and tariffs and the right to restrict the entry of foreign capital; from 1939-45 for effective transfer of power to a 'national government' with complete control over the economy, including the power to plan for the post-war period; and after the war for full political independence.

The compromise and concessions also performed another political function. They enabled the bourgeoisie to keep a tight control over mass political activity and to constantly reduce the political temperature of the masses. This could not be done without the compromise being made palatable to the broad nationalist sentiment. In the absence of a compromise, not only did the left wing grow stronger but even the right wing of the national movement was compelled to adopt a militant programme.

Compromises and concessions do not, however, at any stage lead the capitalist class to keep out of sight the long-term objective which is constantly striven for. Each compromise is used as a jumping ground for the next one. After each compromise pressure for the next round begins to be built up and that too at a quickened pace and within a reasonable time. Thus continuous pressure on imperialism is maintained though not a continuous state of confrontation or struggle. An example may be cited. G.D. Birla worked hard throughout 1935-36 to bring about a compromise on the constitution. He used for this purpose all his persuasive powers on Mahatma Gandhi and the British leaders and authorities. Yet, as soon as success was achieved, he wrote to Mahadev Desai (and therefore to Gandhi) from London on 30 July 1937 that “after working the Constitution for two or three years successfully” the Indians should tell the British that “they had come to a dead stop because no further progress was possible without a new Act... that India could not be satisfied with her present position. And unless there was a permanent agreement there was likelihood of direct action”. Once again specifying the limited duration of the compromise, he pointed out to Lord Lothian “that in case there was no advance after two or three years, then India would be compelled to take direct action”.14

(C) This entire strategy of step by step political progress in an ascending order through a series of struggles and compromises
sprang from the capitalist character of the Indian capitalist class, from the fact that it was a propertied class struggling against imperialism in an era when the exploited classes were simultaneously struggling for their rights and even challenging the very basic concept of class society, and from the fact that the individual capitalists whom the class accepted as their spokesmen and leaders in the economic and political fields and in its relationship with the colonial authorities and the national movement were extremely far-sighted, shrewd, and sagacious. This strategy did not therefore represent the politics of a comprador class or a junior partner of British capital bearing a collaborationist relationship with British capital and imperialism. Undoubtedly, the Indian capitalist class carried on its struggle against imperialism in a compromising and non-revolutionary way. But the aim as also the net result of its entire strategy was not to betray the national movement but to create conditions of growth even under imperialism and at the same time to establish its hegemony over the national movement, to keep under right-wing influence the urban and rural petty bourgeois democrats and radicals, and thus to keep the revolutionary left in check. This strategy was eminently successful in so far as a bourgeois nation state was brought into existence in 1947 and the forces of left were kept weak and divided throughout the period of the anti-imperialist struggle so that the challenge to bourgeois power after independence would remain feeble.

(D) The Indian capitalists were associated with the nationalist movement both as a segment of Indian society and as a separate and distinct political force; but they did not do so primarily through direct participation. In their personal politics most of them were liberals; they seldom went beyond constitutional agitation. Most of them welcomed official titles (though this did not prevent Gandhi, Sardar Patel, etc., from describing some of the title-holding capitalists as patriots). The overwhelming majority of the capitalists could not therefore be described as active anti-imperialists. Some of them did of course give financial support to the Congress but perhaps the extent of such support has been exaggerated.

What is of far greater significance, the class as a whole, including some of its conservative members, never opposed the
National Congress politically and always remained within the mainstream of the national movement. Even while keeping their individual or class political position autonomous, showing scant regard for the Congress programme of non-cooperation, civil disobedience and boycot, the capitalist spokesmen supported the Congress political stand, particularly after 1928. Even when enjoying periods of economic honeymoon with the colonial authorities, they did not urge or encourage the political movement to surrender or to compromise on essentials. As a class, the Indian capitalists refused in spite of blandishments to enter into a separate political agreement with the colonial authorities behind the Congress back. The question of joining the imperialist camp did not even arise. Invariably, following an implicit division of labour, they referred the colonial authorities to the Congress as the organization and Gandhi as the leader with whom they should carry on political negotiations and arrive at a compromise. In the economic field, however, the capitalists negotiated the compromises directly. Though, within the Congress, the right wing was preferred and supported against the left wing, for political purposes the Congress as a whole was seen as the national spokesman. Even the left wing was not attacked openly, and an attempt to do so by a small segment in 1936 was firmly put down by the overwhelming majority. On the other hand, the National Liberals and the Hindu Mahasabha were never taken seriously and were extended little political support.

VI

(The Question of Political Roads)

In discussing the question of the roles that the bourgeoisie may play in a national liberation struggle, which is the form that the bourgeois democratic revolution takes in a colonial or semi-colonial country, the tendency among the recent Marxist writers has been to posit broadly two historical models which are then held to apply in all essentials to all the extent or possible cases.
The first is the French model in which the bourgeoisie playing the leading role and undeterred by the rise of a left wing on its flank boldly overthrew the absolutist monarchy and the feudal nobility and thus under its own leadership accomplished the bourgeois democratic revolution.

In the second or the Chinese (and the Russian) model, the bourgeoisie starts on the road to democratic revolution (for democracy, nationalism, and agrarian reform) but, because of its class links with the semi-feudal landed class and colonialism and the consequent lack of independence in politics and because of its fear of the simultaneously developing radical forces of the politically aroused working class and peasantry, this class oscillates and ultimately abandons or betrays its historical task of making the bourgeois democratic revolution, fails to fight imperialism, and in fact goes over to imperialism and semi-feudalism. It thus betrays nationalism to defend its narrowly conceived class interests. Two sub-cases now follow: (1) This betrayal leads to a certain period of counter-revolutionary predominance or the restoration of imperialism and semi-feudalism. (2) Alternatively, following the period of counter-revolution, the working class develops its political force, allies with the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie, and brings the bourgeois democratic revolution to fruition under its leadership, leading to a quick transition to socialism. Crucial to this model is the notion of the bourgeoisie betraying the national liberation struggle by allying itself with imperialism. And the determining role in this outcome is played by two factors: (i) The lack of a significant stratum of industrial capitalists which is independent, or not basically dependent on foreign capital and colonialism (or is not comprador in character); and (ii) the existence of a powerful revolutionary movement of workers and peasants whose fear drives the bourgeoisie into the arms of imperialism.

A study of the political role of the Indian bourgeoisie during the twentieth century shows that the Indian pattern of development did not follow either of these two models. Certainly, it did not lead or support a resolute revolutionary mass struggle against imperialism. At the same time, as we have seen earlier, it did not betray the national, anti-imperialist movement; it did
not go over to imperialism; it always stayed in the camp of anti-
imperialism; it was willing to participate in the task of national
liberation; it even showed a certain capacity to fight imperia-
ism, though its pattern of struggle was never revolutionary; and
lastly it consistently backed the petty bourgeois leadership of the
national movement. In other words, it revealed the capacity to
fulfil the bourgeois democratic tasks but in a non-revolutionary
way and without completing the economic and the political
tasks simultaneously. This result was of course not accidental.

Firstly, the Indian bourgeoisie had grown as an independent
capitalist class which was not subordinated to the metropolitan
capitalist class.

Secondly, the working class and the revolutionary left
failed to organize the other dominated classes around the tasks
of national liberation and agrarian revolution and remained so
weak as not to pose a challenge to bourgeois hegemony over the
national movement and social development. In both Russia
and China, the revolutionary working class parties had taken
up the struggle for bourgeois democratic tasks on their own,
i.e., independently. In India, this was not done. Neither the
proletariat was prepared for the task, nor were the peasantry
and the urban petty bourgeoisie brought under its political
influence. Consequently, the Indian bourgeoisie was never faced
with the type of challenge from the left that its counterparts
faced in Russia or China. Thus the political, ideological and
organizational weakness of the working class and its political
leadership played a crucial role in the ability of the Indian bour-
geoisie to follow a third road.

Thirdly, the Indian bourgeoisie succeeded in keeping the vast
petty bourgeois masses, both rural and urban, under its political
and ideological influence with the result that these masses
confined their political and ideological activity within the broad
parameters of a bourgeois developmental programme in both
economic and political fields. But this it succeeded in doing
precisely because of its refusal to desert and betray bourgeois
nationalism and because of the political weakness of the left.
Also crucial in this respect was the role of Gandhi who perfect-
ed a political technique which simultaneously mobilised the
masses politically and prevented them from acting on their own
or becoming their own political masters or even functioning
politically in a continuous manner, i.e., non-spasmodically. The result was that the Indian capitalists, on the one hand, gave all out support to Gandhi, and, on the other, learnt not to be mortally afraid of the masses so long as they could be kept under rigid political tutelage and their political awareness remained at a low level; and they, thus, evolved a different relationship with the masses than that evolved by the capitalists in Russia or China.

Sometimes the theory that the Indian bourgeoisie did in the end betray nationalism is put forth on the ground that the Indian road only led to the transfer of political power and not to the expulsion of all imperialist economic interests. While this fact is certainly important for any study of India’s social development and is also a crucial constituent of the Indian way, it does not take away from the central aspect of the change that came in 1947. Nor is it very relevant to the present question. In a bourgeois democratic revolution, the crucial question is that of state power which is then used to promote capitalist development and not to hinder it as before. And here a decisive change did occur. Similarly, the question of the success of bourgeois democratic revolution should not be confused with the capacity to generate self-sustained economic development or with the immediate completion of the bourgeois democratic tasks. The basic confusion here lies in that many Marxists want to encompass the question of the entire future (post-colonial) social development of the ex-colonies under the broad category of bourgeois democratic revolution. This I suggest is incorrect. The main function of the bourgeois democratic revolution is to settle the question of state power and to open the way to the capitalist development of society so that feudalism and/or imperialism no longer determine the main direction of its political and economic life. Whether self-sustaining economic development occurs or not is quite another matter which is linked to the wider question of the capacity of underdeveloped capitalism to grow in the era of world capitalism-imperialism and socialism and not merely to compradorism. When such development fails to occur or when certain other tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution are not completed, certainly other social revolutionary forces emerge. But they do not make then a bourgeois democratic revolution but merely complete the tasks left over by
it as part of the new social revolutionary process. It may be noted that no bourgeois democratic revolution since the French Revolution, if even that, has completed all its tasks immediately or even in the few succeeding decades. If success of the bourgeois democratic revolution is defined as widely as many at present tend to do, then all such revolutions can be successful or completed only when a society turns socialist. For example, when the bourgeois democratic revolution occurred in Britain in 1648, its essence lay in the transfer of state power to the bourgeoisie which could now set out to organize the society and economy in its own interests, i.e., along capitalist lines. No rigid time table for self-sustained economic development was guaranteed (it could have been upset by so many intervening factors) nor were feudal economic and social relations suddenly, dramatically, or immediately overthrown. Even more so was this the case in Germany, Italy, and Japan. I have also the feeling that to argue back from state power to the lack of sudden economic shift when the sudden shift in state power itself is in part and basically the result of changes in the economic field is to indulge in circular reasoning.

Sometimes, perhaps, the confusion arises because of the emphasis on the word revolution in the phrase bourgeois revolution. But this refers to a radical shift in state power and economic relations. This shift need not occur through a mass revolution and by a revolutionary democratic bourgeoisie. It can be brought about in quite non-revolutionary or even reactionary ways. There is again the example of Germany and Japan.

The crux of the economic question after 1947 was not that of completing the bourgeois democratic revolution but that of breaking Indian economy's structural links with world capitalism. This task would remain basically un-performed even if the penetration of the ex-metropolitan country's capital was weakened. The basic weakness of the Indian economy and of its capitalist class lay in its integration with the world capitalist economy in a subordinate or dependent position and not in the comprador character of its capitalist class. So long as this structural link lasted, one or the other national or international capitalist group would continue to penetrate it and threaten its autonomous development. This structural link would also stand in the way of self-sustained growth. The degree of social,
political, ideological and economic transformation and mobilization of the people and the intensity of the struggle against world capitalism that the task of breaking this structural link requires is revealed by the example of Cuba where it took a socialist revolution to accomplish it.

Moreover, this structural link is not the result of the prevalence of semi-colonialism or neo-colonialism; it is part of the process of capitalist development in the modern era. Consequently, after 1947, the task in India was not to organize a national liberation struggle of which the struggle against capitalism would form an integral part, but to organize a struggle against capitalism of which the struggle against imperialism would from an integral part. This issue was and is of great theoretical and political significance since the former understanding could lead to a political struggle that was divorced from reality or to collaboration with the underdeveloped capitalism in the name of fighting imperialism or neo-colonialism. Today, self-sustained economic growth and the defence of democracy require not a national liberation struggle against imperialism but a struggle against capital itself. And the very possibility of neo-colonialism arises because of the incapacity of underdeveloped capitalism to develop on its own, to solve national problems, and to resolve the deep-rooted social crisis, even when it is aided by socialist countries. This aspect, however, needs detailed treatment in a separate paper.

NOTES

1 The idea that the Indian national movement originated with the bourgeoisie is the result of the mechanical application of European history. Moreover, since at no stage did the bourgeoisie provide the main thrust of the movement, at no stage can its development be primarily explained with reference to the role of the bourgeoisie only. I certainly do not want to contribute through this paper to this tendency that warped so much of the political discussion among the Marxists from 1920 to 1948.

2 Many of the Marxist writers on the subject have described the relationship of the Indian capitalist class with imperialism as dual before 1947. But this does not answer the basic question; which of the dual aspects of the relationship was primary both in the long run and at specific moments? Mere recognition of the dual character of the relationship is an advance, but it does not take the analysis very far.

3 There were a few compradors and junior partners of British capital.
But they were neither in the mainstream of Indian business nor important in the business and class organizations of the Indian capitalist class. They also demarcated themselves from the main body of the class by supporting imperialism in the field of politics as also of economic policies.

This was also true of the big (in Indian terms) bourgeoisie. But, certainly, the wide prevalence of small and middle capitalists in India reinforced this result.

Nor did these capitalist houses have significant semi-feudal land holdings. Several of them did, of course, have large-scale capitalist farms. This question is not of direct relevance here except in so far as their semi-feudal interests might have subordinated them to imperialism as in China.

In fact, these did not in the main spring even from direct administrative suppression. British colonial policies in India were geared primarily to the colonial integration of Indian economy with British economy and not to the direct suppression of the Indian capitalist class.

In this paper I have studied the stand taken directly by the class itself through its class organizations and spokesmen and not through its ideological or political spokesmen. The latter can be the subject of a separate study.

In his presidential reply to the third annual general meeting of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry on 16th February 1930, G.D. Birla said: "I am very sorry that we have not been able to influence the Government or to convert them to our views, but we never anticipated that. It is impossible in the present circumstances and in the present political condition of our country to convert the Government to our views; but I think the only solution of our present difficulties lies in every Indian businessman strengthening the hands of those who are fighting for the freedom of our country. . . . Swaraj (freedom) is not a question of sentiment. It is a question of bread. The prosperity of the country depends entirely on the amount of political freedom which we get and I think that not only in the interests of the country but in the interests of the capitalists, the employers, and the industrialists we should try to fight and strengthen the hands of those who are fighting for Swaraj".


The leftover pickings of the China opium trade and the yarn trade with Britain, petty government contracts, the cotton boom of the American Civil War, the fall out from bureaucratic corruption in British India or the princely states, and the normal profits arising in the sphere of internal circulation formed the narrow base of the original capital of the Indian bourgeoisie.

This put the sector of industrialists whose major interest lay in mining, iron and steel, and electric power under strong pressure to remain loyalists. This factor, along with the fact that the Government was the largest consumer of its steel products, seems to have had this effect on the House of Tatas, among others.

In a memorandum, a copy of which he sent to Lord Halifax,
summarising what he had been telling British leaders in England during his visit, G.D. Birla wrote in 1935: "The right-wing Congressmen are thus fighting against two forces—the Government and the Socialists. The latter are making a direct attack by discrediting the leaders for having 'achieved nothing'. The Government is helping the Socialists by ignoring the right-wing; between the two the right-wing is being crushed. . . . Sensible Indian men and women realizes their need of British help; they want British friendship". G.D. Birla, In the Shadow of the Mahatma: a Personal Memoir, Calcutta, 1953, pp. 193-95. Again, in March 1937, in a letter to the Viceroy, Birla after having referred to the Working Committee Resolution on office acceptance wrote: "I think this is a great triumph for the right wing of the Congress and a counter-response would very much strengthen their hands. I hope his Excellency appreciates the position". (Emphasis added). Ibid., p. 214.

11This meant a major opening for the Indian capitalists at a time when normal channels of investment and accumulation were drying up. 30 sugar factories immediately came up and by 1934 their number had gone up to 130 from 32 in 1931. Almost every major industrialist of the country took part in the sugar boom. Moreover, many a capitalist found that profits of his sugar factory alone enabled him to keep up the old rate of dividends.

15This is in complete contrast with the political behaviour of the comprador bourgeoisie of China which thrice, in 1911, in 1926-27 and in 1945-49, not only attacked the left but also surrendered before imperialism.

16In the Shadow of the Mahatma, pp. 255-56.

18Sometimes there is a tendency to suggest that the deviation from the Chinese model is only temporary or for the time being and that in the long run the Chinese (or the Russian) model will apply. This has in fact been said since the 1920s when the famous Colonial Thesis of the Comintern codified this view in 1928. But with the transfer of political sovereignty to India in 1947 and the consequent passage of nearly 25 years one long run at least should be seen to have come to an end. Not to see this is to mystify and indulge in mere logic-chopping. After all, any long run to be a useful concept of analysis must have some sort of limited time-span.

19Though even in the economic field crucial changes occurred. Imperialist domination of the Indian market was severely curbed and the direct appropriation of Indian social surplus virtually ended. Even the position of the existing foreign capital was weakened, while the entry of fresh foreign capital was restricted.

20This was seen by Karl Marx as early as 1849 in the context of bourgeois democratic revolutions in Europe: "Every revolutionary upheaval, however remote from the class struggle (between bourgeoisie and working class) its goal may appear to be, must fail until the revolutionary working class is victorious, . . . every social reform remains a utopia until the proletarian revolution and the feudalistic counter-revolution measure swords in a world war". Wage, Labour, and Capital, Moscow, 1970 printing, pp. 17-18.
Jawaharlal Nehru grew more and more radical during 1933-36\(^1\) for various reasons—ranging from the impact of the world depression on India and the world and the resulting crisis and collapse of the capitalist system portending intense social change everywhere, the culmination of his own intellectual development since 1926-27 fed by the voracious reading he did in jail over 1932-35, to the defeat suffered by the nationalist movement during 1932-34 and his constant incarceration in these years. Not only does he lay claim to being a revolutionary,\(^2\) but his leftism becomes less and less vague and woolly. He begins to see almost every aspect of Indian politics in a clearer light at the plane of thought; and, of course, he does so with his usual passion. Not only questions of theory, but even questions of the perspective, social content, social base, and political strategy of the national movement are seen in a more radical, well-formed way. This is his most ‘Marxist’ phase; the Indian summer of his leftism. His most recent biographer has described the Nehru of 1927-28 as a “self-conscious revolutionary radical”;\(^3\) he was during 1933-36 on the verge of becoming a Marxist revolutionary anti-imperialist.\(^4\)

The transition was long in the making, and it was never completed. But its near-last phase can be said to begin, systematically and publicly, with his articles “Whither India” published in October 1933; and it came to a brilliant fruition in his Presidential Address to the Lucknow Congress in April 1936. In between, there were a number of speeches, articles, letters, prison-diaries, and the Autobiography.

The radical Nehru produced consternation among the Indian capitalists and the right-wing in the Congress. They took certain steps to counter and contain him—thereby revealing a long-term strategy to deal with him and others like him. This paper examines the radicalism of Nehru which frightened the capitalists and the counter-strategy which they therefore used.

Nehru’s commitment to socialism finds a clearer and sharper expression during 1933-36. Already he had declared himself a socialist in 1929 in his Presidential Address to the Lahore Congress, but the conception of socialism had been rather vague. He was veering round to Marxism but there was as yet no ‘deep absorption’ of Marxism.

Now, he repeatedly justified socialism and communism, and he used the two terms synonymously; and declared that they had “science and logic on their side”; and, in October 1933, confidently answered the question “Whither India?” thus: “Surely to the great human goal of social and economic equality, to the ending of all exploitation of nation by nation and class by class, to national freedom within the framework of an international cooperative socialist world federation”. And, in December 1933, he wrote: “The true civic ideal is the socialist ideal, the communist ideal”. He had some reservation regarding the communists; he was also critical of the Comintern’s tactics. But in the end, he gave his commitment squarely to communism: “... fundamentally the choice before the world today is one between some form of Communism and some form of Fascism, ... There is no middle road between Fascism and Communism. One has to choose between the two, and I choose
the Communist ideal.”

This commitment he put in unequivocal and passionate words at Lucknow on April 20, 1936: “I am convinced that the only key to the solution of the world’s problems and of India’s problems lies in socialism... I see no way of ending the poverty, the vast unemployment, the degradation, and the subjection of the Indian people except through socialism.”

Nehru also defined the terms ‘capitalism’ and ‘socialism’ more clearly and scientifically. The word ‘capitalism’, he said in October 1933, could “mean only one thing: the economic system that has developed since the industrial revolution... capitalism means the developed system of production for profit based on private ownership of the means of production”. Similarly, socialism was seen as a radically different social system. It was not to be defined “in a vague humanitarian way, but in the scientific, economic sense”. It involved “vast and revolutionary changes in our political and social structure, the ending of vested interests in land and industry.” In particular he pinpointed the attack on the private ownership of the means of production. Socialism meant, he told his Lucknow audience, “the ending of private property, except in a restricted sense, and the replacement of the present profit system by a higher ideal of cooperative system.” Moreover, one could not be both for socialism and for capitalism—i.e., for “the nationalization of the instruments of production and distribution” as well as for their private ownership. Of course, there could be ‘half-way houses’ on the road, “but one can hardly have two contradictory and conflicting processes going on side by side. The choice must be made and for one who aims at socialism there can be only one choice.”

Nehru also emphasized the role of class analysis and class struggle. In a press interview on September 17, 1933, he said that every person should be enabled to “realize exactly where he and his class and group stand”. So far as class struggle was concerned, he pointed out that it was a fact of life and of history all over the world. “Class struggles have always existed and exist today,” only “people interested in maintaining the status quo try to hide this fact” and then accuse others of “fomenting class struggle.” Class struggle, said Nehru, was not “created but recognized.” The political task was to remove the cloak used to
hide the reality. Then it would be disclosed that “some classes dominate the social order, and exploit other classes”, and the remedy would only lie “in the ending of that exploitation.”

Going beyond economics, Nehru began to criticise even the political institutions of the bourgeois social order—thus undermining the hegemony of the bourgeois political ideology structured by the national movement since 1880s and continuing through the Gandhian era. Though committed to political democracy and civil liberties, he was clear in his mind that “if political or social institutions stand in the way of such a change ['establishment of a socialist order'], they have to be removed”. Moreover, he wrote in 1936, even political democracy was acceptable “only in the hope that this will lead to social democracy”, for “political democracy is only the way to the goal and is not the final objective”. So far as the establishment of socialism by democratic means was concerned, that too was not likely in practice—though it remained a possibility in theory—because “the opponents of socialism will reject the democratic method when they see their power threatened”. The democratic method had not succeeded anywhere so far “in resolving a conflict about the very basic structure of the State or of society. When this question arises, the group or class which controls the State-power does not voluntarily give it up because the majority demands it.” In fact, “ruling powers and ruling classes have not been known in history to abdicate willingly”.

It was also to be noted, he wrote in October 1933, that the West European political doctrines of democracy and liberty served only the capitalist classes. In the absence of economic equality, “the vote...was of little use” and in practice “exploitation of man by man and group by group increased”. The result was that the liberal doctrine of “government of the people, by the people and for the people” was translated in practice as “a government by the possessing classes for their own benefit”. Consequently, concluded Nehru, even this liberal doctrine could be established only “when the masses held power, that is under socialism”.

Nehru also began to escape from the Gandhian dichotomy of conversion versus coercion. Making a beginning in jail in March 1933, he told Gandhi that his weekly Harijan was not likely “to convert a single bigoted Sanatanist”, for, as John Stuart Mill
had pointed out, "‘the convictions of the mass of mankind run hand in hand with their interests or class feelings’. In an interview to the Pioneer on 31 August 1933, he asserted that “a complete reconstruction of society on a new basis” meant the diversion of profits and property from the ‘haves’ to the ‘have-nots’, and it could not be supposed “that vested interests will ever voluntarily agree to that”.

Taking up the theme for systematic treatment in October 1933, in his articles “Whither India”, Nehru pointed out that the whole principle of the state was based on coercion as was also the present social system. “Is not coercion and enforced conformity the very basis of both?” he asked. In fact, “Army, police, laws, prisons, taxes are all methods of coercion. The zamindar who realizes rent and often many illegal cesses relies on coercion, not on conversion of the tenants. The factory owner who gives starvation wages does not rely on conversion. Hunger and the organized forces of the State are the coercive processes employed by both.” It did not, therefore, lie in the mouths of the possessing classes “to talk of conversion”. The real problem was to end the vested interests, to bring the ruling classes and their exploitation to an end. Even Gandhi accepted the principle of divesting the vested interests. But how was this to be done? History did not show any “instance of a privileged class or group or nation giving up its special privileges or interests willingly”. This had always required “a measure of coercion”. India was not going to be an exception. Here, too, “coercion or pressure is necessary to bring about political and social change”. In fact, the non-violent mass movements of India since 1919 had been precisely such processes of coercion or pressure; they were meant “to coerce the other party”. Even non-violent non-co-operation was to be viewed not “as a negative and passive method”, but “as an active, dynamic, and forceful method of enforcing the mass will”.

Nehru took up the theme again in his Autobiography. There, he devoted a whole chapter to gently combating this basic aspect of Gandhi’s ideology. “Economic interests”, he pointed out, “shape the political views of groups and classes. Neither reason nor moral considerations override these interests.” It was, therefore, “an illusion to imagine that a dominant imperialist power will give up its domination over a country, or
that a class will give up its superior position and privileges, unless effective pressure, amounting to coercion, is exercised."

At the end of the chapter, he took up a clear-cut position: If the aim of "a classless society with equal economic justice and opportunity for all" was to be realized, "everything that comes in the way will have to be removed, gently if possible, forcibly if necessary. And there seems to be little doubt that coercion will often be necessary."27

Throughout these years, he pointed to the inadequacy of the existing nationalist ideology and stressed the need to inculcate a new ideology, which would enable the people to study their condition scientifically.28 One reason for his favouring the continuation of the civil disobedience movement, even after its virtual defeat, lay in the belief that the continuation of the political crisis favoured the spread of new ideas among the masses and the intelligentsia.29

The words 'new ideology'—found so often in his letters, essays, and speeches of the period—stood in reality for Marxism, for he explicitly accepted the general validity of Marxism as "the scientific interpretation of history and politics and economics" and as representing "scientific socialism" in contrast to "a vague and idealistic socialism."30 On May 15, 1936, he told the Indian Progressive Group of Bombay that "scientific socialism, or Marxism, was the only remedy for the ills of the world."31 On May 17, he told a meeting of Congress Socialists that history as well as the contemporary state of affairs "could not be explained except by socialism and Marxism."32 Nehru accepted the entire Marxist analysis of the economic crisis of monopoly capitalism and of imperialism and the need for its overthrow. The crisis of capitalism, he wrote in 1933, was essentially "due to the ill distribution of the world's wealth; to its concentration in a few hands". Moreover, "the disease seems to be of the essence of capitalism and grows with it". The heart of the matter was that the capitalist system was "no longer suited to the present methods of production". The answer, therefore, lay in "a new system in keeping with the new technique"; in other words, "the way of socialism".33

Nehru also made his own the contemporary Marxist analysis of Fascism—and this, at a time when many 'general' radicals were being attracted by the superficially 'leftist' programme and
stance, popular base, discipline, and organizational success of Fascism in Europe and Asia. Fascism arose, wrote Nehru, because the failure of the capitalist order had led to a powerful challenge by the working class. "This challenge, when it has become dangerous, has induced the possessing classes to sink their petty differences and band themselves together to fight the common foe. This had led to Fascism." At Lucknow, Nehru concluded his analysis of world affairs by contrasting the failure of capitalism with the success of the socialist experiment in the Soviet Union and openly held up Soviet socialism as the social alternative to capitalism. Nehru was not all praise for the new state. There were "defects and mistakes and ruthlessness". There was much there that had "pained" him. Yet the "new era" was no longer "a dream of the future", for it was "taking visible, vital shape" in the USSR, "stumbling occasionally but ever marching forward." This "new order and a new civilization" was "the most promising feature of our dismal age".

Having made a radical critique of world capitalism-imperialism, Nehru began to argue for the integration of India's anti-imperialist struggle with Asia's struggle against colonialism and with the world struggle against capitalism "for the emancipation of the oppressed." In his Lucknow Address, Nehru developed the linkage further. India's problem was "but a part of the world problem of capitalism-imperialism." Moreover, socialism in Europe and America and the nationalist movements in Africa and Asia formed a single camp against that of Fascism and imperialism. Thus Nehru's internationalism of the period was politically significant, and quite radical; he hoped to use it to radicalise Indian politics, and to spread socialist consciousness and ideology among the Indian people.

II

During the years 1933-36, Nehru increasingly extended his new ideological grasp to the Indian national movement and demanded a change in its basic strategy and organizational structure.
First of all, he challenged the basic nationalist political strategy followed by the Congress leadership since the 1880s, that is, the strategy of advancing towards political power and independence by stages arrived at through a series of compromises to be forced on the colonial power through the application of ever-increasing political pressure. In previous articles, I have described this strategy as that of Pressure-Compromise-Pressure or P-C-P. Under this strategy, political pressure, usually through a mass movement, is applied, political concessions are secured, there is a period of 'peaceful cooperation', however disguised, with the colonial political structure; while such 'goodwill' prevails on both sides, preparations are made for another round of pressure or mass movements, till the cycle is repeated—the repetition being an upward spiralling one. The political advance came, according to the strategy, through the political or constitutional actions of the constituted authority, that is, the British Government. Seizure of political power was thus ruled out by the inherent logic of this strategy.

In the concrete Indian political situation of 1934-36, the dominant Congress leadership and the leadership of the Indian capitalist class felt that the stage of pressure or active struggle was over and the stage of compromise, cooperation, and 'goodwill' had to be ushered in. They had been quietly working towards a political compromise, in fact, since the end of 1933, for the civil disobedience movement had definitely petered out by that time.

In the circumstances existing at the time, this involved the working of constitutional reforms, which were finally promulgated in 1935. Gandhi appeared to be against working the reforms, but his policy—of leaving the legislative councils to those Congressmen who wanted to work in them while others devoted themselves to the 'constructive programme'—virtually amounted to unofficial acceptance of the phase of compromise and cooperation. Moreover, Gandhi and the dominant right-wing leadership of the Congress strained all their nerves to prevent the Congress from adopting a policy of office rejection in the provinces under the Act of 1935 even though they were vehemently denouncing the Act at that time. This is very clearly brought out by the encouragement that Gandhi gave to G.D. Birla to bring about a spirit of mutual trust and 'personal touch'
between the rulers and the Congress leadership in general and Gandhi in particular. Again and again Birla, and through him, though virtually silently, Gandhi assured British statesmen and officials that even the otherwise condemned reforms could be worked if the ‘personal touch’ between the two sides was established.\textsuperscript{44}

Nehru, on the other hand, argued that if the aim was ‘a new state’ and not merely ‘a new administration’, power could not be gained through stages and with the cooperation of the ruling power,\textsuperscript{45} that the Indian national movement had reached a stage where there should be an uncompromising opposition to and permanent confrontation and conflict with imperialism until it was overthrown.\textsuperscript{46} Temporary setbacks should lead not to cooperation or compromise—even a short-term one—with imperialism, but to continued hostility to it though necessarily such hostility would be on a low key till the upswing came once again.\textsuperscript{47}

First, said Nehru, the contradiction between imperialism and the Indian people was fundamental and could not, therefore, be resolved half-way. “...between British imperialism and Indian freedom there is no meeting ground and there can be no peace.”\textsuperscript{48} This meant that even if there was no mass movement there could be no reversion to a constitutional phase when the reforms were worked.

Secondly, every movement—national or social—reached sooner or later a stage when it endangered the existing order. The struggle, then, became perpetual and immediate, unconstitutional and illegal. No scope was left for further compromises. This also happened when “the masses enter politics”. Nor was there a middle stage or middle path out of the impasse. “The only alternative to a continuation” of the struggle was “some measure of cooperation with imperialism”. But, at this stage in Indian and world history, any form of compromise with imperialism “would be a betrayal of the cause”. And the answer: “the only way out is to struggle through to the other side” and to “carry on the struggle for freedom without compromise or going back or faltering.”\textsuperscript{49} Nehru was also trying to impart the notion of the strategy of seizure of power—though through a non-violent mass movement. Real power could not be won gradually, through stages, “bit by bit” or by “two annas
or four annas”. Either imperialism would retain power or the Indians would take possession “of the citadel”. Here, he was directly posing the strategy of P-V (‘V’ for victory) against that of P-C-P. He continued to accept, in full, the non-violent mass movement as the only possible method of struggle in India. But, for him, this method constituted the path of struggle and not of compromise and cooperation with imperialism. He again and again emphasized the strategy of struggle—the question of seizure of power—rather than the methods of struggle which, he said, were conditioned by the existing political circumstances.

More concretely, he clearly saw, during 1935-36, that acceptance of office in the provinces under the Act of 1935 would amount to the reversing of the national movement to the compromise phase. And he campaigned so vehemently against acceptance of office, because it was a question of struggle between two strategic lines. The struggle became bitter precisely because Nehru was here challenging the basic strategy of Gandhi and the national movement. This is also why he was so completely defeated that he was never again to pose a challenge to Gandhi or to the dominant Congress leadership.

In his Lucknow Address, he took a firm stand on this question which, he said, was of great significance since “behind that issue lay deep questions of principle”. “Behind it lies,” he said, “some—what hidden, the question of independence itself and whether we seek revolutionary changes in India or are working for petty reforms under the aegis of British imperialism.” Office-acceptance “would inevitably mean our cooperation in some measure with the repressive apparatus of imperialism, and we would become partners in this repression and in the exploitation of our people”. It would mean, in practice, a surrender before imperialism. For Congressmen it would amount to giving up “the very basis and background of our existence.” The Congress not only should not accept office, it could not afford even “to hesitate and waver about it.” Acceptance of office by the Congress “will be a pit from which it would be difficult for us to come out.” And, lastly, such a step would be fatal to the effort “to cultivate a revolutionary mentality among our people,” which was one of his major concerns at this time.

On a wider plane, Nehru was opposed to giving undue importance to parliamentary activity in general. He wanted to
assign to the work in the legislatures a purely subsidiary role in politics. It was useful only to the extent that it could be used to mobilise the masses for direct mass political action. He also warned Congressmen against the ‘real danger’ that they might be tempted to tone down their programme and policy “in order to win over” for electoral purposes “the hesitating and compromising groups and individuals.” One step, whereby the work in the legislatures could be prevented from becoming “a hindrance to our other work,” was for the Congress and its Working Committee to control that work directly and to abolish the semi-autonomous parliamentary boards.

He recognized, however, that some form of parliamentary activity was bound to exist and that it must, therefore, be given a focus around which to rally without compromising with imperialism. Moreover, the mechanism through which power would be grasped and wielded by successful nationalism had also to be laid before the people. Both purposes could be served by the realistic and brilliant slogan of the Constituent Assembly (CA). It was in 1933 that Nehru had first publicly raised the demand that the future constitution of India should be framed by a popularly elected Constituent Assembly. The slogan of the CA was a direct challenge to the theory of the working of the existing legislative councils—and hence also to the strategy of achieving freedom through stages and through political action by the rulers, for the CA could meet only after British domination had ended. It was, therefore, a slogan which would mobilise the people for the overthrow of imperialism. Nehru reiterated the demand for a Constituent Assembly at Lucknow, and for the same reasons. CA would not come, he pointed out, through negotiations with imperialism or as the result of a new act of the British Parliament. It would be an expression of the seizure of power by the Indian people, of “at least a semi-revolutionary situation”, that is, of the new strategy of national struggle.

Nehru increasingly pointed to another weakness of the national movement—its essentially middle class and bourgeois character. Even when the political struggle was based on the masses, “the backbone and leadership were always supplied by the middle classes.” This produced weakness in several directions. It produced a vague nationalist feeling and ideology
of freedom, which did not even realize "what form that freedom would take". It also produced a certain idealism, a mysticism, and a sort of religious revivalism. Moreover, the middle classes looked in "two directions at the same time." Their members hoped to go up in the world even as most of them were being crushed by the colonial economy. Consequently this leadership looked in "two directions at the same time", and vacillated during periods of struggle. As a propertied group, it was open to threats to its property by the Government which, therefore, found it easy "to bring pressure on it and to exhaust its stamina." Middle class domination of the national movement also meant that its policies and ideas, and the problems it raised, were governed far more by "this middle-class outlook than by a consideration of the needs of the great majority of the population." 

The answer lay in a shift in the social base and the social character of the movement and of its leadership. The middle classes could no longer "claim to represent the masses." The movement must establish "a new link and a new connection." This could only mean the incorporation of the masses, "the active participation of the peasantry and workers." The basic step through which these changes in the class character of the leadership of the national movement, as also in its strategy of struggle and social content, would be brought about was the collective affiliation of the basic organizations of workers and peasants, trade unions and kisan sabhas, to the Congress. In addition, the Congress should encourage the formation of such kisan sabhas and trade unions and help them carry on day-to-day struggle around their economic demands.

It seemed that Nehru was beginning to grope towards assigning the masses a role different from the one assigned by Gandhi. While Gandhi brought the masses into the political movement, he never encouraged or permitted the masses to discuss and develop political activity on their own, leave alone encourage them to have their own leadership. Nehru suggested both. Moreover, Nehru was beginning to come down from the realm of ideas and ideologies to the realm of methods of political struggle and questions of organization, and hence was beginning to meet Gandhi's mild taunt in his letter of 14 September 1933 that "you have emphasized the necessity of
a clear statement of the goal” but the fact is “that the clearest possible definition of the goal and its appreciation would fail to take us there if we do not know and utilise the means of achieving it.”

Nehru paid a great deal of attention to the question of the integration of social struggle with political struggle—thus redefining the very goals of the national movement. Of course, he identified himself fully with the mainstream of nationalism and its chief leader and spokesman, the Indian National Congress. He recognized that nationalism was the strongest force in the country. He also accepted the multi-class character of the Congress as the leader of a national—as apart from a class—movement. At the same time, he criticised the existing dominant tendency to totally subordinate the social struggle to the political struggle, or, much worse, to postpone the social struggle to a later period in the name of national unity and national struggle. This wrong tendency, he believed, was the result of the middle-class, bourgeois character of Indian nationalism. Middle-class nationalism had tended to ignore the “inherent and fundamental” internal class conflicts and tried “to avoid disturbing the class divisions or the social status quo.” The reason usually offered was that “the national issue must be settled first.” But there could be no genuine struggle which did not incorporate the social struggle of the masses.

In fact, predicted Nehru in October 1933, “political and social emancipation will come together to some at least of the countries of Asia.” Freedom of India was necessary, he said, precisely because the masses were having to bear the burden of the vested interests of certain classes in India and abroad. “The achievement of freedom thus becomes a question . . . of divesting vested interests.” On the other hand, “If an indigenous government took the place of the foreign government and kept all the vested interests intact this would not even be the shadow of freedom.” Therefore, the immediate objective or goal of the freedom struggle had to be the ending of the exploitation of the Indian people. Politically, this meant independence from foreign rule; socially and economically it had to mean “the ending of all special class privileges and vested interests.”

In a message to the Indian Labour Journal in November 1933,
Nehru again emphasized that both social and national struggles were basic and that in neither should a compromise be made. Simultaneously, he urged the working class to play its due role in the anti-imperialist struggle. The workers should unite and organize, acquire and develop “the correct ideology” leading to a socialist programme, and act politically in alliance with the national movement with a view to “orient it in favour of the workers”. In December 1933, in a speech delivered at the All-India Trade Union Congress, he assured the workers that, if they participated fully in the national struggle as well as in their own social struggle, they would help bring about not only “political freedom in India but social freedom also.”

The years 1934-35 also witnessed a certain alienation of Nehru from the right-wing leaders of the Congress, which could perhaps have served as a preliminary step towards a political struggle against them within the Congress. In his letter of 13 August 1934 to Gandhi, Nehru spoke in an angry tone of the triumph of opportunism in the Congress and put part of the blame on the Working Committee which had “deliberately encouraged vagueness in the definition of our ideals and objectives.” He was angry with the Working Committee particularly because it had passed a resolution on 18 June 1934, indirectly condemning socialism and socialists for practising “the necessity of class war” and “confiscation of private property”. On reading the resolution in jail, he had written in his diary on 20 June 1934: “to hell with the Working Committee—passing pious and fatuous resolutions on subjects it does not understand—or perhaps understands too well!” To Gandhi he complained in August that “whether the Working Committee knows anything about the subject or not, it is perfectly willing to denounce and excommunicate the supporters of socialism.” The resolution showed “an astounding ignorance of the elements of socialism.” “It seemed”, he wrote harshly, “that the over-mastering desire of the Committee was somehow to assure various vested interests even at the risk of talking nonsense.” And then, he turned the knife with exquisite irony: “... it is oft preferred to break some people’s hearts rather than touch others’ pockets. Pockets are indeed more valuable and more cherished than hearts and brains and bodies and human justice and dignity!” In a note written at about the same time as the
letter, he even suggested that the resolution was aimed at keeping him and other socialists out of the Congress. Moreover, while "nobody called the Congress socialist", it had now "ceased to be neutral on the subject. It is aggressively anti-socialist and politically it is more backward than it has been for 15 years". Nor were the members of the Working Committee innocent reactionaries. They had passed the resolution "at the instigation of the Parliamentary Board or its leaders who want to keep on the safe side of the people who have money."81

There was a certain growing alienation even from Gandhi. The process had started in jail in 1933. On June 4, he wrote in his diary: "I am afraid I am drifting further and further away from him mentally, in spite of my strong emotional attachment to him." He contrasted Gandhi with "Lenin and Co" to Gandhi's disadvantage and then wrote: "More and more I feel drawn to their dialectics, more and more I realize the gulf between Bapu and me..." Gandhi had accepted "the present social order." What was worse, he "surrounds himself with men who are the pillars and the beneficiaries of this order" and who would, without doubt, wrote Nehru with a touch of bitterness, "profit and take advantage of both our movement and of any constitutional changes that may come." On his part, Nehru was quite clear: "I want to break from this lot completely." But he also knew that this was not going to be easy. "There is trouble ahead so far as I am personally concerned. I shall have to fight a stiff battle between rival loyalties." He knew that the choice was not going to be easy to make, and so he wrote: "Perhaps the happiest place for me is the gaol! I have another three months here before I go out, and one can always return."82

A few weeks later, Gandhi's efforts at negotiations with the Viceroy exasperated him further. He wrote in his diary on 24th July: "I am getting more and more certain that there can be no further political cooperation between Bapu and me. At least not of the kind that has existed. We had better go our different ways."83

Nehru reacted with violent emotion to the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement in April 1934, and even more to the reasons advanced by Gandhi for the withdrawal. He wrote in his diary on 12 May 1934: "How can one work
with Bapu if he functions in this way and leaves people in the lurch?"84 Earlier, on 13th April he had written: "It marks an epoch not only in our freedom struggle but in my personal life. After 15 years I go my way, perhaps a solitary way leading not far."85 To Gandhi, he wrote in half-anguish, half-anger: "I had a sudden and intense feeling, that something broke inside me, a bond that I had valued very greatly had snapped... I have always felt a little lonely almost from childhood up... But now I felt absolutely alone, left high and dry on a desert island."86 In an unpublished note he gave freer reign to his disillusionment and the feeling of a near-break with Gandhi. "There is hardly any common ground between me and Bapu and the others who lead the Congress today. Our objectives are different, our spiritual outlook is different, and our methods are likely to be different... I felt with a stab of pain that the chords of allegiance that had bound me to him for many years had snapped." He complained of Gandhi's "concentration on issues other than the political," of his "personal and self-created entanglements," and of his desertion (whatever the reasons) of his comrades in the middle of the struggle." After all, there was "such a thing as loyalty to a job undertaken and to one's colleagues in it, and it was painful to find that Bapu attached little value to it."87

It should also be noted that several chapters of the "Autobiography", written during 1934-35 and published in 1936, were an ideological polemic against Gandhi, even though they were couched in a mild, friendly, even reverential tone. Perhaps they constituted an effort to give Indian nationalism a new ideological orientation.

Thus it seemed by the middle of 1936 that Nehru was setting out to evolve a left political alternative to the Gandhian leadership—an alternative that would challenge the latter in all basic aspects: programme and ideology, social character of the movement and of its leadership, and the strategy of its struggle. He was, moreover, beginning to emerge as the leader of a broad socialist bloc, which was as yet loose and even incoherent, but which was getting formed around his personality. Nor did Nehru confine his new approach to his diary or to discussions in the Working Committee. He wrote extensively for journals and newspapers, both in English and Hindi. His articles were
widely translated in other Indian languages and were often published in book or pamphlet form. He issued press statements almost daily. After coming back from Europe in the beginning of 1936, he was busy stumping the country from one end to the other addressing vast audiences and everywhere attracting students and youth to himself. After his election to the Presidentship of the Congress in April 1936, he got further immense opportunities to form the popular mind and to influence political developments.

III

The new ideological and political approach of Nehru—in particular, its distinct articulation in the Presidential Address at the Lucknow session of the Congress—frightened the Indian capitalist class. While the dominant and far-sighted pro-Congress leadership of the class set out to take protective measures to contain and confine Nehru, the more conservative and anti-Congress sections decided to launch a frontal attack.

The first shot was fired by A.D. Shroff, Vice-President of the Indian Merchants Chamber of Bombay, on 28th April 1934. Three weeks later, on 18th May, 21 leading Bombay businessmen issued what was described by the newspapers as the “Bombay Manifesto against Jawaharlal Nehru”. A series of individual statements by some of the signatories followed—by A.D. Shroff, again, in the Times of India of 20th May, by Chimanlal Setalvad in the Times of India of 23rd May, by Cowasjee Jehangir in the Times of India of May 29th and by Homi Mody in the Times of India of 11 June 1936. All these statements received full publicity in the Press, and they were often reproduced extensively or in full. The main burden of the critique of the 21 leading businessmen was as follows:

Nehru was spreading the idea that private property was immoral and it did not, therefore, deserve protection by the State. He was thus advocating the “destructive and subversive programme” of doing away with private property and thereby jeopardising “not only the institution of private property but peaceful observance of religion and even personal safety.”
This charge was clearly borne out by his speech at Lucknow, in which he had advocated socialism which had been defined as the ending of private property and the profit system. He had, moreover, illustrated his conception of socialism by describing what was happening in the Soviet Union as the inauguration of “the new civilization”. He had thus argued for “the total destruction of the existing social and economic structure.” Such ideas were particularly dangerous because “in the present conditions and widespread economic misery of the country, they are likely to find ready, though unthinking reception”. The masses were likely to be misled by doctrines leading to “disorder in course of time.” The capitalists had hitherto played a considerable part in the development of the national movement, but Nehru’s activities were likely to divide the country and so to impede the achievement of self-government.

The individual critics were worried by Nehru’s abandonment of the contemporary Fabian, Labour-Party, and Social Democratic definitions of ‘socialism’ in favour of the clear-cut Marxist definition. As Chimanlal Setalvad put it: “though he calls his creed socialism, it is really Communism and Bolshevism of the Russian type”. Certainly, most people in India, said Chimanlal, would “welcome socialism, as it is understood and practised in some of the countries in Western Europe”. In fact, many of the critics of Nehru’s propaganda claimed to be supporters of socialism if it meant “the more equitable distribution of profits between labour and capital, the securing of a reasonable minimum standard of living for all, and even in certain circumstances and conditions the nationalization of some key industries.” Similarly, Cowasjee Jehangir asserted that Nehru was “a wholehearted communist” and was throwing “a smokescreen over his propaganda by calling it Socialism”. He was, in fact, “the leader of the Communistic school of thought of India”. The real issue in the debate, he said, was “whether the Soviet form of government is the best for India”. And Homi Mody warned: “His meaning is clear and the programme is fairly definite. First, political independence, and then a Socialist State, in which vested interests, property rights and the motives of profit will have no place at all. Let those whose minds are running in the direction of intermediate stages and pleasant halting places not forget that they are really
buying a through ticket to Moscow.” A.D. Shroff criticised him for promoting ‘class hatred’ and ‘class war’, and asked the Congress to remember that the primary political task of the movement being to “obtain our political freedom”, it should not disturb “that complete unity” which was needed to win concessions from the British. The type of pronouncements made by Nehru at Lucknow could also harm the country’s interests in another manner. They might result “in checking industrial enterprise and in encouraging flight of capital from India.” Homi Mody held up the mirror of reality to Nehru in one other aspect. There existed, he pointed out, a big contradiction between Nehru’s ideology and definition of socialism and his abhorrence of violence and commitment to peaceful, non-violent methods. Nehru was being ‘credulous’ when he suggested that his ideas could be implemented “without a violent and catastrophic upheaval”. “In what age and in which country”, he asked, “such a fundamental change in the basis of society had been brought about by a peaceful and bloodless revolution?”

Nehru’s ideas had, of course, been known for some time, and had been generally ignored. But that even the high office of the Presidentship of the Congress would fail to tone him down was rather unexpected. Much worse, they were no longer the opinions of a mere individual but of the President of the most powerful organization in the country. There was every likelihood that he would use his position and the prestige of his high office to propagate his ideas on a much larger scale, to “push the Congress to the Left”, to undermine the long-established dominance of the bourgeois ideology over the national movement, and in general to strengthen the left alternative to Gandhi. The only solace so far was that the majority in the Congress did not support him; but this situation might not last long. “The socialist section of the Congress was gaining ground,” warned Chimanlal Setalvad, “and it may be that with the powerful advocacy of the Pandit, they will capture the Congress much sooner than people believe.”

These open and stringent critics were, however, confined to Bombay and represented mostly the traditionally pro-Liberal or loyalist and anti-Congress sections of the capitalist class. Some of them objected not only to Nehru’s radicalism but also
to nationalist militancy in the form of the non-cooperation and civil disobedience movements.\textsuperscript{99} Nehru got a biographical analysis of the 21 signatories to be made and found that most of them were either liberals or loyalists, linked with the House of Tatas or with foreign capital, or were nonentities.\textsuperscript{100} Moreover, they were hardly given any support by the other capitalists in the rest of the country or even in Bombay. Many, on the other hand, opposed them, as is brought out in Section IV below. Nehru made full use of both these facts in his running polemic against the 'Bombay 21'.

The odd man out among the 21 was Purshotamdas Thakurdas whose growing anxiety had made him sign the manifesto but who was, as we shall see in the next section, in wider agreement with the larger and more sober section of the capitalist class.

IV

The more far-sighted and pro-Congress of the Indian capitalists were perhaps no less worried by Nehru. But they did not approach the task of setting him right or reducing his influence in anger. Their approach is very clearly brought out in letters exchanged during April to June 1936 between G. D. Birla, Purshotamdas Thakurdas, and Walchand Hirachand.\textsuperscript{101} This approach was laid down in the main by G. D. Birla, the brilliant political leader and mentor of the capitalist class, whose political acumen often bordered on that of a genius; but it is to be kept in view that the rest of the class tended to follow his lead. Birla's and Purshotamdas Thakurdas's approach to the problem of Nehru was a multi-pronged one.

First, they were not immediately worried much by the general ideological bent of Nehru or by his propaganda in favour of socialism. Their chief anxiety was the challenge that Nehru posed to the working of the 1935 Act by his intransigent stance against acceptance of office. The capitalists, on the other hand, were keen to digest the fruits of the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-34 and the resulting constitutional negotiations and, hence, to cooperate with the Government.
For the last two years Birla had been working hard behind the scenes both in India and England to bring about amity between the British officials and the Congress leadership. As President of the Congress, Nehru was in a position to bring all this effort to naught and to frustrate the full working of the P-C-P strategy. Refusal to accept office would lead to a continuous state of confrontation with imperialism and would thus tend to shift the basic strategy of nationalism from the non-revolutionary strategy of P-C-P to the revolutionary one of P-V. This was, therefore, the crucial issue, the fulcrum-point of the Indian politics of the period, on which Nehru must be held. All else was just then peripheral and could wait to be tackled later.

Internal evidence of Purshotamdas’s letter of 18th April and Birla’s of 20th April indicates that Gandhi had assured Birla that he would prevent Nehru from committing the Congress to rejection of office at Lucknow. Thus, referring to the proceedings of the Lucknow session, Purshotamdas asked Birla “whether you think that Mahatma’s and your expectations have been fulfilled”; and Birla replied that he was “perfectly satisfied with what has taken place”. “Mahatmaji kept his promise”, he asserted, “and without his uttering a word, he saw that no new commitments were made.” The last obviously referred to office acceptance or rejection and perhaps to the question of direct affiliation of the trade unions and kisan sabhas to the Congress. Birla’s satisfaction was fully justified; for, once the Congress postponed the decision on acceptance of office and refused to commit itself to office rejection, the battle was half-won by the ministerialists. The crucial question in the situation was to avoid any further confrontation with imperialism, and even Nehru had conceded the point. He had “confessed in his speech ... that there was no chance of any direct action in the near future.”

An allied problem was that of the control of the Congress organization and the party machine. The Presidentship was, after all, only one position in the hierarchy. Here also there was ground for satisfaction. Out of the 14 members of the new Working Committee 10 were right wingers. Or, as Birla put it, Nehru’s Working Committee contained “an overwhelming majority of ‘Mahatmaji’s Group’”. Particularly gratifying to
Birla was the inclusion of Rajaji in the new Working Committee. The control of the new legislatures would also be crucial. With the right type of men there, acceptance of office would not be far off. In this respect too the picture was bright: “the election which will take place will be controlled by ‘Vallabhbhai group’.”

Birla was, therefore, convinced that political developments were “moving in the right direction”. If only Lord Linlithgow handled the situation properly, he concluded, “there is every likelihood of the Congressmen coming into office”. Purshotamdas Thakurdas agreed with this cheerful analysis.

Secondly, Birla was quite clear that the battle against the socialist tendency could not be joined frontally—and certainly not by the capitalists themselves. To do so was to fight on the wrong ground and thus to invite defeat; and those who did so were not friends but enemies of their class. Consequently, he was very angry with the approach of the signatories to the Bombay Manifesto against Nehru. In a letter to Walchand Hirachand, dated 26th May 1936, he questioned the wisdom of his signing the manifesto and asserted that this act had been “instrumental in creating further opposition to capitalism.” He upbraided Walchand Hirachand: “You have rendered no service to your castemen.” In fact, “your manifesto has done positive harm to the capitalist system”. Birla’s strong feelings on the subject were expressed in a more restrained but equally firm manner when he wrote to Purshotamdas Thakurdas, his senior in age and standing. He had been “painfully surprised to see your name in the crowd”. The manifesto was “liable to be seriously misinterpreted”. “Evidently, you did not consider its contents carefully,” he gently chided his capitalist elder, “a thing which is against your habit. The manifesto has given impetus to the forces working against capitalism—another result which you did not intend.” In other words, Purshotamdas Thakurdas had strayed from the path of a far-sighted leader.

Birla believed that, to wage a successful struggle against the left in the Congress, the correct course was to fight through others. This meant strengthening the right-wing leaders in the Congress. “We all are against socialism”, he told Walchand Hirachand, but the question was who had credentials to say so
in public. Certainly, the men of property did not. "It looks very crude for a man with property to say that he is opposed to expropriation in the wider interests of the country." After all, any man of property was bound to oppose expropriation. True, expropriation was against the higher interests of society, "but the question is, 'Are you or myself a fit person to talk?'" Who were then 'fit persons to talk'? "Let those who have given up property," said Birla, "say what you want to say." The task of the capitalists was "to strengthen" the hands of such persons. By doing so, "we can help everyone". But precisely in this respect, "we businessmen are so short-sighted," for "even people like Vallabhbhai and Bhulabhai, who are fighting against socialism, are not being helped." Obviously, though Birla named only Sardar Patel and Bhulabhai Desai, he had Gandhi, Rajaji, Rajendra Prasad, whom he had named in his letter of 20th April, and other right-wing leaders of the Congress in mind as men to be helped to fight against expropriation of private property. Once again, Purshotamdas Thakurdas expressed agreement with Birla's advice. Nor did the advice fall on unwilling ears. Walchand Hirachand promptly gave Rs. one lakh to meet the cost of the Faizpur session of the Congress, presided over by Jawaharlal. And, of course, Birla practised what he preached. For years, he had been financing the Congress and Gandhi's innumerable organizations and giving financial help to Rajendra Prasad and other leaders.

Birla also noted that the 'Mahatma's men' had delivered the goods at Lucknow. "Rajendra Babu spoke very strongly and some people attacked Jawaharlal's ideology openly." Nehru had been throughout in a small minority, and, what is more, "Jawaharlal's speech in a way was thrown into the waste paper basket because all the resolutions that were passed were against the spirit of his speech." Birla was referring to the fact that both of Nehru's crucial proposals— for office rejection and for collective affiliation of the workers' and peasants' organizations with the Congress— were defeated. Birla's strategy also bore rich fruits in the coming months. Through a series of carefully managed organizational crises, the Congress right wing— known popularly as the 'High Command'— aided by Gandhi, curbed, disciplined, and tamed the fire-eating Nehru of the Lucknow Session. Unfortunately, we cannot trace this process
here, which Nehru indirectly helped by fighting, bowing down and sulking in turn, and by fighting the right wing on questions of manners and styles of functioning rather than on policies.\textsuperscript{118}

The third prong of Birla’s approach to Nehru lay in establishing a correct understanding of the man. Nehru was not to be treated as an inveterate enemy. He was to be properly understood and moulded. Answering Purshotamdas Thakurdas’s query in his letter of 18th April—whether Gandhi would be able to keep the extremist Nehru under his control — Birla praised Jawaharlal for fully realizing his position of minority in the party and not taking advantage of his powers as the President.\textsuperscript{119} Similarly, he complained later that the wording of the Bombay manifesto had not done “full justice to Jawaharlal.”\textsuperscript{120} While the short-sighted had only heard the ringing tones of Nehru’s address at Lucknow, Birla shrewdly noted that he had not been willing to fight the right wing at Lucknow. “Jawaharalji seems to be like a typical English democrat who takes defeat in a sporting spirit.” Nor had he, noted Birla appreciatively, caused a split by resigning. Birla also recognized Nehru’s basic weakness, that his political actions were much more sober and ‘realistic’ than his ideological flights; that, in other words, there was a wide gap between his theory and practice. “He seems to be out for giving expression to his ideology, but he realizes that action is impossible and so does not press for it.”\textsuperscript{121} This understanding and appreciation of Nehru Birla seemed to have imbibed from Gandhi, for the latter wrote to Agatha Harrison in Britain in the same vein on 30 April 1936:

His address is a confession of his faith. You see from the formation of his ‘cabinet’ that he has chosen a majority of those who represent the traditional view, i. e., from 1920 . . . . But though Jawaharlal is extreme in his presentation of his methods, he is sober in action. So far as I know him, he will not precipitate a conflict. Nor will he shirk it, if it is forced on him. . . . My own feeling is that Jawaharlal will accept the decisions of the majority of his colleagues.\textsuperscript{122}

Once again, Purshotamdas Thakurdas agreed with Birla’s
overall estimate of Nehru. "I never had any doubt about the bona fide of J," he wrote. "In fact, I put them very high indeed." He, however, felt, extending the line of Birla's reasoning further, "that a good deal of nursing will have to be done to keep J on the right rails all through." \(^{123}\)

Other sections of the Indian capitalist class agreed with this third prong of the Birla-Thakurdas approach, and they immediately set out to 'nurse' Nehru. Immediately after the attack of 'the 21' was published, a host of capitalist associations of Bombay rose up to greet him, to present him addresses, to express their solidarity with him, and thus to dissociate the class as a whole from the manifesto against him. Many of them even defended his preoccupation with the cause of the workers and peasants.

On 18 May 1936, the merchants and brokers of the Bombay Bullion Exchange presented Nehru a purse of Rs 1,501, eulogised his services to the country, and expressed joy at the fact that "he had been devoting a good deal of his time to work in connection with uplift of the peasants and workers of India." \(^{124}\) On 19th May an address was presented to Nehru by five merchants' associations of Bombay — the Marwari Chamber of Commerce, the Hindustan Native Merchants' Association, the Bombay Cotton Brokers' Association, and the Bombay Grain and Seeds Brokers' Association. \(^{125}\) On 20th May a meeting was convened by 13 mercantile bodies at Mandavi, Bombay, including the Grain Merchants' Association, the Sugar Merchants' Association, the Seed Merchants' Association, and the Bombay Grain Dealers' Association. Presiding over the meeting, Velji Lukhamsay Nappoo said: "The merchants might not agree with all the Socialistic views of Pandit Nehru, but whatever views he would like to place before them, the merchants would respectfully consider them." \(^{126}\) On the same day, the Country-Made Fancy and Grey Cotton Piecegoods Merchants' Association presented Nehru an address eulogising his unceasing efforts for the betterment of the conditions of the "teeming millions of workers, labourers, and peasants of the country". In his speech of welcome, the President of the Association, Gordhandas Goculdas Morarji said:

... even though your theories of socialism might have
stirred a section of the commercial community, we are of the opinion that our advancement is inter-dependent upon the advancement of the masses. . . . It is true that certain extreme views regarding Marxism or Communism may not be acceptable to the mercantile community, but looking to the present condition of India and her teeming millions . . . it cannot be denied that the reconstruction of the present form of society is needed.127

The brokers of the Shri Mahajan Sabha also presented Nehru with an address on 20th May.128 On 22nd May, 15 leading businessmen of Bombay, who were all members of the Committee of the Indian Merchants Chamber, met Nehru to affirm their continued support to the Congress and to convince him that the mercantile community as a whole did not support the manifesto. They also asked him “to explain what he meant by socialism, when it would be achieved, and whether the merchants with their limitations could give their quota in the movement of socialism.”129

It has also to be noted that Purshotamdas Thakurdas probably believed that giving a sharp blow to a person to bring him to his senses was part of the tactic of nursing him, for nursing includes the administration of a bitter dose when necessary. Thus, while agreeing with Birla’s sharp critique of the manifesto, he ascribed his own signatures on it to a desire to warn Jawaharlal against “the somewhat aggressive manner” in which he “was preaching socialism verging on communism.”130

V

And what of Nehru’s response? The Lucknow Address was both the high watermark and the swan song of his radicalism.131 Increasingly, his time was taken up by the management of Congress affairs, and imperceptibly he went back to the role of a radical nationalist. He retained some of his fire. Immediately after 18 May 1936, he hit back hard at his critics. Some of the later articles remind one of the Nehru of 1933-36. He always
maintained his courage and manliness. But the gradual abandonment of all the ground gained in the early 1930s continued. He gave up the fight to change the basic strategy of the Indian struggle for freedom and was absorbed by the P-C-P pattern. He was no longer to try to arouse the self-activity of the masses; he began to operate within the ambit of the Gandhian notion of mass participation under strict control of the middle-class leadership.

From now on, the chief role of the masses was to listen to his speeches. In ideology, not Marxism but a mild form of Fabianism became the norm, though once in a while there came flashes of his old Marxism. He also abandoned the strategy of unifying the two struggles, the political and the social. The second remained formally joined to the first but increasingly receded to the horizon. Earlier, he had repeatedly upbraided the Indian socialists and communists for talking tall and doing nothing. Now, he openly accepted that the social struggle would remain a verbal ideal and that the national struggle alone belonged to the realm of political practice.

Why did all this happen? It is always difficult to explain changes in the life history of an individual. Many factors, forces, and events went into the making of the post-Lucknow Nehru. There were inherent weaknesses in Nehru's Marxism and socialist commitment and in his conception of the revolutionary road to independence, which we have not examined in the first two sections of this paper because our object was not to evaluate him as a socialist thinker or a revolutionary nationalist but to bring out those facets of his politics and ideology which worried and frightened the capitalist class.

Some of these weaknesses come readily to mind: His failure to build a political base of his own and lack of active work among or even contact with workers and peasants after 1936; his attachment and subservience to Gandhi which was strengthened by his fear of being 'lonely' or isolated politically; his refusal to form a socialist group or join hands with existing ones or organize in any form radical activity outside the Congress framework; the weakness of the left outside the Congress; his utter neglect of organization, even within the Congress. Psychologically, his leftistm of 1933-36 was in part the product of political frustration arising out of the defeat
and demoralisation of the Civil Disobedience Movement. The excitement of elections, the whirlwind country-wide campaigns, the guidance of the party and Congress ministries, the involvement with China and Spain and the coming war all gave him a psychological boost and lifted him from the slough of depression and 'desolation' as also leftist preoccupations. In other words, G.D. Birla and other capitalists had perhaps evaluated him as well as he himself had been able to do in his Autobiography.

At the same time, there is no doubt that the capitalist strategy of nursing him, opposing him, and, above all, of supporting the right wing in the Congress also played an important role in first containing him and then moulding him so that, by 1947, the capitalist class was ready to accept him as the Prime Minister of independent India and to cooperate with him in the task of building up its economy along the capitalist path.

Abbreviations

I. Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru
   (i) Bunch of Old Letters, Bombay, 1958. BOL
   (ii) India and the World, London, 1936. IW
   (iii) Recent Essays and Writings, Allahabad, 1934. REW
   (vi) S. Gopal (editor), Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru SW

II. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library NMML
III. Purshotamdas Thakurdas Papers PT PAPERS

NOTES

1His public statements from late 1933 to early 1936 have to be seen in continuation since he was in jail for most of 1934-35.
2He wrote to Gandhi on 13 August 1934: 'But whether I function inside or outside the legislature I function as a revolutionary, meaning thereby a person working for the fundamental and revolutionary changes, political and social, for I am convinced that no other changes can bring
peace or satisfaction to India and the world." *BOL*, p. 114.


*4* A certain looseness and mildness in expression which appeared to his left-wing critics as an effort to "avoid the implications" of his statements was ascribed by Nehru in a letter to a young Marxist (10 November 1933) as due to the effort to reach "an audience which is not used to these ideas and to technical terms", to the desire "to carry the audience and not merely to make a brave show," and to avoid isolation from the Congress thus "leaving the organization which has so much influence over people's minds in India to other people with a reactionary outlook". *SW*, VI, pp. 117-18.

*4* His new ideas and politics were given first public expression in an interview to the *Pioneer* on August 31, 1933. See *SW*, V, pp. 506ff.

*4* *IW*, pp. 27-28.

*8* See S. Gopal, Chapter 8.

*8* *REW*, p. 16.

*8* Ibid., p. 24. For an earlier declaration on the same lines, see interview to the *Pioneer*, 31 August 1933, *SW*, V, p. 508. Also see *Autobiography*, p. 523.

*10* *REW*, p. 139. Also see p. 136.


*12* Ibid., p. 126. Also see p. 124.

*13* *IW*, pp. 82-83.

*14* Lucknow Address, *IW*, pp. 82-83.

*15* *REW*, p. 31.

*16* *IW*, p. 83. Also see *Autobiography*, p. 543; *Glimpses*, I, p. 575, II, p. 852.


*18* *SW*, V, p. 538. Also see ibid., p. 541; *Glimpses*, II, p. 857.

*19* *Autobiography*, p. 523.


*111* Ibid., pp. 141-43.

*88* *REW*, pp. 30-31. Earlier, on October 10, 1932, he had written in a letter to Indira: "It took a long time for people to discover that mere equality before the law and the possession of a vote do not ensure real equality or liberty or happiness, and that those in power have other ways of exploiting them still." *Glimpses*, I, p. 575.

*22* *SW*, V, p. 460.


*88* *REW*, pp. 33-35.

*88* *Autobiography*, p. 544.

*88* Ibid., pp. 551-52.

*88* For example, *SW*, V, pp. 479, 489, 521; *REW*, pp. 18, 40; *SW*, VI, pp. 110-11; Lucknow Address, *IW*, p. 79.

*88* *Autobiography*, p. 504.

*88* *REW*, p. 135. Also see ibid., pp. 30, 123; Letter to Lord Lothian, *BOL*, p. 140; *SW*, V, p. 541; *Glimpses*, II, p. 853.
Report in *Times of India*, 18 May 1936, p. 11.


REW, pp. 10-16.

Ibid., p. 14. Also see Lucknow Address, IW, p. 69.


Foreword to Masani’s book, op. cit.

IW, p. 83.

Foreword to Masani’s book, op. cit.

IW, p. 83.

REW, pp. 18-19.

IW, pp. 70, 81. Earlier, in September 1933, he had written to Gandhi: “Both on the narrower ground of our own interests and the wider ground of international welfare and human progress, we must, I feel, range ourselves with the progressive forces of the world.” Letter dated 13 September 1936, in D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, New Delhi, 1969 Reprint, Volume III, p. 306.

The Indian Capitalist Class and Imperialism before 1947’ and ‘Elements of Continuity and Change in the Early Nationalist Activity’ given above.

See below.


Autobiography.

SW, VI, pp. 21, 79, 94. 102-03. He was moving towards this approach since 1932. See SW, V, p. 386.

Ibid., pp. 67, 74.

REW, p. 22.

REW, pp. 21, 38-40; 141-42; SW, V, pp. 532-36; SW, VI, pp. 87-88. Nehru gave a wider sweep to this statement in a speech at Calcutta on 18 January 1934, for which he was jailed for two more years. Repeating the arguments given above, he asserted that hunger being the propeller of Indian nationalism, “even if leaders and organizations weaken, compromise and betray, this economic urge remains and will continue to push the masses on . . . .” See SW, VI, pp. 101-05.

SW, VI, p. 104.

See, for example, SW, V, pp. 532-37, 544.

IW, pp. 90-95. Replying to those who argued that popularly elected ministries would provide some relief to the people and protect them from repression, Nehru pointed out that, while they had little power and their capacity to give relief was marginal, the Congress ministries, “would have to share responsibility for the administration with the apparatus of imperialism, for the deficit budgets, for the suppression of labour and the peasantry.” “It is always dangerous,” he pointed
out, "to assume responsibility without power." Ibid., p. 91. To those who
said that more voters would vote for the Congress if they knew that it
would form ministries, he replied: "That might happen if we deluded
them with false promises of what we might do for them within the
Act, but a quick nemesis would follow our failure to give effect to
these promises, and failure would be inevitable if the promises were
worthwhile." Ibid., p. 93.

55IW, p. 89.
56Ibid.
57Ibid., p. 95.
58REW, pp. 70-72.
59IW, pp. 88-89.
60REW, pp. 3-4; BOL, p. 148.
61Lucknow Address, IW, p. 77.
62REW, p. 3.
63Lucknow Address, IW, pp. 77-78.
64Ibid., pp. 79-81. Also see ibid., p. 95; and SW, VI, p. 101.
65Lucknow Address, IW, pp. 101-04.
66Ibid., p. 103.
68REW, p. 42; SW, VI, pp. 17-18, 118, 126.
69REW, pp. 128-29.
70Ibid., pp. 129, 131; Lucknow Address, IW, p. 84.
71REW, pp. 4-6.
72Ibid., p. 17.
73Also see Letter to Lord Lothian, BOL, p. 144.
74REW, p. 19.
75Ibid., p. 21. Similarly, Nehru told Gandhi in 1933 that "the pro-
blem of achieving freedom becomes one of revising vested interests in
favour of the masses. To the extent this is done, to that extent only will
p. 305.
76REW, p. 127.
77SW, V, pp. 546-47.
78REW, pp. 131-32.
79BOL, p. 115.
80SW, VI, p. 259. Emphasis added.
81BOL, p. 115. In his Autobiography, Nehru again commented
on the subject and pointed out that "Confiscation, persistent and continual,
is the basis of the existing system, and it is to put an end to this that
social changes are proposed. There is the daily confiscation of part of
the labour product of the workers; a peasant's holding is ultimately
confiscated by raising his rent or revenue to such an extent that he
cannot pay it."
82REW, p. 587.
83BOL, p. 116. Nehru did not at the time know that Gandhi had
drafted the Working Committee resolution.
84"Note on "Congress Leaders and their Policy", August 1934,
NEHRU PAPERS. Also in SW, VI, pp. 270-73.
"SW, V, pp. 478-79. The unconscious drift of his mind is revealed by a sudden reference to M.N. Roy in the same entry in the Diary: "I think often of M.N. Roy. The poor chap is so lonely in the world with hardly anyone to give a thought to him." Ibid., p. 479.

Ibid., p. 489.
"SW, VI, p. 251.
Ibid., p. 248.
"BOL, p. 113.

Note of August 1934, NEHRU PAPERS. Also SW, VI, pp. 271-73. Also see Autobiography, pp. 505-08. Alienation from Gandhi was, of course, a mere tendency which had its ups and downs (for ups, see SW, V, pp. 532, 537-38) and in the end loyalty to Gandhi won out after 1936—till 1946-47.

File Number 130, NEHRU PAPERS, Part II.

Ibid.

Times of India, 23 May 1936.
"Times of India, 29 May 1936.
"Times of India, 11 June 1936.

File Number 130, NEHRU PAPERS, Part II.

Times of India, 11 June 1936. Also see Tribune, 13 June 1936.

See, for example, Cowasjee Jehangir’s statement, Times of India, 29 May 1936.

See the statements of Chimanlal Setalvad, Cowasjee Jehangir, Homi Mody, and A.D. Shroff cited above.

Times of India, 23 May 1936. Also see A.D. Shroff, File Number 130, NEHRU PAPERS, Part II.

See, for example, A.D. Shroff’s and Cowasjee Jehangir’s statements cited above.

File Number 130, NEHRU PAPERS, Part II. The analysis showed that only two of the signatories represented the Indian capitalist class—Purshotamdas Thakurdas and Walchand Hirachand. The note pointed out that the latter was notorious for changing opinions and politics while the former had been repudiated by the Indian mercantile community when he had agreed to attend the Third Round Table Conference.

File Number 177/1936-43, PT PAPERS, NMML.


For details of the capitalists’ political strategy during this period, see Bipan Chandra, "The Indian Capitalist Class and British Imperialism".

It was on this ground that Birla appealed to the British statesmen to give concessions to the Congress right wing. See ibid., p. 401; and G.D. Birla, In the Shadow of the Mahatma, pp. 193-95, 214. Referring to Birla’s negotiations in Britain and India, Purshotamdas wrote to Birla on 23 April 1936: "I can’t help feeling that the time is now on when you
can crystallise your splendid work in London last year". File Number 177/1936-43, PT PAPERS.

105 Ibid. Emphasis in the original.
106 See S. Gopal, chapter 13.
107 Birla to PT, 20 April, 1936. File Number 177/1936-43, PT PAPERS.
108 Ibid. The candidates were to be selected by a Parliamentary Board presided over by Sardar Patel. Moreover Sardar Patel took upon himself the task of collecting election funds. See Rajendra Prasad, Autobiography, pp. 427, 430.
109 Birla to PT, 20 April 1936, op. cit.
110 PT to Birla, 23 April 1936, op. cit.
111 File Number 177/1936-37, PT PAPERS.
112 This passage reveals a remarkable sense of class-consciousness. Birla sees fellow capitalists as fellow castemen, thus emphasizing the extent of class cohesion and solidarity.

113 Birla to PT, 1 June 1936, File Number 177/1936-43, PT PAPERS. Birla also wrote: "You are such a cautious man that you never take any step without careful consideration and therefore I was rather surprised that you should have put your name to a document. . . ."
114 PT to Birla, 29 May 1936, File Number 177/1936-43, PT PAPERS.
116 See G.D. Birla, In the Shadow of the Mahatma.
117 Birla to PT, 20 April 1936, op. cit. The majority against Nehru's views was contributed largely by delegates from Gujarat, Bihar, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, that is, mostly by provinces controlled by Sardar Patel, Rajendra Prasad, and Rajaji. Indian Annual Register, Vol. I, 1936, p. 284.
118 But see S. Gopal, Chapter 13.
119 Birla to PT, 20 April 1936, op. cit.
120 Birla to PT, 1 June 1936, op. cit.
121 Birla to PT, 20 April 1936, op. cit.
122 Gandhi to Agatha Harrison, 30 April 1936, BOL, pp. 175-76.
123 PT to Birla, 23 April 1936, op. cit.
124 Times of India, 20 May 1936.
125 Tribune, 20 May 1936.
126 Times of India, 22 May 1936.
127 File Number 130, NEHRU PAPERS, Part II.
128 Times of India, 22 May 1936.
129 Tribune, 23 May 1936; Times of India, 23 May 1936.
130 PT to Birla, 29 May 1936, op. cit.
131 See S. Gopal, Chapter 13.
132 This is a very important aspect, though we cannot go into it here. Nehru was incapable of building a socialist or communist party on his own, but he might have been able to serve as the popular head of a left front led by a revolutionary Marxist Party. But the Communist Party of India was too weak to play such an independent political role, and Nehru was incapable of doing so acting on his own.
Modern India and Imperialism

I

The Historical Background

India was fully integrated into the world capitalist economy in a subordinate, colonial position during the nineteenth century. It emerged as a classic colony playing a crucial role in the development of British capitalism. It was not accidental that the British plunder of India began in the 1750s simultaneously with the initiation of the Industrial Revolution in Britain. For example, the drain of wealth or the unilateral transfer of capital from India after 1765 amounted to 2 to 3 per cent of the British national income at a time when only about 5 per cent of the British national income was being invested. During the years after 1760 when Britain was developing into the leading developed capitalist country of the world, India was being underdeveloped into becoming the 'leading' backward, colonial country of the world.

During the nineteenth century, India served as a major market

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for British manufactures, especially cotton textiles and later iron and steel products and other railway stores. India was also an important supplier of food stuffs and raw materials to Britain. Indian opium played a crucial role in developing the triangular trade which enabled the full economic exploitation of the Chinese people. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Indian railways constructed at a cost of 3,500 million rupees (nearly 350 million pounds sterling) provided the largest outlet for the export of British capital. The bulk of India’s transport system, modern mines and industries, foreign trade, coastal and international shipping, and banks and insurance companies were under British control. For nearly a hundred years after 1858, Indian exports enabled Britain to acquire the foreign exchange needed to meet its own international balance of payments deficit. Control over India’s coastal and international carrying trade was a major factor in the growth of British shipping.

India absorbed a large section of the unemployed youth of the British middle and upper classes (one third of the Indian budget in 1892 was spent on Englishmen in India!). This not only provided a basic cushion to these classes but also thereby enabled the British political process to flow smoothly without the tensions and disturbances, both from the right and the left, that the unemployed educated youth of these classes have a tendency to promote because of their economic condition in conjunction with their idealism and intellectual discontent. Instead, their humanitarian and idealistic proclivities could now find expression in missionary activity on the right and Fabianism on the left.

India as ‘the brightest jewel in the British Empire’ also played an important role in the ideology of imperialism which enabled the British ruling classes to keep their political power intact even after adult franchise was introduced and also to cement their society around capitalism when it was being riven with class conflict. Thus the pride and glory underlying the slogan of ‘the Sun never sets on the British Empire’ were used to keep workers contented on whose slum dwellings the Sun seldom shone in real life.

India also played a crucial role in one other, often ignored, aspect. All this did not cost Britain a penny.\(^1\) India bore the entire cost of its own conquest, including the reconquest after
the Revolt of 1857. Secondly, when it became necessary in the interests of colonialism to partially modernise India through railways, education, a modern legal system, development of irrigation, and detailed penetration of administration into the countryside, India paid the entire cost.

Lastly, once the struggle for the division and then the redivision of the world became intense after 1870, India acted as the chief gendarme of British imperialism and furnished both the material and the human resources for its expansion and maintenance. Afghanistan, Central Asia, Tibet, the Persian gulf area, Eastern Africa, Egypt, Sudan, Burma, China, and to some extent even South Africa were brought or kept within the British sphere of influence through the instrumentality of the Indian army and the Indian finances. The same was true of west Asia during the First World War.²

Throughout this period, except for the duration of the world wars, the British Indian army was the only large scale army contingent available to Britain. This is one of the major reasons why the British Empire in Asia and Africa collapsed like a house of cards once Britain lost control over the Indian army and finances.

It may also be noted that it was precisely in the period after 1870 when British economic supremacy was challenged by rival capitalist powers, when the hunt for markets, raw materials, and fields for investment was intensified, and when adult franchise made it necessary to find new ideological appeals to the working class that British rule in India was more stringently and consciously clamped down and the earlier talk of training Indians for Free Trade and self-government was abandoned in favour of the doctrine of 'benevolent despotism'. Furthermore, through administrative and other measures and the rigidly British character of the higher bureaucracy, India was kept a close preserve of British capitalism. An interesting result was that American capitalism had to begin its penetration of Indian economy after 1947 virtually from scratch and had to spend many valuable years in building contacts and creating a base for itself in the economic, political, scientific, cultural and intellectual life of the country.

Sometimes it is said that British imperialism did not derive,
especially in the twentieth century, as great an economic advantage from its domination of India as was claimed both by the vigorous imperialists and by the Indian and other anti-imperialists. And this is then supposed to prove that modern imperialism did not have an economic motivation. It is true that in the twentieth century India was no longer as big a market for British goods as had been hoped, nor as big an absorber of British capital as desired. Between the hope and the fulfilment there was a big gap. But this does not disprove anything. It is only a manifestation of the internal contradictions in which British imperialism had become involved as a result of its prolonged exploitation of India. It was necessary that India and its people transform their economy and in general develop economically if imperialism was to exploit them fully, but this very exploitation made it impossible for India to develop. Thus, once the existing internal market of India had been captured, the impoverished Indian peasant could neither develop further as a buyer of British manufactures nor provide the consumer base for foreign owned industries in India. Similarly, once the peasant had been taxed to the point of endurance, the Indian state revenues could not be further plundered by British finance capital or by the British upper and middle classes. On the other hand, in the limited Indian market, Indian capital was venturesome enough to outcompete British capital in many fields. Faced with a burgeoning anti-imperialist movement, the imperialist authorities could neither antagonise the Indian bourgeoisie beyond a point nor tax the peasant beyond endurance. Imperialist exploitation could not therefore fulfil the dreams that had so long inspired imperialist policies in India.

In time, a powerful anti-imperialist movement developed in India. Some of its facets resulted in a forceful impact on the development of India’s relations with the great powers after 1947.

(A) The Indian nationalist movement was based on a brilliant and detailed investigation and an all-sided analysis of the economic roots and motive forces of colonialism. Before the end of the nineteenth century, the founding fathers of the anti-imperialist movement had worked out a clear understanding not only of the role of colonialism as an extractor of Indian economic surplus
directly via taxation and indirectly by making India its agrarian hinterland for the sale of its manufactures and purchases of India’s raw materials, but also of its new phase of the exploitation of Indian labour and the suppression of Indian capital through the investment of the metropolitan capital. They also saw clearly that the essence of British imperialism lay in the subordination of the Indian economy as a whole to that of Britain. Moreover, they had come to see and propagate that colonialism was not a fortuitous phenomenon or a matter of the political policy of the ruling parties in Britain but sprang from the very nature and character of the British society and economy, the needs of its ruling classes, and Britain’s economic relationship with India. This understanding of the complex economic mechanism of modern imperialism was further strengthened and advanced after 1918 under the impact of the mass struggles against imperialism, the Russian Revolution, and the spread of Marxist and Leninist ideas. The result has been a heightened awareness of the dangers of foreign economic penetration even after 1947. This has been particularly so in the field of private foreign capital investment. The Indian national leadership started attacking foreign capital from the 1870s, clearly bringing out both its economic and political consequences. Foreign capital was seen not as developing India but as ‘despoiling’ India and exploiting its resources and impoverishing it. For example, the Bengalee of 1 June 1901 wrote that the expansion of foreign investments would hasten the country’s ruin and “surely reduce our nation to a state of eternal economic dependence upon British capital”. This nationalist attitude towards foreign capital was summed up by Bipin Chandra Pal in his weekly, the New India, of 12 August 1901, in the following manner:

The introduction of foreign, and mostly British, capital for working out the natural resources of the country, instead of being a help, is, in fact, the greatest of hindrances to all real improvements in the economic condition of the people. This exploitation of the land by foreign capitalists threatens to involve both Government and people in a common ruin . . . . It is as much a political, as it is an economic danger. And the future of New India absolutely depends upon an early and radical remedy of this two-edged evil.
The political danger was also clearly recognized. G.V. Joshi wrote in 1885:

Politically speaking, if we do not misread history, power must gravitate towards property and wealth, and a strong foreign mercantile interest in the country would not fail to be a very troublesome active factor in the State; it would always be disposed to use the power and influence it could command for its own selfish aims, and dominate the action of Government in its own favour.

The *Hindu* of 23 September 1889 remarked:

Where foreign capital has been sunk in a country, the administration of that country becomes at once the concern of the bondholders.

The nationalists had very early projected the notion of using foreign funds without letting the foreign entrepreneur enter. This was to be done by building up a powerful state (public) sector which would keep out the foreign capitalists in two ways. Firstly, the state sector would build industries which were too large for private Indian capital to build and which would otherwise have to be built by foreign capitalists. Secondly, the state sector would act as an intermediary and a protective wall between foreign capital and Indian enterprise. It would borrow foreign capital and either use it on its own account or lend it to the Indian capitalists through its own financial institutions.

The nationalist movement built up a powerful commitment to rapid industrialization on the basis of its own heavy, capital goods sector. This was also true at the level of popular consciousness. Imperialist pressure to bend Indian economic planning to its interests after 1947 was to find this consciousness a powerful barrier.

The nationalist movement widely popularised the notion of imperialist exploitation through the drain mechanism (export of profits by foreign enterprise, etc.) and unequal trade. This resulted in the people becoming very sensitive after 1947 both to large scale investment of foreign capital and the pattern of trade between the developed capitalist countries and India.3

(B) The nationalist movement gradually involved a large
scale politicalisation of the people and their participation in the movement. Moreover, from the foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885, most of the nationalist and other mass organizations were organized along democratic lines. This led to two results after 1947: on the one hand, parliamentary democracy along with civil liberties and adult franchise had to be promised as well as brought into being as the price of popular participation in the anti-imperialist struggle; on the other hand, the Government of India after 1947 had to pay constant heed to popular opinion and to carry it behind its policies. Undoubtedly, the Government has had a great capacity to manipulate this opinion. But in conditions of comparatively open competition from the left-wing parties and the pressure of its own nationalist wing, this manipulation has occurred within certain limits. It has not been possible for the Government and the ruling classes to ignore the anti-imperialist consciousness, even if they had the desire to do so, as openly and completely as could the undemocratic regimes of Pakistan, China before 1949, South Korea, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, West Asia, etc.

(C) An effective left wing came into being in the 1930s and 1940s. It acquired a strong base among the intelligentsia, youth, working class, and in some parts of the country among the peasantry. Though organizationally too weak and politically too confused to offer a serious challenge to the politically mature bourgeois leadership before or after independence, it has always had, at every stage, vast potentialities of growth. It has constantly waited in the wings, so to speak. Its potential appeal to the masses could not be ignored. The bourgeois leadership has, in fact, kept it confused, divided, and without any real capacity to strike after 1947 by stealing its thunder at the programmatic plane precisely on two issues, one of anti-imperialism, and the other of social development on the basis of social equality and social justice, as signified by the vague goal of socialism. The fear of the left has been a powerful factor in keeping the Government from aligning too closely with imperialist powers or making basic concessions to imperialism.

(D) In the course of their own struggle, the Indian nationalists evolved a foreign policy of opposition to imperialism and of solidarity with the anti-imperialist movements in other parts of the world. From the 1870s, they opposed the use of the
Indian army to extend British imperialism in Africa and Asia. Sentiments of solidarity with the Burmese patriots, the Afghans, the tribal people of the North-West Frontier, the Chinese people at the time of the I Ho-Tuan (Boxer) Uprising, the Tibetan people, the people of Egypt and Sudan and other African people were vigorously expressed and popularised from 1878 to 1914. In the 1920s, this policy of anti-imperialism was developed further. Expressing the solidarity of the Indian people with the colonial people and also the awareness of India’s role as the gendarme of British imperialism the world over, Dr. M.A. Ansari said in his Presidential Address to the National Congress session of 1927:

The history of the philanthropic burglary on the part of Europe is written in blood and suffering from Congo to Canton. Once India is free the whole edifice of imperialism will collapse as this is the keystone of the arch of imperialism.

In the 1930s the National Congress took a firm stand against imperialism in any part of the world and supported anti-imperialist movements in Asia and Africa. In spite of Japan’s Pan-Asian propaganda, the National Congress condemned the Japanese attack on China in 1937 and urged the Indian people to boycott “the use of Japanese goods as a mark of their sympathy with the people of China”. The anti-imperialist consciousness of the Indian people and their increasing understanding of the character of the world-wide struggle between imperialism on one side and the forces of socialism and national liberation on the other found clear-cut enunciation in Jawaharlal Nehru’s Presidential Address to the Lucknow session of the National Congress in 1936:

Our struggle was but part of a far wider struggle for freedom, and the forces that moved us were moving millions of people all over the world and driving them into action. Capitalism, in its difficulties, took to fascism... It became, even in some of its homelands, what its imperialist counterpart had long been in the subject colonial countries. Fascism and imperialism thus stood out as the two faces of the new decaying capitalism... Socialism in the west and the rising
nationalism in the Eastern and dependent countries, opposed this combination of fascism and imperialism.

Even though this understanding of *imperialism as capitalism* was rapidly abandoned by Jawaharlal Nehru and the dominant political leadership during the 1940s and 1950s, they have had to pay close attention to this widespread consciousness in developing their relations with the capitalist powers.

(E) Even though India was economically underdeveloped in 1947, it had developed quite a strong capitalist class. Indian capital was moreover highly concentrated. And, what is more important, this class developed as an independent class and not as a comprador class or as a junior partner of foreign capital. Its dominant sections had no noticeable alliances or partnerships with British or international finance capital or the emerging giant corporations. Its own monopoly structure developed on the basis of its own financial and industrial structure. Instead of allying with British capital in India or abroad through cartels and trusts, Indian monopoly capital developed on the basis of a multi-sided conglomerate character spread over vast regions and a variety of industrial, trading and financial activities. Consequently, the Indian capitalist class was on the whole anti-imperialist and anti-foreign capital. While wanting to develop, this class was very chary of being dominated by the larger foreign capital. It was willing to let a powerful state sector develop as a protective wall rather than being gobbled up by international big capital. It was helped in the task by its monopoly and concentrated character because of which, and aided by powerful administrative measures, it could hope to stand up against the outside giants. Though there are no detailed studies on the subject, it may be suggested that when the era of collaboration agreements came in the 1950s it was the small and medium capitalists who were found most willing to collaborate and that foreign capital also preferred to deal with them rather than with the giants since the former were easy to dominate and control.
II

Relationship with Imperialism and the Danger of 'Neo-Colonialism' after 1947

India became politically independent on 15th August, 1947, and the Indian capitalist class acquired control over its social development. In the colonial period, the Indian economy had been integrated with the world capitalist economy in a subordinate position and this constituted the essence of the colonialization of the Indian economy. The end of the political domination by colonialism did not, and could not, mean the automatic decolonialization of the Indian economy. In fact, the colonial economy could absorb and had absorbed a degree of independent development of the capitalist class and capitalist economy in the colony.

It is the hypothesis of this paper that the aim and thrust of the Government of India and the Indian capitalist class since 1947 has been towards the development of an independent and balanced national capitalist economy and the avoidance of further imperialist economic control and domination. The Indian capitalist class neither before 1947 nor since 1947 has been either a basically comprador class or a junior partner of the imperialist monopolies. Its evolution under colonialism as an independent capitalist class and its opposition to and struggle against colonialism already indicated that it would not readily fall into the clutches of imperialism and welcome 'neo-colonialism'. The big monopoly corporations and international conglomerates of the imperialist world in general and the U.S.A. in particular have not acquired a major hold inside India. By and large, the import bans and restrictions and high tariff walls have been used to promote Indian capitalist owned and controlled industries and not to facilitate the setting up of the subsidiaries of the international corporations. In spite of the increase in technical collaboration agreements and growth in foreign investment, it cannot be said that the national bourgeoisie of India, big or small, is entering into partnership with the giant foreign corporations. In fact, investment of foreign capital in the Indian economy has been carefully controlled, though given a great deal of encouragement within prescribed
limits. The result is that foreign capital has hitherto remained quite ‘shy’ or hesitant in entering India. Moreover, there is not a single major or economically strategic sector of the Indian economy which is under the domination of foreign capital. Lastly, foreign finance capital hardly occupies today an important, not to speak of dominating, position in the Indian economy.

Thus India has not been and is not likely in the immediate future to be further colonialized or made into a ‘neo-colony’. Rather the underdeveloped Indian capitalism has been striving to follow, and will continue to strive to follow, the path of independent capitalist development.

At the same time, it cannot be said that Indian capitalism is not dependent on imperialism or that its independent development is not seriously hampered by imperialism. While India’s dependence on imperialism is not the result of the domination of the Indian capitalist class by the imperialist capitalist class, it is still very much there because of the dependence of the Indian economy on imperialism which in turn is due to its being an integral part of the world capitalist economy in a subordinate position. Thus the ‘external’ restrictions on the Indian economy and its development are ‘structural’ i.e., the products of it being a well-structured part of world capitalism which inevitably produces development in one of its parts while producing underdevelopment in the other. The underdeveloped Indian capitalism has therefore found itself in a dilemma. It tries to develop independently but does so without breaking structural links with world capitalism with the result that development is hampered and economic dependence on the imperialist economic structure remains. On the other hand, in today’s condition, any effort, even within the bounds of capitalism, to break out of the world capitalist structure invariably takes on revolutionary dimensions if it is to be successful, as the initial experience of Cuba after the revolution indicates. Indian capitalism has therefore not even been willing to make a radical effort in the direction. Just as the Indian capitalist class and the Indian nationalist leadership developed a non-revolutionary or ‘muddling through’ strategy of mass mobilization and anti-imperialist struggle before 1947, they have since then followed a similar strategy of independent
capitalist development, hoping that economic development within carefully controlled political limits and without revolutionising the internal social structure will gradually erode dependence on imperialism. In the bargain, India remains an independent country with a developing but still underdeveloped capitalist economy which is still dependent on imperialism.

What are the elements of this strategy which have enabled the system to exist successfully so far, and what are the possible reasons which may lead to its failure?

(A) Firstly, the state in India has been gradually trying, though in a non-revolutionary way and in the interests of the propertied classes, to implement internally a bourgeois democratic programme of social and economic reforms of the sort that is usually associated with the completion of bourgeois democratic revolution. To put it negatively, although not radically restructuring the internal social, economic, and political order, India has not been following internally, *a la* Chiang Kia-shek, a neo-colonial or semi-feudal programme either. Socially, education is spread on a wide scale, women are educated on a massive scale, oppression of women increasingly takes on a bourgeois colouring in place of a feudal colouring especially in towns, the caste system is eroded at least to the extent that it does not remain an obstacle to the growth of capitalism (increasingly, oppression of the lower castes in the countryside becomes an instrument for keeping agricultural wages down and rents high), and family relations increasingly become bourgeois. The cultural and moral ethos is virtually dominated by the cash nexus. The structure of agrarian relations is gradually, stage by stage, transformed in the capitalist direction though, as in the case of Britain, Germany and Japan, at the cost of the cultivator and the agricultural worker. Politically, parliamentary democracy and adult franchise prevail from village to national planes. Even the infringements of and attacks upon civil liberty and parliamentary democracy occur in a modern, capitalist way! Indian administration, however corrupt, is modern by any standards, bent fully to the will of the small and big bourgeoisie.

(B) Secondly, state power has been used by an extremely mature and farsighted bourgeois political leadership to counter imperialist penetration through economic administrative
measures and the assignment of a very active and large role to the public or state sector in modern industry. There has been a concentration of economic power in the hands of the state to face the giant imperialist monopoly corporations and international finance on less unequal terms. The state sector has been used to build industries and elements of infrastructure which would not have been built by domestic capital and would have invariably necessitated the use of foreign capital. The state industrial and financial institutions have been used to absorb foreign capital into the economy without permitting the latter to acquire direct power. The giant foreign corporations' immense advantage of greater financial power, technological capacity, and monopoly have been largely neutralized by the use of state power to shut out their products through exchange controls, high tariffs, and absolute prohibitions, thus enabling the weaker domestic capital to burgeon forth under hothouse conditions. The resources of the state have been used to train a large army of engineers, scientists and technical workers. Even the economic integration with world capitalism is sought to be loosened through administrative means.

(C) Thirdly, economic aid and technical assistance from the socialist countries and the development of trade with them has played a crucial role in the effort to complete the bourgeois democratic tasks in a non-revolutionary manner and to develop and strengthen independent capitalism. They have not only been used as bargaining counters to prevent the imperialist countries from presenting a monopolistic front towards India, but have also helped strengthen the public sector, to lay the foundation of heavy capital goods sector, to develop strategic industries such as the aeroplane industry, and to break the strangle-hold of foreign oil monopolies on India's industry, transport system and military structure. It is of interest to note that the Indian capitalist class has both actively supported the development of economic relations with the socialist countries as well as utilised this link to the hilt and to a far greater extent than any other capitalist country.

(D) Fourthly, the Indian bourgeois order has been based from its inception in 1947 on the most advanced system of political legitimization, i.e., bourgeois democracy. Just as in the struggle against British imperialism, the Indian nationalist
leadership evolved a style of mass mobilization and mass action which on the one hand involved the people in politics and on the other hand left them without any political initiative or autonomy, similarly Indian political leadership has used parliamentary democracy both to give people the satisfaction of participation in the government and to deny them any effective voice in it. Yet, every successive election has politicalised or ‘politically socialised’ an increasingly larger number of people. Consequently, at no stage have any significant number of people questioned the legitimacy of the political system. Even the most radical critics of the system have had to function within its rules of the game. Political democracy has thus enabled the political leadership to throw the entire cost of capitalist development on the shoulders of the common people. Even more, the failure to generate self-sustaining growth and the failure of living standards to rise have not generated the type of internal political crisis which would enable the imperialist forces to intervene in internal politics on a decisive scale.

(E) India’s foreign policy has played a major role, particularly after political unrest began to develop, in cementing the diverse social forces around the dominant political leadership. Foreign policy and its cementing role have been consciously used to follow the path of independent capitalist development, to counter overt imperialist blackmail, and to weaken the elan of the left-wing opposition.

(F) A major factor that has enabled capitalism to develop in India has been the failure of the anti-capitalist left wing to seriously challenge the existing social order even when the objective conditions favoured such a challenge. Just as before 1947, the bourgeois nationalist leadership was at no stage faced with a serious left-wing challenge based on an independent mobilization of the people against imperialism under left-wing leadership, so also after 1947 there has been no such left-wing mass, nation-wide political mobilization either on the agrarian question or against imperialist economic penetration or on the question, and the consequences, of the capitalist path of development. A ready postulate of many on the left has been that because of the fear of revolutionary forces and of ‘expropriation’, the bourgeoisie would rapidly become reaction-
ary, abandon internal bourgeois reforms including economic development and political democracy, and join up with imperialism in an anti-Communist and anti-people crusade. The 'only' thing wrong with this postulate has been that it assumed the presence of such a threatening revolutionary force!

It hasn't happened that way. Thus the reformist bourgeoisie has increasingly succeeded in weakening semi-feudalism and imperialism and in building capitalism both in agriculture and industry precisely because the left was strong enough to keep it on its toes but not strong enough to endanger it to such an extent that it was compelled to take shelter in the lap of imperialism and feudalism. In other words, there has been a dialectical, mutually reinforcing development here. Bourgeois liberalism and reforms, independent capitalist development, and the policy of keeping out of the imperialist alliances and political system have enabled the bourgeois leadership to maintain its political influence over the people and to keep the left weak. At the same time, the weakness of the left has enabled the bourgeoisie to remain liberal and outside the imperialistic camp and to develop capitalism.

The strategy of independent capitalist development suffers, however, from two basic constraints. An underdeveloped capitalist country finds it impossible to develop today without those basic internal social, economic and political changes which would invariably tend to take the economy out of the capitalist path. Secondly, so long as it is a well-structured part of the world capitalist economy in a dependent position, it suffers from basic constraints on its development. Consequently, India has found it impossible to solve its national problems while following the capitalist path. But it should be carefully noted that both at the external and the internal planes the restrictions are structural or those of the system, being built or structured into it. The dependence of India on imperialism is a system's dependence arising out of the very position of Indian capitalism in the world capitalist economy. This dependence does not arise out of the stranglehold of foreign capital on Indian economy, the comprador character of Indian capitalist class or the latter being a junior partner of foreign capital or the Indian State being politically dominated by imperialism directly or through foreign aid or through finance
capital in general. As pointed out earlier, neither foreign capital nor international corporations nor finance capital play a dominating or even an increasing role in the Indian economy. Nor is there one metropolitan centre vis-a-vis India. American private foreign capital in India plays second fiddle to British foreign capital, both in terms of finance and collaboration agreements. In trade, aid, foreign capital and technological collaboration, India has been 'playing the field'. Here again India's relationship is a dependent one not vis-a-vis dominant American imperialism but vis-a-vis the entire world capitalist system. Undoubtedly, India, as other underdeveloped countries, suffers today from technological dependence which in specific industries may lead to some forms of control. It should, however, be noted that this is once again a case of the system's dependence.

All this does not, of course, mean that India in following the strategy of independent capitalism does not constantly face the danger of neo-colonialism. But such a danger would arise primarily from the structural and social inability of its underdeveloped capitalism to develop itself and the country to the extent that social needs are met at a minimum desired plane. When the social failure becomes more and more glaring and also more and more unacceptable to the mass of people and a correct leadership begins to be provided to this discontent, the capitalist class and the dominant leadership would be compelled to seek economic and political support from imperialist powers. They would be compelled to strengthen their links with world capitalism to solve the very economic and political problems which are in part created by these links. In case of a genuine threat of mass revolt, dependent political and military links may also be forged in order to defend the system. Hypothetically, this may also increase the dependence on the socialist countries. A few years back, one might have rejected out of hand the possibility of socialist countries aiding a capitalist regime to suppress popular revolt. But today such a possibility does not appear so preposterous. It could happen under the slogans of keeping neo-colonialism out and helping to strengthen the independence of the developing capitalism. It may also be noted that this type of economic and political threat of neo-colonialism is not faced only by an ex-colony
like India. As Lenin noted much earlier, even other developing or developed capitalist countries could be subjected to it. The position of India today is similar to that of Portugal, Spain, Italy, or even Russia at different times during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Moreover, in the highly integrated system of the international capitalist economy, this threat is constantly faced by countries such as Canada, Spain, Greece and Yugoslavia or even Japan and the Scandinavian countries. Only the degree of the threat and its immediacy are greater in the case of India.

The struggle against imperialism, semi-colonialism, or 'neo-colonialism' in India has therefore to take the form of a struggle against the development of capitalism. India is at present not a neo-colony or semi-colony dominated by foreign capital. Imperialist penetration occurs and the danger of 'neo-colonialism' arises because India follows the path of independent capitalism. Similarly, imperialist pressure is also exercised primarily not through ambassadors, World Bank officials, foreign capital control, etc., but through economic realities. This is why the entire U.S. effort and pressure in India have been exercised primarily to promote the development of the capitalist system or private enterprise and its enmeshing with international capitalism and only secondarily to promote American investments. This is also the reason why the U.S.A. stopped objecting in a serious vein to the Soviet economic assistance to India once it was obvious that the object and consequences of this assistance were not to build socialism but independent capitalism, not to strengthen the forces of social revolution but of capitalism. Such assistance was now even praised as sharing the international burden for the development of India.

It may be acknowledged at this stage that the integration of the Indian economy, as also of the other similar under-developed capitalist economies, into the world capitalist-imperialist economy in a dependent position has yet to be explored in a serious way. What is obvious is that what is involved here is not merely the use of these countries as markets for manufactures, or sources of raw materials, or fields of investment, but their integration into a world-wide structure through aid, trade, finance, investment, technology, science, brain-drain, military defence against internal revolt and exter-
nal enemies, and culture and ideology (for example, the integrated development of economics, political science, and sociology all over the capitalist world including its under-developed part).

NOTES

1. This explains the virtual absence of any popular protest in Britain against the British conquest of India as well as the brutal suppression of all anti-British protests. For example, many thousands of tribal people fighting with swords, bows and arrows were cut down by the well-armed, disciplined British army in India. Or, to give another instance, the massacre of 25,000 people by the British army in Delhi alone after it was reoccupied in 1857 was regarded as an appropriate reprisal for the 'Mutiny'. Similarly, the manpower used for conquest and suppression in India consisted either of Indians or of European 'volunteers' recruited from the lower depths of British, Irish, and European societies. Once again the respectable British citizens did not have to lose their sons. The Indian Empire had therefore hardly any 'sordid' or painful aspects. One could start off the day well by reading about the power and glory and the humanitarian deeds in the morning paper along with one's tea.

2. In fact, the Indian army could not be used in Latin America, and that might to some extent explain the gradual loss of the informal empire there to the U.S.A.!

3. Since this consciousness and 'fear' of imperialist exploitation have played an important role in the struggle against fresh imperialist penetration, the social sciences—history, economics, political science, and sociology—have been pressed into service in the imperialist countries to remove such fears by proving that the entire notion is misconceived or exaggerated as a result of 'nationalist phobia'. The legitimacy of nationalist movements is, for example, recognized on the grounds of national psychology, and an abstract desire for freedom or as the expression of new 'elite' interests. But their basic character as a response to the imperialist exploitation of all classes and strata of the colonial societies is strenuously denied and branded as mere 'ideology'.

4. A major error on the part of the left, both in India and abroad, has been to assume that since the left has failed to overthrow the system, the system or the social order has basically remained stationary since 1947 and would remain so so long as it is not overthrown. But history does not stand still and changes occur constantly. Capitalism develops, among other reasons, precisely because it is not overthrown.

5. To repeat, this is the basic weakness of the Indian social system since 1947 and not any tendency to become a 'neo-colony'. Not 'neo-colonialism' but capitalist path is the basic issue in Indian politics and social development.

6. The increasing role that technological domination plays in the
imperialist scheme of things today and, therefore, the crucial role that the struggle for the development of independent technology should play in the struggle against imperialist economic domination have not yet been adequately analysed even in the anti-imperialist literature. It may be suggested that technology should be assigned the same role that was assigned in the 1920s and 1930s to heavy, capital goods industry.

To make India join the U.S. camp politically or militarily has hardly been a major aim of U.S. policy towards India in the last 25 years.
The Ideological Development of the Revolutionary Terrorists in Northern India in the 1920s

The revolutionary terrorists* of northern India during the 1920s became popular heroes in their own life time and have remained so since then. But their popular image was and is that of heroic youths, saturated with the emotions of abstract or "pure" nationalism and burning with the desire to sacrifice themselves "at the altar of the motherland". Their critics had, of course, harsher things to say about them. But both the admirers and the critics continue to believe that these daring young men had no social ideology, no thought to guide their actions, or that, in other words, they were 'mindless patriots'. The revolutionary terrorists were fully aware of this widely prevalent view. As one of their many public declarations noted: "There are few to question the magnanimity of the noble ideals they cherish and the grand sacrifices they have offered, but their

Read at the Seminar on 'Socialism in India, 1919-39', held in November 1968. Published in Socialism in India, ed. B.R. Nanda, New Delhi, 1972.

*The words "Revolutionary Terrorists" have been used in the absence of a better term. No criticism or value judgment is implied in the use of the term. The alternative was to describe them as "Armed Revolutionaries", as some of the Hindi writers do.
normal activities being mostly secret, the country is in the dark as to their present policy and intentions.” To remove this lacunae they published and distributed, over the years, many statements and pamphlets, some of which were carried in the national press. Many of them are now available, though many more have yet to be traced. In addition, several excellent autobiographies have been published more recently by several of the participants in the revolutionary movement. There is now hardly any excuse for the persistence of the old belief.

II

The Revolutionary Terrorist Movement of the 1920s in northern India was the product of several new factors in the situation. Of course, it arose on the shoulders of the previous revolutionary movements such as the attempts of Rash Behari Bose and Shachindranath Sanyal during the First World War, the Hardinge Bomb Case, the Ghadar Movement, the Mainpuri Conspiracy and the First Lahore Conspiracy Case. There was also the background of the terrorist movements in Bengal, Maharashtra and Europe.

More immediately, it was the product of the Non-Cooperation Movement and its abiding impact on Indian politics. Nearly all of the important members of the new revolutionary movement had taken active part in the Non Cooperation Movement, and had shared in the heady enthusiasm generated by the unprecedented popular upsurge and the hopes raised by Gandhi’s promise of winning freedom within a year. Among the participants in the non-violent satyagraha were, for example, Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, Chandrashekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Jatin Das, Bhagwati Charan Vohra, Yashpal, Shiv Varma, Dr. Gaya Prasad and Jaidev Kapur. But the failure of the Non-Cooperation Movement shattered the high hopes raised earlier. Among the youth who had followed the call of Gandhi and abandoned their schools and colleges and even their homes, there was deep dissatisfaction with the manner in which the movement had been withdrawn. Their sense of gloom was heightened by the replacement of Hindu-Muslim unity forged in
common struggle by an orgy of communal riots and an atmosphere poisoned by mutual communal hatred. These idealist youth could not see anything wrong with Chauri Chaura. Nor could they appreciate a conception of politics and morality which would fell a powerful popular movement with a single blow. Nor were they satisfied with the two substitutes that the national leadership offered them: parliamentary politics of the Swarajists or the so-called constructive programme of the No-changers. The more these young people pondered over the prevailing pessimism and frustration, the more they found fault with the basic strategy of the dominant nationalist leadership and the Gandhian political ideology underpinning it. Their rejection of Gandhism made them search for alternatives. This search led them to socialism on the one hand and revolutionary terrorism on the other. They embraced both, as had been done half a century earlier by the revolutionary Russian youth.

The third event to influence them, though very vaguely in the beginning, was the upsurge of the working class after the First World War. This new social force was watched carefully by many of the older as well as the emerging leaders of the Revolutionary Terrorist movement. They could see the revolutionary potentialities of the new class and desired to harness it to the nationalist revolution. The influence of the working class was strongly felt in 1928 when a strike wave spread over the country.

A major influence on the young revolutionaries was the Russian Revolution and the success of the young socialist state in consolidating itself against heavy internal odds and powerful external enemies. This also led them to study Marxist literature and other books on socialism. The older generation revolutionary terrorists had started discussing the Soviet Revolution and Communism as early as 1924. Gradually more information regarding the Soviet Union trickled down to India. Literature on the Soviet Union was easily accessible at Lahore and was eagerly devoured at the Dwarkadas Library, founded by Lala Lajpat Rai. It had an immediate impact. Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev began to look upon the Soviet Union as the state nearest to their ideal. Soviet Union’s growing impact was also revealed by the attention paid by the public (as opposed to the secret) wing of the revolutionary movement in popularizing the
Soviet Union. This public wing, the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, celebrated, along with radical Congressmen, "Friends of Russia Week" in August 1928. In the same month, the Sabha organized a meeting to eulogize the Russian Revolution. The revolutionaries behind bars also carried on similar propaganda. On 24 January 1930, the Lahore Conspiracy Case prisoners celebrated the "Lenin Day" in the court and sent greetings to Moscow. Similarly, in November 1930, they sent greetings to the Soviet Union on the anniversary of the Revolution.

An important aspect of the Soviet influence was the eagerness of the terrorist revolutionaries to take monetary and other help from the Soviet Union and to send Indians there to get training in the arts, methods, and organization of the revolutionary process. In 1926, Ashfaqullah of the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA) was planning to go to Russia when he was arrested in the Kakori Conspiracy Case. In 1928, Bejoy Kumar Sinha was deputed by the newly founded Hindustan Socialist Republican (Army) Association (HSRA) to go to the Soviet Union. Later Chandrashekhar Azad made vain attempts to send Yashpal and Surendra Pandey to the Soviet Union. The influence of the Russian Revolution was a major factor not only in spreading socialist ideas among the revolutionaries but also in weaning many of them away from purely terrorist ideas.

The young terrorist revolutionaries also established contact with the small communist groups which were sprouting up all over the country. Particularly in the Punjab, but also at Kanpur and Allahabad, they maintained close contact with the communists. During the years 1928-1930, the communist groups and the terrorist revolutionaries worked together in the Naujawan Bharat Sabha.

Gradually, the revolutionary groups and individuals began to emerge out of the mood of frustration and stagnation. Their attempt to create an all-inclusive organization led to the formation of the Hindustan Republican Army in 1924 under the leadership of the "old-timers", i.e., Shachindranath Sanyal, Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, and Ramprasad Bismil. The programme and ideology of the HRA, of which youngsters such as Bhagat Singh, Shiv Varma, Sukhdev and Azad were members, were an amalgam of the old and the new. The HRA helped the young
revolutionaries make a transition to an advanced programme. It also enabled them to maintain continuity with the older tradition. The result was a revolutionary programme with an advanced revolutionary socialist outlook which still tried to incorporate within it individual or group armed actions of a terrorist nature. The new programme emerged fully when the group of young revolutionaries met at Ferozeshah Kotla grounds on 9 and 10 September 1928, created a new leadership, and gave their party a new name with a difference—The Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (Army).

III

The new generation terrorist revolutionaries were men of ideas and ideologies. Their ideas were, of course, rapidly developing and cannot be studied except in motion, so to speak. Moreover, as is true of any other movement with a distinct set of ideas, these ideas were not equally coherently articulated by all the participants. Some naturally assumed the role of ideologues. Such was, for example, clearly the role of Bhagat Singh and Bhagwati Charan Vohra—two men of exceptionally powerful intellect and capacity to translate their ideas into the written word. Other ideologues of the movement were Shiv Varma, Bejoy Kumar Sinha, Sukhdev, and later Yashpal. These men (except Yashpal who came into the movement later) were also responsible for adding the socialist objective to the aims of the movement. But what is equally important is that others discussed these ideas, grasped them, and accepted them with a full sense of responsibility. Chandrashekhbar Azad, for example, was not merely a military leader. He made others read and explain to him books in English till in the end he was able to grapple with their ideas himself. He followed every major turn in the field of ideas and endorsed them only after full discussion and self-conviction. The draft of *The Philosophy of the Bomb* was written by Bhagwati Charan at the instance of Azad and after a full discussion with him.

At the level of the ideologues, the revolutionary ideas were clearly articulated and brilliantly expounded, as even a cursory
reading of the documents cited below would show. The young revolutionaries took particular care to be clear and distinct in their exposition for they were fully aware that the revolutionaries had "all along been, either deliberately or due to sheer ignorance, misrepresented and misunderstood." They wanted to let the people "know the revolutionaries as they are."²¹ Of course, their ideas became much less clear as they came to be expressed by the less educated and less articulate members of the party, as is evident from a perusal of the Atshi Chakkar leaflets written by Inderpal’s group.

IV

The greatest advance that the revolutionary terrorists made was in the definition and development of their aims and objectives. The questions they sought to answer at the ideological plane were: What were the aims of their struggle against the foreigners? What sort of changes in society and polity were they aiming at? What sort of social order and state structure would replace the present ones? And, at the purely intellectual level, they succeeded in postulating the development and organization of a mass movement of the exploited and suppressed sections of society led by the revolutionary intelligentsia for the reconstruction of society on the basis of a new social order—the socialist system based on the abolition of class distinctions and class domination.

The following sections would trace this development in their thought in greater detail. But, at the outset, it is necessary to contradict the impression that all the major shifts in revolutionary thinking occurred during the period of their imprisonment and mainly as a result of the opportunities for serious study that they got while in prison. In fact, the basic ideological formulations of Bhagat Singh were made in the early period of his incarceration on the basis of his earlier reading and thinking—and he had made a great deal of progress in this respect in the pre-1929 period. Moreover, he had read Karl Marx’s Capital in addition to other Marxist, socialist, and revolutionary literature. This is not to deny that continuous development occurred
in the thinking of the revolutionaries due to fresh experiences, study or discussion. But while those who were in jail accomplished all this inside the jail, others who escaped arrest did so outside. For instance this was the case with Bhagwati Charan, Chandrashekhar Azad, and Yashpal. The most mature work of the revolutionary terrorists in terms of theory, *The Philosophy of the Bomb*, was produced by those who had managed to evade arrest.

V

The first major commitment of the revolutionary terrorists was to liberate India from foreign rule and to transform Indian society through a revolution. This commitment found a capsuled expression in the slogan, “Long Live Revolution” or “Inquilab Zindabad.”

Their commitment to revolution was moreover total. To them, revolution was not a mere historical accident or curiosity. It was not merely the demand of a particular historical situation in India. It was “the inalienable right of mankind.” More, it was the eternal principle of human progress. A perpetual process of revolution was needed if human society was not to stagnate and if it was to be overpowered by the dark forces of decay. It was, therefore, the very embodiment of humanist principles. According to the Manifesto of the HSRA (1929):

Upheavals have always been a terror to holders of power and privilege. (But) Revolution is a phenomenon which nature loves and without which there can be no progress either in nature or in human affairs. Revolution is not a philosophy of despair or a creed of desperadoes. Revolution may be anti-God but is certainly not anti-man. It is a vital, living force which is indicative of eternal conflict between the Old and the New, between Life and Living Death, between Light and Darkness. There is no concord, no symphony, no rhythm without Revolution. ‘The music of the spheres’ of which poets have sung, would remain an unreality if a cease-
less Revolution were to be eliminated from the space. Revolution is Law, Revolution is Order and Revolution is the Truth.

The revolutionaries were not afraid of chaos or anarchy which so frightened the middle class intelligentsia of the time. The task of destruction was essential before regeneration could occur. *The Revolutionary* published by the HRA in January 1925 had proclaimed: "Chaos is necessary to the birth of a new star and the birth of life is accompanied by agony and pain." The Manifesto of the HSRA (1929) fully endorsed this anarchistic streak.

Revolution also implied a total struggle—a struggle without compromises, a struggle in which the victory had to be total. *The Philosophy of the Bomb* ended with the declaration: "We ask not for mercy and we give no quarter. Ours is a war to the end—to Victory or Death."

Such glorification of revolution and willingness to make great sacrifices at its altar were, of course, not peculiar to the period under discussion. These were, in fact, inherited from their predecessors. Where first the leaders of the HRA and then Bhagat Singh and his comrades took a giant step forward was in broadening the scope, the definition of revolution.

Bhagat Singh and others repeatedly disclaimed that revolution was to be identified with violence or with "the cult of the pistol and the bomb." These were, when found necessary in some cases, the mere means of bringing about revolution. Revolution was no longer to be seen as a mere political act. That is why a rebellion was not a revolution though it might lead to it. Revolution had a deeper, wider social content. Its aim now was to regenerate society, to change the social order based on "manifest injustice." Revolution was "the spirit, the longing for a change for the better." It was the people’s desire to change their political and economic condition. Bhagwati Charan defined revolution further as "Independence, social, political, and economic." A fuller statement of their position was made in Bhagat Singh’s and Dutt’s statement of 6 June 1929:

By revolution we mean the ultimate establishment of an order of society which may not be threatened by such (social)
breakdowns and in which the sovereignty of the proletariat shall be recognized and as a result of which a world federation should redeem humanity from the bondage of capitalism and misery of imperial wars.

Starting with this view of the revolutionary process, the revolutionary terrorists were no longer satisfied with the mere prospects of the achievement of complete national independence. Even national freedom had to be seen as a means to a new social order. Initially this yearning found expression in the HRA's proclamation in 1925 that it stood for “the abolition of all systems which make the exploitation of man by man possible.” Later revolutionaries also railed against exploitation. The poster put up at Lahore after the assassination of Saunders in December 1928 declared that the revolutionaries were working “for a revolution which would end exploitation of man by man.” The goal was reiterated in the Red Leaflet thrown in the Central Assembly on 7 April 1929. With slightly greater sophistication, *The Philosophy of the Bomb* invited the readers to help establish “a new order of society in which political and economic exploitation will be an impossibility.”

From this egalitarian demand, the next step—the demand for a socialist society—was quickly taken. Socialism became the official goal of the revolutionary terrorists of northern India when they met at Delhi on 9 and 10 September 1928 for reorganizing their party, the HRA. Here, Bhagat Singh proposed that the name of the party be changed to the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (Army). He was given powerful backing by Sukhdev, Bejoy Kumar Sinha, and Shiv Varma. His proposal was carried in the end.

The change in name was not just a gesture. It was taken after full debate and discussion. Several participants had objected on the ground that the older name had acquired a great deal of prestige due to its association with leaders like Ramprasad Bismil, Shachindranath Sanyal and Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee. But they were convinced in the end that the change was essential to denote the changed social, economic and political character of the struggle they were about to initiate.

Nor was the injection of socialism as a goal into the revolutionary movement really sudden. The HRA had already taken
some vague steps in the direction. At the HRA Council meeting, held at Kanpur on 3 October 1924, it had been decided "to preach social revolutionary and communistic principles." The HRA's publication, The Revolutionary, had proposed the nationalization of the railways and other means of transport and communication and the large-scale industries such as steel and ship-building. For other private and small scale business enterprises it had suggested the organization of cooperative unions.

Gradually, more and more revolutionaries had come under the influence of socialist ideas. In 1924, Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee had become a proponent of socialism. Young revolutionaries both in the Punjab and U.P. were taking keen interest in socialism. Many of them were in touch with "Communist" groups.

The goal of socialism was not based on vague and woolly notions or youthful impetuosity. A great deal of intensive reading and discussion had gone into the making of their ideology. At Lahore, Bhagat Singh had helped the Dwarkadas Library acquire a unique collection of literature on revolutions, particularly those of Russia, Ireland, and Italy. He himself had devoured books on revolutions during the years 1924-27. He had organized several study circles with the help of Sukhdev and others and carried on intensive political discussions. J.N. Sanyal, his co-prisoner in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, made in 1931 the following evaluation of Bhagat Singh as an intellectual:

Bhagat Singh was an extremely well-read man and his special sphere of study was socialism. Though socialism was his special subject, he had deeply studied the history of the Russian revolutionary movement from its beginning in the early 19th century to the October Revolution of 1917. It is generally believed that very few in India could be compared to him in the knowledge of this special subject. The economic experiments in Russia under the Bolshevik regime also greatly interested him.

The socialist intellect of Bhagat Singh got a chance to grow and develop in prison. The story of his intellectual endeavours
—his transformation of the jail into a veritable university—has been narrated at length by his niece Virendra Sandhu. In jail, Bhagat Singh wrote several books of which the four prominent ones were Autobiography, The Door to Death, The Ideal of Socialism, and The Revolutionary Movement of India. Unfortunately all the manuscripts have been lost. Similarly, Bhagwati Charan and Sukhdev had made extensive study of socialist ideas. Later, Yashpal emerged as a serious student of the subject. He had not only read R. Palme Dutt’s Modern India but also translated it into Hindi.

What is equally important, Bhagat Singh and others actively promoted the education of party members in the theories of socialism. They were fully aware of the great role that scientific ideology could play in the revolution. Before the Lahore High Court, Bhagat Singh had pointed out that “the sword of revolution is sharpened at the whetstone of thought.” In jail, he had described Gandhi as “a kind-hearted philanthropist” and pointed out that “it is not philanthropy that is needed, but a dynamic scientific social force.” Consequently, when, after the Delhi Conference, the Party office was shifted to Agra, Bhagat Singh immediately built up a small library with economics as the core subject. Here the members were constantly urged to read and discuss socialism and other revolutionary ideas. Bhagwandas Mahour, a virtual teenage member at the time, has narrated how Bhagat Singh urged him to read Marx’s Capital and other books.

It may, however, be stated that Bhagat Singh and his friends were not great scholars of socialism or Marxism but they were no mere novices either. They had travelled some way and were gradually feeling, studying and thinking their way towards a scientific socialist understanding of the problems of the Indian Revolution. For instance, Bhagat Singh grasped that socialism as a system is not the product of a mere subjective longing for a desirable system but far more the objective product of the necessity of the social circumstances. Writing to Sukhdev, who was tormented by doubts, and who along with Bhagat Singh was awaiting the execution of the death sentence, Bhagat Singh remarked:

If we had not entered the field, would it have meant that no
revolutionary action would have occurred? You are wrong if you think so. It is true that we helped to a large extent change the (political) atmosphere. At the same time, we are mere products of the necessity of our times. I would even say that the creator of Communism, Marx, was in fact not the creator of this ideology. It was the Industrial Revolution in Europe which produced many persons of a particular way of thinking. Marx was just one of these men. In his situation Marx undoubtedly helped impart a particular motion to the movement of his times. I and you have not created the socialist or communist ideas in this country. On the other hand, they are the result of the impact on us of our time and circumstances. Undoubtedly, we have contributed in a simple and humble manner to the propagation of these ideas.\textsuperscript{48}

Furthermore, the extent of their socialist understanding is clearly brought out by their concrete understanding of what constituted a socialist society and its points of departure. After all it was on this question that the HRA had been transformed into the HSRA. While the HRA had held up as its immediate object the establishment of a Federal Republic of the United States whose basic principle would be adult suffrage,\textsuperscript{49} the HSRA had by its very name proclaimed the goal of establishing a Socialist Republic.

VI

The leadership of the HSRA clearly grasped that socialism was a product of the historical process and that, therefore, as a system it was the antithesis of capitalism. The first achievement of the socialist system would, therefore, be the ending of capitalism. This was made clear by Bhagat Singh and Dutt in their statement of 6 June 1929 as well as in their statement before the High Court. \textit{The Philosophy of the Bomb} was equally definitive. It had proclaimed: "The revolution will ring the death knell of capitalism."

It was recognized that socialism would represent a new correlation of class forces in society. The entire socialist ideology
was based on class analysis of society. Socialism would be based on the emancipation of the hitherto exploited classes of society, the workers and peasants, and the domination of their interests in the economy, society, and polity. The 6 June statement of Bhagat Singh and Dutt gives even a clearer exposition of this view. After pointing out that the revolution of their conception would change the “present order of things which is based on manifest injustice,” their statement goes on to explain:

Producers or labourers, in spite of being the most necessary element of society, are robbed by their exploiters of the fruits of their labour and deprived of their elementary rights. On the one hand, the peasant who grows corn for all starves with his family. The weaver who supplies the world market with his textile fabrics cannot find enough to cover his own and his children’s bodies. Masons, smiths, and carpenters, who rear magnificent palaces, live and perish in slums, and on the other hand, capitalist exploiters, parasites of society, squander millions on their whims. . . . Radical change, therefore, is necessary, and it is the duty of those who realize this to reorganize society on a socialistic basis.

The leaders of the HSRA also raised the concrete question as to who controls the state power as distinct from the question of exploitation and class interests. Socialism, they said, also represented a new state structure in which power rests in the hands of the workers and peasants. At the same time, socialism could not be established till the existing state apparatus, under the control of the exploiting classes, was captured by the socialist revolutionary forces. In a message from prison in October 1930, Bhagat Singh said:

We mean by revolution the uprooting of the present social order. For this, capture of state power is necessary. The state apparatus is now in the hands of the privileged class. The protection of the interests of the masses, the translation of our ideal into reality, that is the laying of the foundation of society in accordance with the principles of Karl Marx, demand our seizure of this apparatus.
What was to be the state form under socialism? Here the revolutionaries accepted the notion of the “Dictatorship of the Proletariat.” The revolution will “establish the Dictatorship of the Proletariat,” declared the Philosophy of the Bomb, “and will for ever banish social parasites from the seat of political power.” In the course of the court hearings, Bhagat Singh and his co-prisoners made every effort to popularize the notion that the revolution of their conception was closely linked with the fortunes of the working class and its leadership function. On 13 June 1929, Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt met the court judgement in the Assembly Bomb Case with the twin cries of “Long Live Revolution” and “Long Live the Proletariat.” During the Lahore Conspiracy Case trial, all the prisoners used to shout three slogans on their arrival in the court: “Long Live Revolution”, “Long Live Proletariat”, and “Down, Down with Imperialism”.

VII

The growing socialist consciousness also enabled the revolutionary terrorists to constantly link capitalism and imperialism. Their understanding of imperialism and foreign rule went far beyond emotional nationalism. They began to see the close link between capitalism and modern imperialism, between capitalist economic exploitation and the enslavement of nations.

Within India, foreign rule was seen as a form of class rule or as the rule of foreign capitalists. Socialism was then seen as a specific remedy that would, by putting an end to class rule and economic exploitation, bring about true independence. This understanding pervades all revolutionary terrorist documents of the period and was, of course, inherent in the slogans where freedom was linked with the ending of exploitation of man by man. For example, The Manifesto of the HSRA said: “The hope of the proletariat is, therefore, now centred on Socialism which alone can lead to the establishment of complete Independence and the removal of all social distinctions and privileges.”
Once the socialistic outlook enabled them to see the class-based character of all society including Indian society, the revolutionary terrorists ranged themselves squarely against the domestic exploiting classes also. They denounced the domination of Indian capitalists and landlords as strongly as the rule of foreign capital and declared that the abolition of the former was as basic to the revolution as the abolition of the latter. According to The Manifesto of the HSRA:

The position of the Indian proletariat is, today, extremely critical. It has a double danger to face. It has to bear the onslaught of Foreign Capitalism on the one hand and the treacherous attack of Indian Capital on the other: the latter is showing a progressive tendency to join forces with the former.

Bhagat Singh wrote in a message from the prison: "The peasants have to liberate themselves not only from foreign yoke but also from the yoke of landlords and capitalists." His message of 3 March 1931 was even more explicit: the struggle in India would continue so long as "a handful of exploiters go on exploiting the labour of the common people for their own ends. It matters little whether these exploiters are purely British capitalists, or British and Indians in alliance, or even purely Indians."  

It may be noted that the revolutionary terrorists did not make a detailed class analysis of Indian society. There was no concrete analysis of the rural society; no discussion of the structure of Indian capitalism or its complex relationship with imperialism. They even failed to draw a clear distinction between the landlords, zamindars, and money-lenders and the industrial capitalists. It seems that to them capitalism was the epitome as well as the symbol of economic exploitation. What stands out, however, is their firm grasp of the class approach to society, their commitment to socialism, their anti-imperialism, and their recognition of the leading role of the working class. It was therefore not fortuitous that the overwhelming majority of the revolutionary terrorists turned to Marxism and Communism once their own movement reached a dead end.
As practical revolutionaries, the leaders of the HSRA also dealt with the question: who would fight for the revolution or who would bring it about, or, in other words, what was to be the social base of their movement? On the question of the social base of the revolution, the leadership of the HSRA was very clear at the programmatic or theoretical plane. Their movement was to be based on the common people, the workers and peasants, the youth, and the radical intelligentsia. *The Philosophy of the Bomb* was explicit on the question. The appeal was addressed to "the youth, to the workers and the peasants, to the revolutionary intelligentsia." The manifesto of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha (1928) was also clear on the point: "The future programme of preparing the country will begin with the motto 'Revolution by the masses and for the masses'."  

One of the major objectives of the Sabha, as laid down in its Rules and Regulations, was the organization of workers and peasants. The Sabha also decided to open branches in villages in order to emphasize the importance of work in the rural areas. The Kanpur meeting of the HSRA’s Central Council in January 1930, in which, among others, Chandrashekhar Azad, Bhagwati Charan Vohra, Yashpal, and Kailashpati participated, decided to intensify the work among the students, peasants, and workers, and to form for the purpose a separate section of the party organization to be headed by Seth Damodraswarup as President and Bhagwati Charan as Secretary. Similarly Bhagat Singh declared in 1931 that "our main task should be the organization of peasants and workers."  

The role of the common people, in the struggle was emphasized from another angle also. The HSRA’s leaders were convinced that the capitalists and upper classes were showing a tendency to join the foreign power and were likely to abandon the freedom struggle half-way through. Only the common people could then be relied on, and had the strength, to carry forward the struggle for freedom. As Bhagat Singh put it: "The nation can wage a successful struggle only on the strength of organized workers, kisans, and the common people." This emphasis on revolutionary work among the peasants and workers, and
recognition of their revolutionary potentialities, was not new in the revolutionary terrorist movement, though the emphasis on their being the social base of the revolution was. Earlier, in 1924, the HRA had also decided that "to start labour and peasant organizations suitable men must be engaged on behalf of the Association to organize and control labourers in the different factories, the railways, and the coal-fields."69

This was, however, all in theory or at the programmatic level. In practice, little effort was made to organize the common people or to do even elementary political work among them. The Naujawan Bharat Sabha did take part in one or two agrarian agitations in 1928 and issued a few exhortations to the peasants to organize themselves.70 The Sabha had only one village branch in Morinda in Ambala and two tehsil branches at Jaranwala and Talagong, and these were all inactive.71 The activities of the Sabha were, for all practical purposes, confined to the cities and their middle and lower middle class sectors.72 Similarly, Ajoy Ghosh and a few others worked with labour at Kanpur, perhaps under the impact of communist workers.73 Kailashpati, the approver in the Delhi-Conspiracy Case and earlier a member of the Central Council of the HSRA, noted in his evidence that while the Council decided in January 1930 to intensify work among the workers, peasants and students, no one was assigned to work among the peasants.74

In reality, the HSRA failed to do any political work among the common people; it had hardly any link or contact with them, not to speak of its organizing their class power and leading them in class struggles. It was virtually cut off from the classes which it had accepted in its programme as the social base of the revolutionary movement. This was one of the most important weaknesses of the HSRA.

The fact of the matter was that the main appeal of the HSRA was to the radical nationalist youth. In theory, the youth had a double role to play. They were to act as the conveyors of the revolutionary socialist message to the workers and peasants,75 and they were also to be the direct fighters for revolution. In practice, the leadership of the HSRA placed almost its entire reliance for political work on the youth: the youth was to be the vanguard of the revolution. The wide participation and even leadership of the workers and peasants remained the goal,
but it could not yet be so in practice because it was believed the workers and peasants were yet "passive", "dumb", and "voiceless". The youth must, therefore, be the real builders of the revolution, they must act on behalf of the people and arouse them through their work and sacrifices.

The political appeal of the revolutionary terrorists was at its emotive best when made to their real and immediate audience. According to The Philosophy of the Bomb, "the revolutionaries already see the advent of the revolution in the restlessness of youth, in its desire to break free from the mental bondage and religious superstitions that hold them." In 1929 The Manifesto of the HSRA made an appeal to the youth delineating before them their historical mission which in its passion, lyricism, and emphasis on the idealism of youth, reminds one of the appeals of the founders of the May 4th Movement in China. The following extract from the appeal indicates the type of emotion that the revolutionary terrorists tried to generate and on which they themselves relied in making their immense sacrifices:

The future of India rests with the youths. They are the salt of the earth. Their promptness to suffer, their daring courage and their radiant sacrifice prove that India’s future in their hands is perfectly safe... Youths—Ye soldiers of the Indian Republic, fall in. Do not stand easy, do not let your knees tremble... Yours is a noble Mission. Go out in every nook and corner of the country and prepare the ground for future Revolution which is sure to come... Do not vegetate. Grow!... Sow the seeds of disgust and hatred against British Imperialism in the fertile minds of your fellow youths. And the seeds shall sprout and their shall grow a jungle of sturdy trees, because you shall water the seeds with your warm blood.

In practice also, all the revolutionary terrorist public activities, all their propaganda, including the "propaganda by death", were directed towards the youth. The youth from the lower middle class constituted the real social base of the movement. Almost the entire membership of the HSRA was recruited from this section of society.