note of President Azad’s opening speech at the AICC meeting on 15 September. Gandhi spelt out his own ultimatum to the Viceroy—either Indians were to be given the liberty of speech against the war for pacifist reasons or the Congress would resort to Satyagraha.

Nevertheless, Gandhi did “not want to hurl” CD or anything in the face of the Government without making his “meaning clear.” He began correspondence with the Viceroy in which he emphasised that the “immediate issue” was not independence, which broadly meant “free speech.”23 When negotiations
failed, Gandhi started "Individual" C.D., planned in four stages. The Left-wing, other than the Royists, now found an opportunity provided by Gandhi to embark on a much awaited satyagraha. Curiously, the character and objective of the satyagraha could not please the FB; it found no justification to participate in the movement. By June 1941, over twenty thousand Congressmen had courted arrest: but gradually the campaign lost its momentum; and the number of arrests started falling. Gandhi came to realise that the satyagrahis were mostly not opposed to war, because of their lack of faith in non-violence, but also for the reason that they wanted to force the Government to yield to favourable terms. With a sense of reality he found it wise to call off (October 30) the Satyagraha.

ROY'S OPPOSITION TO SATYAGRAHA

To explain Roy's attitude towards the satyagraha, it is necessary to examine the perspective when the CWC welcomed in April 1940 the steps taken by the PCC-s in pursuance of the directions issued by Gandhi, to convert themselves into satyagraha committees for preparing the atmosphere for the struggle, sooner or later. The nature of the action required of the committees was not indicated, other than the fulfilment of the constructive programme laid down by Gandhi, till the middle of May when the CWC would meet again and take stock of preparations made. The CWC also recommended that those members who were "unable to take the prescribed pledge and shoulder the burden of a struggle under the disciplined guidance of the Congress" should "withdraw from their executive positions."

This was the first time when Roy openly revolted against an official decision of the Congress. He saw a palpable conflict between the spirit of the Ramgarh resolution and the spirit of the satyagraha pledge. To him the Ramgarh resolution meant a "declaration of war on British Imperialism," because it was not "conditional upon the working of the constructive programme," as subsequently envisaged by Gandhi. As such
Roy's objection to the programme seemed to be quite pertinent, because spinning should not replace a programme of effective political activity. Nevertheless, he found some "welcome perspective" in the AICC circular which offered a plan of political activity and could embrace practically all active Congress members. But it was prejudiced by another circular that only forty people as "authorised speakers" selected from each district, would be allowed in the prescribed activities of the satyagraha. Roy called it "an unfair and arbitrary discrimination" against willing political workers.²⁴

The members of the LRC all over the country informed their respective PCC members that they were unable to enlist themselves as satyagrahis, for they believed that independence could not be obtained by the prescribed method of the satyagraha, which did not present the perspective of the elimination of the existing authority. The LRC members contended that power could not be voluntarily transferred and it better needed to be captured by the masses; preparation necessary for that would be quite different from those required by satyagraha in the form of plying charkha, harijan uplift etc. They reaffirmed their adherence to the Faizpur resolution and expressed determination to continue as Congressmen without resigning from their seats on the Congress Committees.

Curiously, a section of the LRC headed by V.M. Tarkunde held a different view; they argued that as on previous occasions, failures of and compromise resulting from satyagraha helped the process of radicalisation of the Congress ranks. This time also the satyagraha could provide the opportunity for revolutionary training and organising partial struggles. To avoid isolation from the mainstream of political activities, they were earnest to participate in the satyagraha on economic issue. Despite limitations of satyagraha, Roy was not against a mass CD, if it was ever launched. But to him satyagraha did "not mean mass CD," as it was given a different character. He saw no possibility of a mass CD in the near future. With this in view, he found no possibility of getting isolated from the masses by opposing the idea of satyagraha.
The assumption that when satyagrahis would lose the control of the movement, the revolutionaries would come into operation to prevent compromise and to push on the revolution, was also not convincing to Roy; because he could foresee that it would precipitate a premature clash, having no relevance to the objective condition. With such an attitude it was natural for him to detest "jail-going", which appeared to him as the highest form of satyagraha; in his view the communists and the members of the FB were rushing to jail, not for any struggle, but only for talking about it.

As against satyagraha, Roy showed a different course of action "to win freedom" in the context of international development. The plan of action which he suggested, was the return of Congressmen to office in order to occupy the strategic positions. Because he saw the signs of weakening of the State in consequence of the protracted war. The scheme that he put forward included a transitional slogan that since the war was continuing and the British Government was likely to break down, Indians would have to shoulder the responsibility of governing the country. The focus of his proposal was to repeat the demand for the CA which would ultimately challenge the alien rule and capture the political power. To bring about a revolutionary situation, Roy sought to transform Congress organisation into a cadre party. He did not find the need of forty lakhs of nominal members; it was his firm belief that "no more than a dozen conscious revolutionaries in every district, working with determination and devotion" would suffice. He took Congress to be a "political army" fighting for freedom and for that it was "necessary that those enlisted in that army should know each other," as they were expected "to work and die together." Evidently Roy's plea went unheeded, although the course of events bore testimony to his contention. During the political vacuum caused by resignation of the Congress ministries and subsequent satyagraha movement, the Muslim League eventually made an effective inroad into the political arena and rapidly assumed importance in the eyes of the Government, which had been seeking support from
different parties.

**ANTI FASCIST MOVEMENT OF ROY**

Roy’s attitude towards the war took a more positive turn when Chamberlain was replaced by Churchill as the Prime Minister. The formation of Churchill Cabinet was viewed by Roy as a “departure from the imperialist policy to Fascism.” He took it to be an assertion of Britain’s democratic and progressive forces, which had all along disapproved of the policy of appeasement. It is true that at this turn of the situation the public opinion in Britain asserted its anti-fascist attitude as against the pro-fascist tendency in the public life of Britain. The aim of the war, Churchill had declared, was to “destroy Hitlerism”. At this, Roy seemed to be convinced that “destruction of Fascism would mean a severe blow to the economic system” which constituted the very foundation of imperialism.

Although there had been “no change” in regard to Britain’s policy towards India, Roy chose “to co-operate with the present British Government,” consciously and voluntarily, “with the purpose of fighting Fascism.” The basis of his argument was that ultimately imperialism could not prevent the democratic and progressive forces from taking up the fight. Unlike the Left and Right-wing Roy seems to have been vindicated in his belief by later events that the continuation of the war would “accelerate the process of the liquidation of imperialism, begun with the outbreak of the war.” The very desire to see the end of imperialism, Roy reasoned, “should persuade Indians to contribute to the process of its inevitable liquidation.”

When France fell, two weeks before the anniversary of the French Revolution, the perspective of the war appeared to be more clear to Roy. It was his assumption that the Nazis had dropped, if they really ever had, the plan of invading Britain; but the basic plan was the invasion of the Soviet Union. The subsequent events, which moved rapidly since then, also justified Roy’s assumption.

In the AICC meeting at Poona (July, 1940) Roy insisted on
active participation in the struggle against Fascism without making it conditional upon any declaration on the part of the Government. He adhered to the Ramgarh resolution and reiterated his characteristic plea of convening the CA through local people's councils, for incorporating the fundamental principles of free India's constitution. His suggestion was rejected. Contrarily, the Congress leaders took note of the fact that Britain was in great difficulty and they were confident of ousting the British from power in the country; and it was the overwhelming consensus that if Britain did not accept its demand, the Congress would be free to choose its own course. Although they spoke of "helping the British" in the Poona resolution, the Viceroy, as noted earlier, went back on his August offer, which was spurned by the CWC. Such intransigent attitude, on the part of the Government, aggravated the situation. Taking them on their words, Roy continued to advise the Congress leaders to accept the offer, "irrespective of Imperialist Britain's policy towards us." Unless its policy was recast radically, Roy felt, the Congress was bound to meet political and organisational disaster. To him it was merely a "false sense of prestige" which prevented the Congress leaders from taking a realistic view of the situation. It is true that the leaders were "admittedly ready to accept office even at the Centre." They could do so indeed with some advantage; but by haggling for more, in Roy's words, they had "lost the strategic position."

Roy's impatience to take advantage of the situation became acute when he made a suggestion to the Congress President that all-India demonstrations be organised on July 14, the anniversary day of the French Revolution, in order to express India's sympathy for the French people in distress. He was disappointed at the President's cold reply that no useful purpose would be served by holding such a demonstration. Presumably, the President did not favour the demonstration, which at that moment was bound to be a demonstration of the will of the Congress to participate in the war. Ignoring the President's disapproval, the LRC in different provinces observed the 151st
anniversary of the French Revolution.

ROY'S EXIT FROM THE CONGRESS

The end of the period of "phony war" in Europe caused two divergent developments in India. While the attitude of the Congress leaders gradually stiffened and ultimately culminated in the Quit India movement, the Radicals led by Roy confronted the "primary necessity of assisting the defeat of Fascism at all cost, disregarding all other considerations." This brought about the end of Roy's career in the Congress. He failed to strike a balance between scientific politics and realpolitik. Roy had given another call to the people to observe September 1, 1940, the first anniversary of war, as the Anti-Fascist Day on which the LRC organised meetings and demonstrations all over the country. As it was quite natural, the CWC took disciplinary action immediately against Roy and some of his associates for criticising the basic policy, programme and decisions laid down at the Ramgarh Congress as also for observance of the all-India Anti-Fascist Day. Roy being a primary member of the U.P. provincial Congress, the UPCC in a resolution suspended him from membership of all elective organisations of the Congress.29

Ever since Roy had joined the Congress he was cautious to maintain discipline imposed by the Congress. He had earlier held Bose responsible for violating the party discipline. In his own case though Roy tried to defend his position logically, yet he gave a handle to the CWC to remove a non-conformist from its ranks. In summary, what Roy explained in defence of his action against those charges was that the Ramgarh Congress had prescribed no programme, although he himself submitted a programme of action, which was rejected. Secondly, he claimed to have supported the only political idea of the resolution which condemned the propaganda in favour of Dominion Status; and those who supported it were still holding higher places in the Congress. Thirdly, he had welcomed the decision taken by the CWC. Fourthly, all his writings and statements set forth in his draft resolution submitted to the AICC at Poona were
in no way repugnant to the basic policy of the Congress. Lastly, as for his support to the British Government in the war, he averred that he had advocated India’s participation in the war against Fascism according to the “declared ideas and professed principles of the Congress.” And if support to British Government was a violation of the basic policy of the Congress, then according to his argument, the “charge must be levelled not against” him, but “against the majority” of the CWC.  

In effect, while Roy drifted away from the mainstream of the national movement, the Congress leaders showed little interest in an anti-fascist programme. While the former sought to reach the goal of independence with the defeat of the fascists, culminating into the liquidation of imperialism, the latter impatiently clung to the demand for national self-determination, no matter whether fascism was defeated or not.

Formation of Radical Democratic Party

The issue of suspension of Roy and some of his associates from the Congress figured prominently in the meeting of the Central Executive of the LRC at Meerut in October, 1940: it resolved that all its members immediately resign their executive and elective posts in the Congress. It also decided to transform the LRC into a new party, the Radical Democratic People’s Party. With the formation of the Party, started a new chapter in Roy’s political life. Fairly a good number of Royists who were not prepared to go with him in the wilderness, deserted Roy on the plea of their non-acceptance of his war thesis.

Reaffirming generally its original thesis on the war, the LRC Executive asserted that “in view of subsequent developments, the present war must be characterised as anti-Fascist war.” It declared that the new conclusion about the character of the war was determined by two subsequent events in the process of realignment of international forces: (1) conclusion of Triple Alliance of the fascist Powers representing a revival of the fascist Anti-Comintern International, directed against the Soviet Union; bright prospect of Anglo-Soviet and Soviet-
American rapprochement developing into an anti-fascist alliance, which appeared to be bright; (2) the political eclipse of Chamberlain and the prospect of disintegration of the British Conservative Party, under the impact of the democratic forces in Britain. The Party held its inaugural conference in Bombay on December 20, 1940 with Roy in the chair; it endorsed the Meerut resolution of the LRC and changed the name of the party to Radical Democratic Party (RDP). Alongside, it was also a significant decision of the Party to form a broad-based platform called the National Democratic Union (NDU), to be composed of all the parties and groups opposed to the futile policy of the Congress. While adopting the resolution, the conference appealed to the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Democratic Swaraj Party, the Independent Labour Party and all other democratic and popular bodies to join the proposed Union.

The peculiar political platform that Roy was going to launch with heterogeneous elements, was perhaps intended to serve as a cover of the RDP. Precisely, the Party unlike the Congress, was intended to consist of activist members with a clear-cut ideology, whereas the NDU was sought to be a popular platform to fulfil certain limited goals, such as to help restore the ministries and to foster anti-fascist movement in support of the war. It was also a fact that the antipathy for the Government was "being utilized for fomenting the admiration for fascist" tendencies in India. Referring to "ambiguous and doubtful" attitude of the Congress leaders towards the menace of Fascism, Roy deplored that not only the leaders but the great bulk of Congressmen believed that fascist conquest would not in any way make the position of India worse. In truth, owing to bitter feeling against the British, neither the leaders nor the people who were then keen about a political change seemed to accept the view that destruction of British power in India by an invading army would deliver India to the mercy of that new-comer.

National Democratic Union

Following the inaugural conference of the RDP in Bombay
Roy embarked on mobilising country-wide popular support for the war efforts with a many-sided programme, which included formation of the NDU, a series of provincial conferences of the RDP and its students’ wing and formation of a trade union federation. The idea to launch a national democratic bloc was mooted by Roy after his suspension from the Congress, with a view to “ending the present stalemate” and restoration of responsible Governments in the seven provinces, where the Congress ministries had resigned. Kunwar Anand Singh, Chief Whip of the Congress Party in the U.P. Legislature joined Roy; but his attempt to form a coalition Government in the U.P. fizzled out.

Roy’s tactics to organise the NDU as a united front against Fascism took a formal shape towards the end of December, 1940 in Calcutta, at a motley meeting attended by leaders of several political groups and parties with Sachchidananda Sinha of Patna in the chair. As noted earlier, distinct from a homogeneous party, the NDU was composed of heterogeneous political parties, groups and independent public men, who retained independence over controversial issues. Its objects included (1) defeat of Fascism, (2) realignment of political forces, (3) re-election of the legislatures, (4) establishment of emergency ministries, (5) inclusion of independent popular representatives in the Viceroy’s Executive Council and (6) democratisation of the war efforts.22 Roy was soon able to enlist support of some sections from Liberal Federation, Scheduled Caste Federation, Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha and some former Congressmen. Prominent among those who lined up with Roy in his united democratic front were Periyar E.V. Ramaswami Naicker, leader of the Justice Party in Madras, N.B. Khare, ex-Premier of Central Provinces, Jamnadas Mehta, leader of the Democratic Swaraj Party, Jaipal Singh, President of the Bihar Adibasi Sangh, Mohamed Yunus, ex-Premier of Bihar, Amarendra Nath Chatterjee of the former Jugantar group of Bengal, Dr Satyapal and Shaik Sirajuddin Piracha, ex-members of the Punjab PCC.

While Roy went against the national sentiment by launching
a movement for installation of coalition ministries in the provinces, the attitude of the Government had "not been at all encouraging;" the Government, instead of moving in the direction indicated by the NDU, was rather "still apologetic" towards the nationalists. The All-India Standing Committee of the NDU in its meeting (October, 1941) while welcoming the inclusion of a large number of non-officials in the Viceroy's Executive Council, deplored that the choice in some cases had not been wise, and therefore, resolved to agitate for early reconstruction of the Council.

Evidently, Roy's manoeuvre through the NDU had received very little response from the non-committed people, since the sympathisers of the Congress in the Liberal Federation chose to hold in Calcutta a parallel non-party conference, although with the same object. Because of the association of some elderly conservative public men like Sapru and Jayakar, the non-party conference received more response from the Government than the NDU at the time of reconstitution of the Viceroy's Executive Council. As a result, the NDU "could not achieve its immediate objective" of securing a coalition of non-Congress parties in the provinces for ending the deadlock and to boost up anti-Fascist movement.

The fact that Roy failed to earn credibility of the Government can be gauged from a secret official Note which painted him as a "political adventurer," whose "practical achievement" appeared to be nil. Throughout a devotee of political power and having failed to achieve it, the Note continued, Roy had decided to seek it "by outmanoeuvring" the Congress on the one hand and the British rule at a more distant date, on the other. It remarked that even ignoring his past anti-British activities and distant "revolutionary and essentially communist motives," he could hardly be trusted by the Government to lead a coalition by reconciling the Muslim League with the Hindu Mahasabha, because of his "vanity and personal arrogance." The Note considered it to be "unwise to provide Roy with support" since he "failed to find some common basis, other than distrust of the Congress, among.
those antagonistic parties with the help of which Roy sought to form coalition.” Moreover the Government had another reason to refuse support to Roy, as the Note also took into consideration the small circulation of Roy’s *Independent India* and the number of whole-time workers being within two hundred among a total of fifteen hundred members, which was taken to be half the strength of the CPI.

In any case, regardless of the precise attitude of the Government, Roy found no favour from “the dominant European minority” who were rather favourably disposed to the Congress. It was quite natural for the European groups in the administration and also in the Viceroy’s Executive Council to prefer coming to terms with liberal or conservative elements, rather than with the confirmed radical elements. In truth, the British big business in its own interest could scarcely afford to alienate the Indian bourgeoisie especially at this juncture.

**Impact on Trade Union Movement**

Following the outbreak of the war, there had been growing differences of opinion among the leaders of the trade union movement in India about the character of the war. The AITUC, which after two splits had assumed the shape of a united central organisation, could not take a clear and firm stand in its attitude towards the war. One section in the AITUC represented by the Royists and some nationalist leaders like Jamnadas Mehta, regarded the war as an anti-Fascist war and advocated unreserved co-operation with the war efforts. On the other side were the communists, who in the first two years of the war, maintained that it was an imperialist war and advocated active resistance to it. In between these two sections remained a large section of nationalists who were guided by the postures of Congress. N. M. Joshi, who was then under the influence of the main nationalist trend, maintained a neutral position, amounting neither to co-operation nor to resistance in the war efforts.

The question of India’s participation in the war arose in the
Bombay session of the AITUC in November, 1940. The majority of the delegates favoured endorsement of the war-resistance policy of the Congress. After Nazi attack on the USSR, Roy made a vigorous attempt in the Council meeting of the AITUC in the first week of July 1941 at Nagpur, urging the AITUC to declare that it was no longer possible to hold that this was an imperialist war, and, therefore, the Indian working class could no longer remain neutral or be indifferent to its outcome. He stressed that Indian workers could take their share of that duty by fully co-operating with the British war efforts, so that increased pressures on other fronts might prevent the Nazi hordes from concentrating all their power on the USSR. Explaining the CSP position, Purushottam Trikumdas declared that in spite of sympathy for the Soviet Union, no help could be given, as the Government did not fulfil the conditions of the Congress. The communist position was summed up in a resolution, saying that there had not been any change in the character of the war between Germany and England by which the country was affected. True to its line, the CPI had called for a "political general strike" and organised in March 1940 a strike in the textile industry in Bombay involving 1,50,000 workers. The nationalist view-point was voiced by Mrinalkanti Bose, R. S. Ruikar and N. M. Joshi; it obviously coincided with the view-points of the CPI and the CSP.

As a counterblast to the insistence of the members of the RDP favouring support to the war, V. R. Kalappa, President of the AITUC, held earlier that the Russo-German war was "not a conflict between democracy and dictatorship" and Russia was fighting not to liberate India, but "for her own existence" and to retain her "newly acquired territories." The General Council of the AITUC endorsed the decision of the Bombay conference. In protest, the RDP members of the AITUC, in collaboration with a section of the trade unionists who were not connected with the AITUC, formed a Provisional Anti-Fascist Trade Union Council and decided to form a central organisation, which would give the Indian working class the "correct lead in this fateful moment." M. N. Roy,
V. B. Karnik, Maniben Kara and G. H. Kale resigned their membership of the General Council of the AITUC in November. Meanwhile, a number of leading trade unionists including Jamnadas Mehta, Aftab Ali, Manek Homi, M. A. Khan, J. N. Mitra, M. R. Shetty and others issued an appeal to different trade unions to join the central organisation, which was in the offing. The Anti-Fascist Trade Union Conference, held at Lahore towards the end of November, 1941 with Roy in the chair, declared its determination to rally Indian labour on the side of progress and sent fraternal greetings to the Soviet Union, pledging itself to stand by them. The conference decided to form a new central organisation called the Indian Federation of Labour.

THE INTERREGNUM BETWEEN SATYAGRAHA AND QUIT INDIA

The limited individual satyagraha movement, as noted earlier, had failed to create an impact on the country despite the courting of arrest by no less than twenty thousand Congressmen. Some Congress leaders like Dr Satya Pal of the Punjab and K. M. Munshi of Bombay left the party, because of the negative approach of the Congress. From September 1941 a move was afoot in the Congress under the behest of C. Rajagopalachari and followed by Asaf Ali, Bhulabhai Desai and S. Satyamurty, the deputy leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party to bring the party back to the "parliamentary programme" in the central as well as the provincial legislatures. A move was brewing up to revive the Swarajya Party. But Gandhi rejected the idea and admitted that while the Congress was becoming demoralised by the unproductive CD, a return to "parliamentary programme" would lead to a worse demoralisation.34

By the end of 1941 the war situation had taken a new turn following Germany's attack (June 1941) on the Soviet Union. Japan had made her position secure in Indo-China and she was preparing for a final plunge in the world war. On the eve of the Pearl Harbour incident (December 7, 1941) and consequent U.S. participation in the war on the Allied side, the British
Government made a conciliatory gesture by setting free the CP prisoners, including Nehru and Azad. The “internal crisis” within the Congress had been somehow resolved in 1940 by taking recourse to the satyagraha, but it “took shape again” when Gandhi insisted on complete non-violence.\footnote{Paradoxically, the dominating section led by Nehru and Azad, offering “conditional support,” continued their “dual policy,” by reiterating that only a free and independent India could undertake the defence of the country. Gandhi’s difference with the Congress leaders figured around pacifism, leading to his decision to be relieved again of the leadership of the Congress.}

The revolt against Gandhi’s pacifism was more pronounced in the policy formulated by Rajagopalachari, but it was rejected by the CWC. The issue of his disagreement with Gandhi led to “a parting of the ways,” as it centred around the question of co-operation with the British war-effort. Maintaining an equi-distance both from Gandhi and his opponents led by Nehru and Azad on war issue, Rajagopalachari insisted that the Congress “must ever be ready for a settlement” to take up responsibility. Thus, if the Japanese invaders came they would have found the defenders divided into more than “two camps.” The creed of non-violence, Rajagopalachari believed, was not adopted either wholly or partly by the Congress. “The Gandhi Nehru combination,” he correctly held, “was a contradiction of any claim of pacifism.” Indeed, theory of neutrality had also no firm ground in the international conflict. No “justifiable claim to moral neutrality” in the post-war parleys eulogising the heroic deeds of Indian army and Indian workers, Rajagopalachari envisioned, would be to bring the Congress into “contempt and ridicule.”\footnote{He made a prophesy that the Congress circles would seek “relief in the wishful thought” that soon the war would be over, that the present deadlock would then “vanish as if by magic” and that an “appeal to popular opinion through elections” would settle all issues and “restore” the Congress leaders to their “natural positions of influence.” Rajagopalachari’s prophesy largely came true after a few years.}

Meanwhile, of the other parties the Muslim League
denounced Gandhi's campaign as an attempt to take advantage of the war to force the Congress demand on the Government. Ever since the first months of the war, the League had consistently declared its willingness to co-operate in the war effort; but it was more concerned with the future partition of India, than with her immediate protection from the Japanese invasion. Thus the League, in practice, followed the "same bare track on non-co-operation" in the war effort "as the Congress under Gandhi's." The Hindu Mahasabha, maintaining its militant and communal character, denounced the satyagraha campaign and declared its willingness to support the war effort, on condition that the Government would not accept any proposal for partition.

Soon after the fall of Pearl Harbour, the Viceroy made an appeal for a united national front, expecting that the conflicting Indian parties would reconcile among themselves. But the reaction was similar to that of 1940, manifesting greater bitterness and frustration. Four days after the fall of Rangoon, Churchill announced on March 11, 1942 that Sir Stafford Cripps, who had become a member of the War Cabinet, would proceed to India, to explain the new Draft Declaration of the British policy and to satisfy himself upon the spot, by personal consultation. After a couple of weeks' parley Cripps' negotiations with the Indian leaders broke down. All the parties rejected the British proposals for post-war constitution making, but on different grounds. Nevertheless, the Congress was "prepared to assume responsibility" of the Government, provided it was "a Cabinet government with full power," leaving aside the question of the proposed division of the Defence Department.

Rajagopalachari, who had already taken a moderate line came to realise that it was the Hindu-Muslim discord which stood in the way of creation of a front against Japan. Consequent on failure of Cripps' mission, he tried to prevail upon the AICC (April 29-May 2) to accept Pakistan in principle, in order to forge a unity between the Congress and the League. Secondly, echoing Roy he proposed restoration of responsible Governments in the provinces. The AICC rejected his first
proposal to come to terms with the League by an overwhelming majority, while the second one was withdrawn. And he was compelled to resign from the party. Like Roy, Rajagopalachari also held that withdrawal of Congress from the Government of eight provinces and the failure of Cripps' mission were the "major political disasters of India." He could not acquit the Congress of the "charge of not displaying the required ability for successful negotiation." While appreciating the spirit of the British Government for their taking "the risk of having to transfer power during the war, besides committing themselves to a declaration of India's freedom," he firmly maintained that "the rejection on our part betrayed a lamentable lack of that same quality." He seems to be vindicated in his opinion that "it was a great mistake to have broken off negotiations" when the British Government was in its "most yielding mood."

Ironically, Roy's views were shared by Rajagopalachari, but in a different vein. While Roy intended to substitute older leaders by radical elements, Rajagopalachari sought to pursue his formula under the existing leadership of the Congress and the League.

**Change of CPI Policy on War**

Following the German attack on the Soviet Union (June 22, 1941) the CPGB immediately changed its political line, offering co-operation in the war. There was a "considerable measure of disagreement" among the Indian communists, particularly between those in jail and those outside. In Deoli detention camp a group of communists said, "Roy is vindicated;" while others led by B.L. Bharaadwaj said, "we can help Russia only by working for a revolution in India." To understand the hesitant attitude in the war policy of the CPI, it is necessary to see the perspective which loomed large before its Politburo in the changed context of the situation. Initially, the German invasion on the Soviet land did not indicate to the Politburo any change in the character of the war, nor any change in the international relations, despite Britain's avowed support to the Soviet Union. Its reaction to the event was revealed
in its natural argument that the "only war" in which the Indian people could help in the "just war," which the Soviet Union was waging against the Germans, was "by fighting all the more vigorously for their own emancipation from the imperialist yoke." The attitude towards the British Government and its imperialist war, declared the CPI, "remains what it was." Following this view the party decided to "continue nay, intensify" its struggle "against both," imperialism and Nazism. It found no reason to change its policy "until a people's Government which unequivocally renounces imperialist aims" came to power. Briefly, the CPI campaign in support of Soviet Union had to be coupled with the exposure of imperialist hypocrisy with the intensification of struggle for independence.

For six months the CPI followed the policy of the "dual front," which consisted in giving all possible moral support to the Soviet, while characterising Britain's war against the common enemy as imperialistic. Presumably, the policy of "dual front," as suggested by the intelligence reports, was largely instilled by the CSP. The anti-war attitude of the CSP persisted amidst "much meditation over a change and wrangling in the Deoli Camp and outside" till some documents were received from the CPGB. The Politburo before long admitted the mistakes of the party because of its "blind bourgeois-nationalist hatred of British imperialist Government," which was now in the same progressive camp with the Soviet Union. The communist detenues of Deoli and other places in a statement called "A note from Jail Comrades," echoed Roy that "it was after the installation of the Churchill Government that serious attempts were made for a rapprochement" with the Soviet Union. Declaring the war as People's war, they also affirmed Roy's line for resumption of ministries. No wonder that P. C. Joshi, who in his "Foreword to Freedom," while demanding (in early 1942) the establishment of a national Government consisting of all parties including the Congress and the League, excluded Roy's RDP, CSP and the FB. The CPI had also welcomed the Cripps' proposal, but unlike Roy, urged Congress and the
League to form a national Government for the country's defence. The CPI Politburo frankly admitted (December, 1941) that the Party had pursued a "wrong policy" in the present phase and "repeated parrot-like phrases" without realising "the blunt fact that the war was already a People's war"; because immediately after the Soviet Union was attacked by Germany, the character of the imperialist war was "fundamentally transformed." 44

Notwithstanding the close proximity with the Royist line, the CPI continued to characterise Roy as an "agent of British imperialism" engaged in spreading "disruption in the ranks of labour and left nationalists by use of radical slogans." The CPI also repudiated "Nehruism" for subservience to "Gandhian inactivity and sabotage of mass struggle," because of the Congress policy of "freedom first and then we will fight for the Soviet." The observation of a section of the CPI that the draft political resolution of the party "verged on Royism", was voiced in the first Congress of the Party held in the last week of May 1943 at Bombay. 45

Meanwhile, before the Quit India Movement was launched, P. C. Joshi had made an appeal to the "British democrats" not to get confused by "Gandhian pacifism", and suggested that they should rely on the leadership of Nehru and Azad, whom he considered as "completely anti-Fascist." The communists perhaps felt that Gandhi's pacifism might go in favour of the Axis powers. Though after the arrest of Gandhi on the eve of Quit India movement the CPI began a campaign for Gandhi's release, previously it sought to isolate Gandhi from Nehru and Azad in order to prevent passage of the Quit India resolution. In the crucial meeting of the AICC on the eve of the August Movement, the CPI members tried in vain to amend the resolution by stating that the "proposed struggle would disrupt and weaken the nation." They argued that the real struggle was the "struggle for the unity of the country to meet the Fascist danger."

When the CPI changed its war policy six months after the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the CSP accused the
CPI for abandoning its anti-war policy and observed that during the period when the German-Soviet Pact worked well, the communists in India found it necessary not to do anything which might jeopardise the pact. The socialists held that when Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, the CPI was "per-turbed at the news," believing that "Churchill was instrumental in provoking Hitler to declare war against Russia." The CSP continued to maintain that Russia's becoming a victim of German aggression would "not change the character of the war," as Russia was "fighting a nationalistic war" in her own interest.46 The wrath and denunciation of the CSP fell more upon the Royists for their attempt to characterise the war as a clash between democracy and Fascism; the CSP called it "charlatanism or stupidity."

As for its own position in regard to the changed context of the war, the CSP flatly declared that the war "in no sense" could be regarded as a people's war and it continued to be an imperialist war in spite of joining of Russia with the Allies. In sum, the argument of the Party was that it could become a people's war, had the national liberation movement conducted by subject peoples rose in revolt against the bourgeoisie, acting on the slogan: "turn the imperialist war into a civil war." Though opposed to the Poona offer, the CSP had no objection to negotiations with Cripps. In the Allahabad meeting of the AICC (May 1942) CSP members lent maximum support to Gandhi's draft resolution for an immediate show-down, which was not even acceptable to Nehru. Similar to Bose's view, the main focus of the CSP line was that Nehru's attitude would "lead to abject and unconditional co-operation with British machinery which must collapse." Thus, co-operation with Britain, was considered by the CSP as an invitation to Japan. This view was further elaborated by the CSP leader Narendra Deva by refusing to accept the plea that the "war was one and indivisible." To him the aims of Russia and China were not identical with those of Britain and America. Echoing Gandhi, Narendra Deva declared, "let the British go, leaving the Indians to their fate." Clearly he
was "not interested in defeating Hitlerite Germany." His interest was "more in war aims and peace aims," which the Congress wanted to know from the British at the very outset of the war.

**RDP and the Congress**

The Nazi declaration of war against the Soviet Union seemed to bear testimony to Roy's analysis of international politics. Roy had foreseen that with the domination of the whole of Europe, "The Fascists were sure to turn upon the base of revolution." He consistently maintained that "the Soviet would be a decisive factor in the war against Fascism." With this perspective, he made an appeal to the rank and file Congressmen during pendency of the Quit India resolution, and said that the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union should influence India's relation to the war. When the British Government was allied with the Soviet Union in the fight against the common enemy, he reasoned, "you cannot refuse to co-operate with the former" and yet be seriously "concerned with the defence of the latter." With the design presumably to bring about a division among the Congressmen, he tried to impress upon them that the satyagraha movement had failed, and the leadership had failed the people in a most critical moment; and although the Congress policy had not succeeded in compelling the Government to accept the demand for a national Government, some sort of settlement might still take place. He criticised the "impractical and questionable" policy of the Congress and concluded that it was "distracted from the straight path to freedom by pseudo-moral considerations"; Roy probably tried to entice the Congressmen to the ranks of the RDP. But this attempt fell through, Congressmen turned a deaf year to his call.

Although never recognised by the Comintern, the RDP sent a message to the Soviet Union in July, declaring solidarity and it pledged itself to strengthen the international anti-Fascist people's front. In a critique it referred to the unconcerned and injurious policy adopted by the Congress, and complained about the erroneous stand taken from time to time by the CPI.
which, despite Stalin's declaration that the people of England and the Soviet Union were fighting a common foe with a common purpose, had been organising strikes in industries, with the belief that there were two wars, being waged with different objects. Government Intelligence was not perhaps wrong that behind Roy's admiration for the Soviet tactics remained his belief that the Comintern would approve of his anti-Fascist line and would recognise it as the correct line for the colonial people's national struggle. He had obviously the desire to "rehabilitate" himself in the Comintern. But all his hopes were belied; he never received any response from the Soviet leaders; rather the official communists were systematically favoured with communications from the Comintern.

Similarly the RDP sent another message to the "Friends of India in Britain", in the form of an appeal signed by Roy in March, 1942; the message expressed pleasure for the announcement of Britain's intention to give freedom to India. Declaring himself as a communist and "not an apologist of the Government," Roy sounded a note of caution that in view of the Japanese invasion, it would be dangerous to transfer power to the Congress which had refused to collaborate in the war against Fascism. What came out was his vain attempt to impress upon the British that the national Government, which was proposed to be formed, should not be composed of "politically bankrupt, popular heroes."

While anticipating that the Cripps' mission "was bound to fail", the RDP had misgivings about what might happen should the talks end in war-resisters gaining control of the country. In an open letter to Cripps, the RDP was quick to indicate an alternative approach to the problem of enlisting popular support for war efforts. It tried to convince Cripps that the Central Government should be reshuffled along the lines of his offer; it was natural for the Party to argue that power be entrusted to those who had all along realised that the fate of India was inseparably tied upon with the fate of the nations engaged in the war against Fascism.
Following the abortive Cripps’ mission, the RDP began to demand formal dissolution of the provincial legislatures, which had been made defunct by the majority party. In summary, the Party’s proposal was that pending general election after the war, provincial administration be carried on by “Emergency Ministries”, composed of anti-Fascist elements, according to the proposed principles which would be applicable to the National Government at the Centre. Curiously, before the negotiations over Cripps’ proposals failed, Roy had made an appeal to Nehru, whom he pictured as the “natural leader of the anti-Fascist forces in the country”, to reconsider the situation and avert the catastrophe. Roy made this last appeal to Nehru, because he perhaps, still nourished the illusion that Nehru “alone could yet undo the harm” that had been done by an “ill advised policy”, with which he had been associating himself “against his better judgement.” Roy was not wrong in his assessment of Nehru who had indeed by this time become anxious to take an active part against the Axis powers. What Roy realised was that the Cripps’ offer had “made far-reaching concessions to Indian democracy.” But he was disappointed at the impediments created by the two major parties in the way of Indian democracy, asserting themselves for gaining the right of self-determination offered by “benighted Imperialism”; in his view they had thus obstructed the “process of the liquidation of Imperialism.”

QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

The Congress under Gandhi’s leadership pursued the policy of non-cooperation with war efforts; this policy culminated in the “Quit India” resolution and the August movement. Except the Royists and the communists the entire Left joined the August Movement. Indeed, there was an upsurge of nationalism, and the August Movement spread in many parts of the country. But the masses, like some of the members of the CWC had no clear idea of the movement; people thought that Gandhi “would bring freedom for India by some magic or superhuman method.” With the “scoring success” of Germany
in the first phase of the war, Bose was convinced that Britain would lose the war and the empire would break up. He was confident that if India played her part in the war against Britain and collaborated with the Axis powers, India would win independence. To supplement from outside the struggle going on at home, Bose had left India in January, 1941. While in Germany he assured his countrymen that the Axis powers wanted “to see India fully independent”. In his broadcasts, Bose appealed to the Indian leaders to reject the Cripps’ proposal of compromise. Later he boosted up the Quit India movement and appealed to his friends in India, especially to Sahajana-nda Saraswati, the peasant leader, to come forward and strengthen the movement in the last phase of the fight.

Unable to prevent the Congress from taking to a “suicidal” course, the CPI in an apologetic manner tried to interpret that the Congress had not actually given the call for mass struggle. The Party held the Government responsible for provoking anarchy and hooliganism in the country and demanded forthwith release of the national leaders. Meeting in September, the CC of the Party demanded release of the Congress leaders, and no more characterised the movement as hooliganism. Without, however, lending any support to the movement, the CC declared that the path along which the present “national upsurge” was directed, was one of “national salvation and freedom.” The communists pointed out that despite destruction of the means of war efforts leading to deadlock and anarchy, no rapid victory as was expected by Sardar Patel, had been won. In tune with Roy, the CPI asserted that with the Fascist invader at the door, destruction of national defence could not lead to the goal of national freedom.

ROY ON QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

When the Wardha meeting of the CWC adopted Gandhi’s Quit India resolution in July for ratification of the AICC, Roy referred to the preamble of the resolution and said that as a “concession” to Nehru, Gandhi had allowed the preamble which
could be paraded as the anti-Fascist sympathy of the Congress. But in effect, the preamble, as Roy put it, was "cancelled by the operative part" of the resolution, by which, Gandhi and the Congress would be rendering a great service to the Axis cause by starting a CD at this hour of peril. It was thus natural for him to conclude that the absence of anti-Fascist convictions and presence of pro-Fascist sympathies among the Congress leaders had resulted in abandoning the erstwhile Congress policy of non-embarrassment of the Allies.

It seems that Roy was determined to oppose and expose the Quit India resolution. He opined that the resolution was primarily "a manifesto to the American public," in order to invoke American pressure for withdrawal of the British from India. This belief led him further to conclude that unfavourable reception of the resolution in America had proved that the Congress leaders had "overplayed their hand." From various currents and cross-currents of speeches and utterances of the Congress leaders, appearing often to be contradictory to one another, Roy seemed to have reasonable ground to say that the modification of the Congress demand by agreeing to the presence of Anglo-American armed forces in India, was a "manoeuvring" of the Congress to remain neutral in the war; and battles might be fought on the Indian soil, but it would not be India's war, because of her avowed neutrality. It was also natural for Roy to characterise this move as "nationalist adventurism." He went to the extent of apprehending the danger of a puppet Government in India, similar to the regime set up by Petain in France after the German troops overran the whole of France. Later Bose's emigre Azad Hind Government confirmed Roy's apprehension.

Following the arrest of the Congress leaders, the RDP obviously did neither approve of the Quit India Movement nor did condemn the Government's action; it declared that in view of the anti-war policy adopted by the Congress during the last two and half years and its plan of throwing the country into anarchy when the Japanese appeared on the frontiers of India, preventive measures had become "inevitable," although the measures-
would not by themselves improve the situation, but might cause "further deterioration," unless the Government followed a positive policy to convince the people that the war was being fought in their interest. Thus, along with disapproval of the movement, the Party tried to put forward a positive demand for implementing the Cripps' offer which had been reaffirmed by the Government just before the arrest of the leaders.

Even long after the Quit India movement was launched, Royist clung to the hope that Nehru could still "save the situation." Because, they saw that it was Nehru who showed reluctance to launch the movement, but ultimately yielded to Gandhi. V. M. Tarkunde, the Secretary of the Maharashtra branch of the RDP, addressed a letter to Nehru in prison, appealing to him to negotiate with the Viceroy on the basis of Cripps' proposal for ending the deadlock.54 Eulogising Nehru's "consistent anti-fascist convictions," Tarkunde proceeded on the assumption that Nehru was pained by the position of the country, where bulk of the middle class intelligentsia was anti-war, masses of peasants and workers were apathetic, while the Axis powers were threatening at the borderlands. youths were doing their best to dislocate communication and disorganise the war efforts with the support of and according to the instructions by the Axis radios. On this assumption, the support to the war, as Tarkunde explained, was a matter of self-help against Fascist domination. He reminded how Nehru had nearly accepted the principle of self-determination of the provinces during the negotiations with Cripps. Tarkunde pleaded that on the basis of the same, cooperation of Jinnah could be secured to form a provisional war-time Government, composed of Nehru, Jinnah, Rajagopalachari, Roy, Ambedkar and others, without insisting on a condition precedent to the cooperation in the war. He tried to assure that the Viceroy's power of veto "need not deter us," because a mere "threat to resign will set matters right." Tarkunde's appeal went in vain; he mistook Nehru's anti-Fascist stance for opposition to the Quit India movement.55

Early in December 1942, Roy made a forecast that the
“end of the war is in sight.” Briefly, the theme of his assumption was that in consequence of the war, imperialism as a system of exploiting backward countries “through the agency of exported surplus capital will disappear.” This analysis led him to conclude that as soon as the war was over, political power would be transferred to the Indians. The fortunes of the war had then just begun to swing in favour of the United Nations. With this backdrop, the RDP in its first conference at Lucknow in the last week of December 1942, formulated a plan of action with regard to the post-war developments in India. What the Party came to realise was that while British imperialism “was dying away during the turmoil of this war,” no organised social force would be left in Britain, after the termination of the war, which could oppose the grant of freedom to the Indian people.

While convinced of “gradual extinction” of imperialism, Roy did not fail to notice that a “grave danger,” represented by the Indian bourgeoisie, which was “stepping into the shoes of British Imperialism,” was likely to appear after the war. He was correct in his anticipation that Britain would not necessarily be averse to come to an understanding with the erstwhile opponents of the war. It was indeed a remarkable foresight, which was vindicated by the course of events in the years to come, when the Congress came to power. The Lucknow Conference of the RDP placed before its members a triple programme: (1) to hold people’s conventions and to organise people’s committees on the basis of the eighteen fundamental principles of the constitution of free India formulated by the Party; (2) to organise co-operative societies of consumers and producers; and (3) to develop the trade union movement both by extending the field of activity and improving the quality of work.

It is necessary to note here that from this time there had been a major shift in Roy’s tactics and strategy of Indian Revolution. Before he broke away from the Congress, he had been advocating Radical Nationalism, the underlying idea of which was to bring about radical changes in the social structure
of the country. Radical Nationalism was seemingly an interchangeable theoretical position of National Democratic Revolution. By this time the Royists came to believe that Nationalism had outlived its progressive role in India. With this in view, they concluded that National Democratic Revolution was "no longer appropriate." The new focus of their argument was that the revolution, which must be brought about by the workers and the peasants of India, was to be motivated more by social programme than mere national freedom. For the programme of combating the internal vested interests and to lead the exploited masses to political power and economic progress, the Party abandoned the erstwhile theoretical position and chose to rename it as Radical Democratic Revolution. To explain this new position, it is necessary to mention here that by this time Roy had given up the idea of proletarian dictatorship, but at the same time he was opposed to parliamentary democracy. He, however, differentiated a "genuinely democratic government" from an ordinary capitalist state. The foundation of the state conceived by Roy would not be atomised individuals, but organised units through which the people would exercise their right.

**People's Plan and Constitutional Framework of Roy**

As already mentioned, it was Roy's assumption that "within a few years of the termination of the war," certain constitutional changes, "involving the transfer of power" were "bound to take place"; accordingly the RDP decided as early as September 1943 to participate in the elections after the war, to prevent a "reactionary nationalist capitalist state replacing the disappearing British imperialist state." Roy's assumption proved correct, but his party failed to gather necessary strength to prevent the nationalists from coming to power. In the post-war perspective of "struggle between the Indian vested interests and the forces of Indian democracy," the party resolved to "educate the masses politically" and to form people's committees, which distinct from the units of the party, were conceived as "potential constituent units of a people's state and as an expression of the people's will to power."
To give a stable organisational foundation to the people's committees, Roy and his party envisaged that besides the main function of popularising the fundamental principles of the constitution and stimulating the demand for universal adult suffrage, the committees would be directed to encourage constructive activities, such as formation of co-operative societies, participation in local self government and rural development and to raise educational and cultural level of the locality. Accordingly, the Party organised numerous people's conventions throughout the country during the years following its Lucknow Conference.

Alongside, Roy's strong feeling with active interests in bringing about a renaissance in India were well manifest in the flag of the RDP. Initially for the first two years, the flag of the RDP was the hammer and sickle, similar to that of the communists. Following a prolonged debate in its ranks, the RDP finally chose in 1944 the flaming torch as its emblem in order to symbolise the distinctive nature of its line which was based, as claimed by Roy, on enlightenment. Evidently, Roy intended to blaze a new trail with a new light and philosophy.58

Consistent with his new theoretical framework as mentioned earlier, Roy from now on started demanding for a people's government as against the "vague conception of a national government." His scheme was for a people's government based on the people's committees, which would be the instruments for organising the electorate to the constituent assembly. Neither an "atomised electorate" nor a formally democratic government, was considered by Roy to be necessarily a people's government. Concretely, as he put it, an "organised electorate" could alone create the guarantee for "real democratic freedom." The first stage was to culminate into a national people's convention in order to endorse the fundamental principles of the future constitution; while the second stage was to be marked by the establishment of a provisional people's government commanding support of the majority through the people's committees; the Government of India Act 1935 having poten-

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The text continues on the next page.
tially broken down, it was to be replaced by a workable Constitution. 54

It is significant that Roy from this time substituted his characteristic slogan of CA by People’s Committees. This can perhaps be explained with reference to his realisation that power was going to be transferred almost voluntarily. He no more held out his scheme of CA as an instrument for seizure of power. To cope with the mighty Congress, he held forth the idea of people’s committees which would oust the Congress at the local level and would demand a provisional government so as to frame the constitution on the basis of his draft that he was going to prepare in the following year.

Soon afterward, as a counter-move against the “fast growing dangerous tendencies” inherent in the drive of the Indian vested interests “to bid for political power,” which, in Roy’s version, had culminated in the Bombay Plan, the RDP hastened to convene a special Conference at Jharia in May 1944 to endorse the People’s Plan for post-war economic development of India. The RDP characterised the Bombay Plan prepared by some industrialists as “out and out a Fascist Plan,” and it appealed to the Government to implement its plan and reconstitute the Viceroy’s Executive Council. The Party vigorously launched a campaign to propagate the principles of People’s Plan which attached “greater importance” to the formation of people’s co-operatives particularly for protection of the poor peasants and artisans along with the consumers in general. 55

The main focus of the People’s Plan was “an agrarian revolution,” with this assumption that to raise the standard of living and productivity of the seventy per cent of the population of the country, agriculture should be given priority. Largely modelled after the Russian plans, the People’s Plan envisaged reorganisation of agriculture, through “voluntary” collectivisation which would lead to an expansion of internal market for absorbing the growing volume of consumer goods.

Before long the war took a positive turn in favour of the Allies. A Second Front was opened against the Germans by the invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944. Rome fell to the
Allies on June 4. Paris was liberated on August 25. Japanese advance in the East was thwarted. With this perspective of termination of the war, Roy was quick to foresee that transfer of power in India was imminent. Other political parties in India "having failed to agree about the future constitution of India," Roy proceeded to prepare a draft entitled Constitution of Free India: a Draft which was endorsed by the second all India Conference of the RDP in the last week of December in Calcutta. The conference made a claim that the British in fulfilment of the pledge of self-government, which it had repeatedly given to Indian people, should accept the Draft for establishing a people's government.

The Draft envisaged a "platform on which a united front" of the people could be formed. Perhaps as a gesture of unity, Roy declared, "let the Congress accept this Constitution, and we shall follow the Congress and mobilise the people behind it."66 This seemed to be a challenge and also a design to test the Congress as to whether it was prepared to accept the basic postulate of the Constitution, which incorporated certain features, making it conditional that the People's Plan for economic freedom would be the basis of political liberty. Opposed to parliamentary democracy, the Draft laid emphasis on "organised democracy," enfranchising the entire adult population, which was to be organised under the local "People's Committees" in villages, towns and cities.67

In the following years the RDP persistently tried to develop public opinion in favour of the two documents, the People's Plan and the Draft Constitution, so as to throw a challenge to the dominant parties. Obviously the two documents together appeared to the people as a cart before the horse. People rejected Roy's forecast about the imminence of transfer of power. Roy believed in vain that people could be convinced and attracted to his line by portraying concretely the future shape of the country's political and economic order.

Meanwhile, taking advantage of the absence of the Congress leaders, the Royists had made deep inroad in the trade union movement and enlarged the size of the Party in different pro-
vinces. The numerical strength and composition of the RDP at the time of its second all India Conference in Calcutta stood at 1,00,587 compared with only 3,478 at the time of its inaugural conference in 1940. Of the total membership, half were listed as peasantry and the rural poor, 15 per cent came from industrial workers and the urban poor. About twenty per cent covered educated middle class. Predictably, the last category dominated the Party.

A break-up of the members of the Party and delegates to each of the RDP conferences is given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Conference</th>
<th>I Conference</th>
<th>Special Conf.</th>
<th>II Conf.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bombay, 1940</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Jharia 1944</td>
<td>Calcutta 1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>3,478</td>
<td>31,726</td>
<td>68,926</td>
<td>1,00,587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegates</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>2,187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It has been discussed in the previous chapter that led by Roy, a section of the AITUC, broke away from it and formed the Indian Federation of Labour in July 1941 under the impact of Nazi attack on the Soviet Union; it gradually assumed a position which made it capable of vying with the AITUC. Although the IFL had been formed following a controversy on a political issue, Roy's avowed intention was to build it up "strictly" as a trade union organisation to function in accordance with the basic principles of trade unionism. This shift in Roy's position was not new, in consideration of the fact that he had abandoned his earlier policy of developing political strikes just before joining the Congress. It was his experience after return to India, that "party politics and other extraneous controversial matters" had considerably "weakened" the trade union movement in India. Although not opposed to trade unionists holding political views or belonging to political parties, he had realised that it was not "desirable to utilise trade unions as the platform for this or that political party," because in his view, it led to the "habit of manufacturing paper unions." Thus, in order to keep the IFL "entirely free
from all these malpractices," he proposed to hasten the growth of a "genuine trade union movement." 69

As it was, during the period of war, the activities of Roy's Federation was necessarily confined to propaganda for war efforts and to boost up the morale of the workers in the face of defeat of the Allied forces during the first half of the war, as also continuous anti-war nationalist campaign. For carrying on this propaganda, which was obviously not a part of normal trade union work, the IFL received a monthly Government grant of thirteen thousand rupees; it no doubt gave a handle to Roy's opponents to tarnish his public image.70

On the other side, a tussle developed in the AITUC after secession of the supporters of Roy. From December 1941 the communists had become supporters of the war; they made several attempts to persuade the AITUC to adopt a pro-war attitude. But because of nationalist pressure, the AITUC could not support the war and was exposed to the pulls of anti-war and pro-war groups. The communists failed to secure passage of a pro-war resolution in the annual AITUC session at Kanpur in February, 1942. Naturally, it was also not possible for them to thwart the strike wave, following the adoption of Quit India resolution. They were evidently keen to avoid strikes for maintaining production, and wielded considerable strength in the AITUC, yet they failed to defeat a nationalist resolution in the General Council meeting at Nagpur in September to organise strikes in favour of the August movement.71

Meanwhile, the IFL had been able to secure support of a number of independent trade unions which were also in favour of promoting war efforts. Jamnadas Mehta, who had aligned himself with the IFL, was elected President of the All India Railwaymen's Federation in August 1943, defeating the AITUC nominee N.M. Joshi. Under these conditions, a natural rivalry had developed between the two bodies, which culminated in the dispute over the question of Indian representation at the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and other world forums. As it then prevailed, the respective strength of the two organisations is shown in the table below72:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>AITUC</th>
<th>IFL</th>
<th>AITUC</th>
<th>IFL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>3,37,695</td>
<td>3,43,423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>3,32,079</td>
<td>5,29,818</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evidently, the membership strength of the IFL enabled it to depute Jamnadas Mehta to represent India in the ILO session in Philadelphia in 1944. During the war an idea was mooted by the British TUC to form a world body to co-ordinate the trade union movements, obviously in order to stimulate war efforts in favour of the Allied forces. British, French and Russian trade unions had meanwhile formed a joint committee; the Americans refrained from joining it. Both the IFL and the AITUC received invitations to attend the conference (October, 1945) in Paris, where the World Federation of Trade Unions was formed. The IFL delegation consisting of Maniben Kara, V.B. Karnik and M.A. Khan tried to take the advantage of meeting the British trade union leaders to impress upon them the problems of Indian working class in the context of the then political situation and constitutional development.

By the time of its second all India Conference, the RDP, like the CPI, had to encounter severe nationalist opposition, because of its going against the popular sentiment by supporting the war and opposing the August Movement. A section of the RDP in Bengal broke away from the Party in 1943, criticising the policy of “constitutional reformism” of the Party and organised a new party called the Democratic Vanguard headed by Jibanlal Chatterjee. They acknowledged Roy’s “single voice of wisdom” which gave the “correct analysis and appropriate technique for the guidance of the fighters for freedom”; the first manifesto of the newly formed Party charged that the RDP had transformed itself into “an election running machinery.” Roy’s idea of forming provisional ministries, which would arrange for election of the CA under a new Act, was viewed by the manifesto as “illogical.”

In truth, those charges were not correct in consideration of the fact that Roy had long since realised that the ways of
Indian revolutions in the face of highly organised machinery of repression were “bound to be different.” This led him to discard the “traditional way of agitating” for and precipitating political general strikes and the like. Roy was developing the view that in the then conditions of the world, in no country could a revolution succeed with those methods, which were effective under conditions of a different time. He, therefore, sought to find out different methods suitable for the changed conditions of a different epoch. His strategy and tactics during and immediately after the war turned into his constitutional manoeuvre, which was to be boosted up by a network of people’s committees. His endeavour in the constitutional aspect made no headway, he failed to persuade the British to accept his draft constitution.

In the foregoing perspective it was natural for the RDP to welcome the declaration of Wavell, after his return from a visit to England, to end the constitutional deadlock by holding general elections in India; the RDP intended to seize this opportunity, but it could not ignore the fact that election result on the basis of the prevailing restricted franchise of thirteen per cent of the population would hardly indicate the will of the people. The Party seemed to be correct in its anticipation that whatever prospect it had in the election, would be lost under such a narrow franchise. It, therefore, in an appeal to the British Labour Government, raised a pertinent issue, urging not to adhere to the policy of ignoring the unfranchised majority and “settling the political future of the country according to the wishes of the upper class minority.” Nevertheless, in order that the “voice of the exploited masses” might not go unheard in the process of constitution-making as well as in the solution of the post-war problems, the Central Executive of the RDP resolved in September, 1945 to contest the provincial Assembly elections on the basis of the picture presented in the draft for “people’s freedom” and programme of economic reorganisation, as elaborated in the People’s Plan. Alongside, as put forward by Philip Spratt, who had joined the RDP, the party “appealed to all the Leftist parties in the
-country to rally round and form a united front” in order to consolidate the democratic forces.⁷⁵

Long before the end of the war, it was an assumption of Roy that British Democracy would assert itself after the war by electing the Labour Party to power; consequently the “entire British politics will shift to the Left.” In such an eventuality, it was his fond expectation that India would feel the impact of progressive elements in power, congenial for Indian progressive forces to assert themselves. Roy told the all India RDP Conference (1944) that politically Churchill was “not going to survive the war.” Therefore he proposed to expose before the British people “the conspiracy” of Churchill Government to hand over power to the “Indian vested interests” which would harm not only the Indian people, but the British democracy as well.⁷⁶

Though Roy’s assumption came true, he unrealistically made an over-simplification of the role of the British Labour Party which could hardly be expected to support those who were avowedly loyal to the Soviet Union. However, the RDP tried to clinch the issue by launching a movement to secure the political and economic liberation of the people through holding people’s conventions along with formation of co-operative societies and people’s committees. To impress upon the people in Britain the objective and programme of its activities, the RDP opened a permanent office in London.⁷⁷ It tried to take advantage of the delegation of the IFL to the World Trade Union Conference held in London in February 1945, in order to urge on British workers “for a helping hand in the struggle for people’s freedom.” As it was, when the Labour Party came to power the RDP could not but hope that the advent of a Labour Government in Britain would result in greater aid to forces of Indian democracy. It hoped that the policy of appeasing Indian big business, hitherto pursued by Wavell would be reversed, so that the “liberating consequences of the war” as symbolised by the victory of the Labour Party, would lead to the liberation of Indian masses. Clearly, Roy had developed great faith in the “liberating role”
of the British Labour Party. As we shall see, he was to suffer disillusionment before long.

NOTES & REFERENCES

7. Ever since 1935, when Soviet Union made an alliance with France, the former had been a passionate advocate of an anti-Fascist policy. The alliance tended towards the organisation of the People’s Front on the international basis. Communist parties outside the USSR characterised the Soviet-German Pact as an alliance between Communism and Fascism against British Imperialism. Roy. *Communist International*. 1943. p. 52.
17. *Forward Bloc*. September 14, 1940. p. 5.
22. *I.A.R*. v. 2, 1940. p. 14. Viceroy’s proposals were later referred to as the “August Offer”.
29. *IAR* v. 2, 1940. Roy, was, however, allowed later by the CWC to resign from the Congress. *Indian National Congress*. Report of the General Secretary. March 1940 to September 1946. p. 95.
31. After Roy's break with the Congress, those of his followers who deserted him included Y. B. Chavan, who later became a member of India's Central Cabinet; he said "you are not practical... the Congress commands the fullest support of the masses. The instant you leave the Congress, you'll leave the hearts of the people......"—Quoted in: Chandulal M. Shah. *Yeshyantrao Chavan*. Bombay, 1963. p. 62.
33. *Ibid.* When Wavell became Viceroy, he recorded that Roy "had more in him than most Indian politicians". Roy had "personality and courage," but had a "long way to go before he could attempt all India leadership."—Nicholas Mansergh (ed) *The Transfer of Power*, 1942-47. London, 1970. v. 4, pp. 714, 732.
34. NAI. Home (Political) F.4/8/41 and 3/50/41.
38. NAI. Home/Pol/1941 F. 94/26.
40. NAI. Home/Pol/1942 F44/32.
41. Popularly known as jail document.
42. NAI. *op. cit.*
43. NAI. Home/Pol/1942 F. 226.
44. NAI. Home/Pol/1942 F. 44/32.
45. In return for the CPI support of the war, the Government legalised the Party in July 1942.
46. Philip Spratt was attracted by Roy's cause for support to the war and had no more any inclination to ally himself with the CPI. He believed that the "communists acted under discipline, whereas Roy acted from conviction, when it would have been far easier for him to take the popular line." Spratt joined the RDP towards the end of 1943—Spratt. *Blowing up India*. p. 74.

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Royists believed that Russia entered into a non-aggression pact with
Germany as a measure of self-defence and a make-shift arrangement
to purchase time.—Roy. *India and War.* p. 38.
49. RDP. *Message to USSR.* Calcutta. 1941. p. 12.
The ideological composition of the CWC was later analysed by Joshi
and Adhikari in their report submitted to the CC meeting in September
1942, maintaining that there were two groups in the CWC.: one, the
anti-Fascist group of Nehru and Azad. etc., and the other, the groups
of Gandhi, Patel, Prasad and others, who wanted to bring British
Imperialism on its knees by dislocating the war efforts.—Congress
charges against CPI, in P. C. Joshi. *Communist Reply to CWC
Lest it be misunderstood, said C. R. Reddy, “let me say that every
supporter of Government’s war efforts is not necessarily a supporter
of Government. Nationalists, Communists, Radical Democrats etc.
are not tools and toadies of Government. They are enemies of
imperialism. If they fight for the Government it is as allies and not
Reddy was the Vice-chancellor of the Andhra University.
Gandhi, who actually persuaded the Congress to launch the Quit
India movement, later disclaimed responsibility for the violence which,
he said, was a spontaneous reply to the leonine violence launched by
the Government. While Nehru, who was reluctant to pursue such a
course took full responsibility of the movement.
58. *Last Battles of Freedom.* Being the report of the Calcutta conference
60. M. N. Roy. “*Tasks of the Party Conference,*” *I.I.* December 20,
1942. p. 610.
p. 108.
67. M. N. Roy. *Constitution of Free India: a draft.* Delhi, 1944. p. 14. Other features of the draft included proportional representation for safeguard of minority interests and right of recall of the elected representatives, including the elected Governors of provinces and Governor General of the Federal Republic. The Draft indicated the process of liquidation of the princely states and provided for right of secession of the provinces to accommodate the demand of the Muslim League.
70. V. B. Karnik, Secretary of the IFL writes that the grant was unconditional; no condition was put by the Government, nor accepted by the IFL. The Federation was free to carry on the revolutionary anti-Fascist propaganda.—Karnik. *Rs. 13,000 Controversy X-rayed.* Delhi, 1945. p. 8.
73. Formerly of the Jugantar group, Chatterjee became an adherent of Roy from the middle of 1930-s. Democratic Vanguard was later renamed as the Workers' Party of India.
75. In a letter to Amery Wavell wrote that he found "a good deal of sense" in what Roy said, but "clearly the changes advocated by him were not practicable." Wavell thought that universal suffrage would "only make the confusion worse confounded."—Mansergh. *The Transfer of Power.* v. 4, p. 1127.
77. A. K. Pillai was posted as a permanent representative of the RDP in London. Later Tayab Shaikh took over the charge. The London office brought out systematically a bulletin *The Other India.* Towards the close of the war the RDP extended its activities to Ceylon and Burma.
Chapter 10

Towards Independence

The Effect of the new British policy towards India began to be evident when the victory of the Allies in the war in Europe and in the East was assured in the first quarter of 1945. Wavell announced a plan relating to the formation of a provisional interim government at the Centre; it figured prominently in Indian politics after Gandhi and Jinnah met for talks on the communal problem but failed to reach an agreement. The plan gave no indication of independence. However, to implement the proposal, the Viceroy called a conference of leading Indian politicians, and for that the members of the CWC were released in June. The conference at Simla (June 25) commenced just ten days before the general elections in Britain. Among the twenty-one persons from different political parties invited, none represented any Left party. The CPI had been carrying on a movement for Congress-League unity, but the RDP condemned Wavell Plan as "a stab in the back of Indian democracy and a clear act of disloyalty" to those who had supported the Allied cause in the war despite fierce nationalist opposition. Its appeal to the Viceroy to include the representatives of labour in the Simla conference having gone in vain, the RDP in collaboration with the IFL launched a campaign, protesting against the "attempt to hand over the fate of India's dumb millions" to the "mercy of the vested interests."

By June 28 it was evident that the Congress and the League had failed to come to terms and the conference ended in failure. But Wavell's attitude appreciably changed after the victory of the Labour Party and the formation of the Government headed by Attlee in July, presumably against the backdrop of a resolution which was adopted by the Party in 1944, promising Indian independence after the war. Post-war economic exigencies were no doubt the main reason of this policy. The policy announcement was made by the new Secretary of State, Lord Pethick-Lawrence on August 7, declaring an equal partnership
with India as the goal to be reached. The whole policy was thus
to hold general elections to the central and provincial legisla-
tures and to form, after the elections, a constitution making
body on a basis which was to be determined after consulting
the Indian leaders. Interestingly, Wavell’s new offer was based
on the Cripp’s offer of 1942, which had been turned down by
the Congress.

A popular nationalist sentiment took a shape about this
time for the defence of the personnel of the Indian National
Army (INA). The movement considerably helped to enhance
the prestige and popularity of the Congress for taking up the
cause for release of the prisoners with full vigour. The release
after commutation of the sentences on Shah Nawaz, P. K.
Shegal and G. S. Dhillan by the Commandar-in-Chief and some-
time later acquittal of Abdul Rashid gave rise to a wave of
countrywide jubilation; the nationalist circles acclaimed it to
be a victory for the Congress. Ironically, the CPI and other
Left parties which were in the forefront, reaped no benefit from
the movement.

On the other side, it was Roy who alone did not join the
chorus of eulogising the INA. Consistent with his anti-fascist
conviction, he claimed to have the “courage and intellectual
honesty” to say that since the “miscarriage of the INA venture”
was a “by-product of Japan’s defeat,” it was not a “misfortune
to be deplored in the form of riotous hero-worship.” The main
focus of his argument was that the INA was an “auxiliary to
the Japanese invaders”; and in the name of freedom, Fascism
was going to be “clapped round the neck of Indian masses.”
Had Japan succeeded in her design, as Roy put it, Fascism
would have consolidated its position in the entire South-East
Asia. The INA could not possibly save India from that tragic
fate. Roy, however did appreciate the motive of those “mis-
guided patriots,” but he felt it to be his “revolutionary duty”
to point out that they were “mistaken and misguided.” It is
ture that Roy could hardly suppress his courage of conviction,
but such an impolitic utterance was in no way helpful in retrie-
vying the image already lost.
Almost about the same time, the mutiny in the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) in Bombay was another source of popular upsurge which added strength to the Congress. The communists had actually geared up the revolt while the Congress Socialists under the leadership of Aruna Asaf Ali, were prompt in spreading the mutiny, though for a short duration, over a wide area. Originating from various grievances including maltreatment and insecurity on the shore, the mutiny, which broke out on February 19, involved nearly 20,000 men representing almost the entire RIN personnel along the coastline from Karachi to Calcutta. Strikes in sympathy of the mutiny spread out all over the Bombay presidency, leading to looting, arson and barricades on the streets. Before long, the men in the army and the Royal Indian Air force joined the naval ratings; together they tried to take possession of the armoury and the ammunition dump; this was followed by exchange of heavy fire between the mutineers and the British soldiers. Curiously, the communists who sought to turn the mutiny into an all out revolution, hoisted the flags of the Congress and the League, interwined with their own flag, despite stiff opposition from the Congress leaders. Realising that the prospect of peaceful transfer of power was becoming complicated, Sardar Patel lost no time to condemn the outbreak of mob violence and sympathetic strikes; he appealed for unconditional surrender. Though “sympathetic” towards the mutineers, Nehru disapproved of the “bad tactics” in the perspective of superior power of the loyal armed forces. To Azad, the Congress President, this direct action of naval ratings was wrong and unwise. The rebellion, which cost 236 dead and 1,156 injured, including 25 officers and 75 men of the police, ended in surrender on the advice of the Congress leaders.

It was nothing surprising that the Royists, who always maintained a position distinct from other Left-wing parties, did not support this short lived militant uprising; it was their argument that the mutiny could not end differently unless it was backed up by other factors on a sufficiently large scale. What the Party felt was that unless political and economic
issues were joined and the perspective was clarified, such a partial insurrection and sporadic violence would be of no use. In essence, their argument was that the prevailing atmosphere precluded joining of fundamental social issues. The masses were swayed by racial hatred and resentment against the Government. The Party opposed the prospect of such "isolated" mutinies as ineffective and hasty action. Here, to explain the Party's non-conformist attitude, it will be useful to examine the perspective which appeared before its leaders. In fact, the RDP leadership firmly believed that a change of Government, its complete Indianisation, was imminent. And for that, peaceful political demonstrations would suffice. The Party came to the conclusion that there was no longer any scope or basis for the anti-imperialist struggle of the pre-war type. Seemingly, there was a clear similarity of the RDP with the Congress leaders in the assessment of the situation. At this time the RDP itself was ranged against the Congress, for a fight in the ensuing election, and it was quite natural for the Party not to placate the people's chauvinistic feelings which might enhance the strength of the Congress. The Royists were not perhaps wrong in this respect. Because, although the INA movement was led mainly by the Leftists, the credit for its success went over to the Congress; the RIN mutiny also despite opposition brought to the Congress a windfall gain of acclaim from the press and the public. The Left parties reaped no benefit from it.

Following the termination of the war, political trade unionism also began to thrive in the wake of popular upsurge for freedom; post-war inflation and retrenchment provided the momentum. In a bid to salvage the image they had lost during the war, the communists were prompt to intensify the labour unrest into a strike struggle. Consequent upon their militant propaganda, a series of strikes took place from the close of 1945 till before the spurt of communal riots in August, 1946. This was opposed more particularly by the Congress trade unionists, who, after their release, found that many of their unions had been captured by the communists. Congress opposition to the strikes was more pronounced, because of the
fact that signs of transfer of power to the Congress were in sight, and Congress ministries had already been formed in several provinces. The CWC roundly condemned the strike movement.

Nevertheless, the communists continued their strategy of strike struggle. The most spectacular strike of this period (July, 1946) was the All India Postal strike, in which, though with a different approach, the Royists also participated. The Posts and Telegraph workshop union was then under their control. The AITUC organised a sympathetic strike on July 22 in Bombay, when half a million workers ceased work for the day. A similar sympathetic general strike was organised in Calcutta on July 24; it paralysed the life in the entire industrial belt of Calcutta and the adjoining districts. The Royists, having now no more any inhibition, organised several strikes during this period in Bengal, U.P., Sindh and Bombay, the most notable of which was the prolonged strike of the primary teachers in the U.P. and dock workers at Karachi.

During this period Royists were also active among the peasants in Bihar, Punjab and Kashmir. The movement in Bihar directly confronted the RDP with the Congress, the ruling party. By December 1945 peasants of Sasaram district in Bihar rose against undue exactions of crops and snatching of bakasht (unsettled) land by the zemindars. Inspired by the RDP workers, the landless peasants at many places attempted to harvest paddy cultivated by them under “begari.” Tenant cultivators, who were also subjected to illegal exactions, joined the movement, demanding reduction of rent. Within two months the Party’s propaganda galvanised the whole movement in the district. Peasants, once apathetic, began trekking often miles to gather in rallies addressed by Sheopujan Singh and Ramlal Verma. Encounters with the zemindars supported by the local Congress leaders made the situation tense. Gunmen engaged by the zemindars inflicted heavy casualties including one killed. Police intervened and arrested 24 leaders of the RDP. In the milieu of communal riots and Government repression, the movement died down within a year.
ROY'S ALTERNATIVE TO THE DEADLOCK

After the failure of the Wavell Plan, Roy seemed to be more convinced of the "impossibility of an agreement" between the Congress and the League. The RDP insisted that the constitutional advance of India must no longer be made dependent on a settlement between the two parties. Earlier, the RDP had urged fresh elections for ending the political deadlock. But the Party opposed holding elections on the basis of the restricted franchise of thirteen per cent of the population. In support of the demand for universal adult franchise, the Party launched a movement and organised several regional conferences. At the same time it apprehended that the major political parties having ample financial resources would exploit the poverty, religiosity and backwardness of the people during the election. It therefore demanded formation of a "provisional government with the responsibility of transferring power to the people" as a whole and not to a "privileged upper class minority," and particularly with the task of holding free and fair elections.*

Meanwhile, in the election to the Central Assembly held towards the end of 1945, the Congress and the League had emerged as the two major parties in the country. In this situation, the people were not expecting any other party to oppose the two parties in the ensuing provincial elections. As it was natural, the setting up of candidates in a large number of provincial constituencies by the RDP, the youngest of the Indian parties, amounted to a surprise. This was the first time that the Congress had to face the challenge of the Left. Among the Left, the CPI and the RDP separately contested the election. While the RDP held out a challenge against the two

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* Roy charged that the Simla Conference had failed because HMG and Wavell had identified India with Tatas and Birlas and their political agents. He demanded India's sterling balances for agricultural and industrial development on the basis of public ownership and not by placing them at the disposal of private enterprise. He demanded election of a CA by the entire adult population. Amery found "some substance" in Roy's demands.—Mansergh. *op. cit.* v.5, p.1281.
dominant parties, the CPI supported the two parties, where it did not set up any candidate. But the challenge of the RDP was completely ineffective; in most of the constituencies the RDP candidates were miserably defeated. They could secure not even half a dozen seats all over the country. The results of the election came as a shock, and obviously shattered Roy's calculations. Roy characterised the election as a "typical Hitler election." Given the minimum measure of normal fairness and official impartiality, he claimed, the "Left-wing parties would have successfully challenged the totalitarianism of the Congress." Owing to "limited financial resources," the RDP had set up candidates in a few constituencies which they were sure to win. To Roy's assessment, the Congress had captured those seats "only for sheer coercion and goondaism," money and monopoly of newspapers had "primarily loaded the dice."

But it was a sheer over-estimation on the part of Roy to expect that the RDP "alone could easily capture at least thirty per cent of the rural seats" specially when he knew that "seem-religious appeal" swayed the politically backward rural electorate, reinforced by the coercion of the landlords. On the other hand, the urban middle-class was surcharged with nationalist emotion in the wake of the August movement and the trial of the INA personnel.¹ Even other parties wielding considerable influence, both the Right and the Left, particularly the CPI were almost swept away by the Congress at the poll. Perhaps the panic of the British Government and jailing of all leaders of the eve of the August movement, had "absolved the Congress for any responsibility for the happenings of the ensuing year," while the "glamour of jail" served to erase the record of the Congress ministries in the late thirties, "thereby restoring the full popularity"² of the Congress among the masses.

In the complicate atmosphere when independence was imminent, it was but natural for the Congress to be intolerant of those parties which were opposed to its policy. The feeling against the communists and the Royists was accentuated by
the trial of the INA personnel; it took place just before the provincial elections. The dealings of P.C. Joshi with Reginald Maxwell, the Home Member of the Government, were given wide publicity on the basis of an allegation made by Batlivala, a member of the CC of the CPI. Against the RDP, the main charge was acceptance of a subsidy from the Government during the war. The nationalist press and the leaders made capital of Roy’s bitter attack of Gandhian ideology and the policy of the Congress during the heyday of the August movement, in tarnishing his image at this moment.

Cabinet Mission

The Labour Government sent a Cabinet Mission to India on March 24, 1946 to negotiate with the Indian leaders for the transfer of power. Its negotiations, however, did not prove particularly successful. The Interim Government brought in existence by Wavell did not also work. Until February 1947, however, the British continued to persuade the League to accept the principle of united India and induce the Congress to make necessary concessions. Presumably, having failed to find a formula acceptable to both the parties, the British decided to quit, no matter whether the parties had agreed or not. Prime Minister Attlee announced (February 20) that transfer of power would be effected not later than June 1948. This decision had to be taken in consequence of deteriorating condition of British economy for which overseas military commitments had to be slashed. Moreover, the situation in India rendered the withdrawal from the country inevitable, because of riots and strikes. By the time of August 1946, the country seemed to be heading towards a civil war, the British had lost control of the country, and were no longer in a position to bring in large number of troops. To quit was therefore the only way out of the situation.

Mountbatten was entrusted to complete the process of Britain’s departure from India. He came either with a mind to divide the country or was very shortly convinced by the growing communal disharmony that the efforts for unity had to be
given up. Presumably, the riots were the main reason to persuade the Congress to accept the division of the country. Mountbatten had also to make the home Government agree to partition and to advance the time of British abdication by about a year. He got his way and announced (June 3, 1947) the decision about the partition of the country by August 15 and the formation of two sovereign states.⁴

**ROY ON PAKISTAN**

In his message to the Belgaon Congress (1924), it has been noted in an earlier chapter, how Roy had reacted to the growing communal animosity in India. The *Masses* made quite a justified comment that the Hindu-Muslim problem of the mid-twenties was “principally the creation of the Congress politics,” originating perhaps from the Khilafat movement.⁵ Consistent with the same view, Roy held in the early 1940-s, in the context of the Lahore resolution of the Muslim League, that the “failure of the Congress leaders” drove the League to adopting more and more reactionary outlook”⁶.

To examine Roy’s attitude towards the country’s communal problem, it is first necessary to point out that he never accepted the traditional notion that the problem was a creation of the British. To him such a notion amounted to “play the ostrich game.” He, however, conceded that it was natural for a foreign power to take recourse to the policy of divide and rule. He was not perhaps wrong that unless there were inherent conflicts, a third power could hardly keep the communities divided indefinitely. Indeed, spread over a period of seven hundred years, as Roy put it, the causes were “historical.”⁷ The Royists blamed the British for dealing with Indian issues exclusively in terms of religious communities. In their view, the revivalist ideology of the Congress and its failure to pursue a secular politics had transformed it into a Hindu communal party, for all practical purposes.⁸

Curiously, the Royists were not prepared to take a serious view of the Lahore resolution of the League. The Pakistan scheme sounded to them as “so fantastic and ridiculous”
that they were not prepared to attach any importance to a scheme in which they could find no solution of the minority problem. From the stand-point characteristic of their own, the Royists considered the Pakistan resolution as a "desperate reaction" of the League to the "unhelpful attitude of the Congress leaders," who had been insisting on the CA as the only solution. Obviously, the CA as conceived by the Congress leaders, was basically different from what the Royists had projected. In their critique, the Royists charged that the idea of settling the constitutional tangle after India got freedom, amounted only to escaping from the problem. It was their argument that the solution of the communal problem must precede and not succeed the CA; and the CA could meet only as a joint endeavour of the two communities on the basis of some understanding.\(^9\)

Though not to the same degree of criticism against the Congress, the Royists blamed the League for its inability to define in clear terms a scheme of safeguards that would satisfy the Muslim masses. It was perhaps an expectation of the Royists that a formula duly approved by the Muslim masses would be devised by the League so as to develop a viable unity between the two communities. In truth, owing to quarrels over the preliminaries, the Congress and the League leaders never reached a common definition and a discussion of those safeguards. Presumably, with this in view, Roy stressed that instead of "pious desire" there should be a spirit of "give and take." He laid on the majority community the responsibility of creating a sense of confidence among the minorities. Even admitting the demerits of the Communal Award, Roy went to the extent that it had after all offered a sort of constitutional guarantee to the minority community, which was nervous about its future.\(^10\) He deprecated the growing tendency among a section of the Hindu nationalists to fight on two fronts, the British on one side and the aggressive Muslims on the other; to him such an attitude was least helpful in bringing about the much-needed amity.

In fact, long before the Pakistan scheme was put forward,
Roy had realised that racial, cultural and linguistic autonomy was not an artificial demand. Perhaps for this reason the Pakistan scheme did not terrify him. By an analysis he came to the conclusion that in India a centralised state was not possible, because of diversity of language, race and culture. Obviously patterned after the Soviet constitution, Roy’s scheme stood for an Indian federation composed of units based on those characteristics. In short, Roy’s contention was that the unity of different parts of India, maintained by a force imposed from above, was not consistent with the concept of freedom and autonomy. From this perspective it was natural for him to argue that Pakistan was not contradictory to Indian freedom, nor even Dravidistan, the movement for which had been gaining ground during the early 1940.11

Although Roy equated the Congress and the League as the upper-class parties, he chose to develop good relation with Jinnah, perhaps to draw him into the fold of anti-fascist alliance. But Jinnah was least interested in anything other than protecting the interests of the Muslims. Following his resignation from the Congress, Roy persistently tried, though in vain, to form coalition ministries in the provinces in alliance with the League to fill the vacuum created by resignation of the Congress.12 It was evident that Roy tried to woo the supporters of the movements for Pakistan and Dravidistan in order to achieve co-operation of the League and the Justice party of South India to form coalition ministries for promoting the cause of anti-fascist movement. Presumably, bitterness with the Congress might have also made him ignore the intransigent attitude of the League.

Apart from his theoretical disposition, Roy’s anticipation of irresistibility of the demand for Pakistan perhaps led him to make a significant provision in his Draft Constitution which envisage that transfer of power would take place on the basis of treating India as a constitutional unit. And after that the provinces delimited by the proposed provisional government would be at liberty not to join the federation.13 No wonder that Roy’s Draft failed to convince the League and as such it
received no support from the latter.

Roy held in principle that India could not be a centralised unitary state, but would have to be a "federation of autonomous republics"; this led him to conclude that the League demand could be "easily reconciled." Yet he never supported the concept of Pakistan as a homeland for the Muslims. The fact that after territorial division in 1947 many millions of Muslims were left out in a delicate position, bears testimony to Roy's vision that the idea of a homeland for Muslims was a "utopia."15

LEFT-WING ON THE EVE OF INDEPENDENCE

During the August movement the CSP and the F.B had stood behind the Congress. Admittedly, the socialists came to realise the failure of the Quit India movement after its collapse within a few months.* Soon after his release from jail in early 1946, Narayan strongly criticised the trends of the Congress policy. He felt the need for preparation, in a better organised manner, for the final struggle, instead of parliamentary programme. He opposed the policy of fighting elections and negotiations with the British.16 When the AICC met in July to ratify the CWS decision to join the CA, the CSP members opposed, but few took the opposition in a serious manner.17 Not alive to the changed situation in the country after the war, Narayan sought to strengthen the Congress for a fight with the Government to compel them to quit India.18

Curiously, the CSP leadership while rejecting the Wavell Plan as nothing more than the Cripss' proposals, had accepted

* The Quit India movement ultimately ended in a fiasco in the sense that it had "not achieved the objective."—Narendra Deva. op. cit. p.160. Narayan analysed that the failure was due to the absence of an "efficient organisation," and secondly "there was no future programme placed before the people."—Narayan. Towards Struggle. pp. 20-21. Congress leaders, knowing well that they would be arrested, none "ever thought of a plan of action for the Congress and for the nation as a whole."—Kosambi. op. cit. p.16. Everyone expected that Gandhi would give a plan, but Gandhi's overtures to the Viceroy appeared to the latter to mean his dissociation from the August resolution.—Gandhi's Correspondence... 1942-44. p.20.
the AICC decision (September 1945) to contest the election. Obviously they did so only to make "revolutionary use of the legislatures." Narayan was still sceptic whether the CA could declare independence and force the British to hand over power to India. He developed the view that the struggle for freedom did not cease with the acceptance of the British constitutional proposals. This led him to conclude that a country-wide revolution should be resumed. The struggle was to be "deeper and wider" to which would be added the struggle for national unity and bread. In January 1947 Narayan was belatedly convinced that the Congress leadership had been making compromise with the forces of reaction. He, therefore, became eager to "renew" the Quit India demand and to "mobilise the people for a final challenge to the foreign power," which supported the "reactionary forces" in the country. By reactionary forces, he meant the League. Clearly, Narayan was "opposed to the division of the country"; he proposed to explore a serious attempt to live together in a united and free India. It was natural for him to blame Rajagopalachari for upholding the demand for Pakistan and not telling the people that "Pakistan was a harmful proposal."

In the AICC (July, 1946) Narayan put forward a scheme for breaking the League's hold by directly approaching Muslim masses. He characterised Jinnah as "a friend of our enemies." It was more significant that the opposition of the CSP leadership to the compromising tendency of the Congress, was born out of the fear that the social policy laid down in the Congress manifestoes had not any binding or compelling force. Narendra Deva came to realise that it would be self-deception to think that after winning independence, the upper classes would hand over power to the toiling masses. When the AICC met (September 1946) to ratify the CWC decision to form an Interim Government, the CSP members remained neutral, contending that the Government, had already been formed, despite opposition of the CSP. This policy came in for sharp criticism in the CSP ranks. The Party decided not to enter the CA nor the Government. Much later at the Nasik Con-
ference (1948) of the CSP, a sizable section of the Party repented "being left out of the picture."

The conviction of the CSP leadership was shaken when Narendra Deva characterised the British declaration of February 1947, as "a step forced upon the British" to transfer power to the Indian hands. The first conference of the CSP after the August movement at Kanpur (February-March, 1947) resolved that "every care must be taken that power passes" into the hands of the "toiling masses." The National Executive of the CSP, while denouncing the Mountbatten plan, blamed the Congress leadership for creating a delicate position and acknowledged "its own failure... in working out an alternative and positive policy." It was unfortunate that the CSP which was in the forefront of the militant August movement was left out in the negotiations for transfer of power. It seems that Roy's earlier note of caution to the CSP also came true at this moment, when the Party felt itself alienated from the Congress and failed to put through a socialist programme.

As for the CPI, it is first necessary to refer to its election manifesto which called for immediate "transfer of power" to a CA. The manifesto also outlined the new strategy and tactics by laying emphasis on the need for a "united struggle of all freedom loving Indians" against the British. In truth, as a sequel to estrangement, both from the Congress and the League, the CPI was less disposed to those dominant parties and tried to develop an independent identity. It was perhaps due to the efforts of the CPGB leader R.P. Dutt, who visited India towards the close of 1945, that a conciliatory position of the Party in its attitude towards the Congress was brought about. On this assumption it may also be said that the CPI, in the first half of 1946, refashioned its earlier policy of "unity and struggle." And accordingly, unlike the RDP, the CPI urged the Cabinet Mission to establish a provisional government, based on the main popular parties and considered it to be the "best course" to enable the Congress and the League, freely to negotiate with the British. In regard to the programme of struggle, the CPI decided in August 1946 to give a "bold and
militant leadership” to intensify the struggle of workers, peasants and States’ people. The nature of Indian revolution in the “final phase of freedom struggle,” was reaffirmed as national democratic revolution. As its immediate task, the Party spelt out its policy, which apparently revealed a self-contradictory position in forging a “joint front of all patriotic parties,” meaning the Congress and the League, although the CPI had shunned their policy of compromise with regard to the British plan and their opposition to popular struggles. At this time the CPI also observed the fact that the peasantry was lagging behind the working class in this phase of mass upheaval. This obviously led the Party to give a call for launching a struggle for “abolition of landlordism.”\(^3\) It was a natural expectation of the CPI, as enunciated in the resolution, that the revolutionary struggle would continue and the Party would be able to forge a “joint front” through such a struggle for the “final assault for power.”\(^3\) Clearly, the CPI did not take cognisance of Roy’s contention that power was going to be peacefully transferred to the major Right-wing parties.

Soon afterwards, in pursuance of the August resolution of the Party, the Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha, a subsidiary of the CPI, gave a call for tebhaga struggle in the following month, when the province was raged by communal strife. The movement died down because of Government repression and apathy of the Congress leaders, who were more pre-occupied with the questions of coming to power. Alongside in the same changed context of the Party’s policy, more radical and militant peasant struggles were developed by the CPI in the Telengana region of Hyderabad in 1946. Essentially a peasant revolt which continued for five years, against forced labour, illegal exactions and forced grain levy collection from the small peasantry, the movement simultaneously continued as a liberation movement and armed insurrection against the Nizam: it gradually lost its momentum after occupation of Hyderabad by the Indian army.\(^4\)

As for its attitude towards the Mountbatten plan, the CPI found “important concessions” and “new opportunities for
national advance.” It assured the national leadership of “its full co-operation” in the task of building up the Indian Republic and “paving the way for unity.” Among the Left parties, the FB held a different view, which partly resembled the assessment of Roy. It took the British Plan as a “newer and subtler” way to perpetuate its stronghold over India. The Party belatedly echoed Roy in declaring that the “Indian vested interests are entering into a junior partnership” with imperialism. Almost similar to the CSP line the FB scheme sought to “resist partition and to prepare for seizure of power.”

ROY’S CALL FOR LEFT UNITY

By the time of Mountbatten’s announcement of transfer of power, all the Left parties had realised that the CA was heavily “weighed down by the representatives of property and privileges,” and that a constitution framed by it would have no liberating significance to the masses. Clearly, as a last resort, in an attempt to provide a platform of united action, Roy on the first of May 1947 made an appeal, seeking cooperation of all the fighters for democratic freedom, “for an eleventh hour effort.” He reminded the Leftists that by keeping up the bogey of imperialism, they only raised “a smoke-screen for the benefit of the Congress leadership, helping the upper classes to step into the shoes of the foreign rulers.” He sounded a note of warning that those who would seriously plan the capture of power by the masses, “must call for a revolt not against the ghost of imperialism, but against the so-called National Government.” What he intended to emphasise was that, instead of loose talk of a united front with vague slogans, the unity should be purposeful and based on a common agreement about the objective. The formula that he suggested for united action was nothing new. It was the same controversial and long-drawn procedure of CA, refashioned in the form of people’s committee. However, to proceed into action, he made a proposal to produce a more revolutionary constitution or to endorse his Draft on the basis of which a
mass movement could be brought into existence. The second and more difficult aspect of the strategy, as Roy put forward, was to build up an organ of democratic power, through people's conventions, on local, district and provincial scales, which were to culminate in the national people's convention, capable of challenging the right of the unrepresentative Constituent Assembly.39

Roy's appeal obviously received no response from the Left parties.40 In fact, in the absence of cohesive forces and owing specially to divergent attitudes of the Left parties, Roy's formula had lost its relevance. On the eve of the transfer of power, the RDP organised meetings all over the country to convince the people, that "handing over power to upper class parties," brought them face to face with the "prospect of a new slavery," Ever since the Karachi Congress when social freedom gradually became a major issue of the national movement, the RDP was perhaps justified that the national independence did not lead to social freedom and might not indeed mean anything better than a "substitution of one set of rulers by another." As such in the new political context what the Party visualised was that one obstacle on the way towards freedom had been removed, but the other obstacles would remain and would not disappear voluntarily. Those could be removed only through purposeful and conscious activity. Thus, to familiarise the people with the concept of social freedom, the RDP felt the need for mobilising public opinion; the emphasis was on the setting up of people's committees41 which were to evolve into organs of popular power.

FROM PARTY TO MOVEMENT

Soon after the General Election, Roy disclosed in the second political study camp of the RDP at Dehra Dun (May 1946), that during the last several years, he had been "feeling dissatisfied" with the contemporary trend of world politics.42 Roy, a "tormented soul," through a decade's experience had the realisation that "political practice, be it liberal, democratic or proletarian," had failed to produce the "promised result."
Doubts had also been rising in his mind about the relevance of Marxism to the attainment of human freedom. He felt the need for re-examination of the purpose of political struggles and strifes in order to search for the fundamental principles which would give some meaning to political practice, other than the conventional platitudes. He knew well that the new ideas and ideals which he had been placing before his followers would “appear to be very greatly different” from those which he had been “pursuing all the time.” In fact the rudiments of Roy’s aversion to active party-politics can be traced back as early as May 1939 when in the aftermath of the Tripuri Congress, a proposal was mooted by a section of the LRC to make the League a constituent of the FB. In private correspondence with Karnik, Roy made it clear that if the Royists found no place in the political life of the country on their own merits, he for one “would not waste any more time and energy.” Admittedly, he was then “seriously considering withdrawal from active politics at least for some time.”

Four months later, in a private letter to another friend, Roy expressed similar sentiments stating that in the then situation when he was trusted neither by the Right nor by the Left and nothing serious was going to happen in the visible future in the country, he came to the conclusion that it would be “simple waste of time for me to carry on things.” That apart even the origin of his growing philosophical new orientation can be found in his jail letters in which he wrote that “physical realism” was the essence of materialism. Alongside he expressed his doubts about “dialectic” as a methodological aspect. Moreover, the ideas were not anything new, since they were implied in the very organisation of the RDP. In the first Dehra Dun study camp held in 1940, Roy had proposed “amplification, enrichment of Marxism,” even to the extent of “revising or even discarding certain formulas,” which were considered by the orthodox Marxists as the essence of Marxism. Evidently, Roy made no secret of his revisionist tendency.

But his followers appeared to be taken aback, especially
when Roy declared in the camp that of late he had been "losing taste for politics" and did not "find enough satisfaction in political activities."\(^{49}\) This feeling obviously led him to give a concrete formulation to the new philosophical and political principles based on experience gathered during the preceding years of his tempestuous life. It was also his natural expectation that the programme and political practice of the RDP would follow those fundamental principles. The new philosophical and political orientation of Roy were subjected later to thorough discussions and bitter criticism in the party ranks. Naturally, at the outset, to many of his followers the new formulations appeared to be quite abrupt and confusing. However, in the end, those new principles were adopted in the form of twenty-two theses of Radical Democracy in the third all India RDP Conference held in Bombay towards the end of 1946.

Although it is not within the scope of this study to examine those principles, it is necessary to indicate some of the ideas which foreshadowed Roy's evolution from action politics to a philosophical quest. Initially, Roy in his formulations had not kept out the idea of capturing power. Later, probably actuated by the realisation that since man was essentially rational and therefore moral, he came to the natural conclusion that such men would not hanker after power. As a corollary, a party composed of such men would not think in terms of power. Nevertheless, he continued to maintain, only in a reformulated way, that power should be vested in the people organised in people's committees, because in his view, democracy was vitiated by delegation of power. That being his ideal, the question of his party capturing power did no more arise.\(^{50}\) Clearly, with this attitude towards the question of power, the RDP in effect ceased to be a political party. In order to get rid of this anomaly, it was logical for the RDP to dissolve itself in its last conference held in Calcutta in December, 1948. The conference decided to transform the RDP into a comprehensive movement to develop an intellectual and cultural atmosphere in which sovereignty of the people would be
a reality; the distinctive feature of it was to build up a democratic society from the bottom.\textsuperscript{b1} In the framework of partyless politics, what Roy thought about the economic order of the society, was "neither capitalist nor socialist, but cooperative."\textsuperscript{62}

The idea of a renaissance movement, which had been very dear to Roy ever since he had joined the Congress in the late 1930-s, now assumed the highest importance in his programme of work. Deriving the essence of the movement from the European renaissance, Roy believed that a similar movement was indispensable in India, in order to bring about political freedom and social reconstruction, so that the ballast of misery, backwardness, ignorance and superstition, which impeded revolutionary vision of the people, could be cleared out. Evidently he was convinced that a cultural revolution should necessarily precede a social revolution in India. Along with his diverse activities, Roy had all through harped on renaissance and made it a major plank in the practice of his own concept of Radicalism, which had, meanwhile, undergone a new orientation. In his new formulations he seemed to be confident that the movement would lay the intellectual and moral foundation on which an abiding structure of democratic freedom could be built up.\textsuperscript{53} Roy, who had held on to the Marxist position for decades rejected Marxism and tried to develop the philosophy of Radical Humanism. In fact, he virtually left traditional politics and concentrated on philosophical studies.

Notes & References

Roy had estimated that if the RDP could win a dozen seats in each province, the party would be in a position to influence the political future of the Country.—Roy. \textit{New Orientation}. Calcutta, 1949. p.48. Roy's calculations were probably derived from an understanding given by some members of the Parliamentary delegation, which toured in India in the first quarter of 1946, that if the RDP could prove its strength by securing at least 10 assembly seats in each province, they would pressurise the British Government to invite the party to the
proposed negotiations for constitutional change. Among the most sympathetic members, Arthur Bottomley said later in the Parliament that the doctrines of the RDP "approximated nearest to his own political idea."—I.I. v.10, n.12. March 24, 1946, p. 137.


3. Resigning from the Party, Batlivala charged that an alliance existed between the Politbureau and the Government during the war.—Bombay Chronicle. March 17, 1946.


5. Masses. c.1, n.4. April 1925.


11. Ibid. p. 118.

12. NAI. Home/Pol/1941. F.128.


14. I.I. March 16, 1941. p.130


17. Ibid.

18. Ibid. p. 219.

19. IAR. v.2. 1945. p.96


23. Ibid. p.73.


33. Ibid.


38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. Shortly after the Independence, when Roy came to Calcutta, Jayprakash Narayan, Jogesh Chatterji and Ashoka Mehta called on him with the request to join the Left consolidation which they proposed to organise. Roy in effect discouraged them and said that no one would be able to do anything for the next twenty-five years.—Ronoo Choudhury. “M.N.Roy—as I saw and heard him,” RH. v.38, n.2. May 1974. p.22.


44. Roy Archive. Roy’s letter dated 26 May, 1939 to V.B. Karnik, LRC-4(7)

45. Roy Archive. Roy’s letter dated 16 September, 1939 to Narmada Prasad Singh. IC-22/17(1).


47. Roy. op. cit, p.58.


CHAPTER XI

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This Study on M.N. Roy in the perspective of the historical development of the Left movement in India during the two and a half decades, preceding national independence, lends itself to certain general conclusions. The Left-wing in India was a combination of diverse strands of approach, traditions and practices. It had originated from terrorist, rebellious and conspiratorial tradition. A constitutional attitude was rather held in contempt. Eventually the Russian Revolution made a deep impact on the thinking of the left-wing. From the late 1920-s they began to be attracted towards socialism, both the Marxian kind and of kindred varieties. Obviously, the leaders of the movement laid emphasis on class-struggle; the movement of workers and peasants received considerable importance in their programme. Broadly speaking, the attitude of the Left-wing was anti-imperialist, socialist and revolutionary. Throughout South Asia this was the pattern.

It is, however, a fact that the Left-wing parties in India could not unite. The communists failed to build up Left unity; the Congress Socialists and Jawaharlal Nehru generally abided by Gandhi’s leadership. Subhas Bose, who sought to make a synthesis between Communism and Fascism, was deserted by the socialists and the communists. In fact, the left was in complete disarray during the Second World War, and failed to influence Indian politics. It should be said, however, that the left parties achieved considerable success in building up trade unions and kisan sabhas. This was no mean achievement in view of the social background of these classes.

We may now turn to M.N. Roy, the focus of our study. Roy’s political star reached its zenith in the middle of the 1920-s when he became a member of the Presidium and other policy-making bodies of the Comintern. Perhaps owing to long absence from India and for want of accurate data, he overestimated the revolutionary situation in India during his
debate with Lenin. Ever since the famous debate with Lenin, Roy consistently maintained that the national bourgeoisie received concessions from the British and hardly play a revolutionary role in the colonies. In Roy’s writings this theme recurs most of the time. In the light of modern research it may be said that the Indian bourgeoisie became very powerful between the two World Wars and received concessions in the form of protection and Government purchase of Indian goods (e.g. steel rails from Tatas’ steel mill).

India always figured prominently in Roy’s programme of activities when he was in the Comintern. His efforts to organise a people’s party in India failed and he finally abandoned the plan when he saw several positive signs of radicalisation in the Congress itself from 1929 onwards. Thereafter, he sought to strengthen the hands of the radical elements in order to capture the leadership of the Congress. To him, the Congress appeared to be platform of all the classes, but was dominated mainly by landlords and capitalists; hence his emphasis on building up an “alternative leadership.”

From the beginning of his career in the Comintern, Roy systematically sent political and economic programmes for adoption in the annual sessions of the Congress. At his behest, attempts were consistently made by the radical nationalists to move the resolution for attainment of complete independence, first at the Ahmedabad Congress in 1921 and later in the subsequent sessions. The direct influence of Roy in framing the Karachi Congress (1931) Resolution on Fundamental Rights and Economic Policy can hardly be ruled out, although he himself repudiated the resolution.

It is now a part of history that Roy was one of the founders of the communist movement in India. From 1920 onwards he guided the activities of the Indian communists. It is, however, a fact that communism could not make much headway in India during the 1920-s. Roy was expelled from the Comintern when he opposed the ultra-Left policy of the International. Quite in tune with the Leninist policy of united front, Roy insisted on an anti-fascist alliance with the Social Democrats—
six years before it became the official policy of the Comintern. But Roy was not reinstated and still regarded by the Indian communists as a renegade. Likewise, when he first characterised the Second World War as anti-fascist and people's war, he was maligned by the Indian Communists—three years before they adopted the people's war line in their policy statement. Even so, the Royists and the communists could not unite on a common platform.

A new period in Roy's political life had begun when he was released from jail. It was during this period that he tried to radicalise the Congress directly from within. He opposed the idea of collective affiliation and as a corollary repudiated the separatist tendencies of the CSP, the kisan sabhas, student, youth and labour organisations, which were intended to function as political constituents of the Congress. He was branded a camp-follower of the Right-wing when he supported the move for office acceptance in seven provinces where the Congress had secured majority in the general elections in 1937. Before long the idea of collective affiliation had to be abandoned owing to the feuds inside the Congress; the dispute over the question of office acceptance also ended very soon when the Congress formed ministries with the approval of Nehru and Bose. Roy earned disrepute from the Left-wing elements for advocating courses of action which had earlier been unacceptable to them, only to be endorsed by them a little later. It seems that Roy's attempts to radicalise the Congress did not achieve much success owing to disunity among the radical elements. In fact, the influence of Gandhi over the Congress, not excluding a section of the Left, could not be broken. Roy never got on well with Gandhi.

During the national struggle between the two world wars the Congress carried on civil disobedience, hunger strikes, boycott, no-tax, hartal to wrest political power from the British. Roy tried to introduce a new and novel method of turning the Congress into a constituent assembly, following the pattern of the French Revolution, and ultimately developing the Congress as a state within a state in order to capture
power. After the Faizpur Congress (1936) where Roy had elaborated the idea, it gradually percolated in the ranks of the Congress to a limited extent. It is believed that the idea gained ground during the August Movement when the Congress leaders were in jail. But it lost all reality when communal riots swept the country.

After release from jail and during the period of four years of his stay in the Congress, Roy looked forward to Nehru for stepping up the process of radicalisation in the Congress. Roy and Nehru were perhaps the two prominent political leaders who imbibed the western values. Unlike Nehru, Roy failed as a politician. Perhaps he lacked political pragmatism, and therefore, alienated not only the Congress leaders but also the Left-wing. Nehru was gifted with a practical sense which made him believe that there was no future for anyone who broke with Gandhi. Roy, dominated by logic, stated the conclusions to which his argument led him, and had to break with the Congress.

The parting of the ways came when the second world war broke out. Roy advised the Congress to rise above nationalist prejudices and to work for the success of the forces ranged against Fascism, but his was a cry in vain. When the Congress decided not to continue the ministerial offices in protest against the British war policy, it was Roy who alone insisted on retaining the office on the plea of wielding the strategic position within the state machinery. Ignoring Roy’s contention, the Congress withdrew its ministries from the provinces, allowing walk-over to the Muslim League, an insignificant force at the time. The League lost no time to fill the vacuum, while the Government was looking for popular support, being pressed by the exigencies of the war.

Roy went against the current of popular opinion and was subjected to endless humiliation. Identified with the British war efforts, Roy’s anti-Fascism was regarded as a treachery by the national leaders and also by the middle-class educated people who had strong anti-British feelings. Subhas Bose became a hero when he led the INA. The popularity of
Gandhi, Nehru, Jayaprakash Narayan and other leaders increased, because they were able to capture the imagination of the people.

Following his break with the Congress, Roy had organised the RDP which made effective inroad in some provinces, but the party was no match for the Congress or the Muslim League. The RDP had, however, been able to attract to its fold several old revolutionaries, trade union leaders, students and intellectuals mainly by virtue of Roy's personality. The Party proved itself to be more a propagandist organisation than a political force. In keeping with his earlier opposition to collective affiliation to the Congress, Roy had abandoned the frontal organisations like the kisan sabhas or student organisations. He, however, never ceased to take interest in the trade unions. He refrained from taking recourse to populist movement and economic struggles as media to strengthen the party during the war, lest they affected the anti-fascist war efforts. To alleviate the distress of the people, the Royists organised numerous co-operative societies which received poor response from the people. Likewise, his attempt to form people's committees ended in failure. On the whole, Roy's antipathy to populist activities impeded his movements.

Early in the post-war period, the Congress leaders had realised that the transfer of power was in the offing and therefore, started negotiations with the British. At this point Roy again pleaded for Left unity as a counter-blast to the Congress. His appeal fell on deaf ears. No wonder that Roy hardly played any part in the popular movements associated with the INA prisoners' release and the RIN mutiny. He was convinced that British imperialism was on the wane; a movement launched against the shadow of imperialism would, therefore, help the upper class parties in stepping into the shoes of the departing imperialists. Contrarily, the communists and other Left parties believed that imperialism did very well exist in India even when negotiations took place for transfer of power.

It was evident that Roy relied more on support from extraneous than internal sources. His analysis of Soviet
strategy during and before the war came out almost correct; the most effective defender of Stalin during the war was Roy. Ironically, he perhaps hoped that Stalin as a realist would give the RDP an international status. His hopes were belied as Stalin had no use for a non-conformist like him. Roy was taken aback when the British Labour Party persisted in handing over power to those sections which had worked against the war efforts. In vain, he appealed to the British Labour Party against handing over power to the Congress. The Labour Party hardly paid any attention to Roy’s appeal or to his political activities not only for his failure to prove the strength of the RDP, but perhaps more for his affinity with the Soviet Union.

Imbued with western mode of politics and modern outlook, M.N. Roy seems to be a misfit in India where politics is mostly dominated by emotion and religious considerations; society is ridden by tradition and a variety of prejudices. He was a believer in modernism, while Indian society remained backward. Roy always moved far in advance of his time and of the national surroundings as well. He wrote and spoke of things which were not commonly intelligible. He failed to abandon the process of his thinking and to come down to the level of the common people as was once suggested in the organ of FB. His political make up was western; as such the annual sessions of the Congress appeared to him as “political Kumbha Mela.” While Gandhi and Nehru achieved remarkable success in establishing a rapport with the people, Roy never emerged as a popular leader in Indian politics. He could hardly avoid his fate mostly because of his uncompromising rationalism, an attitude which seldom fits the typical sentimental atmosphere of our politics, often nurtured by the leaders.

Roy laid primacy on cultural revolution in the form of renaissance as a precondition to political revolution. What was missing in Roy’s blue print of a modern political and economic system in India was realpolitik, reconciling rationalism with reality. After his release from jail he drifted gradually from a political leader to a philosopher. Ever since his release from
jail, he remained formally within the Marxist framework, but always felt the "necessity of revising or even discarding" certain formulations of Marx. To him Marxism appeared not as a closed system of philosophy. With a broader understanding of Marx he saw, therefore, the need for "amplification and enrichment" of Marxism, based on experience and new developments in science. He took Marxism as a philosophy of life and "not as the property of any class." While a staunch Marxist he had given up the idea of dictatorship of the proletariat. He later developed the concept of partyless politics and the philosophy of Radical Humanism.

The man who always looked ahead did not fail to foresee his own bleak future. He had admitted long before that he was politically doomed to failure, because he was "politically isolated in India." He had, however, the conviction that his isolation was the isolation of pioneers, which might not be pleasant but "historically necessary." Roy exhorted his followers to have the "courage of pioneering." Like Aurobindo who was an extremist in Indian politics and later chose to be a philosopher, Roy seemed to have lost interest in traditional party politics; and with the dawn of independence he emerged wholly as a political philosopher.