

WHERE ARE WE?

*Books by the Author*

Letters from A Father to His Daughter

Glimpses of World History

Recent Essays and Writings

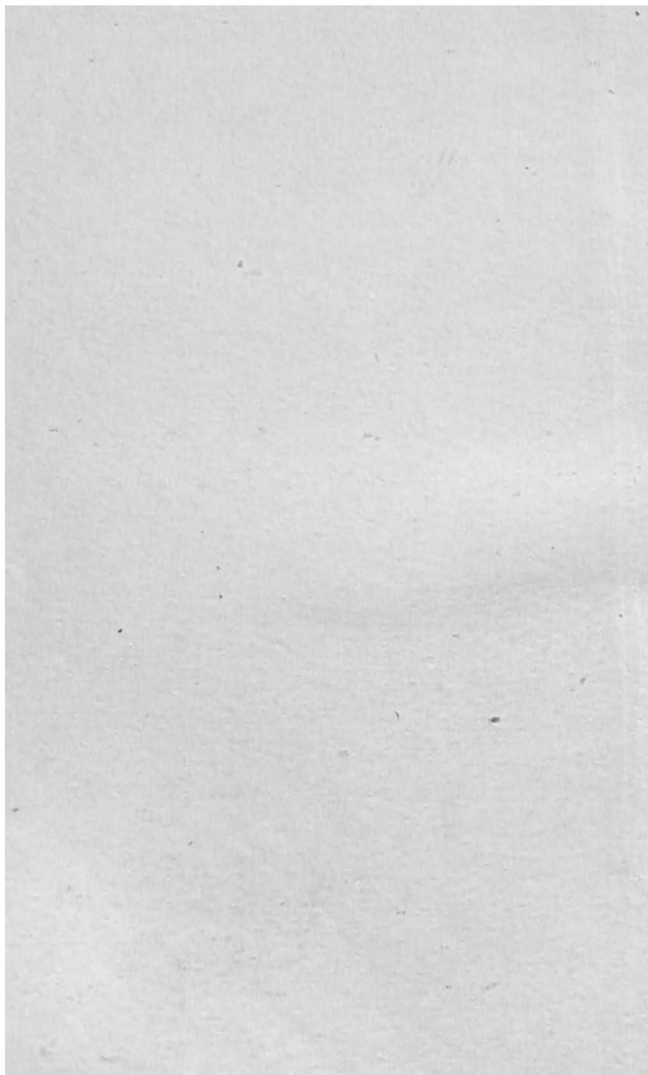
Eighteen Months in India

India and the World

Autobiography

The Question of Language

Whither India ?



# WHERE ARE WE?

*By*

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

KITABISTAN

ALLAHABAD & LONDON

73

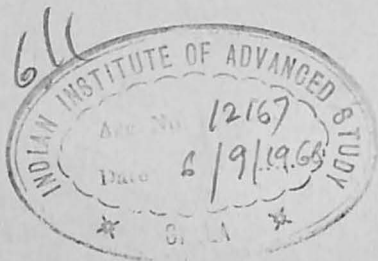


Library

IAS, Shimla



00012167



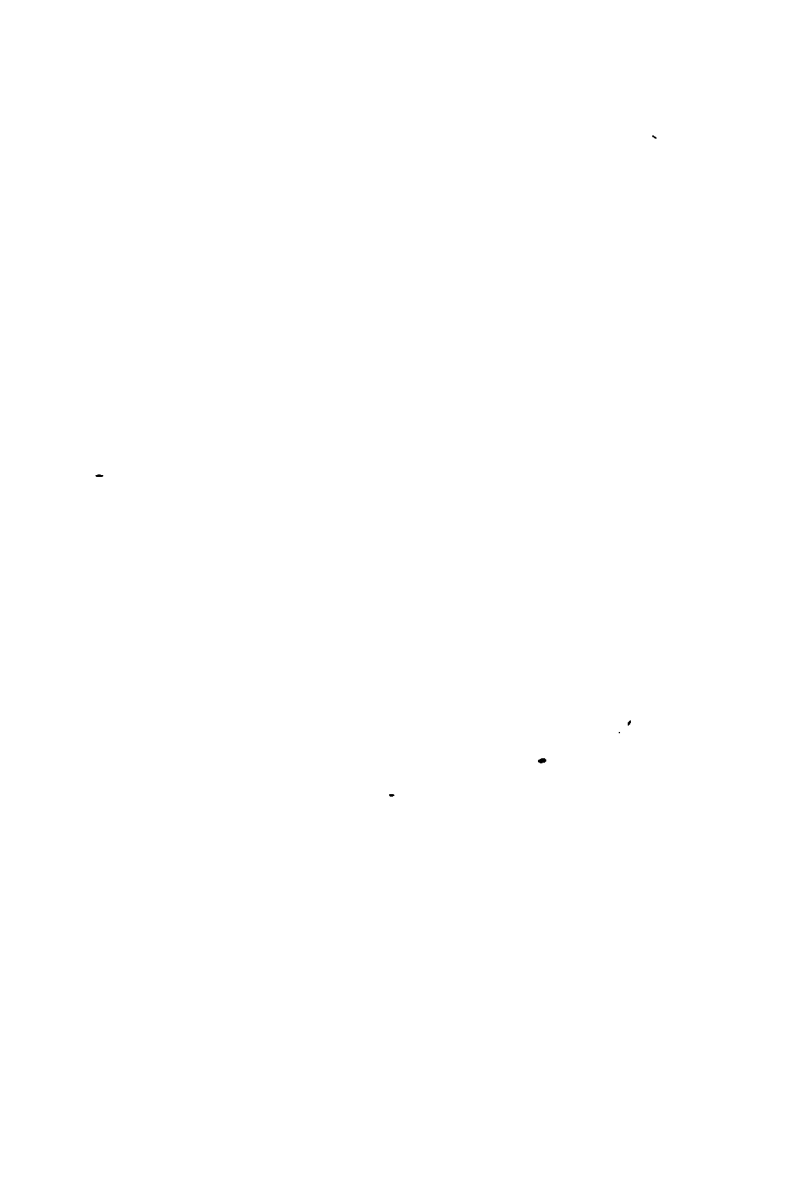
954. 0357  
N 315 W

PRINTED BY P. TOPA AT THE ALLAHABAD LAW JOURNAL PRESS  
ALLAHABAD AND PUBLISHED BY KITABISTAN, ALLAHABAD

## NOTE

These articles were written and published in the 'National Herald' of Lucknow during the ten days preceding the Tripuri session of the National Congress in March 1939. They were meant to review the situation in India as it existed then, and especially in view of the controversies raised by the Congress Presidential election. Since then the Tripuri Congress has come and gone and numerous other developments have taken place. The articles thus date to some extent. But the situation and the problems they deal with remain essentially the same, and this survey might be of help in considering them.

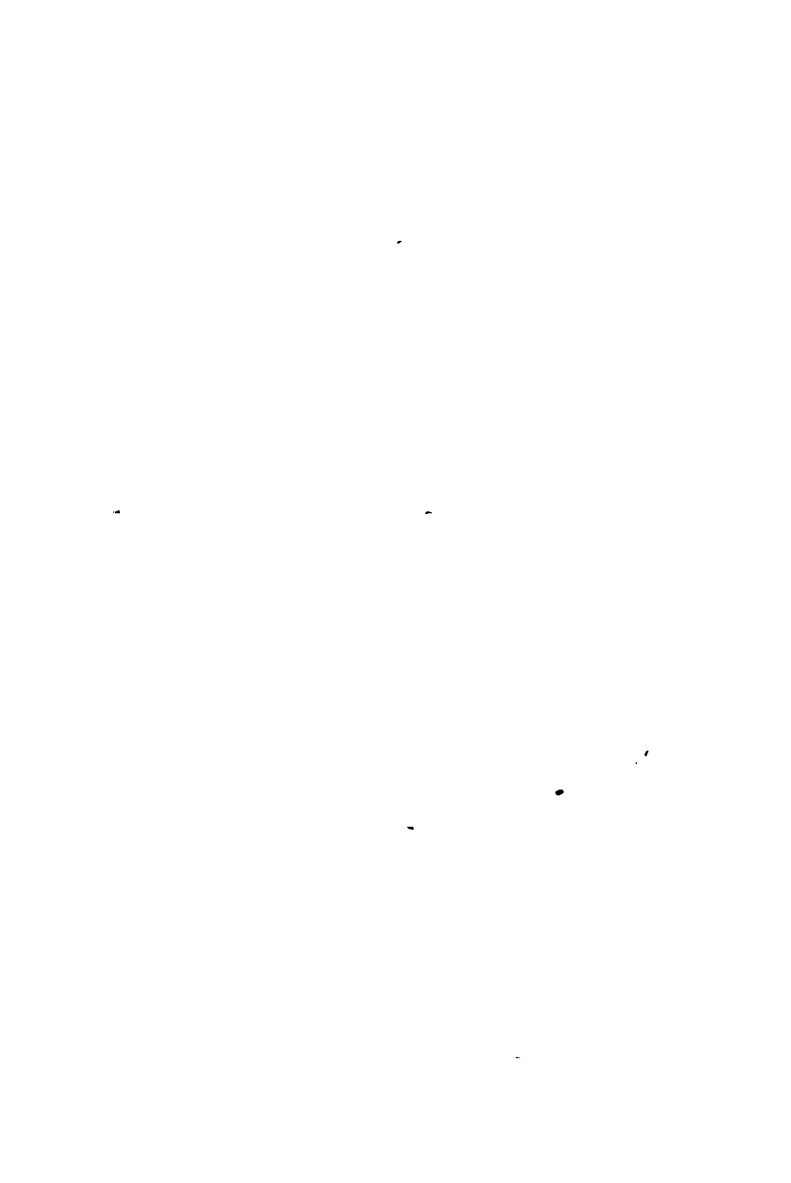
*April 1939*



## CONTENTS

				PAGE
CHAPTER ONE	..			9
CHAPTER TWO	..			16
CHAPTER THREE	..			23
CHAPTER FOUR	..	..	..	30
CHAPTER FIVE	..	..	..	42
CHAPTER SIX	..	..	..	52
CHAPTER SEVEN	..	..	..	64
CHAPTER EIGHT	..	..	..	75





## WHERE ARE WE ?

### CHAPTER ONE

The sun was setting as I trudged back, with Kripalani for my companion, along the dusty road from Segaon to Wardha. We had met and parted that evening of the 22nd of February at Segaon, those of us who had for so long been the members of the Working Committee of the Congress, and the long argument was over. There was a relief from the tension of indecision, but the relief did not bring peace of mind or freedom from apprehension. We wandered about the Ashram in no great hurry to go back, for our work for the moment was over. Meanwhile our colleagues took possession of the two cars and rolled away to Wardha, each car-load imagining that we were in the other car. So we were stranded in Segaon. For an hour we waited and played with the children at the Basic school nearby, but no car came and we decided to walk back the five miles to Wardha.

How many times I had gone along that dusty

path during the past three years, mostly by automobile, sometimes by bullock-cart, once or twice on foot. The scene was a familiar one, with the bare arid plain stretching on every side and hardly a tree in sight. Yet it seemed different, perhaps because I myself had changed and looked at it with different eyes. The sun hung like a ball of fire on the horizon and beauty filled the silent air, but I was in no mood for beauty and felt weary and depressed. Loneliness gripped me in that empty plain and the lengthening shadows seemed ominous. We walked silently for neither of us was in a mood for conversation. I was walking away not from Segaoon but from something bigger, more vital, that had been part of me these many years.

The newspapers say that I have resigned from the Working Committee. That is not quite correct and yet it is correct enough. When twelve members had resigned from a committee of fifteen, there was not much of the committee left; the rump could hardly function as such. The reasons that impelled me to act as I did differed in many ways from those that moved my colleagues. But apart from reasons, I felt an overwhelming desire to be out of committees and to function as I wanted to, without let or hindrance. It was easy enough to

resign from a dying committee whose days were numbered, but the problem in my mind was a deeper one and the step I took would mean a break from many other contacts. To the onlookers I had aligned myself along with the resigning twelve. And so I had. And yet in my mind the gulf between them and me had grown and not again would I be a member of a committee fashioned as the Working Committee had been for three years.

It surprises me that some people should criticise these resignations. There was no other possible course open to these members, or at any rate to several of them, after the charges that had been made against them. Ordinarily, if it was felt that the policy they represented was not approved by the majority, they had to resign. But in the present instance certain grave personal charges were also made against them, and it was quite impossible for them to continue so long as those charges remained. In effect these charges might be considered to be made against Gandhiji himself as he had been the guide and mentor of the Working Committee. This psychological and personal aspect inevitably overshadowed even the political issues, and I suggested therefore

to the Congress President to clear this obstacle before tackling other problems. Unhappily he did not do so. To add to this difficulty the President sent a telegram asking for a postponement of the Working Committee and not permitting it to transact even routine business. It was clear that under the circumstances the Committee had ceased to be.

A great organisation has something impersonal about it, although it might be powerfully impressed by a dominant personality. It carries on though persons may come or go. The Congress has demonstrated this impersonal aspect in a unique manner during past years, when repeatedly all its leaders and principal workers were in prison and the whole might of the law was directed against it. Yet it carried on and showed that sure sign of inner strength which is not daunted by adversity or crisis.

It was obvious that the Working Committee could not and should not, under the existing circumstances, decide any controversial matter of importance or attempt to frame resolutions for the Congress Subjects Committee. In the absence of the President this would have been improper, and every member present realised this fully.

But it was in the fitness of things that routine matters, and especially those demanding urgency, in view of the approaching Congress sessions, should be disposed of. But the President's instructions seemed to come in the way, though whether he meant his words to be interpreted so literally I do not know. And so the Committee, having no function to perform, dissolved and faded away. For the first time the Congress had not functioned impersonally.

When the scales are evenly balanced even a little makes a difference, and the President's telegram made a difference. Ordinarily the democratic way was for the old Committee to resign after the Presidential election and all that had happened in the course of it, so as to enable a new and more representative Committee to be formed. But the rapid development of an internal and external crisis, and the possibility of another struggle on a vast scale, overshadowed the usual processes of democracy and made the decision difficult. When, however, it appeared to the members present that there was no confidence in them even in regard to routine matters, the possibility of cooperation in a small executive became remote. The personal element was dis-

placing the impersonal character of the organisation. Personal loyalties began to count more than loyalty to the organisation.

But this was a small matter after all and would not have counted for much if the surrounding circumstances had been different. It led me to think of a defect in our present constitution which leaves the old Working Committee to function with the new President. It would be far better if the Committee's term expired with the Presidential election and the President met the Congress with a new Committee. The proceedings of the Congress would then be in the nature of a vote of confidence in this Committee. Under the present constitution the Committee is constituted after the Congress is over and it is quite possible that it might not truly represent the Congress.

And so, with all manner of thoughts surging in my mind, I walked back to Wardha town from Segaon. I had sided with my old colleagues of the Committee on the issue of the moment, for that was the only right course for me, but my parting was with them more than with others. In their letter of resignation they had stated that "the time has come when the country should have a clear-cut policy not based on compromise."

between incompatible groups of the Congress.”  
If that was to be their clear-cut policy, I had no  
place with them.



## CHAPTER TWO

If the Working Committee was to consist solely of people believing in a clear-cut policy, where did I come in? Of course the Committee must be homogeneous and capable of functioning as a unit or else it would be ineffective. It must believe generally in one line of action. But if the homogeneity was to be interpreted in a sectarian sense, then a future Committee would be very different from the Committees that have functioned during the past twenty years. Where would Deshbandhu Das or my father or Maulana Mohamad Ali have been under the new interpretation? They would have found no place in the Working Committee. In the early days of the Swaraj Party vital differences arose even as regards the policy to be pursued. There was an attempt to form a "homogeneous" Committee but it failed soon afterwards, and the Congress reverted to a joint Committee consisting of representatives of the two principal groups in it. They functioned effectively for a number of years in spite of a differ-

ence of outlook. Any other course would have led to ineffectiveness and continuing conflict between the two groups and the weakening of the Congress.

If a new principle was now followed, odd individuals like me would be out of place in the Committee. I would not fit in with the old Committee which I knew; still less would I fit in with a new Committee which I did not know. My not being in the Working Committee would not of course mean that I sulked or held aloof. In any event I would, as would others, offer such cooperation as was possible and not obstruct in any way.

I am convinced that the right course for the Congress is to avoid sectarianism and this narrow so-called homogeneity, for this would lead to the growth of conflict and the spirit of opposition within the Congress. It is for the Congress to lay down its policy clearly and to ask for a strict adherence of it by its executive. Within the four corners of this there must be homogeneity, but any attempt to narrow this still further would result in the exclusion of vital elements.

This policy of a joint front, though inevitable for us under the circumstances, has its dis-

advantages, as it leads to a feeling of suppression in the two or more groups that cooperate together. Each feels that it cannot have its way and that its progress is obstructed by the other group. This feeling of suppression has grown during the past few years, and so it is perhaps desirable to have executives consisting of one group only in order to give them full play. In effect this will make little difference as there is not too much choice of policies and soon after there is bound to be a reversion to the joint Committee, which alone can be really representative of the Congress and the country.

One need not therefore take the present deadlock in the Congress too tragically, unfortunate as it is. It is a sign of the growth of our movement and it mirrors the ideological conflicts that are troubling the minds of large numbers of our people. But everybody knows that in any action that might have to be undertaken we hold together and a crisis, national or international, will find us united.

What is unfortunate is the manner in which this deadlock has come about for it represents no clear conflict of ideals or policy. It is the outcome of a desire to control the Congress organi-

sation, whatever the policy. There has been a certain reaction against what was considered an authoritarian tendency in the Congress High Command, and yet curiously enough the new leadership is far more authoritarian than any during the recent history of the Congress. A radical policy for the Congress one can understand whether one approves of it or not. A line of action can be judged and accepted or rejected. But radical slogans allied to authoritarianism is a wrong and dangerous trend. It is wrong because it leads people to think that strong language and much shouting are substitutes for action. It is dangerous because radical slogans delude the people and under their cover authoritarianism creeps in and entrenches itself. I do not think there is any chance of the Congress going this way for we are too much wedded to democratic processes, and we have, these many years, discarded the tyranny of strong language, which enervates, in favour of action that is effective and that strengthens. Yet we may not grow complacent, for recent years have brought strange happenings in Europe, and we have seen the proud edifice of democracy fall before our eyes. Regretfully we recognise how easy it is to wean away a muddle-headed and

confused public and then to drive it towards wrong ends.

Therefore it becomes vitally necessary for us to be clear about our policy and our methods, to define with precision our attitude to national and international problems. The world changes and new problems arise, new questions have to be answered, and the well-worn and hackneyed phrases of yesterday may have little meaning to-day. We live in the post-Munich Age and the map changes from day to day and barbarism and black reaction triumph. Even as I write my mind is filled with that supreme tragedy of our time—the murder of Spanish democracy. It was not the rebels who killed Republican Spain, or traitors' hands that did it. Nor was it ultimately done to death by the Fascist Powers, much as they tried to do so. Britain and France must be held responsible for this, as for the betrayal of Czechoslovakia, and history long ages hence will remember this infamy and will not forgive them. The infinite sadness of the looks of the Czechs and the Spaniards, whom they deserted and betrayed and, in the guise of friendship and impartiality, drove to death and slavery, will haunt them from generation to generation.

---

This is the world we live in. And in India also the problems that are arising are perilously like those in Europe. While we think still in terms of a straight fight against British imperialism, that imperialism changes its shape, and, not so sure of its strength, tries to meet the challenge indirectly and more dangerously. Reaction itself talks a different language and, using progressive phrases, exploits the unpolitical masses for its own ends. Communalism becomes even more definitely the citadel of the reactionary and the bulwark of imperialism.

Phrases and slogans have become dangerous companions in these days unless they are allied to clear thought and well-considered objectives and methods. Most of us seldom take the trouble to think. It is a troublesome and fatiguing process and often leads us to uncomfortable conclusions. But crises and deadlocks when they occur have this advantage at least, that they force us to think. Let us then profit in this way in our present impasse.

It is for this reason that I am venturing to put forward some thoughts and experiences of mine. In a changing and uncertain situation it is difficult for me to point with any confidence to a way out

of the deadlock. It may be that this way will show itself sooner than people imagine. Meanwhile it might be worth while for me to trace the various tendencies that have developed in India during the last three years. In doing so I crave the indulgence of my colleagues of the old Working Committee, for it may be necessary for me to refer to certain happenings with which they are connected and which have so far been treated as confidential. I hope I shall not thereby abuse their confidence.

## CHAPTER THREE

In March three years ago I flew back to India from Europe, president-elect of the Congress. My views and opinions were well known and I was to some extent entitled to presume that the Congress electorate had expressed their approval of them. But I knew well that I could not presume too much for elections are often governed by other considerations. No one could say that the Congress had turned Socialist because the delegates had elected me their President. But this election did mean that there was a general desire for a more radical policy and that Socialist ideas were spreading in the country. For the past year the Congress had been rapidly recovering from the reaction that had set in on the withdrawal of civil disobedience. The elections to the Central Assembly had helped in the process and the more radical elements were chafing at the inactivity of the organisation.

An organised Socialist wing had grown up and with the intemperance and exuberance of

---



youth, it criticised and condemned the leaders of the Congress. It spoke a language, borrowed from Western Socialist literature, which was seldom understood by the rank and file of the Congress. And so though it won over some, it created a barrier against the many. The vast middle groups of the Congress, politically left, socially vague and undecided but generally pro-peasant, looked askance at this new type of propaganda which attacked their leaders. Some Socialists openly talked of replacing the old leadership and evidently considered themselves as chosen by destiny for this purpose. They endeavoured to run their candidates for local Congress Committees and the impression grew that they wanted to capture and control them. From a democratic point of view they were entitled to do so but this very attempt and their methods turned against them and the middle groups of the Congress lined themselves in an opposing camp. Thus the very people to whom Socialism should have appealed were pushed away and made hostile. The Socialist group instead of being the crusaders for a new idea became to some extent a sect seeking power and creating opposition among those who did not fall in line with them. Under cover of Socialism

purely personal local groups were sometimes formed seeking office or positions of authority in the Congress.

The leaders of the Congress disapproved strongly of these developments. They disliked the intricate theories connected with Socialism and thought that Socialism was inevitably connected with violence which was opposed to the basic principle of the Congress. Above all they were irritated by the personal attacks and criticisms and sometimes reacted in kind.

I found this atmosphere of bitterness and conflict on my return. I was full at the time of the idea of Popular Fronts and Joint Fronts which were being formed in some European countries. In Europe where class and other conflicts were acute, it had been possible for this cooperation on a common platform. In India these conflicts were still in their early stages and were completely overshadowed by the major conflict against imperialism. The obvious course was for all anti-imperialistic forces to function together on the common platform of the Congress. Socialism was a theoretical issue, except in so far as it affected the course of the struggle, till political freedom and power were gained. There could be no Socialism

before independence. It was true that vital differences might arise in regard to the methods and the means, but I was not myself troubled greatly over this matter. I was convinced that the Congress technique of peaceful action was the right method and must be pursued not only as a superficial policy but as a fundamentally sound method which would lead us to our goal.

Some Socialists and Marxists, thinking in terms of Europe and its pacifists, tried to ridicule the method of non-violence. I am no admirer of European pacifists and crisis after crisis has shown them to be not only totally ineffective but often the unconscious tools of reaction and even war-mongering. Theirs has been the negative passive attitude which surrenders to evil and violence because resistance would lead to a breach of their pacifist doctrine. Political surrender leads almost inevitably to moral surrender also.

11-31 | But the non-violence of the Congress was the very opposite of this and the basis of it was no surrender, political or moral, to what it considered evil. It involves, as all policies do, the acceptance of compromises when circumstances dictate them, but essentially perhaps it is more uncompromising than other policies. It is dynamic and not passive;

it is not non-resistance but resistance to wrongdoing, though that resistance is peaceful. In practice it had proved remarkably successful not only in achieving visible results but also in the far more important task of strengthening the morale of the nation and training the people for peaceful, disciplined and united action.

Almost everybody, including the Socialists, accepted this as the national policy and realised that there was no alternative. It is true that some did so rather mechanically without accepting its implications and sometimes not acting wholly in accordance with it. So far as I was concerned, I had no difficulty in accepting it, although it was no article of faith for me, nor could I say that it would be applicable under all the circumstances. It applied fully to India and to our struggle and that was enough for me.

I decided to devote my energies towards bridging the gulf between the old leaders and the new Socialist group. To some extent I was fitted for this task as I had intimate contacts with both. I was convinced that India could not do without either of these groups and there seemed to me no valid reason why there should not be the fullest cooperation between the two in the struggle against impe-

rialism. The old leaders were tried men with prestige and influence among the masses and the experience of having guided the struggle for many years. They were not Rightists by any means; politically they were far more Left and they were confirmed anti-imperialists. Gandhiji, standing behind them and supporting them from outside the Congress organisation, was of course a tower of strength to them and to the country. He continued to dominate the Indian scene and it was difficult to conceive of a big struggle without him. The Socialists, though a small group and speaking for a minority, represented a vital and a growing section and their influence was spreading, especially among the youth. I was akin to them in their ideology and their objectives, and to me and to many others they represented the future.

On the eve of the Lucknow Congress we met in Working Committee and I was pleased and gratified at the adoption by this Committee of a number of resolutions that I sponsored, and which seemed to give a new tone and a more radical outlook to the Congress. This increased my confidence in my capacity to keep the various groups in the Congress together. But the proceedings of the Congress itself weakened this impression and I

realised some of the difficulties in store for me. The Congress rejected some of my important recommendation and gave its full support to the old leadership. I stood in a minority in the Congress and doubts assailed me as to whether I should continue as President. The formation of the Working Committee distressed me still more as it emphasised the limitations within which I had to function. In theory the Committee had to be nominated by me but I could not override the majority view of the Congress. I decided to resign from the Presidentship and my last words at the open session, as the Congress was concluding, were to the effect that after the glory of the last few days I was sinking back into oblivion.

## CHAPTER FOUR

The Lucknow Congress was over and a Working Committee was announced. I had decided, after much mental conflict, not to resign, as the consequences of resignation were serious and the whole organisation might have been shaken up by it. I threw myself into the work before me and drew up schemes for developing the A. I. C. C. office and opening various departments in it. With these plans in my head I went to the first meeting of the Working Committee. No questions of principle or high policy were involved and yet I was surprised to find that my proposals were viewed with suspicion by many of my colleagues. It was not that they objected to them but they did not know where these developments might lead to. After long and exhausting arguments certain more or less routine proposals were agreed to which should not have taken more than a few minutes.

I undertook some tours and visited, among other places, Bombay. Everywhere I spoke about the Congress programme, as decided at Lucknow,

and emphasized the need for strengthening the organisation. In the course of my speeches I laid stress on the poverty and unemployment in India and said that a true solution could only come through Socialism. But there could be no Socialism without independence and all of us had therefore to concentrate on the latter. I met with an enthusiastic and overwhelming response everywhere.

Early in July 1936 there was another meeting of the Working Committee and I went to it heartened by the enthusiasm I had met with. To my surprise and dismay I found that some of my colleagues did not share this and they were full of apprehension at the developments that were taking place. They offered their resignations from the Working Committee. (Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was one of the absentees from this meeting). I was stunned. It appeared that they were deeply hurt at what they considered was a regular and continuous campaign against them, treating them as persons whose time was over, who represented ideas that were worn out, and who were obstructing the progress of the country. I was of course not said to be a party to such a campaign but my ideological sympathy with some of those who indulged



in it was taken to be as passive support of it.

All this surprised me greatly. There had been some foolish and objectionable speeches and statements by odd individuals but that was no sufficient reason for the offer to resign. Perhaps it was the long background of bitterness and conflict which influenced my colleagues, although this was improving rapidly. To some extent there was a feeling that the Congress Socialist party was not playing fair. Three of their numbers were in the Working Committee and yet the Party continued in a sense to play the part of an opposition. But the dominating reason at the time was, I think, a feeling that my speeches might scare away voters and thus effect adversely the general elections that were coming. Later it was realised that I was a fairly efficient election winner.

Owing to the intervention of Gandhiji the resignations were withdrawn, but I returned from Wardha in a depressed frame of mind. I felt that I should resign and place the whole matter before the A.I.C.C. so that suitable arrangements could be made for future work. I sent a long letter to Gandhiji from Allahabad from which I give some extracts below:

“Ever since I left Wardha I have been feeling

weak in body and troubled in mind. Partly this is no doubt due to physical causes—a chill which has aggravated my throat trouble. But partly also it is due to other causes which touch the mind and the spirit directly. Since my return from Europe I have found that meetings of the Working Committee exhaust me greatly; they have a devitalising effect on me and I have almost the feeling of being much older in years after every fresh experience. I should not be surprised if this feeling was also shared by my colleagues of the Committee. It is an unhealthy experience and it comes in the way of effective work.

“I was told, when I returned from Europe, that the country was demoralised and hence we had to go slow. My own little experience during the past four months has not confirmed this impression. Indeed I have found a bubbling vitality wherever I have gone and I have been surprised at the public response. . . . I am grateful to you for all the trouble you took in smoothing over matters and in helping to avoid a crisis. I was convinced then and am convinced now that a break of the kind suggested would have had serious consequences for all our work, including the elections. And yet, and yet, where are we now and

what does the future hold for us? . . . .  
I have written at length, both in my book and subsequently, about my present ideas. Those views are not casual. They are part of me and, though I might change them or vary them in future, so long as I hold them I must give expression to them. Because I attached importance to a larger unity I tried to express them in the mildest way possible and more as an invitation to thought than as fixed conclusions. I saw no conflict in this approach and in anything that the Congress was doing..."

With the fixed intention of resigning and leaving the matter to the A.I.C.C., which was meeting next month in Bombay, I left for Sind. News reached me there of the Spanish Revolt and I was greatly affected by it. I saw this Rising developing into a European or even a world conflict. Crises on the biggest scale seemed to be at hand and India's part in these was to me a vital matter. Was I going to weaken our organisation and create an internal crisis by resigning just when it was essential for us to pull together? My mind became tense with expectation and all thought of resignation left it.

In Bombay the Working Committee drafted the Election Manifesto and this, curiously enough,

was agreed to without much argument. A new atmosphere of cooperation surrounded us and the tension seemed to lessen. As a colleague remarked with pleasure, it was like old times again.

As the elections approached, all of us plunged into the campaign and our internal conflicts vanished for the moment. For many months I wandered about India and millions of faces passed before my eyes. I saw a thousand facets of this country of mine in all their rich diversity, and yet always with the unifying impress of India upon them. I sought to understand what lay behind those millions of eyes that stared at me, what hopes and desires, what untold sorrow and misery unexpressed. Glimpses came to me that illumined my vision and made me realise the immensity of the problems of the hundreds of millions of our people.

Elections came and the A.I.C.C. decision to accept office subject to certain conditions, and then the intervening period of interim ministries. The Congress took office in a number of provinces and this by itself released mass energy and both the kisan and the worker woke up and began to play an aggressive ro'le. New problems arose and internal conflicts, which had so far been largely ideological, took new shape. No one, not even

the opponents of office acceptance, wanted to create crises for the Congress Ministries. But there was a continuous attempt to bring pressure upon them by strikes and kisan manifestations which embarrassed the Ministries greatly. In Behar the kisans movement came into conflict with the Congress organisation. Elsewhere also the high hopes that had been raised by the advent of the Congress Ministries not being fulfilled, dissatisfaction arose. The machinery of government was working in much the same way as of old, although various reforms had been introduced. In Madras especially the Congress Government functioned in some ways perilously like the old Government.

To some extent this was inevitable as the old steel frame was still there circumscribing and restricting the activities of the Provincial Governments. But it was felt in ever widening circles in the Congress that the Ministries could have functioned more effectively in accordance with our principles and that they were growing too complaisant. There was not the full cooperation between the Ministries and the Provincial Congress Committees which was essential for effective progress, and various incidents occurred—the Nariman affair, the Batlivala arrest—which added to the internal

conflict. It is difficult for me to deal with all these matters in the course of these brief articles, or else I shall continue to write on and take too long a time to reach the present stage. Still it is essential that the background of these incidents and of the Congress in 1937 should be kept in mind and I shall therefore deal with these in a subsequent article.

The vague but general feeling of dissatisfaction took some shape in the A.I.C.C. meeting in October 1937 and found moderate expression. Long-continued repression in Mysore State was also greatly resented and a resolution, which was not happily worded, was passed. These resolutions, and especially the Mysore one, were disapproved of by many members of the Working Committee, and Gandhiji, who was seriously ill at the time, was upset by them. He expressed himself at a meeting of the Working Committee in language unusually strong for him and condemned artificial combinations in the Congress. This could not go on, he said, and the organisation must be one from top to bottom. He said that he would have to withdraw completely unless a change was made in the Congress and this drift stopped. What exactly he wanted done was not clear to

me but what was clear was that he strongly disapproved of what I had done. I suggested that the A.I.C.C. should be re-called as a crisis seemed imminent. Later it was decided to carry on as we were doing for the time being.

In the columns of the 'Harijan', Gandhiji criticised the Mysore resolution and stated that it was *ultra vires* of the A.I.C.C., which meant that he condemned my action in allowing it to be discussed. This amazed me for I was and am convinced that from a constitutional and legal point of view Gandhiji was wrong. I wrote to him and to the members of the Working Committee on the subject and intended issuing a press statement but ultimately refrained from doing so in order to avoid a public controversy. But more and more I felt that I could not carry on as a responsible member of the executive. I decided not to do anything to precipitate a crisis but to drop out of the executive at the next Congress session which was approaching. I informed Gandhiji and some of my colleagues accordingly and wrote to the same effect to Subhas Babu who was in Europe then. (He had not been formally elected President then although his election was certain).

At Haripura we had suddenly to face the

ministerial crisis in the U.P. and Behar and my decision not to belong to the W.C. was shaken. Another consideration which affected me was that my not joining the W.C. might be looked upon as if I was not desirous of giving my full cooperation to Subhas Babu. This had of course nothing to do with my decision but I could not go about explaining this to everybody. I decided to join the Working Committee.

But I was ill at ease and in April 1938 I wrote to Gandhiji. I give some extracts from my letter: "As you know I have been greatly distressed at the turn events have taken in Congress politics during the last six months. Among the matters that have disturbed me is the new orientation of the Gandhi Seva Sangh. . . . It is distressing to find that even the Gandhi Seva Sangh which might have set a standard to others and refused to become a party organisation intent on winning elections had descended to the common level. I feel strongly that the Congress Ministries are working inefficiently and not doing much that they could do. They are trying to adapt themselves far too much to the old order and trying to justify it. But all this, bad as it is, might be tolerated. What is far worse is that we are losing the high position



that we have built up, with so much labour, in the hearts of the people. We are sinking to the level of ordinary politicians. . . . Partly of course this is due to a general deterioration all over the world, partly to the transition period through which we are passing. Nevertheless it does show up our failings and the sight is painful. I think there are enough men of goodwill in the Congress to cope with the situation if they set about it in the right way. But their minds are full of party conflicts and the desire to crush this individual or that group. Obviously bad men are preferred to good men because the former promise to tow the party line. When this happens there is bound to be deterioration.

“For months past I have felt that I could not function effectively in India as things were going. I have carried on of course as one can always carry on. But I have felt out of place and a misfit. This was one reason (though there were others also) why I decided to go to Europe. I felt I could be more useful there and in any event I would freshen up my tired and puzzled mind. . . .”

In this letter I have referred to the Gandhi Seva Sangh. On subsequent inquiry I found that there was no such political orientation at the top

as I had been led to believe. The fault lay with certain individuals in local areas who tried to exploit Gandhiji's name as well as that of the Sangh in Congress elections.

## CHAPTER FIVE

The Working of Provincial Autonomy, restricted as it was, had many dangers for us. It tended to emphasize, as it was no doubt meant to, provincialism and diverted our anti-imperialist struggle into narrower channels. Because of this, internal conflicts grew—communal, social and organisational. The major problems of poverty, unemployment, the land, industry, clamoured for solution, and yet they could not be solved within the framework of the existing constitution and economic structure. The only course open to us was to go as far as we could towards this solution—it was not very far—and to relieve somewhat the burdens on the masses, and at the same time to prepare ourselves to change that constitution and structure. A time was bound to come when we had exhausted the potentialities of this constitution and we had to choose between a tame submission to it and a challenge to it. Both involved a crisis. For if we submitted, the major problems finding no solution or outlet would overwhelm us. If

we did not, and we had no intention of doing so, a conflict with British Imperialism was inevitable unless the latter surrendered, which it was not likely to do. There was an odd possibility, however, that if the national movement grew powerful enough, and in view of the critical situation, we might gain our objective without a major struggle.

Our strength had certainly increased greatly and in spite of internal conflicts and sometimes bogus membership, there is no doubt that the Congress is a more powerful organisation today than at any previous period of its history. The masses are more politically awake than ever before. Yet these very signs of strength may turn against us if they are not organised and directed into right channels. For the moment I am not considering the communal problem in spite of its obvious importance and its repercussions on our national struggle.

We had to deal with, both in the organisation and in the provincial governments, the coordination of the political struggle with the social and economic problems of the masses. Failure to integrate the two meant weakness and a growing paralysis. On the one hand we had to keep our struggle

predominantly political and anti-imperialistic; on the other, we had to go as far as we possibly could in the direction of social advance. Above all it was essential that the Congress must continue to be a disciplined well-knit organisation keeping the various aspects of the struggle well under control. If the Congress weakened there was no possibility of effective struggle for us.

As I have indicated, I was dissatisfied with the progress made by the Congress Ministries. It is true that they had done good work, their record of achievement was impressive, the Ministers were working terribly hard and yet had to put up with all manner of attacks and criticisms, often based on ignorance. Theirs was a thankless job. Still I felt that progress was slow and their outlook was not what it should be. Nor was I satisfied with the approach of the Congress leadership to the problems that faced us. It was not so much a question of difference of opinion as of emphasis, though there was difference of opinion also sometimes. What alarmed me was a tendency to put down certain vital elements which were considered too advanced or which did not quite fit in with the prevailing outlook. This was a dangerous drift though it had not gone far, and it

reminded me of the fate of the German Social Democrats and the British Labour Party.

It is true that some of the so-called Leftist elements in the Congress had not behaved with responsibility and had deliberately encouraged tendencies which could only lead to internal conflict and the weakening of the Congress. Their idea of a joint front was to have the full protection of the Congress, the advantage of its prestige, and yet to attack it and criticise it from outside. The Red Flag, perfectly justified in its own sphere, became often a challenge to the National Flag. The Kisan Sabha frequently functioned as a permanent opposition to the local Congress Committee and sometimes demonstrations were organised which could only lead to friction and irritation. Much of this took place in the lower ranks, but even the Kisan Sabha leadership was quite astonishingly irresponsible. In the villages, all manner of undesirables who had found no place in the local Congress, or were otherwise disgruntled elements, found shelter in a local Kisan Sabha. Even politically reactionary elements sometimes utilised the Kisan Sabha to weaken the Congress.

All this led to petty conflicts, and what was worse, a growing spirit of indiscipline in the Con-

gress. If this had represented the growth of an organised and disciplined Left, it would have been a healthy sign, whether one agreed with it or not. In effect it represented a healthy awakening of the masses which was being exploited by numerous mutually differing groups among those who called themselves the Leftists. For a considerable time the conflict among the Leftist groups themselves absorbed most of their energy.

Gandhiji was not interested in these ideological conflicts but with his extraordinary capacity to sense a situation, he felt that indiscipline was growing rapidly and chaotic forces were being let loose. He was thinking more and more in terms of a great struggle with British Imperialism and indiscipline could not be the prelude to this. I was myself distressed by this development. It reminded me of various unfortunate stages of the Chinese Revolution, and I had no desire to see India go through that chaotic process.

The Nariman episode of 1937 and the Khare incident of 1938 were symptomatic of this spirit of indiscipline. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was held to blame for both these most unjustly when the responsibility for them was fully shared by all the members of the Working Committee. As

President of the Congress I was intimately connected with every step that was taken with reference to Mr. Nariman. President Subhas Bose was equally responsible for the decision regarding Dr. Khare.

I think that there has been a certain tendency towards authoritarianism in the Congress. It might have been toned down, but to some extent it was inevitable when discipline was essential for us and there was danger of our far-flung organisation going to pieces without it. Probably what was objected to was more the manner of doing than the thing done. In any event it was fantastic and absurd to talk about Congress fascism because of what was done to Mr. Nariman or Dr. Khare. Politically speaking and from the Congress point of view, what Dr. Khare did was unpardonable. He came to an arrangement with the Governor behind the backs of, and on the eve of, the Working Committee in order to present them with an accomplished fact. If that was permitted then all control over Congress Ministries vanished and Congress Ministers became a law unto themselves.

Mr. Nariman invited trouble. He seemed to consider it his birth-right to be made the Leader of the Party and when this did not happen, he started



an agitation which continued for many months. This agitation amazed and astounded me. I had known Mr. Nariman fairly intimately ever since he joined the Congress in the twenties. I had seen him function in times of peace and in times of struggle and had formed some opinion of his virtues and his weaknesses. If I had been a voter for this purpose, I would not have voted for him to be appointed Leader, as I did not think that he could have shouldered this burden adequately. Subsequent events have only confirmed this opinion and I have been surprised at the lack of responsibility he has shown.

But in any event, even if he was the better or more suitable person, the agitation which he and his supporters carried on was indefensible. Most unfortunate of all was the communal turn that was given to it. Just as in Dr. Khare's case an attempt was made to rouse Maharashtrian sentiment against the Congress.

There has been a great deal of talk of democracy being suppressed in the Nariman and Khare episodes. I presume those who say so have not troubled to study the facts, or else our conceptions of democracy differ very greatly. It is easy to sneer and be sarcastic and this seems the fashion today, not only

among some Congressmen but among that numerous crowd who do little themselves but offer advice from a distance. I think that the Working Committee would have been completely failing in their duty if they had not expressed themselves clearly on both these issues. Democracy does not simply mean shouting loudly and persistently, though that might have some value occasionally. Freedom and democracy require responsibility and certain standards of behaviour and self-discipline. Our struggle, more specially the type of struggle we are carrying on, requires all these qualities and if we do not possess them in sufficient measure, we risk failure.

The Leftists, using the word correctly, stand for certain principles and policies. Inevitably they attract to their ranks all manner of people, both the finest type of crusading spirit and the intellectually and morally incompetent. If they do not take care they will be swamped by the latter, and lose the reputation that they should possess. It is not in indiscipline or in loose thinking or in irresponsible action that they will find success. The student world of India should be the nursery of new ideas and clear thinking and disciplined action. And yet unfortunately it often

shows a lack of all the virtues that they should possess.

There is one matter I should like to refer to although it comes at a later stage in the narrative. This is the Trades Disputes Act of Bombay. It is one of my regrets that I was away from India when this was considered and passed. Perhaps, if I had been here I might have been able to have some changes made in it. The Act as a whole is decidedly a good measure but it has, according to my thinking, certain vital defects which affect the workers adversely and take away from the grace of the measure. The manner it was passed was also unfortunate. On the other hand it was equally unfortunate for the workers' representatives to ally themselves with the declared opponents of the Congress and to exploit the situation to the detriment of the Congress. Another attitude and approach would have yielded better results.

The Congress Ministries have certain definite and substantial achievements to their credit; they have failed in some ways. But one of their achievements which is full of promise is their new approach to mass education. The literacy campaigns have been good. More important and of fundamental significance is the new Basic scheme of education

which is based on the Zakir Hussain Committee's report. I have been deeply impressed by it and I think we have found the right method to educate the growing generation.

## CHAPTER SIX

My visit to Europe last year coincided with a period of intense crisis in the international sphere, and I put myself psychologically in tune with this by going straight to Barcelona, that "flower of the fair cities of the world," as Cervantes called it. Alas that this flower should be crushed to-day and enemy hands should hold this ancient home of liberty, which struggled for freedom even in the days of Ferdinand and Isabella! But when I visited this gracious city, it was still the home of the unconquerable spirit of man which knows no defeat and reckons death and disaster as of little account in freedom's cause. Nightly I saw the bombs fall from the air, raining death and destruction on the populace. I saw the hungry crowds in the streets, the plight of the refugees; I visited the armies at the front and those brave young men of the International Brigade, so many of whom rest for ever in the soil of Spain. I come back full of the tragedy of Spain, which was being strangled not so much by enemies, but by those who called

themselves the friends of democracy.

Later I visited Czechoslovakia and saw yet another tragedy, yet another betrayal, unroll itself before my eyes. All these events impressed themselves powerfully upon me and I tried to understand our own struggle for freedom in relation to them. In this swift changing drama Federation and many of the lesser problems of India seemed to lose importance. Bigger things were afoot and it was time that India also thought in terms of them.

I had gone to Europe in a personal capacity but inevitably I had a certain representative character. In my public or private utterances I could not forget this and I was anxious not to say or do anything which might embarrass my colleagues in India. I took care therefore to send full and detailed reports of all my political activities, public or private; I enquired if the line I had taken was the correct one, I asked for full directions and put questions to be answered. I sent several such reports and each one went to the Congress President, to the General Secretary of the Congress for the members of the Working Committee, and to Gandhiji. It was my misfortune that the President, did not even acknowledge any of them and consequently I received no directions from him.

The General Secretary informed me that the Members of the Working Committee generally approved of the attitude I had taken up. Gandhiji also expressed his approval.

It was obvious that in the course of a discussion or conversation, it is not enough to speak in terms of a brief Congress resolution, although that must be the basis of the discussion. All manner of possibilities have to be investigated and various developments considered in the light of the Congress decision. The purely agitational attitude is not good enough for a detailed consideration of a subject. It was because of this that I wanted full instructions from the Congress leaders in India. My own general attitude was that the whole question of Federation was out of date now and it was time that the Indian problem was solved by a Constituent Assembly drawing up a constitution.

I learnt that an attempt was being made behind the scenes in England to impress upon people that what I said about Federation did not represent the Congress or Gandhiji and that it was Gandhiji who counted in the end. I wrote to the Working Committee about it, as well as to Gandhiji. Gandhiji sent me a cable in reply expressing his

agreement with what I had said, though his language might have been different. He wrote an article in the 'Harijan' about that time to the same effect.

The international crisis and the possibility of war also raised vital problems for us and I wanted directions from my colleagues at home. I got no directions from the President and little from the others in this matter. I felt from this and various other indications that the President did not wholly approve of the international policy I was advocating.

In view of the crisis and the rapid developments in Europe most of us, I suppose, were forced to think out afresh what their political faith should be. Perhaps this sense of crisis and tension was not so obvious in India and events did not compel us to examine our premises afresh. Our socialist friends in India have not reacted sufficiently to changing conditions. The Communists in Europe might change, under the compulsion of events, but not so the Communists of India.

I had been considerably upset by the course of events in Soviet Union, the trials and the repeated purges of vast numbers of Communists. I think the trials were generally bona fide and there had been a definite conspiracy against the régime and



widespread attempts at sabotage. Nevertheless I could not reconcile myself to what was happening there and it indicated to me ill-health in the body politic, which necessitated an ever-continuing use of violence and suppression. Still the progress made in Russian economy, the advancing standards of the people, the great advance in cultural matters and many other things continued to impress me. I was eager to visit the Soviet Union but unfortunately my daughter's illness prevented me from going there.

Whatever doubts I had about internal happenings in Russia, I was quite clear in my mind about her foreign policy. This had been consistently one of peace and, unlike England and France, of fulfilling international obligations and supporting the cause of democracy abroad. The Soviet Union stood as the one real effective bulwark against Fascism in Europe and Asia. Without the Soviet Union what could be the state of Europe to-day? Fascist reaction would triumph everywhere and democracy and freedom would become dreams of a past age.

In Spain, in Czechoslovakia, and right through the September crisis, the Communist Party seemed to me to take the straightest line. Their analysis

of the situation almost always turned out to be correct, and even when the nerves of most of the progressive groups were shattered, the Communists as a rule kept their heads and continued to function. They had the capacity to learn from events and to shape their policy accordingly, unlike the British Labour Party which has shown an astounding inability to understand a changing world.

The events in Europe, the growth of Fascism, the Spanish Revolution, and most of all the deliberate encouragement of the Nazi and Fascist Powers by the so-called democratic governments of England and France, impressed upon me that the dominant urge of owning classes is to protect their own vested interests. When nationalism means protection of their interests, then they are nationalists and patriots; but when these interests are endangered, then nationalism or patriotism have little value for them. The ruling classes of Britain and France are even prepared to endanger the security of their empires, rather than cooperate for the defence of democracy with Soviet Russia, for such cooperation might release forces which would undermine their privileged position. Democracy means nothing to them, nor freedom,

though they talk loudly of them; their main concern is the protection of their vested interests and privileges. That they might lose these anyhow, even by the policy they pursue, is their misfortune.

The Marxian philosophy appeals to me in a broad sense and helps me to understand the processes of history. I am far from being an orthodox Marxist nor does any other orthodoxy appeal to me. But I am convinced that the old Liberal approach in England or elsewhere is no longer valid. *Laissez faire* is dead, and unless far-reaching changes are made with reasonable speed, disaster awaits us, whether we live in England or India. To-day the community has to be organised in order to establish social and economic justice. This organisation is possible on the fascist basis but this does not bring justice or equality and is essentially unsound. The only other way is the socialist way.

Liberty and democracy have no meaning without equality, and equality cannot be established so long as the principal instruments of production are privately owned. Private ownership of these means of production thus comes in the way of real democracy. Many factors go to shape opinion but the most important and fundamental of them

is the property relation, which ultimately governs our institutions and our social fabric. Those who profit by an existing property relation do not, as a class, voluntarily agree to a change which involves a loss of power and privilege. We have reached a stage when there is an essential contradiction between the existing property relation and the forces of production, and democracy cannot effectively function unless this relation is transformed. Class struggles are inherent in the present system, for the attempt to change it and bring it in line with modern requirements meets with the fierce opposition of the ruling or owning classes. That is the logic of the conflicts of to-day and it has little to do with the goodwill or illwill of individuals, who might in their individual capacities succeed in rising above their class allegiance. But the class as a whole will hold together and oppose change.

I do not see why under socialism there should not be a great deal of freedom for the individual, indeed far greater freedom than the present system gives. He can have freedom of conscience and mind, freedom of enterprise and even the possession of private property on a restricted scale. Above all he will have the freedom which comes from economic security, which only a small number

possess to-day.

I think India and the world will have to march in this direction of socialism unless catastrophe brings ruin to the world. That march may vary in different countries and the intermediate steps might not be the same. Nothing is so foolish as to imagine that exactly the same processes take place in different countries with varying backgrounds. India, even if she accepted this goal, would have to find her own way to it, for we have to avoid unnecessary sacrifice and the way of chaos, which may retard our progress for a generation.

But India has not accepted this goal and our immediate objective is political independence. We must remember this and not confuse the issue, for else we have neither socialism nor independence. We have seen that even in Europe the middle classes are powerful enough to suppress to-day any movement aiming at vital social change, and when danger threatens, have a tendency to go to Fascism. The middle classes in India are relatively at least as strong and it would be the extremity of folly to estrange them and force them into the opposing ranks. Our national policy must therefore be one which includes a great majority of them on the common basis of political independence and anti-

imperialism, and our international policy must be one of anti-Fascism.

Marxism or socialism are not policies of violence, though like almost other groups, capitalist or liberal, they envisage the possibility of violence. Can they fit in with the peaceful methods of the Congress, not only as a temporary expedient but in a straightforward *bona fide* manner? It is not necessary for us to discuss the whole philosophy underlying the doctrine of non-violence or to consider how far it is applicable to remote and extreme cases. For us the problem is that of India and of India of to-day and to-morrow. I am convinced that the way of non-violence is not only the only feasible course for us but is, on its merits, the best and most effective method. I think that the field of its application will grow as its effectiveness is recognised. But here in India large numbers of people have recognised it and it has become the solid foundation of our movement. It has proved effective enough already but it is quite possible, with further experience, to extend its applications in a variety of ways. It is easy to belittle it and point to its failures, but it is far easier to point out the innumerable failures of the method of violence. We have seen powerfully armed

countries collapse and sink into servitude without a struggle. India, with all her lack of armed might, would never have succumbed in this way.

There are peculiar dangers in India in the use of the violent method. It cannot be used in a disciplined or organised way. It will come in the way of mass organisation and mass action, and it is bound to lead to internal conflicts on a big scale resulting in chaos and the collapse of our movement. I am not optimist enough to imagine that out of this chaos a free, united and advanced India will rise up.

No one in India thinks in terms of this type of violence. It is out of the question. But there is a feeling that a violent mentality increases the militancy of the masses and is therefore to be vaguely encouraged among the industrial workers or even the kisans. This is folly and if continued the consequences are likely to be disastrous. So long as a government deals gently with it, it flourishes, but a determined government can crush it easily and completely demoralize the workers. Strength comes not from occasional exhibitions of individual or group violence but from mass organisation and the capacity for mass action, which, to be effective, must be peaceful action.

In any event the fact remains that the Congress policy is a peaceful one, and if we adhere to it, we must do so fully and in all honesty. Not to do so is to fall between two stools. Any Socialist or Communist, who pays lip service to non-violence and acts differently, does injury to his ideals and makes people think that his acts do not conform to his professions.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

We discuss our differences and sometimes over-emphasize them. Yet it is well to remember that our political movement for freedom has a fundamental unity and all our differences of outlook and approach do not lessen this unity. That unity comes out most strikingly in times of struggle, but even at other times that unity is apparent. Our debates and arguments do not attack that unity: they are in fact based on that unity. This is natural enough for under the circumstances the independence of India and anti-imperialism are the common urges which move vast numbers of our people.

Real disunity creeps in from the communal side and we must recognise that there is an ideology, fostered by the principal communal organisations, which cuts at the root of national unity. Yet I do not think that this ideology has affected to any large extent even the members of the communal organisations. As soon as there is an improvement in the communal atmosphere, this way of thinking will probably fade out.

So far as the Congress is concerned, there is no such difficulty. The real difficulty is not so much in what we do or even in the resolutions we pass, but in our approach and interpretation. There are, as there must be in a vital organisation, numerous sets of opinions shading off into one another, and yet bound together by a common link. Broadly speaking, there are two divisions (and this has practically nothing to do with Right or Left): those who might be called the Gandhites and those who consider themselves Modernists. These words are not happy or precise for they indicate that Gandhism is something ancient and out-of-date, while as a matter of fact it is very modern and perhaps to some extent in advance of our age. But it is different from the modernism of the West, and a certain religious or metaphysical tinge about it does not fit in with the spirit of science which represents the best of European thought to-day. There is little stress on the mind in it or on the processes of the mind, and too much on an intuitive and authoritarian interpretation. And yet there is no reason why the Gandhian technique should not be considered from a purely scientific point of view and made to fit in with the spirit of science.

The so-called Modernists are a motley group: Socialists of various kinds and odd individuals who talk vaguely of science and modern progress. Many of these are relics of an out-of-date nationalism and have little to do with modernism or science.

These two broad divisions must not be confused with Right and Left. There are Rightist and Leftists in both groups, and there is no doubt that some of our best fighting elements are in the Gandhian group. If the Congress is looked upon from the Right and Left point of view, it might be said that there is a small Rightist fringe, a Left minority, and huge intermediate group or groups which approximate to Left-Centre. The Gandhian group would be considered to belong to this intermediate Left-Centre group. Politically, the Congress is overwhelmingly Left; socially it has Leftist leanings but is predominantly centre. In matters affecting the peasantry it is pro-peasant.

In trying to analyse the various elements in the Congress, the dominating position of Gandhiji must always be remembered. He dominates to some extent the Congress, but far more so he dominates the masses. He does not easily fall in any group and is much bigger than the so-called Gandhian group. Sometimes he is the single-

minded revolutionary going like the arrow to his goal and shaking up millions in the process. At other times he is static, or seemingly so, counselling others to prudence. His continuing ill-health has brought a complicating factor in the situation. He cannot take full part in national affairs and is out of touch with many developments; and yet he cannot help taking part in them and giving a lead because of his own inner urge to do so and the demand of the people. It makes little difference whether he is formally connected with the Congress or not. The Congress of to-day is of his making and he is essentially of it. In any event the commanding position he has in the country has nothing to do with any office, and he will retain that dominating place in the hearts of the people so long as he lives, and afterwards. In any policy that might be framed, he cannot be ignored. In any national struggle his full association and guidance are essential. India cannot do without him.

That is one of the basic factors of the situation. The conscious and thinking Leftists in the country recognise it and, whatever their ideological or temperamental differences with him, have tried to avoid anything approaching a split. Their attempt has been to leave the Congress under its present

leadership, which means under Gandhiji's guidance, and at the same time to push it as far as they could more to the Left, to radicalize it, and to spread their own ideology.

If this is so during more or less normal periods, still more is Gandhiji's guidance necessary when crisis approaches. A split, or anything like it, at such a critical period when all our united strength is necessary, would disable us and make us ineffective.

While Gandhiji and the old leaders of his group are essential for our national work and our struggle, it is becoming increasingly evident that without the active cooperation of other vital elements in the Congress and the country, they will be hampered and their work will be ineffective or, at any rate, less effective. This applies to the so-called Modernist group within the Congress; it applies still more to a large but vague body of opinion in the country, to most of the intelligentsia. It does not apply directly to the masses but indirectly the masses are affected by others of this way of thinking.

Thus we arrive at the conclusion that the full cooperation of this Modernist group is also essential for the successful functioning of the Congress.

If *bona fide* cooperation between the two groups is lacking, it is difficult to think in terms of a struggle against the common opponent. There will then be no equilibrium in the Congress and our energies will be spent in internal conflict, or even if this is avoided, an atmosphere of mutual tension and want of confidence in each other will grow up, which is fatal for effective work. People at the top might behave and be tolerant of each other, but lower down in the organisation indiscipline and conflict will be rampant. The Congress Ministries will be greatly affected by this and might find it difficult to carry on. They have a difficult enough task in having to face the disruptive tendencies of communalism.

Every line of thought leads to the conclusion that this united working of the Congress is essential. Is this impossible? Or are the elements composing it incompatible, as has been said? In answering this question we must not think in terms of individuals but rather of broad policies. The past has shown that this unity of working can be achieved, though there are undoubted difficulties in the way. I have no doubt whatever that there is an overwhelming desire in the rank and file of the Congress to have such cooperation and a united

front. The difficulties that arose in the past, though real, were not fundamental. I venture to think that the fault lay on both sides.

'United Front' are vague words which have been somewhat abused. Examples of such Fronts in Europe have not flourished and have left a bad taste in the mouth. But we must remember that the differences there were far more vital. In China, on the other hand, we see full-blooded cooperation between groups that were bitterly hostile to each other. The national peril compelled them to combine. Are we less sensible of the crisis and perils that await us?

The Congress cannot obviously be treated as a sectarian group. It represents the nation and its doors are open to all who believe in its objective and its methods. At the same time it cannot possibly be treated as a kind of federation of groups, a common platform where conflicting opinions and methods are pressed forward for acceptance and attempts are made to arrive at a compromise which enthuses nobody. The Congress has been and is a fighting unit. That it must remain if it is to fulfil its historic destiny. Platforms do not fight, howsoever joint they might be, nor do debating societies carry on effective struggles.

There has been a tendency in the Congress leadership in the past to become sectarian, narrow-minded and exclusive. That is undesirable and creates barriers between it and large numbers of people in the Congress and the country. There has also been a marked tendency among these other groups to play the role of an aggressive opposition, to adopt methods not in line with Congress policy, to encourage indiscipline and irresponsibility, to weaken the homogeneity of the Congress, even while they talked of unity and united fronts. That way lies peril and disaster.

A time may perhaps come when the real conscious Leftists are strong enough to take charge of the Congress and run it according to their policy. To-day they are not in a position to do so. They have neither the national backing nor the discipline for the job. There are numerous groups amongst them, each pulling its own way, with little love for each other, and united only for the moment by a common opposition, a link that will break soon enough. The Left to-day can destroy; it cannot build. They still live in a world of agitation, not fully realising that the Congress and the national movement have grown in stature and speak with authority and responsibility now.



Those among the Leftists who are Socialists must look at our movement in historic perspective and realise what the present stage of development requires. To over-reach the mark now might mean reaction to-morrow. If they are conscious of their historic role, they must prepare themselves for it and gain the confidence of the Congress and the country. Above all they have to strive their utmost to check indiscipline and the forces of chaos, for out of these neither independence nor socialism will emerge.

Any executive must be homogeneous, in the broad sense of the word, or else it will be ineffective. The executive of a fighting organisation, like the Congress, must inevitably be homogeneous in this sense. But I see no reason why this homogeneity should be interpreted in a narrow sectarian sense. At the same time every member of the executive must be loyal to it and must not sit there just as a representative of another group which commands his primary loyalty. In the past we had members of the Congress Socialist Party in the Working Committee. They continued to remain members of the executive of the C.S.P. and often they spoke in different voices. This seems to me to be undesirable and a member

of the Working Committee should not continue to belong to an executive of a party or group which may have occasion to criticise it. This does not mean a break with the other party but the observance of a rule which will help us to function together, and which will give greater dignity to the Working Committee and its members.

Such were my thoughts when I returned from Europe last November and reviewed the situation. I saw a crisis developing in the States and Gandhiji taking the lead, Federation and other issues hung in the air, our Provincial Governments seemed to be exhausting the possibilities open to them, and the future seemed dynamic. The international situation seemed as bad as it could well be. I thought in terms of approaching crisis in India.

I felt that every effort should be made for the two main groups of the Congress to cooperate together (and these groups, as I have said above, were not Leftists or Rightists). This cooperation should be based on, broadly speaking, the existing programme and methods of the Congress, and especially on an adherence to the policy of non-violence. The present leadership should not be markedly disturbed, but fresh blood should be brought in representing the so-called Modernist

viewpoint. This was not meant to disturb the homogeneity of the Working Committee but to spread out the responsibility of shouldering the burden of work and guiding the movement. Gandhiji's leadership and guidance were essential and I believed that he would willingly give it on these conditions. Above all we should all combine to put an end to the indiscipline and disruptive tendencies in the Congress. This was the essential preliminary to preparation for the struggle that was to come.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

Soon after my return from Europe in November I was asked about the Congress presidentship. Who was going to be President next year? Would I agree to accept office again? I had not given a moment's thought to the matter and was not particularly interested. But I was quite clear in my own mind that there was no question of my re-election. What occupied my mind was not the personality of the President to be, but the policy that the Congress should follow, both nationally and internationally. I did not know then that Subhas Babu was likely to stand again.

Some time later I had occasion to discuss this matter with Gandhiji. I gave it as my decided opinion that Maulana Abul Kalam Azad would be the right choice for the presidentship. He seemed to me just to fit in from every point of view. He could carry on the old tradition of the Congress and yet not in any narrow or sectarian way. He had breadth of vision, a deep understanding of events,

and round him every section of the Congress would gather and offer cooperation. He represented to me the ideal emblem of united working which I sought, especially at this critical juncture.

I learnt that Subhas Babu was thinking in terms of re-election. I did not like this idea for a variety of reasons. I disliked it for the same reason as I disliked my own election. I felt that both he and I could serve our cause much better without the burden of the presidentship. During the past year his presidentship had made little difference to the policy of the Congress, and he had functioned more or less as a chairman. He had taken hardly any interest in the A. I. C. C. office and the organisational side of the Congress and this had led to a certain deterioration. The rapid growth of the organisation required quick and efficient handling and the A. I. C. C. office was unable to cope with this owing to the fact that the President was largely occupied with local and provincial affairs in Calcutta.

I felt instinctively that an election contest with Subhas Babu as a candidate would probably lead to various difficulties and to the creation of an atmosphere prejudicial to that united working which I deemed essential. The question of Left or Right

did not arise. Indeed, so far as Gandhiji was concerned, he expressed his wish repeatedly in my presence that he would like a Socialist as President. Apart from my own name, he mentioned Acharya Narendra Deva's name. But, for the reasons I have indicated above, I did not like the idea of a Socialist being President at this stage. I wanted the burden to be shouldered by those who were primarily responsible for the policy to be followed, and I had no desire to change that policy radically then for fear of producing serious complications in our organisation. I insisted therefore on Maulana's name. There was, so far as I know, no desire on any one's part to keep out a Leftist as such or to insist on a Rightist President.

I had a talk with Subhas Babu on the occasion of the Working Committee meeting and told him how I thought about this matter. I presumed that he appreciated my line of reasoning.

Maulana Azad did not readily agree to our proposal. Extraordinarily sensitive and retiring as he is, it is no easy matter to push him forward in this age of conflict. Still I thought he would ultimately agree, and indeed when I went to Almora I had the definite news that he had agreed. But soon after, probably because of the possibility of a

contest, he decided to withdraw.

It was only on my way down from Almora, on the very eve of the presidential election, that I read the various statements that had been issued. I was pained to read them and fervently wished that everybody might have suppressed the urge to issue statements to the press and take the world into confidence. There seems to be a particular passion in India for all of us (I am an old and inveterate sinner in this respect) to rush with a statement to the press, and our friends of the press encourage us in this failing.

The charges that Subhas Babu had made in his statements regarding a conspiracy to accept Federation, and even plans for the formation of Ministries, astonished me, for I had not heard anything about all this. If even a rumour to this effect had reached us, it was up to us to thrash it out in Working Committee. So far as I know there was never any difference of opinion in regard to Federation in the Working Committee. Indeed there was hardly any marked difference over any other matter, except to some extent about the formation of coalition ministries, on which Subhas Babu held strong views, which I was unable wholly to share. But this was hardly a matter of principle.

I felt therefore that very unfair charges had been made on colleagues, and although no names were mentioned, the public would inevitably imagine that some members of the Working Committee were involved. This was a new and serious development in the upper circles of our political life and it meant the creation of high barriers which would be difficult to overcome. A small group could hardly function together in a responsible position if there was utter lack of confidence and intrigue was suspected. If this happened at the top, what of the lower ranks of the Congress? We could not face in this way the growing indiscipline which was weakening our movement.

Later, after the President's re-election, he passed certain direct orders in provincial and local matters, sometimes over the head of the Provincial Congress Committee concerned. Some of these orders seemed to me to be wrong, but what filled me with apprehension was the manner in which all this was done. It seemed to me that our organisation would suffer grievously if this method was followed. Then came the Working Committee meeting which could not be held.

The President's re-election was tribute to his personality and popularity. It was the delegates'



way of showing that they wanted a stiffening up of our policy. It was also an expression of disapproval of what was considered authoritarianism at the top. It was not a defeat for Gandhiji, as he called it, but indirectly it might be considered a criticism of the Working Committee which had functioned under his guidance. The curious part of it is that the President himself had been responsible for what the Working Committee had done.

Under ordinary circumstances it would have been right and proper for those members of the Working Committee who had been dubbed Rightists and so condemned, to retire and be replaced by others. The fact that personal charges had been made against them of a serious nature made their position still more untenable.

What is to be done now? It would be somewhat presumptuous and a little premature for me to suggest what steps should be taken to resolve our internal crisis when unusual events and strange developments are taking place from day to day. The Congress President, on whom the burden rests primarily, is most unfortunately lying ill. Gandhiji has to-day started a fast the consequences of which no one can tell.

But within a few days we meet at Tripuri and each one of us must shoulder his or her part of the burden and responsibility. We dare not shirk them. Let us hope that all of us will do so with forbearance and dignity, keeping ever in mind the cause for which we have laboured and the high purposes which have animated us. We shall take our part, great or small, in the decisions that will be made and abide by them in all loyalty. For the organisation is greater than the individuals of whom it consists, and the principles we stand for are more important than personalities. We must avoid all personal bickering and private animosity, and view our problems from the high level which befits the Congress and the chosen representatives of the Indian people.

It would be easy and desirable for me, as for others, to make suggestions about matters of policy and programme. But for the moment other issues take precedence and these affect the very structure and life of our great organisation. There are no vital differences about policy or programme to-day, but even if there were such differences, our first concern must be to maintain the Congress as the representative organ of the Indian people and the effective fighting organisation for India's

freedom. If it ceases to be so, what do our resolutions matter and where does our brave talk lead to?

Many people talk about the weakness and vulnerability of British Imperialism to-day and imagine that if we shout loudly enough or threaten persistently, the walls of the citadel will fall down. British Imperialism is weak to-day and the Empire of Britain seems to be fading away before our eyes. But the forces of evil and reaction dominate the world to-day and are triumphantly aggressive and British Imperialism lines up with them. Even by itself it is not so weak or vulnerable as our wishes lead us to think, and, outside scripture, shouting has not been known to bring down the walls of citadels or cities. We dare not underrate the strength of the adversary. If we win it will be by our own strength, not the weakness of our opponent, for however weak he might be, he will know how to profit by our lack of strength.

It is a patent fact to-day that the British Government cannot hinder our progress to independence if we can hold together and act in a disciplined and united manner. It is only our own weaknesses and lack of unity and discipline that give it the chance to hold us down and frustrate us. We are

strong enough to-day potentially; how can we convert that potentiality into actuality?

Long years of struggle and training hardened us and disciplined our minds and bodies. Instead of talk we spoke the language of action, and even our mildest whispering had weight because it had the promise of action behind it. Success came to us in some measure and that very success made people forget that training and discipline which had laid the foundation for it. It is strange how short our memories are, how soon we forget.

A generation has gone by since the Congress took to this new path of disciplined and peaceful struggle. Many of our dearly-loved captains and comrades are no more, and we, who linger on still, feel lonely as our old companions in the struggle drop out. New people come and fill the ranks and grow rightly impatient at the slowness of change. They are eagerly welcomed with their fresh enthusiasm and desire to achieve. They represent To-day more than we do, and To-morrow is theirs. But these new-comers have no memory of that training and discipline of the long years of trouble. Will they profit by the experience of the passing generation, or will they stumble along and themselves learn in that bitter school? The world

is heavy with sorrow and tragedy stalks everywhere. Abyssinia, Spain, China, Palestine—can we forget them? Can we forget the mad folly of our communal troubles? There is no easy walk-over to freedom anywhere, and many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow again and again before we reach the mountain tops of our desire.

Dangers and difficulties have not deterred us in the past ; they will not frighten us now. But we must be prepared for them like men who mean business and who do not waste their energy in vain talk and idle action. The way of preparation lies in our rooting out all impurity and indiscipline from our organisation and making it the bright and shining instrument that will cleave its way to India's freedom.

.

-

.