



**COMMUNIST MOVEMENT AND
COMMUNAL QUESTION IN
INDIA, 1920-1948**

ABSTRACT

OF THE

THESIS

SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF

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BY

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

In colonial and post colonial India, the question of communalism is/ has been a vexing question. It was/ is the communists who addressed this question more comprehensively than any other political formation. Precisely because of this, a study of the "Communist Movement and Communal Question in India, 1920-48" holds great importance.

The present study, consisting of 6 chapters, has made an enquiry into the question dividing its development in various phases. It has elaborated upon how the Communist Party of India perceived Hindu-Muslim problems vis-à-vis its role in the National movement during these years.

The first chapter is an introduction to the study which has analysed and scrutinized the existing major works e.g. M.R. Masani, John H. Kautsky, Gautam Chattopadhyay, Bipan Chandra, B.R. Nanda, Bhagwan Josh and Suranjan Das. These works have not focused adequately on the communal question/Hindu-Muslim relations. Some of these works are confined to specific regions, that too addressing only marginally on the communal question.

The 'Introduction' of the present study therefore attempts to look into the relationship of the League, Congress and Communists on the one hand and the Communist Party's attitude towards the question of 'Pakistan', on

the other. The famous 'Adhikari thesis' on 'National Self-determination' has been analyzed and an attempt is made to see the changing views of the Communist Party on this issue.

The second chapter, 'Establishment and Growth of Communist Ideology and Party' deals with the whole historical context of the foundation of the Communist party of India, since the world war I, from Tashkent to Kanpur, 1918-1925. It elaborates upon how the revolutionaries went abroad, their 'Hijrat movement', and how the splinter groups of revolutionaries came together after concretizing their ideological/tactical differences. The Kanpur conspiracy Case (1924) was a sort of major landmark in the ideological-organizational emergence of the Communist party. This chapter therefore, devotes a whole separate section on it. It has derived much from hitherto untapped vernacular sources available with the NMML. Then the chapter concludes with the first Communist Conference of Kanpur (December 1925).

The third chapter, 'Communist Party in India, 1925-39' deals mainly with the various workers and peasant parties, which explains how the communists underlined the economic basis of the class identity rather than any other social basis of the identities. The WPPs also addressed the communal question, which has been taken up here also. This phase is

marked by the Meerut Conspiracy Case (1929-33), therefore, there is a whole sub-section on this aspect, and then it takes up the Draft Platform of Action of CPI, 1930. From here onwards, Left sectarianism can be distinctly traced. Having elaborated upon the ideological, organizational progress of the CPI, locating the communal question, in the communist politics becomes convenient and explanatory as well. This chapter, therefore, produces an exclusive sub-section on CPI's concern with the communal question during 1920s-30s. It is a well known fact to the students of Indian History that the decade of 1920s was most fatal in terms of the rise of communalism in India. G.R. Thursby and almost all text-books/reference books on the social-political history of late colonial India deals with this aspect. But the roles/attitude of the communist parties have not been dealt adequately. This gap has been sought to be filled up in this chapter. This may be mentioned here that the CPI was first political formation of colonial India to have passed a resolution against dual membership, which prohibited its members against joining any communal organization. For example, Hasrat Mohani and S.D. Hasan were asked to quit the Muslim League in 1927, characterizing the dual association as 'splintered consciousnesses.' Same restriction was imposed on K.N. Joglekar for having association with Brahmin Sabha.

During 1934-37, the CPI suffered from state repression. This aspect has been explored with the help of many archival documents not used before. Having found many significant archival documents pertaining to it, this sub-section of the chapter looks deeply into the communist activities in different regions. The fourth chapter, 'Imperialist War to People's War 1939-1945' deals with this period (1939 to 1945) witnessed the ascendancy of imperialists; it also saw a paradigm shift in CPI's assessment which characterized the World War-II as 'imperialist war'. It has tried to look into continuation/discontinuation of their succumbing to the anti-imperialist plan of the communist movement during this time to clear the wrong impression of their support to the British war efforts. This was also a phase when the Muslim League made a rapid rise after the formation of ministries (1937-39). Addressing this problem became vital both for the Congress and the Communists, hence a detailed treatment of the subject in the chapter.

The period between 1940 and 1948 saw the partition of the country along communal lines. This fatal decade witnessed dreaded faces of communalism. The fifth chapter, 'Communist Party, Muslim League and the Question of Pakistan', therefore, deals exclusively with the CPI's engagement with the League's Separatism, Pakistan Question and historically much debated position of the CPI on the issue.

During this phase the CPI came out with the question of right to self-determination for nationalities, which posed serious problems before the theoretical position of the CPI. Having insisted on class identity, the CPI was questioned for having taken this kind of position, which, *prima facie*, contradicted the economic basis of class identity. This chapter has tried to explain all these aspects in detail.

The last chapter concludes the whole work. The Communist Party's acknowledgement of the existence of nationalities and acceptance of right to self-determination for nationalities, unleashed a process to understand the economic and political problems of the minorities, the problem of communalism and some hitherto ignored aspects of partition. The questions of communalism and of nationalities came to be seen as linked inextricably with each other.

It, therefore clarifies that on the question of Pakistan, the CPI's attitude did not provide any concession to any political group on the basis of aspirations premised exclusively on religious considerations. At the same time it was not averse to the provisions of safeguarding their concrete political and economic interests in the face of their backwardness and under-representation in power structure. The CPI always put primacy on the economic issues like poverty, which remained central to its agenda, which was in contrast with other

contesting parties. Subsequently, in the post colonial period, the question of self-determination continued to be discussed by the party.



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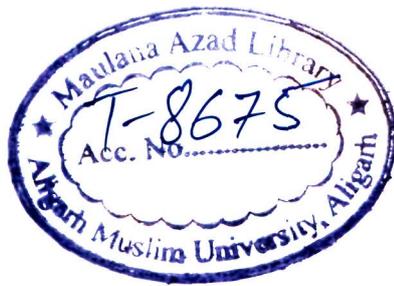
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis "*Communist Movement and Communal Question in India, 1920-1948*" by Mr. Habib Manjar is the original research work of the candidate, and is suitable for submission to the examiners and for the award of the Ph.D. Degree.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ishrat-Alam".

(Dr. Ishrat Alam)
Supervisor

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Abbreviations

AICC	All India Congress Committee
AICEA	All-India Council of the European Association
AIFSU	All India Friends of the Soviet Union
AIKS	All India Kisan Sabha
AIML	All India Muslim League
AISF	All India Student Federation
AITUC	All India Trade Union Congress
AIPWF	All India Press Workers Federation
AINC	All India National Convention
AIRF	All India Railway men's Federation
AIWPP	All India Workers' and Peasants' Party
BCMU	Bengal Chatkal Majdur Union
BPCC	Bengal Provincial Congress Committee
BPKS	Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha
BSPA	Bombay Special Power Act
BTLU	Bombay Textile Labour Union
CA	Constituent Assembly
CC	Central Committee
CCI	Comintern Communist International
CDM	Civil Disobedience Movement
CE	Central Executive
CHNN	Communist History Network Newsletter
CP	Communist Party
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPC	Criminal Proceeding Code
CRC	Central Revolutionary Committee (All India)
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain

CPSU	Communist Party of Soviet Union
CSP	Congress Socialist Party
CPB	Central Publication Branch
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CPI	Communist Party of India
CLAA	Criminal Law Amendment Act
Comintern	Communist International
DIB	Director of the Intelligence Bureau
ECCI	Executive Committee of the Communist International
GIP	Great Indian Peninsula (Railway men's Union)
GKU	Girni Kamgar Union
GOI	Government of India
IAR	Indian Annual Register
ICP	Indian Communist Party
INC	Indian National Congress
INPRECOR	International Press Correspondence
INTUC	Indian National Trade Congress
IPC	Indian Penal Code
IPTA	Indian People's Theatre Association
IRA	Indian Revolutionary Association
ITUF	Indian Trade-Union Federation
LKP	Labour and Kisan Party
LRC	League of Radical Congress
MMCP	Muslim Mass Contact Programme
NAI	National Archives of India
NCM	Non Cooperation Movement
NFL	National Federation of Labour
NMM	National Minority Movement
NMML	Nehru Memorial Museum Library

NTUF	National Trade Union Federation
PB/Politburo	Political Bureau
PCC	Provincial Congress Committee
PIHC	Proceedings of the Indian History Congress
Red TUC	Red Trade Union Movement
RFSFR	Russian Federated Soviet Federal Republic
RPIWC	Revolutionary Party of Indian Working Class
RILU	Red Internationals of Labour Unions
RIN	Royal Indian Navy
SBI	Special Branch, Intelligence
UF	United Front
UNF	United National Front
UP	United Provinces (Before 1947)
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WPP	Workers' and Peasants' Party
YCL	Young Communist League
YWL	Young Workers League

Introduction

A study of the “Communist Movement and Communal Question in India, 1920-48”, constitute an important subject of enquiry which holds the key for understanding several political developments obtaining during the course of national movement in India. The present study is an attempt to investigate the communal question from 1920 to 1948 and its relevance for understanding the contemporary political questions like communal riots, demands of the Muslim League and their counterpart communal parties and the question of ‘Pakistan’. This is the period during which communist movement began in India and progressed through several crucial tests. To be specific, our aim is to assess the evolution of the Communist movement’s approach to the communal question between 1920 and 1948. An attempt in this regard is made to see how the Communist Party of India perceived Hindu-Muslim problems vis-à-vis its role in the National movement during these years.

It is very satisfying to note the kind of attention the communist movement has drawn over its long history in India. M.R. Masani has tried to assess the role of communists in his book *The Communist Party of India: A Short History*¹ and is possibly the first attempt to make a historical assessment of the Communist Party of India. Masani’s evaluation of the rise of communist movement in India serves at best as one of the earliest texts on the concerned subject. This work tries to

¹ M.R. Masani, *The Communist Party of India: A Short History*, London, 1954

argue that the Communist Party of India worked directly under the supervision of Communist International. He is particularly acerbic in taking stock of the communists' 'blunders and betrayals.' Masani's work has largely ignored the complex issue of communal question and Communist Party attitude toward it. He writes that the communist support to the idea of Pakistan as a separate Muslim state meant the total dismemberment of the country and its 'Balkanization' into a dozen or more independent states.²

Similarly we find that a host of writers on Indian Communist movement provided an extreme form of interpretation accusing the Party of having acted directly at the behest of either Communist International or the Communist Party of Great Britain, and, therefore, as the "agent" of British imperialism during the "Do or Die" struggle of the Indian people.³ So we will look into this question in the light of the vast available sources.

Next important study on the subject is by John H. Kautsky.⁴ Kautsky's purpose is to assess the role of the Soviets in formulating the strategy of the Communist Party of India. He tried to prove that the Indian Communists were in fact been doing just what they had always claimed they were doing: 'struggling to

² Ibid, p. 84

³ Madhu Limaye, 'Indian Communism: The New Phase', *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 27, No. 3, September, 1954, pp. 195-215; John H. Kautsky, *Moscow and the Communist Party of India: A Study in the Postwar Evolution of International Communist Strategy*, New York, 1956; Gene D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller (ed.), *Communism in India*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1959

⁴ John H. Kautsky, *Moscow and the Communist Party of India*, New York, 1956

bring about world socialism under the leadership of the Soviet Union.’ However, his work starts from 1945 and looked even in the post colonial period, which is out of purview of our study. This work is simply a history of Soviet Union and the part played by it in the formulation of policies by the Communist Party of India. This work has ignored the major problem of CPI’s contribution and its policy towards ‘Pakistan resolution’ that is to be investigated.

Another important work on the theme is *Communism and Bengal Freedom Movement*.⁵ The author has conducted a series of interviews with some of the Marxists in Bengal, including, Gopen Chakravarty, Radharaman Mitra, Satis Pakrasi, Pramatha Bhowmik, Atul Bose and Abdur Rezzak Khan. It provides a chronology of a wide variety of ideas in response to worldwide historical stimuli, and thus documenting underlying socio-economic and political forces within India, particularly the communal question.

Despite his rigorous attempts to provide documentation, Chattopadhyay’s work has some limitations. Perhaps the most controversial of his assertions concerns the founding of the Communist Party in India, which, according to him, was brought largely through the work of Abani Mukherjee and Nalin Gupta. According to Chattopadhyay, “once ...historical facts are established firmly, the myth of Muzaffar Ahmad being the founder of the Indian communist movement

⁵ Gautam Chattopadhyay, *Communism and Bengal Freedom Movement*, Vol. I. (1917-1929). New Delhi, 1970

gets blown up sky-high.”⁶ This work has largely ignored the use of vernacular sources and their perceptions of the rising communist movement and communal question.

Bipan Chandra and other contributors to *The Indian Left: Critical Appraisals*⁷ have also dealt with the Communist ideology’s growth in India and its various facets. This is one of the most comprehensive volume on the subject. The Indian Communist Party has been left behind. It could never gain hold on the nationalist movement: it was always hovering on the edges, always goading, but never taking lead. This book has tried to create the impression that essays communists’ adherence to a paradigm based on external analysis and on the ideology of a foreign power leads to nowhere. The Communist Party failed to take advantage of the upsurge of peasant discontent at the end of the 1920s because the leadership in Moscow insisted upon a centralization of form and structure unsuited to the Indian condition and temperament. The collected essays also come down heavily on Communists side of the Pakistan issue. Shri Prakash’s contribution in this volume is of considerable significance for our theme.

The CPI was thus never able to answer the question as to why the Muslim League could gain any ‘mass influence’ at all. Once the theory of the League’s democratic character had been given up, it was replaced by the conspiratorial

⁶ Gautam Chattopadhyay, *Communism and Bengal Freedom Movement*, Vol. I. (1917-1929), New Delhi, 1970, p. 27

⁷ Bipan Chandra (ed.), *The Indian Left: Critical Appraisals*, New Delhi, 1983

intrigues of imperialism. The imperialists had granted Pakistan to keep “a British dominion to allow British capital to have almost undisputed sway over the Muslim majority areas”. The Punjab almost undisputed sway over the Muslim majority areas”. The Punjab unit of CPI in one of its resolutions in October 1947 argued that the communal disaster had been a shame on “the Punjab the land of Lala Lajpat Rai, the Punjab that gave India Iqbal”, According to it these riots were not a “spontaneous outburst”. Indeed, “the leader, inspirer and organiser of this offensive is British imperialism. It seeks to disrupt our economy, so that India may continue to be dependent on Britain”. Nothing could bring out more sharply the communists view of India in 1947. for them the 75 year-old social process which led to the rise of a large communal intelligentsia, the Hindu revivalism of the rising mercantile classes in specific regions and the objective dependencies of the Congress liberalism on it in lieu of a socially radical mass programme, the ideological and political channels created and political channels created for the spread of communalism by the British designed separate electorates, their support of the League as a counterweight to Congress nationalism-all this and much more remained uncomprehended. Really became defined by the formal logic of selected Marxist principles. Even here the Leninist stand-point of the primacy of the working class interest, the necessity for continually expanding one’s own sphere of influence within an united front, etc., were missing from the CPI strategy.

The question is not whether the communists would have prevented the partition of Pakistan or done away with the communal problem. The point is that the communists did not even build the presuppositions to correctly fight against them. Theirs was not a materialist analysis of communalism based on the actual history of the national movement. Rather, for them the history of the national movement was the reflection of an idealized history firmly rooted in their minds backed up by the psychological fixedness of an intense emotional loyalty. The dialectic of their method was provided by a constant interaction between the fixed permanence of this idealized history and the perpetually shifting conjunctures of the real one. The attempt to grasp the latter was strictly conditioned by the range of choices available in the first. The question was one of reducing the concrete form of a phenomenon to its presumed truth, and not of presuming the truth in the first instance from the concrete form of the phenomenon itself. But then as Mark pointed out in his critique of Hegel's method the attempt to rediscover the "logical idea" (here the idea of self-determination in the communal problem) in every object meant that "the real subjects.....are reduced to mere names of the idea so that we are left we are left with no more than the appearance of real knowledge. They are and remain uncomprehended because their specific nature has not been grasped.

Thus according to Shri Prakash, the CPI failed to realise and propose an "alternative strategy to the Gandhian" strategy of negotiations from above "to unite various communal organisations against the common target i.e. eviction of

the British. They failed to expand their areas of influence among the lower peasantry in minority dominated areas and thus restricted their capacity to penetrate into this layer of society. This failure was responsible for precluding expansion of the communist ideology at horizontal level. Shri Prakash is of the opinion that such a misperception on the question of Pakistan accounted largely for CPI failure to address itself to this political problem.⁸

B.R. Nanda provides a brief survey of a complex interplay of personalities and politics that affected the growth of leftist ideas and parties. He, however, indicates that the Bolshevik Revolution failed to make a great impact on Indians because of the presence of the Gandhi at the helm of a nationalist movement that was already on the crest of a rising wave. Whereas Zafar Imam's essay (in the same Volume), on the other hand, points out that the Russian Revolution gave a significant impetus to India's freedom struggle by its call for national self-determination. The emergence of leftist parties, trade unions and terrorist groups on the wake of the Bolshevik revolt, likewise, helped the rapid transformation of the Indian National Congress into a dynamic organization- a process that marked the beginning of the end of British rule and the growth of socialism. The essays in *Socialism in India*⁹, however, do not contribute everything original or unfamiliar to the world of scholars.

⁸ Cf. Bipan Chandra (ed.), *The Indian Left: Critical Appraisals*, pp. 256-57

⁹ B.R. Nanda (ed.), *Socialism in India*, New York, 1972, Second Impression, New Delhi, 1991

Another critical account on the national movement and covering left movement is *Struggle for Hegemony in India 1920-47* in three volumes.¹⁰ The first two volumes argue that the Indian Left failed to come to terms with the reality of India's colonial situation. To them, in colonial India the "primary contradiction" was between imperialism and the Indian people and Gandhi recognised this and shaped the Congress into a vehicle to express this multi-class, anti-imperialist consciousness. He also recognized that the colonial state, as a semi-hegemonic and not purely repressive state, could only be displaced through a 'counter hegemonic strategy.' By contrast, the communists clung to illusions of an insurrectionary upsurge and, partly because of this, wrongly characterised the Congress as a bourgeois organisation that was half hearted in its nationalism and that would seek to curb the militant struggles of the lower classes.

This work is sharply critical of the political and intellectual Left. The three volumes are animated by the belief that victory was a matter of having the right "line" or paradigm. They display a complete intolerance towards all other viewpoints.

Suranjan Das in his authoritative work *Communal Riots in Bengal, 1905-1947*¹¹ has examined the nature and factors behind communal riots in Bengal to understand the evolution and growth of communalism in pre-independent India. He has tried to understand the phenomenon as a developing process of

¹⁰ Bhagwan Josh, *Struggle for Hegemony in India 1920-47*, 3 Vols., , New Delhi, 1992

¹¹ Suranjan Das, *Communal Riots in Bengal, 1905-1947*, Delhi, 1991

legitimization. He has dealt with the “launch of the Pakistan movement”. He has dealt with this problem in the context of Muslim League and its leadership efforts to popularize the concept among Muslim masses of Bengal. Suranjan Das has briefly touched the role of the Communists by underlining the involvement of the Communist Party of India and labour unions, especially Calcutta Tramway Worker’s Union in organising peace squads or expressing their anger over the League’s promotion of such fissiparous tendencies.¹²

The Communist movement in India is a product of the given historical conditions at home and abroad. It arose, when, in the beginning of 1920s the Indian proletariat drawing its inspiration from the Marxist-Leninist ideology and the October Socialist Revolution, entered the Indian political scene. During the course of nearly half a century from its beginning, it has gone through a long process of twists and turns, ups and downs, additions and modifications.

The Communist movement in India, since its inception, has travelled a militant and heroic course full of uncountable hardships and sufferings and has struggled under the ban imposed by the British Government. Throughout its career, it has faced a series of institutional suppressions (e.g. the Peshawar Conspiracy Case 1921, the Kanpur Conspiracy Case 1924, the Meerut Conspiracy Case in 1929 and so on). All along the line, it has shown the bravest spirit of not fearing any brute force and daring to struggle against the most ferocious enemy. In

¹² Ibid, pp. 181, 86, 190

its legendary fights, numerous communists have heroically laid down their lives for the national cause.

Hence, a history of the Communist movement in India is important to ascertain the role of the Communist Party of India in the national liberation movement. It was under the influence of October Revolution, the revolutionaries like V. Chattopadhyaya, M. Barkatullah, M.N. Roy, Abani Mukherjee, and Shaukat Usmani etc. were goaded to establish communist groups throughout the country. Even since its coming into existence in India, they continued to assess and reassess the situation as a dynamic political organisation.

One of the most overarching question was the communal question from 1920 onward. After the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation movement there was a significant rise in the communal riots during these periods. In the context, the Communist Party of India's role and the subsequent writings on the communal question merit our attention. Our attempt in the present thesis is to evaluate the particular position taken up by the communists on the question of communal problem on the basis of availability of new literature especially the appearance of Communist Party's documents.

The Communists leaders were arrested in Meerut Conspiracy Case (1929-1933) it is generally believed that the influence of the communists waned in the aftermath of the Meerut Conspiracy Case. But for example our study of the Government Intelligence Department and Home Department documents suggest

the contrary. We find that the Communist Party functioned during these years even after the imposition of ban on the Party.

An important phase during the course of freedom struggle was the period of Second World War (1939-45), which marked a switch over in the Communist Party of India's assessment from an 'imperialist war' to 'people's war'. The period from 1939 to 1945 which witnessed the ascendancy of imperialists, also saw a paradigm shift in CPI's assessment and its characterization of World War as 'imperialist war'. They advocated People's war. Other changes in the party line during the course of war (when they considered it a people's war) need also to be investigated. We will try to look for continuation/discontinuation of their succumbing to the anti-imperialist plan of the communist movement during this time to clear the wrong impression of their support to the British war efforts.

It is generally assumed that in the post Congress Ministry period, League's influence among the Muslims had increased on the basis of allegation that Muslims were ill-treated under the Congress Ministry as clearly documented by Suranjan Das, Joya Chatterji, Salil Mishra, Mushirul Hasan.. So, in this context we have tried to look into the relationship of the League, Congress and Communists on the one hand and the Communist Party's attitude towards the question of 'Pakistan'. The famous 'Adhikari thesis' on 'National Self-determination' has been analyzed and an attempt is made to see the changing views of the Communist Party on this issue. Despite all odds, the country was divided into India and Pakistan as two separate identities.

Chapter II

Establishment and Growth of Communist Ideology & Party

II.1. First World War and the Russian Revolution

The First World War¹ started as a result of imperialist rivalries for the re-division of world markets and territories. Its effects were seen in every sphere of life, specially political and economic, throughout the world. In India too it led to the rise in the prices which deteriorated the condition of the workers as well as peasantry. The workers demand for higher wages, dearness allowances and shorter hours of work began to figure prominently from 1917 onwards and it brought spontaneous protests and strikes. The end of the year 1918 was marked by a great strike in the Bombay cotton mills, and by January 1919, 125,000 workers coming from practically all mills of Bombay were out of work. The strikes occurred in the country throughout 1919 and 1920, and nearly paralyzed the whole industrial organisation.² At the same time, the heavy taxation deteriorated the conditions of the peasantry as well.

¹ 'After the First World War, the internal situation in colonial and dependent countries also began to undergo rapid changes. The patriarchal and feudal way of life continued increasingly to disintegrate under the onslaught of capitalism in the conditions of brutal colonial exploitation with the use of imperialist methods. The further decay of feudal relations and the development of capitalist ones resulted in the aggravation of contradictions of the colonial regime and promoted the mounting of liberatory aspirations of oppressed peoples.' (E. Komarov, *Lenin and the National Liberation Movement in India: Historic Essays*, New Delhi, 1986, p. 111)

² Zafar Imam, 'The Rise of Soviet Russia and Socialism in India, 1917-1929' in B.R. Nanda (ed.), *Socialism in India*, New York, 1972, Second Impression, New Delhi, 1991, p. 47

The Russian Revolution pitted proletarian ideology against imperialism and its success was celebrated as victory of the proletariat all over the world. It provided an alternative before every colonial country to get rid off imperialism. The Indian Communist movement was also a post Russian Revolution phenomenon.³ The Communist ideologies started entering into India through various sources.⁴ In the words of S.A.Dange, “The First World War and the Russian Revolution brought the first wave of class consciousness and strike struggles to the Indian factory workers in big cities and town...it began to figure from 1917 onwards.”⁵ The news of the February Revolution in Russia was enthusiastically received in India. All sections of Indian opinion both the nationalist and the pro-Government, joined hands in welcoming the beginning of democracy in Russia.⁶ Even the nationalist leaders were influenced by the Bolshevik Revolution and they welcomed it.⁷

³ Harkishan Singh Surjeet et al.(eds.), *History of the Communist Movement in India. The Formative Years 1920-1933*, Vol. 1, New Delhi, 2005, p. 25

⁴ M.R.Masani, *Communist Party of India A Short History*, p. 27: He writes that a steady and expensive stream of literature had been flowing into India ever since Communist activity in the country started.

⁵ S.A.Dange, *On Trade Union Movement*, p. 20, Cf. Pankaj Kumar, *Communist Movement in India*, p. 16

⁶ Zafar Imam, ‘The Rise of Soviet Russia and Socialism in India, 1917-1929’, p. 42

⁷ Lala Lajpat Rai regarded Bolshevism, “the real and genuine idea which can not be destroyed.”. Lala Lajpat Rai, *Unhappy India*, Calcutta, 1928, pp. 485-86; Similarly Tilak believed that “the principle and practice of Bolshevism stemmed from Geeta and Shastras”, (Cf. Pankaj Kumar, p. 7); Further Tilak in his *Kesari* of January 29, 1918 described Lenin as an “advocate of peace.”.

The formation of the Third Communist International (Comintern)⁸ in March 1919 was instrumental in organizing the Communist parties in the colonies. In 1919, the Third International decided to support nationalist movements in the East ‘as they tend to upset the existing authority while not opposing revolutionary aspirations’⁹. The Congress which concluded on 6 March 1919 adopted a resolution “On the International Situation and the Policy of Entents” and a “Manifesto of the Communist international to the proletariat of the whole world.”

And the “Thesis on Colonial and National Question” of Lenin was adopted at its Second Congress of the Communist International held in 1920.¹⁰ This was in

(Shashi Bairathi, *Communism and Nationalism in India: A Study in Inter-relationship 1919-1947*, Delhi, 1987, p. 17)

⁸ Communist International (1919-1943), was born out of a vision, originating in the dream of a world revolution. The visionary was Lenin, the architect of the Russian Revolution. For a recent study on the history of Communist International see, Sobhanlal Dutta Gupta, *Comintern and the Destiny of Communism in India 1919-1943: Dialectics of Real and Possible History*, Kolkata, 2006

⁹ M.R.Masani, *Communist Party of India A Short History*, London, 1954, p. 20; Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. I, p. 105. On March 1919, held an international conference of Communist International, it was attended by 52 delegates from 35 organisations of 21 countries. Lenin presented Thesis on bourgeois democracy and dictatorship of the proletariat as well as the guidelines of the Communist International outlining the tasks of the communist parties. These were adopted as the basic programmatic documents of the international communist movement and on 4 March the Conference converted itself into the First foundation of the Congress of the Communist International.

¹⁰ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. I, p. 195; the Second Congress of the Comintern, held in 1920 stated that ‘the nationalist movement in the Colonial and semi-colonial countries was objectively fundamentally a revolutionary struggle and as such it formed a part of the struggle

the context of determining the most complex problem i.e. the national liberation all over the world and the role of the Communists. One of the central questions discussed here relates to the attitude that the Communists should adopt vis-à-vis the anti-imperialist movements “led by the bourgeois.”¹¹

Lenin’s original Draft Theses as well as Roy’s Draft supplementary Thesis, following a substantial modification of the latter by Lenin, was examined by a Commission on National and Colonial Question. Both the Theses¹² were later adopted by the Congress, following discussions and modification.¹³

Roy, in his Draft Theses, arrived at a position substantially different from Lenin’s. His position, being derived from an assessment of the nature of the colonial bourgeoisie and the degree of preparedness of the proletariat, was at complete variance with that of Lenin’s. Sanjay Seth argues that for Lenin the project in East was one of, namely, national liberation; for Roy the objects were multiple in the sense that, notwithstanding his acceptance of Lenin’s position, for him, a distinction had to be made between bourgeois democratic movements and

for world revolution. Sir Cecil Kaye, *Communism in India* (ed.), Mahadev Prasad Saha. Calcutta, 1972, p. 1

¹¹ Bipan Chandra (ed.), *The Indian Left: Critical Appraisals*, New Delhi, 1983, p. 1

¹² This has been already dealt in detail. For original draft of both the Theses see. Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. I, pp. 151-205; also see Adhikari, ‘Lenin on Roy’s Supplementary Colonial Theses’, *Marxist Miscellany*, I, Delhi, January, 1970, pp. 1-30

¹³ Sobhanlal Datta Gupta, *Comintern and the Destiny of Communism in India 1919-1943: Dialectics of Real and Possible History*, p. 66

mass revolutionary movements led by the Communist Party.¹⁴ It is now well known fact that Lenin agreed to substitute the expression “bourgeois democratic” by “national-revolutionary” in the adopted text of the Colonial Theses.¹⁵

Even before the people of the East, especially of India, could respond to the First Congress of the People of the East at Baku (September, 1920), the colonial authorities were busy creating an organizational network to prevent the ideas of the Third International from trickling down to the militant nationalists of these countries.¹⁶ This is further corroborated by the scanning of the British Government Home Political and other secret reports that the Government maintained strict and careful watch over all correspondences of Indian leaders. This was not all and at the same time the Government started mischievous propaganda against the Bolsheviks.¹⁷

At the same time the Government of India used to publish an annual report to Parliament on India. *India in the Year 1919* of this series records that a special

¹⁴ Sanjay Seth, *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics: The Case of Colonial India*, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 63-64

¹⁵ Sobhanlal Datta Gupta, *Comintern and the Destiny of Communism in India: 1919-1943: Dialectics of Real and Possible History*, pp.66-67. Lenin introduced a distinction between two types of bourgeois democratic movements within the framework of nationalism: one being reformist, oriented towards cooperation with imperialism, the other being radical, playing a militant role vis-à-vis imperialism. Roy's strategy of revolution in colonial countries like India was based on the premise that it had to be a proletarian revolution led by the Communist Party.

¹⁶ Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab (1926-1947)*, Delhi, 1979, p. 44

¹⁷ Muzaffar Ahmad, *Communist Party of India and Years of Formation (1921-1933)*, Calcutta, 1959, p. 4 (Henceforth *CPI and Years of Formation*)

staff to deal with the “dangers of Bolshevik agents and propaganda” was established that year. In the Indian police circles, this was known as the (anti) Bolshevik Department of the CID which functioned both at the Central and provincial levels. It appears that the Bolshevik Department continued to function as a part of the Indian police even in the last two decades or more after independence.¹⁸

Alarmed by the victory of Russian Revolution and the successes of the Bolshevik regime in Russia and the growing revolutionary spirit sweeping India, the Anglo-Indian Press published a series of articles and editorials about the Bolshevik menace and the dangers inherent in the spread of Bolshevik ideas. It is mentioned by the Intelligence Bureau that in December 1918 the wireless stations of the Bolshevik Government broadcast a report of a memorandum handed to the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet by an “Indian delegation”, in the name of the “Peoples of India”. It called upon the Soviet for assistance and ended with an expression of confidence that the days of England were numbered and that free Russia would stretch out a fraternal hand to oppressed Indians. Wireless message intercepted a year later spoke of the facts the Russian Communist Party had

¹⁸ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. I, pp. 60-61; for details see, *India in 1919: A report prepared for Parliament, Calcutta, 1920* by L.F. Rushbrook Williams, Officer on Special Duty in the Home Department, Government of India

decided “to take concrete measures to spread revolution in the East” and that the Third International would establish sections in oriental countries.¹⁹

In November, 1919 the Home Department of the Government of India issued a circular to all local governments drawing their attention to a number of defensive measures against Bolshevism enunciated by the Central Government. The measures included prohibition of Bolshevik literature, appointment of special officer to collect information about Bolshevik activities outside and inside the country and to take suitable action to prevent Bolshevik emissaries from coming to India.²⁰

The large quantities of Bolshevik notes which made their way to India were an ominous sign, and the administration took vigorous and successful measures to prohibit their circulation. The menace to India has been rendered more real by the opening of traffic on the Orenburg-Tashkent railway, which resulted in the reinforcement of Bolshevik forces in Turkistan.²¹ It was only in April 1920 that the names of some ‘pro-Bolshevik’ Indians were referred to in a confidential report.²² The leading Indian press also welcomed the October Revolution.²³

¹⁹ H. Williamson, *India and Communism*, Calcutta, 1933, p. 87. It further noted that on the 9th February 1924, Moscow turned her eyes more directly on India, and speaking through Chicherin, proclaimed that ‘Future India must stand at the head of the free Eastern Republics’.

²⁰ Sobhanlal Datta Gupta (ed.), *A Documented History of the Communist Movement in India, 1917-1922: Select materials form Archives on Contemporary History*. Vol. I, New Delhi, 2007, p. 74

²¹ *India in the Year 1919*, L. F. Rushbrook Williams, Calcutta, 1920, pp. 6-7

²² Subodh Roy (ed.), *Communism in India 1919- 1924*, Calcutta, 1971, p. 2

II.2. The Revolutionaries Abroad

The revolutionary activities undergoing outside India during the course of the First World War also facilitated the causes of Indian liberation movement. The revolutionary groups of Indians abroad were now particularly encouraged by the conflict between Germany and England on the one hand and latter's war with Turkey on the other. Consequently, the initiatives in the direction of organizing revolutionary terrorism from abroad became associated with such names as Shyamaji Krishnavarma, V.D. Savarkar, Lala Hardayal, Madam Cama and Ajit Singh in Europe and shortly Germany became a major centre of Indian revolutionaries abroad. This ultimately crystallized in the formation of the Berlin Committee in which Raja Mahendra Pratap, Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, Bhupendra Nath Datta, among others, played a crucial role.²⁴

These developments led to the formation of 'Provisional Government of India' with the help of *Muhajirs* by Raja Mahendra Pratap as its president in Kabul on December 1, 1915.²⁵ Obaidullah Sindhi who was a Sikh convert was engaged

²³ *Dainik Basumati*, a daily newspaper (published from Calcutta) wrote 'on 17 November 1917' that 'the downfall of Tsardom has ushered in the age of destruction of alien bureaucracy in India too'; *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, in its editorial 'Bolshevism and Bolsheviks' characterized October Revolution as the 'Russian Volcano', Cf. Harkishan Singh Surjeet et al.(eds.). *History of the Communist Movement in India, The Formative Years 1920-1933*, p. 29

²⁴ Sobhanlal Datta Gupta (ed.), *A Documented History of the Communist Movement in India 1917-1922*, Vol.I, p. 4

²⁵ Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and the Communist Party of India*, (henceforth *Myself and CPI*) Calcutta, 1970, p 154: In March 1915 under the influence of Obaidullah Sindhi 15 students

as a Professor at the Deoband College in the Saharanpur District of United Provinces. There he started the Deoband Old Boys' Association, which became a centre of "Pan-Islamic intrigue" as mentioned by Home Department Political Files.²⁶ He was entrusted with the portfolio of the Home Ministry, Barkatullah (c. 7 July 1854 – 20 September 1927)²⁷ was appointed as Prime Minister, Mohammad Shafiq (who later became secretary of the Communist Party of India formed in Tashkent in October 1920) as secretary of Interior Ministry. Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Wali Khan, Mohammad Basher and M.Pillai were allotted different posts under the Provisional Government.²⁸ They tried to build good relations between them and Soviet Union in 1916 but since Great Britain and Soviet Union

from Lahore left for Kabul to fight Jihad against the British rule and liberate India from British subjugation.

²⁶ Home Poll, February 1918, No. 32, Cited in Sobhanlal Datta Gupta (ed.), *A Documented History of the Communist Movement in India 1917-1922*, Vol.I, p. 19

²⁷ In March 1919, Barkatullah went to Soviet Russia as the Afghan representative to negotiate the establishment of diplomatic relations. He stayed on in Soviet Russia for several months, closely involved in Pratap's activities to popularize Marxism and Socialism among Muslims in Central Asia. For this purpose he has written a number of articles and pamphlets, the best known among which was on *Bolshevism and Islam*.

²⁸ Raja Mahendra Pratap, *My Life Story*, Vol. I, 1886-1941, edited by Vir Singh, Delhi, p. 51 (1st Pub 1947) This Provisional Government sent several missions, issued many proclamations and tried to come to some kind of understanding with the Czarist, Kerensky's and Bolshevik Russia (p. 54); In fact Raja Mahendra Pratap was one of the earliest advocates of building up a strategy of establishing an Indo-Russian alliance by taking advantage of the Anglo-Russian rivalry, even before the revolution, (Sobhanlal Datta Gupta (ed.), *A Documented History of the Communist Movement in India 1917-1922*, Vol.I, p. 7); (Harkishan Singh Surjeet et al.(eds.), *History of the Communist Movement in India, The Formative Years 1920-1933*, p. 35)

were allies in the war, she could not break the alliance. But Maharaja Pratap was not disheartened by Russia's persistent lack of interest in his proposal. It had taken three years of continuous efforts of Pratap in the face of repeated refusals and changes in Russian political scene and polity to start a dialogue with Russian authorities on the means to be employed to attain Indian independence.

In the aftermath of the October Revolution of 1917 Russia became the refuge of revolutionaries from all over the world who considered the new Russia as their hope for a brave new world of the future. The establishment of the Communist International (Comintern) in 1919 on Lenin's initiative with its avowed objective of realizing the goal of a world revolution provided fresh impetus to their aspirations. The Indian revolutionaries abroad, scattered in different countries like the United States, Germany, France as well as the north Western provinces of India were also no exception to it and they began flocking to post revolutionary Russia as representative of various streams, especially after the formation of Comintern was announced. Sharp political and ideological differences notwithstanding, they, remained united by one common aim. namely, the overthrow of British imperialism by adopting appropriate revolutionary methods of struggle which would be distinctly at variance with the reformist methods of freedom struggle, as popularized by the Indian National Congress since its inception.²⁹ The Provisional Government of India in Kabul became the

²⁹ Sobhanlal Dutta Gupta, "The Comintern and the Indian Revolutionaries in Russia in the 1920s", *Communist History Network Newsletter No. 13, Autumn 2002*, p. 12

first grouping of Indian nationalists to have established contacts with the Bolshevik Government and the link of this important event was forged in Tashkent.³⁰

Significantly, just two months before the Second Congress of the Communist International, Mohammad Shafiq published a bilingual vernacular weekly (in Urdu and Persian) the *Zamindar* from Tashkent in May 1920 with an objective to train Indian workers in revolutionary zeal and educate them in the methods of the Russian Revolution.³¹

Meanwhile, Abdur Rab and M.P.B.T.Acharya in Kabul formed the Indian Revolutionary Association (IRA) towards the end of December 1919 or in January 1920. Later in February 1921 Rab met Lenin for the second time and at his request, prepared a list of books on the Indian Liberation Movement. The delegates of the IRA led by Rab and Acharya went to Tashkent on July 2, 1920 from Kabul and contacted the Council for International Propaganda. And the branches of IRA were formed in Tashkent. Abdur Rab, Acharya and Mahendra Pratap attended the Second Congress of the Communist International in Leningrad

³⁰ M.A.Persists, "Eastern Internationalists in Russia and Some Questions of the National Liberation Movement (1918-July 1920), in Ulyanovsky, ed., *The Comintern and the East*, Moscow, 1979, p. 77, Cf., Surendra Gopal, 'Indian Freedom-Fighters in Tashkent: 1917-1922 (Contesting ideologies: Nationalism, Pan-Islamism and Marxism), Mimeographed; Sec. Raja Mahendra Pratap, *My Life Story*, where he has narrated his efforts in getting Russian support for the cause of country's freedom.

³¹ Harkishan Singh Surjeet et al.(eds.), *History of the Communist Movement in India. The Formative Years 1920-1933*, p. 37

on July 19, 1920. During their stay in Tashkent, Rab published the Political Programme of Indian Revolutionary Association on August 13, 1920. It sent nine delegates to attend Baku Congress in the first week of September 1920.³²

II.3. *Hijrat* Movement

The Hijrat³³ movement was an anti-imperialist mass upsurge which brought the common Muslim masses into the mainstream of national politics. It originated from the Khilafat Movement. During the first World War the Prime Minister of Great Britain earnestly sought help from the Indian Muslims. He therefore, made pledge to them in these words: “Nor we are fighting to deprive Turkey of the rich and renowned land of Asia Minor and Thrace which are predominantly Turkish in race.”³⁴ But Lyod George did not fulfill his pledge. In April 1920 as soon as the news reached India, a powerful Hijrat movement broke out.³⁵ It was as a result of the treaty of Sevres which disposed off the Turkish Khalifa (Caliph), considered as the spiritual head of the Islamic World.³⁶ Shaukat Usmani wrote that ‘the wave of Hijrat which swept over India in 1920 took with it to lands far off not only some dissatisfied landless peasants and shopkeepers of the Punjab but also some

³² Ibid, pp. 37-39

³³ The word Hijrat, i.e. migration, means to go away leaving one’s country and friends behind in order to save one self from oppression. This was the meaning written by Muzaffar Ahmad in his book, *CPI and Years of Formation* , p. 12

³⁴ *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. I, p. 139, Cf., Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and CPI*, p. 160

³⁵ Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and CPI*, p. 160

³⁶ Haithcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India*, p. 20

members of the intelligentsia determined to liberate India from foreign yoke."³⁷ He further opined that it was the religious aspect of the Khilafat Movement that moved the Muhajirs as a whole. The idea was to leave the country whose rulers (British) were attacking an Islamic state and acting against the Muslim's faith, and to settle down in a country which was under Islamic regime.³⁸ Later Usmani joined Communist Party of India in Tashkent in early 1921 and was subsequently convicted in the Cawnpore and Meerut Conspiracy Cases.³⁹

The Indian Muslims were irked and 'Khilafat' movement developed among them with the aim of forcing the English to restore the power and prestige of the Caliph.⁴⁰

Afghanistan became a preferred destination for Indian Muhajirs because of its proximity, accessibility and the anti-British stance of its ruler Amanullah. During this period from June 1919 until the summer of 1920, the Muhajirs in Kabul had considerable freedom of movement.⁴¹ On its part, the Afghan

³⁷ Shaukat Usmani, *Historic Trips of a Revolutionary: Sojourn in the Soviet Union*, Delhi, 1977, p. 3 (henceforth *The Historic Trips of a Revolutionary*); Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and CPI*, p. 161 mentioned that the Muslim of Sind, NWFP and Punjab and other provinces too sold their properties and migrated.

³⁸ Harkishan Singh Surjeet et al.(eds.), *History of the Communist Movement in India. The Formative Years 1920-1933*, p. 28

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Cf. Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement. Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India*, New Delhi, 1982

⁴¹ Khizr Humayun Ansari, *The Socialist Thought Among the North Indian Muslim (1917-1947)*, Lahore, 1990, p 24

government opened a reception centre for the Muhajirs at Jabal-us-Seraj. The estimated number of muhajirin (migrants) arriving in Kabul was estimated between 18,000 to 50,000.⁴²

Some of the Muhajirs intended to go to Turkey, to obtain arms and ammunition, and to gain military training with the intention of returning to India to fight British imperialism.⁴³ However, the Afghan Government realized that it was unable to meet the expenses of the muhajirs due to financial crunch; then the Afghan official started oppressing the muhajirin in a variety of ways. They were compelled to leave Afghanistan and nearly 3000 muhajirin returned via Khyber Pass.⁴⁴ A section of Muhajirs in Afghanistan decided otherwise; instead of coming back to India, they proceeded towards the Soviet Central Asia. Shaukat Usmani, an eminent the muhajir has thrown light on the reasons prompting them to decide on this course. Some of the Muhajirs including Akbar Kan Qureshi, Mian Akbar Shah Khattak, Gauhar Rehman, Abdul Majid, Sultan Khan, Rafiq Ahmad, Fazl

⁴² Shaukat Usmani, *Historic Trips of a Revolutionary*, p. 4: According to his estimate the number of Muhajirs who left India was more than 36,000 people; G. Adhikari (ed.), *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Vol. II, New Delhi, 1974, p.42: the number of Muhajirs was around 18,000

⁴³ Muzaffar Ahmad, *CPI and Its Formation Abroad*, Calcutta, 1962, p. 16, Shauka Usmani. *Historic Trips of a Revolutionary*, p. 17

⁴⁴ Surendra Gopal, 'Indian Freedom-Fighters in Tashkent: 1917-1922 (Contesting ideologies: Nationalism, Pan-Islamism and Marxism), Mimeographed, p. 5

Elahi Qurban, and Ferozuddin Mansur decided to proceed to the Soviet Union to procure arms; for the moment they kept their opinions to themselves.⁴⁵

They submitted a joint petition to Amanullah Khan seeking permission to go to Anatolia. They divided themselves into two groups in Jabal-us Siraj and Muhammad Akbar Khan and Muhammad Jan were elected as the leader of their respective group.⁴⁶ In the words of Muzaffar Ahmad, “Afghanistan was a more backward country than India. It was not liked by a number of Muhajir young men. They started insisting that they would go to Turkey and join the war on the side of Turkey. Finally, the Afghan government gave them permission to proceed to Turkey.”⁴⁷

Two hundred Muhajirs succeeded in reaching Tirmiz⁴⁸ by crossing Amu Darya to enter Soviet Russia. A large group of these people fell into the hands of Turkomen rebels. But here their lives were saved by the Red Army. Hence they fought with arms along with Red Army to defend the Kirkee fort against the counter-revolutionaries. Subsequently, some of these young men joined military school at Tashkent. Later on they joined the newly founded Eastern University which had been set up for teaching Marxism.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Shaukat Usmani, *Historic Trips of a Revolutionary*, p. 6

⁴⁶ Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and CPI*, p. 162

⁴⁷ Muzaffar Ahmad, *CPI and Years of Formation*, p. 12

⁴⁸ Ibid, pp. 12-13; Shaukat Usmani, *Historic Trips of a Revolutionary*, p. 6; Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. I, p. 27

⁴⁹ Muzaffar Ahmad, *CPI and Years of Formation*, pp. 12-13

When M.N.Roy⁵⁰ heard of the arrival of the Muhajirs, he thought he might be able to recruit some of them for the proposed liberation army and invited them to Tashkent to meet the group that had been rescued near Kirkee by the Red Army.⁵¹

Another batch of muhajirs which included Shaukat Usmani, Rafiq Ahmad, Abdul Majid, Ghaus Rehman, Fazal Ilahi Qurban, Ferozuddin Mansoor and Akbar Khan reached Tashkent in November 1920.⁵² All of them joined CPI founded by Roy and attended courses of study, first at the Indian Military School established in Tashkent and later at the Eastern People's University, Moscow. After completion of courses they made an attempt to come back to India.⁵³ On the way back home many of them were arrested and tried in four consecutive Communist conspiracy cases which were held between 1921 and 1924 in Peshawar⁵⁴ Of the

⁵⁰ Cecil Kaye noted that 'M.N. Roy played prominent part in the Communist campaign against India...He left India in April 1915 and returned in June...He went to Shanghai and thence San Francisco, where he arrived in June 1916...Left Mexico in 1920 and arrived in Moscow in June 1920...he persuaded Soviet Government to provide a large quantity of arms and ammunition to be sent to the Indian frontiers through Afghanistan. Sir Cecil Kaye, *Communism in India*. (ed.). Mahadev Prasad Saha, Calcutta, 1971, p. 1

⁵¹ John Patrick Haithcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India*, p. 20

⁵² Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol.1, p. 22

⁵³ Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab (1926-1947)*, Delhi, 1979, pp. 51-52

⁵⁴ For detail about the Peshawar Conspiracy cases see: Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*. Vol.II. pp. 27-50; Haithcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India*, pp. 34-35; Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and CPI*, pp. 161-198; Harkishan Singh Surjeet et al.(eds.), *History of the Communist Movement in India. The Formative Years 1920-1933*, p. 51; the list of convicts are given in detail by Shaukat

seven accused who were convicted in Moscow (Peshawar) Conspiracy case, Mir Abdul Majid, Ferozuddin Mansoor and Ghaus Rehman later on became activists in the Communist Movement.⁵⁵ They were booked under section 121A of the Indian Penal Code. Muzaffar Ahmad wrote that the Peshawar Conspiracy case was in reality the first Communist conspiracy case in India.⁵⁶

II.4. Formation of Communist Party of India, Tashkent

With the help and consistent efforts from both Third International as well as M.N.Roy along with the participation of Muhajirs that the Communist Party of India was founded at Tashkent in 1920. The émigré Communist Party was formed after a meeting held at Tashkent. It consisted of seven members: M.N.Roy, Evelyn Trent-Roy, Abani Mukherji, Rosa Fitingow, Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Shafiq and Acharya. Shafiq was elected as secretary of the Party, Roy as secretary of Turk Bureau and Acharya as chairman signed the minute. The inaugural meeting also adopted the principles proclaimed by the Comintern, and decided to work out a programme of the CPI suited to the conditions of India.⁵⁷

Usmani, *Historic Trips of a Revolutionary*, pp. 32-34; Muzaffar Ahmad, *CPI and Years of Formation*, pp. 45-54

⁵⁵ Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab (1926-1947)*, p. 52: After the partition of India Ferozuddin became the General Secretary of the Communist Party of West Pakistan and Fazal Ilahi Qurban became member of the Communist Party of Pakistan.

⁵⁶ Muzaffar Ahmad, *CPI and Years of Formation*, p. 14

⁵⁷ Harkishan Singh Surjeet et al.(eds.), *History of the Communist Movement in India. The Formative Years 1920-1933*, p. 47; Shaukat Usmani, *Historic Trips of a Revolutionary*, p. 46: Shaukat Usmani mentions the date of formation of CPI at Tashkent as November 7, 1920. It appears that he had used Russian calendar; M.R.Masani, *Communist Party of India*, pp. 21-22:

Little is recorded about the activities of the party, but the minutes of the CPI of December 15, 1920, reveal that three persons were inducted into the party as candidate members. They were Abdul Qadir Sehrai, Masood Ali Shah and Akbar Shah.⁵⁸ A candidate member was to complete a probation period of three months for full membership of the party. The same meeting also elected a three-member Executive Committee with Roy, Shafiq and Acharya. They also decided to register the party in Turkistan. Many of the Muhajirs joined CPI and later they joined the newly founded the University of the Toilers of the East in 1921

The formation of the CPI was followed by the foundation of the Indian Military School in Tashkent with equipment and trainers brought by Roy. The formal opening and the functioning of the school began probably at the beginning of October 1920 after batch of 50 Muhajirs had arrived at Tashkent (which

He writes that 'the earliest recruits, apart from a few political exiles and wandering intellectuals, were made by the Communists among the Muhajirin, fanatical Muslims who left India as an unholy land in protest against the Afghan war of 1919; John Callaghan. 'The heart of darkness: Rajani Palme Dutt and the British Empire - a profile', *Contemporary British History*, 5:2, 1991, p. 262, soon after the formation of CPI at Tashkent, it appears that friction existed between the Moscow-based Roy, on the one side, and the CPGB together with the Berlin Committee of Indian revolutionaries under the leadership of Virendranath Chattopadhyaya on the other. The latter objected to Roy's foundation of a Communist Party of India (CPI) at Tashkent in 1921 with a handful of members and also to Roy's ultra-leftist reading of the situation in India which imagined that the CPI itself could lead the fight for national independence; Sir Cecil Kaye, *Communism in India*, p. 3; Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. I, p. 57, mentions on the basis of Devendra Kaushik and Muzaffar Ahmad's comments that the initiative to form CPI at Tashkent came from Acharya of Indian Revolutionary Association which was functioning in Tashkent and other parts of Turkistan.

⁵⁸ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol.1, pp. 331-32

continued from October 1920 to the end of May 1921). The Indian Military School (Indusky Kurs) in Tashkent was originally planned to train a liberation army based on the muhajirs who were expected to enter the Soviet Union in large numbers. In fact in the formal and ceremonial opening of the school, speeches were made in that strain: "Trained in the Tashkent Military School, Indian revolutionaries would carry the message of the Russian revolution to their countries, which surely inspire the Indian masses to undertake heroic actions for overthrowing the British rule."⁵⁹ Then in Moscow, the Communist University of Toilers was founded on April 21, 1921. Shaukat Usmani and Rafiq Ahmad who had joined the Tashkent Military School later shifted to the University of the Toilers of the East.⁶⁰

Cecil Kaye noted that "Communist groups to be formed in Moscow whose work will be to (1) prepare a propaganda literature in all Indian language; (2)

⁵⁹ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol.I, p. 52, reports that 26 out of 50 Muhajirs joined Indian Military School. According to various accounts of the Military School in Tashkent, there were three courses: one for training air force pilots and officers, another for infantry officers and a third for ordinary infantry soldiers...General political education was given to all but the more educated were given an impressive political education course. But it functioned only for 8 months from October 1920 to May end 1921. There are different opinions regarding the closing of the school. M.N.Roy seems to connect the closing of the school with the signing of the trade agreement between Soviet Russia and Britain. Shaukat Usmani believed that "it is absurd to think that this dissolution had anything to do with the trade negotiation between the Soviet and British Governments, some writers have alleged so."; H. Williamson, *India and Communism*, p. 3. It received a first hand report of the Communist school in Tashkent where instruction was given in methods of capturing a city with the help of 1000 men. At the appointed hour these communist agents will assume control and will paralyze the government of the city.

⁶⁰ Harkishan Singh Surjeet et al.(eds.), *History of the Communist Movement in India. The Formative Years 1920-1933*, p. 49

collect and train Indian revolutionaries and send them to India; (3) select from Indians now in Moscow, an emissary to India; who shall- (a) form a Communist Party in India; (b) establish liaison between the Third International, Gandhi and the Khilafat Party; (c) arrange for dispatch to Russia of representatives of the Indian working classes for instruction in revolutionary matters; (4) send a man to America to form a Communist Party among the Indians in California.”⁶¹

Therefore, after completing the study in the Communist University, Muhajir recruits were sent to India through various routes in batches of two.⁶² Some came through the North-West frontier, others through the Pamirs. Among those who came through the former route, choosing their own companions were (a) Shaukat Usmani and Masood Ali Shah, (b) Mia Muhammad Akbar Shah and Gowher Rahman Khan.⁶³ But most of them were arrested soon after their entry into India. They were sent to Peshawar in June where the first conspiracy case was launched. Their trial was under Section 121-A of the Indian Penal Code which was

⁶¹ Sir Cecil Kaye, *Communism in India*, p. 6

⁶² Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and CPI*, p.167; 21 out of 26 muhajirs who joined Military School and later went to Moscow to join the Eastern People's University have been mentioned in the statements of the witnesses in the Peshawar Conspiracy Cases: (1) Fida Ali (Peshawar); (2) Abdul Qadar Sehrai (Haripur); (3) Sultan Mohammad (Lahore); (4) Mir Abdul Majid; (5) Habib Ahmad (Shahjahanpur, U.P.); (6) Ferozuddin Mansoor (Sheikupura); (7) Rafic Ahmad (Bhopal); (8) Mian Akbar Shah (Nowshera Derveshi, Haripur); (9) Gour (Ghaus?) Rahman; (10) Aziz Ahmad; (11) Fazl Ilahi Qurban; (12) Abdulla; (13) Mohammad Shafiq; (14) Shaukat Usmani; (15) Masood Ali Shah; (16) Master Abdur Hamid; (17) Abdul Rahim Meerut. Hazara); (18) Ghulam Mohammad; (19) Mohammad Akbar; (20) Nisar Raz; (21) Hafiz Abdul Majid. Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. I, p. 55

⁶³ L. P. Sinha, *Left-Wing in India*, Muzaffarpur, 1965, p. 105

an offence of conspiracy to ‘deprive the King-Emperor of his sovereignty over India.’ On May 31, 1922 the Judgment in this case was delivered. Muhammad Akbar Khan and Bahadur were found guilty and were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for three years and one year respectively.⁶⁴

II.5. Emergence of separate communist groups in India

The journey of the early Indian Communists, in ideological terms, was from nationalism to Marxism. M.N. Roy himself, of course, was an example of this. His conversion to Marxism occurred abroad, under the influence of leading figures in the international Communist movement; and it occurred during a period when he was not directly engaged in nationalist politics in India.⁶⁵

The attempts to build Communist Party began at four places in India, independently of each other. The first four prominent places were Calcutta,

⁶⁴ For detail see, Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and CPI*, pp 173-194; Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. II, New Delhi, 1974, pp 26-41; *Home Political*, F.N. 103, 1923, Part. I; It was reported in the *Home Political file* that “Fazl Elahi alias Kurban was a native of Lahore was sent to India. He was arrested in Bombay on 5th April, 1927 and prosecuted in Peshawar conspiracy case under Section 121 A of the IPC and sentenced to 5 year rigorous imprisonment”. David Petric, *Communism in India* (ed.), Mahadev Prasad Saha, Calcutta, 1972 (This book provides one of the earliest and best factual pictures of the growth of Communism in India, even though written from an imperialist angle and a practical hostile intent. Its values lie in the fact that it was prepared during the very period when Communism was having its impact and taking roots in India.); Muzaffar Ahmad, *CPI and Its Formation Abroad*, pp 45-55, Rafiq Ahmad gives the detail information about the Peshawar conspiracy cases as well as the list of those who were convicted.

⁶⁵ By contrast, the first Communists in India men such as Dange, Singaravelu, Ghulam Hussain, and Muzaffar Ahmad all began as Congressmen. Sanjay Seth, *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics: The Case of Colonial India*, p. 108

Bombay, Lahore and Madras. The Communist International was the source of inspiration for them. However, the Communist International established independent connections with each of these four places.⁶⁶

At the Ahmedabad session of the Indian National Congress (1921), Gandhiji had defined 'Purna Swaraj' to mean 'Dominion Status'.⁶⁷ The embryonic Communist group had widely distributed a leaflet in the name of the Communist Party of India, signed by M.N. Roy and Abani Mukherji. But no Communist was a delegate to the Ahmedabad Congress. Hence, a strident Khilafat leader, Maulana Hasrat Mohani, who later joined Communist Party of India, moved an amendment, declaring that "complete Independence, free from all foreign control" should be the aim of the Indian National Congress, in place of Dominion Status.⁶⁸ Gandhiji vehemently opposed by calling it "irresponsible" and it was voted out by an overwhelming majority.⁶⁹

Shripat Amrit Dange⁷⁰, an important recruit to communism from Bombay, public activities started with the first big mass anti-imperialist movement against the British rulers, participated actively in the Non-Cooperation movement led by

⁶⁶ Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and CPI*, p. 78

⁶⁷ *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. I, 1922

⁶⁸ Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. I, Bombay, 1935, p. 228

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Dange (10 October 1899 - 22 May 1991) was a prominent Indian politician and trade unionist who along with Muzaffar Ahmad, founded the Communist Party of India and served as its chairman until 1978. For further details about Dange see Mohit Sen (ed), *Indian Communism: Life and Work of S.A. Dange*, New Delhi, 1992; Dick Kooiman, 'Bombay Communists and the 1924 Textile Strike', *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 19, 1980, pp 1223-1236

by Gandhiji in 1920.⁷¹ But soon he became critique of Gandhi's ideology and method of struggle. He was profoundly influenced by the Russian revolution and Lenin's thought.⁷² He began his search for new paths of struggle and became interested in Marxism and wrote a book *Gandhi vs. Lenin* in 1921.⁷³ It was a comparative study of approaches of both the leaders; but, Lenin coming out as better of the two. Dange criticized Gandhi for his excessive emphasis on religious and moral considerations and reliance on the goodwill of individuals to effect change. He came to believe that only a revolution involving the solidarity of the workers, peasants, and army could bring down foreign rule and with it, capitalism.⁷⁴ Muzaffar Ahmad rightly observed that in those days it required

⁷¹ After leaving College, Dange was attracted by socialist thought; his mind carried the great impression of the Russian Revolution and Lenin. His open preaching of socialism combined with active interest in working-class struggles was too much for British imperialism. Dange was arrested in connection with what is known as Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case. (*New Age* (Political Monthly of Communist Party), Vol. 8, No. 10, October 1959, pp. 14-15)

⁷² Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. I, p. 277; after his rustication from the Wilson College. Dange joined the Non-Cooperation Movement. When this movement failed, Dange and his associate formed a 'Radical Group' within the Bombay Provincial Committee... (Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and CPI*, p. 107)

⁷³ Ibid; Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and CPI*, p. 107, 114: It is Dange's book that brought Ranchoddas Bhavan Lotvala in contact with Dange. Later Lotvala fixed a monthly allowance for Dange and allowed him to use his library for further study on Marxism; Mohit Sen (ed), *Indian Communism: Life and Work of S.A. Dange*, p. 2

⁷⁴ The book reflects Dange's imperfect understanding of the Marxist stand on violence, which he considers as the only method of struggle in Communism. For detail description about Dange's book see Sanjay Seth, *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics: The Case of Colonial India*, pp. 109-114; Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. I, pp. 281-310; Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and CPI*, pp. 107-112

considerable courage to write such a book.⁷⁵ It clearly shows that Dange had turned towards Marxism-Leninism. His *Gandhi vs. Lenin* attracted the attention of the Communist International also.⁷⁶

With Lotvala's help, Dange bought the English weekly, *Socialist*,⁷⁷ the first Indian Communist journal, in August 1922. Keshava Nilkantha Joglekar and Chaitaliya joined Dange to work with him. Subsequently, R.S. Nimbkar, S.V. Ghate, and S.S. Mirajkar also joined him.⁷⁸

The *Bombay Chronicle*, in June 1922, reviewed *Gandhi vs. Lenin*, which prompted Cecil Kaye to write down Dange's name in his note book.⁷⁹ In

⁷⁵ Muzaffar Ahmad, *CPI: Year of Formation, 1921-1933*, p. 10.

⁷⁶ Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and CPI*, pp. 107-8

⁷⁷ It was English weekly which continued to appear till the end of December 1922 after which it became monthly. It continued to appear as a monthly upto his arrest in the "Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case" in February 1924. Thereafter a few issues of the paper appeared in 1924 in the weekly form edited by K.N. Joglekar then it stopped. (Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. I, p. 505. For detail also see pp. 505-517)

⁷⁸ Ibid, pp. 116-17; No journal under this name (*Socialist*) had ever been brought out in India ever before. (Muzaffar Ahmad, *CPI: Year of Formation, 1921-1933*, p. 10); its pages attested that Dange's had embraced Marxism, and was influenced by Roy's analysis of the relation between class and national independence. In its September issue, it was first proposed that a Marxist party be established in India- the Indian Socialist Labour Party of the INC. The object of the party was to be 'the establishment of the people's state in which land and capital are owned communally and the process of production, distribution and exchange is a social function democratically controlled', an aim to be achieved by 'the organisation of the workers politically to capture the power of the state and industrially to take over the control and management of the industrial machine'. (Sanjay Seth, *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics: The Case of Colonial India*, p. 115); Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. I, p. 505

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. xi

September 1922, Dange and M.N.Roy came into contact with each other. Roy congratulated Dange on the appearance of *Socialist* and sent his articles for the paper. Dange also requested Roy to send propaganda material. In October 1922, a communist emissary Ashleigh visited Bombay and handed over to Dange secret papers from Roy. Muzaffar Ahmad writes that Ashleigh gave him passage money to participate in a conference in Europe.⁸⁰ Roy wrote a letter to Dange in December 1922, informing the address that he was going to hold a conference in Berlin, where the programme and organisation of a revolutionary party of the working classes, and the control of the Trade Union Congress, would be discussed. About this time Roy, in an article entitled 'Labour Party' wrote that the workers and peasants of India must be organised into a revolutionary party.⁸¹ But Dange declined to accept his invitation. His outlook is evident from his correspondence with Singaravelu, his writings published in the *Socialist* as also his statement in the Kanpur Case.

Malaypuram Singaravelu Chettiar (18 February 1860-11 February 1946) a lawyer based in Madras proclaimed himself a Communist in 1922.⁸² His is one of the important figures in building of the Party in Madras. He gave up his practice

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 359

⁸¹ A.R.Desai and Sunil Dighe, *Labour Movement in India 1923-1927: Documents*, Vol. IV, Delhi, 2004, p.145

⁸² Cf. K. Murugesan and C.S. Subramanyam, *Singaravelu-First Communist in South India*, New Delhi, 1975

during the Non-Cooperation Movement. He joined labour movement in 1922.⁸³ He attended the Gaya Session of the Indian National Congress in 1922 and moved the resolution on National Independence.⁸⁴ He expressed his faith in non-violent methods and advocated Marxism from the Congress platform. He said: 'Comrade in this hall, fellow workers, peasants of Hindustan, I have come to speak on your behalf as a representative of the interests represented by the great order of the Communists. I have come to tell you the great message which communism offers to the workers',⁸⁵

Singaravelu had read M N Roy's *India in Transition*. The book had impressed him. And he wrote a letter to Roy admiring the book and expressed his desire to translate the book into Tamil language.⁸⁶ Roy also wrote letters to Chettiar asking him to select delegates for a Communist conference in Berlin and attend it himself if possible.⁸⁷

⁸³ Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and CPI*, p. 120; Muzaffar Ahmad, *CPI: Year of Formation, 1921-1933*, p.11.

⁸⁴ Muzaffar Ahmad, *CPI: Year of Formation, 1921-1933*, p.11.

⁸⁵ Report of the Proceedings of the Thirty-seventh Session of the Indian National Congress (Gaya) 1922, pp. 16-17, Cf. Shashi Bairathi, *Communism and Nationalism in India*, p.47

⁸⁶ Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and CPI*, p.120: Later he was expelled from Communist Party on a proved charge of dishonesty.

⁸⁷ Sir Cecil Kaye, *Communism in India*, pp. 40-41, also document cited in Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case, *Home Poll. F. No. 278*, p. 24, Cf. Shashi Bairathi, *Communism and Nationalism in India*, p. 47. In Cawnpore Conspiracy Cases many letters were presented before court written by MN Roy to Chettiar and vice-versa.

In the formation of the Communist Party of India at Tashkent by MN Roy, there were persons from Punjab also. They were arrested and prosecuted in the Tashkent conspiracy case in 1921-22 and in the Moscow conspiracy case in 1922-23. However, even independently of these persons (Communists), a separate link with the Punjab was established.⁸⁸ The communist movement in Punjab was started by Shams-ud-Din and Ghulam Hussain. They started publishing an Urdu newspaper called *Inquilab* (Revolution) to disseminate Marxism. Ghulam Hussain accepted Marxism-Leninism and agreed to proceed along the path charted out by the Communist International in conformity with Indian conditions.⁸⁹

Ghulam Hussain tried to form an All-India Communist organisation and issued a circular from *Inquilab* office in May, 1923 to hold a conference on June, 1923 at Lucknow.⁹⁰ The circular was sent to all important Communist leaders in India. But the programme the programme could not materialize as they were arrested before the convening of the conference.

⁸⁸ Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and CPI*, p. 118. Ghulam Hussain taught Economics in Edwards Church Mission College in Peshawar.

⁸⁹ Ibid, In Lahore he joined the North-Western Railway Workers Union and subsequently became its secretary. He was also in contact with Dewan Chaman Lal. According to Muzaffar Ahmad Ghulam Hussain became communist after his visit to Kabul. In Kabul he met Mohammad Ali, who came from Tashkent after the formation of CPI there. They had a lot of discussion for several days

⁹⁰ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. II, pp. 138-40

Muzaffar Ahmad⁹¹ was the moving spirit behind the formation of Communist nucleus in Bengal.⁹² He himself wrote that ‘while editing *Navyug* (New Age) I became interested to some extent in the problem of workers’.⁹³ He started reading Marxist literature which he had bought and gradually turned towards Communism. It was lack of adequate finance and non-availability of Marxist literature which made him to work hard. After disbandment of 49th Bengali Regiment in 1920, Qazi Nazrul Islam entered into politics in addition to poetry and literature,⁹⁴ Nazrul was involved in formation of the Communist Party. He, however, did not join the party, though he became one of the founders of the ‘Labour Swaraj Party’ of the INC formed on 1 November 1925.⁹⁵

⁹¹ He was born (1889-1973) at Sandwip (Noakhali District, E. Bengal)

⁹² He belonged to the poor peasant family and was influenced by the workers strikes and popular movement going on in Bengal at that time; according to British intelligence report, ‘the Calcutta group was started by Muzaffar Ahmad a journalist. Nalini Gupta had introduced Muzaffar Ahmad to the Communist International at the beginning of 1922. From then onward he began to correspond directly with Roy. (Khizr Humayun Ansari, *The Emergence of Socialist Thought Among North Indian Muslims (1917-1947)*, pp. 62-63)

⁹³ Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and CPI*, pp. 79, 81. He purchased Marxist literature in his desire to study about labour movement in general. In November 1921 he bought (1) a booklet of an article by Lenin, *Can the Bolshevik Retain State Power?* (2) Lenin’s *Left-Wing Communism-An Infantile Disorder*; (3) *People’s Marx*: Abridged Popular edition of *Capital*, edited by Julian Borchardt, Translated in English by Stephen L. Trask.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 77; Muzaffar Ahmad, *CPI: Year of Formation, 1921-1933*, p.5. Qazi Nazrul was a Havildar in the 49th Bengali Regiment. He was influenced by the Russian Revolution

⁹⁵ Ibid.

In the United Provinces, the Communist activity was started by Shaukat Usmani, who was trained by Roy in Tashkent and was sent to India for this purpose. After his return to India, Shaukat Usmani got into touch with the various Communist groups at the important centres like Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Lahore. He actively engaged himself in organising a Communist centre at Banaras.

Thus we can safely say that most of the Communist groups in India had originated independent of each other. But for long they could not become strong enough and existed as illegal bodies. There was no central committee or organisation of the Communists till December 1925. The Communist International played an important role in forging individual relationship with the Communists and provided continuously an idea of forming party on an all-India level.

II.6 Kanpur Conspiracy Case

The British Government had got disproportionately alarmed at the foundation of the Communist Party of India under the leadership of M.N.Roy. Though its membership was not large but the British government was apprehensive about C.P.I's role in the fast changing political scenario of the country.⁹⁶ The stirrings of communist ideology were reflected in the deliberation of the Indian National Congress. The British Government seemingly scared of the impact of communist's

⁹⁶ Cf. Arindam Sen and Partha Ghosh, eds., *Communist Movement in India: Historical Perspective and important Documents 1917-1939*, Vol.I, Patna. 1991, pp. 61-63

ideas on the members of the Indian National Congress. Alarmed by the advocacy of radical ideas from the nationalist fora, the government filed a case of treason and conspiracy to overthrow the legally constituted authority against the Communists in 1924. This case became famous as Cawnpore (now spelt Kanpur) Conspiracy Case.⁹⁷ Communist trials had taken place in India, in frontier towns like Peshawar where Russian trained muhajir Communists were put on trial. But no case had attracted public gaze like the Kanpur case. Pages of newspapers daily splashed sensational communist plans and people for the first time learned such a large scale about communism and its doctrines and the aims of the Communist International in India.

The continuously increasing popularity of communism and terrorism, particularly among youth alarmed the British government so much so that it launched a round of repression. On 17th March 1924 the Kanpur Conspiracy Case was started in the court of Joint Magistrate of Kanpur. Initially eight persons were

⁹⁷ H. Williamson, *India and Communism*, pp. 88-89. It has been mentioned in this book that communism was taking its root in India slowly due its feudal spirit and hereditary principles are ingrained in India. By 1924 its (Bolshevik) menace to India's peace and prosperity had become sufficiently serious to necessitate the first important Communist Conspiracy case, and in February of that year a formal plaint was lodged at Cawnpore against a selection of eight (including the absent Roy) of 168 Indian Communists whose names the "brief" of the case contained, the charges being that of conspiring to deprive the King-Emperor of the sovereignty of British India. For detail see Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and CPI*, pp. 327-406; Sobhanlal Datta Gupta (ed.), *A Documented History of the Communist Movement in India 1923-1925: Select materials from Archives on Contemporary History*, Vol. II, New Delhi, 2007, pp. 544-581; Muzaffar Ahmad, *CPI: Year of Formation, 1921-1933*, pp. 15-19; Adhikari (ed.) *Documents*, Vol. II, pp. 452-84

framed as Bolshevik agents and were charged with planning to overthrow the British Empire and thus violate the section 121A of Indian Penal Code⁹⁸ The accused were named in the court as follows: Maula Baksh' alias Shaukat Usmani, Muzaffar Ahmad, Nalini Bhusan Das Gupta, S.A.Dange, Ghulam Hussain, M.N.Roy, Singaravelu Chettiar and Ram Charan Lal Sharma. Out of them, only Usmani was present in the court. The case could be launched only against the four of the accused, because R.C.L. Sharma not being under the British Jurisdiction (for he had taken shelter in Pondicherry) could not be brought into the court for the trial. M.N.Roy was in Europe, so he also could not be produced, Singaravelu was on bail against a sum of Rs. Fifty thousands.⁹⁹

This conspiracy case was filed on the basis of intercepted letters written by Berlin-based M.N.Roy to different persons in India. Ross Alston, an advocate from Allahabad represented the government in the trial. The accused had not hired a defence counsel. They were charged of violating the provisions of Section 121A of IPC. The main charges of the case filed before the magistrate read as follows:

“They wanted to remove the rule of the British Emperor from India by opening the branches of Communist International in India.”

It has also been said that “their objective was to use fair or unfair means; (they) had also decided to get control over the India National Congress. They were

⁹⁸ *Calcutta Samachar*, 18 March 1924, Vol. 9, No. 13, p. 3. (Micro-film, available in NMML)
This paper was also known as a *Hindu Sansar*, later on.

⁹⁹ *Abhyudaya*, 5 April 1924, Vol. 18, No. 13, p.1

getting support from the revolutionary organization of Russia. In this regard (they) have communication with many cities. Kanpur is also one of the important places. To achieve their target they had propagated banned revolutionary literature, newspapers and books. Col. Cecil Kaye in his statement said that “Indian revolutionaries from different part of Europe gathered at Moscow in 1920 with the intention to propagate Bolshevism in India. M.N.Roy was the moving spirit”.

In the court, one significant document presented was the letter of the Executive committee of the Third International, addressed to the workers, and Bolshevik activists in India.¹⁰⁰ Letter started with the endorsement and sympathy of the activities of Indian counterparts. “All the revolutionaries of the world appreciated the historic task of Indian peasants and political activists. A revolutionary programme was prescribed for them. They were urged to:

1. establish a democratic republic,
2. have no relations with imperial government any more
3. abolish Zamindari system,
4. nationalize railways, aero planes and other means of public property.
5. have eight hours working day,

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 5: A ‘Bolshevik Conspiracy Trial of 8 Indians’ a collection of court proceedings at Kanpur trial published regularly in those days by the Bombay office of the “*Times of India*”. The file is available in the National Archive of India, New Delhi, India. But we find everyday reporting of the trials in the vernacular press and the reactions of the nationalists.

6. Establish workers' association in factories and peasant organisation in villages.¹⁰¹

Besides, they were also advised to organize strikes by workers and not to pay new taxes and protect their rights.¹⁰² This according to them would strengthen their organization. At the end they cried "Long live India's National and Social independence/ Down with British imperialism/ Long live International Democratic Institution."¹⁰³

Cecil Kaye (Director of the Intelligence Bureau of the Government of India) proves that, about the end of the year 1921, information was laid before him of the alleged existence of a conspiracy to overthrow by force the existing Government in India, or, in the words of the section "to deprive His Majesty the King Emperor of the Sovereignty of British India."¹⁰⁴ The first arrests of the Communists, who were later figure in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case, began as early as in May 1923, just at the time when the main Peshawar Conspiracy case were concluding. These arrests were in fact a continuation of the campaign of anti-communist repression started by the Peshawar cases.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ *Bande Mataram* (Urdu), 21 March 1924, Vol.67; *Pratap*, 31 March 1924, Vol.11, No.21, p.7; *Abhyudaya*, 5 April 1924, Vol. 18, No.13, p.5

¹⁰² *Abhyudaya*, 5 April 1924, Vol. 18, No.13, p.5

¹⁰³ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁴ Sobhanlal Datta Gupta (ed.), *A Documented History of the Communist Movement in India 1923-1925*, Vol. II, p. 545

¹⁰⁵ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol.II, New Delhi, 1974, p. 273; For detail about the Peshawar Conspiracy Cases see, Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and CPI*, pp. 152-198

Meanwhile, the Government withdrew the case against Ghulam Hussain.¹⁰⁶ Eventually the case was pushed against the remaining four persons, namely Shaukat Usmani, Muzaffar Ahmad, Nalini Gupta and S.A.Dange.¹⁰⁷ Charges were framed against each of them, individually.

Shaukat Usmani was charged as being a Bolshevik agent and having connection with Berlin-based M.N.Roy and his communist party.¹⁰⁸ He was convicted under section 121A of IPC. A number of evidences were presented from the government side on 29 April, 1924, reported the *Tej*, (an Urdu daily). They were mainly from the intelligence department who had intercepted letters written by M.N.Roy to the accused on 3 May 1924. Shaukat Usmani repeated before the court, as he had done at the initial stage of the case, that “he was a student”¹⁰⁹, and was not a member of any such conspiracy which aimed at overthrowing the British Empire or had any relation with M.N.Roy and his communist party with the

¹⁰⁶ *Abhyudaya*, 5 April 1924, Vol. 18, No.13, p.5

¹⁰⁷ Ibid; we see that Muzaffar Ahmad, Shaukat Usmani and Nalini Bhusan Das Gupta wrote a plea letter to the District Magistrate of Kanpur, requesting to transfer their jail from United Provinces to the New Central Jail, as they objected that the climate of this province was not suited to their health. *Home Poll, F. No. 421/1924*

¹⁰⁸ Regarding M N Roy's letters to Shaukat Usmani, See Sukhbir Choudhary, *Peasants' and Workers' Movement in India 1905-1929*, New Delhi, 1971, pp. 154-57

¹⁰⁹ *Tej*, 7 May 1924, Vol.2, No.105. The file of this paper is missing from March to April 1924. (Nehru Memorial Museum Library, New Delhi)

intention of fuelling revolution amongst workers and peasants, “nor I have any opinion like this”.¹¹⁰

H.E.Holmes gave a judgment sentencing Usmani to four years rigorous imprisonment. He was sent to Bareilly jail.¹¹¹ *Pratap*, a Hindi weekly, reports “we got confidential news that Usmani had not taken food for the last 26 days in protest against the brutalities of jail administration. Milk was given to him forcefully through rubber pipes on 27th day, when Nawab Mahboob Ali visited jail and saw Usmani he assured the latter that there will be no injustice against him, only then Usmani was persuaded to terminate his hunger strike. “We also got news”, the *Pratap* reported “that the treatment meted out to these well educated gentlemen is not good. This was mainly because they are Indian not British”.¹¹²

The *Tej* reports that during the course of hearing of the case, the government advocate observed, “If Usmani is not punished then I do not know who is to be punished? He is not only a conspirator but he is proud of being a member of conspiracy”.¹¹³ Defence counsel Mani Lal asserted that the letter found at the time of arrest were not proved to be written by Usmani.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ *Pratap*, 31 March 1924, Vol.11, No.21, p.1; *Abhyudaya*, 5 April 1924, Vol. 18 No.13. p.5; *Tej*, 5 May 1924, Vol.2, No.103, p.3

¹¹¹ *Pratap*, 29 September 1924, Vol.11, No.46, p.6

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p.4

¹¹³ *Tej*, 11 May 1924, Vol.2, No.108, p.7

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 12 May, No. 109, p.3

Muzaffar Ahmad was arrested on May 1923 few days after Usmani's arrest, in Calcutta. On March 17, 1924 a charge sheet was filed against him in the court of Joint Magistrate of Kanpur on similar charges¹¹⁵. An envelope containing two letters purported to have been written by M.N.Roy, one to T N Roy and the other to Muzaffar Ahmad, were produced in the court by intelligence department.¹¹⁶ Charges levelled were the same. Muzaffar reply to this charge sheet was, "I will give my statement in session court".¹¹⁷ A numbers of witnesses were produced before the court mostly from the intelligence department.¹¹⁸

Muzaffar Ahmad neither denied his involvement in the conspiracy nor did he admit any relations with M.N.Roy and his communist party and asserted that he had no intention of bringing revolution through workers and peasants.¹¹⁹ He also said that he was a journalist by profession.¹²⁰ Like Shaukat Usmani, he was also awarded four years rigorous imprisonment and was sent to Gonda Jail.¹²¹ The same paper reports that Muzaffar Ahmad was imprisoned in Rai Bareilly Jail.¹²²

Third accused, Nalini Bhusan Das Gupta, was arrested on 20 December 1923 in Calcutta. He made a detailed statement on 21 December 1923 and on

¹¹⁵ *Pratap*, 31 March 1924, Vol.11, No.21, p.7; also see, *Home Poll. F. No.21/1.1924*

¹¹⁶ *Tej*, 3 May 1924, Vol.2, No.103, p.3

¹¹⁷ *Pratap*, 31 March 1924, Vol.11, No.21, p.7

¹¹⁸ *Tej*, 3 May 1924, Vol.2, No.103, p.3.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 7 May 1924, Vol.2, No.105, p.6

¹²⁰ *Ibid*; *Zulqarnain*, 1 May 1924, Vol. 22, No. 18, p. 3

¹²¹ *Pratap*, 14 July, 1924, Vol.11, No.36.

¹²² *Ibid*, 29 September 1924, Vol.11, No.47, p. 4.

subsequent eight days that speeded up the judgment.¹²³ By now the government had collected a vast mass material from many sources.¹²⁴ He was also accused of planning to overthrow the British rule.¹²⁵ The *Calcutta Samachar*, a Hindi reports “on 29 April Nalini and Dange were produced in the session under section 121A of IPC regarding Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case. The case will start today”¹²⁶.

Nalini Gupta contested the charges levelled against him. He said, “I have neither conspired to deny the sovereignty of British Emperor in India nor have any idea to do so”.¹²⁷ He also said that he was an engineer and his age ranged between 22 and 23 years.¹²⁸

The *Pratap* published an interview (entitled “Char”) with fall the four accused. Some excerpts from Nalini’s interview are as follows”. Nalini himself asked to the reporter. “Do you know who Nalini is? He is a well reputed engineer, lived eleven years in Europe Lloyd George has awarded him a good certificate for rendering services during wartime”.¹²⁹ Reporter asked, “How long will it last, that’s fact?” Replied Nalini, “we will die, if it comes to, that “. Reporter said, “I won’t let you pray live, if not for your sake, for the sake of us the do nothing

¹²³ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. II, p. 275

¹²⁴ Ibid, pp. 275-76; also see *Home Poll. F. No.21/1/1924*

¹²⁵ *Bande Mataram*, 25 April 1924, Vol.95, p.5; for detail also see, *Home Poll. F.No.21/1/1924: Home Department, Political, 1925, File. No. 272*

¹²⁶ *Calcutta Samachar*, 8 April 1924, Vol. 9, No. 46, p. 2

¹²⁷ *Pratap*, 31 March, 1924, Vol.11, No.21, p. 1.

¹²⁸ *Tej*, 7 May 1924, Vol.2, No.105, p.6.

¹²⁹ *Pratap*, 14 July 1924, Vol. II, No. 36, p. 2.

ones”.¹³⁰ Like others Nalini was also awarded four year rigorous imprisonment and sent to Gorakhpur Jail.¹³¹

The editor of the *Socialist*, S.A.Dange from Bombay, was also an accused in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case. In the district magistrate’s court of Kanpur, he was accused of being a Bolshevik agent who conspired to overthrow the sovereignty of British Emperor in India.¹³² He was convicted under section 121A of IPC.¹³³

In the court he pleaded, “I am having correspondence with M.N.Roy. But when I knew that his ambition was to overthrow the British rule from India, then I switched of relations. I have published all those letters in Maratha Papers in July 1923. I am a supporter of communism. English and indigenous traders and businessman intend to keep the poor of the country depressed by virtue of their wealth. To eradicate this evil I think it necessary to propagate communism.”¹³⁴

Dange said in his defence that he was journalist.¹³⁵ He denied any role in any conspiracy to overthrow British regime.¹³⁶ He was also given four year rigorous imprisonment like others and sent to Sitapur Jail from Kanpur Jail.¹³⁷

¹³⁰ Ibid

¹³¹ Ibid. 29 September 1924, Vol. II, No. 47, p. 4

¹³² *Calcutta Samachar*, 18 March 1924, Vol. 9, No. 31, p. 3

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ *Pratap*, 31 March 1924, Vol.11, No.21, p.1

¹³⁵ *Tej*, 7 May 1924, Vol.2, No.105, p.6

¹³⁶ Ibid.; *Zulqarnain*, 14 May 1924, Vol. 22, No. 11, p. 3

¹³⁷ *Pratap*, 29 September, 1924, Vol. II, No. 47, p. 3.

The *Matwala*, a Hindi daily from Calcutta reported that “fifth convict M. Singaravelu Chettiar’s case will start from first July. Does it still remain to end?”¹³⁸ W.Chriti, the joint magistrate of Kanpur filed a petition against eight persons who were accused of being Bolshevik agents. Singaravelu was one of the accused. But he was released on bail of Rs. Fifty thousand,¹³⁹ and for consideration of poor health.¹⁴⁰ But his letter was produced by Col. Kaye before the court. It expressed hope that since Congress was nearly dead after the postponement of Bardoli Satyagraha Gandhi, “now only peasants and workers will succeed. But it requires financial support. We should wait till this government accepts the Russian government. After that we will ponder whom to send”.¹⁴¹

A letter addressed to C.R.Das by M.N.Roy was also intercepted by the intelligence department. Yogendra Kumar Sen, Assistant Sub-Inspector identified the photocopy of the letter.¹⁴² C.R.Das out rightly refuted the charge. He said that he never received any letter from M.N.Roy.¹⁴³

It is interesting to note that at the level of the joint magistrate’s court, all four accused remained undefended. Whereas in the session court Pandit Kapil Dev

¹³⁸ *Matwala*, 28 July 1924, Year 1, No. 44, p.851; this weekly had hostile attitude towards the persons accused in Kanpur Conspiracy Case. Therefore, it reported the case in brief

¹³⁹ *Pratap*, 29 September, 1924, Vol. II, No. 47, p. 7; *Abhyudaya*, 5 April 1924, Vol. 18, No.13, p.1; *Calcutta Samachar*, 8 April 1924, Vol. 9, No. 46, p. 2

¹⁴⁰ Irfan Habib, “The Left and the National Movement”, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 27, Nos. 5-6, May-June 1998, p.10

¹⁴¹ *Tej*, 7 May 1924, Vol.2, No.105, p.6; *Zulqarnain*, 14 May 1924, Vol. 22, No. 11, p. 3

¹⁴² *Calcutta Samachar*, 30 March 1924, Vol. 9, No. 40, p. 2

¹⁴³ *Pratap*, 31 March 1924, Vol.11, No.21, p.1

Malviya defended S.A.Dange and Nalini Gupta and Muzaffar Ahmad and Shaukat Usmani were defended by Dr. Mani Lal.¹⁴⁴

The *Tej* reported on 29th April that dozens of witness were produced before the court from the side of government, who had intercepted letters written to the accused. The proceedings of this case are also interesting. Malviya asked the witness Rai Karan Bihari Mukherji, inspector, intelligence department, “was this only method of correspondence?”¹⁴⁵ Inspector replied, “I do not know but one thing I knew this is a method of communist correspondence”. Dr. Malviya argued, “There is no evidence to prove that there is an International Organization in Europe. It was based on a letter written by Lord Curzon to Soviet government. But that letter is not presented in the court. No proof has been put about Roy’s leadership. Nor it has been proved that leaders, Roy and Dange or Roy and Nalini, had achieved a consensus on a conspiracy”.¹⁴⁶

Karan Bihari, an accountant in the New India Life Insurance Company, Bombay, was produced before the court as a witness against Nalini Gupta. He was an old friend of the accused. Dr. Malviya wanted to know from him, “Did you ever suspect that he was trying to revolt against the crown?” He replied in

¹⁴⁴ *Pratap*, 28 April 1924, Vol.11, No.21, p.7.

¹⁴⁵ *Tej*, 3 May 1924, Vol.2, No.103, p.3

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 11 May 1924, Vol.2, No.108, p.7

negative. He told, "I was never suspicious about him and his connection with Roy or Bolshevik government of Europe".¹⁴⁷

Dr. Mani Lal in the course of his defence dealt with the contents of the Bolshevik literature alleged to have been received by the accused.¹⁴⁸ He argued vehemently that there was no harm in holding communist views....According to him a communism was nothing but an attempt to bridge the wide gulf that exists between the capitalists and the labourers in matters of wealth and power. "It is not his majesty who is opening shops in India, running factories in Kanpur or Bombay or coming of administer the civil services".¹⁴⁹

The *Pratap* reported that three assessors were appointed namely Shive Prasad, Ayodhya Nath and Krishna Dutt.¹⁵⁰ Shiva Prasad held Muzaffar Ahmad and Usmani guilty.¹⁵¹ While Ayodhya Nath thought that only Usmani was guilty and Krishna Dutta considered all the four innocent.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 1 May 1924, Vol.2, No.102, p.3

¹⁴⁸ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. II, pp. 313-315, has produced the details of Dr Mani Lal's defence speech.

¹⁴⁹ *Bande Mataram*, 15 May 1924,, Vol. 5, No. 11; *Pratap*, 26 May 1924, Vol.11, No 27. p.4

¹⁵⁰ *Pratap*, 12 May 1924, Vol.11, No.27

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

On 20th May 1924, session judge H.E.Holmes delivered the judgment. All the four were sentenced to four years rigorous imprisonment.¹⁵³ A strong protest against this infringement of civil liberty was expressed in the vernacular press.

A Hindi weekly *Abhyudaya* wrote: It appears “We are in favour of right to speech, expression and thought. We can not tolerate the penalty given to them for having independent ideas. Therefore, how can we be in agreement with such long judgment (read punishment). We hope that his matter will not end here.”¹⁵⁴

The *Pratap*'s observation was equally contemptuous of the judgment, “In India, till now, no case connected with Bolshevik conspiracy was pursued in the manner as at Kanpur. We had read news one year ago that in Madras province one gentleman was jailed for seven years for being a Bolshevik propagandist. But that was a case in which conspiracy could not be proved. It was an individual case. Kanpur conspiracy case was first of its kind. From political point of views, it was very important. Because of this a heavy uproar was created at the international level. In the parliament, Mr. George Salisbury and other parliamentarians considered this case so important that they collected funds to fight against it. The previous year Marquis Curzon, foreign minister of Britain had written to his Russian propagation of Bolshevism in India. Fro this, Curzon referred to the imprisoned advocated of Bolshevism in Afghanistan and Central Asia. But until

¹⁵³ *Matwala*, 24 May 1924, No. 39; *Zulqarnain*, 28 May 1924, Vol. 22, No. 20; *Pratap*, 7 July 1924, Vol.11, No.35, p. 3

¹⁵⁴ *Abhyudaya*, 24 May 1924, Vol. 18, No.20

now no incident had taken place in India, on the basis of which it could be conclusively declared that Bolshevism had been propagated here. This was for the first time that four accused were punished by the government. It also questioned the basis of judgment. Like the *Pratap*, the *Prabha*, a monthly, was very critical of the judgment.¹⁵⁵ It wrote that two years back, International Communist Party had given nearly 1000 to '*Daily Herald*' a labour party paper. The propagation of class war in Britain is going on openly. In "*Labour Monthly*", R Palme Dutt and Lansbury propagated Bolshevism. Even the sons of Baldwin and George Lansbury openly propagated Bolshevism against the wishes of their father, "But it is India, this country of "impotents" where Bolshevism is considered as war against British Emperor. Here being enemy of British Imperialism and saying Down with British imperialism in a crime under section 121A of IPC. How long this kind of justice will last".¹⁵⁶

Satyabhakta gave a report entitled "Government assault on Communist Party" which was published in *Pratap*. He wrote, "Indian Communist Party titled paper was seized. The government says that the paper's content fall under section 121 A of IPC... There is nothing new about it. Everyday more forceful articles are published in India. So the government must say clearly that Communist Party and its ideology are illegal".¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ *Pratap*, 26 May 1924, Vol. II, No. 27, p. 4; *Prabha*, 1 June 1924, Vol. I, No. 6, p. 479

¹⁵⁶ *Prabha*, 1 June 1924, Vol. I, No. 6, p. 479, T. No. 54

¹⁵⁷ *Pratap*, 20 August 1924, Vol. II, No. 49.



To conclude, we may say that the Kanpur Conspiracy Case helped in crystallizing the disorganized and scattered ranks and file of Communists in India. The Kanpur conspiracy provided a chance for those having communistic ideas to sympathise with the accused who were convicted by the British government on wrong charges. The apprehensions made the British more hostile towards the Communists. But it proved fruitful for the formation and establishment of a communist party in India. We find that large number of people came in support of the accused and press vehemently criticised government policy of suppressing these people. This wide coverage by the press proved blessing in disguised for the ideological propaganda. In November 1924, Roy wrote of the Cawnpore Case that it had had good effects as well as bad: "People have got used to hearing things which simply terrified them before... We must reap the benefit of this situation... We must prepare to begin the struggle for the legalization of our party".¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ H. Williamson, *India and Communism*, p. 89; the conviction at the Cawnpore had a sobering effects on Indian newspapers. The *Vartaman* (Cawnpore) wrote, in August 1924, that Roy's programme "appears to be sweeter than honey and more pleasant than paradise to the poor Indians and there is every likelihood of their welcoming it heartily." The *Bande Mataram* announced that an Indian Communist Party had been openly formed "with branches at Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and Cawnpore", and that "an All-India Communist Conference will be held in three months' time." Sir David Petrie, *Communism in India 1924-1927*, pp. 61-62 (This book provides one of the earliest and best factual pictures of the growth of Communism in India, even though written from an imperialist angle and a practical hostile intent. Its values lie in the fact that it was prepared during the very period when Communism was having its impact and taking roots in India.)

Later in the communistic survey by the Intelligence, it is reported that with the institution of the first Communist conspiracy case at Kanpur, 'faith in communism was established as no offence, and the fear of the law against communism largely removed; the immense power of mass action as a political weapon became recognised by nationalist intellectuals of advanced views. Communism began to earn appreciative comment in quarters which could not be dismissed as irresponsible. The first phase in Indian Communism had reached.'¹⁵⁹

As an immediate consequence, the Kanpur communist conference was held in December 1925, which resulted in the birth of Communist Party of India. It strengthened the left elements considerably.¹⁶⁰ Secondly, a new awakening took place which helped in the formation of a broader based left oriented party in Bengal. Thirdly, a front was created under the aegis of the Communists which excluded persons belonging to communal organisation or had communal ideology.

II.7 The First Communist Conference, Cawnpore (mod. Kanpur), 26-28

December 1925

The Kanpur Communist Conference held in the last week of December 1925¹⁶¹ has a very important role in the formation of Communist Party of India.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ *Home Poll*, 7/7/1937

¹⁶⁰ Irfan Habib, *op.cit.* p. 10

¹⁶¹ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. II, pp. 591-670; Harkishan Singh Surjeet et al.(eds.), *History of the Communist Movement in India, The Formative Years 1920-1933*, p. 87-111; H.N.Mitra (ed.), *The Annual Indian Register*, December 1925, pp. 367-371; Devendra Kausrik and L.A. Mitrokhin, 'First Indian Communist Conference at Kanpur (1925)', *Mainstream* (Weekly).

It was the first legal conference of communists in India. And apart from Satyabhakta and his associates, Communists like Muzaffar Ahmad, S.V. Ghate, K.N. Joglekar, R.S. Nimbkar, Abdul Majid, Ayodhya Prasad, Janki Prasad Bagerhatta etc. attended this conference. The émigré Communist Party of India was formed in Tashkent under the guidance of the Communist International led to the emergence of various Communists groups in different parts of India with their varying degree of understanding about the principles of scientific socialism. This conference was the first prototypical event in British India where almost all communist groups and elements joined. However, the Comintern, which was in contact with all active Marxist, socialist groups in India, through Roy, was completely in dark about the conference, and Satyabhakta, the convenor of the conference, did not belong to any such group. The idea of holding such a conference was first mooted by the leaders of the recognised communist groups

Annual Number, 1969, pp.67-71: Sobhanlal Datta Gupta ed., *A Document of the Communist Movement in India 1923-1925*, Vol. II, New Delhi, 2007, pp. 697-736; Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and CPI*, pp. 407-13

¹⁶² Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol.II, p. 609, It was the Central Secretariat of the CPI before the split took the unanimous decision about the date of the foundation of the Party being 1925. The Secretariat at that time consisted of Ajay Ghosh, B.T. Ranadive, P.C. Joshi, M. Basapunniah, Z.A. Ahmad, S.A. Dange, and A.K. Gopalan. It was on 19 August 1959 that the Party centre sent a letter to the Indonesian Communist Party in answer to its query that "It was in December 1925 that in meeting of representatives of the various groups of Communists in the country held at Kanpur that the Communist Party of India was formed."

functioning in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Lahore and U.P., particularly by S.A. Dange from jail.¹⁶³

When the Communist leaders were arrested and prosecuted in the Kanpur conspiracy case (1924) many statements appeared in Indian press. It was Dange who suggested from jail to utilize this opportunity to hold an open conference of the communist party. Letters were published discussing the question that an open communist conference be held to test the statements made in the course of the case proceedings.¹⁶⁴ So it was during this period that the idea of holding a communist conference at Kanpur cropped up when the INC session was also going to be held at Kanpur in 1925. It was openly discussed in the *Socialist* early in 1924 and it shows that the pioneers of the communist party were thinking in terms of an all-India conference of Communists to create a countrywide organisation with an all-India centre.¹⁶⁵

It was thought by some that the colonial government was not justified in prosecuting the Communists. Therefore, they attempted to form a 'legal' communist party. And Satyabhakta was instrumental in organizing conference through his Indian Communist Party, which was started by him on September 1.

¹⁶³ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol.II, p. 591; Adhikari, 'The Comintern Congress and the CPI', *Marxist Miscellany*, January 1971, Delhi, p. 18

¹⁶⁴ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. 2, p. 594

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 595

1925. Its birth was announced through the *Bande Mataram* of Calcutta, *Pratap* of Kanpur and *Aj* of Banaras.¹⁶⁶

Before going into different aspects of the First Communist Conference it is important to have some discussion about Satyabhakta's Indian Communist Party (ICP). It was formed on September 1, 1924. It was widely covered in vernacular as well as English newspaper. By June 1925 he claimed to have enrolled 250 members "from different provinces in the country."¹⁶⁷ Those who had joined his party were mainly from the United Provinces (UP), Rajasthan and Madhya

¹⁶⁶ Devendra Kaushik and L.A. Mitrokhin, 'First Indian Communist Conference at Kanpur (1925)', *Mainstream* (Weekly), Annual Number, 1969, pp.67-68. Satyabhakta real name was Chakan Lal, came from Bharatpur state. In 1923 he came to Kanpur and began to work among the workers. He took a keen interest in the Kanpur conspiracy case and launched vigorous campaign in Hindi press for the release of communist prisoners. He wrote in *Pratap* He concluded from the Kanpur case that to advocate communism was not in itself illegal and that a communist party could exist without engaging in activities which the government could regard as treasonable.; Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol.II, pp. 591-600. Satyabhakta was a member of the national revolutionary (terrorist) group in U.P., who was influenced by October Socialist Revolution. Cecil Kaye (Intelligence bureau chief), records that Satyabhakta corresponded with Sylvia Pankhurst who was then editing *Workers' Dreadnought*, the organ of the CPGB, to obtain communist literature. David Petrie records that "He attracted attention too as a correspondence of S.A. Dange..." He published two leaflets one in Hindi and other in English, both entitled "The Indian Communist Party" (Bhartiya Samyavadi Dal). The U.P. Government banned both these leaflets by a notification in its gazette dated 11 October 1924. Later he published another leaflet "An Appeal to the Lovers of Communism" (Samyavad ke Premiyo Se Appeal, 12 November 1924); Ibid. pp. 597, 598. It was in Hindi daily *Aj* of 12 July 1924 that Satyabhakta first announced his intention to set up his Indian Communist Party; for more detail about Satyabhakta and programme also see, Sir David Petrie, *Communism in India 1924-1927*, pp. 157-67

¹⁶⁷ Devendra Kaushik and L.A. Mitrokhin, pp. 67-68

Pradesh. Some of the prominent names amongst them were Maulana Hasrat Mohani, Ram Shankar Avasthi (editor, *Vartaman*), Radha Mohan Gokulji, and Suresh Chandra Bhattacharya (sub-editor, *Vartaman*).¹⁶⁸

The main aim of the ICP was declared as: “The right of peasants on land, of workers in factories and mills to be recognised and that they should be recipients of the product and profit obtained from land and factories; all employees be ensured decent living conditions.”¹⁶⁹ He called upon all wage earners, including peasants, workers, clerks, school-masters, railway and postal employees, peons, etc, to join the party.¹⁷⁰

Thus we see that Satyabhakta’s Indian Communist Party talked about of complete swaraj, of abolishing landlordism and ending all exploitation. He called upon the toiling people to achieve these by “capturing all councils, big and small, district boards and municipalities and other bodies which are today ruling the country.”¹⁷¹ In December 1924 Satyabhakta issued a Hindi leaflet “Samyavad ke Premiyon se Appeal” (An Appeal to the Lover of Communism) dated 12 November 1924. This document fell into the hands of British Intelligence Bureau chief David Petrie and it is reported by him. It has mentioned clearly that Indian Communist Party wants:-

¹⁶⁸ Harkishan Singh Surjeet et al.(eds.), *History of the Communist Movement in India. The Formative Years 1920-1933*, p. 89

¹⁶⁹ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol.II, p. 597

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 599

1. The kisans should be the absolute owners of the produce of their fields...no ejection, no arbitrary taxes from them and abolition of Zamindari systems.
2. All the profits of the factories should go to the workers engaged in them. The word “workers” is for all from the coolies’ upto the managers. No large profits to shareholders or directors.
3. All land, railways, telegraphs, tramways, mines and forests etc., should be owned by a democratic government. Possession of all these led to public miseries.
4. Every person should earn his living by working with his hands or bodies. No work, no right to get their food even.
5. Sufficient wages to man or woman to provide them good food, clothes and neat houses
6. The up-bringing and education of children in the hands of democratic government, expenses borne by public treasury.
7. One man one house, other rest with democratic government, given to those who have no home to in.
8. Administration in government hands, right to vote to men and women for the election of the representatives constituting the government.
9. No favour on the basis of race, religion, colour, descent or wealth, equal treatment in political and social matters. No one should be regarded as untouchables or low caste.

10. Government to utilize taxes on intoxicants, forests, canals, salt, administration of justice etc. as a source of income. Stop use of intoxicants altogether.

11. A limit of wealth should be fixed...The limit should be place at a lac of rupees roughly.

12. Interest, rent, satta, phatka, horse race betting, lottery etc. should be stopped as it lead to illicit gain produce various defects in the general public.

All debts due from peasants and workers should be cancelled. It is the firm determination of the C.P. to free India from the fetters of slavery at the earliest opportunity and to establish Swaraj; the administration of country in the hands of the representatives elected by the general public.”¹⁷²

Despite its peaceful and no-violence policy publicity, the ICP could not save itself from troubles at the hands of the British authorities. The government was suspicious of the Party and raided its office thrice at Kanpur once in December, 1924 and again in February 1925 and July, 1925. The police seized a number of books on communism from the Socialist Bookshop run by Satyabhakta. His leaflet ‘*Bhartiya Samyavadi Dal*’ (Indian Communist Party) was declared as

¹⁷² *Home Poll, F.N. 449/1924*. Satyabhakta (Secretary, Indian Communist Party, Cawnpore). “Samyavad ke Premiyon se Appeal” (An Appeal to the Lover of Communist dated 12 November 1924).

sedition literature by the government and its publication was forfeited.¹⁷³ But both the Bombay Communists and the Communists abroad looked at the party and dubbed it as having of 'doubtful elements'. A handbill prepared by the C.P.I. in 1941 maintained that it consisted of fools and spies.¹⁷⁴ The Communists generally looked down upon this Communist Party.

At the same time as the annual conference of the Indian National Congress was being held at Kanpur, the Indian Communist Party of Kanpur convened an open all-India conference of the Party towards the end of December 1925 which was attended by Communists and other radical nationalists from different parts of the country. British Communist M.P. Saklatvala had been requested to preside over the conference but he could not attend. When M.N. Roy heard this news he had also sent a message to different groups of Communists in the country to help and make the conference at Kanpur a success.¹⁷⁵

The First Indian Communist Conference met at Kanpur (Cawnpur) on the 26th of December 1925 presided by M. Singaravelu who explained the aims and objects of the Indian Communist Party which he declared, stood for the emancipation of workers from their present state of economic bondage. The Party, he continued, aimed at securing the rights of the working classes and establishing

¹⁷³ Devendra Kaushik and L.V. Mitrokhin, op.cit., p. 68; the police informed Satyabhakta that the object of the search was to prevent the spread of communism in India. *Report on Newspaper and Periodical in Bengal*, 12 September, 1925, pp. 672-73

¹⁷⁴ L.P. Sinha, *The Left-Wing in India*, pp. 156-57

¹⁷⁵ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. II, p. 607

a Workers' State in India under any system of Self-Government. The immediate aims of the Party, he stated further 'is to win Swaraj for the masses in India, to prevent exploitation of the workers and peasants by suitable land and industrial legislation, to secure to the bread winner a minimum wages by which he and his children shall have the necessaries of a decent life and to end all distinctions of castes, creed or sect in all political and economical relationship.'¹⁷⁶

Maulana Hasrat Mohani, Chairman of the Reception Committee, described the aims of the Party to be the establishment of a Soviet Constitution in India after the establishment of Swaraj. In his address he said:-

"The movement of Communism is the movement of peasants and workers."¹⁷⁷ Further he described the aims and objects of the Party "to establish Swaraj or complete Independence by all fair means. After the establishment of Swaraj to see that it takes the forms of the Soviet Republic on which all principles of Communism will come into force."¹⁷⁸ Maulana stated that "our organization is purely Indian. Our relation with similar Parties of other countries will be only that of sympathy and mental affinity to these entire in general and to the Third International in particular. Neither we give them any practical help, nor do they

¹⁷⁶ H.N.Mitra (ed.), *The Annual Indian Register*, December 1925, pp. 367, 371

¹⁷⁷ Ibid

¹⁷⁸ Ibid

extend any financial aid to us.”¹⁷⁹ Not only this, he tried to link communism with Islam in order to show that it was not anti-religious.¹⁸⁰

It was in this conference that the name of the party was changed to ‘Communist Party of India’ instead of ‘Indian Communist Party’. Satyabhakta scheme of national communism and its relationship of detachment with International Communism differed with others like Muzaffar Ahmad, S.V. Ghate and K.N. Joglekar. They challenged Satyabhakta’s pretensions of national communism with their own conception of internationalism and maintained that in line with the practice of Communist International, the name of the Party should be Communist Party of India. When Satyabhakta himself in minority he left the place with his papers and files.¹⁸¹ The constitution was also adopted which stated the ‘object’ of the party as follows: ‘The establishment of a workers’ and peasants’ republic based on the socialization of the means of production and distribution, by the liberation of India from British imperialist domination.’ The resolution adopted for the establishment and formation of the party clearly spelt out that: “Whereas, the workers and peasants of India are unable to live a human life on account of being exploited both by the foreign and native capitalists and landlords in India and whereas the existing political parties in India are dominated by bourgeois interests which are diametrically opposed to the well-being of the Indian

¹⁷⁹ Ibid

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 367-68

¹⁸¹ Muzaffar Ahmad, *CPI and Years of Formation*, p. 19

workers and peasants. This conference of the Indian Communists resolves that a party be formed for the purpose of the emancipation of the workers and peasants of India. This party shall be known as the Communist Party of India and the ultimate aim of the party shall be the establishment of a republican swaraj of workers and peasants, and the immediate object of the party shall be the securing of a living wage to the workers and peasants by means of nationalization and municipalization of public services namely land, mines, factories, houses, telegraphs and telephones, and railways and such other public utilities which require public ownership... No one who is a member of any communal organization India shall be admitted as a member of the Communist Party”¹⁸²

The victorious elements at the Kanpur conference brought together the Communists of diverse places and constituted a central committee of the Communist Party of India at Kanpur itself.¹⁸³

In March 1926 Sepassi wrote to the effect that for the establishment of new Communist Party of Bagerhatta, Muzaffar Ahmad, etc., would be given “every kind of help available ...Financial help will be given as much possible”, but at the same time a rider was put to at that it was important that the Party should refrain from publicly declaring its independence of “outside world and Third International in particular” was prepared “to send all kinds of literature”.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. II, pp. 665-66

¹⁸³ Muzaffar Ahmad, *CPI and Years of Formation*, p. 20

¹⁸⁴ Sir David Petrie, *Communism in India*, pp. 98-99

An informal conference of the CPI was held at Calcutta (16-18 April 1926) and it was unanimously decided that the party should completely disown Satyabhakta and his organisation. And in May 1926, the headquarters of the Party was shifted to Bombay from Kanpur.¹⁸⁵ The object of the removal of the headquarters of the Communist Party from Kanpur to Bombay was said to be the desire to facilitate communication with foreign countries.¹⁸⁶

The provisional general rules for the Party were drawn up and in these rules the objects of the Party were given as follows:-

- (a) To secure the freedom of India by all practicable means.
- (b) To end all sorts of exploitation of man by man.
- (c) To establish a Workers' and farmers' republic through the nationalization of the means and instruments of production and distribution, such as land, mills, factories, railways, tramways, ships etc.

The Party programme was to educate and organise the working classes namely, peasants, labourers, and servants engaged in other occupations, for the abolition of capitalism.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, pp. 99, 167, David Petrie recorded that the split occurred because of its international connection.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 165, the removal of the headquarter form Kanpur to Bombay was supported by Ghate, Joglekar, Muzaffar Ahmad, while it was opposed by Hasrat Mohani, Azad Subhani, Satyabhakta and Arjunlal Sethi.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid

Chapter III

Communist Movement in India, 1925-39

III.1. Workers' and Peasants' Parties

The Communist Party of India organised the Workers' and Peasants' on class lines. The Peshawar and Kanpur conspiracy cases had led to the realization by the Communists almost the need of an "open party, say a Workers' and Peasants' Party" so as to organise militant trade unions and peasant masses for their urgent demands.¹ The period following the Kanpur Communist Conference and formation of CPI witnessed the establishment of workers' and peasants' parties in various provinces of India, culminating in the formation of the All India Workers' and Peasants' Party (WPP) by the end of 1928. Though Communists led these parties in various provinces, the WPP was not a Communist Party, or even a veiled Communist Party. As the General Statement of the Meerut prisoners was to explain this in 1932, the WPP was conceived of as the organisational form of the united front of the working class, the peasants and the petty-bourgeois to carry through the national democratic revolution'.²

The Workers' and Peasants parties according to Roy were the medium through which the Communists could find their way to the masses. He thought that

¹ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. II, p. vi

² Jyoti Basu and others (eds.), *Documents of the Communist Movement of India*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1997, p. 253

the object of the WPP was to make new Party “the rallying ground for all the nationalist revolutionary elements into a revolutionary mass party”.³

The Workers’ and Peasants parties in India passed through two distinct phases: (I) they existed as labour groups within the Indian National Congress with no connection with the mass of workers. The Bengal Workers’ and Peasants’ Party, for example, had originated as a Labour Swaraj Party inside the INC in 1925.⁴ So also it did in Madras and Bombay; (II) From the beginning of 1928 they

³ *International Press Correspondence*, 18 February 1929, Articles by Roy on W. &P.P.. Cf. L.P. Sinha, *The Left-Wing in India*, p. 178; in fact in letter to Dange (19 December 1922) Roy applied Lenin’s tactics to India by pressing for the formation of an illegal Communist Party, and for the establishment of a ‘front’ organisation to operate within Congress to fight the compromising tendency and develop the revolutionary trend in bourgeois nationalism. As the letter put it: “The time has come for the organisation of our party in India... A revolutionary mass party has to be organised as a part of the Congress, but this party must be under the control and direction of our own party which cannot but be illegal”. (Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. I, pp. 593 and 595); Legality was seen as crucial for the building up of an open mass movement without which the Communists would have been isolated in small sects. (Bipan Chandra (ed.), *The Indian Left: Critical Appraisals*, p. 3)

⁴ In Bombay, around November 1926, a group of Congressmen in the Bombay PCC decided to form a party called the Congress Labour Party. Many of the leaders of these early parties and even WPPs were radical Congressmen like Dange, Singaravelu, Velayudhan, Joglekar, Nimbkar, Thengdi, Satyabhakta and Bagerhatta. (Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. II, p. 129, Vol. IIIA, pp. 31-32, 147, Vol. IIIB, p. 32-33 and 165); The detailed account of Labour Swaraj Party which is viewed by Dr. Adhikari, as a fore-runner of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Party provides a picture of early experiment in the formation of a Marxist organisation in India. (A.R.Desai and Sunil Dighe, *Labour Movement in India 1923-1927 Documents*, Vol. IV, Delhi, 2004, p. 141)

turned towards the masses, adopting a more independent stand-point. The formation of the Girni Kamgar Union was accomplished during this phase⁵

The idea of forming WPPs was first mooted to evolve a plan of action in India in the context of government repression (as in Peshawar and Kanpur conspiracy cases) and the absence of any communist influence in the country, especially over masses. Many organisations and parties in different parts of India were involved. These parties may be seen as precursors to the WPPs and many of them just changed their names to WPPs.

As early as in September 1922 in his *Socialist* S.A. Dange suggested the formation of an 'Indian Socialist Labour Party of the Indian National Congress'.⁶ At the Gaya session of the Indian National Congress (December 1922) Singaravelu and others distributed Roy's proposed programme for the Congress, and the formation of a left-wing party was discussed, which resulted in the production and publication of a 'Manifesto' for a new party in March 1923. This was subsequently rewritten and issued in April under the names of Singaravelu

⁵ L.P. Sinha, *The Left-Wing in India*, pp. 178-79; we find that the first voice was raised in 1920 to declare the necessity of organising in India a political party of the working class. (Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. IIIA, pp. 164-76), 'Programme of a Working Class Party' pp. 176-82; Sanjay Seth writes that 'despite the existence of a CPI, the WPPs became the main vehicle for Communist activity in India. Energies were directed at building the WPPs and successive meetings of the CPI CEC urged members to do so.' (Sanjay Seth, p. 121)

⁶ *Socialist*, Vol. I, No. 8, 16 September 1922 in Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. II, p. 64

and M.P.S. Velayudham (who signed themselves as Indian Communists), as the manifesto of 'the Labour and Kisan Party of Hindustan'.⁷

The Labour and Kisan Party was formed by Singaravelu in 1923 and it held the first 'May Day' meeting in Madras city, published the *Labour Kisan Gazette* in October 1923, a fortnightly in English and *Thozhilalan* a weekly in Tamil.⁸ On 28 May, the *Swadeshmitran* carried an item of news saying that the secretary of the Hindustan Kisan Party has announced that in Punjab a Labour Kisan Party Unit has been formed with M.A. Khan, Ghulam Hussain, Shamsuddin and Hasan; that it was being affiliated to the Central Committee and arrangement were being made to establish such a party in Bihar, Bengal and Bombay and also that the Central Committee was going to publish a Tamil weekly called *Thozhilalan*.⁹

In Bengal with the efforts of Communists and radical leaders 'Labour Swaraj Party' of the Indian National Congress was formed on 1 November

⁷ The manifesto of the Labour and Kisan Party (LKP) began by pointing out the shortcomings of the INC. It says that LKP would represent both the immediate and the ultimate interests of the workers and peasants. It was short-lived. Sanjay Seth, *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics: The Case of Colonial India*, pp. 116-18. For full programme see, Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. II, pp. 114-133 and Sobhanlal Datta Gupta (ed.), *A Documented History of the Communist Movement in India 1923-1925*, Vol. II, pp. 459-73; it is reported by Cecil Kaye that 'the Comintern recognised Singaravelu's "Labour and Kisan Party". Comintern wrote according to Kaye that "it is the duty of the Labour and Kisan Party of Hindustan to assume the supreme lead of the struggle for national liberation, and subsequently, for social revolution."' (Sir David Petrie, *Communism in India 1924-1927*, pp. 42, 43)

⁸ K. Murugesan and C.S. Subramanyam, *Singaravelu-First Communist in South India*, p. 4

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 103, for detail account of the Manifesto of the Hindustan Labour and Kisan Party see pp. 172-87

1925,¹⁰ influenced by communism, but independently of Roy and the Comintern.¹¹

The 'Labour Swaraj Party' was composed of Communists, a group of radical literati and a number of Muslim radicals. It declared its goal to be independence 'based on social and economic emancipation', and this was to be achieved by the INC's strategy of 'non-violent mass action', and INC membership was a condition of a membership of the Labour Swaraj Party. This party sought to represent the workers and peasants in the INC, by putting forward both their 'immediate' and 'ultimate' demands.¹² David Petrie dubbed the programme of the Labour Swaraj Party as 'distinctly communist'.¹³ The party started a weekly journal called *Langal*. However, *Langal* was closed in April 1926 due to shortage of fund. A new weekly *Ganavani* (Voice of the Masses), under the editorship of Muzaffar

¹⁰ Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and CPI*, pp. 77, 414-16. The Bengali name of the party was Bhartiya Jatiya Mahasamiti Shramik-Praja-Swaraj Dal. The founding members were (1) Qutbuddin Ahmad, (2) Hemanta Kumar Sarkar, (3) Qazi Nazrul Islam and (4) Shamsuddin Hussain (Abdul Halim's elder brother, Abdul Halim was a pioneer of the Communist movement in India). The first constitution, programme and policy of the Labour Swaraj Party were also published on November 1, 1925. The documents were printed in the second issue of the *Langal* (The Plough) on December 31, 1925, and formed Exhibit No. P. 546 (13) of the Meerut Conspiracy Case (1929-33). The name Workers' and Peasants' Party had been changed two or three times.

¹¹ Conrad Wood, 'The Impact of Ultra-Leftism on the Communist Party of India, 1928-36', *Journal of Indian History*, April 1973, Vol. LI, Part, S.N. 151, p. 360

¹² Sanjay Seth, *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics: The Case of Colonial India*, p. 18. (For the full text of the aims and objectives of the Labour Swaraj Party, see Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. II, pp. 671-689; Gautam Chattopadhyay, *Communism and Bengal's Freedom Movement, Volume I (1917-1929)*, New Delhi, 1970, Appendix D, pp. 177-79).

¹³ Sir David Petrie, *Communism in India*, p. 128

Ahmad took its place.¹⁴ The famous poem of Nazrul Islam, "Samyabadi", was printed under different sub-headings in the first issue of the journal.¹⁵

The second session of the All Bengal Peasants' conference was held at Krshnanagar, Nadia (6-7 February 1926). The resolution adopted was that the party stood 'for the protection and furtherance of the interests of the peasants' and workers', the conference herewith resolved to organise a Peasants' and Workers' Party in Bengal.¹⁶ In February 1926 Roy in one of letter had suggested his scheme for the formation of a Republican or "People's" Party. He advised for a dual organisation; a legal Nationalist Party with a radical Republican programme (People's Party), with an illegal Communist Party inside it. According to him "the

¹⁴ Harkishan Singh Surjeet et al.(eds.), *History of the Communist Movement in India. The Formative Years 1920-1933*, p. 114; the first issue of the *Ganavani* came out on August 12, 1926. Muzaffar Ahmad said: 'The reason for changing the name was that from its name many people assumed that *Langal* was exclusively for the peasants, while this paper of ours was for the toiling masses.' (Muzaffar Ahmad, *CPI: Years of Formation*, pp. 416-17); Muzaffar Ahmad attended the meeting of the AITUC which was held at Delhi in March 1927 and there he received Rs. 200 from Spratt for the *Ganavani*, the publication of which was suspended towards the end of 1926 by reason of lack of funds, though it reappeared in April 1927 (Sir David Petrie, *Communism in India*, p. 130).

¹⁵ Muzaffar Ahmad, *CPI: Years of Formation*, p. 22

¹⁶ Details of the constitution, organisational set up and demand are given in Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, IIIA, 1926, New Delhi, 1978, pp.155-62; in March 1926 M.N. Roy wrote that 'the growth of communist influence over the Trade Union Congress (TUC) will be conditional upon the work that the Communists will do in the Trade Unions- among the rank and file of the working class. Every communist must be an active Trade Union worker and will endeavour to liberate the labour movement from the harmful influence of the Nationalist politicians like Lajpat Rai, Moti Lal Nehru, etc. (Sir David Petrie, *Communism in India*, p. 99)

Communists will take the initiative in calling this conference, not as Communists but as Nationalists; and the People's Party should publish a legal organ".¹⁷ It seems that he advised it because of the apprehension of Government vigilance and suppression of the Communist Party at the very early stage.

Exactly a year later (after the formation of Labour Swaraj Party, around November 1926, a similar party the 'Congress Labour Party', composed of Communists and a radical in the Bombay was founded. The meeting of the CPI Executive Committee, held in (16-18 January) 1927, decided to form of a workers' and peasants' party in Bombay province, which was to be the first such organisation outside Bengal, and the publication of a Marathi weekly. Subsequently, on 13 February, six days before the second conference of the Bengal Peasants' and Workers' Party in Calcutta, the Workers' and Peasants' Party was formed in Bombay with D. R. Thengdi as the president.¹⁸ The name of the Congress Labour Party was changed to W.P.P in the beginning of February, 1927, with S. Mirajkar as its Secretary. The Party started publishing its own organ, the *Kranti*, a weekly in the Marathi language. The WPP of Bombay declared that the INC and its leaders represented the interests of the propertied classes and that

¹⁷ Sir David Petrie, *Communism in India 1924-1927*, pp. 97-98

¹⁸ Harkishan Singh Surjeet et al.(eds.), *History of the Communist Movement in India. The Formative Years 1920-1933*, pp. 115-15

its aim was to liberate the Congress from the stranglehold of the class interests of its leadership.¹⁹

In February 1927 the Bengal WPP adopted a new programme. It asserted that “the imperial Government in India is not only contrary to the wishes of the people of Great Britain...doing nothing to better the condition of the peasants and workers and of the lower classes...It is therefore, necessary to form political association of the workers and lower classes, who must join the INC and urge their claim through that body. They must form labour and peasants associations and fight the Government determinedly for their rights. The exploitation of the masses would never cease until Federal Republic was set up in India in place of the Imperial Government’. It further emphasised its ‘Immediate Demands’ which demanded ‘women’s suffrage; the abolition of race and caste distinction; the freedom of the press and of speech; the re-organisation of Trade Unions; the abolition of indirect taxation; the nationalization of land; the establishment of co-operative banks; preferential terms for cultivators borrowing from moneylenders; agricultural trade on scientific lines; a worker’s week to consist of 5 ½ days of 8 hours; wages of factory and mill-hands to be fixed by law at 33% above the living wage; the education of the masses; and legislation on the subject of workers’ compensation and against the employment of women and boys in dangerous work.”²⁰

¹⁹ Shashi Bairathi, *Communism and Nationalism in India*, p. 96

²⁰ Sir David Petrie, *Communism in India*, pp. 131-32

In the same month (February 1927) both parties (of Bombay and Bengal) held conferences where they adopted the common name, Workers' and Peasants' Party, and adopted similar programmes. By now the Communists (including the Kanpur prisoners, who had been released) were organised their own party and were taking an active role in promoting the development of the Bombay and Calcutta parties.²¹ At the same time Gopendra Chakravarty and Dharani Goswami, along with five other former members of the Secret Terrorist Society, Anushilan, joined the executive committee of the Bengal Workers' and Peasants' Party.²²

It was under the influence of Communist Party of India that the Workers' and Peasants' Party (WPP) of Bombay in 1927 issued a 'Mohurrum Manifesto' appealing against a possible communal clash between Hindus and Muslims. It was declared that the party was duty bound to call up on Indian masses to maintain peaceful and fraternal relations among themselves during the forthcoming Mohurrum festival. The working masses of both the Hindu and Muslim communities had nothing to gain by communal mobilization, which would only lead to the advantage of the exploiting masses. It was shameful and tragic that the Hindu and Muslim masses who were all exploited people would

²¹ Sanjay Seth, *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics*, pp. 118-19; for the full text of Party's demand, see Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. IIIB, pp. 166-68. The immediate demands of the Party were as follows: (1) universal adult suffrage and responsible government; (2) Abolition of communalism; (3) freedom of speech, press and the right of association; and (4) removal of all restrictions on trade unions.

²² John Patrick Haithcox, *Communism and nationalism in India: M. N. Roy and Comintern policy, 1920-1939*, p. 46

fight amongst themselves. It added that they must realize that the two communities together constitute a homogenous body and their suffering were common which resulted from serfdom and their social and political exploitation.²³

The 'Mohurrum Manifesto' declared "the WPP, the political vanguard of all exploited, considers its duty to advise the Indian masses not to participate in religious struggle and communal movement which the religious minded ambitious bourgeois politicians of Indian dream of and aspire to kindle on a countrywide scale. The communal movement will only create a disastrous division in the ranks of masses".²⁴ The WPP firmly demanded the abolition of communalism.²⁵

The extended meeting of the CEC of the Communist Party of India held in Delhi in March 14-15, 1927. Muzaffar Ahmad records that "...Comrades from the many parts of India came to Delhi."²⁶ A constitution of the Communist Party was adopted there and a number of resolutions passed.²⁷ It was in the May CEC meeting in Bombay was an important stage in the growth of the Party. It was the determined efforts of a handful of Communists in different parts of the country to create an all-India team functioning collectively and in a disciplined way –an all

²³ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. IIIA, pp. 174-76.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and CPI*, p. 441

²⁷ Ibid.

India party centre- to guide through its open forum, the workers' and peasants' parties, and the rising mass movement of workers and peasants.²⁸

M.N. Roy through the *Masses of India* was also putting forward the idea of building workers' and peasants' parties as an open forum for the Communist Party functioning in the face of repression, but he was stressing for creating a People's Party as a broad anti-imperialist forum in place of the Indian National Congress which he maintained was ceasing to be a militant political force against imperialism.²⁹

In the meantime WPPs were formed in various provinces. Besides the formation of WPPs in Bengal and Bombay by early 1927, in Rajasthan a WPP was formed by Arjunlal Sethi around this time.

As a result of the labours of Allison, Spratt and Saklatvala, Workers' and Peasants' Parties were formed in Calcutta and Bombay in order "to voice the demands of the peasants and working classes within the National Congress, to promote the organisation of Trade Unions and to wrest them from their present alien control, to advance the organisation of peasants on the basis of their economic and social requirements and to present a determined and permanent opposition to the Government, thus to secure the social, economic and political emancipation of the classes."³⁰ The ultimate object of the Party would be "to

²⁸ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. IIIB, pp. 56-57

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 57

³⁰ Sir David Petrie, *Communism in India 1924-1927*, p. 274

obtain Swaraj wherein the means of production, distribution and exchange are publicly owned and socially controlled.”³¹

Philip Spratt³² was joined in September 1927 by Benjamin Francis Bradley, also a capable and devoted worker, who took a similar active part in the organisation of the ‘Workers’ and Peasants’ Party and worked amongst the employees of the cotton mills and the railways.³³

In Punjab, a WPP came into existence on 12 April 1928 with the name of Kirti Kisan Party, under the leadership of Sohan Singh Josh and Abdul Majid.³⁴

The need for the Workers’ and Peasants’ Party was shown in the Gurumukhi *Kirti*

³¹ Ibid, p. 274. At the same timer a letter addressed to the Indian “Comrades” was received from M.N. Roy. He again suggested dropping the name of “Communist Party of India” and substituting that of “Workers’ and Peasants’ Party”. The proposition to organise a WPP. Roy explained: “They are two entirely different things. One is veiled Communist Party while the other is a revolutionary Nationalist Party”. (Ibid, p. 107)

³² After the conviction of George Allison, alias Donald Campbell, who was mainly responsible for the organisation of Workers’ and Peasants’ Parties, a very able and energetic successor was found in the person of Philip Spratt. Spratt was a graduate of Cambridge University, who came to India in December 1926, ostensibly on behalf of the Labour Research Department, London. This organisation was under the control of the Central Council of Trade Unions in Moscow, and there was little doubt that Spratt's mission to India was mainly in Communist interests. At any rate, it is certain that he was a powerful influence in strengthening the organisation of the Workers' and Peasants' parties. Philip Spratt was most active in Bombay until his departure for Calcutta in March, 1928, and, with his Communist underlings, encouraged the Lillooah strikers to stand firm, and induced other railway and jute workers to down tools. (*India in 1927-28; A report Prepared for Parliament by J. Coatman*, Calcutta, 1928, pp. 341-42)

³³ H. Williamson, *India and Communism*, p. 94

³⁴ Ibid, p. 43; for detail see, Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab (1926-1947)*, Delhi, 1979

as far back as April 1927. The WPP of Punjab held its second conference at Lyallpur in September (28-30) 1928.³⁵ The first conference had taken place at Hoshiarpur.³⁶ Many processions were taken out under the leadership of the Party. The Press Workers Union, Amritsar, Motor Drivers Union and some other small unions of the workers were formed by the Workers' and Peasants' Party.³⁷

The Punjab WPP aimed at the establishment of the national democratic independence through revolution. It was openly a revolutionary body of the militant workers and peasants, who being disillusioned by the Congress defeatist politics had raised in revolt against it.³⁸

The congress of the Workers' and Peasants' Party held at Meerut. It was attended by Spratt, Muzaffar Ahmad, Kedarnath Sehgal, Abdul Majid and Sohan Singh Josh.³⁹ The Workers' and Peasants' Party of the United Provinces and Delhi was formed at Meerut in October 1928.⁴⁰

³⁵ As the campaign progressed, Phillip Spratt, in earnest pursuance of the avowed policy of the Communist International- the creation of internal unrest as a preliminary to the 'workers' revolution'- sought other fields to conquer. He enlisted Sohan Singh Josh in an attempt to plant the seeds of revolt in the Punjab. In this he was hardly more successful, though a Peasants' and Workers' Party was formed in that province which passed a number of objectionable resolutions. The Party conference was held in Lyallpur in the autumn of 1928. Communist doctrines were proclaimed with greater candour than on any previous public occasion. (H. Williamson, *India and Communism*, p. 97)

³⁶ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. IIIC, pp. 282-83

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 285

³⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 285-86

³⁹ In consultation with these and local leaders a provincial party was organised. The following were elected the officers leaders: - President: Vishwanath Mukherji (Gorakhpur), vice-

In the Madras session of the INC, Communists functioning through the WPP played a significant role and in an organised manner. Muzaffar Ahmad in his report of the executive committee of the WPP of Bengal, 1927-28, records: "Three of our members were elected in 1927 to the Bengal provincial congress committee and two to the all India congress committee. At the Madras session of the Congress (December 1927) with comrades from Madras, Bombay, Ajmer-Merwara and Punjab, we formed a fraction which was able to give effective expression to our views in the subject committee."⁴¹

At the Madras session the "Manifesto of the WPP to the Indian National Congress, Madras, (December) 1927" sought to commit the INC to leading a mass struggle for full independence, and to fighting for an independent nation where universal suffrage and peasant and worker rights were guaranteed. It gave clear cut revolutionary answers to the urgent questions before the session⁴². i.e. as follows: "The programme for the realisation of which the Workers 'and Peasants' Party will organise this campaign is: (1) establishment of free national-democratic state; (2) nationalization of land (abolition of native states and landlordism); (3)

president: Dharambir Singh MLC (Meerut), General Secretary: P.C. Joshi (Allahabad). For full text of the Party Resolutions, (see Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. IIIC, pp.287-90

⁴⁰ Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and CPI*, p. 429)

⁴¹ Meerut Record, p. 139, Cf., Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. IIIB, pp. 118-19

⁴² Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. IIIB, p. 125; the WPPs members worked as a fraction at the Madras Congress, seeking support for their manifesto and resolutions. The historic resolution of full independence was first moved by Jawaharlal Nehru and seconded by Joglekar, the latter a member of Bombay WPP and the CPI CEC. (Sanjay Seth, *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics*, p. 122)

abolition of all levies on the agricultural population except land tax not exceeding 15 per cent of the net income; (4) exemption from taxation of peasants cultivating 'uneconomic holdings'; (5) annulment of peasants' indebtedness; (6) control over usury (interest not to exceed 6 per cent per annum); (7) nationalization of public utilities (railways, telegraph, waterways, etc.) and mines; (8) minimum wages guaranteed and irreducible standard of living for the industrial workers; (9) improvement of labour and housing conditions; (10) eight-hour day and 44-hour week; (11) free primary education; (12) insurance against unemployment, sickness, old age, etc. and maternity benefit (employers and state to contribute 75 per cent to the fund); (13) freedom of press, speech and assembly; (14) right to strike and carry arms; (15) freedom of religion and worship; (16) abolition of caste privileges; (17) equal political and economic rights for women."⁴³

The Workers' and Peasants' Party took up the campaign and published two pamphlets, one in English by S.S. Mirajkar from Bombay and other in Bengali by Dharani Goswami from Calcutta. Both the pamphlets figured in Meerut conspiracy case. The prosecution filed a police report of a public meeting organised by the WPP in Bombay in Marwadi Vidyalaya Hall on the 28th August.⁴⁴ A meeting of WPP members attending the Madras session of INC held on 28 December 1927 "decided that a congress should be held for the purpose of formation of the AIWPP at Calcutta within the period 10 February-10 March

⁴³ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. IIIB, pp. 130-31

⁴⁴ Meerut Record, p. 2311, Cf., Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. IIIB, p. 109

1928, arrangements being left to Muzaffar Ahmad.”⁴⁵ Actually this took place only at the end of December 1928 at the time of the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress when the first all-India workers’ and peasants’ conference was held.⁴⁶

The strikes in textiles mills in Bombay (late April-early October 1928) saw the creation of the Communists and WPP led Girmi Kamgar Union. At the conclusion of strikes, the GKU membership was about 27,000 by December, about 50,000 by January 1929. The strikes in Bombay and Bengal were hailed with delight by Communists abroad, and much space was given in Communist publications to the labour troubles in India and to the activities of the Workers' and Peasants' Parties.⁴⁷ This strike saw the WPP extend its influence by organising workers around economic, class demands. The WPP press organ, *Kranti*, highlighted on the connection between the workers’ economic grievances and the British rule in India, and the Party sought to effect a practical link among these.⁴⁸

In this regard, the Bombay WPP registered an important success during the visit of the Simon Commission to Bombay in February 1928. WPP slogans and

⁴⁵ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. IIIB, p. 127

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ For detail press report of *Masses of India* and *Inprecor* see, *India in 1927-28: A report Prepared for Parliament by J. Coatman*, pp. 342-44

⁴⁸ Sanjay Seth, *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics*, p. 124

banners such as 'Nothing short of Independence' and 'Living Wage' were the prominent at the demonstrations.⁴⁹

Thus, the WPP of Bombay's by late 1928 succeeded in organising and establishing its influence over a significant section of Bombay working class. Amongst the mill workers the party had strong base, with the GKU being an organisation of the WPP, and its Executive Committee composed entirely of WPP members.

A significant move on the part of Communists and WPP activists was their involvement in the growing and organized youth movement, especially in Bengal, Punjab and Bombay provinces. The first formal decision to organise youth wings was taken by the enlarged executive meeting of the Workers' and Peasants' Party in Bombay on January 29, 1928, in the backdrop of the anti-Simon Commission boycott movement. The document resolved that the WPP 'should attract to its banner the newly organizing forces of the youth and must establish an 'independent youth organization' by recruiting working class and peasant youth 'to broaden the social base of the traditional youth organization'.⁵⁰

It has also charted out a six-point programme of action for such a youth organization:

- (i) Participation in the political nationalist movement

⁴⁹ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. III C, pp. 187-89

⁵⁰ Harkishan Singh Surjeet et al.(eds.), *History of the Communist Movement in India. The Formative Years 1920-1933*, p. 126

- (ii) Advance the cause of trade unionism among young workers, and study their working conditions.
- (iii) Fight for the redress of the special grievances of the youth, especially the unemployed.
- (iv) Political study and self preparation.
- (v) Conduct of education in political and economic subjects among workers, villages and students.
- (vi) Acts as a centre within the existing general youth organizations for the propaganda of radical ideas and the advancement of a sound policy.⁵¹

In Punjab, the organizers of Workers' and Peasants' Party played an active role in mobilizing the Naujawan Bharat Sabha in April 1928. Though Naujawan Bharat Sabha was formed as a broad based organisation, WPP had been its guiding spirit.⁵²

The first Conference of the All-India Workers' and Peasants' Party (AIWPP) held in 21-23 December, 1928 in Calcutta, was presided by Sohan Singh Josh.⁵³ In Calcutta, however, it took up a defiant line of action. In order to prepare the peasants for revolution, the Party placed before them a programme of their immediate needs of life, and for the workers need was felt for strengthening the trades' union movement by all means on the basis of forward economic and political demands and by resorting to "direct action ". All occasions were to be seized to draw the workers into political action by demonstrative means, strikes etc. While acknowledging the utility of non-violence, the party made no fetish of

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. IIIC, pp. 708-11, 740

it, though it acknowledged that the methods of secret preparation for an armed uprising were quite useless in prevailing conditions. In short, the party's immediate objective as revealed at these meetings was the creation of an aggressive attitude among the workers, the peasants and the petty 'bourgeoisie with a view to bringing about a revolution, first of a political and then of a social and economic kind. Even when the usual allowances are made for the excessive exuberance which such occasions engender, there is still no doubt that a year's successful work coupled with a lavish display of foreign interest, had enormously increased the prestige and confidence of the Communist Party of India and had encouraged them to make still further efforts in pursuit of their goal.'⁵⁴

In his presidential address of the First All India WPP Conference, Sohan Singh Josh said that "If our enemies (colonial government) call us Bolsheviks, we accept the epithet, because we know that Bolshevism stands for liberty, equality and fraternity."⁵⁵ Further he defined the task of the party as follows: "(1) unceasing war against exploiter...without this tactics it is difficult to win economic freedom; (2) our watchword should be complete independence; (3) abolition of landlordism and the Indian states; (4) to secure international

⁵⁴ H. Williamson, *India and Communism*, pp. 99-100; For full documents of the 1st All India WPP Conference see, Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. IIIC, pp. 730-76; the Workers' and Peasants' bodies also attended the All Parties Conference held at Calcutta in December 1928. Gautam Chattopadhyay, *Bengal Electoral Politics and Freedom Struggle 1862-1947*. New Delhi, 1984, p. 113

⁵⁵ Jyoti Basu and others (eds.), *Documents of the Communist Movement of India*, Vol. I. (1919-1928), p. 362

affiliations those who are bent upon destroying imperialism; (5) to disseminate our ideas among the young men; (6) we should carry on an active propaganda against the coming war and preach masses not to supply recruits and other assistance to the Government; and (7) to look to your organisation and solidarity of rank and file.”⁵⁶

Thus, in the ‘Political Resolution’ adopted at the AIWPP Conference, the old task of working within the Congress was abandoned. WPPs members were instructed to remain in the INC for the moment, but only for the purpose of ‘exposing its reactionary leadership’.⁵⁷

The Executive Council of Communist International in its message of greeting to the AIWPP Conference, called upon the conference to ‘discuss the question of separating the workers’ organisation from the peasants’ organisations.’⁵⁸ For the weaknesses of the Party no one was to be blamed, except the historical conditions in which the workers’ and peasants’ movement, as a disguise for CPI, developed and disappeared. D.N. Dhanagre observed, “Since force was superior to logic, CPI and WPP, being under constant surveillance and

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 364

⁵⁷ ‘Political Resolution’ of the AIWPP Conference, Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. III C, p. 712: the All-India Workers’ and Peasants’ Party congress passed a resolution calling for a struggle for the complete independence of India. It also said that for the success of the struggle it was necessary to develop working class leadership and called upon workers under the influence of the Communists to increase their activity among the peasants and the youth. B.T. Ranadive, ‘The Role Played by Communists in the Freedom Struggle of India’, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 12, No. 9, September 1984, pp. 12-13

⁵⁸ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. III C, p. 764

repression, were compelled to resort to the politics of survival in which ideological issues and inconsistency in programme tended to be compromised, if not sacrificed, first.”⁵⁹

Finally in March 1929 the Government arrested 31 CPI and WPP leaders. Which completely left CPI and WPP important leaders out of the work and they were put behind the bar in the famous Meerut Conspiracy Case.

III.2. The Meerut Conspiracy Case 1929-33

The Meerut Conspiracy Case marked a significant landmark in the history of India's freedom struggle. It was instituted at a time when the entire world capitalism was passing through the Economic Crisis, and the newly born socialist state of Soviet Russia was registering significant advances. The British attacked the leadership of the rising working class, peasant and revolutionary movements (called the terrorist movement) by launching the Meerut Conspiracy Case (directed against the rising communist movement).

The year 1928 witnessed a much greater increase in the strength and influence of the Communist Party of India.⁶⁰ It was towards the end of 1928 that

⁵⁹ D. N Dhanagre, *Peasant movements in India, 1920-1950*, Delhi, 1983, pp. 136-37

⁶⁰ It was towards the end of 1928 that the Communists had established their predominant position in the Trade Unions by organising the Bombay Cotton Mill Workers in the form the Girmi Kamgar Union, and the workers of the Girmi Indian Peninsular Railway in the powerful G.I.P Railway Men's Union. Similarly G.I.P. Railway Men's Union was also in the hands of orthodox Communists. Home Department Poll, F.No. 95/1930, p. 84. (Cf. Arvind Kumar Sharma, 'The Critical Years of the Indian Trade Union Movement: The Communists and the

the Communists had established their predominant position in the Trade Unions by organising the Bombay Cotton Mill Workers in the form the Girri Kamgar Union,⁶¹ and the workers of the Girni Indian Peninsular Railway in the powerful G.I.P Railwaymen's Union.⁶² Likewise the Communists had also established themselves in many other important industrial cities of the North.⁶³ The Royal Commission on Indian Labour has put it in the following words:

'For some time efforts had been made by the Communists in India and from beyond its borders to capture the Labour Movement. These met with their greatest success in Bombay in 1928'.⁶⁴

It is interesting to note that the formation of the Workers' and Peasants' Party in Bombay and Calcutta was followed by a wave of industrial strikes throughout 1928 and 1929⁶⁵, on the railroads, in ironworks and in the textile

Trade Unionism 1929-33', *Quarterly Review of Historical Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 1-4, 1984-85, p. 10)

⁶¹ The Girni Kamgar Union or the "Red" flag Union was a Communist body, ab initio. It was further developed and by the end of July, 1929, its membership was over 96,000.

⁶² Similarly G.I.P. Railway Men's Union was also in the hands of orthodox Communists (Home Department Poll, F.No. 95/1930, p. 84)

⁶³ N.P. Raman, *Political Involvement of India's Trade Unions, Bombay, 1967, p. 3*

⁶⁴ *Royal Commission on Indian Labour, Delhi, pp.318-20*

⁶⁵ In the year 1928 there had been much labour unrest in various parts of the country, of which Communist workers had been quick to take advantage. In particular they succeeded in exploiting the discontent felt by the cotton operatives in Bombay and the railway workers in Lillooah near Calcutta in such a way as to bring about a temporary paralysis of essential services and important industries; riots and attacks on the police were frequent, and every effort was made to stir up hatred not only against servants of the Crown but against

industry. 31 million working days were lost in 1928, through industrial disputes. Williamson writes that 'by the end of 1928, therefore, hardly a single public utility service or industry remained which had not been affected by the wave of Communism which swept the country during the year'.⁶⁶ The dislocation of the jute and cotton industries and the railway services naturally focused the attention of the press and public on the activities of the Workers' and Peasants' parties. It became evident that the theory of Communism was being translated into practice.⁶⁷ Trade unions nullified during this period.

Moreover, under the new guidelines, given by the Sixth Congress of the Communist International the Indian Communists had been asked to pursue an ultra-leftist line,⁶⁸ that is to build up revolutionary trade unions, and to jeopardize the reformist trade unions. They were directed to organise local strikes and then to

employers of labour, landlords, and the propertied classes generally. Agents sent from Britain had taken a prominent part in working up this situation, and had joined forces with Indian Communists recently released after serving sentences in connection with the Cawnpore Conspiracy Case of 1924, and with agitators in the rural areas of the United Provinces and Punjab. (*India in 1932-33; A report Prepared for Parliament [the] Government of India Act (govt & econ conditions)*, Delhi, 1934, pp. 48-51)

⁶⁶ H. Williamson, *India and Communism*, p. 98, observed, Transport, industrial and agricultural workers of every description, policemen, colliers and even scavengers were all subjected to, and many fell under, the baneful influence of this whirlwind propaganda campaign which promised them the sweets of revolution if they would but raise their hands to grasp them. Even youths of all classes were to be harnessed to the communist car of destruction and a network of study classes made its appearance alongside the shop and factory committees which the campaign had brought into being.

⁶⁷ *India in 1927-28; A report Prepared for Parliament by J. Coatman*, p. 342

⁶⁸ V.B. Karnik, *Indian Trade Unions: A Survey*, Bombay, 1966, pp. 64-65

develop them into general revolutionary struggle for the establishment of a Soviet type of Government.⁶⁹

It was in January 1929, that the Government's apprehensions about the growing communist movement and their influence among the working class became evident from the secret report of the Government. It reported that "the situation arising from the communist activities...is grave. The government policies toward Communists are deplorable and it will encourage the Communists and intensify the distrust of the Government's ability to maintain order which is already strongly felt in Bombay. In Calcutta also the Communists are strengthening their position and the very large gathering of labourers under communist auspices invaded Congress Pandal...was a striking demonstration of the degree to which the Communists were succeeding in getting hold of industrial labour."⁷⁰ It suggested for action that could be taken against the Communist Movement such as:-

- (a) Public Safety Bill to get rid of non-Indian Communists agents...interceptions and confiscation of remittances from abroad in support of Communist movement.
- (b) the Home Department successful prosecution of a comprehensive conspiracy case which would embrace all leading Communists
- (c) if emergency arises, for instance the outbreak of a general strike, which is apprehended in Bombay, the sub-committee consider it would be justifiable to use Regulation III for the purpose of detaining those persons whose activities are dangerous to the state

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ January 9, 1929, *Home (Poll)*, F. 18/XVI/1928

- (d) possibility of using section 144 of CPC for particular areas and of the Criminal Law Amendment Act Part II, which would enable dangerous associations to be declared unlawful
- (e) While the contemplated conspiracy case will test the resources of the law fully in regard to the specific communist activities now in progress. The Communist Bill should be made as comprehensible as possible.⁷¹

The British Government initiated a Committee headed by Sir Charles Fawcett. The immediate result of their new tactics was the arrest of the Communist-cum-Labour leaders in the famous Meerut Conspiracy case. The arrest of the well known communist leaders framed in the case meant removal of them from the field of trade union activity.⁷²

The colonial government also started other repressive measures to suppress the anti-imperialist upsurge accompanying the growth of the strike-struggles. The government introduced the Public Safety Bill in 1928 to curb Communist activities in India. It was rejected by the Legislative Assembly in 1929 but was later issued as a special ordinance. The Trade Disputes Act was passed to provide conciliation machinery, prohibit sympathetic strikes and limit the right to strike in public utility services. This was an attempt to anticipate coming developments which, under the leadership of the Communists, were turning towards a general strike in all industries to support the nationalist struggle. The Communist Party was popularizing the idea among the workers and its increased influence on trade

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² For detail see N.P. Raman, *Political Involvement of India's Trade Unions*, Bombay, 1967, pp. 70-73

unions, and more especially among railway unions, created concern in official circles.⁷³

The growing communist influence was perceived as a real danger to society in the eyes of the colonial Government and the mill owners.⁷⁴ The measures against Communists came on the 20th March, 1929 when, under instructions from the Government of India, were arrested thirty-one prominent labour leaders (from trade union, peasants and youth leaders, including all prominent Communist leaders) in different parts of India and were brought to Meerut for trial, and thus commenced the famous Meerut Conspiracy Case. The charges were framed as the result of the inquiry into a complaint (P 2485), filed on March 15, 1929, in the Court of the District Magistrate of Meerut Mr. R.A. Horton, Officer on Special Duty, under the Director, Intelligence Bureau, Home Department of India. It runs as follows:-

1. That there exists in Russia an organisation called the Communist International. The aim of this organisation is, by creation of armed revolution, to overthrow all the existing forms of Government throughout the world and to replace them by Soviet

⁷³ B.T. Ranadive, 'The Role Played by Communists in the Freedom Struggle of India', *Social Scientist*, Vol. 12, No. 9, September 1984, p. 15

⁷⁴ The situation was that the certain communist agitators had produced conditions of great unrest among the industrial population in Bombay city...In these circumstances the Government of India recognised that the situation in Bombay might at any time render it imperative to arrest these communist leaders. The situation has now completely changed. Thus the case was launched and all prominent communist agitators in Bombay have been arrested under the ordinary law and removed from Bombay for trial at Meerut. 'Letters to the Government of Bombay', *Home (Poll) Department, F. No. 18/XVI/1928*

Republics subordinate to, and controlled by the central Soviet administration in Moscow.

2. That the said Communist International carries on its work and propaganda through various committees, branches, and organisations, controlled by and subject to itself, e.g., the Executive Committee of the Communist International (E.C.C.I.), and various sub-committees of the same, including a sub-committee concerned with Eastern and Colonial affairs (Colonial Bureau); the Communist Party of Great Britain (C.P.G.B.), which is a section of the Communist International the Red *International of Labour Unions* (R.I.L.U.), the *Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat*, the League Against Imperialism, the Young Communist League (Y.C.L.) and various other bodies.
3. That the ultimate objective of the said Communist International is the complete paralysis and overthrow of existing Governments in every country (including India), by means of a general strike and armed uprising. It has outlined a programme or plan of campaign which should be followed for the achievement of this ultimate objective. Among the methods so ordained are:
 - a) The incitement of antagonism between Capital and Labour.
 - b) The creation of Workers' and Peasants' Parties, Youth Leagues, Unions, etc., ostensibly for the benefit of the members thereof, but in fact for the purpose of propaganda: the domination of such parties by Communists pledged to support the aims of the Communist International and the unification of such bodies under one control subservient to the Communist International.
 - c) The introduction of fractions or nuclei of such Communists with illegal objects as aforesaid into existing Trade Unions, Nationalist bodies and political and other organisations, with the object of capturing the same or obtaining their support in the interests of the Communist International.
 - d) The encouragement of strikes, hartals, and agitation.
 - e) Propaganda by speeches, literature, newspapers, and the celebration of anniversaries connected with the Russian Revolution, etc., etc.
 - f) The utilisation and encouragement of any movements hostile to the Government

4. That in the year 1921 the said Communist International determined to establish a branch organisation in British India, and the accused Sripad Amrit Dange, Shaukat Usmani and Muzaffar Ahmad entered into a conspiracy with certain other persons to establish such branch organisations with a view to deprive the King Emperor of his sovereignty of British India.
5. That thereafter various persons, including the accused Philip Spratt and Benjamin Francis Bradley were sent to India by the Communist International through the medium of one of its branches or organisations, and with the object of furthering the aims of the Communist International
6. That the accused named in this complaint reside at different centres throughout British India. They have conspired with each other, and with other persons known or unknown within or without British India, to deprive the King Emperor of the sovereignty of British India, and for such purpose to use the methods and carry out the programme and plan of campaign outlined and ordained by the Communist International, and in fact they used such methods and carried out such plan of campaign with the assistance of, and financial support from, the Communist International.
7. That the accused have met and conspired together as aforesaid at various places within and without British India, and amongst other at Meerut, and in pursuance of such conspiracy as aforesaid, the accused formed a Workers and Peasants' Party at Meerut and there held a Conference thereof.
8. That the above named accuseds have committed an offence under section 121A of the Indian Penal Code and within the jurisdiction of this Court. It is, therefore, prayed that the Court will enquire into the above named offence." ⁷⁵

The arrests were made under Section 121-A of the Indian Penal Code which declares: "Whoever within or without British India conspires to commit any

⁷⁵ N.N. Mitra (ed.), *The Annual Indian Register*, 1929, Vol. I, pp. 67-68; *Meerut Communist Conspiracy Case* (Sessions trial no. 2 of 1930), Vol. 1, 1932, pp. 3-4 Cf. C.H. Philips (ed.), *The Evolution of India and Pakistan 1858 to 1947: Select Documents*, London, 1962, pp. 258-59

of the offences punishable by Section 121 or to deprive the King of the sovereignty of British India or any part thereof, or conspires to overawe, by means of criminal force, the Government of India or any local Government shall be punished with transportation for life or any shorter term, or with imprisonment of either description which may extend to ten years".⁷⁶ The charges made on behalf of the Crown were supported by a vast mass of documentary evidence. For the purpose a comprehensive search operations were carried out simultaneously prior to the institution of the case. Communist books and papers, leaflets and other literature, letters couched in cryptic terms or written in invisible ink, plans of campaign, and codes and ciphers for use in communication with agencies in foreign lands, were amongst the documents seized and later exhibited before the courts.⁷⁷ On 29th April 1929, Haig wrote to Langford James mentioning Petrie's letter for an early decision. He further wrote that "(a) a judicial pronouncement is required as early as possible which will enable us to deal with the further manifestations of Communism and to prevent the Communist movement recovering from the blow which the arrest of the leaders has dealt it (b) From political point of view it would be able to convince the public in general as early as possible that Communism is not the kind of movement that should receive the

⁷⁶ Clemens Dutt, *Conspiracy against the King*, p. 19, Cf. L.P. Sinha, *The Left-Wing in India*, p. 225. For detail charge sheet see pp. 225-228

⁷⁷ H. Williamson, *India and Communism*, p. 101. See for details, pp. 101-106

sympathy of the Nationalists. The opposition to the Public Safety Bill has created artificial and false atmosphere, and we want to set that right as soon as possible.”⁷⁸

The choice of Meerut as the place for launching a conspiracy was curious. Only two accused hailed from Meerut. Officially choice of Meerut was justified on the ground that in 1928 a conference of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Party had taken place there. But the real motive behind the choice was that at Meerut there was no trial by jury; where as in Bombay and Calcutta (the two centres of the alleged conspiracy), in the face of frequent strikes, it was not considered prudent to choose the place for trial.⁷⁹

The Additional Sessions Judge, who then took up the hearing of the case on the 30th January 1930, the judgment being awarded by justice Yorke on the 16 January 1933⁸⁰. The judge observed, ‘there has been in existence in Russia an organisation known as the Communist International, which has its aim to bring about throughout the world a revolution or revolutions for the overthrowing of existing Governments and the establishment in their place of Soviet Republics similar to that established in Russia. This overthrow is expected and intended to be brought about by armed uprisings’. ‘Secondly it has been clearly established that

⁷⁸ To Langford James from Haig, 29 April, 1929, *Home (Poll)*, F.No 10/iv 29-Poll

⁷⁹ L.P. Sinha, *The Left-Wing in India*, p. 228; the two Workers’ and Peasants’ Party of United Provinces held their inaugural conferences one at Jhansi and the other at Meerut in October 1928. H. Williamson, *India and Communism*, p. 97

⁸⁰ H. Williamson, *India and Communism*, p. 103. Sentencing all but four of the thirty-one to varying terms of transportation and rigorous imprisonment

the Communist International works to that end through (1) various committees of its own, as for example the E.C.C.I. and its sub-committees, such as the Colonial Committee, (2) branches, such as the Communist Party of Great Britain, and (3) auxiliary organisations, as for example, the R.I.L.U., the National Minority Movement, the P.P.T.U.S, the League against Imperialism, the Young Communist League, the W.W.L.I. and other bodies. Some of these bodies are nominally independent, but in reality they are all controlled by the Communist International and are subject to it'.⁸¹

It further stated that 'the method which have been laid down as a programme of work for the revolution in India, include (a) incitement generally of antagonism between Capital and Labour; (b) the creation of Workers' and Peasants' Parties, Youth Leagues, etc., but mainly in only for the purpose of propaganda; such parties to be organised and run by Communists; (c) in the case of existing Trade Unions, political bodies and their capture in the Communist interest by the introduction of fractions consisting of Communists; (d) encouragement of strikes, hartals and similar demonstrations; (e) propaganda by speeches, newspapers, articles, leaflets, celebration of anniversaries and 'days': (f)

⁸¹ Delivered by R.L. Yorke, Additional Sessions Judge, *Meerut Communist Conspiracy Case* (Sessions trial no. 2 of 1930), Vol. 1, 1932, pp. 312-13, Cf. C.H. Philips (ed.), *The Evolution of India and Pakistan 1858 to 1947: Select Documents*, pp. 260-62

mutilation of any other movements hostile to Government, such as Bardoli, Independence League etc.’⁸²

It was the costliest Labour trials.⁸³ Like the Cawnpore case earlier Nationalist Press and Nationalist leaders in India regarded the arrested persons as nationalists and, therefore, deprecated the wholesale arrests. The Working Committee of the Indian National Congress even passed a resolution to the effect.⁸⁴ Mahatma Gandhi held that the arrests were made by a panicky government to strike terror.⁸⁵

In general, the Communists among them defended Marxism, proletarian internationalism and admitted that they were Communists and had been members of the CPI.⁸⁶

Muzaffar Ahmad, a convict in the case, proudly mentions that ‘the communist ideology came to be established in India from the time of Meerut

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ This important trial, which lasted for nearly four and a half years and cost Government over Rs. 18 lakhs, was concluded before the Sessions Court on 15th January 1933. *India in 1932-33: A report Prepared for Parliament [the] Government of India Act (govt & econ conditions)*, Delhi, 1934, pp. 48-51

⁸⁴ *Indian Annual Register*, 1929, p. 31. Even men like Jawaharlal Nehru and Kailash Nath Katju were on the Legal Committee which defended the accused.

⁸⁵ D.G. Tendulkar: See Mahatma, Vol. II, pp. 468-69; Gandhiji visited the Meerut jail to meet the Meerut Conspiracy Case prisoners (mostly Communists) and to tell them that the Congress had decided to complete independence as its goal. "Now you should have no complaint against me", Gandhiji had remarked, and asked for the support of the Meerut prisoners. M. Farooqi, *India's Freedom Struggle and the Communist Party of India*, 1974, New Delhi, p. 49

⁸⁶ L.P. Sinha, *The Left-Wing in India*, p. 236

Conspiracy Case”.⁸⁷ On the other side a high official of the Government of India had written of the judgment that “it is satisfactory that by this decision a conspiracy, fraught with the gravest dangers to the well-being of India, has been stopped at an early stage; it is even more important that it has been held that these activities, which might be regarded by some as harmless or even beneficial, have been revealed in their true light as an attempt to overthrow by revolutionary methods the Government established by law in India”.⁸⁸

Thus, we see that the case was concluded by saying that ‘moreover it became increasingly evident during 1933 that the agitators who carry out the policy of the Communist International and the Indian terrorists whose activities we will consider in a moment have nowadays a great deal ideologically in common, and, so far as they differ, do so over means rather than ends’.⁸⁹

III.3 Draft Platform of Action for India

The Meerut arrests created inexperienced communist leaders out of jail, while the prominent leaders were behind the bar and subsequent repression had

⁸⁷ Muzaffar Ahmad, *Communist Party of India (Years of Formation) 1921-1933*, Calcutta, 1959, p. 35; According to B.T. Ranadive, the Meerut case was ‘a tribute to the anti-imperialist political work’ done by the Communists among the Workers, peasants, and youth. B.T. Ranadive, ‘The Role Played by Communists in the Freedom Struggle in India’, in B.T. Ranadive and Jyoti Basu, *Role of Communists in the Struggle for Independence*. Fiftieth Anniversary Independence Series No. 2, CPI (M) Publications, New Delhi, n.d., p. 16

⁸⁸ H. Williamson, *India and Communism*, p. 105

⁸⁹ *India in 1932-33; A report Prepared for Parliament [the] Government of India Act (govt & econ conditions)*, Delhi, 1934, p. 51

posed a serious challenge before the communist movement in India.⁹⁰ At the same time the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) was launched by Gandhiji but it did not remain non-violent.⁹¹ Riots broke out in India's major cities and numerous confrontations were reported between local demonstrators and police. Two of the most serious threats to British authority occurred in Bombay Presidency and the North-West Frontier. In May 1930, the Textile Workers of Sholapur, a textile centre in Bombay, managed to establish their own regime for few days.⁹²

Even in 1930, when the Comintern was passing through the phase of left extremism, Kuusinen contested the claim that the time of armed uprising had arrived in India and warned against the too simple estimation of the Indian situation, since in India the Communist Party was very weak and hardly had any presence.⁹³

⁹⁰ In Bengal, Abdul Halim was the only leading figure that the British police did not put behind the bars. In Madras, Singaravelu came out of jail after 18 months in August 1930, when the Civil Disobedience Movement was in full swing in Bombay, S.V. Deshpande and B.T. Ranadive tried to keep the trade union front going. Harkishan Singh Surjeet et al.(eds.), *History of the Communist Movement in India: The Formative Years 1920-1933*, p. 192

⁹¹ Civil Disobedience Movement was started against the British government exploitative rule. For detail see, Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India*; Bipan Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence* and also papers of the period are full of every noting of the movement. We are not concern with CDM in detail

⁹² Walter T. Wallbank, *A Short History of India and Pakistan*. Cf., Pankaj Kumar, *Communist Movement in India*, New Delhi, 1989, p. 142

⁹³ Sobhanlal Dutta Gupta, *Comintern and the Destiny of Communism in India 1919-1943: Dialectics of Real and Possible History*, pp. 40-41

But the Comintern called Civil Disobedience Movement merely as an ‘oppositional manoeuvre’ forced on a reluctant Congress by the “pressure of the masses.”⁹⁴ In December 1930 there appeared, first in the *International Press Correspondence*, the official organ of the Communist International, and later in the *London Daily Worker* and the *Moscow Pravda*, a thesis on Indian Communism entitled “Draft Platform of Action of the Communist Party of India” while the Meerut trial was on Draft Platform of Action was a comprehensive document⁹⁵ and was based on the new orientation decided upon by the Sixth World Congress. It was later translated into Urdu by an Indian member of the Comintern staff in Moscow. A reprint made in Bombay was widely circulated at the Karachi Congress in March 1931.⁹⁶

The Draft Platform of Action basing itself on Marxism and Leninism, marked departure from the policy of bourgeois-feudal outlook and linked the success of anti-imperialist struggle with the agrarian revolution and the abolition of all social inequalities. In a forthright manner it declared war on all inherited inequalities and linked this struggle with the fight against imperialism, calling on

⁹⁴ *Inprecor*, XI, 33, 1929, pp. 589-95, Cf. Pankaj Kumar, p. 143; M.R. Masani in his article, ‘The Communist Party in India’, *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 24, No. 1, March, 1951, p. 20, write that the Indian Communist Party stood apart from the Civil Disobedience movements of 1930-31 and 1932-34. They concentrated on the small urban working class. They indeed denounced them as bourgeois, reactionary and calculated to distract the Indian masses from the real struggle, presumably led by the Communists themselves.

⁹⁵ H. Williamson, *India and Communism*, p. 119; for full text see, ‘Draft Platform of Action of the Communist Party of India’, *International Press Correspondence*, 18 December 1930.

⁹⁶ L.P. Sinha, *The Left-Wing in India*, p. 245

all sections to join the battle for freedom. Never before did India see such a revolutionary document directly addressing the problems of all sections of Indian people, as well as the immediate needs of the revolutionary struggles to overthrow the British rule.⁹⁷

After vigorous denunciation of Gandhism and the Indian National Congress, this document advanced the following as the main tasks of the Indian Communist Party:-

1. "The Complete independence of India by the violent overthrow of British rule. The cancellation of all debts. The confiscation and nationalization of all British factories, banks, railways, sea and river transport, and plantation.
2. The establishment of a Soviet government. The realisation of the right of national minorities to self-determination including separation. The abolition of the Native States. The creation of an Indian Federal Workers' and Peasants' Soviet Republic.
3. The confiscation, without compensation of all lands, forests and other property of the landlords, ruling princess, churches, the British Government officials, and moneylenders, and the handing of them over for use by the toiling peasantry. The cancellation of slave agreements and all indebtedness of the peasantry to moneylenders and banks.

⁹⁷ Harkishan Singh Surjeet and Basu et al.(eds.), *History of the Communist Movement in India: The Formative Years 1920-1933*, p.199; B.T. Ranadive, 'The Role Played by Communists in the Freedom Struggle of India', *Social Scientist*, Vol. 12, No. 9, September 1984. p.)

4. The eight-hour working day and the radical improvement of conditions of labour. Increase in wages and State maintenance for the unemployed.⁹⁸

The Platform declared: "In order to destroy the slavery of Indian people and emancipate the working class and peasant from the poverty which is crushing them down, it is essential to win the independence of the country and to raise the banner of agrarian revolution which would smash the system of landlordism surviving from the middle ages and would cleanse the whole of the land from the medieval rubbish. An agrarian revolution against British capitalism and landlordism must be basis for revolutionary emancipation."⁹⁹

However, due to the serious sectarian understanding and the absence of a rousing call for joining the movement in the draft platform and because of its attitude towards the Congress leadership particularly its right wing- Communists in general more or less kept aloof from the movement.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ H. Williamson, *Indian and Communism*, pp. 119-20; , Jyoti Basu and others (eds.). *Documents of the Communist Movement of India*, Vol. III, 1929-38, pp. 75-91

⁹⁹ Harkishan Singh Surjeet et al.(eds.), *History of the Communist Movement in India. The Formative Years 1920-1933*, p. 200

¹⁰⁰ In Trade Union we see that there appeared two split within a period from 1929-31. The first split appeared in November-December 1929 at Nagpur and another when the communist of at all cost wanted to wrest control of the unions from the hands of the 'agents of the bourgeois' whether 'moderate' or nationalist culminating in a further split in the AITUC at the Calcutta session of July 1931. For detail study on these splits see, B.L. Mehta, *Trade Union Movement in India*, Delhi, 1991; the Girmi Kamgar Union, the mainstay of the Communist Party in Bombay, split into two groups, the reformist and communist, the former advocating support to the National Congress, the latter regarding it as inimical to the 'interests of the workers who were being deceived by the Congress. The second communist group was led by S.V.

B.T Ranadive made a self criticism of the Party 'Draft Platform of Action' argued that the Platform contained very mistaken and wrong notions about the role of the Indian bourgeoisie. This led to sectarian attitudes in 1930 which did great damage to the Party's image among the people, leading to a misunderstanding about its revolutionary outlook and programme. The Party, however, corrected these mistakes and did not repeat them when it adopted its programmatic document in 1934. The second error in of the Platform consisted in not providing for a transitional state from like the one based on the Constituent Assembly. It talked only of Soviet State. Notwithstanding these errors, the Communist Party was armed with a proper revolutionary understanding and programme for national liberation, which was based on the class realities of Indian societies.¹⁰¹

Thus, by the mid of 1932 the Indian communist movement was in serious trouble. There was little Communist activity outside of Bombay, Calcutta and Nagpur, and almost no coordination of efforts between these centres. The Meerut prisoners wrote several memoranda to the Comintern during this period complaining of the weakness of the Communist Party of India and suggesting the

Deshpande and B.T. Ranadive, who claimed to represent the 'Official' Communist Party. The Deshpande-Ranadive group organised the Young Workers' League in June 1930 before their expulsion from the Girni Kamgar Union. *Home (Poll.) File No. 7/20/1934 and K W. of 1934*, p. 2. Cf., B.B. Mishra, *The Indian Political Parties: An Historical Analysis of Political Behaviour upto 1947*, Delhi, 1976, p. 256

¹⁰¹ B.T. Ranadive, 'The Role Played by the Communists in the Freedom Struggle of India'. *Social Scientist*, Vol. 12, No. 9, September 1984, pp. 11-12

formation of a Provincial Central Committee, the adoption of a new constitution, and the establishment of a regular party apparatus on all-India basis.¹⁰²

Soon thereafter an article appeared in the *International Press Correspondence* which purported to be an "Open Letter" to the Communist Party of India from the Communist Party of China, Great Britain, and Germany. It criticised the Indian Communists along lines similar to the Meerut critiques and urged to form an effective underground Communist Party, while at the same time working through various legal organisations. Although the Communist Party of India was advised to continue its exposure of "left national reformist," the Party was warned that it would be "a great mistake to continue the practice of self isolation from...the mass trade unions which are under the influence of reformists."¹⁰³

¹⁰² H. Williamson, *Indian and Communism*, pp. 182-83

¹⁰³ *Inprecor*, XI, 1932, p. 347, Cf., Pankaj Kumar, p. 145; This letter made criticism of Communists' isolation from the mass movement. It says 'the general picture of the Communist movement is not satisfactory...it consists of a small number of weak groups. often isolated from the masses, disconnected with each other...now represents the main danger to the revolutionary proletarian movement.' It further noted that 'the biggest mistake made by Indian Communists consists of the fact that in reality they stood aside from the mass movement of the people against British imperialism...the self isolation of Communists from the anti-imperialist mass struggle as a movement alleged to be purely a Congress movement. has created confusion among the communist movement, 'The Parties Letter to the Indian Communists' An open Letter written by the Communist Party of China, Great Britain and Germany, May 1932, (Jyoti Basu and others (eds.), *Documents of the Communist Movement of India*, Vol. III, 1929-38, pp. 18-20)

Conrad Wood writes that the CPI failure in the trade union movement in 1929-32 is shown to have been basically a result not only of the Party's leftism in general but also of CPI antagonism to the national movement in particular. The party followed negative attitude to the Indian national movement as well as considered Congress as the bourgeois organisation and kept aloof from it.¹⁰⁴

But when the Meerut prisoners came out of jail in August 1933, and later formed their Provincial Central Committee in December that year, they faced a situation which was somewhat different. The political theses adopted by the Provisional Central Committee in December 1933 states that "the supremacy of British imperialism is the basis of the backwardness, poverty and endless suffering of our [Indian] people. Only by the merciless and violent destruction of the political and economic supremacy of the British Imperialist will the working class of India succeed in rising to their feet, achieving independence."¹⁰⁵ The strike figure, which had fallen shortly in 1932 after rising steadily during 1929-31, picked up again in 1933, so that the Government had to admit ruefully that though the Meerut leadership was in jail, Communist "menaces remains and intensified."

¹⁰⁴ Conrad Wood, 'The Impact of Ultra-Leftism on the Communist Party of India, 1928-36', *Journal of Indian History*, April 1973, Vol. LI, Part, S.N. 151, p. 350

¹⁰⁵ 'Draft Political Theses of the CPI adopted by the Provisional Central Committee in December', Jyoti Basu et al. (eds.), *Documents of the Communist Movement of India*, Vol. III, p. 143

III.4 Government's anti-Communists measures 1934-1937

The Communist movement started in India in the 1920s. The British government determined to suppress the burgeoning movement, came down heavily on the Communists, especially in the context of the Peshawar Case (Moscow conspiracy Case, 1922-23) and the Kanpur Conspiracy Case (1924). After the introduction of the Public Safety Bill (September 10, 1928), it hatched a conspiracy case against the Communists as is exemplified in the Meerut Conspiracy Case (1929-33) leading to the arrest of almost all the prominent Communists. The year 1933 opened a new chapter in the history of the Communist Movement; as it moved towards reorientation and reorganisation. This growing popularity of the Communist Party of India (CPI) alarmed the colonial authorities, which took several measures against Indian Communists.

The British government's hostility heightened in the wake of the communist perception that their movement was likely to develop and succeed as a strong anti-imperialist movement. Time and time again, Colonial authorities and officials expressed their anxiety against the Communists. Thus, for instance, the All-India Council of the European Association opined that 'Communism, in its revolutionary stage, makes use of every weapon to overthrow the 'Ordered government'. It further asserted that 'in Bengal the two movements i.e. the terrorist and communist, both actuated by a quasi-religious fervour sought to upset imperialist capitalist regimes.' Further 'at present time very considerable support would be forthcoming for legislation designed to meet the kindred menaces of

terrorism and communism'.¹⁰⁶ The General Secretary of the Association wrote to the Secretary of State for India, on 27 May, 1934, that the present conditions of unrest all over the world, coupled with an agrarian and industrial crisis in India, would inevitably strengthen the communist doctrines. He highlighted that 'the strikes in the last year in the Bombay Cotton Mills and of the Calcutta Stevedores Labour were aggravated by communist activities'. Further, he asked for the extension of the Criminal Law Amendment Act (1932) in order to enable the government to combat communism.¹⁰⁷ M.G. Hallet recognizing the danger of 'communist menaces', to the European Association wrote that all India legislation may be needed to counter it.¹⁰⁸

To celebrate the anniversary of the Greater Indian Peninsula Railway strike of 1930, a meeting was held in Bombay on 4th February 1934 under the joint auspices of the Girni Kamgar Union, the Lal Bavta Girni Kamgar Union and the Young Workers League. A resolution supporting the All-India Textile Workers' Conference's decision to declare a general strike was passed. In reaction, the government arrested the strike leaders; i.e. V.B. Karnik, R.S. Nimbkar, and Lalji Pendse under Section 3 of the Bombay Special (Emergency) Powers Act of 1932. On 30th August, 1934 Dange, Maniben Kara and P.B.

¹⁰⁶ *Home Poll, 7/13/34*: All India Council of European Association, 15 March, 1934.

¹⁰⁷ *Home Poll, 7/11/34*: General Secretary of European Union to the Secretary of State, India (SOS), 27 May, 1934.

¹⁰⁸ *Home Poll, 7/11/34*: M.G. Hallett (S.O.S.) to General Secretary, European Association, 30 May, 1934.

Kanpule were arrested and charged under Section 17(1) of the Indian Trade Dispute Act 'for having declared, instigated others to take part in strike, which was illegal under Section 16 of the Act.'¹⁰⁹ Similarly Muhammad Yusuf was sentenced to fifteen days' imprisonment for causing obstruction to traffic while distributing leaflets'. He was the General Secretary of Mill Mazdur Union, Ahmadabad and a member of the CPI. Found in possession of twenty eight copies of the *Communist* and prosecuted under the Indian Press (Emergency) Powers Act of 1931, he was sentenced to 7½ months 'rigorous imprisonment'. R.D. Bhardwaj, a Bombay communist was sentenced to two years imprisonment under Section 124-A, IPC for delivering a speech at Ahmadabad. Similarly, S.G. Tambitkar was sentenced to three months' 'rigorous imprisonment', on 29 May, 1934, for delivering a speech at a meeting of mill strikers.¹¹⁰

The communist activities posed a severe threat to the government. On 20 July, 1934, the Secretary of State asked the Governor of Bombay to introduce an anti-Communist Bill at a time when memories of the strike were still fresh.¹¹¹ Finally, on 23rd July, the Government of India issued a notification declaring the Communist Party of India, its Committees and branches, as 'unlawful associations

¹⁰⁹ *Home Poll, 7/120/1934*: April 1934.

¹¹⁰ *Home Poll, (KW) 7/20/1937*: May 1934.

¹¹¹ *Home Poll, 7/2/1934*: Letter from the Secretary of State to His Excellency Government of Bombay, 20 July, 1934.

within the meaning of part 2 of Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908'.¹¹² The reason for this action were given that 'the Meerut Conspiracy case had proved that the Communist Party of India was a revolutionary party with the avowed object of overthrowing the existing order of society and bringing about India's independence by means of violent revolution, seeking to secure this object by mass revolutionary action, strikes, demonstrations etc. culminating in general strikes and armed insurrections.'¹¹³ This was in light of the Communist Party emerging on an altogether new and ambitious scale, and its efforts to secure control over workers organisations in various parts of India. Consequently, the Central government recognized the necessity to declare the CPI and its subsidiary organisations as 'unlawful'.¹¹⁴ The result was inevitable. The government ban

¹¹² *Indian Annual Register (IAR) 1934*, Vol. II, New Delhi, 1990, p.27. . The reason for the ban was that the 'association and its branches had for their object interfered with the administration of law and constituted a danger to public peace'; Subodh Roy, ed. *Communism in India, Unpublished Documents 1935-1945*, Calcutta, 1972, p. 89

¹¹³ Subodh Roy (ed.), *Communism in India, Unpublished Documents 1935-1945*, pp. 89-90. The Central Government's intention was to give a lead in declaring a war on Communism in India root and branch and to show to the country at large that there was no intention of temporizing with the forces of communism in India. It was recognised at the time that, apart from the psychological effect, the ban would act as deterrent by obstructing and impeding Communist activity in India in forcing the movement (if it continued) underground, and thereby preventing it from developing into the open mass revolutionary movement which Communism in its later stages aims to become in order to succeed.

¹¹⁴ *Home Poll, 7/5/39*.

achieved its purpose; it was able to prevent communism from developing into an organised movement all over India.

Yet, the Communists were not disheartened. Not surprisingly, the Bombay Provincial Branch of the CPI issued a leaflet urging the people to “Unite under the Banner of the Communist Party”, despite the government’s proclamation of the ban. It further maintained that the Communist Party ‘Strenuously opposes the naked dance of the Czarist rule started by the British imperialists’. It highlighted the colonial government’s policy of crushing all labour organisations functioning on communist lines. ‘This policy of government had been fully supported by the capitalists, zamindars, and sawkars of India’, it added. Further, the chief problem in India was to overthrow imperialism and to establish the workers’ and peasants’ rule’.¹¹⁵

In Punjab, the “Kirti” group was recognised as the Indian counterpart of the Ghadr organisation in America. Inspired by communist beliefs, over 50 Kirti Sikh Communists had undergone expert training in Moscow as representatives of the Ghadr Party.¹¹⁶ The Punjab Government, on 10th September 1934, declared five associations as unlawful under Section 16(1) of the Criminal Law Amendment Act

¹¹⁵ Translation of a Marathi Leaflet issued by the Bombay Provincial Branch of the CPI, *Home Poll*, 7/14/34

¹¹⁶ *Home Poll*, 216/1940

of 1908.¹¹⁷ Under the same provision, the Bombay government declared ten organisations as unlawful.¹¹⁸

A conference of the Police held in November 1934, which established that the notification under the Criminal Law Amendment Act had some immediate effect in checking the movement. Yet in Punjab, the movement was agrarian in nature and prompt internment of prominent organisers had actually contributed to its great success. However, similar colonial control in Madras had checked the development of the movement. The conference thus, recommended ‘the passage of draft revolutionary movement Bill as essential if communism was to be checked.’¹¹⁹

The government introduced another measure to combat communism, i.e. through propaganda material. For instance, the U.P. Publicity Department issued a pamphlet entitled “Communist Likes and Dislikes” in which Jawaharlal Nehru was projected as the high priest of communism in India and as having no faith in religion.¹²⁰ Likewise, “The Communist Solar System”¹²¹ and revision and

¹¹⁷ On these associations see, *Home Poll (K.W.)*, 7/20/1934: Letter of Government of Punjab to Under Secretary of State for India, London, 17th September, 1934.

¹¹⁸ On these associations see *Home Poll. (K.W.)* 7/20/1934 Letters from Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 24 September, 1934.

¹¹⁹ *Home Poll*, 7/25/34: Extract from Para 18 from the report of the Conference of Police, 14 December, 1934.

¹²⁰ *Home Poll*, 7/13/1934.

¹²¹ *Home Poll*, 4/1/1934

reprinting of “India and Communism”¹²² were circulated. As a deliberate attempt to prevent the extremist labour leaders and Communists from intermeddling in the affairs of the textile industry of Bombay city, Bombay Trade Disputes Conciliation Bill was submitted to the Bombay Legislative Council on 14th August, 1934.¹²³

In Calcutta, thirteenth working men’s organisations (according to Colonial administration had interference with the administration of the law and with the maintenance of law and order and constitute a danger to the public), directly or indirectly, affiliated with the Communist Party were banned in 1935 under Section 16(1) of the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908. These organisations were as follows:- (1) The Calcutta Communist Party, (2) The Calcutta Port and Dock Workers’ Union, (3) The Workers’ and Peasants’ Party (Bengal Branch), (4) The Calcutta Committee of the CPI, (5) Kirti Dal, Bengal, (6) The Workers’ Party of India, (7) The Indian Proletarian Revolutionary Party, (8) The Bengal Jute Workers Union, (9) The Bengal Match Factory Workers’ Union, (10) The City Motor and Transport Workers’ Union, (11) The River Steam Navigation and India General Navigation and Railway Companies Workers Union.,(12) The Youth League, Bengal, and (13) The Chhatra Juba Samsad.¹²⁴

¹²² *Home Poll*, 1-7/21/34

¹²³ Dick Kooiman, *Bombay Textile Labour, Managers, Trade Unionists and Officials 1918-1939*, Delhi, 1989, pp.90-92

¹²⁴ *Home Poll*, 7/20/37: ‘Notification by the Government of Bengal, Political Department, No.1110-P.S., Calcutta, 1 March, 1935. Where as the Governor-General

After these organisations were declared as 'unlawful', their offices were raided and searched. The police seized a large quantity of 'objectionable' literature. About twenty men, including Bankim Mookerji, Somnath Lahiri, K.C. Mitter, Phani Dutt, Gopen Chakravarty and Dharambir Singh, were interrogated.¹²⁵ In Punjab, during the course of three years (1933-55) eight Moscow trained members of the Ghadr Party were intercepted and interrogated by the police. Till 1935, the police identified twenty to forty trained Communists who had returned to India and were working in different places.¹²⁶ Similarly, S.S. Mirajkar, who had left India in March 1935, to attend the Third International at Moscow was arrested and sent back to India from Singapore.¹²⁷

The British government was given a memorandum by the Central Publication Branch, Delhi for dealing with; (I) the suppression of communist agitation in India, (II) restricting the entry of Communists into India. Though there

in Council is of opinion that the associations specified in the schedule hereto appended have for their object interference with the administration of the law and with the maintenance of law and order and constitute a danger to the public peace.

Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by Sub-Section (1) of Section 16 of the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908 (XIV of 1908), the Governor in Council is pleased to declare the said associations to be unlawful associations within the meaning of Part II of the said Act'.

¹²⁵ *Home Poll, 24/15/35; Statesman, Delhi, 8 March 1935.*

¹²⁶ Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab*, p.109 (The number of the Ghadr Party students in Moscow in 1935 was 60, according to Williamson. See his *India and Communism*, p.270).

¹²⁷ *Home Poll, 44/32/1942*

was a special enactment for dealing with 'Communism' in India, following provisions of the general laws were enforced in times of emergency:

1. Section 121A and 124 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)
2. The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908.
3. The Regulation III of 1818,
4. The Foreigners Act, 1864,
5. Provisions for detention under certain provincial enactment, e.g. Madras and Bombay Regulation, the Bombay Special (Emergency) Powers Act, 1932. In addition, the entry of Communists and other 'undesirable persons' into India, was controlled by the Passport Act.¹²⁸

On 17th October 1935, Bombay Special (Emergency) Powers Bill was extended, in view of its expiry on December 15, 1935. Sir Robert Bell, Home Member, maintained that the object of the Bill was to deal effectively with communism and terrorism. More so, communism posed the greatest danger to the British as it was steadily growing and 'taking a firm footing in large industrial cities exploiting the grievances of industrial workers'.¹²⁹ In a similar vein, the Punjab Criminal Law Amendment Bill was passed by the council.¹³⁰

Despite the ban on the Communist Party, the government remained highly suspicious and insecure. Thus, on 8 January 1936, the Bombay Police carried out

¹²⁸ Memorandum from the Central Publication Branch, Delhi, No. s.p. 62357. 12 March 1935, *Home Poll*, 7/3/35

¹²⁹ *Indian Annual Register*, 1935, Vol.II, p.29.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.197

house search and raids arresting four persons with the assistance of the Lahore Police, accusing them of carrying on Communist activities in the city and distributing communist literature.¹³¹ On 5th February 1936, the CID made investigations in Lucknow, with the help of the police. Similar probe were conducted in Allahabad.¹³² On 12 May 1936, twenty one houses in Lahore and six in Amritsar were raided, but nothing ‘incriminating’ was found.¹³³ In Calcutta the shop of “Messrs Books of the World” was inspected and books were recovered.¹³⁴ Communist literature was found in Ajay Kumar Ghosh’s house. A case was registered against him under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, but he evaded arrest.¹³⁵ The headquarters of the CPI was also raided and the papers seized demonstrated a close connection between the CPI and the Comintern.¹³⁶

This was not all. The Jail guards and officers even found Communists activities in the Deoli Detention jail, especially the communist meeting that was being organised. They got hold of the placards bearing the words “workers of the world unite.” They found that the ‘organisation though not effective was in the process of formation’; and hence they took steps to prevent the growth of this

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 1936, Vol.1, p.4

¹³² *Ibid*, p.6

¹³³ *Ibid*, Vol.II, p.186

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, p.187

¹³⁵ *Home Poll*, 44/32/43

¹³⁶ *Home Poll*, 7/6/36.

organisation by prohibiting inter-camp entry and restricting the time allotted for playing in the field.¹³⁷

Reviewing the 'terrorist situation' in India during 1936, the official report highlighted that the 'terrorist leaders' had, in fact, accepted some form of communist creed, as the communist programme included not only violent mass revolutions but also the desire to obtain the assistance of peasants and workers as their allies. It was difficult to differentiate between the terrorists and Communists as the former's literature was full of 'hackneyed communist phrases'. In Bengal and the United Provinces the chief characteristic of 'terrorism' during 1936 was a continued shift of the so-called terrorists towards communism. One time terrorists came to form communist organisations in Kanpur, Lucknow, Allahabad, Benaras, Meerut and Jhansi. Even in Delhi communism intermixed with terrorism,¹³⁸ and the government kept a vigilant eye on them.

The C.I.D. reports on Police Administration in Punjab (1936) establish that the ban on the main communist organisation had in fact, failed to check the growth and spread of communist doctrines. The underground activities of the communist agents, however, continued unabated. The Punjab Criminal Law Amendment Act proved effective in combating these activities. The report appreciated and lauded the capture of Gurumukh Singh, a convict in the 1914-15 conspiracy cases. The

¹³⁷ *Home Poll, 43/37/36*: Review of the Terrorist Situation in India during the year 1936.

¹³⁸ *Home Poll, 43/37/36*

police continually monitored and controlled the 'subversive activities of potential terrorists and active Communists'.¹³⁹

The Director of the Intelligence Bureau dispatched letters to the local government asking them to proscribe the All India Press Workers Federation, a communist organisation and other branches under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908 and to keep strict vigilance over the activity of the Federation.¹⁴⁰ The police, in its confidential report, supported the proposal for declaring this organisation and its allied bodies as unlawful; especially as the activities of the union and the federations were indistinguishable from those of the Communist Party. After all, they actively participated in the observances of "May Day", "Russian Revolution Day", Lenin Day", Paris Commune Day", etc. The guiding principle of the federation was to organise the press workers on the basis of "class-consciousness" to fight the capitalist and imperialist offensive.¹⁴¹

The formation of the Progressive Writers' Association (1936), heightened the administrative anxieties, in the light of 'its avowed purpose of spreading communistic ideas'. Thus, its activities were seriously monitored and carefully reported by colonial officials.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ *Home Poll, 113/1937*: Extract from Report on Police Administration in the Punjab for the year 1936.

¹⁴⁰ *Home Poll, 7/5/36*: Director of Intelligence Bureau to all local Government

¹⁴¹ *Home Poll, 7/5/36*: Head Police Office, Confidential, 12 June, 1936.

¹⁴² *Home Poll, 7/9/1936*

On the eve of the Faizpur session of the Congress, in December 1936, International Communism called upon the Indian Communists to assist and support the Indian National Congress's movement for liberation.¹⁴³ It held that the CPI was playing a major role in moulding and organising the workers, peasants and middle classes against imperialism. It laid emphasis on the unity of all the anti-imperialist forces.¹⁴⁴ In early 1937, the Home Department in India declared the Communist Party of India as a section of the Communist International and as being supported and guided by the Comintern. It further maintained that the 'menace of Communism in India must be judged on these, as well as on purely internal considerations.'¹⁴⁵

The British government's hostility continued thereafter. On June 12, 1937, for instance, twelve men were charged with conspiracy for having assisted the operations of the CPI in Calcutta.¹⁴⁶ Likewise, in the same year a number of houses were searched at Kanpur soon after the celebration of "May Day", and communist literature was found.¹⁴⁷ In another instance, two students of Allahabad University were arrested for their links with the 'banned Communist Party' on

¹⁴³ Harry Pollit, R. Palme Dutt, and Ben Bradley, 'The United National Front', *Inprecor*, Vol.16, No.50, 7 November, 1936, Cf. Shashi Bairathi, *Communism and Nationalism in India. A Study in Inter-Relationship 1919-1947*. Delhi, 1987, p.51.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Home Poll*, 7/7/1937

¹⁴⁶ *Indian Annual Register*, 1937, Vol.I, p.15

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.231

14th June 1937.¹⁴⁸ And this was not all. The Punjab government did not issue a passport to M.A. Majid, convicted and sentenced in the Meerut Conspiracy Case, to go to Australia.¹⁴⁹

In a similar vein, the Bombay government found Chaman Lal to be in possession of 'prohibited books banned under the General Communist and another notifications', after his arrival in Bombay on November 1, 1937, by the S.S. "Conte Biancamano."¹⁵⁰ The Chief Secretary wrote to the Madras government for the confiscation of literature under the general communist notification; as the existing notification was not adequate for checking 'the continuous, underground and subversive communist literature'. In addition, section 4(1) of the Indian Press (Emergency) Powers Act, 1931 was not effective enough to deal with the communist propaganda which had acquired an international character. So strict controls were employed to scrutinize and monitor the list of communist publications and dispatches.¹⁵¹

Despite the CPI and its affiliated organisations being declared unlawful in 1934, the Communist movement did not die down. Neither did it lose its momentum. In fact, in many ways, it strengthened itself against all odds. And yet its mode of operation and strategy underwent some transformation, as it allied

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.232

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.233

¹⁵⁰ *Home Poll*, 41/27/37

¹⁵¹ *Home Poll*, 37/12/37: Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras, 27 November, 1937.

itself strongly with the Congress Socialist Party, the Indian National Congress and other mainstream Left parties, in their never ending struggle against imperialism. And the communist influence had markedly increased in Bengal revolutionaries, workers, peasants, students and youth.

The British government's efforts to crush them did not diminish their commitment and conviction to socialism, anti-imperialism and communism. In fact, the British repression hardened their resolve to oppose imperialism and capitalism, and sharpened their commitment to the idea and vision of an independent and socialist India. This reality was not lost out to a colonial official, M.G. Hallet, who wrote that "as for M.N. Roy, every little act of a real Communist is a blow to Imperialism, so too, I suppose it right be said that every little act of a real Imperialist is a blow at Communism."¹⁵²

III.4. United Front

The later half of the 1930s witnessed sharp changes in the international situation, and following them, the situation in India changed as well. In fact until 1933 the communist movement was virtually deprived of an all India Centre. In 1933, a new Central Committee was elected which took over the leadership of the Party on a national plane. The Party also joined the Comintern in 1933.¹⁵³ It was during this phase which marked the unification of the anti-fascist forces all over

¹⁵² *Home Poll, 7/6/1936.*

¹⁵³ Harkishan Singh Surjeet, 'Importance of Dutt Bradley Document', *The Marxist*, Volume: 13, No. 01, Jan-March 1996

the world for which the call was given by the Seventh Congress of the Comintern met in July-August 1935 at Moscow. Recognizing the emergence of fascism as a worldwide phenomenon of extreme danger, especially after Hitler's rise to power in Germany in 1933, G. Dimitrov, in his report to the Seventh Congress to the Communist International (1935), called for an extensive, "people's united front" in the struggle against fascism, which was to include Social Democrats and other anti-fascist forces.¹⁵⁴ In the course of report, Dimitrov said: "In India the Communists have to support, extend and participate in all anti-imperialist mass activities, not excluding those which are under national reformist leadership. While maintaining their political and organisational independence, they must carry an active work inside the organisations which take part in the INC, facilitating the crystallization of a national revolutionary wing among them, for the purpose of the Indian peoples against British Imperialism".¹⁵⁵ In October 1933 R.P. Dutt wrote to Pollitt to announce that the idea of bourgeois democracy as simply a sham and 'out of date'.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ For the full text of Dimitrov's report, see G. Adhikari (ed.), *From Peace Front to People's War*, Bombay, 1944, pp. 142-49; Jagannath Sarkar, A.B. Bardhan and N.E. Balaram (eds.), *India's Freedom Struggle: Several Streams*, New Delhi, 1986, pp. 207-08

¹⁵⁵ G. Adhikari (ed.), *From Peace Front to People's War*, Bombay, 1944, p. 68. Cf. Jagannath Sarkar, A.B. Bardhan and N.E. Balaram (eds.), *India's Freedom Struggle: Several Streams*, New Delhi, 1986, pp. 207-08

¹⁵⁶ Quoted in John Callaghan, 'Rajani Palme Dutt, British communism, and the Communist Party of India', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 62

The report on India was made by a Chinese Communist Wang Ming, who in his report on the colonial countries¹⁵⁷ especially on India he criticised Indian Communists for 'left sectarianism', and for not participating in the 'demonstrations' organised by the National Congress, thus, isolating themselves from the masses in the national movement.¹⁵⁸ At the same time, asked Indian Communists not to "disregard work within the National Congress as a genuine part of the anti-imperialist united front. The specific implications were worked out in an important article "The Anti-Imperialist People's Front in India" written by Rajni Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley, popularly known as the Dutt-Bradley thesis (February, 1936). Both of them were leaders of the Communist Party of Great Britain. In this document, while giving an analysis of the situation prevailing in India at that time, they also project the strategic alliance that would be required in the struggle against imperialism as well as the tactical approach that will have to be worked out in different stages. The role of the various classes in this struggle against imperialism and the varied forms to be adopted, the role of the working

¹⁵⁷ "Report on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonial Countries", presented on August 1, 1935, Wang Ming said: "...our comrades in India have suffered for long time from 'Left' sectarian errors; they did not participate in all the mass demonstrations organised by the National Congress or organisations affiliated with it. At the same time the Indian Communists did not possess sufficient forces independently to organise a powerful and mass anti-imperialist movement." He further added that "it was only recently that the All India Communist Party, which has already taken shape, began to rid itself of its sectarian errors and made the first step towards the creation of an anti-imperialist united front." M.R. Masani, 'The Communist Party in India', *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 24, No. 1, Mar., 1951, p. 21

¹⁵⁸ Quoted from L.P. Sinha, *The Left-Wing in India*, p. 419

class in the struggle as well as the necessity of its intervention enabling it to acquire the leadership of the struggle in the process, has been pointed out.¹⁵⁹

The theses contained the following major propositions: (1) the most broad-based unity was desirable on the basis of (a) “a line of consistent struggle against imperialism”, and (b) “struggle for the vital needs of the toiling masses”. (2) The Congress was “the principal existing mass organization of many diverse elements seeking national liberation”. (3) Several previous actions of the Congress leadership had been “disastrous” and “equivalent to surrender to imperialism”. (4) There was thus, need to criticize Congress leadership, but only with the purpose of assisting the Congress to play its role, and not to weaken the unity of the elements already in the Congress. (5) The Congress had the potentiality “by the further transformation of its organisation and programme” to “become the form of realization of the Anti-Imperialist People’s Front”. (6) “Mass organisations of workers and peasants”, of youth, etc., should be developed and their affiliation to the Congress striven for. (7) Democratization of the Congress (e.g., elected Working Committee) should be demanded. (8) A minimum programme to be presented to the Congress, based on “complete independence”, civil liberty (including right to strike), repeal of repressive laws, release of political prisoners.

¹⁵⁹ Harkishan Singh Surjeet, ‘Importance of Dutt Bradley Document’, *The Marxist*, Volume: 13, No. 01, Jan-March 1996; Communists in India had changed their strategy after the change in the tactics of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern. They no longer dismissed the Congress as a bourgeois agency of the imperialists. S.M. Ganguly, *Leftism in India: M.N. Roy and Indian Politics 1920-1948*, Calcutta, 1984, p. 165

protection of rights of workers (including 8 hour day), 50 per cent rent reduction for peasants and security from seizure of their lands by landlords and moneylenders. (9) The question of whether “Non-violence” should be a requisite dogma for the Congress should be raised, but the issue “should not be allowed to split the national front”. (10) There should be a consolidation of the left-wing comprising “Congress Socialists, Trade Unionists, Communists and Left Congressmen”, in which “the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) can play an especially important part”. (11) The Left Wing should try to have a number of its candidates run in the ensuing elections [under the Act of 1935], while preventing “a splitting of the National Front [votes] in the elections”. (12) The slogan of a Constituent Assembly to make free India’s own constitution was to be presented as a central slogan.¹⁶⁰

In accordance with the Dutt-Bradley theses, the CPI declared that the agitation was to be carried on both from inside and outside the Congress and emphasised a new concept of “collective affiliation”, which aimed at transforming the Congress into a people’s front.¹⁶¹ The theses accepted by the Indian Communists, began to bear fruit almost immediately.¹⁶² Already under the

¹⁶⁰ Quoted from Irfan Habib, ‘The Left and the National Movement’, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 27, Nos. 5-6, May-June 1998, pp. 15-16

¹⁶¹ S.M. Ganguly, *Leftism in India*, pp. 165-66

¹⁶² Bhagwan Josh’s criticism of the Communist policy following the Dutt-Bradley theses is characteristic. No success could arise out of “the policy of building a separate independent mass Communist Party and a united front simultaneously” (*The Indian Left: Critical*

influences of the Seventh Comintern Congress, the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) National Executive, meeting at Meerut in January 1936, had decided to withdraw the earlier formal ban on Communists' entry into the CSP, originally imposed in 1934, and allowed Communists to seek admission on an individual basis. Communists thereupon began to enter the CSP from April 1936 onwards; and this gave them effectual entry into the Congress as well.¹⁶³

The United Front of the left started working in a concerted manner from the Congress general session at Lucknow in April, 1936. Nehru spoke of socialism, of the need for "ending private property, except in a restricted sense", and of "the new civilization" represented by the resurgent Soviet Union.¹⁶⁴ Though the left-sponsored resolutions for affiliation of mass organisations, rejection of ministerial office after elections under the 1935 Act, and a proportionally elected Working Committee, was rejected, the votes in favour were respectable in number.¹⁶⁵ Simultaneously, the CSP, the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) and Progressive Writers' Association¹⁶⁶ were founded at the conference held in Lucknow about the

Appraisals, pp. 147-200). In other words suicide by the Communist Party to further the united front was requisite. Josh also ignores the success which the CPI obtained in 1936 and subsequent years, while pursuing the new "tactical line" of the united front.

¹⁶³ Quoted from Irfan Habib, 'The Left and the National Movement', p. 16

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 16-17

¹⁶⁵ For example, 225 members of the AICC voted for the rejection of the ministerial office, and 487 against. Irfan Habib, 'The Left and the National Movement', pp. 16-17

¹⁶⁶ The Intelligence report writes that "in India this growth of intellectual communism is shown by the Indian Progressive Writers' Association. Subodh Roy (ed.), *Communism in India: Unpublished Documents 1935-1945*, Calcutta, 1976, p. 84

same time. In both these organisations, the Communists rapidly became the main force, rallying peasants and writers behind the national movement, while also expanding their own ideological influence.¹⁶⁷ Besides this the Communists also decided to dissolve their Red TUC and affiliate all their unions to AITUC.¹⁶⁸

Through the United Front tactics it attempted to work in mass organisations and radicalise them. According to an official report "...the infiltration by the Communists into right-wing bodies and other progressive organisations within the Congress has since 1935 become a marked feature of the CPI. and the crystallization of a revolutionary wing within the anti-imperialist front forms the keynote of the present Communist attitude towards the Congress left wing."¹⁶⁹

When the Congress decided to participate in the Election based on the 1935 Act, the Communists despite their opposition to 'Slave Constitution' issued 'Draft Election Platform' for Communist candidates which were as follows:-

1. "For workers and peasants Soviet Republic
2. Repeal of all Anti-National, Anti-Peasant and Anti-Working class laws.

¹⁶⁷ Irfan Habib, p. 17; delegates of Kisan organisations at Lucknow on April 11 1936 at the same time of the Lucknow session of the INC; Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, Indulal Yagnik and N.G. Ranga joined hands with Communists like Bankim Mukherjee, Z.A. Ahmad, E.M.S. Namboodripad and Karyanand Sharma. Rakesh Gupta, *Bihar Peasantry and the Kisan Sabha*, New Delhi, 1982, p. 132; the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha ideological position moved from the Congress to the CSP and finally to the communist understanding. p. 128

¹⁶⁸ Madhu Limaye, *Communist Party: Fact and Fiction*, Hyderabad, 1951, p. 29

¹⁶⁹ 'Review of the Recent Communist Activities in India' compiled by the Intelligence Bureau. Government of India, (Home Political Department, F. No. 7/1937, in Subodh Roy (ed.). *Communism in India: Unpublished Documents 1935-1945*, p. 77)

3. Unconditional release of all political prisoners, state prisoners, internees and detenues.
4. Freedom of speech, press and association
5. Withdrawal of army of occupation from India, existing army and police to be replaced by arming the workers, peasants and all toilers.
6. Abolition of native states, property of the princes to be confiscated.
7. Repudiation of the working class and peasant indebtedness
8. Confiscation of the large estates. Land to the tillers of the soil.
9. Repudiation of Imperialist Debts.
10. Confiscation of British capital in India.
11. Nationalization of all key and large industries, plantations and banks.
12. Revolutionary fraternal support to the British working class in its struggle against British capitalism.
13. Active opposition to the Imperialist war
14. Active supports to all costs to the Soviet Union, the hope of the toilers of the world.”¹⁷⁰

The main purpose of the electoral activity of the CPI was to develop and build the mass movement, based on the partial demands of toiling masses. and for destruction of ‘slave constitution’. Imperialist terror was suppressing every sign of mass activity. The CPI would use the legal opportunities provided by the elections and endeavour to transform the election into a mass movement against imperialist.

¹⁷⁰ ‘Draft Election Platform’, *Communist*, July 1936, pp. 15-16, Cf. Jyoti Basu and others (eds.), *Documents of the Communist Movement of India*, Vol. III (1929-38), pp. 253-54

The CPI believed that an effective struggle against the 'slave constitution' must be based on the policy of united front and equally firmly insisted that it should be an anti-imperialist united front.¹⁷¹

The CPI emerged by 1937 as a force to reckon with. The statement made in 1937 by the Polit-Bureau of the CPI wrote that 'the United Front has already had a certain degree of success. The Unification of the GKU in Bombay followed by the unification of the both Trade Union Congress is playing an important role in the consolidation of the united front of the working class.'¹⁷² The demand for a Constituent Assembly was the main slogan of the CPI and it regarded it as a practical and important for all organisations who were possible participants in the United National Front.¹⁷³

The popularity of the left that followed was reflected by the expansion in the membership of the AIKS and rising tide of strike movement. By the time of its Congress at Camilla (Bengal) in May 1938, the membership of the AIKS had crossed half a million; by its Gaya congress in April 1939, it had reached 800,000.¹⁷⁴ This was not all, but the AIKS observed 20 March 1938 as the All India Day for demanding the legalization of the CPI and Swami Sahajanand issued

¹⁷¹ 'Communist Party and the Coming Election', *Communist*, Vol. I, No. 10, July 1936, in Jyoti Basu and others (eds.), *Documents of the Communist Movement of India*, Vol. III, pp. 258-59

¹⁷² 'For the United National Front', *Communist*, Vol I, No. 15, February 1937, Cf. Ibid. p.328; for detail programme see the CPI tasks entitled 'The Present Situation and Our Task', *Communist*, June 1937

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Irfan Habib, 'The Left and the National Movement', p. 17

the following statement for the legalization of the CPI. "I hasten to endorse wholeheartedly the appeal issued by Comrade Jaya Prakash Narayan (then General Secretary of the CSP) to observe 20 March as the All India Day for the legalization of the CPI in the name of civil liberties."¹⁷⁵ It is evident that by 1939 the CPI had come to occupy an influential position in the AIKS and gave it a radical orientation.

The thirties marked the height of growing influence of the socialist ideas over the national movement. The growth in the mass influence of the left found its reflection in the increasing strength of the left within the Congress, especially the AICC. The Congress election manifesto it prepared at the Faizpur Congress was based on the Karachi resolution and had a manifestly left orientation. By 1939 the Communists had as many as 20 seats in the AICC, communist influence was on the rise as well, with EMS Namboodripad and Sajjad Zaheer as joint secretaries of the CSP. The greatest triumph of the left was the re-election of Subhas Chandra Bose as Congress president early in 1939. However, this triumph was short-lived.¹⁷⁶ However, the communal question at this stage of the development of communist movement had not occupied the centre stage.

III.6 The Communist Party and the Communal Question

The peculiar communal problem in the country has always baffled the nationalists. As early as beginning of the 1920, M.N.Roy then a prominent leader

¹⁷⁵ Quoted in M. A. Rasul, *A History of the All India Kisan Sabha*, Calcutta, 1974, p. 21

¹⁷⁶ Irfan Habib, 'The Left and the National Movement', p. 17

of Communist Party of India had drawn attention to the problems of communal riots and its adverse impact on class struggle. He suggested that the only remedy to communal divisions was class unity. This meant the bringing together of all working people belonging to diverse castes and communities in the struggle against imperialism. According to him, class unity through struggle against the oppressing classes was the only solution to the communal problem¹⁷⁷ The Communists talked of masses, their common economic demands, end of exploitation etc., the unity between the Hindus and the Muslims, forged during Khilafat and non-cooperation days, showed increasing signs of cracks after the withdrawal of the movement and the squabbles that followed.¹⁷⁸

The communal problem had become a serious political issue in the last phase of the non-cooperation movement¹⁷⁹, when riots broke out in places like Multan and Malabar. Some important nationalist leaders including Madan Mohan Malviya and Lala Lajpat Rai joined the Hindu Mahasabha, while many Muslim leaders joined the Muslim League. These same leaders had stood shoulder to shoulder in the Non-Cooperation Movement just a couple of years ago. Issues such as the playing of music in front of mosques or the slaughter of cows became

¹⁷⁷ Jyoti Basu and others (eds.), *Documents of the Communist Movement of India*, Vol. I, 1917-28, Calcutta, 1987, pp. 14-16

¹⁷⁸ L.P. Sinha, *Left-Wing in India*, p 163

¹⁷⁹ Sukhbir Chaudhary, *Growth of Nationalism in India (1919-1929)*, Vol. II, New Delhi, 1973, p. 373. Old prejudices, grievance and bickering of communal politics began to appear in public life after the suspension of non-cooperation movement.

communally charged. According to official estimates, 112 communal riots broke out between 1922 and 1927, leaving 450 dead and more than 5,000 injured. Of these 112 riots, 21 took place in 1926 alone.¹⁸⁰

According to M.N.Roy, the upper classes of the both communities were trying to serve their own rights and privileges, whereas the masses of both communities were exploited by the upper classes of respective communities jointly. He added, "Hindu and Muslim workers sweat in the same factory and peasants toil on the land but all of them are robbed by the landlords, money-lenders and the agents of the imperialism".¹⁸¹

Roy further argued that setback suffered by the nationalist movement during the post Non-Cooperation Movement had given an impetus to the communal conflict. Therefore, he advised re-organization of the nationalist movement with a programme of militant mass action. He suggested that the masses should be mobilized under the banner of nationalism on the basis of immediate economic demands. Agitation on economic lines, according to him

¹⁸⁰ Namboodripad, *History of Indian Freedom Struggle*, p. 329, cf., Harkishan Singh Surjeet et al. (eds.), *History of the Communist Movement in India, The Formative Years 1920-1933*, pp. 96-98; later he suggested that the solution was the "total abolition of separate communal organisation" and placing the agitation among the masses more on a nationalist and "more upon economic struggle than upon religious fanaticism". S.M. Ganguly, *Leftism in India*, pp. 61-62

¹⁸¹ Jyoti Basu and others (eds.), *Documents of the Communist Movement of India, Vol. I*, pp. 332-333

would provide the safest guarantee against communal tensions.¹⁸² One of the main planks in the nationalist platform, he further suggested should be the protection for national and communal minorities.¹⁸³

The C.P.I. adopted several resolutions against communalism at its Kanpur Conference in 1925. It resolved that ‘no one who is a member of any communal organization in India shall be admitted as members of the Communist Party’.¹⁸⁴ In the resolution on aims and objects it was mentioned clearly that the party shall consist of Communists who would pledge themselves to work for the party’s objectives and that no one who was a member of a communal organization would be admitted as a member of this party.¹⁸⁵

The Communists were trying to win over the Muslim masses through different programmes. Their aim was to influence and if possible to recruit class conscious and politically aware Muslims in their ranks. They published newspapers in different languages in order to reach different religious communities including Muslims. In Punjab, the Communists brought out *Kirti* in Gurmukhi as well as in Urdu so as to be able to reach both Sikhs and Muslims.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² Ibid.,

¹⁸³ Ibid.,

¹⁸⁴ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. I, p. 666.; Irfan Habib, “The Left and the National Movement”, p. 10

¹⁸⁵ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. II, p. 668.

¹⁸⁶ Khizr Humayun Ansari, *The Emergence of Socialist Thought among North Indian Muslim (1917-47)*, Lahore, 1990, pp. 74-75. It is evident that during 1925 Hindu and Muslim religious organisations developed rapidly. Most prominent Hindu and Muslim nationalist

After the Kanpur conference, CPI's first open call to the Indian people was through its Manifesto on the 'Hindu-Muslim Problem'. Dated May 15, 1926, this manifesto, published jointly by Muzaffar Ahmad and J.P. Bagerhatta, placed an entirely new solution to the communal problem in India. The Manifesto pointed out: 'Have the Hindu and Mussalman masses nothing in common in India? Are both of them not suffering equally under the ruthless exploitation of the foreign bureaucracy? Are they not economically ruined by the foreign and Indian capitalists and landlords? The union can only be realized when they are told of their common grievances, so that they should be conscious of their common miserable plight. It may be difficult for bourgeois political philosophy to find a common ground to stand upon. The masses- the common workers and peasants- are, however, as a matter of fact already united by virtue of their common economic interests, only the consciousness of this union is interfered with by large doses of conflicting religious dogmas administered by interested parties. Religious propaganda is an indigenous method of exploitation by the able doctors of

leaders declared it to be their object especially to defend the interests of their co-religionists. In April 1926 Sir Abdur Rahim, a liberal Muslim leader in Bengal, formed a Bengal Muslim Party. In May 1926 the Khilafat Committee, enlarged its objects to embrace all the interests, temporal as well as spiritual of Mohammedans. In June the chief Hindu organisation, the Hindu Mahasabha countered by deciding where necessary for Hindu interests, to run its own candidates at the election. Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. III A, pp. 222-23

divinity. This they have to do in order to preserve feudal rights of the upper classes, without whose support they cannot live and prosper'.¹⁸⁷

The preaching behind every religion is that of obedience and faith and it created a tradition and lived by it. To-day the power of tradition is destroyed. Religion begets servility. You are taught to obey God, His apostles, obey parents, obey masters, obey your landlord, obey your king, and obey even those blessed souls, the rich people. A country where people have only learnt to obey could never demand its freedom and where liberty cannot be hoped for, power becomes the grand object of human desire and the passion for it is the most ardent and unscrupulous... [We] want to impress upon our countrymen with all the earnestness we are capable of to begin with a new phase of the movement with an economic programme reflecting the immediate demands of the workers and peasants- the proletariat of the country- and commence a struggle subordinating all religious and communal questions to the great politico-economic one.... The Communist Party of India, which stands for the economic emancipation of the people, to create a society having no bloodsuckers and wage slaves- a classless

¹⁸⁷ Government of Bengal, I.B. File No. 35/1926 (Sl. No. 2/26), cited in Roy Chaudhury (ed.), *Seed-Time of Communism*, pp. 166-73, Cf. Harkishan Singh Surjeet et al.(eds.). *History of the Communist Movement in India, The Formative Years 1920-1933*, pp. 96-97

society, is ready to join hands with you in your struggle against the ruthless exploitation of the present capitalist plutocracy.¹⁸⁸

The Manifesto emerged out the understanding contained in the Constitution of the CPI. Thus, as E.M.S. Namboodripad says: 'Right from the inception of the Communist Party as a movement, a new approach towards the Hindu-Muslim strife, as in the case of many other problems, appeared on the Indian political scene. As distinct from the bourgeois-petty bourgeois approach, this new, communist approach linked the socio-cultural problem Hindu-Muslim rift to the political problem of anti-imperialist struggle and to the economic and political problem of the fight between the exploited and exploiter'.¹⁸⁹

The Indian National movement suffered because it was based upon shaky foundations. The unity achieved in the wake of non-cooperation and Khilafat was an artificial one, being built on the unreliable foundation of religious sentimentalism. But a political movement, involving unity of the Hindu-Muslim masses, must be based on only upon their basic, common economic demands which alone could bring about a solid and durable national unity.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ Government of Bengal, I.B. File No. 35/1926 (Sl. No. 2/26), cited in Roy Chaudhury (ed.), *Seed-Time of Communism*, pp. 166-73, Cf. Harkishan Singh Surjeet et al.(eds). *History of the Communist Movement in India, The Formative Years 1920-1933*, pp. 96-98

¹⁸⁹ Namboodripad, *History of Indian Freedom Struggle*, p. 331, cf., Harkishan Singh Surjeet et al (eds.), *History of the Communist Movement in India: The Formative Years 1920-1933*, pp. 96-98

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 164; for different angle on Khilafat issue see, Moin Shakir, *Khilafat to Partition: A Survey of Major Political Trends among Indian Muslims during 1919-1947*, New Delhi, 1970

It ended with an appeal to the workers, the peasantry and the lower middle class elements to free themselves from religious and communal bias and work for economic emancipation. The battle for national freedom was to be fought by the masses and it must be their interests.¹⁹¹

In December, 1926 a Manifesto by the CPI addressed to the Indian National Congress on the occasion of its annual session at Gauhati, was published from London. The Manifesto took a disconcerting note of the national movement and the nationalist parties which were divorced from the masses. Both the National Congress and the Swaraj Party were deficient in this respect. The Manifesto found the national movement in a state of decomposition. The leadership of the Swaraj Party was predominantly bourgeois, and there was a contradiction between the leadership and its rank and file. Its programme and policy were always dictated by the capitalist and landowning classes. It maintained: "The Swaraj Party will not be able to become a Party of the people unless it breaks away completely from the bourgeoisie seeking compromise with imperialism."¹⁹²

Like the Manifesto of July, 1926, this Manifesto also addressed itself to the communal problem. It reiterated the earlier stand that the non-cooperation and Khilafat agitations quickened religious fanaticism at the expense of political

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² *A Manifesto to the All-India National Congress, Gauhati, 1926* by the CPI, Muzaffar Ahmad. *Myself and CPI*, pp. 492-510; L.P. Sinha, *The Left-Wing in India*, pp. 164-65

consciousness. The decomposition of the national movement gave impetus to communal conflict.

While the upper classes of both fought for rights and privileges, the masses of both the communities had their economic exploitation. Thus, there was no need to be discouraged by communal conflicts. It maintained that a party of the people would find solution to this problem by helping them to be the conscious of their economic interests, and by giving them a courageous lead against their common enemy. It admitted that this could not be done overnight but there was no other remedy of communalism.¹⁹³

When communal riot broke out in Calcutta in 1926, the Communists re-stated their non-sectarian position and explained the conflict as essentially a product of the class division within Indian society. A manifesto drafted most probably by M.N.Roy and Evelyn Roy, was circulated in Calcutta. It argued that communal strife was an expression of the competition between Muslim and Hindu privileged groups, of which the office holding intelligentsia was the spokesmen and slum dwellers in the cities, were the instruments.¹⁹⁴ It further added that 'in

¹⁹³ *A Manifesto to the All-India National Congress, Gauhati, 1926* by the CPI, cf. L. P. Sinha, *The Left-Wing in India*, pp. 165-66

¹⁹⁴ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. IIIA, p. 78; Khizr Humayun Ansari, *The Emergence of Socialist Thought among North Indian Muslim*, pp. 74-75; for a different understanding on the communal riots in Bengal see, Suranjan Das, *Communal Riots in Bengal 1905-1947*. New Delhi, 1991. Suranjan Das writes that both in terms of social geography and political developments Bengal occupied a crucial place in the evolution of communal politics in the sub-continent. By the turn of the twentieth century Bengal had one of the largest

spite of the fact that Hindu-Muslim unity was one of the planks of the nationalist programme, the bourgeois leaders have totally failed to solve the vexing problem.¹⁹⁵ In countryside, too, communalism was seen as serving the vested interests of Muslim and Hindu landlords. These communal divisions enabled the British rulers to play on the mutual fears and suspicions of the two communities, and thus successfully pursue their policy of 'divide and rule'. The solution to the problem, according to this manifesto, lay in class struggle.¹⁹⁶

The Communists denounced communal antagonism in their periodicals *Langal* and *Ganavani*. As a result, their popularity suffered temporarily but they continued to make fervent pleas for social harmony between the two communities.¹⁹⁷ So strong was their opposition to communal sentiments that the slightest concessions to communal feelings by a member of the party invited immediate expulsion.¹⁹⁸

In 1927, the Workers' and Peasants' Party (WPP) of Bombay issued a 'Mohurrum Manifesto' appealing against a possible communal clash between

concentrations of Muslims in India. Although economically more backward in comparison to their other co-religionists, the Bengal Muslims were among the first to be organised politically to voice their right as Muslims; Bengal had one of the worst records of Hindu-Muslim conflict; and it was the only state where the Muslim League managed to form relatively stable ministries in the two crucial decades preceding the end of the British Raj. also see, Ishwari Prasad, *Hindu-Muslim Problems*, Allahabad, 1974

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 75

¹⁹⁶ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. IIIB, pp 82-85

¹⁹⁷ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. IIIA, p. 25

¹⁹⁸ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. IIIA, p. 136

Hindus and Muslims. It was declared that the party was duty bound to call up on Indian masses to maintain peaceful and fraternal relations among themselves during the forthcoming Mohurrum festival. The working masses of both the Hindu and Muslim communities had nothing to gain by communal mobilization, which would only lead to the advantage of the exploiting masses. It was shameful and tragic that the Hindu and Muslim masses who were all exploited people would fight amongst themselves. It added that they must realize that the two communities together constitute a homogenous body and their suffering were common which resulted from serfdom and their social and political exploitation.¹⁹⁹

The 'Mohurrum Manifesto' declared "the WPP, the political vanguard of all exploited, considers its duty to advise the Indian masses not to participate in religious struggle and communal movement which the religious minded ambitious bourgeois politicians of Indian dream of and aspire to kindle on a countrywide scale. The communal movement will only create a disastrous division in the ranks of masses".²⁰⁰ The WPP firmly demanded the abolition of communalism.²⁰¹

The contents of a Central Committee meeting of C.P.I held in 1927 are equally revealing. It carry following items having a bearing on their policy with regard to communalism: (1) position of members of a Communist Party who were members of a communal organization or were carrying on communal work to be

¹⁹⁹ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. IIIA, pp. 174-76.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

considered, and (ii) statement on Hasrat Mohani's claim as being a Communist and communal leader at the same time.²⁰²

S.A.Dange presided over the meeting on 29th and 30th 1927. The Central Committee took firm action against members who were associated with any communal organization.²⁰³ This problem of 'simultaneity'²⁰⁴ and dual membership was characterized a 'splintered consciousness'.²⁰⁵ Since Hasrat Mohani was asked to quite the Muslim League. But he preferred to resign from the Communist Party. Similarly, S.D.Hasan who was working for a communal paper in Punjab was "dropped" from the party. K.N.Joglekar who was a member of the Brahmin Sabha was asked to resign from that position for the same reason.²⁰⁶ This was in fact, the

²⁰² Ibid, p. 136

²⁰³ Sukhbir Chaudhary, *Growth of Nationalism in India (1919-1929)*, p. 376. A number of Congressmen were members of Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League "communalist under his nationalist cloak".

²⁰⁴ Habib Manzer, 'Hasrat Mohani, Indian National Movement and Communist movement till his Disenfranchisement' - An Evaluation', in A.K.Sinha, (ed.) *Reading in History*, Delhi, 2003, p. 348

²⁰⁵ Shashi Joshi, 'Nehru and Emergence of the Left Block, 1927-29, in Bipan Chandra. (ed.) *The Indian Left: A Critical Appraisal*, Delhi, 1983, p. 85

²⁰⁶ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, vol. IIIB, p. 136; Shashi Joshi, *Struggle for Hegemony in India, 1920-47, The Colonial State, the Left and the National Movement*, Vol. I, 1920-34, New Delhi, 1922, p. 170; Muzaffar Ahmad, *CPI and Years of Formation*, p. 21. Hasrat Mohani had to leave our Party in 1927, when we did not approve of his joining the Muslim League. Our standpoint was fundamentally different from that of the Congress, and we know that the top leaders of the Congress participated in the Muslim League conference in Calcutta even as late as January 1928.; Harkishan Singh Surjeet et al (eds.), *History of the Communist Movement in India: The Formative Years 1920-1933*, p. 108. In Madras meeting: December

first occasion when a political party adopted such a resolute stand against communalism. On the other hand, it was only in 1938 that Congress banned its members from joining communal organisations.²⁰⁷

Subsequently, on 29th January 1928, the Workers and Peasants, Party of Bombay, then a platform of Communists, passed a resolution calling upon the whole nation not to be misled by motivated communal propaganda, and to realize that the interest of all the oppressed and exploited people did not clash. They appealed to people to sink, minor differences in the great task of obtaining freedom for all.²⁰⁸ Again around the same time (middle of January 1928) the Bombay Presidency Youth Conference, which had invited a sizeable number of

1927, Hasrat Mohani and S.D. Hasan were expelled from the Party for their association with communal outfits.

²⁰⁷ Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh (ed.), *Struggle for Hegemony in India 1920-1947: Culture, Community and Power*, Vol. III (1941-1947), New Delhi, 1994, p. 308. It was only in 1938 that the Congress barred its doors to members of the communal organisations. Both in Punjab and Bengal, many a Congress leader had no difficulty in championing the 'Hindu cause' in respect of jobs, constitutional discussions and communal riots. While a Muslim joined the Muslim communal organisations, only the very rabid Hindu communalist would join the Hindu Mahasabha or RSS in the 1930s; the ordinary Hindu patriot tended to remain in the Congress. Cf. Bipan Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India*, New Delhi, 1984, p. 191. The Working Committee proceedings (Wardha-11-16 December 1938) resolved that for the purpose of Article V (c) the following organisations are declared as communal organisations: Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League. Article V(c) reads: "No person who is a member of any elected Congress Committee of a communal organisation, the object or programme of which involves political activities which in the opinion of WCC, anti-national and in conflict with INC. *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. 2, 1938, p. 300

²⁰⁸ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. IIC, p. 184.

important communist or radical leaders in its meeting, passed a resolution on Hindu-Muslim unity and the abolition of communal electorates.²⁰⁹

In the same year on 27 October 1928, Jawaharlal Nehru in the meeting of First All India Socialist Youth Congress pointed out if the attention of the masses was directed to the economic facts which mattered, they would automatically turn away from communalism. Further, he stressed his belief that the various communities in India could remove this communal spirit by socialistic ideas.²¹⁰

Being fed up with the congress reformist politics and getting sick of growing communal strife in the post-non-cooperation phase during the twenties the revolutionary group, Punjab Naujawan Sabha, was formed by the workers of Amritsar in which all the different communities represented. Their primary objective was to shift the attention from ‘communal programme’ to economic issues concerning general masses. Their perception was that “communal programme” was the root cause of all communal clashes. Therefore, it should be shunned from public sphere.²¹¹

The criticism of Nehru Committee report on the principles of the Swaraj Constitution by the WPP Bengal and AITUC Sub-Committees had an identical approach on the communal problem. Both the documents (of WPP and AITUC) dealt in detail with the communal question and observed that a solution was

²⁰⁹ Joshi, *Struggle for Hegemony*, Vol. I, p. 188

²¹⁰ Sukhbir Chaudhary, *Growth of Nationalism in India (1919-1929)*, p. 407

²¹¹ Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, Vol. IIC, pp 291-292

possible through a joint struggle of the working class and other toiling people against imperialism, feudalism or any other forms of exploitation. All Parties Conference was held in Delhi on 12 February 1928 in which major participants were AITUC, WPP and CPI (Bombay) who represented the working class. A Subcommittee was formed to delve into the problem of communal question and the creation of province based on linguistic boundaries. Its report was to serve as the basis of the provisional draft from a left perspective of the principles of Swaraj Constitution.²¹²

The WPP of Bengal criticized Nehru report for giving excessive attention to the communal question. Their perception was that masses had no communal feelings and that such an unwanted discussion would only lead to creating communal consciousness among them.²¹³ Following the necessities to curb the communalism on December 21-24, 1928 at Calcutta Conference the All India Workers' and Peasants' Party adopted a provision in its constitution making it mandatory for "candidate" as well as full fledged members to avoid joining any communal organization as well as not to participating in any communal campaign.²¹⁴

²¹² Ibid, pp. 22-24.

²¹³ Ibid, pp 218-219

²¹⁴ Basu, (ed.), *Documents of the Communist Movement in India*, Vol. 4, p. 371; Harkishan Singh Surjeet et al (eds.), *History of the Communist Movement in India: The Formative Years 1920-1933*, p. 132

However, with the rise of an active left leaning youth cadre inside the congress, a large number of persons with a working class background were drawn into the movement. The communal tensions among workers were partly, a result of the recruitment pattern in the mills where the employer and the government had a tendency to play one section of the workers against another on narrow communal grounds.²¹⁵ This became explicitly clear during the 1929 communal riot of Bombay. But the Communist trade union leaders are known to have participated actively in pacifying that riot.²¹⁶ In the same context Gandhiji (July 1931) had suggested that the communal problem may be solved only by substituting it by a feeling for the nation in which the role of minorities is recognized.²¹⁷ This the advocacy for solution of the Communal problem, however, suffered a major set back when prominent ideologues of Communist Party were convicted in the Meerut Conspiracy Case (1929-33) to long terms of imprisonment.²¹⁸

The Progressive Writers Association (PWA) was then having a considerable influence among Urdu speaking groups came out in late thirties opposition against Muslim League. They asserted that the League was not a broad-based political organization but represented rural aristocrats and urban nawabs.

²¹⁵ Joshi, *Struggle for Hegemony*, Vol. I, pp 288-289

²¹⁶ Ibid

²¹⁷ Mahatma Gandhi, *Communal Unity*, Ahmadabad, 1949, pp. 157-59.

²¹⁸ Irfan Habib, op.cit., p. 11; P.K. Shukla, 'Imperialism War to Peoples War-Communist Strategy', 1939-42, *PHIC*, pp. 555-63

The League according to them was formed for safe guarding the narrow economic interest of these exploiting classes by fomenting communal prejudices. In this way, the revolutionary zeal of the masses was being deliberately diverted into inter- communal strife. The imperial policies 'divide and rule' were served very effectively by communal strife. According to PWA the task of the Muslim Left wing intellectuals among Muslims was to oppose the League. They were of the opinion that freedom could only be won on the basis of inter communal harmony.²¹⁹ The PWA also tried to resolve the long standing Hindi-Urdu language controversy, which had acquired communal overtones. The difference in script was artificial and the direct result of the divide and rule policy of the colonial rulers. To resolve this problem they suggested that Roman script should replace both the scripts.²²⁰

Jawaharlal Nehru had visualized the danger of communalism and its fascist implications for Indian society and future polity. He therefore initiated a program of Muslim Mass Contact to prevent the gullible from falling into the trap of Communal ideology.²²¹ K.M.Ashraf, a Communist was entrusted by the AICC to direct the Congress's Muslim Mass Contact Campaign to 'wean away Muslims

²¹⁹ Ansari, *The Emergence of Socialist Thought among North Indian Muslim*, pp. 222-23

²²⁰ Ibid

²²¹ Mushirul Hasan, 'The Muslim Mass Contact Campaign: An analysis of strategy of political mobilization', in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *India's Partition: Process, Strategy and Mobilization*, pp 133-159; R.C.Dutta, 'Towards Social Democracy: A New Orientation of the Congress 1928-36', Symposium on 'History of the Indian National Congress 1885-1947', Nehru Memorial Museum Library, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 51-52

from the fold of Muslim League'.²²² It was launched in 1937 with a radical political and economic plan.²²³ Nehru in his election speech at Ambala on 16 January 1937 lambasted those who talked in terms of Hindu rights and Muslim interests as "job hunters who were guided by self interest".²²⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru said, "We talk of approaching the Muslim masses. That is no new program for us although the stress may be new. It must be remembered that the Congress has always had large numbers of Muslims in its fold and the most eminent (National) leader of ours have been and are Muslims."²²⁵

The programme of the Muslim Mass Contact threatened the communal lobby amongst Muslims.²²⁶ Nehru could feel the left ward swing of the masses, which resulted on the one hand in thousands of Muslims joining Congress and on the other hand forced the League to adopt a radical anti-imperialist program. This had created a favorable situation for attracting of Muslim masses that were still under communal influence into active political struggle by organizing the joint struggles for the immediate demands of the Hindu and Muslim masses. They were

²²² Ansari, *The Emergence of Socialist Thought among North Indian Muslim*, pp. 222-23

²²³ Mushirul Hasan, 'The Muslim Mass Contact Campaign: An analysis of strategy of political mobilization', in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *India's Partition: Process, Strategy and Mobilization*. Delhi, 1994, pp 133-159.

²²⁴ S.A.I. Tirmizi (ed.), *The Paradox of Partition, 1937-47*, Vol.I, New Delhi, 1998. (Nehru Election Speech at Ambala)

²²⁵ K.K. Aziz, *Muslims under Congress Rule, 1937-39, A Documentary Record*, n.d., Vol.I, pp 110-114

²²⁶ *National Front*, 19 June 1938, Vol. I, No. 18, p. 6

of the view that 'communal unity' at the base would provide much broader base to work upon.²²⁷

The conference of the Congress Socialist Party held at Lahore in April 1938 identified the Communal disturbances as the handiwork of reactionaries and deliberated upon preventing such occurrences in future by upholding the religious, linguistic and cultural rights of the minorities in accordance with the promises made in the Congress manifesto prior to the elections. The Congress wanted identification of political and economic interests of all the different communities and thus drew them into the fold of the party providing it a broader social base. It suggested the creation of a Volunteer Corps for the maintenance of communal peace. It was hoped that there would be a mass movement involving all communities in the nation's anti-imperialist struggle.²²⁸

The Muslim League condemned the Muslim Mass Contact campaign and dubbed the Congress as a Hindu organization. It demanded withdrawal of 'Bande Mataram' as national anthem, statutory share for Muslims in government services, withdrawal of opposition to Communal Award in local bodies and recognition of the Congress and League as exclusively Hindu and Muslim organizations respectively.²²⁹ Thus, League wished to take away Muslims from the Congress

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid, 1 May 1938, No.11

²²⁹ For such utterances pertaining to the Congress Ministry (1937-1939) of Bihar see Papiya Ghosh, *Community and Nation: Essays on Identity and Politics in Eastern India*. Delhi, 2008, pp. 34-77

fold.²³⁰ The League was apparently feeling threatened. It tried in vain for example, to disrupt the strike of Kanpur workers. It tended to become a bargaining lever of mobilizing all sections of Muslims of the city. As a result, the ranks of League were increasingly filled by left wing young leaders. It was, however, anxious to check the growing influence of Communists and socialists among Muslims²³¹

On a country- wide scale, however, the League started gaining ground among the Muslim intelligentsia, as well as the urban poor. It was believed by them that the League was championing their sectional demands. Even Congress was prepared to concede all the reasonable communal demands made by the League, provided the League joined hands with the Congress for overthrowing imperialism.²³² Subhas Chandra Bose wrote that it's was necessary to stress the economic issues common to all which cut across communal divisions and barriers.²³³

²³⁰ Ibid, 12 June 1938, No. 17: According to United Press message of June 7, the League has made eleven demands. CPI organ *National Front* writes that 'the leaders of the League representing the upper classes of Muslims do want the pact... They want successfully to blackmail Congress. But already the broadening base of the League is coming into conflict with its reactionary top. All efforts of reactionaries to use the League to disrupt the glorious strike struggle of the Cawnpore workers failed... The leaders of the League want 'unity', unity for struggle not against imperialism but against the rising tide of kisan and working class movements, unity against Communists and Socialists, unity to share the ministries and jobs. They expect entering into such unity'.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid, 18 September 1938, No. 31

²³³ Ibid, 23 October 1938, No. 36

In 1937, a General Jute Workers Strike was called by trade unions. Soon the strike spread to Barrkappore and Hoogly areas. The leadership of the “Communists in this strike was firmly established. They organized meetings with workers every where. However, Suhrawardy, the labour minister in Fazl-ul-Haq’s government tried to exclude the labour organizations from mill areas by the use of section 144 of the Criminal Penal Code. This was sought to be justified by arguing that Muslim workers were not happy with the Hindu leadership, which naturally, whipped up communal feelings leading to attempts at organizing the workers on communal lines. In the Meghna North Mill, Muslim workers were attacked by the Hindu workers of the nearby Anglo-Indian Mill.²³⁴

On 16 November 1938, a clash broke out between Hindus and Muslims as Ramzan coincided with Durga Pujaa in September- October. *The Anand Bazar Patrika* blamed a few persons belonging to the local Communist organization for the communal trouble at Titagarh. Reference was made to the formation by the “Red” group of Hindu Sangha. Throughout October, Nani Gopal Mukherji, a local CPI leader, convened meetings of the Titagarh branch of the Bengal Chatkal Majdur Union (BCMU) in conjunction with the Hindu Sangha. Mukherji involvement with the Hindu communalists did not have the sanction of the official Communist leadership. The CPI leaders were unhappy over his divisive tactics.²³⁵

²³⁴ Nirban Basu, *The Working Class Movement*, Calcutta, 1994, pp. 82-83.

²³⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 139-40.

The BLP-CPI leaders were of the opinion that a general strike would help remove the communal differences by focusing attention on economic issues.²³⁶

Communal disturbances broke out in Bengal over the question of 'victimization of some jute workers who had participated in a demonstration against the jute ordinance. Two workers had been killed and 40 injured in these disturbances. Subhas Chandra Bose had observed, "The strike breakers have fomented communal strife in order to put an end to the strike."²³⁷

In the annual session of Hindu Sabha at Nagpur, the leading communal ideologue V.D.Savarkar pleaded in his address for a 'Hindu National Front' and appealed to communal minded persons to boycott congress by stopping all kinds of monetary helps to it in running its affairs.²³⁸

The Second Conference of Progressive Writers Associations held in January 1939 suggested a constructive plan with regard to the communal problem. They declared, "It is we who want that literature should have the closest touch with the masses...we want to keep literature clear of communalism and racial discrimination."²³⁹

The Communalists and bureaucrats had ignited the communal trouble at Jabalpur in May 1939 because of their apprehensions on account of increasing influence of the left. On that occasion the CPI sponsored National Front

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ *National Front*, 27 November 1938, No. 41

²³⁸ Ibid, 1 January 1939, No. 47

²³⁹ Ibid, 8 January, 1939, p. 211

suggested that to ease communal tension is to hold private meetings in all mohallas by calling all parties; peace committees ought to be formed, pickets and volunteers from both the communities ought to be recruited to guard the mohallas. The Muslim Mass Contact Committee has not done anything so far. The attention must be focused on economic struggle that they have to wage.²⁴⁰

In June 1939, again the communal riots occurred in the industrial city of Sholapur. It was believed by the Communists to be result of divisive policies and activities of Arya Samajists. They reported to have used very offensive slogan like 'Hindustan Hindooka, Nahin Kisi Ke Bapp Ka'. It goes to the credit Girni Kamgar union led by Communists that the swift and decisive intervention it saved the city from a riot on the occasion.²⁴¹

A.K.Gosh, writing in *National Front*, in January 1939, suggested a definite line of action for combating communalism; "that congress must accept the reasonable demands of Muslims, special effort must be made to win over Muslims, Congress must purge its Hindu outlook and prohibit the semi-religious ceremonies at Congress functions. Bande Mataram must be given up and should not be used in Congress meetings. The insistence on the Vidyamandir Scheme almost created a crisis in Central Province. It is necessary to discard all doubts of

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 7 May 1939.

²⁴¹ Ibid, 4 June 1939.

Muslims. Nothing could be done which shows that congress wants to impose Hindu culture on them use of religious terminologies be given up.²⁴²

After the Muslim League adoption of 'Pakistan Resolution', Adhikari admitted that 'in 1938 we did not understand the real nature of the communal problem which was becoming clear in the process of national, political and economic development. We were groping towards it. It became crystal clear to us when (in March 1940) the Muslim League adopted the Pakistan Resolution. In 1938 we were yet wrapped up in the theory, like the rest of the nationalists, that India was one nation and that the Muslims were just a religious cultural minority and that Congress-League united front could be forged by conceding "protection of cultural and religious rights and demands". We stood on the same basis as the Congress leadership.²⁴³

Thus, the ideological struggle between mainstream Congress party and the Communists on the one hand and the communal parties of all hue on the other continued. But the Muslim Mass Contact movement of the Congress did

²⁴² Ibid, 1 January 1939; similarly, B.T. Ranadive had tried to trace Muslim communalism to the 'fact', that this Hindu-Muslim separateness had been intensified by the current misinterpretations of the history...because "the masses" have fears of majority community. "Years of isolation from the Muslim masses have invested the Congress with a peculiar Hindu atmosphere". He warned the Congressmen to get "rid of these shortcomings". B.T. Ranadive, 'The Communal Problem', *National Front*, 12 March 1939.

²⁴³ G Adhikari, (ed.), *Pakistan and National Unity- The Communist Solution*, Bombay, 1943, pp. 29-30, Cf. Utpal Ghosh, *The Communist Party of India and India's Freedom Struggle 1937-1947*, Calcutta 1996, p. 49

contribute to creating awareness among the political class, the urgency of focusing on concrete issues of economic and political power rather than narrow parochial concerns.

Chapter IV

Imperialist War to People's War 1939-1945

Communism in India had a difficult birth, and faced an uncongenial environment worsened in its first decades by a vigilant foreign police. The Communist Party of India (CPI) had begun making some progress, but the Meerut conspiracy case trial (1929-33) left it outlawed, with most of its leader behind the bars. Despite the harsh attitude of the colonial government towards the Communists, the CPI still took some measures to progress into Indian National Congress, and Congress Socialist Party (CSP) and unify the trade unions. The government *Home Political Files* began very apprehensively to mention Communist activities in the various provinces.¹

This chapter aims at reviewing the activities of the CPI and the response of the Government of India during Second World War. The focus will be from 1939 to 1945 which covers the beginning of the war and the period when a German invasion of

¹ For detail information regarding the communist activities in entire period of 1930s see *Home Political files* which is full of communistic information and apprehension; When the war broke out in Europe in September 1939, the leftists formed a 'war cabinet' consisting of Rahul Sankritayan, Sahajanand and Kishori Prasanna Sinha and the latter two went on advising *Kisan* workers to concentrate on anti-war issue. (Saradindu Mukherji, *Peasants' Politics and the British Government 1930-40: A Study on Eastern Bihar*, Delhi, 1993, p. 140); by the middle of 1940 the number of the members of Communist Party grew to 55. Many others also came near party who were working among workers, peasants and students. It was under these people influence that in 1940 in Dalmiya Nagar workers strike and in Patna, Chapra, Darbhanga, Bhagalpur, and Monghyr and at other places students strike were being organized against the war (Indradeep Singh, *Bihar Mein Communist Party ka Vikas*, Communist Party Prakashan, P.C.Joshi Archive, JNU Library. p. 5)

Soviet Union CPI's characterization of war had changed from that of an 'imperialist war' to 'people's war'. What other changes took place in the party line during the course of war when they considered it a people's war is also to be investigated. An important question to be answered in this aspect is if the anti-imperialist plan of the communist movement continued during this time or they were blindly supporting the British war effort?

Condition for the work of the CPI became extremely complex when World War II broke out in 1939, especially from 1939-1941 until shift in the CPI's position over the war after Germany's attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941. As we know, World War II passed through essentially two phases:² First, when it was being fought between the imperialist powers (the fascist axis on the one hand and the Britain and France, on the other). This was between 3 September 1939 and 21 June 1941 and Second, when Hitler attacked the Soviet Union (on 22 June 1941), with the resources of practically the whole of the Europe at his command. In Communist view the character of the war now changed from an 'imperialist war' to 'people's war'.

As a result of Nazi Germany's attack on Poland on September 1 1939, Britain and France declared war on Germany on September 3. The British Government declared India to be a belligerent party to the war without even informally consulting Indian leaders. In reaction, the Congress Provincial ministries resigned and the Congress withheld its support to war activities. The war took Communist Party of

² The C.P.I. viewed the war as neatly divisible into two phases: Imperialist War phase (September 1939-June 1941) and People's War phase (June 1941-1945)

India completely by surprise; only a week earlier its organ, *National Front*, declared that there was going to be another Munich.³ The CPI condemned the war altogether and following the line taken by the International Communist leadership declared this war as an ‘Imperialist War’⁴. The opinion within the rank of Indian National Movement was divided: on the one side was the antipathy to the British masters of India, on the other, hostility to the Nazis as upholders of everything offensive to human dignity.⁵

During this phase the CPI considered it as imperialist war because of two factors viz. (1) the two contestants in the war “two imperialist rivals, the Anglo-French imperialists on the one side and the Hitler fascists on the other” were responsible for it; and (2) the “actual living war aims of the two sides... were selfish imperialist aims.” In this phase the task before the people according to CPI was “Revolutionary utilization of war crisis for the achievement of National Freedom and therefore the people should be brought out into “active struggle”. On the question of

³ Victor G. Kiernan, ‘The Communist Party of India and the Second World War’, in Prakash Karat (ed.), *Across Times and Continents*, New Delhi, 2003, p.212

⁴ The Communist International issued in October a manifesto on the inter-imperialist character of the war (William Z. Foster, *History of the Three International II*, New Delhi, 1958, pp. 157-58). G. Dimitrov, its Secretary-General, issued a long address “The War and the Working Class” by the end of 1939 (reprinted in G. Adhikari (ed.), *From People Front to People’s War*, second ed., Bombay, 1944, pp. 328-46, setting out a detailed defence of the International’s position.

⁵ P Bandhu and TG Jacob (ed.), *War and National Liberation: CPI Documents, 1939-1945*, New Delhi, 1988, p.iii; Communist International treated this war as inter-imperialist war having being preceded by Munich Conspiracy (1938), (Cf. Irfan Habib, “The Left and the National Movement”, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 27, Nos.5-6, May-June 1998, p.20)

immediate struggle the Communist Party was with Bose for launching mass struggles.⁶

Within a few days of declaration of war, CPI decided to call for a general strike on October 2.⁷ This was anti-war protest strike in which more than 90,000 workers participated, making it the first anti-war strike in the world labour movement. The resolutions adopted at the meeting of the strikers proclaimed: "this meeting declares its solidarity with the international working class and the people of the world, who were being dragged into the most destructive war by the imperialist powers. It regards the present war as a challenge to the international solidarity of the working class and declares that it is the task of the workers and people of different countries to defeat this imperialist conspiracy against humanity."⁸ Thus a process started which continued intermittently all through 1940s. The CPI issued a manifesto on 26 January 1940, in which it declared:

"Struggling against the economic distress caused by war, struggling against the suppression of political liberties the masses are already moving on the path of action. Aided and led by the Congress, these struggle will millions of our countrymen into

⁶ Rakesh Gupta, *Bihar Peasantry and the Kisan Sabha, 1936-1947*, New Delhi, 1982, p. 112

⁷ Jyoti Basu(ed.), *Documents of the Communist Movement in India*, Vol. IV (1939-1943), Calcutta, 1997, p.102

⁸ B T Ranadive, 'The Role Played by the Communists in the Freedom Struggle', *Social Scientist*, Vol.12, No.9, September, 1984, p.23; L.P. Sinha, *The Left-Wing in India*, Muzaffarpur, 1965, p.495; R P Dutta, *India Today*, Bombay, 1949, p. 305. According to official reports, 110 strikes took place in the last quarter of 1939, involving about 170,000 workers. (Cf Pankaj Kumar, *Communist Movement in India*, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 177-78)

organised assault on the very citadel of imperialism... with this perspective Independence Day must be celebrated this year as a day of demonstration of national unity and strength, a day for the decisive struggle for the smashing of Imperialist Rule, for the victorious convening of the Constituent Assembly, for laying the foundation of the People's Democratic Republic".⁹

By the time the open session of the Congress was held at Ramgarh in March 1940, the CPI had come to the following conclusions:

1. That the crisis created by the outbreak of the Second World War could be fully utilized for the achievement of independence because of two reasons: (a) British imperialism was at its weakest; and (b) the Indian masses were prepared for an outright struggle against imperialism.
2. That the congress could, if it gave a call for such a struggle, mobilize the entire nation. However, the Gandhian leadership that represented the interest of the bourgeoisie was more interested in bargaining with imperialism than in attaining independence because it was afraid more of masses than imperialism.
3. That because of the class character of the Congress, even the task of the bourgeois democratic revolution had to be, and could be, completed only by the proletariat and its party, the CPI. This would be possibly only if the CPI was able to establish its hegemony over the national movement. Its basic

⁹ 'Independence Day Manifesto of the CPI, 26 January 1940', C H Philips Ed., *The Evolution of India and Pakistan 1858-1947: Select Documents*, London, 1962, p. 365

objective was to isolate the Congress leadership from the Congressmen who, then, would come under the leadership of CPI.

4. That in order to isolate the Congress leadership from the Congressmen, the masses had to be mobilized both around an understanding of the imperialist nature of the war and around economic demands such as increase in wages and war allowances.¹⁰

The Communists were the first to start resistance against the war burden imposed on the people.¹¹ They started their resistance with the strike of 175,000 textile workers for dearness allowance in Bombay in March 1940. The Bombay strike lasted for 40 days despite wholesale arrests of the strike leaders and terrorization of workers. The Bombay Trade Union Congress led by Communists gave a call for one-day solidarity strike and 350,000 workers in different industries joined the strike on March 10, 1940.¹² The British Government launched a ruthless attack against the Trade Union and peasant leaders in India, and arrested and detained without trial hundreds of them under the Defence of India Rules (Act). Of the 700 (who were arrested or externed) were detained in jail without any charges in January 1941, about

¹⁰ D.N. Gupta, *Communism and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1939-45*, New Delhi, 2008, pp. 93-94

¹¹ Ibid, the *Home Political Files* and other CID and Intelligence reports are full of the Communists activities during 1939-1940.

¹² B.T. Ranadive, 'Role Played by the Communists in the Freedom Struggle', *Social Scientist*, Vol. 12, No. 9, September, 1984, p. 24

480 persons were Communists.¹³ The Communist Party was virtually driven underground; a few functionaries were, however, able to evade police.¹⁴ By a Communiqué issued on 14th March 1940, the Government of India declared its policy of keeping under detention those persons who were engaged in Communist activities. The General Council of the All India Trade Union (AITUC) on 28th March condemned this policy of the imperial government.¹⁵ The war situation saw a large-scale spurt in militant peasant struggles as well, with the Communists playing a leading role in some of them. They organized "hunger marches" and other militant activities of the rural poor in several parts of Madras province, Andhra, Malabar, Bengal, etc., where traders and zamindars were forced to provide grain to the hungry either free or at "fair price". It is clear that Communist influence strongly affected the Kerala branch of Socialist Party by 1940. In that year the Communists tried to

¹³ Cf., Sunil Kumar Sen, *Working Class Movements in India 1885-1975*, Delhi, 1994, p.65: the main targets of the British were the Communists. Using the law on the Defence of India Rules, the authorities arrested nearly the entire CPI leadership, including A.K.Gopalan, S.A.Dange, Muzaffar Ahmad, S.V.Ghate, S.S.Mirajkar, E.M.S.Namboodripad, Sajjad Zaheer, and others D. N. Gupta. *Communism and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1939-1945*, p. 95. In March 1940, the Government of India, after seeking the advice of the provincial governments, issued orders for the arrest of 19 prominent Communists, who formed the Central Communist Directorate, under Rule 26 (1) (b) of the Defence of India Rule and sub-section (2) of the Defence of India Act 1939, in order to cripple the Communist activities in India. Despite its best efforts, the government failed to apprehend all of them, and 10 of them went underground. (For detail see, Letter from the Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, to Provincial Governments, 23 February 1940. *Home (Poll), 1. File No. 7/1/40.*

¹⁴ Sunil Kumar Sen, *Working Class Movements in India 1885-1975*, p. 65)

¹⁵ Prem Sagar Gupta, *A Short History of AITUC(1920-1947)*, New Delhi, 1980, p.325

precipitate Indian independence by paralyzing the British wartime administration. The national bourgeoisie within the Congress was now seen not as allies but as “cowards” to be isolated,”¹⁶ and the urban proletariat was expected to lead the struggle. The most well known among the peasant struggles of the early war years took place in Kayyur and adjacent areas of Malabar. Four policemen and two Kisan activists died in separate clashes on and immediately after 15 September 1940, observed as the Anti-Repression Day. Responding to these events, the national Congress leadership expelled the Kerala socialists from the party. All of them thereupon joined the Communist Party. Those Communists who escaped imprisonment went underground, and the “proletarian struggle” petered out in early 1941¹⁷.

On 1st April 1940, in a *Chatkal Majdoor Bulletin*, the CPI issued a leaflet addressing to the jute mill workers of Bengal put forward some demands like war bonus of 25 per cent and permanency of jobs to the workers etc. Further it declared that ‘there is only one path of conflict before the working class now. That path is the path of conflict, of heroic struggle against an imperialist war, a struggle in which there is no chance of either safety or settlement...’¹⁸ The Party also issued a leaflet to students and asked them to join anti-war struggle against the imperialist power

¹⁶ P. C. Joshi, “Unmasked Parties and Politics,” March 1940, quoted by Gene D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1959, p.181

¹⁷ Kathleen Gough, ‘Peasant Resistance and Revolt in South India’, *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 41, No. 4, Winter, 1968-1969, pp. 526-544; (For Bihar see Vinita Damodaran, *Broken Promises: Popular Protest. Indian Nationalism and the Congress Party in Bihar 1935-1946*, New Delhi, 1992).

¹⁸ *Home Political*, File No. 37/60/1940.

defying all obstacles thrown by the Ordinances in the path of meetings, processions. They were asked to form Anti-War Committees from among the selected revolutionary students in schools and colleges. 'Then and then only will we be able to draw the masses, ready for a movement into a real struggle... The responsibility of the students' community is very great here'.¹⁹ In an official survey of 1941(January), it was mentioned that the CPI was functioning in Bombay and part of the illegal communist apparatus was not dislocated or disorganized by police measures. Communist leaders from the Bombay, Bengal Punjab, Madras and several 'underground' leaders of U.P. had been arrested, and yet there were a sizeable number of publication of leaflet published by the Party which were translated into different regional languages like Urdu, Hindi, Marathi, Telegu, Tamil, Bengali etc.²⁰ The Communists' publication's resources was not enough to meet the expenses incurred on publications, and officials suspected some foreign aid and support having been obtained for the purpose.²¹ The Central Committee had appealed for a collection of Rupees 10,000 on the eve of 'May Day'²². The Women's fraction of the Bengal

¹⁹ *Home Political*, File No. 37/27/1940. Communists influence among the students is visible in different kinds of report.

²⁰ *Home Political*, File No. 7/1/1941; the pamphlets was published from Bombay mentioned in the report are: "Communist", "Marx on India", "A Contrast of Two Worlds- 20 Years Under Imperialism and Socialism", and reproduction of R.P.Dutt's book *India Today*, "A Soldier Hero" about the life of Garhwali soldier mutineers by Thakur Chandra Singh in the name of Ramesh Chandra Sinha, "Fight Against War", "Second Imperialist War and Our Task", and "Lenin's Advice to Students".

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*. communist survey of May 1941

Branch of the CPI called women to join anti war campaign against the British Government. The examples of the women and their role in revolution in Soviet Russia and China were cited for the purpose. It was emphasised in the pamphlets that 'Women may help the Communist Party in various ways. By giving help to the Communist Party girl students of schools and colleges, domestic girls and educated young women may still more strengthen the movement for freedom.' The pamphlet further assigned what help women may render.

1. 'They may collect funds for the party from every house, school, college and hostel.
2. They may sell the secret organ of party.
3. They may make arrangements for keeping in safety men engaged in secret work.
4. They may distribute everywhere the secret pamphlets and manifestos against the war and in favour of the struggle for freedom.
5. They may help in the matter of preserving pamphlets, books and documents of the party.
6. They may carry on propaganda against the war by holding secret meetings.
7. They may help in the formation of women workers' organisation by paying visits to workers' bustees and may start schools, study circles, and associations for removal of illiteracy in order to educate their children'.²³

²³ 'The Communist Party's Call to Women', Published by the Women's fraction of the Bengal Branch of the Communist Party of India,-Branch of the Communist International, *Home Political*. File No.

From 1940 to 1941 almost 500 Communists were arrested and convicted for carrying on anti war political propaganda. The Bombay Communists attempted to organize a strike of Victoria drivers in late April (1941), but it failed owing to the communal riots. Similarly their efforts to stage a one day strike on 'May Day', was foiled by the imposition of bans on all meetings. Still 'May Day' was celebrated by Communists and socialists²⁴ By May 1941 more than 20,000 freedom fighters, mostly leftists, had been put behind prison bars under the Defence of India Rules and other repressive laws. A Detention camps were set up, as in Deoli (Rajasthan) and Hugly (Bengal) for confinement of political prisoners from various states. The war period witnessed a series of glorious anti-imperialist actions of students led by the All-India Students' Federation—against war and against imperialist repression. University campuses all over the country were stirred as never before. The Central Government issued a Press Note (March 1941) drawing public attention to the subversive nature of the Communists anti-war propoganda and organized attempts to sabotage India's war effort. Bengal Intelligence Branch reported that the Communist Party aimed at stirring

37/61/1940. Renu Chakravarty, *Communists in Indian Women's Movement* writes that in October 1942, soon after the legalization of the Communist Party, the Bengal Provincial Women's Front of the Communist Party was formed. Fighting against tremendous odds in the form of social barriers and anti-communist propoganda, communist women campaigned on the issues of food scarcity, protection from Japanese bombings and the defence of the country. Earlier in September 1942 communist women started famine relief work among the working class and rural poor women in Calcutta, Pabna, Rangpur, Barisal and Dinajpur.

²⁴ *Home Political*, File No. 7/1/1941; Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab (1921-1947)*. Delhi, 1979, p. 161; he mentioned that the rally was poorly attended by the Communists ignoring the fact about the communal riot as mentioned in the *Government Home Political* file

up industrial and peasant discontent; it planned to organize “protest” strikes and cause unrest among industrial and railway labour on “war allowance” and other grievances.²⁵ The Intelligence Bureau reported that

“The aims of the Communists in India are two fold: to overthrow the British Government established by law, and to destroy the present economic organization of society. The ultimate method of achieving these objects is that of violence, and the law is not adequate to deal with that. The first stages, at which we have endeavoured to stop Communists attack, are the stages of the propaganda to deal with propaganda. The Communists themselves divide their activities into legal and illegal. They devise legitimate means for the purpose of promoting a situation which will encourage the development of the communist spirit...they also mobilize workers for no-rent against landlords to deprive Government of its revenue.”

During this period (1940-41) the CID launched various conspiracy cases against the Communists which are as follows:

1. Orissa Communist Conspiracy Case, Cuttuck, 1940
2. Coimbatore Communist Conspiracy Case, 1941
3. Trinevelli Communist Conspiracy Case, 1941
4. Madras Communist Conspiracy Case, 1941.²⁶

²⁵ *Home Political/1941, Cf., Subodh Roy(ed.), Communism in India Unpublished Documents 1935-1945, Calcutta, 1972, p.231*

²⁶ *Home Political, File No. 7/8/1941*

As noted the Government suspected that CPI was involved in secret activities and foreign Communists were supporting Indian Communist Movement. Intelligence Bureau report of the period showed that there was evidence of CPI's secret correspondence with their British advisors founded as a result of the search of the home Michael Carritt in England.²⁷ Despite Government efforts the Communist activities was going outside and inside jail also. The Communists were paying much attention to the reorganization of the Party as the intelligence bureau in its Communists survey of May (1941) noted. The CPI headquarters' at Bombay laid down the policy to be observed by the Communists in both prison and outside and further described the "brutal and inhuman treatment" meted out to security prisoners in the detention camps at Deoli and Nasik and in other Indian jails.

By June, however, there was an apparent decline in Communist activities, and there were reports of dissension among Communists in the Deoli Camp on the question of treatment as Class I and Class II prisoners. The Central Committee published only the "Communist" (Number 4) for June 1941, but some local branches had been continuing to issue their pamphlets, in Bombay, Ahmadabad, Punjab, Kerala and Delhi. In Kerala several party Letters in Malayalam were secretly distributed. These letters condemned "police repression". In the Punjab the 'Lal Jhanda' was

²⁷ *Home Political*, File No. 7/39/1941, He was an I.C.S. officer in Bengal and after his resignation he settled in London and became a leading member of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) being in charge of the Indian section. Michael Carritt wrote his memoirs entitled *A Mole in the Crown*, Hove, 1985. He had assisted Ben Bradley who had been an accused in the famous Meerut Conspiracy Case.

distributed in the Jallundhur district and anti war posters had been discovered at Dera Ghazi Khan²⁸.

On June 22, 1941 Nazi Germany attacked Soviet Russia and for the Communists it necessarily brought a change in complexion of the war. The Comintern declared that this was not an extension of war but transformation of war: The attack on Red Russia was not like an attack on any other country. It was an attack on the Socialist Fatherland of the workers of all lands, it was an attack on the anti-imperialist friend of the oppressed peoples of the East; it was an attack on new civilization; it was an attack on one-sixth of the earth, which alone was only free and prosperous, which embodied the best dreams and all the hopes of the best of mankind, and behind which stood not only the organized world-wide Communist movement but all freedom-loving and progressive peoples.²⁹ Therefore, this war was called as 'People's War'³⁰ by the Comintern.

The German attack found bulk of the Communist leaders imprisoned in Deoli Detention Camp, where they kept company with the Socialists, who also had been actively opposing the war effort in pursuance of their demand for immediate national independence.³¹ The shift in the character of the war caused deep confusion among the members of the Progressive Writers Association (PWA). In July 1941 progressive writers, who were also members of the CPI supported the 'united anti imperialist

²⁸ *Home Political*, File No. 7/1/1941

²⁹ P Bandhu and TG Jacob(ed.), *War and National Liberation: CPI Documents 1939-1945*, p.33

³⁰ For detail, see, Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947*, New Delhi, Reprint 2001, pp. 411-13

³¹ M R Masani, 'Communism in India', *Pacific Affairs*, Vol.24, No. 1, March 1951, p.24

front'.³² The CPI took some time to appraise the changed character of the war.³³ Most of its leaders in jail found it difficult to turn from the long established position of hostility to British Imperialism, and treat it as an ally in a world wide alliance. Therefore, its anti-imperialist activities had been going in various provinces. The continuing anti-war effort had been reaffirmed as correct by a pamphlet dated July 1941 issued by the Polit-Bureau of the CPI. This pamphlet (secretly circulated throughout the various party strongholds) declared:

“Our attitude towards the British Government and its imperialist war remains what it was. We must continue and intensify our struggle against both. We can render really effective aid to the Soviet only as a free people”.³⁴

In August 1941 as well there was no change in communist's anti-war attitude. The party adopted two fold 'party line'. The war on the Eastern front which Soviet Russia was fighting must be supported; and the war between Britain and Germany in Europe was an 'imperialist war' and must be resisted and obstructed. Communists

³² Khizr Humayun Ansari, *The Emergence of Socialist Thought Among the North Indian Muslim (1917-1947)*, Lahore, 1990, p. 18

³³ Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh, ed. *Struggle for Hegemony in India 1920-1947*. Vol. III. 1941-47. New Delhi, 1994, p. 328. The change in the character of the imperialist war into people's war started a debate among the political line of the Communist ranks in India. For about six months two opposing lines in the party, one advocated by P.C. Joshi who was outside and other by the jailed comrades in the Deoli camp, continued to contend with each other. (The party stalwarts jailed at Deoli included S.A. Dange, Muzaffar Ahmad, S.S. Mirajkar, B.T. Ranadive and Ajay Ghosh). Ultimately the entire leadership accepted the 'Deoli Thesis' which declared that 'national struggle is only a part of the International struggle and not vice-versa'.

³⁴ *Home Political*, File No. 7/1/1941

sought to organize “Solidarity Campaign” through Soviet Aid Committees and creation of funds for popular agitation-voiced through civil liberties unions, Kisan Committees, and Student organizations for the release of Communist prisoners without fear of consequence. Later they crystallized their position as follows: “Britain is fighting an ‘Imperialist War’ and the Soviet Union a ‘Just War’...CPI’s activities in provinces like Punjab, U.P, Madras, Calcutta and Bombay etc., were still on.”³⁵ In November the Central Committee from Bombay issued a ‘Party Letter’ in commemoration of ‘November Day’. This stated:

“Our main slogan this November is: victory of the Soviet Union is bound up with the victory of all oppressed peoples over their exploiters. We must help to make Soviet victory possible, not by helping Imperialist rulers in their war effort, but by fighting harder for our own freedom”³⁶

The Communist leaders (held in Deoli Jail Camp) prepared their ‘Jail Document’ in December, in which they argued forcefully for a change of policy to one of ‘people’s war’. This involved offering their assistance to the British war effort without linking it to the demand for immediate independence.³⁷ It was only in

³⁵ *Ibid.* Survey of the Communist Activity in India, August 1941; In September survey the situation was more or less same despite Soviet characterization of the war as people’s war.

³⁶ *Ibid.* Summary of Communist Activity in India, November-December 1941

³⁷ The defeat of ‘fascism’ became an important constituent of the political agenda of the national and provincial leaders of the CPI. They saw the demand of Indian independence and the need to help the Allied war effort as being mutually exclusive issues. The leadership did not ask its cadres to give up their fight for independence but advised them to postpone the struggle till the ‘forces of fascism’ were defeated. The Polit-Bureau members consistently reiterated that, ‘...India’s freedom

January-February of 1942 that the Communists in Kerala fully grasped the tactics of unconditional support to the War Efforts.³⁸ P.C.Joshi, (the then General Secretary), also maintained that India would secure freedom in the course of supporting the war.³⁹ This statement was based on two arguments- first, that the leadership and example of the Soviet Union was in itself a guarantee of world wide liberation from the pre-war order, and secondly, that the creation of national unity to support war efforts would force the British to concede India's freedom.

The 'Prison Document' or 'Jail Document' justifying the people's war wrote:

"Nazism is the main enemy of the international proletariat and the peoples of the world and the war against it is a people's war...Soviet peoples are fighting not for "national preservation" but for the existence as a socialist state ..."Therefore, "the war against Nazism waged by the USSR with the help of British was people's war to defend socialism and safeguard the future revolutionary movements."⁴⁰ Further, they reiterated that 'the party must take the initiative to unite all the progressive forces in the country to demand and fight for minimum demands such as:

1. Unconditional release of all political prisoners and detenus

lies through successful resistance against fascist invader...Let us rouse and mobilize the people to force the nations leaders to defend the country and win its freedom in the common struggle with the United Nations'.

³⁸ T M Thomas Isaac, 'The National Movement and The Communist Party in Kerala', *Social Scientist*, August-September 1986, Vol. 14, No. 8, 9, p. 72

³⁹ P C Joshi, *Communist Reply to the Congress Working Committee Charges*, Bombay, 1945, p. 45

⁴⁰ *Home Political*, File No. 44/32/1942

2. Removal of ban on all Communists who have been interned or otherwise restricted.
3. Withdrawal of warrant against all underground Communists.
4. Withdrawal of ban on the *National Front*, *The New Age*, and all other organs of the Communists in provincial languages.
5. Immediate grant of press declarations for new newspapers, journals, and periodicals

This charter of demand should be the basis of a mass struggle and its acceptance by the British government of unfolding India voluntary war effort to secure victory in the war against Hitler's fascism'.⁴¹ The All India Student Federation (AISF),⁴² amidst scenes of tempestuous enthusiasm, had passed the resolution on the people's war by 534 votes to 9 at its Patna sessions (December, 1941). The Executive of the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) also (at its Nagpur session in February, 1942)

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² All India Students' Federation (AISF) was organized in 1936 to provide a unified voice for the student movement. From the beginning, the AISF was strongly nationalist and radical in its political views, Myron Weiner, *The Politics of Scarcity*, Chicago, 1962, p. 163; Communists, socialists, and Gandhians worked harmoniously within the AISF and provincial affiliates were organized in all parts of India. The annual AISF conferences, held at the same time as the sessions of the Indian National Congress, attracted upwards of 3,000 delegates and the top Congress leaders addressed the students, (Philip G. Altbach, 'The Transformation of the Indian Student Movement', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 6, No. 8, Aug., 1966, p. 450).

had adopted the policy of the people's war, and it was reported that the imprisoned leaders of the movement wholeheartedly agreed with the resolution.⁴³

Despite Communists' support to war effort the colonial administration continued strict vigilance over their activities. Writing to Secretary of State L.S. Amery on 26 February 1942, the viceroy Lord Linlithgow complained that there was "little practical support" to the war effort from the Communists.⁴⁴ There were raid on several places and Communists' post was often withheld. A large number of books were seized by the intelligence police during the period January-September 1942.⁴⁵ But eventually, an order was issued for the release of sixteen communist prisoners in April. In the Punjab several communist and Akali leaders were released. The order stated that 'the persons who have been detained as member of the CPI are supporting the war effort so their alleged detention no longer exists and they may safely be released'.⁴⁶ A letter explaining the government's attitude towards the party declared:

⁴³ Bandhu and TG Jacob(ed.), *War and National Liberation CPI Documents 1939-1942*, p.66

⁴⁴ *Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. I, pp. 252 ff, quoted from Hiren Mukherjee, *Under Communism's Crimson Colour: Reflections on Marxism, India and the World Scene*, New Delhi, 1982, p. 119

⁴⁵ *Home Political*, File No. 41/5/42 (Internal), Between January 1942- January 1943; See Appendix for the book lists)

⁴⁶ *Home Political*, File No. 44/32/1942, Those who were released were Harsh Deo Malviya, Ajoy Kumar Ghosh, Sajjad Zaheer, Sunil Kumar Mukherji (I regret to have failed in obtaining a copy of his autobiography *Party Jivan ki Yaaden*), S A Dange, R D Bhardwaj, S. V Ghate, S. S. Batliwallah, B T Ranadive, S. S. Mirajkar, Paramhans Ram Udhar Das alias Rahul Sankritayan, Sher Jang Chowdhury, A. S. K. Ayyangar; In Punjab Teja Singh Sutantar, Achhar Singh Chinna, Iqbal Singh Hundal, Bhagat Singh Bilga, Sohan Singh Josh Ferozuddin Mansur, Karam Singh Ma and Fazl Elahi Qurban were released (who were member of the Communist Party and Kirti circles) by the Punjab Government. And then the CPI issued a proclamation: "we must defend our country

“At the present juncture, the Government of India consider it to be of primary importance to allow freedom of action to the adherents of any party in India who are prepared to help the prosecution of the war and make use of any elements in the population whose activities will form an effective makeweight to the defeatist tactics of the Indian National Congress and thus help discredit that party. They are fully aware that there are risks in the policy which it is proposed to adopt...”⁴⁷ In various parts of India units of the Friends of Soviet Union (FSU) were set up. On 21 July, 1941 the first All-India Day of solidarity with the Soviet Union was observed. Meetings and demonstrations, evenings of friendship were held in Bengal, the United Province, Bombay, Bihar, Malabar and at many other places. The leaders of the Congress also expressed their solidarity with the people of the USSR and gave vent to their unreserved hatred against Fascism.⁴⁸

Though there were reports from different provinces of renewed communist activities. The decision to support the war resulted in the gradual release of all the communist leaders from detention (24th July 1942), and to lifting the ban on the Communist Party itself and its organ the *National Front* and the *New Age*, enabling it

against Japanese imperialism to the bitter end.” They urged “for the formation of a National Government, release of political prisoners, and creation of a democratic Peoples Army by mobilization of nation’s manpower and the utilization of all the industries and resources of the country’, see, Punjab Fortnightly report for the Hind half of April 1942 received from the Central Intelligence Officer, Lahore, (Cf., Subodh Roy (ed.), *Communism in India 1935-1945*, p.338)

⁴⁷ Cf., Biswamoy Pati (ed.), *Turbulent Times, India 1940-44*, Mumbai, 1998, p. 144

⁴⁸ L.V. Mitrokhin, *Friends of the Soviet Union*, Delhi, 1977, p. 31, Cf., Shashi Bairathi *Communism and Nationalism in India*, Delhi, 1987, pp. 185-186

to function as a legal party for the first time nearly after a decade.⁴⁹ Before the legalization of the communist party, Japanese attack had alarmed the British. They had sent a Cripps Mission but that was rejected by the Congress as well as Muslim League. The CPI in its letter number seven welcomed the British Constitutional proposal “as a suitable basis for a settlement; inadequate though they are”, and urged the Congress and Muslim League to form a national government for mobilizing the country for defence.⁵⁰

In May 1942 Police reports mentioned that there was an argument with N.G. Ranga of Madras over key positions in the AIKS secretariat. It further suggested

⁴⁹ M R Masani, *The Communist Party of India: A Short History*, London, 1954, p.80 in December 1941, Japan and America entered into war. Singapore surrendered to Japanese in February 1942. On 9th March, Rangoon was seized. The Allied forces were in full retreat on all fronts. And in July 1942 the Indian atmosphere was choking with unrest and frustration, anger and a desire for change. With the failure of the Cripps Mission, all hopes of compromise with the British had broken down: (Shashi Bairathi, *Communism and Nationalism in India*, p.185; Bhagwan Josh, *op.cit.* p.165)

⁵⁰ Subodh Roy (ed.), *Communism in India Unpublished Documents, 1935-1945*, Calcutta, 1976, p.361: towards the end of April (1942), the war came closer to India. The Japanese airplanes bombed Chittagong and were talks of an air attack on Calcutta. The AICC meeting at Allahabad, held towards the end of April, decided to adopt a neutral attitude towards the Japanese. The CPI, pledged by now to do everything in its power to rouse the masses to resist the Fascist invade, was highly critical of the Allahabad decision of the AICC. A top CPI leader (Adhikari), wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru, “Anti-British demagogy plus neutrality means defeatism and more defeatism among the masses. It is not the soil on which we can grow the harvest of the patriotic defenders of our motherland. It is the soil on which the enemy- the new imperialist enslaver will grow his ugly crop. That is why we appeal you to see that the resolution is not taken advantage of by pro-Fascist elements and implemented in the spirit of your press review”. (Adhikari to Nehru, 3 May 1942. Jawaharlal Nehru ed., *A Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 488, Cf. Gautam Chattopadhyay, *Bengal Electoral Politics and Freedom Struggle 1862-1947*, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 179-80)

that some of his youthful communist adherents favoured civil defence organization as a means of obtaining arms to commit dacoities, and of screening underground operation. Before their release from Hazaribagh jail in the 17th April, three students' security prisoners were involved in a "rowdy" demonstration refusing to leave without their jail kit and to accept Government orders restricting their movements (Jai Prakash Narain and the Socialists kept aloof from this fracas). Two of them were later prominent at a Patna meeting which condemned Government, but urged students to spend their vacation creating an anti-fascist atmosphere in the villages. The released Monghyr Communists planned to 'activise' the district Kisan Sabha and student organization.⁵¹

On 8th August 1942 the Congress launched 'Quit India' movement and most of its leaders were imprisoned. CPI following the policy enunciated by the Comintern opposed the Quit India Movement and criticized the CSP and Forward Bloc for organizing sabotage. They planned to persuade the Congress and Muslim League that their interests lay in unity.⁵² As Sumit Sarkar has pointed out, it was a wise step to embark and avoid confrontation at a moment when India was full of Allied troops and when the British would have had a unique chance of justifying the most brutal of

⁵¹ Second fortnight Review of situation in Bihar, CID-Patna, *Home Political* File, No. 226/1942: As such the Communists were able to form the Bihar state unit of the CPI only in October 1939, when their United Front agreement with the CSP collapsed. (See *Indian Communist Party Documents 1930-56 (CPI Documents)* (Bombay: Democratic Research Service, 1957, p. 44)

⁵² Bipan Chandra (ed.), *The Indian Left: Critical Appraisals*, New Delhi, 1983, pp. 243-44

repressive measures.⁵³ The District Communist Party of Jhansi issued statement on 17th August: “The Communist Party wants to remind the people that by resorting to violent methods against government in the name of Congress and Gandhi they are neither enhancing the prestige of the Congress nor helping Gandhi to fulfill the mission of his life...The Communist Party severely condemns the repression and urges Britain to recognize the independence of India and set up a national government immediately with a view to fighting the Japanese aggression successfully...the communist party, concludes the statement, appeals to the people to carry on the agitation against the arrest of Congress leaders by all peaceful means”⁵⁴ A large number of party cadres were arrested in eastern India. In Orissa, for instance, all ‘leading communist, Kisan, student, labour workers’ were rounded up and detained within a week after the trouble started, the Communist press was muzzled and no pamphlets explaining the party’s stance were allowed to be published until the 20

⁵³ Sumit Sarkar, “Communists and 1942”, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 12, No. 9, September, 1984, p. 52: The Communist Party characterized this war as People’s war because of the changed regrouping and changed prospect before the world. It did not mean subjugation to the British. In view of the party, as alleged by the Congress. It worked out a strategy of a national unity to win a National Government...as far as its aims of National Government was concerned, and suggested a united front, Rakesh Gupta, *op.cit.*, p. 113; Similarly, the AIKS did not subscribe to the ‘August Struggle’ programme of the Congress. In its political campaign it demand like the Communist Part. the release of Congress leaders arrested immediately after the announcement of the August Struggle, and campaigned for unity of the Congress, (M.A. Rasul, *A History of the All India Kisan Sabha*, Calcutta, 1974, p. 85)

⁵⁴ Reuter Telegram, For Press Advice No. 9, Jhansi, August 17, *Home Political*, File No 36/61/1942(Internal)

September 1942.⁵⁵ A letter from Madras asked, in September 1942, whether the Government of India wanted to continue the policy of treating the Communists action with the distrust. The letter agreed with a collector's view that the Communists were '10 percent anti-Nazi and 90 percent anti-Government'.⁵⁶ In this period of mass anger, the voice of the Communists fell on the deaf ears and they were isolated from the people as never before.⁵⁷ Communists on the other hand, argued that the path to Indian freedom lie not through struggling against Indian defence but by strengthening it. By destroying defence they would not achieve freedom but Fascism instead. 'Unity is the only way out for the Indian people.'⁵⁸

While criticizing the August movement, the manifesto issued by CPI also denounced the repressive measures against Congress leadership. It held that the solution to the crisis did not lie in continuing repression to crush the Congress as "imperialists, loyalists and Royists suggest". They severely criticized the

⁵⁵ *People's War*, 20 September 1942: Cf. Biswamoy Pati (ed.), *Turbulent Times India 1940-44*, pp. 148-149; the Communist Party in Orissa was started in 1938. Biswamoy Pati, 'Cf Movements, Compromises and Retreats: Orissa, 1936-1939', *Social Scientist*, Vol. 20, No. 5/6. (May - Jun., 1992), p. 64

⁵⁶ *Home Political File*, No. 7/15/42(I), Cf. Biswamoy Pati (ed.), *Turbulent Times India 1940-44*, p. 149

⁵⁷ For detail debate over the CPI and 1942 as well as criticism of the party for not supporting this movement, (See, Sumit Sarkar, "Communists and 1942", *Social Scientist*, Vol. 12, No. 9, September, 1984; Biswamoy Pati (ed.), *Turbulent Times, India 1940-44*; Bandhu and TG Jacob(ed.), *War and National Liberation CPI Documents 1939-1945*)

⁵⁸ *People's War*, 4 October, 1942

government's policy of repression and held the British responsible for the same.⁵⁹ At this time Harry Pollitt urged that it was the task of the British Labour Movement to play a leading role in resolving the Indian deadlock. The only path according to Pollitt was 'to grant India her independence which would enable her to form an Indian National Government here and now representing all national forces and parties. Such a Government would then be in a position to mobilize all the great power and resources of the Indian people to fully cooperate with Britain and the United Nations in armed resistance to the Fascist aggressors.'⁶⁰ P.C.Joshi repeatedly mentioned that 'the path to Indian freedom lies not through struggling against Indian defence but by strengthening it. To destroy defence is not to get freedom but fascism instead. Unity is the only way out for the Indian people. Unity is the people's strategy to complete the encirclement of a handful of the imperialist rulers. Unity at the top will be the culmination. It can not be the beginning of the movement for national movement'.⁶¹

On 17 January 1943, the local Communists at Dacca organized a successful conference. They advocated National Defence and formation of National Government. In this conference programme was chalked out. 'It was decided to raise Rs. 3,500 for the two lacs fund. The other items were as follows: enroll 125 new Party members, organise a Volunteer Corps of 300 consisting of Party members and militants, raise *Janayudha* subscribers from 700 to 1000 by the end of January 1943.

⁵⁹ Shashi Bairathi, *Communism and Nationalism in India*, p. 190

⁶⁰ *People's War*, 17 January 1943, 'Support for Labour-Communist Unity'. Pollitt's New Year's message- End Indian Stalemate (11 January 1943)

⁶¹ *People's War*, 4 October 1942

every Party comrade to take A.R.P. training by the next month and every cell leader to get special Party training.⁶²

Prior to this, Chittagong District Communist conference (held on the 29th and 30th December 1942), was attended by 396 party members, militants and sympathizers and in the open session nearly 4000 men, women, workers, peasants, students and intelligentsia were present. In this conference nearly Rs. 5000 were collected. Some members of the Muslim League also participated in the meeting. It succeeded in rousing the people for Unity-National Resistance-Freedom.⁶³ In February the party gave a call for the release of Gandhiji to end national crisis and appealed to every patriotic son and daughter to stop sabotage.⁶⁴

With the blatant and brutal attack of Japanese fascists came the devastating famine of 1943 which took the toll of 35 lakhs of men, women and children. Writers and intellectuals could no longer keep themselves aloof from the national stream.⁶⁵ Consequently Bengal suffered from food crisis both because of famine as well as black marketeers. The Communist Party had launched anti-hoarding drive, to raise the

⁶² *Ibid*, 17 January 1943. (Dacca District Communist Conference)

⁶³ *Ibid*.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 21 February 1943, Resolution of Central Committee of the CPI in session at Bombay, 14-22 February, 1943, p 1

⁶⁵ Sarojmohan Mitra, 'Progressive Cultural Movement in Bengal', *Social Scientist*, Vol. 8, No. 5/6. [Marxism and Aesthetics] , Dec., 1979 - Jan., 1980), p.118

war production, etc. The party sought the cooperation of the Congress and Muslim League to form a National Government to end the political deadlock.⁶⁶

P. C. Joshi wrote that 'the government arrested our agitator, detained our organizers without trial, raided our offices and denied us permission to hold meetings. We suffered the lack of civil liberties with the rest of national movement except that our party was formally legal.' Despite Government continuous repression he noted that 'our membership have doubled, we lost 29 old members, but gained 4,448 new ones. Party membership today is 9,219. The sale of *People's War* has increased by 124% and it comes out in five languages.'⁶⁷

The description provided by the intelligence department showed that despite Government's strict vigilance, the dissemination of Soviet propaganda was going on in communist strong-holds. Soviet Literatures and cinemas were used as a means for propaganda. Russian films were translated either into English (or into some other Indian languages) by an Indian communist at the exhibition. The Indian Communists

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 4 July, 1943, Vol. 2(1), p. 1; They put emphasis on the unity to achieve independence. *People's War*, 1 August, B T Ranadive, "Communist Fight for Unity". (For food scarcity in Bihar see Vinita Damodaran, *Broken Promises: Popular Protest, Indian Nationalism and the Congress Party in Bihar 1935-1946*, pp. 245-83 and Vinita Damodaran, 'Bihar in the 1940s: Communities, riots and the state', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 18:2,153-176)

⁶⁷ P. C. Joshi, 'The Way out of the Crisis', *People's War*, 7 March 1943: 'Over 65,000 copies of the Party organs are produced in 11 languages... Party Central Head quarter alone has brought out 26 pamphlets in 42,500 copies and 92.5% of which is already sold out. It organised 24,610 volunteers in the Red Guards of P.V.B; 1, 97,629 workers in 240 Trade unions; 2, 81,109 kisans in their own sabhas; 25,822 women in Mahila Sanghams or Atma Raksha Samities; 6,400 kids in 190 Basu Sanghams.'

were sending literature to China for which the Intelligence Bureau advised, "hundred per cent censorship...anything objectionable would be stopped by the censor."⁶⁸

The Government of India pointed out that 'the communist openly declare their 'pro-war' and 'anti-fascist' attitude. They do little however to practice what they preach. It admitted that the arrest of Gandhi and the working committee have persistently demanded their release. The Government of India admits the propaganda of the party since its legalization has given the cause for anxiety and they refer in particular to the party's organ the *People's War*. The tone of this paper was such that action had to be taken against it under the Indian Press Act by the Bombay Government. The Government of India is inclined to discount the pro- Congress activities of the Communists, in particular their support of the Congress, on the ground that this was necessary in order that party might increase its influence. But according to the latest policy of the party, adopted in June 1943, their object is the liberation of the country from imperialist enslavement. This can mean nothing but the overthrow of the present Government. The policy adopted in this province (Bihar) towards Communists has been in the past one of strict neutrality in the sense that

⁶⁸ *Home Political (I) Secret File*, No. 7/10/1943-poll (I); Summary by Chief Censor in India. this report labeled CPI as "official propaganda agents" of the Soviet Union. It mentioned that M.B. Billimoria was instrumental in providing and arranging newsreels for exhibition which was produced by Films Pont, Moscow on behalf of CPI. The Russian films were translated either into English or some Indian languages by an Indian communist at the exhibition. Billimoria also contacted Messrs Sayvzintorgkino for hiring newsreels at cheaper rate for rupees one per reel per month. This further reports that the Socialist Literature Publication Co., Agra offered to buy various speeches by Stalin and to sell communist literature in Urdu if the Russian firm was interested

since the ban was removed, members of the Communist Party have not been condemned as such but have been dealt with strictly on their merits.⁶⁹

The communist Party had been condemning the arrest of Gandhi and Congress leaders and demanded their release. These demands had been supported by a campaign for reconciliation between the Congress and Muslim League with the professed object of forming National Government. The attack on 'Government which accompanied this propaganda in the Communist Press had undoubtedly at times been embarrassing.' 'The Party had, as a whole, exercised a restraining effects on students, and its influence over the student community, though not great, has, such as it is, been used in the direction of preventing student strikes and disorderly demonstration.' The party also made every effort to extend its influence with labour, kisan and the food situation, army and services. *The People's War* in particular had frequently overstepped permissible bounds in its attacks on the colonial Government. The party's pro-war propaganda had almost invariably interlarded with attacks on bureaucratic inefficiency, the effect of which might had detracted from the value of its condemnation of sabotage and fifth columnists. At the time of its legalization, a Japanese invasion of India seemed imminent. Subsequent improvement in the war situation provided a breathing space in which the parties concentrated on internal organization and expansion; finally, increasing confidence in its own strength had

⁶⁹ Government of Bihar to Government of India (from Y.A. Godbole Chief Secretary to GOI to The Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, 21st October 1943). *Home Political*. File No. 7/23/1943, Cf. PS Gupta, *Towards Freedom Documents on the Movements for Independence in India 1943-1944*, ICHR, Delhi, 1997, pp 1648-49

produced a tendency for the party to resume its pro-war and anti-Congress propaganda. It was clear that during (the) period under review, the Communists' principal preoccupation had been to increase the strength of their party. It was difficult to think about Communists to adopt a wholly loyalist attitude; as Communists and Nationalists they 'were fundamentally opposed to "Imperialist domination".⁷⁰

After the conclusion of Bezwada session of AIKS on March 16th, 1944, Adhikari, one of the three members of the Polit Bureau of CPI, addressed in a private meeting of some 50 Communists from all provinces. He said: "their success had greatly encouraged them and could now go ahead with the real task of bringing about of revolution of the proletariat. The kisans and mazdoors were ready for such a revolution and therefore, their work in the trade unions and Kisan Sabha should be intensified. The call for the revolution would be given when the Russian victory in the present war become an absolute certainty, the Nazis are completely annihilated and British and American imperialism is crippled to the extent of being unable to suppress the revolution. They had to take into account the 20 lac of Indian army personnel and to inculcate communist ideas to them so that when the bugle of revolution was sounded, the Indian Army rank and file should join the comrade."⁷¹

⁷⁰ Government of India, *Home Department to all Provincial Governments*, L.P.&J 8 581: ff 31-34, New Delhi, 20 September, 1943.

⁷¹ *Home Political*, File No. 7/5/1944 (I) & K.W, Communist Policy

The Punjab C.I.D. reported that the communist headquarters at Bombay had circulated a model speech to all provincial committees of the Party on the eve of Independence Day regarding famine in Bengal.⁷² In March 1944, the Communists were actively involved in famine relief work. In Bengal they organized a People's Relief Committee. It claimed to have distributed lakh of rupees on relief through food committees, gruel kitchen, and medical units. It had distributed cloth and grain collected from other provinces. Besides this the Party claimed its membership to be 25,000 throughout India, an increase of 9000 since May 1943, Bengal and Madras were the leading provinces with about 7000 members each. Bombay stood next after them with a claim of some 3000 members whereas in Punjab the communist following in industrial area was negligible and there was intense rivalry between the Communist and their Kirti allies and the hostile Akali leaders. The Communist Party journal, the *People's War* circulation, was at its peak in January 1943 when 34,000 copies on the average were sold every week of the English, Marathi, & Gujrati

⁷² Punjab C.I.D. No. 341-42-A.D.S.B. dated 20th January 1944, 'Policy towards Communists'. *Home Political*, File No. 7/5/1944 (I) & K.W: "Independence Day this year comes at a time when utter extinction faces Bengal, the land which gave us our Renaissance and where was born our national movement. Famine started there over 6 months ago... Bureaucracy saying it is over for the last two months. Truth is just opposite. Malaria, smallpox, dropsy, typhoid, a host of epidemics have come in the wake of starvation... The entire socio-economic and family life of Bengal has cracked up all around... How can independence come to the rest of us in India if we allow Bengal, the cradle of our very national movement, to die in this manner in front of us? Bureaucracies realize this. It cannot fight with corruption because it is linked with hoarders... The so called 'Wavell plan' of trying to solve the famine by purely administrative measures, by passing the political issue is their last card."

editions combined. This went down to 26,000 in August and rose again just to 31,000 in December. The Party had established a new record by selling 8000 copies of P.C.Joshi's pamphlet "Who Lives if Bengal Dies".⁷³ In Orissa Communists' interference in the business of procuring food was on the increase. Their newspaper the *Muktiyudha* continued to publish exaggerated and unfounded reports of the starvation. They hold meetings to proclaim the failure of the bureaucracy to solve the problem and alleged that the officials and police were alliance with the hoarders and the merchants. The Communists in Puri district are reported that they were preaching the doctrine of village self-sufficiency for the purpose of preventing the movement of paddy from one village to another. The Cuttack District Communist speakers demanded the opening of more relief centres, the release of political prisoners, and the maintenance of the Parlakimedi ministry in organizations. One of the organizers was arrested under Rule 129 (1) of the Defence of India Rules because he was believed to have instigated people to violence.⁷⁴ The leaders of the Punjab Communist Party had been warned that unless they restrain anti-ministry and anti-Government propaganda

⁷³ Communist Survey Number 1, 31st March 1944, *Home Department Political*, and K.W. to 7/5/1944-Poll: In United Provinces "Organising Committee" claimed about 1000 members: The Bihar Party informed P.C. Joshi that it has 963 members; Assam, Central Provinces and Orissa not more than few hundred each; in Sindh and NWFP, the Communists were a mere handful. The Party Convention in May 1943 launched a membership drive and the target for end of December was Rs 500,000 fund, 56,000 member, 1,33,000 students and 5,60,000 trade unionists was fixed.

⁷⁴ Extract from Orissa Fortnightly for the 2nd half of June 1944, Communist Survey, *Home Poll K.W. to 7/5/1944(I)*

within the limits of reasonable criticism, 'action will be taken against them under the Defence of India Rules.'⁷⁵

The Party started agitation for the release of some 60 Bengal terrorists, who were alleged to have abjured the old cult of terrorism and categorically sworn allegiance to the principles and programme of the Communist Party of India. Meanwhile on 6th May 1944, 9 leading Communists of Delhi were convicted and sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging from one to six months for rioting at a Royist meeting in November 1943.⁷⁶

The Government report mentions that the main objective of the communist was to overthrow the British rule through violent insurrection on the Russian model. The eventual establishment of a communist state in India was scheduled after independence from British rule. 'Despite their professed desire to hasten the overthrow of Fascism, the Communists have never abandoned their traditional strategy of introducing their followers into the armed forces with object of preparing the ground for an outbreak of mutiny when the time for revolution is ripe.' It further mentioned that a careful watch was kept for the existence of Communist 'Cell'. A group of 5 communist was discovered in R.A.F. signal school in Hyderabad state in early in 1944, one was attempting to spread sedition.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Extract from Punjab Fortnightly Report for the first half of July, 1944, *Home Poll K.W. to 7/5/1944(I)*

⁷⁶ Communist Survey No. 2, 30 June 1944, *K.W. to 7/5/1944(I)*

⁷⁷ 'Policy towards the Communist Party of India' (Communism and Armed Forces in India) *Home Political, File No. 7/11/45-Poll (I) & K.W.*

In 1945 there was a widespread support for lifting the ban on *The People's War* in U.P. Krishna Chandra Sharma, leader of the Meerut Congress advocated for the lifting of ban.⁷⁸ Similarly, Abbas Hussain Ghaznavi, a Muslim Leaguer in Ranchi said that '*The People's War* has been doing real and sincere service to the country towards the cause of political unity. Unity of the political parties to end the deadlock has been its guiding motto. By placing ban on it in U.P. there will be setback for the cause of unity. The U.P. Government should reconsider the matter and remove the ban. The ban on the paper is to be taken as a ban on the freedom of press.'⁷⁹ The Meerut District Committee of the CPI in its special meeting strongly condemned this undemocratic and vindictive attitude of the U.P. Government banning the sale and circulation of '*People's War* and its language editions in this province and arresting mass communist leaders at Cawnpore and elsewhere. This committee felt that it was a direct attack on civil and democratic liberties of the Indian people and press which no representative government could deem to do. This committee demanded removal of

⁷⁸ *Home Political. File No. 7/11/45-Poll (I)*. He says 'It is difficult to understand the U.P. Government's order with regard to *People's War's* circulation in U.P. the fault in publishing a historical incident dating as far back as 1930. The story and its implications do not come within purview of the Government's ever-ready phrase 'prejudicial to the efficient prosecution of war'. Even in June-July 1944, the Provincial Committee of CPI at Bombay and Delhi requested that 'Special permission may be granted to the People's Publishing House, Bombay, to consume 2 ½ tons of paper other than newsprint. The five journals of the Communist Party may be allowed to be printed on paper other than newsprint... permission to use the quantity of paper each month equal to the quantity they have been using upto now. (*Home Poll, 7/11/44-Poll (I)*)

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

ban on the papers from U.P. Government.⁸⁰ On 9 June 1945 Amalner Girni Kamgar Union condemned the ban imposed by the Government on *People's War* (English), *Lokyudh* (Hindi) and *Koumijang* {*Qaumi Jang*, Urdu}. It further clarified that it was not only attack on the freedom of press, but it was an attack on genuine fighters for the cause of United Nations and urged for the withdrawal of ban.⁸¹ Similarly Jila Kisan Sabha (Itawa), Lala Pindi Das a Congress leader, Sardar Hayat Khan, leader of Muslim League (Punjab) Assembly Party, Raja Ghazanfar Ali, Deputy Leader Punjab Muslim League Assembly Party and others severely criticized U.P. Government ban on *People's War* and demanded its removal.⁸² In the same year (6 & 9 August, 1945) the Second World War ended after America dropped atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Thus they had resorted to after defeating fascist powers in Europe. As a matter of time, it became obvious that Communists must shift from the strategy of people's war back to the strategy of anti-imperialist struggle. In December 1945 the CPI central committee described "the post-war period in India" as "the period of unprecedented opportunity to make the final bid for power."⁸³

⁸⁰ *Ibid*

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 9 June, 1945

⁸² *Ibid.* 11 June, 1945. several others leader like Syed Jafar Imam, M.L.A., member of the Provincial Muslim League, Jagjivan Ram, Congress leader of Bihar and President of All India Depressed Class League, Rajendra Prasad, member of Congress Working Committee and others vehemently criticized U.P. Government imposition of ban on the *People's War* and its Urdu and Hindi edition. They all were of the opinion that these three weeklies had exposed the hoarders, profiteers and black-marketers

⁸³ P Bandhu and TG Jacob (ed.), *War and National Liberation: CPI Documents, 1939-1945*, p. 159. P. Sundararayya says of this meeting that "in fact it revised its [the Central Committee's] reformist

The relations between CPI and British during 1939-1945, were not very amicable. It can be seen clearly into two phases. First, was between 3 September 1939 and 21 June 1941 when it was considered as imperialist war by the Communist Party of India. In this phase the task before the people according to CPI was "Revolutionary utilization of war crisis for the achievement of National Freedom and second, when Hitler attacked the Soviet Union (on 22 June 1941), the CPI adopted the pro-war policy. The policy towards CPI was thus a failure at all levels of administration on the one hand. The Home Department would have believed that communist cooperation could be used to mobilize the war effort in India to destroy the legitimacy of the Congress instead they supported and continuously demanded the release of Gandhiji and other political prisoners. It is important to remember that they regularly mobilized people by promising a 'final assault' against the government and its lackeys after the war was over. It is evident that the Kerala Communists never lost any opportunity to harness local militancy in Malabar. The Communists did not support the Quit India resolution, due to existing international situation when there was a war between Fascist on the one side and Soviet Russia and allied powers on the other side. But in the course of repression against the Congress member, quite a large number of the Communist workers were also arrested by the local authorities. The Home Departments' secret reports also show that the Communists were trying to reorganize

policies pursued during the war period. *Telengana People's Struggle and its Lessons*. Calcutta, 1972, p. 39; Tridib Chaudhuri in his work *The Swing Back A Critical Survey of the Uevious Zigzags of CPI Political Line 1947-50*, Calcutta, 1950, p. 7, has written that "the CPI in 1947 broke away with people's war tactics and followed Soviet policy of opposition to Anglo-American Imperialism.

and strengthen their party. Communism fundamentally opposed the theory of imperialism, so the whole hearted loyalty from the Communists 'was remote possibility'. In U.P. the entry of *People's War* was banned by the provincial government. Finally it may be said that the relations between the two were mutually hostile to each other. Although there were no political strikes during people's war period (as the workers were involved in the production of war material, Kisans were busy in no-rent movement at one or another place). during war period CPI benefited in terms of organizational expansion and consolidation and could lay claim to be the third most influential party in post-war Indian politics

Chapter V

Communist Party, Muslim League and the Question of Pakistan

V.1. The Communist Party and the Muslim League, 1937-1947

The decade 1937-1947 was crucial as well as trying period in the history of India's freedom struggle. The role of the Communist Party during the period has largely been ignored or partially touched in the historiography of India's struggle for independence. In this section an attempt is made to trace the moves of the Communist Party of India during these years, to influence the Muslim League, in order to persuade them to demand a larger independent, undivided nation based on secular values rather than obtaining, narrow, parochial partitioned country.

Growing popularity of the CPI in early thirties made the government apprehensive. It was banned in 1934. The rank and file of the CPI joined Indian National Congress with the purpose of radicalizing it.

This was the time when provincial elections were declared and different parties had adopted divergent courses. The CPI considered the declaration of provincial elections illegal. They called the Act of 1935 a 'Slave Constitution'. Still they decided in favour of participating in the elections. At the same time CPI was opposed to the "acceptance of office" under the constitution. They raised the demand for a 'constituent assembly'. Later, there was change in CPI's stance with regard to acceptance of office. It was based on the understanding that a 'bourgeoisie democratic revolution' should precede socialism. When the Congress

decided to accept office, Ben Bradley advised CPI to form a united front by supporting it from outside.¹

On the eve of elections (1937), like the Congress, the Muslim League had also adopted a resolution, spelling out their programme concerning the country's progress and the interests of the people. The hallmark of this resolution was the concern shown for Islam and the Urdu language as also its scripts with which the Muslim minority identified itself. An atmosphere was thus created in which the Congress and the League appeared to be coming together for the collective benefit of the country.² Both parties had contested the election in United Provinces on the basis of a general agreement to put up common candidates.³ The results were on expected lines.⁴ However this phase of conciliation proved to be temporary and short-lived. Soon after the convincing success of the INC in the election, a rift started appearing.⁵ Subsequently, the Muslim League shifted to a separatist stance as reflected in the famous document 'Final Bid for Power' (1947) where it was noted that the goal of League was "the establishment in India of a federation of

¹ Utpal Ghosh, *The Communist Party of India and India's Freedom Struggle 1937 to 1947*, Calcutta 1996, p.57

² Tufail Ahmad Manglori, *Towards a Common Destiny A National Manifesto*, trans by Ali Ashraf, New Delhi, 1994, p. 276

³ T G Jacob (ed.), *National Question in India, CPI Documents 1942-1947*, Delhi, 1988, p 275

⁴ Cf. Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman, Jinnah, the Muslim League and the demand for Pakistan* (henceforth *The Sole Spokesman*), Cambridge, rep. 1994, p 31. The Congress could win 134 out of 140 general seats while the League won 1 urban Muslim seats and 20 in rural.

⁵ Tufail Ahmad Manglori, *Towards a Common Destiny*, p 276

free democratic state in which the right and interest of Muslims and other minorities are adequately and effectively safeguarded".⁶

The All India Muslim League Council on 20th March 1937 passed a resolution strongly condemning the Congress for foisting 'Bande Mataram' as the National Anthem upon the country showing callous disregard for the feelings of Muslim. The resolution further stressed that the song was not only anti-Islamic and idolatrous in its inspiration, but also subversive of the growth of genuine nationalism in India.⁷

The fissures appearing in the relationship between INC and AIML became further evident from Jawaharlal Nehru's speech at Madras where he reportedly asserted that there were only two parties in India: the Congress and the British Government. Reacting to this assertion Jinnah said there was a third party, the Muslim League. Nehru contradicted it saying that the League was confined to the upper classes only. Its members did not go to villages on the contrary; the members of the Congress were in touch with Muslim Masses. In short there began a quarrel on no-issues.⁸

In U.P., the Congress leaders refused to form a coalition with the League on the pretext of having a "homogenous cabinet". They offered to League members

⁶ T G Jacob (ed.), *National Question in India, CPI Documents 1942-1947*, p 275

⁷ G. Allana (ed.), *Pakistan Movement: Historical Documents*, Lahore, 1988, p.175

⁸ Tufail Ahmad Manglori, *Towards a Common Destiny*, p 276

births in the ministry provided they dissolved their Party in the Assembly.⁹ All these happenings, naturally, led to simmering disputes between the Congress and the Muslim League.

It was in this situation of growing differences between Muslim League and Indian National Congress that poet Allama Iqbal wrote to Jinnah on 20th March 1937: “while we (Indian Muslims) are ready to cooperate with other progressive parties in the country, we must not ignore the fact that the whole future of Islam as a moral political force in Asia rests very largely on a complete organization of Indian Muslims. I, therefore, suggest that an effective reply should be given to All India National Convention. You (Jinnah) should immediately hold an All India Muslim Convention in Delhi to which you should invite members of the new Provincial Assemblies as well as other prominent Muslim leaders. To this convention you must restate as clearly and as a distinct political unit in the country. It is absolutely necessary to tell the world both inside and outside India that economic problem is not the only problem in the country. From the Muslim point of view the cultural problem is of much greater consequence to most Indian Muslims. At any rate it is not less important than the economic problem... This would further make it clear to the Hindus that no political device, however subtle, can make the Indian Muslim lose sight of his cultural entity”.¹⁰

⁹ T G Jacob (ed.), *National Question in India, CPI Documents 1942-1947*, p 275

¹⁰ G. Allana (ed.), *Pakistan Movement: Historical Documents*, pp. 140-41.

A.K. Ghosh, (who joined Communist party in 1931 and became its general secretary in 1951) articulating in *National Front*, suggested that even though some of the demands of the Muslims such as a larger share in the Government and Municipal services, schools for imparting education in Urdu medium and Muslim culture in localities where the Muslim constitute a small minority, etc. may appear unreasonable, the Congress must prepare itself to concede them. The Muslim grievances of attempted restriction on cow slaughter, music before mosque etc. wherever they exist, should be immediately remedied. He further emphasized that it was necessary to purge the Congress completely of its Hindu outlook and it should prohibit all semi-religious ceremonies at the Congress functions. Bande Mataram should not be used in the Congress meetings. The insistence on the Vidyamandir scheme had created a crisis in the Central Province. It was also necessary, according to him, to discard other doubts among the Muslims regarding the scheme.¹¹

The installation of the Congress Provincial Ministries in eight out of eleven provinces and the exclusion of the League, led to sharp reaction among a section of Muslims against the idea of a “Congress majority”. They were induced to strive for making the League more powerful.¹²

¹¹ A.K. Ghosh, ‘Communal Unity’, *National Front*, 1 January 1939, Vol. 1, No. 42, p 5

¹² R. Coupland, *Report on the Constitutional Problem in India*, Part II, Indian Politics, 1943. p 112; Soon after the election debacle the League through its ‘economic, social and educational’ programme in 1937 tried to bring the organisation into touch with the masses. This included the encouragement of cottage industries, use of ‘swadeshi’ articles, organisation of volunteer corps

It is in this context that Iqbal, in a letter to Jinnah dated 21 June 1937 urged that the Muslims of North and West India and Bengal should have the privilege of self-determination.¹³

The INC had already launched the Muslim Mass Contact Programme in January 1937 and placed it under the charge of K.M. Ashraf, a well known Communist. He was entrusted with the express task of directing this programme to 'wean away Muslims from the fold of Muslim League'.¹⁴ In 1937-38 the Communists were active in the mass contact campaign of the Congress, which immediately provoked bitter opposition from the Muslim League.¹⁵

for social service, ameliorating the conditions of factory workers, abolition of usury, reduction of rural and urban indebtedness, rural uplift, the introduction of compulsory primary education and re-organisation of secondary and university education. C H Philips and Wain Wright. *The Partition of India: Policies and Perspective 1935-47*, Aberden, 1970, p. 259

¹³ Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, p 42

¹⁴ Khizr Humayun Ansari, *The Socialist Thought Among the North Indian Muslim (1917-1947)*, Lahore, 1990, p 222; The Congress had a big majority in U.P. (134 out of 228), enjoyed the support of the Deoband ulama group which dominated the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind, and was being backed in northern India also by Ahrar Party formed few year back by ex-Khilafatists in the Punjab. An Ahrar Conference in May 1937 denounced Jinnah as an 'out-of-date politician...making a fetish of constitutionalism', and the League as 'a coterie of a few knights, Khan Bahadurs, and Nawabs'. Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947*, first published, Delhi, 1983, rep. 2001, pp. 353-54. For detail about Muslim Mass Contact see, Mushirul Hasan. 'The Muslim Mass Contact Campaign: An Attempt at Political Mobilization', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 7:1, 1984, pp. 58 -76

¹⁵ Irfan Habib, 'The Left and the National Movement', *Social Scientist*, Vol. 27, No.5, 6, May-June, 1998, p. 24; Throughout the twenty-seven months of Congress rule in provinces, the League kept up an intense propaganda barrage, climaxed by the Pirpur Report (Report of the inquiry Committee appointed by the Council of the All India Muslim League to inquire into

The Congress was trying to consolidate its electoral success by winning support of the Muslims.¹⁶ This made Jinnah and the Muslim Leaguers apprehensive of losing their political support. In the 26th session of the Muslim League at Patna in 1938 (Dec 26-28), Jinnah ventilated his anger against the Congress by dubbing it as a Hindu party which “wanted to enslave the Muslims”. This indicated that the objective of the League at this juncture was opposing the Congress on all counts.¹⁷ The reaction of the Congress is epitomized in Nehru’s characterization of League as anti-nationalist and narrow-minded. According to Nehru (1938), League was a directionless party and stood for chaos and social anarchy.¹⁸ Some elements in the Congress felt that congress had perhaps underestimated League’s capacity for survival, as well as the extent of fear that was created among Muslims which it could play up. The Congress therefore, called off the Muslim Mass Contact Movement and Jinnah was approached through Subhash Chandra Bose for arriving at a fresh understanding between the league and the

Muslim grievances in Congress provinces, late-1938), the Shareef Report on Bihar (March 1939), enumerated the various atrocities committed by the Congress Party regime on the Muslims of Bihar and Fazlul Huq’s Muslim Sufferings under Congress Rule (December 1939) spoke of denigration of Islam, interference with their religious beliefs, and religious practices such as prohibition of *azan* and of the sacrifices of cows, desecration of mosques by throwing pigs which are abominable to Muslims, etc. Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947*, p 355; Y Krishnan, ‘The unfinished agenda of partition’, *Asian Affairs*, 1998, Vol. 29, No. 3, p. 279

¹⁶ Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, p 45

¹⁷ Tufail Ahmad Manglori, *Towards a Common Destiny*, p 279

¹⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, New Delhi, 1980, p 605

Congress. But Jinnah refused to parley with the Congress.¹⁹ Much of the League propaganda at this stage was directed against the Congress tri-colour, the singing of Bande Mataram, the Vidyamandir scheme in C.P. and Wardha Scheme of education. All these examples were paraded as the proof of ‘Congress atrocities’.²⁰ Not only this, the League reduced its membership fee to 2 annas instead of Congress 4 annas, in place of Congress tri-colour flag they started hoisting the green “Islamic” flag and a committee for social programme was appointed.²¹

Around this time the Communist Party was also engaged in analyzing the “communal problem”. This effort is reflected in the report on their “Resolution on Pakistan and National Unity”²², passed at Mantravarpallam (1938). This was the initial effort. The Communist Party could foresee that the Congress-League unity was the key to national unity and therefore, urged negotiation between two. They could see the transformation that had already occurred in the attitude of the Muslim masses.²³ The other political parties including Congress Socialist Party utterly failed to perceive this change in the situation. They still saw the problem in the old way. The C.S.P. for example declared: “the Muslim masses will come over

¹⁹ Subhash Chandra Bose’s note to Jinnah, 14 May 1938, AIML/File No. 122, Cf. Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, p 44

²⁰ Ayesha Jalal, p 43

²¹ K M Ashraf, *An Overview of Indian Muslim Politics, 1920-47*, Trans. By Jaweed Ashraf. New Delhi, 2001, pp 102-04

²² G Adhikari (ed.), *Pakistan and National Unity- The Communist Solution*, Bombay, 1943, p 17

²³ *Ibid.*, p 28

to us and the League leadership will get isolated”.²⁴ The Communists on the other hand were of the opinion that though a section of Muslim intelligentsia had joined hands with Congress, but in the post election scenario, when Congress refused to form coalition ministries, these intellectual along with Muslim masses felt ditched. The League leadership was also trying to exploit the anti-imperialist upsurge of Muslim masses. The Communists realized that the waxing of the Muslim League was tantamount to swelling of the problem of “communalism” in India.²⁵ Congress on the other hand felt that the reactionary League leadership was only exploiting the ‘backwardness’ of the Muslims.²⁶ Therefore, they had resorted to ‘Muslim Mass Contact Programme’ which was perceived by the League as a move by the Congress to destroy their political support. Apparently the situation was turning very pessimistic but the Communists perception was different. In their perception “growth of Muslim League was not the growth of communalism but the rise of anti-imperialist nationalist consciousness among the Muslim masses.”²⁷ The CPI hoped “to weld this into a firm anti-imperialist unity”.²⁸ Therefore, they put forward the slogan of Congress-League Unity.²⁹ The idea behind this slogan was that as both League and Congress were essentially opposing the British

²⁴ Ibid., pp 28-30

²⁵ Ibid., p 28

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., pp 28-29

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

imperialism, these should not be allowed to dissipate their energies in vain. By uniting these two major political forces, it was visualized; a united front could be formed to pursue democratic demands for carrying forward Indian struggle for freedom.”³⁰

It is interesting to see that on 8th April 1939 at the Delhi session of the AIML, a resolution moved by S Naimul Haq seeking certain civil liberties and the criticism of the controversial Wardha Scheme of Basic Education was discussed and withdrawn.³¹ However, the same League changed its opinion within a few months. They raised a serious objection in July 1939 to the Wardha scheme of education. It was condemned as a calculated step to destroy Muslim culture gradually and secure Hindu cultural supremacy.³² Clause 5 of the Resolution was particularly addressed to the linguistic schism. The League felt that in the name of Hindustani a highly Sanskritised Hindi was being spread to suppress Urdu.³³ Similarly the text books prescribed and provisionally sanctioned by some provincial governments were also condemned as highly objectionable from the Muslim point of view.³⁴ There was a lurking fear of hegemonic structuring of Indian society and culture by exclusiveness of Hindu religion, its gods and

³⁰ Ibid., p 29

³¹ Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada (ed.), *Foundation of Pakistan, All India Muslim League Documents 1906-1947*, Vol. III, Karachi, 1990, p 294

³² Ibid., pp 301-02

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

goddesses and ignoring of the contribution of Muslim thereto.³⁵ In this context, the suggestion by the Progressive Writers Association deserves attention. In their meeting of January 1939, they suggested that the solution of communal problem, especially the problems of school syllabus and Hindi-Urdu controversy could be achieved by “eschewing communalism, sectarianism and reaction over the introduction of syllabus of education introduced by the provincial governments...”³⁶ They declared “It is we who want literature should have the closest touch with the masses. We want is for us to make the language and the script easy enough for masses to learn. We want to keep literature clear of communalism and racial antagonism so it is our duty to evolve a common language and a common script.”³⁷

Besides socio-political grievances, there were economic grievances as well. B T Ranadive (born in December 1904) drew the attention towards economic grievances of the Muslims. Admittedly, the CPI treated communal as closely linked with economic grievances of the Muslim masses which were exploited by the opportunist League’s leaders as well as imperialists. It appears that the CPI’s stand was on the whole pro-Congress and anti-League.³⁸

On the communal question the CPI’s stand during this period was more or less closer to that of the Congress. It supported Congress initiatives but did not

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ ‘India’s Cultural United Front’, *National Front*, 8 January 1939, Vol.I, No 47, pp 6-7.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Utpal Ghosh, *The Communist Party of India and India’s Freedom Struggle*, pp 70-71

regard it as a final solution. Adhikari sought the root of communalism in the capitalist-imperialist exploitation and “mainly in the competition for jobs and favours in the struggle for the distribution of the little political power which is to be obtained through compromise with imperialism”.³⁹ He suggested that the menace of communalism could be eliminated only through mass struggle against the imperialists. He glorified League progressive role in twenties and denounced its subsequent pro-imperialist stand.⁴⁰ The CPI favoured the mass campaign against federation for repeal of repressive laws and direct election to the Central Assembly. They expressed an appreciation that some of the Congressmen like Bhulabhai Desai and Satyamurthi were for the acceptance of the federal scheme in a modified form.⁴¹ CPI noted that when every circumstance ‘was favourable for a final struggle’ these acceptances of federal scheme would mean repudiation of the goal of national independence. Like Bose, the National Front contested the logic of members of Constituent Assembly elected under the Act of 1935, time being representative of the people. They demanded that the AICC must declare in unequivocal terms that the Constituent Assembly could not be convened under the aegis of imperialism. It was felt by R D Bhardwaj, Bankim Mukherji, Somnath Lahiri, N Dutta, Majumdar, S G Sardesai, V. V. Chitale et al., authors of Draft

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp69-70

⁴¹ Ibid., p 62

Resolution that “time was ripe for passing on to the offensive”.⁴² The party called for an intensive campaign throughout the country against federal scheme, and Workers and Peasants organization.⁴³

In 1939 the Congress Provincial Ministries resigned in protest against Great Britain’s making India a party to their war against Nazi Germany without consulting the Indians. The CPI on the other hand, following the line taken by the International Communist leadership declared this war as an ‘imperialist war’.⁴⁴

Both the Congress and the League looked at the war as a good opportunity for bargaining with the British. Gandhi and Nehru, at first offered their unconditional cooperation to British war efforts. The CWC declared their resolve not to spark off or lead any mass movement against the British rule in order to extract concessions. The AICC endorsed this view on October 10, 1939 and demanded that India be declared an independent nation.⁴⁵ Prior to this the Muslim League had passed a resolution on 18 September promising support in the war effort on the condition that no constitutional advance in India be made without consulting the League as the sole representative of the Muslims in India.⁴⁶ Obviously, the League leadership too had started a parallel ‘bargaining game’ with

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ P Baddhu and T G Jacob, (eds.), *War and National Liberation CPI Documents 1939-45*. New Delhi, 1988, p iii

⁴⁵ Ibid. ., pp xix-xx

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp xx

imperialism. They offered cooperation in war, pledged non-embarrassment and hoped for separate settlement on its own.⁴⁷ However from the League's point of view suspension of the federal scheme was not enough. They asked for its complete abandonment and impressed upon the government the need of revising and reviewing the entire constitutional problem *de novo*.⁴⁸

Commenting upon the war, the *National Front* observed that both Hindu and Muslim masses would receive severe treatment at the hands of the British. There was a strong feeling amongst a large section of the Muslims to achieve unity between the two communities for forming a common front against imperialism in the struggle for independence.⁴⁹

In 1940, the Congress at Ramgarh session demanded complete independence and a Constituent Assembly based on adult suffrage. Whereas the League in 1940 passed a historic 'Pakistan Resolution' demanding complete freedom for Muslim majority zone, to be carved out and constituted into independent states.⁵⁰ League's adoption of the Pakistan Resolution in March 1940, made it clear that all chances of rapprochement between the Congress and League had lost their relevance. It has rightly been observed that this resolution was a

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p xx

⁴⁸ Cf. C H Philips and Wain Wright, *The Partition of India: Policies and Perspective 1935-47*, p. 262

⁴⁹ 'Joint Front Against War', *National Front*, 3 September, 1939, Vol. 2, No. 29, p. 459

⁵⁰ Tufail Ahmad Manglori, *Towards a Common Destiny*, p 280; for an alternative critical view on the aspect see Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman* (1985)

clear demand for secession based on exploitation of the fear of Muslim masses about Hindu domination.⁵¹ The only way to avoid such an ugly turn in Indian history was to unite the Hindu and Muslim masses by raising issues of agrarian nature in which the Muslim masses were generally interested.⁵²

Confronted with the challenge of the demand for the division of British India into two separate states, the CPI had to examine afresh the nature and complexity of the communal problem of the Indian subcontinent.⁵³ The CPI began to see that the so called communal problem especially Hindu-Muslim in India was really a reflection of the growth of linguistic and other regional nationalities.⁵⁴ According to them the only way out in the situation was to recognize the right of self-determination to the point of secession of the Muslim nationalities “as in fact of all nationalities which have India as their motherland”.⁵⁵ Nevertheless by advocating this formulation of the right of self-determination, the Communists were not advocating secession as such. This was an acknowledgement of the availability of opportunity for remaining together. First, people should try to reach an understanding for remaining together by avoiding fratricidal conflicts of so as to be able to fight unitedly against British imperialism. The CPI believed that it

⁵¹ B T Ranadive, ‘The Role of Communist in the Freedom Struggle in India’, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 12, No. 9, September 1984, pp 26-27

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ G Adhikari (ed.), *Pakistan and National Unity- The Communist Solution*, p 29

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p 30

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

was essentially a national problem not a communal or religious one and therefore should be treated as a just demand. They emphasized “self-determination not out of any opportunistic impulse for winning over Muslims. But it was aimed at achieving Congress-League unity for united resistance to imperialism. According to CPI it was only way of weaning them, (Muslims) away from separatist and disruptive slogans. This becomes evident from a contemporary document.” It addresses the Muslim League in following words: “Our (Communists) ardent appeal to the Muslim League is: your right of self-determination will remain on paper if you do not intervene in national crisis. Both Hindu and Muslim will pass from British domination to Jap (Japan) slavery if you let the situation drift. The harder you work for the release of the Congress leaders, the more unequivocal your support to the national demand, the more ardently you work for Congress-League unity, the easier it will be to get the Congress to accept willingly the right of self-determination”.⁵⁶ The sincerity of the Communists is also proved by the declaration of its young followers the All India Student Federation conference in December 1940. Commenting on the Pakistan resolution, they demanded that India should be “a voluntary federation of regional states based on mutual confidence”.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Utpal Ghosh, *The Communist Party of India and India's Freedom Struggle*, pp 197-206

⁵⁷ Shri Prakash, ‘CPI and the Pakistan Movement’, in Bipan Chandra (ed.), *The Indian Left: Critical Appraisals*, New Delhi, 1983, p 284

By 1941, the Pakistan demand took a concrete shape. Jinnah had made it clear that the Muslim League would not accept any constitution of all India character with one government at the centre but would like “to establish a completely independent state in the North-West and Eastern Zones of India, with full control of finance, defence and foreign affairs”.⁵⁸

A marked shift in the Communist Party of India towards war appeared when on 22 June 1941 Hitler invaded the USSR, the character of the war according to CPI transferred from an imperialist one⁵⁹ to people’s war because now there was an attack on a socialist country which was the father land of the workers of the world. This stand caused deep confusion among the members of the PWA. In July 1941 Progressive Writers who were the members of the CPI held fast and supported the ‘united anti-imperialist front’.⁶⁰ The majority of the Communist leaders detained at Deoli Detention Centre felt that it had become their ‘moral and political’ duty to support Allied war effort because the Soviet Union had come under attack. The threat of Communist disruption to the war effort thus being removed, the British government gradually released leading Communists and CPI was legalized on 24th July 1942.⁶¹

Perceiving the war situation, the British Government sent a Cripps proposal to reconcile Indian at this juncture of war crisis. Joshi said that the Congress stand

⁵⁸ Utpal Ghosh, *The Communist Party of India and India’s Freedom Struggle*, pp 101- 02

⁵⁹ P Banddhu and T G Jacob, (eds.), *War and National Liberation CPI Documents 1939-45*, p 31

⁶⁰ Khizr Humayun Ansari, *The Socialist Thought Among the North Indian Muslim*, p 18

⁶¹ Ibid.

was “Give us National Government and we will defend the country” League, “Give us Self-Determination and we will defend the country with or without Congress”. Imperialist used further promises to calm the League or Congress. Neither of two forges the united front to face Cripps, blow up the imperialist game and jointly rouse the people for national defence. ‘Neither trusted the other and both lost’⁶². But it was rejected by both the Congress and the Muslim League. Though the government had accepted Jinnah’s⁶³ demand in the sense that the provinces were given the option to join or not to join the union. The Communist Party in their letter number seven welcomed the British constitutional proposals “as a suitable basis for a settlement; inadequate though they are”, and urged the Congress and the League, to form a national government to mobilize the country for defence.⁶⁴

The things had come to such a passé that C. Rajagopalachari’s proposal that the freedom of India could not be achieved without a settlement with the Muslim League. It was outrightly rejected by Congress as well as League. In sheer disgust he tendered his resignation.⁶⁵ The Muslim League opposed the proposal of Rajagopalchhari better known as “Rajaji Formula”, for a plebiscite of the whole

⁶² *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. 1, 1943, p. 305

⁶³ Tufail Ahmad Manglori, *Towards a Common Destiny*, p 284

⁶⁴ Subodh Roy (ed.), *Communism in India, Unpublished Documents, 1935-1945*, Calcutta, 1976, p. ?

⁶⁵ C H Philips and Wain Wright, *The Partition of India: Policies and Perspective 1935-47*, p 267

population in Muslim majority regions on the issue of separation.⁶⁶ The CPI too criticized the Rajaji's proposals and exposed the weakness of its position on Pakistan. According to them it was in the nature of top settlement which did not show to the bulk of the Congress rank and file how justice to the Muslim masses was combined with the preservation and strengthening of Indian unity and integrity.⁶⁷ P C Joshi had out rightly rejected Rajaji Formula. He said, "It accepts the right to Pakistan but not Pakistan itself. It provides the mechanism to vote for it if they want to get it. But the right to vote is not the right to self-determination."⁶⁸

The Muslim League, in its resolution at Bombay, deplored the decision of AICC on August 8, 1942 to launch an "open rebellion" by resorting to mass civil disobedience movement in pursuance of their objective of establishing Congress Hindu domination in India. This movement according to League was not only directed against the British Government into handing over power to Hindu Oligarchy, but also to force Mussalmans to submit and surrender to the Congress terms and direction.⁶⁹ Jinnah utilized this period when the principal leaders of the Congress were behind prison bars, to the fullest advantage in building up the League as a powerful party. An extensive propaganda was carried out in favour of

⁶⁶ Shri Prakash, 'CPI and the Pakistan Movement', p 250

⁶⁷ G Adhikari (ed.), *Pakistan and National Unity- The Communist Solution*, p 9

⁶⁸ P.C.Joshi, 'They Must not Fail', p 30, Cf. Shri Prakash, 'CPI and the Pakistan Movement'. p 251

⁶⁹ G. Allana (ed.), *Pakistan Movement: Historical Documents.*, p 310

Pakistan. Muslim separation became the creed and ideology of the progressive, the intellectuals, the business community, the middle class and masses.⁷⁰

The CPI was following the policy of united front as enunciated by the Comintern. It opposed the Quit India Movement and criticized the CSP and Forward Bloc for organizing sabotage. They planned to persuade both the Congress and League that their interest lay in unity.⁷¹ As Sumit Sarkar has pointed out that it was not a wise step to embark on an out confrontation at a moment when India was full of allied troops and when the British would have had a unique chance of justifying the most brutal of repressive measures.⁷² The appeal issued by the CPI on the occasion of the League session at Delhi (1943) clearly reflected this policy. The CPI referred to the League as a sister organization in the struggle for freedom and self-determination. It also criticized the League negligence of government attack on the Congress as a national danger.⁷³ But Jinnah holds contrary view of the appeal issued by the CPI.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ C H Philips and Wain Wright, *The Partition of India: Policies and Perspective 1935-47*, p 267

⁷¹ Shri Prakash, 'CPI and the Pakistan Movement', pp 243-44

⁷² Sumit Sarkar, 'The Communist and 1942', *Social Scientist*, Vol. 12, No. 9, September 1984. p 52

⁷³ Shri Prakash, 'CPI and the Pakistan Movement', p 243-44; It was on 15 February 1943 that the CPI in its appeal to Muslim League in *People's War* wrote: "we appeal to all our leading patriots. On your shoulders rest the biggest responsibility today. There are few barriers of prejudice of misunderstanding left between you and the Congress. Gandhi has disowned the campaign of sabotage and anarchy; he has stretched out on behalf of the Congress his hand of friendship towards you through the prison bars. Nothing but these bars stand between you and your great brother party; between you and National Government which you so ardently desire

Muzaffar Ahmad wrote to CPI in 1943 about replacing 'Advisors' Rule. To him the best way was to move the masses for forming real coalition ministries with or without Congress participation but with Congress support, pledged to work for crisis for Congress-League Unity and for National Government for National Defence... The bureaucracy wanted to drive a wedge between the non-Congress parties and the Congress. The best solution was to launch a broad-based popular movement for forming coalition ministries in all provinces, composed of all non Congress parties and provided for the later inclusion of the Congress also. And the ministries ought to pledge themselves before the people to work for the release of Congress leaders and lifting ban on the Congress, to solve food problem in close collaboration with People's Food Committee, to support the demand for National Government based on Congress-League unity. The CPI, he argued, had no hesitation in declaring that it would support such coalition ministries in all provinces. It urged the League leader that their asking for the release of Congress

and urgently need, between you and the satisfaction of your just demand for self-determination. The viceroy had already said 'No' to this just demand of yours. The viceroy demands surrender of the Congress. To tolerate this demand is to help the bureaucracy to crush the biggest brother party of yours in the country through which alone you can realise your fight of self-determination". PS Gupta (ed.), *Towards Freedom Documents on the Movements for Independence in India 1943-1944*, pp. 1566-68

⁷⁴ Jinnah referred to the appeal issued by the Communist Party to the Muslim League. "The Communist Party", he said, 'seems to be the most active party these days, but the statement in their appeals is fundamentally wrong'. Sajjad Zaheer, *A Case for Congress-League Unity*. Bombay, 1944, p. 15

leaders would smoothen the path of winning self determination.⁷⁵ The Communist literature of the period is full of similar commentaries on Congress-League unity and grant of self-determination despite the opposition from Congress. The CPI issued an appeal to the Muslim League at the time of Karachi session in December 1943. It stated that since League ministries had been formed in Assam Bengal, Punjab, Frontier Province and Sind and it commanded allegiance of Muslim masses, the party wanted the League to work for the welfare of the people. They demanded that the League must introduce rationing, equal quantity of food for each. According to them unity and self determination was the panacea of all evils. The key to the freedom of entire Islamic world, the CPI pleaded for national unity, Congress League unity to secure the release of Congress leaders and end the deadlock.⁷⁶

The CPI had high hopes from Gandhi-Jinnah talks. They thought some kind of settlement would come forth. But unfortunately, Jinnah stuck to his demand for the separation of six provinces, namely Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan, NWFP, Bengal, and Assam. He described Gandhiji's offer as 'a shadow and a husk mutilated and moth-eaten Pakistan', ultimately the talk broke down.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ P.S. Gupta (ed.), *Towards Freedom Documents on the Movement for Independence in India 1943-44*, pp 1606-1608

⁷⁶ Sajjad Zaheer, *A Case for Congress –League Unity*, pp 40-44; 'Appeals of the CPI on the eve of the Karachi Session of AIML'. *People's War*, 19 December 1943

⁷⁷ Utpal Ghosh, *The Communist Party of India and India's Freedom Struggle*, pp 206-207

R.P.Dutt noted that there was a remarkable growth in the size and strength of the League during 1937-45. Its membership in 1927 was 1330 increased to hundred of thousands in 1938 and 2 million by 1944. In Central and Provincial Assembly it won 460 out of 533 seats. So it established as a major political organization among the Muslims in India. Above all the League's growth reflected the failure of the Congress to make any serious consistent effort to reach out and appeal to the Muslim masses.⁷⁸

Similarly, we find that Muslim press like *Ajmal* (Bombay) on 16 April 1944 also echoed in the similar tone of CPI that "the stable unity between the Congress and the League spells the death blow for British imperialism". It appealed for the bigger and broader unity of Congressmen and Leaguers in the country.⁷⁹

The Simla Conference (25 June, 1945) broke down as Jinnah demanded League's absolute right to choose the Muslim members in the proposed cabinet and as he wanted to secure some sort of communal veto in Executive. The CPI opposed the League demand, and appealed to both the Congress and the League leadership not to wait for fresh British initiative but must come together themselves on the basis of Congress-League policy. Elsewhere, Joshi alleged that for the failure of attempts to come for a compromise on the communal question was due to the pursuance of the 19th century liberal ideas by both the League and

⁷⁸ R.P.Dutt, *India Today*, Calcutta, 1947, edn., pp 468-70

⁷⁹ 'One Step Nearer to wider unity', *People's War*, 16 April 1944

the Congress leaders and their faith in British.⁸⁰ The Simla conference seriously undermined Jinnah claim to be the sole spokesman of all Muslims.⁸¹

The CPI rejected the League demand of six provinces because the demand appeared to be 'unjust'. Communist Party promised extension of its support if the League gave up the demand of partition and agreed to 'fight shoulder to shoulder for common independence in alliance with freedom loving brothers'.⁸² The CPI was advocating its vision of free India comprising 17 nationalities and a vague idea of some sort of federation. Whereas Jinnah and League reiterated their demand that the first step must be to accept Pakistan in principle since the Muslim electorate had given their verdict in favour of it. The Congress still wanted independence first and settlement of the communal problem afterward.⁸³ In January 1946 P.C.Joshi declared "we and all the progressive persons in India wanted the Congress to become the people's National United Front and lead us in India's struggle for independence".⁸⁴

During the Cabinet Mission's negotiation (March-June, 1946), the CPI objected to the presence of British troops and demanded their withdrawal within six months.⁸⁵ In a memorandum to the Cabinet Mission by the CPI, it was

⁸⁰ Utpal Ghosh, *The Communist Party of India and India's Freedom Struggle*, pp 206-207

⁸¹ Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, p 129

⁸² P.C.Joshi, *For the Final Bid for Power. The Communist Plan Explained*, Bombay, 1946, p 97

⁸³ Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, p 174

⁸⁴ Cf. Shri Prakash, 'CPI and the Pakistan Movement', p 250

⁸⁵ Utpal Ghosh, *The Communist Party of India and India's Freedom Struggle*, pp 216-217

proposed that the best course would be an agreement between the Congress and the League for parity in the Government and the adequate representation to minorities. It was the right of the Indian people to have their own constitution and the full sovereignty vested in them. The Communist Party was firmly convinced that the best interest of the Indian masses would be served by their remaining together in one common union, in a common brotherhood to defend the freedom and solve the problem of poverty which required the basis of the application of the principle of self determination.⁸⁶

The Communists called the proposed scheme of the Constituent Assembly as 'undemocratic' because it was not elected on the basis of adult suffrage.⁸⁷ They however, opposed the League's demand for a single Constituent Assembly and a separate state. It could not be conceded without reference to the will of the entire peoples of the linguistically and culturally homogenous areas like Assam, Bengal, the Pathanland and Central Punjab etc., all of whom had the right of self determination.⁸⁸ To solve the Hindu-Muslim problem Somnath Lahiri proposed setting up of a Boundary Commission which would demarcate the existing provinces and states in such a way that each state was culturally homogenous and "India is regrouped in national units."⁸⁹

⁸⁶ P.C.Joshi, 'Memorandum of the CPI to the British Cabinet Mission', in T G Jacob (ed.), *National Question in India, CPI Documents 1942-1947*, pp 236-240

⁸⁷ Somnath Lahiri, 'Draft Resolution for the Constituent Assembly', pp 5-8

⁸⁸ Utpal Ghosh, *The Communist Party of India and India's Freedom Struggle*, pp 216-217

⁸⁹ Somnath Lahiri, *op.cit* , p 8

We find shift in Communists attitude toward Pakistan in 1946. R. P. Dutt in *Labour Monthly* wrote: 'Muslim League is not a national movement of certain nationalities. It is a communal organization just as Hindu Sabha. Pakistan movement is a movement of the League for the constitution of the Muslim state with the determining factor as religion and not nationality'.⁹⁰ The PWA began to support once again the emergence of a united Indian nation at independence; the League became more hostile and contested literary and political issues whenever the opportunity arose.⁹¹

It was emphasized by Joshi that the Communist Party was the only non-Muslim organization that had voluntarily accepted and popularized demand of the Muslims to be sovereign in their own homeland. They had done this despite the suspicion of the League leadership about Communists and slanders against them in the League's press.⁹²

On April 26, 1947 Jinnah told Mountbatten that he would be delighted "if Bengal could remain united even if this meant it would have to stay out of Pakistan. After all, what is the use of Bengal without Calcutta; they will better remain united."⁹³ Contesting this, Nehru on 27 May formally announced that Congress would agree to Bengal remaining united only if it remains in Union.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Utpal Ghosh, *The Communist Party of India and India's Freedom Struggle*, p 207

⁹¹ Khizr Humayun Ansari, *The Socialist Thought Among the North Indian Muslim*, p 188

⁹² T G Jacob (ed.), *National Question in India, CPI Documents 1942-1947*, p 322

⁹³ Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, p 256

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p 281

Earlier on 8 March 1947 the CWC passed the historic resolution demanding the partition of the Punjab.⁹⁵

The Communal riots that preceded and accompanied the partition could not demarcate the Congress and Muslim League better. Despite the undoubted growth of communal sentiments in the Congress, which the CPI constantly pointed out, Gandhi's valiant fight to protect both Hindus and Muslims from Communal slaughter had no counterpart on the League side. The communist had no large mass influence of similar kind, but their fight against communalism during this period forms an important chapter in their contribution to the National Movement.

The CPI resolution on 'Mountbatten Award and After' addressed the British Government utter weakness which forced it to make transfer of power to the Congress and League Governments on Dominion Status basis by August 15.⁹⁶ This was not all, but the CPI also passed a resolution against communalism. It read as follows: 'The Congress must save the immediate communal situation from worsening and shape it right direction by taking a firm and fraternal stand on the following issues: (i) Boundaries Commission, (ii) Muslim Minority Rights- in which full protection to the religious and cultural rights of the Muslims are to be safeguarded.'⁹⁷ The Mountbatten plan (June 1947) was accepted by the Congress,

⁹⁵ Ibid., p 247

⁹⁶ 'Political Resolution of the Central Committee of CPI in June 1947', T G Jacob (ed.), *National Question in India, CPI Documents 1942-1947*, p. 215

⁹⁷ For the full text of the Resolution see, Ibid, pp. 210-228

the League and other Sikh leaders which became the cornerstone of Indian Independence Act. This was ratified by the British Parliament on August 15, 1947.

V.2. The Question of Pakistan and the Communist Party of India

With the outbreak of World War II, the freedom movement of India enters into its final phase. The demand was raised: Recognise independence here and now; let the Indian people decide their constitution through a Constituent Assembly based on adult suffrage. The Congress leaders raised this demand because they realised that imperialism had now entered its final crisis and the Indian freedom movement could now make the bid for power. After the outbreak of the war, the League leadership too begins to play a parallel bargaining game with imperialism.⁹⁸ Hence, the last decade of the freedom struggle was the most crucial phase of India's independence from colonial yoke. The British withdrawal from the Indian subcontinent led to the creation of two sovereign states, India and Pakistan. The justification for the Great Divide has always been the so-called 'two-nation theory', which holds that 'Hindus' and 'Muslims' in the subcontinent comprise distinct, homogenous collectivities, harbouring in their separate spheres the elements of nationality. Behind the chronology of events that culminated in the formation of the state of Pakistan in 1947 lay a historical process that has been the

⁹⁸ P C Joshi, 'For the Final Bid for Power: The Communist Plan Explained' (1946), in Jyoti Basu (ed.) *Documents of the Communist Movement in India*, Vol. V (1944-48), Calcutta, 1997

object of a wide-ranging and disputed discourse. This chapter examines the attitude of the Communist Party of India (CPI) towards the question of Pakistan.⁹⁹

The official policy of the CPI until 1940 was based on the presupposition that India was a single nation. This view was later changed to one that recognized the existence of a number of nationalities, some Hindu and some Muslim¹⁰⁰; the exact number of nationalities varied from time to time (for example, as new nationalities came into existence).

The resignation of the Congress ministries was celebrated by the Muslim League as a 'Day of Deliverance' or *Yaum-e Nijaat* (October 1939).¹⁰¹ Both the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League tried to exploit the war situation. The Congress at Ramgarh session (1940) demanded complete independence and Constituent Assembly based on adult suffrage. Whereas the

⁹⁹ Ch. Muhammad Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan* (1967): Pakistan as the land where Muslim aspirations could be fulfilled. P. Hardy, *Muslims of British India*, Cambridge, 1972: Pakistan demand a remit of Muslims' underprivileged position in India. Francis Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims. The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860-1923*, Cambridge, 1974: Indian Muslims' separatist tendencies due to the possibility of losing their relatively privileged position under Hindu-dominated independent India. Tafiq Ali, *Can Pakistan Survive?* (1982), provides an eclectic explanation: Pakistan formed owing to an "ideological confection" and because Muslim capital could not compete with Hindu capital. For a recent work, see A. Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman, Jinnah, The Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge, rep. 1994, which typifies the methodology prevalent in the studies on the formation of Pakistan in spite of different conclusions from the above studies; Ayesha Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam since 1850*, New Delhi, 2001

¹⁰⁰ G.D. Overstreet and M. Windmiller, *Communism in India*, Bombay, 1960, p. 492

¹⁰¹ Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947*, New Delhi, Reprint 2001, p.358

Muslim League in March 1940 passed Lahore Resolution, which became the basis for the 'Pakistan' demand.¹⁰² It demanded complete freedom for Muslim majority zone, to be carved out and constituted into 'independent states'.¹⁰³ Since the Communists had declared it as an 'imperialist war' therefore, they stood for "the freedom for all India and not freedom of one section or worse still of the Congress caucus and slavery of Musalmans and other minorities".¹⁰⁴

The League's adoption of the Pakistan resolution made it clear that all chances of rapprochement between the Congress and the Muslim League had lost their relevance. It has rightly been observed that this resolution was a clear demand for secession based on exploitation of the apprehensions of Muslim masses about assumed domination.¹⁰⁵ The only way out was unifying the Hindu-

¹⁰² Irfan Habib, "The Left and the National Movement", *Social Scientist*, vol. 27, No. 5-6, May-June, 1998, p. 24; For a different view on the issue, see, Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman. Jinnah, the Muslim League and the demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge, rep. 1994; But we find that different political organisations condemned the 'Pakistan' demand of the Muslim League. Resolution of Hindu Mahasabha (19 May 1940, Bombay) strongly condemn the 'Pakistan Scheme' as adopted by the Muslim League aiming to break India into a number of Muslim States and Hindu States as fundamentally anti-Hindu and therefore anti-national and its resolution at Madura (29 December 1940) condemns the attitude of the British Government is not making a clear announcement of its opposition to the scheme of Pakistan and... 'Pakistan is the only solution to communal problem in India. S.R. Bakshi (ed.), *The Making of India and Pakistan, Select Documents*, Vol. III, Delhi, 1997, pp. 5 and 45

¹⁰³ Tufail Ahmad Manglori, *Towards a Common Destiny A National Manifesto*, trans by Ali Ashraf, New Delhi, 1994, p. 280

¹⁰⁴ N.N.Mitra (ed.), *The Indian Annual Register (IAR)*, 1940, Vol. I, p. 309

¹⁰⁵ B T Ranadive, 'The Role of Communist in the Freedom Struggle in India', *Social Scientist*, Vol. 12, No. 9, September 1984, pp 26-27; B.R. Nanda writes that 'the 'Pakistan Resolution'.

Muslim masses through the slogan of an agrarian revolution in which the masses especially the Muslims were vitally interested. It was felt that neither the Congress nor the Muslim League leadership would be interested in such an enterprise.¹⁰⁶

Nehru's immediate reaction to the 'Pakistan' Resolution was that "all the old problems...pale into insignificance before the latest stand taken by the Muslim League leaders at Lahore. The Whole problem has taken a new complexion and there is no question of settlement or negotiations now."¹⁰⁷

The CPI regarded the Congress-League unity as the key to national unity, yet right up to the first half of 1942, it laid the main emphasis in exposing the reactionary character of the Pakistan programme. In a pamphlet entitled 'The Imperialist Alternative', Adhikari maintained that the problem was not unity vs. partition but it was the problem of achieving Hindu-Muslim unity. For this proper solution needed. He further wrote that 'Cripps proposals' was a conspiracy between Churchill and Cripps for a new communal award.¹⁰⁸ The Government had accepted Jinnah's demand in the sense that the provinces were given the option to join or not to join the union.¹⁰⁹ In February 1942, P.C. Joshi (then Party Secretary)

as it came to be known, gave a new twist to the communal problem. All the solutions hitherto thought of – separate electorates, composite cabinets, reservation of posts- suddenly became out of date'. B. R. Nanda, *Jawaharlal Nehru: Rebel and Statesman*, New Delhi, 1995, p. 139

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ B. R. Nanda, *Jawaharlal Nehru: Rebel and Statesman*, p. 139

¹⁰⁸ G. Adhikari, 'The Imperialist Alternative', in Jyoti Basu (ed.), *Documents of the Communist Movement in India*, Vol. V, Calcutta, 1997, pp. 4-6; *IAR*, 1943, Vol. I, p. 305

¹⁰⁹ Manglori, p. 284

said: "Jinnah's dreamland of Pakistan (separate Muslim state) leads no where except to stalemate and sitting tight."¹¹⁰

Confronted with the challenge of the demand for the division of British India into two separate nations, the CPI had to examine afresh the nature and the complexity of the communal problem.¹¹¹ G. Adhikari explained the Muslim League's demand of Pakistan in the following words: 'In 1938, were yet wrapped in the theory like the rest of the nationalists, that India was one nation and that the Muslims were just a religious cultural minority and that the Congress-League United Front could be forged by conceding 'protection of cultural and religious rights and demands'. We stood on the same basis as the Congress leadership, and were guilty of the charge of denying the peoples of the Muslim nationalities their just right to autonomy in free India. Since 1940, the party began to see that the so called communal problem in India was really a problem of growing nationalities and that it could be solved on the basis of the recognition of the right of self determination, to the point of political secession of the Muslim nationalities as in fact of all nationalities which have India as their common mother land. In those days many comrades were shocked by the formulation that India was not one

¹¹⁰ Cf. L.P. Sinha, *The Left-Wing in India*, Muzaffarpur, 1965, pp. 559-60.

¹¹¹ G Adhikari (ed.), *Pakistan and National Unity- The Communist Solution*, Bombay, 1943, p 29: the main division between the Congress and the League was over the question of Pakistan. The Congress stands for the unity of India. The League demands Pakistan or a sovereign Moslem State in North-West and North-East India. R.P. Dutt, 'A New Chapter in Divide and Rule'. Jyoti Basu (ed.), *Documents of the Communist Movement in India*, Vol. V, p. 247

nation and its development was in the direction of a multinational unity... the demand for Pakistan if we look at its progressive essence is in reality the demand for self determination and separation of the areas of Muslim nationalities of the Punjab, Pathan, Sindh, Baluchistan and the Eastern Provinces'.¹¹² The Communist Party of India's assessment of the situation was the so called communal problem was a reflection of the growth of linguistic and other regional nationalities.¹¹³

Before 1940, the Communists were active in Muslim Mass Contact Campaign (MCCP) of the Congress, as the Muslim League was not considered a suitable party in which Communists should work. From then the Muslim League started their anti-Congress, anti-mass movement programme. This effort of the League paid heavy dividend for there occurred a substantial increase in the membership of the Party. Clearly, once the Muslim League had grown in strength there had to be negotiations with it. The Communists propose that the Congress and the Muslim League leadership should come together, and certain concessions be given to the League, as a party.¹¹⁴

A new policy was formulated by the CPI on the national composition of India, which was to go through a number of mutations over subsequent years,

¹¹² G. Adhikari, *Pakistan and National Unity*, August 1942, pp. 29-30

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Irfan Habib, "The Left and the National Movement", p. 24; For further details see. Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947*, First published, Delhi, 1983, rep. 2001

culminating in the declaration of the right of nationalities to secede from the Indian Union.¹¹⁵

In the midst of situation, Adhikari invoked the Marxist Leninist positions on national self-determination¹¹⁶ (better known as Adhikari thesis) in September 1942, it says that ‘every section of the Indian people which has a contiguous territory as its homeland, common historical tradition, languages, culture, psychological make-up and common economic life would be recognised as a distinct nationality with the right to exist as an autonomous state within the free Indian union or federation and will have right to secede from it if it may so desire. This means that the territories which are the homelands of such nationalities and which today are split by the artificial boundaries of the present British provinces and of the so call “Indian States” would be re-united and restored to them in free India. Thus free India of tomorrow would be a federation or union of autonomous states of the various nationalities such as the Pathans, Western Punjabis (dominantly Muslim), Sikhs, Sindhis, Hindustanis, Rajasthanis, Gujratis, Bengalis,

¹¹⁵ G.D. Overstreet and M. Windmiller, *Communism in India* (1959)., p. 493

¹¹⁶ ‘The right of self-determination means that only the nation itself has the right to determine its destiny, that no one has the right forcibly to interfere in the life of the nation, to destroy its schools and institutions, to violate its habits and customs, to repress its language, or curtail its rights.’ ‘Thus, the right of self-determination is an essential element in the solution of the national question.’ According to Stalin ‘s well known definition: ‘A nation is a historically constituted stable community of people formed on the basis of common language, territory, economic life and psychological make up manifested in a common culture’. J. Stalin *Collected Works*, Vol. II, Moscow, 1953, pp. 300-81

Assamese, Biharis, Oriyas, Andhras, Tamils, Karnatakis, Maharashtrians, Malayalees, etc'.¹¹⁷

This theoretical position ('the Adhikari thesis'), which was confirmed in comparatively cautious language by the political resolution of the Communist Party of India's first Congress in May 1943 (Bombay)¹¹⁸ had immediate practical implications. S.A. Dange said that Congress-League unity was of paramount importance and the party would strain its most for the consummation of such unity.¹¹⁹ Communists were now to work in the Muslim League, as they had done in the Congress. Nevertheless, by advocating secession as such the Communists emphasised self-determination not out of any opportunistic impulse for winning over Muslims. But it was aimed at achieving Congress-League unity for united resistance to imperialism. It was the only way of weaning them (Muslim) away from the separatist and disruptive influences.

¹¹⁷ See, Adhikari, *Pakistan and National Unity- The Communist Solution*, pp. 14-15; T G Jacob (ed.), *National Question in India, CPI Documents 1942-1947*, Delhi, 1988., 1988. pp.29-32. 'But the recognition of the right of separation in this form need not necessarily lead to actual separation. On the other hand, by dispelling the mutual suspicions, it brings about unity of action today's and lays the basis for greater unity in the free India of tomorrow. National unity forged on the basis of such a declaration and strengthened in the course of joint struggle in the defence of our motherland is bound to convince the peoples of all Indian nationalities of the urgent need to stick together and to form a free Indian union or federation in which each National State would be a free and equal member with right to secede.'

¹¹⁸ *IAR*, Vol. I, 1943, p. 308; same text in T G Jacob (ed.), *National Question in India*, p. 98

¹¹⁹ S.R.Bakshi, (ed.), *The Making of India and Pakistan: Select Document*, Vol. III, p. 42

This becomes evident from the contemporary document. The party addresses the Muslim League in following words: “our (Communists’ ardent appeal to the League is: your right of self determination will remain on paper if you do not intervene in the national crisis. Both Hindus and Muslims will pass from British domination to Jap (Japan) slavery... work for Congress-League unity and release of the Congress leaders, the easier it will be get the Congress to accept willingly the right of self determination”.¹²⁰

Reacting to it, Congress in its April (1944) resolution of the working committee said, “Nevertheless, the committee also declares that it cannot think in terms of compelling the people in any territorial unit to remain in the Indian union against their declared and established will.”¹²¹ Such a unity was strongly advocated by C. Rajagopalachari’s proposal (1944) that the freedom of India could not be achieved without a settlement with the Muslim League and conceded to them their demand for Pakistan as a political expediency.¹²² But it was summarily

¹²⁰ ‘Appeal of the Communist Party of India on the eve of the Karachi session of All India Muslim League’, *People War*, 19 December 1943; Also, Utpal Ghosh, *The Communist Party of India and India’s Freedom Struggle 1937-1947*, Calcutta, 1996, pp. 197-206.

¹²¹ B.T. Ranadive, p. 27

¹²² Adhikari, *Pakistan and National Unity- The Communist Solution*, p. 9; C. Rajagopalachari however, realised the necessity for Hindu-Muslim reconciliation as a pre-requisite for the attainment of independence. On April 23 1943, Rajagopalachari addressed a small gathering of old Congress supporters in the Madras legislature and got a resolution passed for submission to the All India Congress Committee, recommending the acceptance of partition in principle. On May 2, he mooted his proposal on Pakistan in the AICC at Allahabad, which stated “...it has become necessary to choose the lesser evil and acknowledge the Muslim League’s claim for

rejected by both the Congress and the League. In sheer disgust Rajaji tendered his resignation.¹²³ The CPI too criticised the Rajaji's proposal on the basis of its concession to political secession by licensing the "two nations" theory of Jinnah.¹²⁴ P.C. Joshi's rejection of Rajaji formulae was its acceptance of Pakistan as a separate nation. Right to vote should not have been interpreted as right for self-determination.¹²⁵ P. C. Joshi wrote that 'Our Party is the only organization that has actually worked for Congress-League Unity. We alone have tried to explain the view-point of one to the other during the last two and a half years. We have popularized the Muslim demand for Pakistan among Congress men. and the Congress demand for National Government and the need for the release of Congress leaders among the Leaguers... Anti Unity, pro-sabotage and pro-Hindu elements among the Congressmen have tried to stop us getting a hearing by spreading the slander that we were government agents and in private paying the compliment (not meant to be such) that we were able to work out the case for Pakistan better than even the Leaguers'.¹²⁶

separation..." D.N. Bannerji, *Partition or Federation*, Calcutta, 1945, pp. 127-28 Cf. Syed Razi Wasti, *Muslim Struggle for Freedom in British India*, Delhi, 1993, p. 354

¹²³ C H Philips and Wain Wright (eds.), *The Partition of India: Policies and Perspectives 1935-47*, Aberden, 1970, p 267

¹²⁴ Adhikari, *Pakistan and National Unity- The Communist Solution*, p. 9

¹²⁵ P.C. Joshi, 'They must not Fail', p. 30, cf. Shri Prakash, 'CPI and Pakistan Movement', in Bipan Chandra (ed.), *The Indian Left: Critical Appraisal*, New Delhi, 1983, p. 251.

¹²⁶ Joshi P C, 'They Must Meet Again', Bombay, January 1945

The CPI's position on the questions of self-determination, Pakistan, and the national question differed from that of both the Congress and the Muslim League, as we see. The Congress, with some exceptions such as Rajagopalchari, held that a single, pre-existing Indian nation (begrudgingly admitted as being composed of various linguistic groups) and nationalism had been rediscovered. For the Muslim League, another nation had been added to the Hindus-the League's well known "two-nation" theory.

In contrast, the CPI talked about Muslim nationalities¹²⁷: that the Muslims were a group of nations and not a single nation; and that, whilst Muslims could not

¹²⁷ Mohit Sen in his autobiography, *A Traveller and the Road, The Journey of An Indian Communist*, New Delhi, 2003, pp. 27-28, writes that 'A serious error committed by the CPI leadership was its virtual support to the Pakistan demand of the Muslim League. CPI never accepted the two nation theory but in 1943 it advanced the concept of Muslim nationalities, i.e., geographical areas where linguistic and Muslim majorities combined North-West Frontier Province, Punjab, Baluchistan, Sindh and Bengal. The "Muslim nationalities" theorists also pointed out that in these areas the landlords were mainly overwhelmingly Muslim. It was further pointed out by them that the Muslim middle class had lagged behind their Hindu counterparts in accepting western education and, therefore, had lost out in the competition for jobs and business in the latter decades of the nineteenth and early decades of twentieth century. By the founding of the AMU by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was such as an attempt to remedy this situation. Taking all these factors into account, the Pakistan was assessed as the distorted version of the urge for freedom of Muslim nationalities.

According to the some analogy, the CPI leadership also stressed that free India should be a united India and all nationalities should be persuaded to remain together to fight unitedly for India's freedom.

Religion and geographical or regional concentration as the basis of a nation or nationality was also reason that led the CPI to accept the Sikhs as a nation and plead the case for a Sikh homeland in those districts of the Punjab where they were in a majority.

be regarded as a nation on the basis of their common religion alone, there were other factors, such as contiguous territory, a common culture, a common political aspiration, etc, which would enable some Muslim groups to form federated Muslim homelands.

Muslim League's case was based on the premise that the unitary centre for India was a British creation and India consisted of many nationalities and creeds that had to be brought together through a compact that recognized its diverse character. This was endorsed by the Communist Party. P C Joshi, a stalwart of the Communist Party, wrote:

“We were the first to see and admit a change in its character when the League accepted complete independence as its aim and began to rally the Muslim masses behind its banner. We held a series of discussions within our party and came to the conclusion in 1941-1942 that it had become an anti-imperialist organization expressing the freedom urge of the Muslim people that its demand for Pakistan was a demand for self determination and that for the freedom of India, an immediate joint front between the Congress and the League must be forged as the first step to break imperialist deadlock. A belief continues to be held that League is a communal organization and what Mr. Jinnah is Pro-British. But what is the reality? Mr. Jinnah is to the freedom loving League masses what Gandhiji is to the Congress masses. They revere their Qaid-e-Azam as much as the Congress does the Mahatma. They regard the League as their patriotic organization as we regard

the Congress. This is so because Mr. Jinnah has done to the League what Gandhi did to the Congress in 1919-1920 i.e., made it a mass organization”.¹²⁸

The Communist Party, the Congress and League had to shed their prejudices against each other on the eve of Simla Conference.¹²⁹ The Conference (25th June 1945) broke down due to Jinnah’s insistence on right to choose Muslim members in the proposed cabinet. The CPI opposed the demand of the League and appealed the Congress and League leadership to take initiative and come together themselves on the basis of Congress-League policy. Joshi remarked that the compromise on the communal question failed due to the pursuance of the nineteenth century liberal ideas by leaders¹³⁰ of both the contesting parties. Finally, in the election manifesto of 1945-46 the CPI proposed that, since India was a multinational state, all nationalities had the right to secede and should form their own sovereign states.¹³¹

Next on the question of constitution making body, Congress wanted one whereas Muslim League demanded for two constitution bodies. The CPI in its election manifesto (January 1946) advocated that power be transferred to seventeen different sovereign national constituent assemblies rather than India and

¹²⁸ P C Joshi, *Congress and the Communists*, Bombay, 1942, p 5

¹²⁹ ‘Congress-League Agreement: Immediate Need’, *Peoples War*, June 24, 1945, p. 5

¹³⁰ Utpal Ghosh, *The Communist Party of India and India’s Freedom Struggle*. pp. 206-207. 23: *People’s Age*, January 20-27, 1946, No. 8

¹³¹ G.D. Overstreet and M. Windmiller, *Communism in India*, p. 232

Pakistan.”¹³² The Resolution of the Central Committee of the CPI held in February 1946 described the key significance of the ‘Self-Determination’. ‘Self-determination of nationalities means the bringing together of the common people of the same nationality, Hindus and Muslims, to fight against imperialist feudal regime, against Princely autocracy and landlordism. It also means the bringing together of the common people of all nationalities in the common struggle for independence from British imperialism for that is the precondition for winning self-determination. The CPI fights to build Hindu-Muslim unity by bringing the Hindus and Muslims workers and peasants together in their common organisation to fight for their living conditions and by fighting for self-determination. Similarly the party will popularize the consistent application of self-determination to the states under the slogans, “End of Princely Autocracy”.’¹³³ The Communists opined that the British imperialists wanted to utilize the conflict between two political organisations and aimed at dividing India into a ‘Pakistan’, a ‘Hindustan’ and a ‘Princistan’. The Communists were very clear that such a step would not lead to the freedom of either Pakistan or India.¹³⁴

¹³² *People's Age*, January 20-27, 1946, No. 8, p. 8.

¹³³ Jyoti Basu (ed.), *Documents of the Communist Movement in India*, Vol. V, Calcutta, 1997. pp. 114-15

¹³⁴ Adhikari, ‘Sikh Homeland’, *National Question in India*, pp. 127-28; It is interesting to see that at All India Akali Conference (14 October 1944 Lahore), President Sandhu Pritam Singh said. “The Sikhs are opposed to the establishment of Pakistan and they can not tolerate India’s vivisection. But if India is to be divided and cut into pieces, the Sikhs must have a hon eland on the basis of the land now in their possession and their political importance.” Master Tara Singh

Furthermore, the CPI rejected the demand of the League, for six provinces because the demand appeared to be 'unjust'. The Communist Party promised extension of its support only if the League dropped the demand of partition and agreed to fight unitedly.¹³⁵ This is evident from the party documents that the party characterized the post war period as a period of final united struggle for Indian freedom. The central slogan of the party was the demand of the immediate transfer of power to the Indian people through an All India Constituent Assembly. This includes the right of self determination of the people of Indian states.¹³⁶ In this period of the role of the Communists was emphasized by advocating for the United National Front of "Congress-League-Communist Unity" instead of Just "Congress-League Unity".¹³⁷

There was variable response to the policy of support for a separate Pakistan: opposition came from both within the CPI and from outside. In 1940 K.M. Ashraf, a prominent Muslim member of the CPI, condemned the Muslim League's version of Pakistan though he did not reject self-determination. More vigorous support for Pakistan came from another prominent Muslim member of the CPI, Sajjad Zaheer, who saw in self-determination and Pakistan a just,

said that 'both Gandhi and Jinnah wanted to impose Hindu and Muslim majorities on the Sikhs by dividing India.' S.R. Bakshi (ed.), *The Making of India and Pakistan: Select Documents*, Vol. III, pp. 683-84

¹³⁵ P.C. Joshi, 'For the Final Bid for Power', Bombay, 1946, p. 97.

¹³⁶ 'Resolution of the Central Committee of the CPI' passed at its meeting, December 1945, in Jyoti Basu (ed.), *Documents of the Communist Movement in India*, Vol. V, pp. 78-79.

¹³⁷ T G Jacob (ed.), *National Question in India*, p. 178

progressive and national demand. Criticism of the new policy also came from the British Communist Party and the Soviet Union (in the person of D. Dyakov). D.N. Pritt¹³⁸, Ben Bradley¹³⁹ and R P Dutt condemned both the Muslim League and the Pakistan idea. The League was a creation of the British, it was suggested, and the Congress was the sole representative of the Indian people in their negotiations with the British for independence. The opposition to Pakistan was based on the assumption that religion could not designate a nationality and that support for Pakistan would mean a fracture in the anti-imperialist struggle.

The Communist Party rejected the Cabinet Mission Plan¹⁴⁰ (March-June 1946) for : (a) it did not make immediate declaration of independence (b) it denied a democratic Constituent Assembly based on universal suffrage's (c) it did not provide provision for democracy in states (d) it partitioned India into four zones

¹³⁸ G.D. Overstreet and M. Windmiller, *Communism in India*, p. 232.

¹³⁹ Ibid..

¹⁴⁰ On May 16, the Cabinet Mission announced its draft plan for solution of the Indian problem. and on the same day, it was placed before the House of Commons by Attlee. Its relevant portions ran thus: "The setting up of a separate sovereign state of Pakistan on the lines claimed by the Muslim League would not solve the communal minority problem. Nor can we see any justification for including within a sovereign Pakistan, those district of Punjab and of Bengal and Assam, in which the population is predominantly Muslim. Every argument that can be used in favour of Pakistan, can equally, in our view, be used in favour of the exclusion of the non-Muslim areas, from Pakistan. The point would particularly affect the position of the Sikhs... We are, therefore, unable to advise the British Government that the power that at present resides in the British hands, would be handed over to two entirely separate sovereign states". Gautam Chattopadhyay, *Bengal Electoral Politics and Freedom Struggle 1862-1947*, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 205-206

(e) Central government was left with very weak and limited powers.¹⁴¹ In a memorandum to the Cabinet Mission, it was proposed that the best course would be an agreement between the Congress and the League for parity in the government and adequate representation to minorities for safeguarding their interests. The CPI was firmly convinced that the interest of the Indian masses would be best served by their remaining together in one Common Union, and in a common brotherhood to defend the freedom and solve the problem of poverty.¹⁴²

In an article entitled 'A New Chapter in Divide and Rule' R.P. Dutt wrote that 'the tactics of Cabinet Mission were entirely concentrated on the division between the Congress and the League in such a way as to erect on these divisions inseparable obstacles to effective Indian independence...unfortunately the Congress and the League played in their hands. It had served the (imperialist) purpose of displaying to the world the apparently irreconcilable divisions of the Congress and the League, and thus paving the British award as the supposed inevitable only solution. The Cabinet Mission's plan for India is not an Indian plan

¹⁴¹ Cf. L.P. Sinha, *The Left-Wing in India*, p. 548.

¹⁴² See, 'Communist Party Memorandum of the Cabinet Mission', *IAR*, 15 April 1946. Vol. I, pp. 220-21; the reaction of the Congress and the Muslim League to the Cabinet Mission's Plans were mixed. The Congress welcomed it because it rejected the Pakistan proposal and recommended scheme based on the concept of a united India. On the one hand, the Congress was highly critical of the system of groupings and the delay in the transfer of power. On the other hand, the Muslim League resented the criticism of Pakistan, but welcomed the Grouping Scheme. Gautam Chattopadhyay, *Bengal Electoral Politics and Freedom Struggle 1862-1947*, pp. 206-207

for India. It is a British plan for India imposed by British power, and its terms are deeply resented by large sections of Indian opinion'.¹⁴³

By 1944, important leaders like Zaheer had started arguing that the 'demand for Pakistan is the logical expression of the development of political consciousness among the Muslims of India. It has grown together with the development of the national movement as a whole'.¹⁴⁴ Reacting against such assertions, we find a shift in the Communist attitude towards Pakistan in 1946. R.P.Dutt in the Labour Monthly wrote: Muslim League is not a national movement of certain nationalities. It is a communal organization just as Hindu Sabha. Pakistan movement is a movement of the League for the constitution of the Muslim state with the determining factor as religion and not nationality.¹⁴⁵

According to R P Dutt, "The Pakistan movement . . . is a movement of the Moslem League for the constitution of a Moslem State, with the determining factor as religion, not nationality. It is doubtful if it is correct to speak of 'Moslem nationalities' any more than it would be to speak of Spain, Italy, France and Austria as 'Catholic nationalities.'" The measure of religion is not identical with the measure of nationality."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Jyoti Basu (ed.), *Documents of the Communist Movement in India*, Vol. V, pp. 249-51

¹⁴⁴ Sajjad Zaheer, 'Muslim League and Freedom', *People's War*, 19 March 1944, p. 3

¹⁴⁵ Utpal Ghosh, *The Communist Party of India and India's Freedom Struggle*, p. 207

¹⁴⁶ 'India and Pakistan', *Labour Monthly* XXVI, March (1946), p. 89; for detail on the nationalities question, See, Irfan Habib, "Emergence of Nationalities", *Social Scientist*, Vol. 4, No. 1, The National Question in India Special Number. August, 1975, pp. 14-20

When the Mountbatten plan (June 1947) was announced, the Party's Central Committee offered to "fully cooperate with the national leadership [of Indian Union] in the proud task of building the Indian Republic on democratic foundations". The programme that it put before the "national leadership" demanded that there be: No discrimination to religious and cultural rights of Muslims. No discrimination against Muslims in services or in any other sphere of life. Open repudiation elements which preach that Muslims are alien inside the Indian Union.¹⁴⁷

The plan was the culmination of a double-faced imperial policy, which obstructed the realization of real independence. The 'divide and rule' formula finally led to an act of partition of the country into two separate states.¹⁴⁸ Accordingly Moscow denounced the Mountbatten plan of the partition of the subcontinent into two sovereign independent, the union of India and Pakistan as a "British maneuvers designed to perpetuate British hegemony and control over the area".¹⁴⁹

Finally when the country was declared independent on 15th August 1947 and dividing sub-continent into two sovereign independent states i.e. India and Pakistan, the CPI declared it as sham and not a real independence and the party

¹⁴⁷ 'Mountbatten Award and After', in Jyoti Basu (ed.), *Documents of the Communist Movement in India*, Vol. V, pp. 360-61; See also Irfan Habib, "The Left and the National Movement", p. 28.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 354-365

¹⁴⁹ Raghunath Ram, *Soviet Policy Towards Pakistan*, New Delhi, 1983, p.7

issued, 'Onward to Task Ahead' on 15 August 1947 in which it was stated that the CPI would "doggedly defend all the just way to defeat the worst reactionaries in one's own camp and bring the common people together to fight for common democratic advance, this is, into the real battle".¹⁵⁰ It also advocated for the safeguard of minorities, and their democratic rights.¹⁵¹ The CC described Pakistan as the outcome of "the Muslim bourgeois feudal vested interests, who are seeking for compromise with imperialism for a share of administration in a divided India."¹⁵²

Thus on the question of Pakistan, the CPI's attitude was not blurred by any concession to any political group on the basis of aspirations based exclusively on religions. At the same time it was not averse to the provisions of safeguarding their legitimate interests in the general backdrop of their backwardness and under representation in power structure. The CPI always tried to bring economic issues like poverty to the fore front of its agenda which cut across both the contesting parties. Subsequently, after independence the question of self-determination continued to be discussed by the party. Even in the election manifesto of 1951 the Communists' put forward the demand for the linguistic redistribution of states. Finally at the Ninth Party Congress (CPI) held in 1972 in which the self-determination was dropped.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ 'Onward to Task Ahead', 15 August 1947, in Jyoti Basu (ed.), *Documents of the Communist Movement in India*, Vol. V, pp. 406-407

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, pp. 399-407

¹⁵² Irfan Habib, "The Left and the National Movement", p. 32

¹⁵³ M.R. Masani, *Communist Party of India*, p. 142

Conclusion

The period between 1920 and 1948 is the most critical phase of both the Indian National Movement and the communist movement in India. The Communist Party of India started at Tashkent in 1920 by a group of Indians led by M.N. Roy played a significant role. At the same time, the British Government apparently scared of the impact of communist ideas on the members of the Indian National Congress. Alarmed by the advocacy of radical ideas from the nationalist fora, the government filed a case of treason and conspiracy to overthrow the legally constituted authority against the communists in 1924 which is popularly known as Kanpur Conspiracy Case.

The Kanpur Communist Conference played a very important role in the formation of Communist Party of India. It strengthened the left elements considerably. It was the first legal communist conference in India. And apart from Satyabhakta and his associates, communists like Muzaffar Ahmad, S.V. Ghate, K.N. Joglekar, R.S. Nimbkar, Abdul Majid, Ayodhya Prasad, Janki Prasad Bagerhatta etc. attended this conference. The émigré Communist Party of India was formed in Tashkent under the guidance of the Communist International which led to the emergence of several communist groups in different parts of India with their varying degree of understanding about the principles of scientific socialism.

It was under the impact of the Russian Revolution that the revolutionaries of India began their search for new paths for struggle for Indian independence. It

exercised a very powerful influence on the Indian freedom movement and helped to broaden the base of that struggle by drawing into it the industrial workers and organised peasants and youths.

We have seen that despite the foreign origin of the Communist Party within India a new awakening was taking place which helped in the formation of a broad based left oriented workers' and peasants' party in different parts of country. The attempts to build Communist Party began at four places in India independently of each other. The first four prominent places were Calcutta, Bombay, Lahore and Madras. For all of these places, inspiration was the Communist International. However, the Communist International established independent connections with each of these four places.

Thus we can safely say that most of the Communist groups in India had originated independent of each other. But for long they could not become strong enough and existed as illegal bodies. There was no central committee or organisation of the Communists till December 1925. The Communist International played an important role in forging a common relationship among Communists and goaded continuously the idea of forming a party at all-India level.

The most important and the crucial question to be investigated in this thesis is the communal question and the CPI attitude towards it. During the course of our research we find that ever since the Communist Party of India was founded at Tashkent M.N. Roy started writing incessantly on the question of communal problem. He emphasized that the communal problem of the Hindus and Muslims

was based on their economic situations. The upper classes of both the communities were fighting for the seats in legislative assemblies, municipalities, government jobs. The elites of both the communities had been exploiting the masses for their selfish motives. The party also vehemently criticized insistence on Bande Mataram and language controversy.

And a front was created under the aegis of the communists which excluded persons belonging to communal organisation or had communal ideology. We have seen that Hasrat Mohani and S.D. Hasan were expelled from the Party because they were having their associations with communal organizations as well. The Communist Party of India was the first ever political organisation during the course of India's freedom struggle which noticed the danger of communalism so early.

The British government got alarmed after the success of the Communist groups in different industrial cities leading to a large number of hartals and strikes by the industrial workers. To counter their increasing influence the British Government hatched 'Meerut Conspiracy case (1929-33)' leading to the arrest of almost all the prominent communists. The year 1933 opened a new chapter in the history of the Communist Movement; as it moved towards reorientation and reorganisation. This growing popularity of the Communist Party of India (CPI) alarmed the colonial authorities, which took several repressive measures against Indian Communists.

Despite the CPI and its affiliated organisations being declared unlawful in 1934, the Communist movement did not die down. Neither did it lose its momentum. In fact, in many ways, it strengthened itself against all odds.' And yet its mode of

operation and strategy underwent some transformation, as it allied itself strongly with the Congress Socialist Party, the Indian National Congress and other mainstream Left parties, in their never ending struggle against imperialism. And the communist influence had markedly increased among Bengal revolutionaries, workers, peasants, students and youth.

The British government's efforts to crush them did not diminish their commitment and conviction to socialism, anti-imperialism and communism. In fact, the British repression hardened their resolve to oppose imperialism and capitalism, and sharpened their commitment to the idea and vision of an independent and socialist India. This reality was not lost out to a colonial official, M.G. Hallet, who wrote that "as for M.N. Roy, every little act of a real Communist is a blow to Imperialism, so too, I suppose it might be said that every little act of a real Imperialist is a blow at Communism."

In this chapter, we find that the relations between CPI and British during 1939-1945, were not very amicable. It can be seen clearly into two phases. First phase was between 3 September 1939 and 21 June 1941 when it was considered as imperialist war by the Communist Party of India. In this phase the task before the people according to CPI was "Revolutionary utilization of war crisis for the achievement of National Freedom and second phase coincided Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union (on 22 June 1941) when the CPI adopted the pro-war policy. The policy towards CPI was thus a failure at all levels of administration on the one hand. The Home Department would have believed that communist cooperation could be

used to mobilize the war effort in India to destroy the legitimacy of the Congress instead they supported and continuously demanded the release of Gandhi and other political prisoners. It is important to remember that they regularly mobilized people by promising a 'final assault' against the government and its lackeys after the war was over. It is evident that the Kerala Communists never lost any opportunity to harness local militancy in Malabar. The Communists did not support the Quit India resolution, due to existing international situation when there was a war between Fascist on the one side and Soviet Russia and allied powers on the other side. But in the course of repression against the Congress member, quite a large number of the Communist workers were also arrested by the local authorities. The Home Departments' secret reports also show that the communists were trying to reorganize and strengthen their party. Communism fundamentally opposed the theory of imperialism, so the whole hearted loyalty from the communists 'was remote possibility'. In U.P. the entry of *People's War* was banned by the provincial government. Finally it may be said that the relations between the two were mutually hostile to each other. Although there were no political strikes during people's war period (as the workers were involved in the production of war material, kisans were busy in no-rent movement at one or another place), during war period CPI benefited in terms of organizational expansion and consolidation and could lay claim to be the third most influential party in post-war Indian politics.

The Communist Party attitude towards the question of Pakistan has been analysed in the light of available archival and documentary sources. The CPI's

position was originally voiced by Adhikari in 1942 in *Pakistan and Indian National Unity*, which was quite different from Dutt's understanding. The CPI took the position that the Muslim League was an organ of self-expression of the Muslim masses and not necessarily a separatist and communal outfit, as alleged by Dutt. Accordingly, the CPI took a positive attitude towards the Muslim League's demand for self-determination of the Muslims without, however, endorsing the slogan of Pakistan. In 1943, there was a marked shift in the position of the CPI, as Adhikari presented a revised thesis in the CC, which came out in 1944 under the title *Pakistan and National Unity*. In this revised understanding, the slogan of Pakistan was endorsed, the argument being that as the Muslim League was the national organisation of Muslims, and its demands for a separate state of Pakistan represented the urge for freedom of the ordinary Muslim masses. Although, R.P. Dutt was consistently critical of the Muslim League's demand for the establishment of Pakistan as a separate state, his understanding resting on two main arguments. First, there was the argument of oneness of India, already outlined in *India Today*. Second, he considered the Muslim League as a separatist and communal organisation and its demand for Pakistan a reactionary slogan.

The Communist Party recognition of the existence of nationalities and acceptance of self-determination for nationalities contributed to understand the problem of minorities, the problem of communalism and the problem of partition. The communal question was also linked with the problem of nationalities

Thus on the question of Pakistan, the CPI's attitude was not blurred by any concession to any political group on the basis of aspirations based exclusively on religions. At the same time it was not averse to the provisions of safeguarding their legitimate interests in the general backdrop of their backwardness and under representation in power structure. The CPI always tried to bring economic issues like poverty to the fore front of its agenda which cut across both the contesting parties. Subsequently, after independence the question of self-determination continued to be discussed by the party.

Appendices

APPENDIX-I STATEMENT OF REMITTANCES FROM FOREIGN [SUSPECT] SOURCES RECEIVED BETWEEN, 1922-28

	Year	Amount	By whom sent	By whom received	Remarks
1	1922	25,000(Rs)	From Kabul	Ghulam Hussain	
2	1922	£. 600	do	Mota Singh	
3	1922	£. 200	do	Relatives in India of Indian revolutionaries	
4	1923	£. 200	MN Roy	Muzaffar Ahmad	
5	1923	£. 100	Do	Singaravelu	
6	1924	£. 100	Do	RCL Sharma	
7	1924	£. 22	Indian Defence Committee, London	For defence Cawnpore conspiracy case	
8	1924	£. 50	M.N. Roy	RCL Sharma	
9	1925	£.200 £. 600	Do	Do	
10	1925	£ 25	Worker Welfare League, London	Lajpat Rai	
11	1925	Rs 6,472-10-0	British Trade Union Congress, London	For help of Bombay cotton mills strike	
12	1925	Rs 17591-5-4	IFTU, Amsterdam	Ditto	
13	1925	Rs 6049	International Federation of Textile Workers Association, London	For help of Bombay cotton mills strike	
14	1925	Rs 13,832	Saklatvala	N.M.Joshi	
15	1926	£ 50	MN Roy	Bagerhatta	
16	1926	£ 66	From Abroad	Bengal Communist	
17	1926	£ 50	Roy's agent Sepasi	Muzaffar Ahmad	
18	1927	Rs 20,000	CPGB	Saklatvala brought	
19	1927	£ 190	BTUC, London	Mukund Lal Sarkar	
20	1927	Rs 1315	Workers International Relief, London	J.M.Sen Gupta	
21	1927	£ 200	International Transport Workers Federation, Amsterdam	All India Railways Federation, Calcutta	
22	1927	£ 5000	Central Council of Trade Union, USSR	N.M. Joshi	
23	1927	£ 500	Board of Central Union of Consumer Societies, Moscow	Bombay Provincial Cooperative Institute	
24	1927	Rs 13,625	USSR, Trade Union Council, Moscow	AITUC	
25	1927	£ 3000	Central Union, USSR	All India's Railway's Federation	
26	1928	£ 50	Unknown	Spratt or Bradley	
27	1928	Rs 1328/2/0	Mrs. Doughlas Parsone	Spratt	
28	1928	£ 7,690	Textile Union, Moscow	Jhabwala	
29	1928	£ 40	Profitern	Muzaffar Ahmad	
30	1928	£ 40	Ditto	Bombay Textile workers	
31	1928	7000 Rouble (Rs 20,000)	RILU, Moscow	Mitra, Sec. of the EIRU, Lillooah	
32	1928	£ 75	Moscow	WPP Bengal	
33	1928	£ 200	Communist Party of London	Ditto	
34	1928	£ 30	Red International	E.I.Railway Union	
35	1928	£ 10	Workers Welfare League, London	K.C. Mitra	

36	1928	£ 20	International Transport Workers Federation, Amsterdam	N.M.Joshi	
37	1928	£ 40	Maxziese	Muzaffar Ahmad & S.V Ghate	£ 20 each
38	1928	£ 40	L.C.Bradley	Bradley	
39	1928	£ 40	Robin	Spratt	
40	1928	£ 100	Workers Welfare League, London	Bradley	
41	1928	£ 100	IFTU	N.M.Joshi	
42	1928	Rs 4995/4	Bhai Bal Singh	Kirti	
43	1928	£ 80	Maxziese	Muzaffar Ahmad & S.V Ghate	£ 40 each
44	1928	£ 250	Amsterdam	E.I. Railway Union	
45	1928	Rs 533/5	JE Potter- Wilson	B.F.Bharucha	
46	1928	£ 20	Bob-Lovell	S.A.Dange. Asst. Sec. AITUC	
47	1928	£ 100	IFTU	AITUC, Bombay	
48	1928	£ 50	International Transport Workers Federation.	All India Railway Federation. N.M.Joshi	
49	1928	£ 1059/8/5	Russian Textile Association	Jhabwala	
50	1928	£ 10	JE Potter	B.F. Bharucha	
51	1928	Rs 212/7	Ditto	Ditto	
52	1928	Rs 200	U.S.	N.M.Joshi	
53	1928	Rs 1151	Vancouver	Punjab	
54	1928	Rs 1200	Canadian Bank	Kirti, Amritsar	

Source: [Home (Poll), F. 18/6/1928, National Archives of India, New Delhi]

APPENDIX-II

Langford James, the Crown counsel in the Meerut Conspiracy Case had filed a list of known organisations and persons outside British India. The list contained the name of 12 organisation and 51 persons.

- (1) The Third International or Comintern and affiliated bodies;
- (2) The Krestintern;
- (3) The Red International of Labour Unions;
- (4) The U.S.S.R for Cultural Relations with Foreign countries;
- (5) The CPGB;
- (6) The National Minority Movement;
- (7) The Workers Welfare League of India;
- (8) The Labour Research Department;
- (9) The Young Communist League of Great Britain;
- (10) The Indian Seamen's Union;
- (11) The Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat and
- (12) The League Against Imperialism.

Alleged Persons abroad

- (1) R.P. Arnot, (2) T. Bell, (3) Bahaduri, (4) R. Bishop, (5) L.C. Bradley, (6) E.H. Brown, (7) H.R. Brown, (8) V. Chattopadhyaya, (9) Dombal, (10) C.P. Dutt, (11) R.P. Dutt, (12) A. Clyn Evans, (13) Fazl Illahi, (14) Arthur Field, (15) Percy Glading, (16) J.S. Ganden, (17) E.J. Horsman, (18) Harry Howell, (19) A. Inkpin, (20) I. Jusefowitsch, (21) J.W. Johnstone, (22) C.L. Lesse, (23) Bob Lovell, (24) A. Lozovsky, (25) Luhani, (26) L.C. Mellonie, (27) Willi Munzenberg, (28) AGN Nambiar, (29) Orloff, (30) W. Paul, (31) Graham Pollard, (32) H. Polit, (33) J.H.

Politt, (34) J. Potter, (35) Wilson, (36) H.P. Rathbans, (37) R.W. Robson, (38) M.N. Roy, (39) William Rust, (40) J. Ryan, (41) S. Saklatvala, (42) Khushi Mohamad alias Muhammad Ali alias Sepassi, (43) RCL Sharma, (44) Agnes Smedley, (45) S.V. Sovani, (46) S.N. Tagore, (47) Julius Thosin, (48) N.J. Upadhyaya, (49) Vernoff A. Vozneclensky, (50) Max Ziesse, (51) George Allison alias Donald Campbell

Source: [Home Poll, F. No. 10/20, Pioneer, Meerut, 2 August 1929, National Archives of India, New Delhi]

APPENDIX III

LIST OF THE MEERUT CONVICTS AND THEIR RELEASE AND CHARGES

S.N	Name	Date of release from Meerut Case	Date of Subsequent Arrest (if any)	Section of Law	Resultant Action	Remarks
1	Philip Spratt	6.9.34	18.12.34	Bombay Special Powers Act	Ordered to reside in Belgaum Fort under section 4 of that Act on 16.2.35	Action taken on secret information
2	B.F. Bradley	15.11.33	.....	.....	.....	Left for U.K. on 6.1.34
3	Ajodhya Prasad	3.8.33	.....	.....	.....	.....
4	Shaukat Usmani	1.7.35	.....	.....	.....	.....
5	Puran Chand Joshi	3.8.33	9.3.34	124A & 153A, IPC	Sentenced to 2 yrs R.I. 20.4.34	.....
6	Gauri Shankar	3.8.33	....	.....	.....	.....
7	Lakshman Rao Kadam	3.8.33	....	.....	.....	.....
8	Vishwanath Mukherji	16.1.33	19.10.34	108 CPC	On 19.1.35 he was ordered to execute personal bond of Rs. 2000/ & to furnish 2 sureties	.....
9	Dharani	15.11.33	17.6.34	Bengal	Still detenué	.....

	Kanta Goswami	3		Criminal Law Amendment Act 1930		
10	Sachidanand Vishan ghate	16.11.33	(i) 30.4.34 (ii) 9.4.35	3, Bombay Spl. Power Act 3, do	Released on 29.6.34.ordered to reside in Satara. 8.6.35 externed under Sec.4 of this Act from Bombay Presidency	Action taken on secret information
11	Shiavaksh H. Jhabwala	3.8.33	.....	.....	.....	.....
12	Dhondi Raj Thengdi	.....	.....	.....	.....	Died Nov, 1932
13	Keshav Nilkanth Joglekar	15.11.33	(i) 30.4.34 (ii) 24.7.34 (iii) 9.11.35	*3, B'bay Spl. Power Act 16&17 *Trade Dispute Act, VII 3, BSPA	Released on 29.6.34. Acquitted on 23.10.34 under Sec.4 of BSPA to reside within the limits of town & Island of B'bay. 9.11.35	i) Action taken on secret information ii) do
14	Shibnath Banerji	16.1.33	(i) 21.3.35 (ii) 2.36	i) 17.C.L.A Act 1908 ii) 505(C) IPC	i) Acquitted ii) sentenced to 1 yr R.I	.....
15	Muzaffar Ahmed	13.7.35	13.7.35	2(1)(G) Bengal C.L.A Act, 1930	Restricted to Noakhali distt. Under Sec2(1) of that Act in Aug, 1935	Action taken on secret information
16	Gopal Chandra Basak	3.8.33	.....	.....	.....	.....
17	Shamsul Huda	3.8.33	(i) 14.11.33 (ii) 11.4.35	124 A, I.P.C. 124A, I.P.C.	i) sentenced to 6 month R.I. on 5.12.33 ii) 1yr R.I, 3.5.35	.....
18	Kishori Lal Ghosh	16.1.33	.....	.....	.....	Died Dec, 1932

19	Gopendra Chakravarty	3.8.33	.....	.....	.....	.....
20	Radha Raman Mitra	3.8.33	21.2.34	Bengal C.L.A. Act, 1930	Still detenu	.....
21	S.A. Dange	8.5.35	.....	.....	.....	.....
22	Shantaram Saolaram Mirajkar	15.11.33	(i) 9.3.34 (ii) 30.4.34 (iii) 8.8.35	i) 117&143 I.P.C. & 127 ii) Bombay Spl. Power Act iii) do	i) 1 day's S.I. & Rs.300 fine ii) released on 29.6.34 iii) order, Sec.4, to reside in a village in Bijapur, 7.10.35	Action taken on secret information
23	R.S. Nimbkar	15.11.33	(i) May 1934 (ii) 15.7.35	124 A, I.P.C.	i) 6 Month R.I. on 23.5.34 ii) 6 Month R.I. on 25.9.35 in Madras	.....
24	Gangadhar Adhikari	3.8.33	25.5.34	3, Bombay Spl. Power Act	Under Sec.4 to remain within the municipal limit of Bijapur on 24.7.34	Action taken on secret information of communist activities, general strike
25	Motiram Gajanand Desai	3.8.33	.....	.....	.....	.....
26	Arjun Atmaram Alve	3.8.33	(i) 22.7.34 (ii) 24.7.34	i) 149&323, I.P.C. ii) 16&17, Trade Dispute Act, VII, 1929	i) Rs 10 fined for each offence ii) acquitted on 23.10.34	.....
27	Gopi Ramchandra Kasle	3.8.33	22.7.34	149 & 323, I.P.C.	Rs 10 fined for each offence	.....
28	S.S. Josh	15.11.33	.....	.....	.....	.....
29	Mir Abdul Majid	15.11.33	.....	.....	.....	.....
30	Kedar Nath	5.8.33	.....	.....	.....	.....

	Sehgal					
31	H.L. Hutchinson	3.8.33	.....	.....	.....	Left for the U.K on 25.3.33

Source: [*Home Department, Poll, F.N. 27/11/36-poll, National Archives of India, New Delhi*]

APPENDIX-IV

EXTRACT FROM PARA 18 FROM THE REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE OF POLICE, NOVEMBER 1934

18. Action against Communist Activities: - The recent measures directed against the CPI and communist activities generally have been only partially effective. The notification of various bodies under the Criminal Law Amendment Act had some immediate effect in checking the movement, but the bodies concerned have succeeded in evading the purpose of the action taken by changing their designations and by other similar stratagems. Prosecutions have been largely precluded by the difficulty of proving membership of a particular organisation against any particular person. These remarks have, however, to be qualified by note of the fact that the use of the Criminal Law Amendment Act in the Punjab, where the Communist movement is mainly of an agrarian character, has resulted, for the first time being at least, in subduing the local communist movement. Similar action taken in 1931, in the U.P., where also the movement is largely agrarian, had an equally good effect. These facts lead us to the conclusion that action under the Criminal Law Amendment Act may be more likely to succeed in agrarian than in industrial areas. Good results have been obtained from the use of the Press Emergency Powers Act; while the prompt internment of prominent organisers in the Punjab has contributed greatly to the degree of success attained there and similar action in Madras has checked the serious development of the movement in that province. We believe that a policy of unhesitating internment of leaders is well calculated and likely to be effective and that by no other means under the present laws can a dangerous movement, which is being organised behind the scenes, be controlled. The various local Acts enabling Communists to be interned are unfortunately, temporary Acts. The Criminal Law Amendment Act is largely, and the Press Emergency Powers Act entirely a temporary Act. We consider that permanent weapons are necessary which will enable effective

action to be taken. It has proved possible to take action against Communists under the ordinary criminal law only to a very limited extent.

19. Future Action against Communism:- We have submitted the draft Revolutionary Movement Bill which was circulated to Local Governments and consider that the passage of this Bill into law is essential if communism is to be checked. Its application combined with the use of the Press Emergency Powers Act and accompanied by a general policy of unhesitating use of Regulation III of 1818, Bombay Regulation XXV of 1827, and Madras Regulation II of 1819, is likely to be effective. Provisions for the extension of the Press Emergency Powers Act when its present term expires will also be necessary.

We fully realise the desirability of the development of India of a healthy trade's union movement, but we see no hope of its attainment unless the present unions are effectively prevented from coming under Communist influence. We feel that, as in the case of terrorism in Bengal, Communism is not purely a police problem but is one that concerns many other branches of the administration, and we think that there is essential work in this direction which should be under expert co-ordinated guidance.

ANALYSIS OF ACTION TAKEN AGAINST COMMUNIST LEADERS OF ALL INDIA NOTORIETY WHO ARE AT PRESENT IN JAIL EITHER AS CONVICTS OR AS UNDER TRIALS

Seditions	Bengal	Bombay Presidency	U.P.	Total
Sedition-124 A, I.P.C.	6	6	5	17
Rioting, 147, I.P.C.	4	----	---	4
Conspiracy to commit offences punishable by Sec. 121 A, I.P.C.	1	--	4	5
Member of an unlawful Assembly-143, I.P.C.	10	1	--	11
Party to a Criminal Conspiracy, 120 (20) (B) (i) I.P.C.	3	--	--	3
Promotion of Class Hatred, 153 A, I.P.C.	---	--	2	2
Abetment to Conspiracy, 109, I.P.C.	--	1	--	1
Incitement to Rioting, 117, I.P.C.	---	3	--	3
Criminal Law Amendment Act	1	2	--	3
Disobedience of orders passed v/s 144 Criminal P.C.C. (188 I.P.C.)	--	2	--	2
Security Proceedings 107 I.P.C.	1	--	--	1
Regulation II of 1819	--	1	--	1
Temporary Legislation. Distribution or possessing unlawful news sheets, (18) (i)	1	--	--	1

of Act-XXIII of 1931				
Total	27	16	11	54

Source: [*Home (Poll), F.N. 7/25/34-Poll*, National Archives of India, New Delhi]

APPENDIX: V

BAN ON THE COMMUNIST ORGANISATIONS IN BOMBAY

Letter from Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 24 September, 1934

I am directed to refer to the telegram no. 1764, dated the 14th July 1934 from the Secretary of State for India to the Government of India in the Home Department regarding the proposed use of the Criminal Law Amendment Act against Communist organisation. The Government of Bombay have decided to declare the following organisation whose headquarters are in Bombay city and Ahmedabad to be unlawful association throughout the Presidency of Bombay under Section 16(1) of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908 (XIV of 1908):-

1. The Young Workers' League, Bombay;
2. The "Lal Bavta" Girni Kamgar Union, Bombay;
3. The Kamgar Vangmaya Prasarak Mandal, Bombay;
4. The Marxist League, Bombay;
5. The Bombay Provincial Working Class Party, Bombay;
6. The 'Red' B.B. & C.I. Railway Union, Bombay;
7. The G.I.P. Railway Labour Union, Bombay;
8. The AITUC, Bombay;
9. The Mill Mazdoor Union, Ahmedabad;
10. The Bombay Girni Kamgar Union (Red Flag).

Source: [*Home Poll, F.N. 7/20/1934-Poll & K.W*, National Archives of India, New Delhi]

APPENDIX: VI

GOVERNMENT OF GOVERNMENT, POLITICAL DEPARTMENT

NOTIFICATION No. 594-P.S. dated 14th February 1935

Where as the Governor in Council is of the opinion that the associations specified in the Schedule hereto appended have for their object interferences with the administration of the law and with the maintenance of law and order and constitute a danger to the public peace.

Now therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by Sub-Section (1) of the Section 16 of the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908 (XIV of 1908) the Governor in Council is pleased to declare the said associations to be unlawful associations within the meaning of Para II of the said Act.

1. The WPP
2. Kirti Dal
3. The Indian Proletarian Revolutionary Party
4. The Bengal Jute Workers Union
5. The City Motor and Transport Workers Union
6. The Match Factory Workers Union

NOTIFICATION BY GOVERNMENT OF BENGAL, No. 1110, P.S. dated 1st March 1935, Calcutta

Under Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act 1908 (XIV) of 1908) Governor declared many association to be unlawful.

1. The Calcutta Communist Party
2. The Calcutta Port and Dock Workers' Union
3. WPP, Bengal
4. The Calcutta Committee of the CPI
5. Kirti Dal, Bengal
6. The Workers' Party of India
7. The Indian Proletarian Revolutionary Party
8. The Bengal Jute Workers Union
9. The Bengal Match Factory Workers Union
10. The City Motor and Transport Workers Union
11. The River Steam Navigation and Indian General Navigation and Railway Company Workers Union
12. The Youth League
13. The Chhatra Juba Samsad

Source: [*Home Poll, F.N. 7/20/34-Poll & K.W, National Archives of India, New Delhi*]

APPENDIX- VII

NOTIFICATION BY THE GOVT. OF BENGAL, POLITICAL DEPARTMENT, NO 1110-P.S. DATED CALCUTTA, 1ST MARCH 1935

Where as the Governor-General in Council is of opinion that the associations specified in the schedule hereto appended have for their object interference with the administration of the law and with the maintenance of law and order and constitute a danger to the public peace.

Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by Sub-Section (1) of Section 16 of the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908 (XIV of 1908), the Governor in Council is pleased to declare the said associations to be unlawful associations within the meaning of Part II of the said Act.

Schedule

- 1) The Calcutta Communist Party
- 2) The Calcutta Port and Dock Workers' Union
- 3) The Workers' and Peasants' Party (Bengal Branch)
- 4) The Calcutta Committee of the CPI
- 5) Kirti Dal, Bengal
- 6) The Workers' Party of India
- 7) The Indian Proletarian Revolutionary Party
- 8) The Bengal Jute Workers Union
- 9) The Bengal Match Factory Workers' Union
- 10) The City Motor and Transport Workers' Union.
- 11) The River Steam Navigation and India General Navigation and Railway Companies Workers Union.
- 12) The Youth League, Bengal
- 13) The Chhatra Juba Samsad.

Source: [*Home Poll, F.N.7/20/1937, National Archives of India, New Delhi*]

APPENDIX-VIII

REVIEW OF THE TERRORIST SITUATION IN INDIA DURING THE YEAR 1936

General: - The terrorist situation in India is definitely satisfactory.

This improvement in the situation which began some years ago mainly as the result of successful police activity has more recently been helped by the tendency of terrorist leaders to veer towards Communism. This apparent affection for Communism has been noticeable for some time past. And is due partly to a realization of the fact that sporadic terrorist outrages do not pay and partly to the acceptance by the terrorists of some form of the communist creed. Doubtless, also since the communist programmes includes violent mass revolution, it satisfies not only terrorist inclinations but also the desire to obtain the assistance of peasants and workers whom all revolutionaries want as their allies... it is difficult to sort out the terrorist from the communist, particularly as the literature of both is full of hackneyed communist phrases. For example, the Ghadr Party, inspired as it is from Moscow and working as it does for 'mutiny' is normally classified as a communist

organisation yet it was almost certainly responsible for one of the most serious of the few terrorist crimes of 1936. Since communism recognizes the need for the occasional violent 'liquidation' of approvers and spies at least it does so in Malaya- it is obvious that the line between terrorists and communists is difficult to draw. It must also be remembered that terrorists, like the subscribers to other subversive creeds, are waiting for the opportunity which they hope that a European war will provide.

In Bengal the year 1936 has again clearly shown that the spread of Communist ideas is an important factor in the future policy of the terrorists. Most of the detainees in detention camps have been studying communism and socialism and are impressed by the value of an armed mass revolution as a means of obtaining independence. Most of them would [on release] work for this objective without pausing to consider what would happen after independence had been gained by such means. It also appears that there will be no dearth of recruits to such a programme as there is much evidence to show that communist ideas are spreading both among terrorists in Bengal and among the Hindu student community, from which terrorists are generally recruited.

United Provinces:- The main characteristics of terrorism in the U.P. during 1936 have been a continued swing of terrorists towards Communism, and lack of effective leadership. Here, as elsewhere, it will become increasingly difficult to separate terrorism from Communism in future. One time terrorists have formed Communist organisations in Cawnpore [Kanpur], Lucknow, Allahabad, Banaras, Meerut and Jhansi.

Delhi:- Seditious and revolutionary posters continued to make their appearance in Delhi like "Lal Dhandora" (Red Proclamation), "Kranti ki Gunj" (Echo of Revolution), and "Philosophy of Dynamite". They were a mixture of a communism and terrorism and indicate the presence in Delhi of persons who must be regarded as terrorist suspects.

Source: [Home Poll, F.N. 43/37/36, National Archives of India, New Delhi]

APPENDIX IX

EXTRACT FROM REPORT ON POLICE ADMINISTRATION IN THE PUNJAB FOR THE YEAR 1936

Part VI-CID

The ban on the main communist organisations failed to check the development and spread of communist doctrines. It had the effect of driving communist agitators into other organisations, some of which carried on their open activities in a more or less lawful manner. The underground activities of the communist agents, however, continued unabated. More trained workers arrived from abroad, some openly, some secretly. In dealing with these the Punjab Criminal Law Amendment Act proved of the greatest value. The greatest success of the year was the capture of Gurumukh Singh, a convict in the 1914-15 conspiracy cases, who escaped in 1923. A good deal of sympathy and sentiment has been wasted over this convict, chiefly by extremist Sikhs. They overlook the fact that he was an ordinary convict, who had since his escape been engaged in activities prejudicial to the peace and good order of the country.

The alleged offenders are now standing their trial. The subversive activities of potential terrorists and active communists require the constant vigilance of the police. Relaxation of this vigilance would undoubtedly lead to a revival of violent terrorist crime.

Source: [Home Poll, F.N. 113/1937-Poll, National Archives of India, New Delhi]

APPENDIX: X
BOOKS WITHHELD UNDER THE GENERAL COMMUNIST NOTIFICATION IN 1938

No.	Book	Author	Publisher
1	<i>Abyssinia</i>	-----	International Secretariat of the League Against Imperialism and for National Liberation, London
2	<i>A.R.P.</i>	-----	CPGB
3	<i>Capitalism, Communism & the Transition</i>	E. Burns	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
4	<i>Civil Liberties</i>	W.H. Thompson	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
5	<i>Colonies, Mandates & Peace</i>	Ben Bradley	Peace Library Association
6	<i>Communism & the Building Workers</i>	-----	CPGB
7	<i>Communism & the Co-ops</i>	William Gallacher	CPGB
8	<i>Communism & Cotton</i>	W. Rust	CPGB
9	<i>Communism & Railways</i>	-----	CPGB
10	<i>Communist Manifesto of Karl Marx & Engels</i>	Prof. Ryazonoff	ML Ltd (now Lawrence& Wishart)
11	<i>Communist Party part-ii-Political Education</i>	-----	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd
12	<i>Co-operation in the Soviet Union</i>	Alderman J. Reeves	Friends of the Soviet Union
13	<i>Defeat of Trotskyism</i>	Marjorie Pollih	CPGB
14	<i>Defend the People</i>	John Gollan	Young Communist League. G. Britain
15	<i>Economic Theory of the Leisure Class</i>	N Bukharin	ML Ltd.
16	<i>11 Trade Unionist Visit Russia</i>	-----	Congress of Peace & Friendship with USSR
17	<i>Forward</i>	Harry Pollitt	CPGB
18	<i>France Faces the Future</i>	R. Fox	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd
19	<i>History of Anarchism in Russia</i>	E. Yaroslavsky	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd
20	<i>How the Rich Live</i>	-----	CPGB
21	<i>How to Change the Social Order</i>	Lenin	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd
22	<i>I Accuse Baldwin</i>	Harry Pollitt	CPGB
23	<i>Is Social Democracy a stepping stone to Fascism</i>	D.Z. Mannuilsky	ML Ltd
24	<i>Is War Inevitable?</i>	Stalin	Friends of the Soviet Union
25	<i>Karl Marx</i>	R. Postgate	Hamish Hamilton Ltd. London.
26	<i>Lenin in Action</i>	R. Fox	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
27	<i>Lenin on Democracy and Trade Unions</i>	-----	ML Ltd
28	<i>Lenin on Historic Significance of the Third International</i>	-----	ML Ltd
29	<i>Lenin on Working Class Policy</i>	-----	ML Ltd
30	<i>Lenin</i>	Stalin	ML Ltd
31	<i>Modern India</i>	R.P. Dutt	CPGB
32	<i>Peace or War</i>	P. Lang	Modern Books Ltd. London
33	<i>Questions and Answers on Communism</i>	J.R. Campbell	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd
34	<i>Report and Court Proceedings in the Case of the Anti-Soviet Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites</i>	-----	People's Commissariats of Justice of the USSR, Moscow
35	<i>Russian Revolution</i>	Lenin and Stalin	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd
36	<i>A Short history of the USSR</i>	Prof. K V Shestakov	Cooperative Publishing, Moscow
37	<i>Spain's Left Critics</i>	J. R. Campell	CPGB
38	<i>Stalin (speeches)</i>	-----	Friends of the Soviet Union
39	<i>Stalin and the Red Army</i>	-----	Cooperative Publishing, Moscow
40	<i>(The) Strange Case of Major Vernon</i>	-----	National Council of Civil Liberties. London
41	<i>This Final Victory of Socialism in the Soviet</i>	-----	CPGB

	<i>Union</i>		
42	<i>Trade Unionism</i>	John A Mahon	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
43	<i>Verbatim Report of the Moscow Trial</i>	-----	Lawrence & Wishart Ltd
44	<i>Virgin Soil Uplifted</i>	Mikhail Sholekov	Putnam and Co. Ltd. London
45	<i>What are We to do</i>	John Strachey	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
46	<i>Why you should be a Socialist</i>	John Strachey	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
47	<i>William Gallacher's Speeches in Parliament</i>	-----	CPGB
48	<i>Will the Bolsheviks maintain Power?</i>	Lenin	Lawrence & Wishart Ltd
49	<i>Stalin's Reports on the Soviet Union</i>	Stalin	ML Ltd

Source: [Home Poll 41/23/38, National Archives of India, New Delhi]

APPENDIX- XI
LIST OF BOOKS WITHHELD UNDER GENERAL COMMUNIST
NOTIFICATION.

No.	Book	Author	Publisher
1	<i>April Conference</i>	Lenin	Martin Lawrence Ltd. London
2	<i>Anti-Duhring</i>	F. Engels	Martin Lawrence Ltd. London
3	<i>ABC of Communism</i>	F. Engels	CPGB
4	<i>American Writers Congress</i>	(Ed.) Henry Hart	Lawrence & Wishart Ltd. London
5	<i>Abyssinia and Italy</i>	Emile Burns	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
6	<i>British Imperialism in India</i>	Joan Beauchamp	Lawrence & Wishart Ltd
7	<i>Bolsheviks Discover Siberia</i>	S. Bishorodov	Co-operative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR. Moscc
8	<i>Barricades in Berlin</i>	Klan Neukrantz	Martin Lawrence Ltd. London
9	<i>Britain Without Capitalists</i>	A group of socialists and technician	Lawrence & Wishart Ltd. London
10	<i>Communism</i>	Ralph Fox	The Bodley Head. London
11	<i>Comrades for the Charter</i>	Geoffrey Trease	Martin Lawrence Ltd. London
12	<i>Comment for FV Gladkov</i>	Do	Martin Lawrence Ltd. London
13	<i>Coming struggle for Power</i>	J. Strachey	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
14	<i>Correspondence of Karl Marx and Engels</i>	-----	Martin Lawrence Ltd. London
15	<i>Cannery Boat</i>	Takiji Tobayashi	Martin & Lawrence Ltd. London
16	<i>China's Red Army Marches</i>	Agnes Smedley	International Pubs. New York
17	<i>Chapayev</i>	Furmanov	Cooperative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in USSR. Moscow
18	<i>Call to Arms</i>	Geoffrey Trease	Martin & Lawrence Ltd. London
19	<i>Outline History of CPSU, Part II</i>	N. Popov	Martin & Lawrence Ltd. London
20	<i>Christianity and the Social Revolution</i>	John Lewis	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
21	<i>Communism in U.S.</i>	Earl Browdev	International Pubs. New York
22	<i>Conveyor</i>	James Steel	International Pubs. New York
23	<i>Condition of the Working Class in Britain</i>	Allen Hutt	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
24	<i>Conquest of Bread</i>	Peter Kropotkin	Vanguard. New York
25	<i>Colonial Policy of British Imperialism</i>	Ralph Fox	Martin & Lawrence Ltd. London
26	<i>Communist Answer to the World's Needs</i>	Julis F. Hecker	Chapman & Hall Ltd. London
27	<i>(The) Coming World War</i>	T.H. Wintringham	Martin & Lawrence Ltd. London
28	<i>(The) Class Struggle in France</i>	Marx	Martin & Lawrence Ltd. London
29	<i>Civil War in France</i>	Marx	Martin & Lawrence Ltd. London
30	<i>(The) Coolie</i>	M.R. Anand	Lawrence & Wishart Ltd. London
31	<i>Changing Man: The Soviet Education System</i>	Beatrice King	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
32	<i>Change the World</i>	Michael Gold	Lawrence & Wishart Ltd. London
33	<i>China Struggle for Freedom</i>	P. Miff	Modern Books Ltd. London
34	<i>Critique of the Gotha Programme</i>	Marx	Lawrence & Wishart Ltd. London
35	<i>Defence of Terrorism</i>	L. Trotsky	George Allen & Unwin Ltd. London

36	<i>Dialectics, the Logic of Marxism</i>	T.A. Jackson	Lawrence & Wishart Ltd. London
37	<i>Deception of the People</i>	Lenin	Martin & Lawrence Ltd. London
38	<i>Down over Samaraqand</i>	Joshua Kunitz	Lawrence & Wishart Ltd. London
39	<i>Dimitroff's Letters from Prison</i>	Kurella	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
40	<i>Aspects of Dialectical Materialism</i>	H. Levy, etc	Watts & Co. London
41	<i>Draft of Soviet Constitution</i>	Joshua Kunitz	Lawrence & Wishart Ltd. London
42	<i>Dialectical Materialism</i>	V. Adoratsky	International Pubs. New York
43	<i>Education in Soviet Russia</i>	Scott Nearing	International Pubs. New York
44	<i>Europe since the War</i>	J. Hampden Jackson	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
45	<i>End of Socialism</i>	Marx Eastman	Martin Secker & Warburg
46	<i>Fascism and Social Revolution</i>	R.P. Dutt	Martin Lawrence Ltd.
47	<i>Foreign Trade in the USSR</i>	J.D. Yanson	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
48	<i>Fascism the menace of</i>	J. Strachey	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
49	<i>France Today and the People's Front</i>	Maurice Thorez	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
50	<i>Fundamental Laws of the Chinese Soviet Republic</i>	-----	Martin Lawrence Ltd
51	<i>Freud and Marx</i>	R. Osborne	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
52	<i>From Bryan to Stalin</i>	William Z. Foster	Lawrence & Wishart Ltd. London
53	<i>For Peace and Friendship</i>	-----	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
54	<i>Fundamental Problems of Marxism</i>	P. Plekhanov	Lawrence & Wishart Ltd. London
55	<i>(The) First American Revolution</i>	Jack Hardy	Lawrence & Wishart Ltd. London
56	<i>Four Soviet Plays</i>	-----	Lawrence & Wishart Ltd. London
57	<i>Great Crisis and its Political Consequences</i>	-----	Modern Books. London
58	<i>Germany: Revolution and Counter Revolution</i>	Engels	Martin Lawrence Ltd.
59	<i>Handbook of Marxism</i>	Emile Burns	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
60	<i>Health Protection in the USSR</i>	A. Semashko	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
61	<i>Housing Question</i>	Engels	International Pubs. New York
62	<i>The History of the Civil War in the USSR, Vol. I</i>	Ed. Stalin, etc.	Lawrence & Wishart Ltd. London
63	<i>Illustrated History of Russian Revolution, Vol. II</i>	-----	Martin Lawrence Ltd
64	<i>Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism</i>	V.I. Lenin	Martin Lawrence Ltd
65	<i>Jews and other nationalities under the Soviets</i>	Avraham Yamolinsky	Vanguard. New York
66	<i>John Reed</i>	Granville Hicks	Lawrence & Wishart Ltd. London
67	<i>K. Marx Letters to Kugelmann</i>	-----	Martin Lawrence Ltd.
68	<i>Letters from V.I. Lenin a Far</i>	-----	Martin Lawrence Ltd.
69	<i>Leninism, Vols. I & III</i>	J. Stalin	Allen & Unwin Ltd., London
70	<i>Lenin</i>	R.P. Dutt	Hamish Hamilton Ltd., London
71	<i>Lenin on Organisation</i>	-----	Issued by the Daily Workers. USA
72	<i>Left Wing Communism</i>	Lenin	Martin Lawrence Ltd.
73	<i>Lenin</i>	Stalin	Martin Lawrence Ltd.
74	<i>Lenin Iskara Period 1900-02</i>	Lenin	Martin Lawrence Ltd.
75	<i>Letters of Lenin</i>	Tr. & ed., Elizabeth Hill & Doris Mudie	Chapman and Hall Ltd. London
76	<i>Ludwig Feuerbach</i>	Engels	Martin Lawrence Ltd.
77	<i>Marxism and Modern Thought</i>	N.I. Bukharin	George Routledge & Sons. London
78	<i>Manifesto of the Communist Party</i>	Marx & Engels	Martin Lawrence Ltd.
79	<i>Memoirs of Lenin, Vol. II</i>	V. Krupskaya	Martin Lawrence Ltd.
80	<i>Marx and the Trade Unions</i>	Lozovsky	Martin Lawrence Ltd.
81	<i>Marx-Engels Marxism</i>	Lenin	Martin Lawrence Ltd.
82	<i>Martin's Annual</i>	-----	Martin Lawrence Ltd.
83	<i>Militarism and Fascism in Japan</i>	O Tanin & E Yohan	Lawrence & Wishart Ltd. London
84	<i>The Menace of Fascism</i>	J. Strachey	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
85	<i>Mutiny</i>	T H Wintringham	Stanley Nott. London

86	<i>Moscow Dialogues</i>	J F Hecker	Chapman and Hall Ltd., London
87	<i>Money</i>	E Burns	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
88	<i>Marxism and the National Colonial Question</i>	Stalin	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd. London
89	<i>Materialism Empirio-Criticism</i>	Lenin	Martin Lawrence Ltd
90	<i>Nature of Capitalist Crisis</i>	J. Strachey	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
91	<i>Nazi Conspiracy in Spain</i>	E. Burns	Victor Gollanz Ltd. London
92	<i>Novel and the People</i>	Ralph Fox	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd. London
93	<i>The Negro Question in the U.S.</i>	James S. Allen	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd. London
94	<i>Nationalism in Soviet Union</i>	Hans Kohn	George Rutledge & Sons. London
95	<i>On the Eve of October</i>	Lenin	Martin Lawrence Ltd
96	<i>(The) October Revolution</i>	Stalin	Martin Lawrence Ltd
97	<i>Political Economy</i>	A Leontiev	Martin Lawrence Ltd
98	<i>Proletarian Revolution & Renegade Kautsky</i>	Lenin	Martin Lawrence Ltd
99	<i>Paris Commune</i>	Lenin	Martin Lawrence Ltd
100	<i>Problems of Soviet Literature</i>	Radek Bukharin, etc.	International Pubs. New York
101	<i>Post War World</i>	J Hampden Jackson	VG LTD
102	<i>(The) Post War History of the British Working Class</i>	Allen Hutt	VG LTD
103	<i>Problems of the Distressed Areas</i>	Wal Hannington	VG LTD
104	<i>Poverty of Philosophy</i>	Marx	ML LTD
105	<i>Portraits and Pamphlets</i>	Marx	L&W
106	<i>Religion under the Soviets</i>	F Hecker	Chapman and Hall
107	<i>Reminiscences of Lenin</i>	Clara Letkin	International Pubs. New York
108	<i>Rulers of America</i>	Anna Rochester	International Pubs. New York
109	<i>Religion</i>	F Hecker	Chapman and Hall
110	<i>Religion</i>	Lenin	ML Ltd
111	<i>Revolution of 1905-1907</i>	Lenin	Do
112	<i>Revolution of 1905</i>	Lenin	Do
113	<i>Red Flood over China</i>	Agnes Smedley	Co-operative Publishing Society. Moscow
114	<i>Reporter in Spain</i>	Frank Pitcairn	L&W
115	<i>Revolt in Spain</i>	Harry Gannest Theodore Repard	VG Ltd
116	<i>Roar China</i>	Tretiakov	ML ltd
117	<i>Red Comet</i>	Geoffrey Trease	L&W
118	<i>Revolt on Clyde</i>	William Gallacher	Do
119	<i>Russia's Productive System</i>	Emile Burns	VG Ltd
120	<i>Ralph Fox- A Writer in Arms</i>	John Lehmann etc.	L&W ltd
121	<i>Readings in Leninism Nos. 1-4</i>	-----	Do
122	<i>Religion and Communism</i>	J. F. Hecker	Chapman and Hall Ltd
123	<i>Russian Sociology</i>	Do	Do
124	<i>Russia with open Eyes</i>	Paul Winterton	L&W Ltd
125	<i>Stalin</i>	Henry Barbusse	Int. pub NY
126	<i>Socialism Victorious</i>	Stalin etc.	ML Ltd
127	<i>Soviet Russia and her Neighbours</i>	R Page Arnot	Vanguard, New York
128	<i>State of the Soviet Union</i>	Stalin	Int Publ. NY
129	<i>Soviet Russia Today- Report of the Workers Delegation</i>		Issued by the Labour Research Department. London
130	<i>State and Revolution</i>	Lenin	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd
131	<i>Soil Upturned</i>	Mikhail Sholokov	Cooperative Publishing. Moscow
132	<i>Stalin Reports on the Soviet Union</i>	-----	ML Ltd.
133	<i>7th World Congress of Comintern</i>	-----	Do
134	<i>Socialism and War</i>	Lenin	Do
135	<i>Storm over Ruhr</i>	Hans Marchwitza	Do

136	<i>Soviet Union and the Path to Peace</i>	Lenin & Stalin etc.	L&W Ltd
137	<i>Soviet Union and the Cause of Peace</i>	Lenin & Stalin, etc.	V.G Ltd
138	<i>Selected Works of Karl Marx</i>	-----	L&W Ltd
139	<i>Schools at the Cross Roads</i>	Jack Cohen	Do
140	<i>Science and Education in the USSR</i>	A Pinkevitch	Do
141	<i>2nd Five Year Plan</i>	-----	Do
142	<i>Selected Works of Lenin</i>	-----	Do
143	<i>Socialism and the Churches</i>	John Lewis	V.G. Ltd
144	<i>Soviet State</i>	Bertram W Maxwell	Selwyn & Blount
145	<i>Soviet Union 1936</i>	-----	L&W Ltd
146	<i>(A) Short History of the Russian Revolution Vol.I &II.</i>	R Page Arnot	VG LTD
147	<i>20 Years in Underground Russia</i>	Cecilia Bobrovokaya	ML Ltd
148	<i>Ten Days that Shook the World</i>	John Reed	Do
149	<i>Two Tactics of Social Democracy in Democratic Revolution</i>	Lenin	Do
150	<i>Teachings of Karl Marx</i>	Lenin	Do
151	<i>Threatening Catastrophe & How to avoid it</i>	Lenin	Do
152	<i>Theory and Practice of Socialism</i>	J Strachey	V.G. Ltd
153	<i>Three Speeches</i>	Stalin	L&W Ltd
154	<i>(A) Textbook of Marxist Philosophy</i>	Ed. John Lewis	V.G. Ltd
155	<i>Two Leaves and a Bud</i>	Joan Beachamp	L&W Ltd
156	<i>Twenty Years After</i>	H Lee	Do
157	<i>The Task of the Proletariat in our Revolution</i>	Lenin	ML Ltd
158	<i>This Final Crisis</i>	Allen Hutt	V.G Ltd
159	<i>Unified Transport System of the USSR</i>	K N Tverskoi	Do
160	<i>Unsleping Sword</i>	Geoffrey Trease	M.L. LTD
161	<i>Unemployed Struggles 1919-36</i>	Wal Hannington	L&W Ltd
162	<i>Voices of October</i>	J Kunitz & L Lozowick	Vanguard. New York
163	<i>Whither England</i>	L Trotsky	George Allen & Unwin Ltd.
164	<i>What is to be done</i>	Lenin	ML Ltd.
165	<i>Where is Britain Going</i>	Trotsky	George Allen & Unwin Ltd.
166	<i>Wage, Labour and Capital</i>	Marx	ML Ltd.
167	<i>World Politics</i>	R P Dutt	V.G.Ltd
168	<i>Where is the Bomb?</i>	R Gullan & Buckley	L&W Ltd
169	<i>War and the IInd International</i>	Lenin	ML Ltd
170	<i>(The) Working Class Against Fascism</i>	G. Dimitrov	Do
171	<i>Where is Civilization Going?</i>	Scott Nearing	Vanguard. New York
172	<i>Youth in British Industry</i>	John Gollan	V.G.Ltd

Source: [Home Poll 41/23/38, National Archives of India, New Delhi]

APPENDIX: XII

THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT BAN ON THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA

The Notification:-

1. In 1934 the CPI, it's Committee, Sub-Committee, and branches were declared unlawful associations under the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908, on the ground that they constituted a danger to the public peace.

Reasons:

2. The reasons for this action were briefly that the Meerut Conspiracy Case had proved that the Communist Party in India was a revolutionary party with the avowed object of overthrowing the existing order of society and bringing about India's independence by

means of a violent revolution, seeking to secure this object by mass revolutionary action, strikes, demonstrations, etc. culminating in general strikes and armed insurrection. Evidence had been accumulated to show that the Communist Party was re-forming on a new and more ambitious scale, and that attempts were again being made by communists in various parts of India to secure control over workers' organisations and to organise a combined workers' and peasants' revolutionary movement under communist leadership. In view of these facts, the Central Government recognised the necessity of taking action not only against the Communist Party, but also against its subsidiary organisations

Government Intention:

3. The Central Government intention was to give a law in declaring war on Communism in India's root and branches to show to the country at large that there was no intention of temporizing with the forces of communism in India.

Government's Policy:

4. The Central Government recognised at the time that, apart from the psychological effect, the ban would act as a deterrent by obstructing and impeding communist activity in India in forcing the movement underground, and thereby preventing it from developing it into the open mass revolutionary movement which communism in its later stages aims to become in order to succeed. It was in fact not so much the immediate activities of the communists as the ultimate object which led to the Communist Party in India being declared unlawful.

In brief, the ban was imposed because experiences had conclusively shown that the ordinary law was inadequate to control communist activity and because proscription was considered more warranted by circumstances than special legislation and calculated to succeed without resort to frequent or protracted legal proceedings.

The effect of the ban:

5. The ban has achieved its purpose of preventing communism in India from spreading into an organised mass movement...the Communist Party has largely as a result of the ban been disorganized and its policies discredited.

Present Position:

6. It is necessary to quote from secret information to show that despite the Communist leaders' attempt to create an atmosphere in which the Communist Party may be regarded as a legal organisation, no longer consisting of international revolutionaries but patriotic nationalists, communistic designs remain unaltered and are to quote the recent words of one Hon'ble Minister: "to use the Congress for their own ends which was nothing short of the complete destruction of the existing social and economic system in the interests of what they are pleased to call Communism". The issue could not be better stated than it was by the Hon'ble Minister in a leading Congress province earlier this year when replying to debate.

Conclusion:

7. The withdrawal of the ban at the present, or any future stage, would be tantamount to a truce with the forces of Communism in India against which the Central Government declared war in unequivocal terms in the notification of 1934. the ban on the Communist Party equally with the Sea Custom Act notification prohibiting the importation of Communist propaganda into India is designed to protect the ignorant masses in India from being misled by the evil influence of the communism. Communism is not only a

creed: It is a plan of campaign. The method of enforcement is as much a part of the Communist faith as the doctrine itself.

Source: [Home Poll, F.N. 7/5/39, National Archives of India, New Delhi]

APPENDIX: XIII
PROSCRIPTION OF CERTAIN COMMUNIST PUBLICATIONS UNDER
DEFENCE OF INDIA RULES, 1939, GOVERNMENT OF U.P

Name of Documents	Author	Publisher	Press
<i>On the Eve of October Revolution</i>	Lenin (with a note by Krishnaswami)	The Socialist Literature Publishing Co., Gorakhpur, Agra	Jesu Press, Triplicane, Madras
<i>Essay on Religion</i>	Lenin (introduction by Gopal Pranjape)	The Socialist Literature Publishing Co., Kaserat Bazar, Agra	Anand Press, Kaserat Bazar, Agra
<i>Lenin on the State</i>	Lenin (ed., by Krishnaswami)	The Socialist Literature Publishing Co., Agra	The Anglo- Oriental Press Banaras
<i>State and Revolution</i>	Lenin (ed., by Krishnaswami)	The Socialist Literature Publishing Co., Agra	Bharti Mucranalaya, Khadia Golvad, Ahmedabad
<i>On the Peoples Front</i>	G. Dimitrov (note by B. Srinivas Rao)	The Socialist Literature Publishing Co., Agra	Jesu Press, Triplicane, Madras
<i>Wage Labour and Capital</i>	Karl Marx	The Socialist Literature Publishing Co., Agra	Jesu Press, Triplicane, Madras
<i>Address of the Communist League</i>	Karl Marx (ed, G. Adhikari)	The Socialist Literature Publishing Co., Agra	Bharti Mudranalaya, Khadia Golvad, Ahmedabad
<i>Victory of Socialism in Russia</i>	J. Stalin (Preface by S.V. Ghate)	The Socialist Literature Publishing Co., Agra	Jesu Press, Triplicane, Madras
<i>Lenin's Theory of Imperialism</i>	N. Popov (ed, Krishnaswami)	The Socialist Literature Publishing Co.,	Anglo Oriental Press, Banaras

		100/3, Kaserat Bazar, Agra	
<i>Teachings of Karl Marx</i>	Lenin	The Socialist Book Club	The Madho Printing Works, Allahabad

Source: [Home Poll, 37/11/40-Poll, National Archives of India, New Delhi]

APPENDIX-XIV
BOOKS WITHHELD UNDER THE GENERAL COMMUNIST NOTIFICATION OF
1932.
APRIL 1942- SEPTEMBER 1942

Books	Authors	Publisher	Exporting from
<i>Marxism and National and Colonial Question</i>	J Stalin	Simpkin Marshal Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd. London
<i>Marx, Engels, Marxism</i>	Lenin	Marxist Lenin Library	Do
<i>The October Revolution</i>	Stalin	Do	Do
<i>April Conference</i>	Lenin	-----	Do
<i>Threatening Catastrophe</i>	Lenin	-----	Do
<i>Marxism, Nationality & War</i>	Donna Ton	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	Do
<i>Paris Commune</i>	Lenin	-----	Do
<i>War and Workers</i>	Lenin	-----	Do
<i>Lenin on Religion</i>	Lenin	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	Do
<i>Left Wing Communism</i>	Lenin	Do	Do
<i>Revolution of October 1905</i>	Lenin	----	Do
<i>Teachings of Karl Marx</i>	Lenin	-----	Do
<i>Proletarian Revolution& the Renegade Kautsky</i>	Lenin	-----	Do
<i>Deception of the People</i>	Lenin	-----	Do
<i>Task of the Proletariat in Our</i>	Lenin	-----	Do
<i>Foundations of Leninism</i>	Stalin	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	Do
<i>Will the Bolshevik Maintain Power</i>	Lenin	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	Do
<i>One the Eve of October (1917)</i>	Lenin	-----	Do
<i>War and IInd International</i>	Lenin	--	Do
<i>Socialism and War</i>	Lenin	----	Do
<i>Opportunism and Social Chauvinism</i>	Lenin	----	Do
<i>What is to be done</i>	Lenin	----	Do
<i>Imperialism is the Highest Stage of Capitalism</i>	Lenin	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	Do
<i>Letters from Afar</i>	Lenin	----	Do
<i>Theory and Practice of Socialism</i>	Strachey	Victor & Gollanz Ltd	Do
<i>Coming Struggle for Power</i>	Strachey	Do	Do
<i>State and Revolution</i>	Lenin	----	Do
<i>Decline and Fall of British Empire</i>	R. Briffault	Simon Schuster Inc. New York	Dawson & Sons Ltd. London
<i>India Today</i>	R.P. Dutt	-----	Do
<i>From Revolution to</i>	-----	Revolutionary Workers	Demos Press Chicago

<i>Reaction</i>		League of USA	
<i>Freedom is our Weapon</i>	T Wintringham	Trubner & Co. Ltd. London	Simpkin & Marshall Ltd. London
<i>Lenin and Stalin on Youth</i>	-----	-----	Do
<i>Lenin and Stalin on State</i>	-----	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	-----

Source: [Home Poll, 41/5/42-Poll (I), National Archives of India, New Delhi]

APPENDIX-XV

BOOKS WITHHELD UNDER THE GENERAL COMMUNIST NOTIFICATION OF 1932. DURING JANUARY 1942-JANUARY 1943

Books	Authors	Publisher	Exporting from
<i>Pioneering Days</i>	Thomas Bell	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd L (L&W)	Simpkin Marshal 1941 Ltd London
<i>War and the Workers Booklet</i>	John West	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd
<i>April Conference</i>	Lenin	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd
<i>Civil Liberties</i>	WH Thompson	Victor Gollanz Ltd, Lond	Victor Gollanz
<i>Civil War in USSR I</i>	Stalin etc.	Victor Gollanz Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd.
<i>Deception of the People</i>	Lenin	Victor Gollanz Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd.
<i>Dialectical Materialism</i>	David Guest	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd.
<i>Dialectics of Nature</i>	F. Engels	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd.
<i>Foundation of Leninism</i>	J Stalin	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd.
<i>France Faces the Future</i>	Ralph Fox	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd.
<i>Freud And Marx</i>	R Osbren	Victor Galaxy? Gollanz	Simpkin Marshal Ltd.
<i>Imperialism is the Highest .Stage of Capitalism</i>	Lenin	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd
<i>Left Wing Commune</i>	Lenin	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd
<i>Lenin on Religion</i>	Lenin	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd.
<i>Letters from Afar</i>	Lenin	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd.
<i>Leninism</i>	J Stalin	George Alen & Union Ltd London	Simpkin Marshal Ltd
<i>Marx and Trade Unions</i>	A Lozovosky	Do	Simpkin Marshal Ltd.
<i>Marxism, Nationality & War II</i>	Donna Ton	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd.
<i>Paris Commune</i>	Lenin	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd
<i>Political Economy</i>	A Leontiev	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd
<i>Proletarian Revolution& the Reneg Kautsky</i>	Lenin	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd
<i>Revolt of 1905</i>	Lenin	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd
<i>Short History of the Russian .Revol I&II</i>	R Page Arnot	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd
<i>State and Revolution</i>	Lenin	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd
<i>Task of the Proletariat in Our Revol</i>	Lenin	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd
<i>Theory and Practice of Socialism</i>	J Strachey	Victor Gollanz Ltd	
<i>Trade Unionism</i>	John Mahon	Victor Gollanz Ltd	Victor Gollanz Ltd
<i>War and II International</i>	Lenin	Victor Gollanz Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd
<i>Threatening Catastrophe</i>	Lenin	Victor Gollanz Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd
<i>Two Tactics of Social Democracy</i>	Lenin	Victor Gollanz Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd
<i>What is to be Done</i>	Lenin	Victor Gollanz Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd
<i>Will the Bolsheviks Maintain Power</i>	Lenin	Victor Gollanz Ltd Victor	Simpkin Marshal Ltd

		Gollanz Ltd	
<i>World Revolution</i>	CLR James	Victor Gollanz Ltd	Simpkin Marshal Ltd

Source: [*Home Poll, 41/5/42-Poll (I)*], National Archives of India, New Delhi]

APPENDIX- XVI

BOOKS WITHHELD UNDER THE GENERAL COMMUNIST NOTIFICATION OF 1932. DURING OCTOBER 1942- JANUARY 1943

No.	Book	Author	Publisher
1	<i>A programme for Progress</i>	J. Strachey	Victor Gollanz Ltd.
2	<i>Landmarks in the life of Stalin</i>	E. Yaroslansky	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd
3	<i>Lenin and Stalin on State</i>	E. Yaroslansky	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd
4	<i>Why Must India Fight</i>	V. Krishna Menon	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd
5	<i>The Parting of the Way</i>	J.L. Nehru	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd
6	<i>Truth about India</i>	Dorothy Hewitt	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd
7	<i>India and the War</i>	Dorothy Hewitt	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd
8	<i>India's Demand for Freedom</i>	?	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd
9	<i>Theory and Practice of Socialism</i>	J. Strachey	Victor Gollanz Ltd.
10	<i>Sword and sickle</i>	M.R. Anand	Jonathan Cape
11	<i>The Great Crisis and its Political Conseq</i>	E. Varga	Madam Books Ltd.
12	<i>Change the World</i>	M. Gold	Lawrence& Wishart Ltd
13	<i>Capital</i>	Karl Marx	C.H. Kerr & Co., Chicago
14	<i>Culture and the People</i>	Maxim Gorky	Lawrence& W shart Ltd
15	<i>Portraits and Pamphlets</i>	K. Rodek	Wishart Books Ltd.
16	<i>Ten Days that Shook the World</i>	J. Reed	The Modern Library, New Yo
17	<i>Problems of Soviet Literature</i>	Azhdanor, M. Gorky etc.	Martin Lawrence

Source: [*Home Poll, 41/5/42-Poll (I)*], National Archives of India, New Delhi]

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