SECTION TWO

NATIONALISM IN INDIA DURING THE WAR PERIOD
A

OUR PROGNOSIS

WE WILL now study the development of Nationalism in India during the intra-War and post-War period till the British rulers transferred power to the Indians. This phase has crucial significance since it is crowded with developments which culminated into the acquisition of political independence by the Indian people. This is particularly so because the transfer of power was the outcome of unique historical circumstances and tortuous diplomatic bargainings. Within the limited space of this small work which has emerged as a Post Script to 'Social Background of Indian Nationalism', it is possible only to narrate that process briefly and in its main outlines.

In the Epilogue of the 'Social Background of Indian Nationalism', we ventured to make a prognosis of this phase of the development of Indian Nationalism. This prognosis was based on the major postulates which have guided the analysis of the subject under discussion. We stated as follows:

"However, considering that the Indian capitalist class appreciably added to its economic and social strength during the period of the present World War II and is led by a group of politicians who possess great experience and consummate political and strategic talent in contrast to the awakened lower layers of the Indian society who are culturally backward, organizationally weaker, and politically less conscious than the bourgeoisie and, further, are led by groups of persons smaller in political stature and experience, it is very likely that, in its immediate next stage, the Indian nationalist movement will be dominated by and made to subserve the interests of the capitalist class.

"The direction of development of Indian history and the nationalist movement in the next phase led by and suberving the interests of the capitalist class, can be broadly indicated.

"The first feature of this development will be the working out
of the policy of 'Concessions and Counterpoise' by British Imperialism on a much grander scale in the changed historical situation to win over increased sections of the vested interests for its support, and also to stimulate more bitter rivalries among them to its advantage. This will result in a more intensified struggle among these sections and will accentuate communalism and inter-provincial antagonisms.

"The second feature of the development will consist in that the leaders of the vested interests will oppose mass movements of lower strata of the population or will distort and canalise these movements for gaining concessions from British Imperialism as well as from sectional rivals.

"Constitutionalism, sharpened communalism, accentuated inter-provincial rivalries, and opposition to or increased distortions of the growing mass struggles by the leaders of the vested interests are likely to be the principal characteristics of the next phase of Indian development." (pp. 391).

The above historical prediction has been appreciably corroborated in its basic outline by developments which have taken place during the subsequent period. This confirms our view that the method of Historical Materialism provides a most fruitful approach to correctly analyse, evaluate and prognosticate social phenomena.

We will now briefly describe the development of Indian nationalism upto Independence.

During the period of the Second World War the tempo of history quickened at an unprecedented rate. The struggle of the Indian people for national independence became more militant, rose to new heights, assumed new forms.

In the new historical situation British Imperialism, involved in a perilous war with the Axis Powers evolved a new political strategy based on a new variant of the old policy of counterpoise, concessions and coercion to subserve the same objective viz. the perpetuation of its domination over India.

The Indian National Congress representing the Indian bourgeoisie and the principal leader of Indian Nationalism and the nationalist movement naturally decided to take maximum advantage of the critical situation in which Britain was placed. It strengthened and brought into action its basic strategy of negotiation and bargain backed up by the pressure of a limited mass movement or a threat of mass movement. This had been always its classic strategy suited to the peculiar historical position in which
it was placed. The principle of this strategy was to transform all anti-imperialist discontent in the country in the form of a mass movement such as would be prevented from assuming revolutionary forms and still exert pressure on Britain to make substantial concessions or even transfer power to the Indian bourgeoisie. The Indian National Congress fully realized that a revolutionary mass movement would not stop at ending British Imperialism but also would end the Indian propertied classes.

The Muslim League, the party of the Muslim feudo-capitalist classes, had defined the creation of an independent state of Pakistan, (parts of India predominantly inhabited by the Muslims) as its goal. It recognized the inherent weakness in the position of the Indian National Congress, bargained with and brought pressure on the latter with the threat and even actual precipitating of communal disturbances in the country. It reinforced this method with that of utilizing for its own advantage the policy of counterpoise which Britain had invented for its own purpose.

The Communist Party of India pursued the policy of developing and leading anti-imperialist mass struggle during the first phase of the War, when the war continued between the democratic and fascist imperialist powers and when the Soviet Union was not involved. But when Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union and Britain and other democratic imperialist powers entered into a war alliance with the Soviet Union, the Communist Party of India turned a volte-face, glorified the War as a Peoples' War and opposed all struggles for independence from the British rule. It, in fact, directly or indirectly helped the war efforts of the British government. By abstaining from and even opposing the nationalist mass upsurge, the C.P.I. betrayed the national liberation struggle and left the leadership of the movement to the compromising Indian National Congress and the reactionary communal Muslim League.

The Congress Socialist Party attempted to interpret the Congress strategy in more radical terms and tried to carry forward that strategy by developing mass movements after 1942. But its activities, though heroic, were not enlightened by a deep political vision or guided by a correct strategy of mass movements.

“The Second World War brought extreme inflation, disorganization and famine in the economic field.” While the bourgeoisie, taking advantage of the acute scarcity of the consumers' goods as well as of the increased demand for war necessities, reaped fabu-
ious profits and, that too, through most inhuman profiteering and unscrupulous black-marketing activities, the Indian masses and the lower middle classes suffered unbearable privations. Political and economic discontent among the people consequently was aggravated and the class struggles of the workers, the peasants, and the middle class employees during the latter phases of the War and during the immediate Post-War period became a regular feature of the situation. The discontent spread even among the police, armed forces and services creating an explosive revolutionary situation. It was in this situation that British Imperialism, the Indian National Congress, the Muslim League and other political parties evolved their respective plans to secure maximum benefits in whatever new political pattern may emerge as a result of struggle and negotiations.

B

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

CLASSIC OPPORTUNITY FOR INDIAN BOURGEOISIE

We will next indicate the decisive economic developments which took place in India during the war and post-war period, and which brought about changes in the Indian national economy, changes in the position of various classes and their respective movements.

As we have previously seen, the Indian national economy was a subordinate colonial adjunct of the British imperialist economy. By her economic and political policies, Britain had obstructed the free and rapid industrialization of India. She, particularly, did not permit the development of heavy industries, the vital prerequisite for the rapid industrialization of a country and for the building up of an independent national economy.

During the period of the Second World War, national economies of Britain and other highly developed industrial countries were almost entirely mobilised for meeting the requirements of the war. This provided a classic opportunity to the Indian industrialists to capture the Indian market and, thereby, to expand their industries.

"The following table shows in index numbers, the development in various industries during the war period."

1937 = 100

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cotton</th>
<th>Jute</th>
<th>Steel</th>
<th>Chemicals</th>
<th>Sugar</th>
<th>Cement</th>
<th>Paper</th>
<th>General</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>109.0</td>
<td>98.3</td>
<td>108.0</td>
<td>84.4</td>
<td>88.7</td>
<td>124.8</td>
<td>121.6</td>
<td>105.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>104.3</td>
<td>92.4</td>
<td>125.0</td>
<td>103.9</td>
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<td>152.9</td>
<td>135.1</td>
<td>102.7</td>
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<td>1940</td>
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<td>96.1</td>
<td>125.5</td>
<td>133.3</td>
<td>106.0</td>
<td>152.1</td>
<td>169.7</td>
<td>109.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>114.8</td>
<td>92.4</td>
<td>131.1</td>
<td>153.2</td>
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<td>185.8</td>
<td>195.4</td>
<td>117.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>102.0</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>136.7</td>
<td>138.7</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>194.5</td>
<td>180.9</td>
<td>111.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>117.0</td>
<td>84.4</td>
<td>141.5</td>
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<td>95.3</td>
<td>188.4</td>
<td>179.2</td>
<td>117.0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>117.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>120.0</td>
<td>84.4</td>
<td>142.9</td>
<td>134.1</td>
<td>85.5</td>
<td>196.5</td>
<td>196.5</td>
<td>120.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"The conditions created by the war led to the maximum utilisation of the existing capacity of Indian industries though they were not quite favourable for the development of new industries on a large scale. A number of industries, however, like ferroalloys, non-ferrous metals like aluminium and antimony, diesel engines, pumps, bicycles and sewing machines, chemicals like soda ash, caustic soda, chlorine and superphosphates, and certain kinds of machine tools, were started on a modest scale during the period of the Second World War. A greater stimulus was, however, given to medium and small-scale industries like cutlery, pharmaceuticals, medicines and drugs. The conditions of inflation and a sellers' market gave a great impetus to the production in established industries which worked multiple shifts but the difficulties of imports of essential requirements led to tremendous wear and tear."\(^{11}\)

**THE BRITISH ECONOMIC POLICY**

The British government, however, even then did not give unrestricted freedom for the expansion of the Indian industries, light as well as heavy. The Eastern Economist observed:

"We could make everything and yet nothing. We were just suppliers of anything and everything, menders and repairers of all things on earth, but the makers of none. We had no system, no plan. Rather, there was a plan—clearcut and thorough—to prevent the industrialization of this country in the post-war period."\(^{12}\)

11. Ibid. p. 431  
Britain did not permit free expansion of the Indian industries during the war period because she was afraid that an industrially developed India armed with a strong heavy industry would prove a powerful competitor during the post-war period.

On the ground of lack of shipping resources and by restricting capital issues the government did not permit India to freely import much capital goods from foreign countries during the war period. Hence the Indian industrialists not only could not establish new industrial enterprises but were constrained to overwork the existing industrial plants to meet the demands of the market which had expanded as a result of the almost complete stoppage of import of foreign goods and also due to the government’s orders for war necessities. In fact, the expansion of production during the war period was due to “the reckless overworking of existing plant and machinery and more man-power shifts.”

Even regarding orders for war supplies, the Eastern Group Supply Council, the basic organisation to distribute orders to different countries of the Empire, heavily discriminated against India. Referring to it, M. Visvesvaraya states as follows:

“The orders for products required for the present war seem to have been distributed among the various belligerent countries within the Empire on the advice of the Roger Mission and the Eastern Group Supply Conference. According to the arrangements made, only a few products which required no technical skill or practice seem to have been assigned to factories and industrialists in India. Products requiring heavy industries or higher technical skill were allotted to the U.S.A. and the Dominions of Canada and Australia.”

Absence of any large orders for the products of heavy industries by the Council was one of the major reasons why Indian heavy industries could not appreciably expand during the war period.

Britain retained her grip over the sterling balances accumulated in favour of India and to be paid by Britain to India in connection with war expenses incurred by the latter on behalf of the former. Britain did not allow India to make use of these balances during the war and post-war periods to import consumers’ or capital goods according to the basic requirement of the national need.

13. Ibid. March 5th 1956
14. Sir M. Visvesvaraya: Prosperity through Industry,*p. 15
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

RECKLESS PROFITEERING

The rising inflationary spiral during the war period brought increasing privations to the common people who suffered from acute shortage of even prime necessities of life.

Though the common people of India were impoverished during the war due to the rise of prices of even basic necessities of life, the industrialists, the merchants and businessmen made colossal profits. As pointed out by many economists, even in the pre-War period, the rate of profit was very much higher in India than elsewhere (particularly in advanced countries). The war enhanced the profits enormously. The patriotic capitalists, who have been always posing as representatives of national interests, even exploited the war situation and people’s intensified hardships to amass fabulous profits. This can be seen from the following table:

Index numbers of average net profits in 1943 in different Industries.\textsuperscript{16}

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{Industry} & \text{Index Number} & \text{Year} \\
\hline
\text{Jute} & 926 & \text{1939} = 100 \\
\text{Cotton} & 645 & \text{Engineering} = 225 \\
\text{Tea} & 392 & \text{Miscellaneous} = 401 \\
\text{Sugar} & 218 & \text{All kinds} = 327 \\
\end{array}
\]

Demand for the increase in dearness allowance was not met in any industry during 1944. “The Government of India in its concern began freezing part of the wages for the duration of the war. The impact of the soaring prices and the inadequacy of the dearness allowances to keep up the cost of living can be seen from the fact that in 1943 the working days lost in strikes were 1,291,100 whereas upto October 1944 they were 3,779,000 days.”\textsuperscript{16}

As Professors Wadia and Merchant very trenchantly point out, “this accumulation of capital had not been based on any productive economic development or industrial advance during the war. The contradiction between the inflated wealth of the Indian capitalist class and the low level of Indian economic development was glaring.”\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15} Prof. Wadia and K.T. Merchant op. cit. p. 571.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid. 571
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
CHANGING POSITION OF BRITISH AND INDIAN CAPITALISTS

The respective strength of British and Indian capital however changed in favour of the latter at the end of the war. "Indians recently grown rich and powerful due to inflationary conditions and profits from war contracts are attempting to buy out British interests." 18

Another reason why Indian capital which had increased during the war was spent in buying out British enterprises was its inability to secure industrial plant from foreign countries due to war conditions. "Hampered by the non-availability of machinery imports during the war, unable to invest in any large measure in new industries, this huge mass of newly accumulated capital in Indian hands gravitated inevitably to industries already well-established in this country under foreign ownership. Complete or partial buying out of British concerns by Indian interests became a significant phenomenon during the war and immediately after and to the British interests concerned was not unwelcome in view of the uncertain political future in India and Asia generally." 19

NEW ERA OF FUSION OF INDIAN AND FOREIGN CAPITAL

Subsequently, the tendency of a fusion of Indian and foreign capitals developed.

Though there existed before the war some joint economic enterprises in which both foreign and Indian capitals were combined, however, on the whole, there was little fusion of both capitals. A new economic feature emerged after the war. British capitalism which had emerged weakened from the war evolved a manoeuvre to safeguard its interests in India, that of Joint Anglo-Indian enterprises in India.

This was facilitated by the fact that India was weak in capital resources. An era of a fusion of Indian and British interests in new and old concerns on an increasing scale opened.

"Andrew Yule and Co. controlling 78 companies, Gillanders Arbuthnot controlling 70, Octavius Steel and Co. agents for 57 companies, Mcleod controlling 39 companies and Jardine Henderson and Co., have now Indian directors on their boards and are some characteristic examples of the rapid growth of the pheno-

18. Daily Express, 1949
19. Supplement to Capital, Dec., 22nd 1949
menon of the fusion of British and Indian capitals. The development of a fusion of interests in existing enterprises foreshadowed the pattern of new investments by foreign capital in the country."20

American capital in alliance with Indian capital has also been establishing joint economic enterprises in India since 1946. "Side by side with these, Indian Business has also been putting through such deals with American Business. The Indo-American deals are spread almost all over the new industries to be developed in India—automobiles, radio manufacture, plastics, agricultural machinery, certain branches of the chemical industry, artificial silk and the manufacture of machinery for industrial use".21

We will discuss the implication of these post-war developments subsequently.

C

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

We will now briefly indicate the history of nationalism in India in the political field during the period of the Second World War, which finally culminated into the withdrawal of the British Rule.

INDIA ARBITRARILY MADE PARTICIPANT IN WAR

India was made a participant in the war on the side of Britain without any consent of the Indian people expressed through its representatives. Immediately after Britain declared war on Germany in 1939, the Viceroy, without consulting the leaders of the Indian people, proclaimed India a belligerent. The British Parliament passed also the Government of India Amending Act which invested the Viceroy with the power to override the working of the Constitution. Through Defence of India Ordinance of 1939, the Central Government armed itself with powers to rule by decrees and promulgations.

The arbitrary committing of India to the War by the Viceroy, the representative of the British rule in India, together with the assumption of autocratic powers by him created deep resentment among the Indian people.

20. Ibid
I. N. CONGRESS AND BRITISH GOVERNMENT

Under these circumstances, the Indian National Congress, the leader of the nationalist movement, evaluated the war as an imperialist war and refused to associate with it. In a statement, its Working Committee declared that “The Committee cannot associate themselves or offer any co-operation in a war which is conducted on imperialist lines and which is meant to consolidate imperialism in India and everywhere.” It further declared, “The Working Committee, therefore, invites the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged in particular, how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect to in the present. Do they include the treatment of India as a free nation whose policy will be guided in accordance with the wishes of her people?” (September 1939).

The British Government declined to meet the demand of the Congress. It only reiterated its promise of Dominion Status for India in future.

Again in 1940, the Congress expressed its willingness to cooperate in war provided Britain conceded the demand of national independence for India and established a Provisional National Government at the Centre which, though formed as a transitional measure, should be such as to command the confidence of all elected members in the Central Legislature . . . . if these measures are adopted, it will enable the Congress to throw in its full weight in the efforts for the effective organisation of the defence of the country” (July 1940).

The British Government rejected the Congress proposal on the ground that the Muslim League representing the Muslim community and the Princes would not consent to it. The Viceroy put forth a counter-plan which included the establishment, after the end of the war, of a body of representatives of the principal elements in India’s national life in order to devise the framework of the new Constitution, “the enlargement of the Viceroy’s Executive Council by the addition of nominated Indians”, and “the appointment of a ‘War Advisory Council’ of the representatives of the Indian States and other Indians.” (August 1940).

INDIVIDUAL CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

After experiencing repeated failures to secure national indepen-
dence through negotiation, the Congress finally launched individual civil disobedience in October 1940. The limited programme of struggle indicated that the Congress leadership did not desire to seriously obstruct Britain in War.

NEW SITUATION IN WAR

After Germany attacked the Soviet Union at the end of 1941, and Japan attacked Pearl Harbour, the war alliance between Britain, France and other countries was broadened into the United Nations including the Soviet Union, the U.S.A. and China within it.

The Atlantic Charter sponsored by Britain and the U.S.A. declared as a part of the war aim the restoration of “sovereign rights and self-government” to those peoples who had been forcibly deprived of them. The Charter kindled optimism among the Congress leaders.

After Germany attacked the Soviet Union and Japan the Philippines thus threatening other Asiatic countries including India, the Congress discarded its former characterization of the war as an imperialist war. It now described the war as an anti-fascist war. In 1942, it categorically named the Axis-Powers as aggressors and declared its sympathy for nations which were victims of those powers. It further stated that “only a free independent India can be in a position to undertake the defence of the country on a national basis.”

CRIPPS MISSION TO INDIA

The triumphant advance of the Japanese army on the Asiatic mainland culminating into its capture of Rangoon impressed upon Britain the necessity of conciliating India. Britain realised that without mobilizing the support of the Indian people, it was difficult to resist any Japanese invasion of India. The British War Cabinet therefore sent the Cripps Mission to India to negotiate a political settlement with the Indian leaders. The attempt, however, proved abortive since Britain refused to meet the demand of the Indian nationalist leaders for a war-time national government with full powers. Though the nationalist leaders were ready to be satisfied with Britain’s promise of transfer of power after the end of the war and even agreed to accept the Viceroy as the head of the wartime national government, they insisted that the wartime national
government should be invested with full powers. The British Government, however, declined to concede this demand and the negotiations broke down.

While the leaders of the Indian National Congress had taken an anti-fascist stand naming the Axis-Powers as aggressors, while they were prepared to accept Britain's grant of national independence to India after the end of the war and also to undertake the organisation of the defence of India through a national government with full powers, there were two other nationalist groups in the country which considered the hope of securing national independence through negotiation with British imperialism, even though the latter was enmeshed in a war crisis, as utopian and advocated a militant countrywide mass struggle as the only means to win freedom. There was, however, a divergence of opinion among these groups regarding the attitude to be adopted towards Japan. One group evaluated Japan as the enemy of peoples and hence rejected the idea of even temporarily aligning with her for tactical reasons in the struggle against Britain for freedom. The other group headed by Subhas Bose, on the other hand, held the view that the Indians could utilize the Japanese aid to eliminate British domination over India and win independence.

A basic weakness of the nationalist movement was the failure of the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League to unite and unitedly present the national demand to the British Government. "In the development of the national movement for freedom, there appeared a wider and wider rift between the two major political parties in India—the Congress, on the one hand, organised on a national basis and the Muslim League, on the other, organised on a communal basis as an authoritative organisation of Muslim opinion. It is more and more evident that while the Congress demanded independence on the basis of a unitary India, the Muslim League based its achievement of independence on a division of India into two sections, Pakistan and Hindustan."

British statesmen adroitly exploited and utilised this cleavage between the two most powerful political organisations in the country, to prevent their united pressure for the national demand. Thus Indian Nationalism was seriously weakened by Communalism.

The minds of the Congress leaders were torn between two contradictory sentiments. On the one hand they desired to co-ope-

22. B.N. Vekaratnam: National Movements and Constitutional Develop-
rate with the United Nations in fighting fascist aggression; on the other, they desired the Indian people to co-operate with the United Nations in the anti-fascist war as a free people. When the British Government declined to meet even their compromise demand viz. postponement of the establishment of national independence till the end of the war but creation of a war-time national government with full powers, they felt they had no alternative except that of starting a struggle to enforce the national demand.

THE FAMOUS AUGUST RESOLUTION OF 1942

The Congress passed a resolution in August 1942 declaring that "An immediate ending of British rule in India is an urgent necessity both for the sake of India and the success of the cause of the United Nations." The Congress further resolved "to sanction the starting of a mass struggle on the widest possible scale so that the country may utilize all the non-violent strength it has gathered during the last 22 years of peaceful struggle."

As Mahatma Gandhi subsequently clarified, the resolution of struggle was more intended to exert pressure on the British Government to reopen negotiations rather than to start an immediate struggle. This is confirmed by the fact that the resolution also stated that "The Committee is anxious not to embarrass in any way the defence of China or Russia whose freedom is precious and must be preserved or jeopardise the defensive capacity of the United Nations".

BRILLIANT STRATEGY

Professor D. D. Kosambi has interesting observations to make on the brilliant strategic significance of the 1942 Resolution. While evaluating Pandit Nehru's version of the same as embodied in "Discovery of India" he comments as follows:

"When the All India Congress Committee met at Bombay, the members knew that arrest was imminent and most of them had prepared for the event by setting their family affairs and personal finances in excellent order against all contingencies that might arise for the next year or two. What strikes this writer as remarkable is that not one of these worthy and able delegates, though aware that the British adversary was about to strike, ever thought of a plan of action for the Congress and for the nation as a whole.
The general idea was ‘the Mahatma will give us a plan’, yet no especial impression was made by the Mahatma’s speech just before the arrests—though that address to the assembled delegates on the eve of an anticipated popular explosion is not only not revolutionary in character, nor a plan of action of any sort, but seems, when taken objectively, to be on the same level as a comfortable after-dinner speech. Why is it that knowledge of popular dissatisfaction went hand in hand with the absence of a real plan of action? Does it mean, for example, that the characteristic thought then current among the Indian bourgeoisie had in effect permeated the Congress leadership? One may note that on a class basis the action was quite brilliant, no matter how futile it may have seemed on a national revolutionary scale. The panic of the British Government and jailing of all leaders absolved the Congress from any responsibility for the happenings of the ensuing year; at the same time the glamour of jail and concentration camp served to wipe out the so-so record of the Congress ministries in office, thereby restoring the full popularity of the organization among the masses. If the British won the war it was quite clear that the Congress had not favoured Japan; if on the other hand the Japanese succeeded in conquering India (and they had only to attack immediately in force for the whole of the so-called defence system to crumble) they could certainly not accuse the Congress of having helped the British. Finally, the hatred for the mass repression fell upon the thick heads of the bureaucracy, while having the discontent brought to a head and smashed wide open would certainly not injure the Indian bourgeoisie . . . You look in vain in Nehru’s book for any recognition of the undeniable fact that in 1942, while the toiling masses had begun to taste the utmost depths of misery and degradation, the Indian bourgeoisie was flourishing as never before. War contracts, high prices, the ability to do extensive black-marketing, had given the financiers and industrialists what they wanted . . . . Taking cognizance of this and of the further truth that the British in India had consistently allowed investors to make an increasing amount of profit in this country, one may be able to account for the lack of a plan in 1942 and for the successive deadlocks that followed in spite of mass pressure in the direction of revolution.”

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

POLITICAL STALEMATE

The government forestalled the launching of any movement by arresting prominent Congress leaders and proscribing the Congress organisation. This led to large-scale spontaneous disturbances all over the country which, in the absence of any leadership and plan of struggle, were successfully put down by the government by methods of ruthless repression. Struggles involving widespread sabotage and terrorism organised by underground revolutionary groups subsequently broke out but they were crushed by the government. Jayaprakash Narayana became the symbol of these heroic struggles. Also the attempt of Subhas Bose who organised the Indian National Army in Burma to liberate India with the aid of Japanese imperialism also failed.

There was a political stalemate in India at the time when the war ended.

During the Second World War period the national consciousness of the Indian people deepened and its urge for national independence became accentuated and more articulate. Both the Muslim League with the overwhelming section of the Muslim community behind it and the Indian National Congress with its mass support more aggressively put forth the demand of national independence. The conflict between these two major political organisations, however, sharpened and they could not unite and make a united demand for national freedom. The initial military defeats of Western colonial powers undermined the moral, political and military prestige of these powers among all Asiatics including the Indians. This gave a momentum to the urge of national independence among them as also instilled greater self-confidence among them. The organisation of the army of Indian freedom by Subhas Bose, though with the assistance of Japanese imperialism, challenged the non-violent principle of Gandhism which had determined the character of the Indian nationalist movement, and, though crushed, served to inspire movements of military and naval revolt which broke out in India in the post-war period and which influenced Britain to a great extent to revise its attitude to the demand of national independence of the Indian people.

GROWING POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DISCONTENT AT THE END OF THE WAR

The end of the war found India seething with grave political and
economic mass discontent. The economic suffering of the masses due to war conditions were instilling among them moods of revolt and strong urge for political and economic liberation. The country threatened to be a theatre of great mass struggles. The British Government comprehending the depth of the crisis decided to send a Cabinet Mission to negotiate a settlement with the Indian leaders. Farsighted Britishers sensed a dangerous situation. As P. J. Griffith, the leader of the European Group in the Indian Central Legislative Assembly remarked in his speech in London in 1946:

"India in the opinion of many was on the verge of a revolution, before the British Cabinet Mission arrived. The Cabinet Mission has at least postponed if not eliminated the danger."

R. I. N. MUTINY

The political and economic ferment was spreading in the post-war period, not only among the civilian population but was also steadily permeating the armed forces. In February 1946 strikes broke out in the air force and the navy in a number of centres, threatening thereby the military basis of the British rule in India. This was a danger signal to Britain. Further the naval risings which broke out in Bombay, Madras and Karachi evoked great sympathy and support of the people. In Bombay, the naval rising was supported by the working and middle classes by means of sympathetic demonstrations, closing of shops and strikes. The government had to use mainly British troops to cope with the situation. It was only when Vallabhbhai Patel intervened and advised the ratings that the latter abandoned the struggle.

Large-scale political demonstrations for national independence involving clashes with the police and military were taking place in a number of centres in the country.

SIR STAFFORD CRIPPS ON NEW LINE OF IMPERIALISM

British statesmen comprehended the explosive character of the situation and conceived and inaugurated a new political line to meet the situation. The Cabinet Mission was sent to India on 19th February 1946, the day after the naval strike broke out in Bombay.

Sir Stafford Cripps retrospectively elucidated the new political line of Britain in relation to India before the Parliament in 1947 thus:
“There were fundamentally two alternatives facing the government. They could attempt to strengthen British control in India on the basis of an expanded personnel in the Secretary of State’s services and a considerable reinforcement of British troops to be in a position to enforce for as long as might be necessary for our administrative responsibility while awaiting an agreement among the Indian communities. . . . The second alternative was to accept the fact that the first alternative was not possible. . . . One thing that was quite obviously impossible was to decide to continue our responsibilities infinitely and indeed against our own wishes into a period when we had not the power to carry out.”

SOME PECULIAR FEATURES OF POST-WAR INDIAN SITUATION

One peculiar feature of the post-war Indian situation was that while the people of all communities were increasingly uniting and struggling in their own way for national freedom, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, two major political organisations, were unable to come together and present a united demand for independence on an agreed basis.

Another feature of the post-war situation was that the leadership of both the Congress and the Muslim League strongly condemned the methods of struggle resorted to by the people to secure independence. Azad, the then Congress President, commented on the new developments thus:

“ Strikes, hartals and defiance of temporary authority of the day are out of place. No immediate cause has arisen to join issue with the foreign rulers who are acting as caretakers.”

Mahatma Gandhi scathingly condemned the growing struggle of the masses thus:

“I might have understood it if they had combined from top to bottom. That would of course have meant delivering India to the rabble. I would not want to live upto 125 to witness the consummation, I would rather perish in the flames.” (Harijan, April 7, 1946).

Regarding the naval strike, Vallabhbhai Patel condemned it and “endorsed the remarks of the Commander-in-Chief that there ought to be discipline in the Navy.”

The Congress leaders were hoping to secure freedom through negotiation with Britain. They did not approve of popular movements, especially when they were assuming revolutionary and violent forms.
CABINET MISSION

The Cabinet Mission came to India in such an explosive situation. It brought recommendations for the future constitution for India, proposals for constitution-making machinery and a plan for interim government. The Congress criticism was trenchant as revealed in the following A.I.C.C. News letter:

"The independence that has been promised is so hedged in with restrictions that it is a misnomer to call it by that name. The so-called Constituent Assembly will have the semblance but not the reality of a sovereign body. . . ."

"The Union Government without control over currency, banking, customs and planning will be weak to direct the economic progress under modern industrial conditions."

"National interest has been subordinated not only to the communal but to the feudal no less. The Princes and not their people will decide the future relations of the states to the Union."

"The communal and feudal interests have been the main props so far of the British imperial game in India. To try to maintain them as permanent and effective features of the so-called independent India gives rise to a plausible suspicion that the British Government are unable to break away from the traditional policy of their predecessors."

The Muslim League announced that while "the attainment of the goal of a complete sovereign Pakistan still remains the unalterable objective of the Moslems of India", it accepted the plan since "the basis and the foundation of Pakistan are inherent in the Mission's Plan."

The democratic criticism of the Plan can be summed up thus: It did not provide a sovereign Constituent Assembly since the constitution it evolved was subject to the endorsement by Britain. It did not provide a democratic Constituent Assembly since it was not elected on the basis of universal franchise and, further, the autocratic princes and not the peoples of the states were to choose representatives for the Assembly on behalf of the states; it injected communalism into the Constituent Assembly by providing representation to communal minority. It divided India on feudal and communal lines by providing for two Muslim majority areas and the Princely Zone. It evoked a weak Centre making thereby national planning difficult.

The extreme Left groups in the country recommended a cate-
gorical rejection of the proposals of the Cabinet Mission. They
evaluated the proposed scheme as a subtle strategic device of
Britain to maintain its grip over India indirectly, to concede
pseudo-independence to her. One Left criticism ran thus: "The
Constitutional Plan of 1946 continued the old method of elaborate
balancing and counterpoise of the different elements in Indian
political life, especially of building a political situation on com-
munal antagonisms, by balancing the Congress against the Muslim
League with Princes as the reactionary pivotal force, in such a way
as to nullify in practice the supposed offer of Indian freedom and
retain effective final control in their hands... British imperialism
had not yet abdicated and transferred power to the Indian people.
It had rather exploited all its ingenuity and age-long experience
to establish an elaborate, cumbersome, precarious machinery
through which even behind the formal facade of Indian 'Independ-
dence' it would be able to continue to manoeuvre and seek to main-
tain its essential economic and strategic domination".

With the declaration of the Cabinet Mission that the scheme
proposed by it "stands as a whole", the hope of a political settle-
ment between Britain and India faded.

The post-war political and economic situation was in the mean-
while steadily deteriorating. In industrial centres, the strike move-
ment of the workers was growing and assuming grave proportions.
The democratic movement of the peoples of the States was gather-
ing new momentum and extending. Popular struggles in Travanc-
core, Hyderabad and Kashmir were reaching new heights and
depths. Radical sections of the people were growing critical of the
compromising policies of the nationalist leaders and their methods
of winning independenece through negotiations.

GROWING RIFT BETWEEN I. N. CONGRESS AND MUSLIM LEAGUE

Another feature of the situation was the rapid deterioration of
the Hindu-Muslim relations. The conflict between the Indian
National Congress and the Muslim League regarding such pro-
blems as the nature of the state structure of a free India, the com-
position of the Interim Government and others, was exacerbating
and accelerating communal feelings. Communal clashes of unpre-
cedented ferocity broke out in Bengal, Bihar and other provinces,
resulting in the massacre of thousands of persons. In the atmos-
phere of intensifying communal tension the Hindu Mahasabha
began to gather influence among increasing sections of the Hindus.

The British government recognised the gravity of the situation. "Faced with this deepening crisis, signalized equally in the advance of the working class and peasant struggles, and popular revolt against princely rule, and in the growth of political disintegration and reactionary communal conflict and anarchy, imperialism sought to hasten the time table for reaching the new political settlement." To meet the immediate crisis a Coalition Government at the centre composed of the Congress, the League and the Sikh representatives was formed. Due to acute differences among these representatives the coalition failed to function smoothly.

MOUNTBATTEN PLAN AND PARTITION OF INDIA

The rift between the Congress and the League leaders was rapidly widening. They failed to compose their differences and reach an agreement at the Conference held in London in December 1946. In the face of the deteriorating political situation, the British Government replaced Lord Wavell by Lord Mountbatten as the Viceroy of India. A new plan known as the Mountbatten Plan was evolved. The basic difference between the Cabinet Mission Plan and the Mountbatten Plan lay in the fact that while the former provided for a single united Indian state, the latter, by the implication of its terms, paved way for the political partition of India.

The leaders of the Indian National Congress at first felt reluctant to accept the Mountbatten Plan which involved the political vivisection of India. Subsequently, however, they accepted the Plan, though with great misgivings. While accepting it on behalf of the Congress, Pandit Nehru remarked, "It is with no joy in my heart that I commend these proposals". Mahatma Gandhi who at first very strongly opposed its acceptance finally recommended it.

The Left Nationalist groups in the country stood for the categorical rejection of the Plan and for the launching of a country-wide mass struggle for national independence. They interpreted the Plan as an astute political, strategic manoeuvre of politically, economically and militarily weakened post-war Britain to maintain through the Plan indirect political and economic grip over India by dividing India into two parts both of which would be politically and economically weakened and therefore constrained to be dependent on Britain. Further, they said, the partition of India on a religious basis would not eliminate communalism but only lift it to the plane of an inter-state struggle.
The British Conservatives, the staunch defenders of the Empire, supported the Plan in its fundamentals. "Economist", the organ of British Capital, commented in its issue on June 7, 1947 on the Plan thus: "Something may remain even of the formal ties if Dominion Status is not renounced; and in any case, the essential strategic and economic ties between Britain and India will remain even if they are under different political forms".

REASONS FOR ITS ACCEPTANCE BY I. N. CONGRESS
The acceptance though reluctant of the Mountbatten Plan by the Congress leaders may perhaps be explained by three reasons. First, the Congress leaders had lost all hope of an agreement with the Muslim League to present a united demand for the unitary state of a free India. Secondly, the growing cleavage between the Congress and the League was transforming India into a cauldron of ferocious communal passions and a theatre of expanding brutal communal warfare. Thirdly, they viewed with apprehension, especially after the R.I.N. strike, the extending mass movements which were assuming violent revolutionary forms.

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IMPLICATIONS OF PARTITION

The partition of India into the states of Pakistan and the Indian Union destroyed the political unification of the Indian people accomplished by Britain. It also brought into existence new problems.

Since India was partitioned not on nationality or linguistic but on religious lines, the problem of religious minorities in both states emerged in a permanent form. The partition also led to a sharp communal conflict instigated mainly by reactionary communal forces. This resulted in a large-scale uprooting of millions of members of both the Hindu and the Muslim communities from their provincial homelands and the emergence of the baffling problems of rehabilitation of refugees, evacuee's property and others. Even today, the problems remain unresolved.

The political partition of India also inevitably resulted in the vivisection of the Indian economy to the detriment of both the states. Since Pakistan is predominantly agrarian, and the Indian Union has, within its territory, practically all industries, a balanced
development of their respective economies has become extremely difficult. "The division cut across economic and political links, divorced mutually inter-dependent agricultural and industrial area, cut indiscriminately across railway and irrigation systems and thus placed barrier in the way of All-India economic development and planning of vital importance for the future prosperity of India". Further it has also led to almost chronic trade and currency war between the two states.

The problem of the settlement of refugees also put a great strain on the weak economies of these states.

The unhappy political relations between the two states engendered political suspicion and fear prompting both of them to maintain huge military machines. The Indian Union is at present spending about 54 per cent of its annual revenue on defence. The state of Pakistan too spends an enormous sum on the military. This exerts a severe strain on the economies of both states constraining them to almost starve social services and makes difficult to realize projects of economic and cultural advance.

The Partition also generated political problems like that of dispute over Kashmir and others which are still not resolved. In fact, actually both states were for some time engaged in large scale military operations in Kashmir. The dispute over the Kashmir problem which was subsequently referred to the U.N.O. still remains unresolved. The Partition has also created the problems of border incidents, boundaries as well as others.