The decade preceding the Second World War was a crucial period in the history of the Indian nationalist movement. It was at this time that the leadership of Gandhi and the 'Old Guard'—Congress veterans who, with few exceptions, were annually re-elected to the party's Working Committee—faced its most serious challenge for control of the Congress Party. The outcome of this internal party struggle determined the nature and scope of the independence movement throughout the war years and until the attainment of freedom in 1947. It also determined the political complexion of the party that was to guide the Republic of India through the early, and critical, formative years of its existence.

This study focuses on the debate between M. N. Roy and Indian socialists in the 1930s on the important question of the relationship between socialism and nationalism in the Indian independence struggle. Failure to resolve this issue contributed in large measure to the inability of the socialists, Royists, communists and other left-wing groups in India to unite in order to make an effective challenge for the leadership of the Congress Party.

The conflict today between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China over the correct attitude to adopt toward 'bourgeois-nationalist' regimes in the Third World is the latest manifestation of this thorny problem which has agitated communists since the early years of the Comintern. The Indian communist leader and theoretician, Dr Gangadhar M. Adhikari, has recognized that the roots of the present dispute between the Communist Party of India—the CPI or so-called 'pro-Moscow' party—and the Communist Party of India (Marxist)—the CPI(M) or so-called 'pro-Peking' party—lie in the perennial question of the role of the national bourgeoisie in India's

* The author would like to express his appreciation to the Ford Foundation which supported a field trip to India and to The Research Institute on Communist Affairs, Columbia University, and its Director, Professor Abigniew Brzezinski, for their generous support during the time when the manuscript was prepared.
'national democratic revolution in its various phases', both in the struggle for 'national political independence (before liberation)' and in its extension, the struggle for 'national economic independence (after liberation)'. For communists in India, as elsewhere in former colonial areas, the problem has always been, both before and after independence, how to unite with the national bourgeoisie without being completely absorbed.

Both the CPI and the Royists were active within the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) during the period under consideration. Information is readily available elsewhere on the Indian communist party. Consequently, there is little need here for a description of the party or its objectives, although for convenience, a summary of its fractional activities within the socialist party will be provided. In contrast to the CPI, very little is known about the Royists and therefore attention will be concentrated on this group. It will be shown that the Royists played a more important role in the early years of the CSP than has heretofore been suspected and that they made significant contributions to the formulation of socialist policy. Before exploring this question, however, we shall first discuss the origins of the CSP and the dissatisfaction of its founders with Gandhi's leadership.

The Congress Socialist Party

In Patna, Bihar, on 18 and 19 May 1934, the All-India Congress Committee (AICC), meeting for the first time since the resumption of the civil disobedience campaign in January 1932, made two important decisions which were to alienate a considerable section of the Congress Party. First, formal approval was given to Gandhi's decision to suspend, except for himself, the individual civil disobedience campaign. Secondly, the proposal of the All-India Swarajya Party to contest the forthcoming elections to the central Legislative Assembly was endorsed. Three weeks later the government's ban on the party was lifted.

The decision of the AICC to adopt a new tack was a tacit admission that the civil disobedience campaign had failed. As a result of the government's suppression the movement had been demoralized. After the first year, the Congress had been put on the defensive and, in the

1 Gangadhar M. Adhikari, Communist Party and India's Path to National Regeneration and Socialism, New Delhi, 1964, pp. 55-7.
2 See, for example, Gene D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, Communism in India, Berkeley, 1959.
words of a contemporary party spokesman, the campaign had been reduced to ‘sporadic attempts at defiance of authority by individual Congressmen’. After Patna the Congress secured a new lease on life, not by having vanquished its enemy but through its sufferance. Its members now had to behave constitutionally or face another round of persecution. To make matters more galling for the nationalists, the government had not granted a full and unreserved amnesty. Its proscription of many organizations affiliated with the Congress, such as the Hindustani Seva Dal and the Khudai Khidmatgars (Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan’s Redshirts in the Northwest Frontier Province) continued, and not all political prisoners were released. When the Congress convened its annual session in October, Jawaharlal Nehru was still in prison and unable to attend.

Also at Patna, on the eve of the AICC meeting, the first All-India Socialist Conference was convened, at which time a decision was taken to organize an All-India Congress Socialist Party. Conference delegates were moved to take such action by a common dissatisfaction with the policies of the Congress Party, to which they all belonged. The abandonment of the civil disobedience movement had left a residue of bewilderment and disillusionment, especially among the younger and more impatient Congressmen, and had inflamed smouldering doubts about the efficacy of Gandhian tactics. Those who attended the Conference vehemently opposed the decision to enter the central Legislative Assembly. To their minds, this was a clear violation of the 1929 Lahore resolution which had called for boycotting the legislatures and had demanded nothing less than complete independence. To the socialists this new policy was further proof that the nationalist movement, under the leadership of Gandhi and the ‘Old Guard’, was drifting inevitably toward constitutionalism and accommodation with the British. Furthermore, they felt that the Congress Party had deliberately refrained from adopting programmes which would bring any substantial relief to the sufferings and deprivations of India’s peasants and workers. They were unhappy with the 1931 Karachi resolution, widely acclaimed as the first public commitment on the part of the nationalist movement on behalf of social and economic reform. Its implementation, they felt, would not alter substantially the

4 Address of K. F. Nariman, Chairman of the Reception Committee, 26 October 1934, at the 48th Session of the Indian National Congress, Bombay.
5 AICC Newsletter, No. 38, 27 February 1936, p. 3.
6 Acharya Narendra Deva, Socialism and the National Revolution, Bombay, 1946, p. xii.
7 Address of K. F. Nariman, Chairman of the Reception Committee, 26 October 1934, at the 48th Session of the Indian National Congress, Bombay.
inequities endemic to Indian society. The CSP was thus conceived as a party within the Indian National Congress which would press for the adoption of more militant tactics in the nationalist, anti-colonialist struggle and for a more progressive position on the question of social and economic reform.

Socialism at this time was in vogue among young, educated Indians, but it more closely represented an ill-defined sentiment than a distinct ideology. The leadership of the CSP in the 1930s reflected the inchoate nature of Indian socialism. Among the party’s ten most influential leaders, no less than three disparate political orientations were to be found. Narayan and Acharya Narendra Deva were Marxists. Minoo R. Masani, a former member of the British Labour Party, and Asoka Mehta were democratic socialists. Achyut Patwardhan and Rammanohar Lohia shared Gandhi’s faith in governmental and economic decentralization and non-violent revolution, as applied to both the nationalist struggle and class conflict.

The platform and policies of the party represented a tenuous balance between the various contending points of view of its leaders. The party was described as Marxist, but not Marxist–Leninist—the latter would have implied a commitment, which was not shared by all, to the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. As a compromise, the party was not affiliated either with the Second (socialist) or the Third (communist) Internationals. Marxists did not constitute a majority within the leadership cadre, but they were the most influential

9 In India, groups which shared one or both of these positions were designated as 'left wing'. The term 'right wing' was given a similarly broad but converse meaning. It is in this dual sense, and in conformity with Indian usage, that these terms are employed throughout this article.
10 Minoo R. Masani, The Communist Party of India, New York, 1954, pp. 53-4. See also Thomas A. Rusch, ‘Dynamics of Socialist Leadership in India’, Leadership and Political Institutions in India, Richard L. Park and Irene Tinker, Eds., Princeton, 1959, p. 189. How varied were the political views of these early socialist leaders can be seen in tracing their subsequent careers. Narayan came under the influence of Gandhian ideas in the 1940s, and later, in 1954, formally eschewed politics in order to devote himself to work in the Bhoodan Yagna movement of Vinoba Bhave, a disciple of Gandhi. Masani resigned from the CSP in 1939 and in 1959 helped found the conservative Swatantra (Freedom) Party, which is a firm advocate of the free enterprise system. Asoka Mehta left the Praja Socialist Party (PSP), the successor of the CSP, in 1962 and joined the Congress Party. In January 1966, he became Planning Minister in Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s cabinet. The late Rammanohar Lohia was expelled from the PSP in 1955 because of his views and unaccommodating attitude. Lohia, who died in October 1967, was the founder of the Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP).
11 Masani, op. cit., p. 53 and Rusch, op. cit., p. 189.
group among the party rank and file. Consequently, CSP pronouncements were heavily larded with Marxian terms, which gave the party a more radical appearance than was, in fact, the case.

**The Congress Socialist Party and Gandhi**

Gandhi never dealt systematically with the problem of the nature of Indian society after independence. His views on the subject are interspersed among utterances and writings on a myriad of subjects to which he was forced to give attention in a crowded life. But one of his most explicit statements on the question occurred in an interview he granted with a group of U.P. zamindars in 1934. On that occasion Gandhi stated that he was not in favour of dispossessing the propertied classes. Instead, he said, his object was to reach their hearts and convert them so that they might hold all their private property ‘in trust’ for their tenants and ‘use it primarily for their welfare’. His ultimate aim, he declared, was ‘the co-operation and co-ordination of capital and labour and of the landlord and tenant’, and, he assured the zamindars, there was ‘nothing in the Congress creed or policy that need frighten’ them. He exhorted them, however, to refrain from squandering their wealth in ‘luxurious and extravagant living’ and to use it instead to promote the well-being of their tenants. Once they ‘experience a sense of kinship with you and a sense of security that their interests as members of a family will never suffer at your hands’, he said, there would be no longer any need to fear class war.12

Jayaprakash Narayan, writing in 1936, characterized Gandhism as a mixture of ‘timid economic analysis, good intentions and ineffective moralizing’. Such views, he held, were objectively deceptive in that they masked the fact that the wealth of the landlord and the capitalist was obtained by theft. Gandhi, he continued, was inadvertently giving his seal of approval to a system of ‘large-scale, organized theft and violence’. Moreover, he charged, Gandhism was being used as a ‘cloak for reaction and conservatism’. Gandhi’s views had found ready acceptance among the wealthy, he contended, because it made them appear virtuous and at the same time protected their ill-gotten gains. ‘The acceptance of this philosophy costs them nothing except an occasional donation to a public cause’, he wrote, whereas it ‘strengthens their position . . . by giving it a moral sanction’.13

13 Narayan, pp. 74 and 89–93. Since writing this tract, Narayan’s views have altered considerably. As indicated earlier, he later came under the influence of Gandhi’s ideas.
Gandhi wanted to transform rather than uproot traditional Indian society and he visualized a revitalized village as the basic social unit. He criticized the socialists for introducing what he regarded to be a foreign system inappropriate to India with its unique problems and heritage. He attacked the socialists not only for popularizing the concept of class war but also for their advocacy of industrialization, which he equated with the introduction of large-scale machinery and its attendant disruption of India's traditional village-based economy, increased suffering for the rural-based population and the growth of ugly, parasitic cities.

To Narayan and his followers, Gandhi was a 'reformist', who offered only palliatives for India's chronic and grievous social ills, when a purgative was required. All Gandhi asked of the landlord and the capitalist, Narayan contended, was that they should 'improve their relations with the tenants and labourers', in return for which they could rest assured that nothing disquieting would happen to deny them their favoured position in Indian society. He denied Gandhi's claim that, in contrast to the foreign ideas of the socialists, his approach was uniquely Indian. Gandhi's views, Narayan argued, were also imported from the West. Moreover, he likened Gandhi's objections to socialism with those of 'Church divines and philosophers of the old order in Europe at the dawn of the industrial revolution', who sought to avoid strife and any sharp reversal of the status quo through the promotion of 'common understanding and good will'.

William Godwin in his book, An Inquiry Concerning Political Justice, argued that the object of all religious morality has been to persuade men 'by individual virtue' to repair the injustice of accumulated wealth, and that 'the most energetic teachers of religion' have counselled the rich to 'hold their wealth only as a trust'. In a tract entitled Why Socialism? written in 1936, Narayan quoted extensively, and with evident approval, from Godwin's work. He endorsed Godwin's condemnation of this doctrine as exciting man 'to palliate' his injustice rather than 'to forsake it', and his view that 'a gratuitous distribution' by the wealthy was 'a very indirect and ineffectual way' of giving every man his due. The result of such a system, Godwin wrote, would be to place the supply of man's wants at the disposal of a few, 'enabling them to make a show of generosity with what is not truly their own, and to purchase the gratitude of the poor by the payment of a debt'. It endowed the rich with unreasonable pride and the poor with unwarranted servility. Narayan concurred with Godwin's summation

\[14\] Narayan, pp. 70 and 84–7.
that it was ‘a system of clemency and charity instead of a system of justice’.

**The Congress Socialist Party and Congress**

Many Congress leaders were antagonized by the sharp criticism levelled at them by the socialists. Others were intimidated by the socialists’ condemnation of violence as a means of resolving class antagonisms. Gandhi was opposed in principle to the use of violence both as a means of settling differences between nations and conflicts between classes. Few shared Gandhi’s adherence to non-violence as a creed; many embraced it as a matter of expedience. It was the most effective weapon available against the British and moreover, to the propertied classes and to others who wished for whatever reason to preserve as far as possible the traditional hierarchical structure of Indian society, Gandhi’s advocacy of class collaboration was more reassuring than the socialist doctrine of class conflict.

It was also feared that the emergence of the CSP might hurt the party at the polls in the forthcoming elections to the central Legislative Assembly. The electorate was restricted to about 1,500,000 persons, representing largely the propertied classes. Consequently, the Congress Working Committee greeted the formation of the CSP in 1934 with a resolution which stated that it was necessary ‘in view of all the loose talk about confiscation of private property and the necessity of class war, to remind Congressmen’ that such ideas were ‘contrary to the Congress creed of non-violence’.

At the same time, the Working Committee advised the various units of the Congress Party, in the absence of a programme of civil resistance, to concentrate exclusively on Gandhi’s constructive programme, which involved such varied tasks as the production of khaddar, the removal of untouchability, the reconstruction of village life, the establishment of useful small industries and the promotion of prohibition.

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16 Gandhi, ‘Is Violence Creeping In?’ *Harijan*, Poona, 13 August 1938, p. 216. Gandhi here cites as an example of violence to which he is opposed the reviling of capitalists as a class and ‘inciting people to loot them’.


19 Homespun cotton cloth which is also known as khadi.

and other dissident groups within the Congress interpreted this move as a suit for peace with their British rulers and as a further retreat from the goal of complete independence as stated at Lahore.

Because of continued resistance to his programme, Gandhi announced in September his decision to withdraw from active work in the party. In his announcement he reaffirmed his belief in non-violence, as well as reform and revolution through conversion, and observed that ‘one section of the country was running away from these articles of faith and . . . the other was giving no effect to its allegiance to them which it professed’. As for the former, he explained that there was ‘a growing vital difference of outlook between many Congressmen and myself’, and added that if the socialists should ‘gain ascendancy in the Congress’, he could not remain a part of it. In a subsequent statement he suggested several changes in the Congress constitution which he deemed necessary if the party was to be saved from ‘disruption’. He wanted the Congress creed to be changed from a belief in ‘peaceful and legitimate’ methods to ‘truthful and non-violent’ ones in order to eliminate any ambiguity as to its meaning. He also urged that spinning be made a requirement of membership, that voting in party elections be restricted to khaddar wearers and that the number of delegates to Congress session be reduced from six thousand to one thousand. A few days after this statement was released a CSP manifesto was issued in Bombay attacking these proposals as an attempt to reduce socialist influence in the Congress Party.

Gandhi’s ‘retirement’ was postponed until after the annual Congress session, which was held in Bombay in October 1934. This was the first session of the party since the lifting of the government ban in June and the first full-scale session in over three-and-a-half years. Brief, token sessions had been held in Delhi in 1932 and in Calcutta in 1933, but most of the party leaders had been in jail. On the latter occasion nearly half of the elected delegates, including the president, had been arrested en route. The 1934 session was also the first session in which an organized political group participated within the Congress

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21 Quoted in Presidential Address of Rajendra Prasad, 26 October 1934, at the 48th Session of the Indian National Congress, Bombay.
23 Meeting of the Working Committee, Wardha, 9–11 September 1934, as referred to in Presidential Address of Rajendra Prasad, p. 15.
with a fundamentally different programme from that of the leadership. Although this occasioned some misgiving, the socialists were unable to prevent amendments to the party constitution along the lines suggested by Gandhi, and their attempt to substitute their own programme for Gandhi's constructive programme was easily defeated.

In his presidential address at Bombay, the Gandhian Rajendra Prasad defended the constructive programme against its critics. He interpreted it as a non-violent approach to the problem of imperialism and capitalism. 'The spinning wheel and khadi', he declared, 'are symbols of the country's determination to resist all forms of exploitation by non-violent means', and he warned the socialists that coercive techniques would trigger reaction; whereas conversion, though slow, was the surer route to the goal they all shared.26

The annual session had been held earlier than usual, despite the fact that October in Bombay is one of the most uncomfortable months of the year, so that the decision of party leaders to contest seats for the central Legislative Assembly could be endorsed in open session before the elections, scheduled for November, were to be held.27 It also provided a public forum for the leaders of the party to answer the objections of the socialists that the decision to enter the legislative councils was in violation of earlier party resolutions. Finally the pre-election session presented another opportunity for the 'Old Guard' to allay the fears of the conservative electorate with respect to the party's position on economic and social issues. Evidently this tactic was successful, for the Congress Party was able to secure forty-four of the forty-nine elective seats not reserved for special groups.28

The Congress Socialist Party and the Royists

Jayaprakash Narayan has acknowledged that while a student in the United States in the 1920s he first imbibed his Marxism through the writings of M. N. Roy. As a member of a communist cell, he was introduced to Roy's works, which he later described as 'flaming political tracts, powerfully written, closely reasoned and attempting to tear to shreds the ideology of Gandhi's non-co-operation movement'.

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26 Presidential Address of Rajendra Prasad.
27 Address by K. F. Nariman, Chairman of the Reception Committee, 26 October 1934, at the 48th Session of the Indian National Congress, Bombay.
Roy’s book, *India in Transition*, impressed him as ‘a masterly exposition’, and according to his own account, he soon became one of Roy’s ardent admirers.

Although there were important differences, the programme of the Royists, approximated more closely than that of any other political group in India, to that of the CSP. Both called for working within the Congress Party for the attainment of political independence and ultimately of economic and social reform. In addition, they shared a common aversion to Gandhian ideas of non-violence and trusteeship, which, it was believed, served as a bastion for the conservative wing of the Congress Party, from whose control they wished to wrest the nationalist movement.

The objectives of the CSP, as stated in its constitution, were the attainment of ‘complete independence ... and the establishment of a socialist state’. The party’s ‘plan of action’ called for ‘work within the Indian National Congress’ in order to secure the acceptance of these objectives. Party leaders believed that there was no alternative to working within the Congress Party, which, they felt, represented the nationalist movement at ‘the present stage of the Indian struggle ... that of bourgeois revolution’. But at the same time they were determined, according to an official party resolution, to ‘rescue the Congress from the hands of the right wing by educating and organizing the rank and file on the basis of a clear-cut programme of national revolution and to carry on a consistent propaganda for the exposure of the reactionary aims, policies and programmes of the right wing’.

As we shall see, Roy also joined the Congress Party in the interest

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29 M. N. Roy, *India in Transition*, Geneva, 1922. Except for the date, the publication details are fictitious. The English edition was preceded by a Russian version in 1921. The book was written in collaboration with Abani Mukherji.

30 Jayaprakash Narayan, ‘M. N. Roy’, dated May 1954. This is a testimonial to Roy written shortly after his death. A copy is in the possession of the author. In this document Narayan makes the interesting observation that, after a long period of disagreement, the political thought of the two men converged once again in the early 1950s on the concept of partyless democracy. Narayan wrote: ‘We had moved closer together at the end just as I was close to him at the beginning ... Both of us, each in his own way, had moved away from Marxism in the same direction and to the same goals’. Narayan felt that Roy ‘had done more thinking’ on the question of non-party democracy than anyone else and visited him twice, just before his death, to discuss the topic with him, but on both occasions Roy was too ill to speak. Narayan’s writings on the subject are well known. Roy’s pertinent essays have been gathered together in a volume entitled *Politics, Power and Parties*, Calcutta, 1960.

31 *Congress Socialist Party . . .*, pp. 5 and 9–10.

32 Presidential address of Acharya Narendra Deva at the First All-India Congress Socialist Conference, Patna, May 1934, quoted in Deva, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

of both the nationalist and socialist revolutions, and he, too, sought to alter Congress policies by working with the rank and file to subvert its leadership. According to Roy’s plan, this was to be accomplished by revitalizing and securing control over local party units at the district, taluka34 and village level and by working to democratize the Congress constitution in order to increase the influence of these units in the organizational structure of the party.35 For Roy, ‘democratization’ was to be ‘the means to the object of radicalizing the Congress and activation of the rank and file the condition for effective democratic control’.36

Within the CSP there was an earnest desire to join forces with the communists and the Royists,37 the two other contemporary Marxian socialist groups with all-India aspirations, and in Jayaprakash Narayan the party had an eloquent exponent of left-wing unity.38 Narayan was keenly aware that left-wing hegemony over the nationalist movement required that all radical groups learn to work in concert. In his presidential address before the Bengal CSP Conference in 1935, Narayan contended that had the communists not abandoned the Congress Party in 1929 on the eve of its launching of the civil disobedience campaign, ‘the radicalization of the Congress would have gone much further and we would have been much nearer our goal today’. Having exposed the folly of political sectarianism, he reaffirmed his conviction that the CSP ought not to remain separate from other socialist forces in India:

I firmly believe that unless there is a fusion of the forces which I have mentioned, our common objectives will remain unrealized. I . . . exhort you to develop the greatest possible co-operation with the groups that are, except for minor differences, working for the same object as ourselves . . . I entreat them to work together in the promotion of identical ideals, keeping in mind the day we shall all come closer and merge into one organization.39

In view of Narayan’s early acquaintance with Roy’s writings, the similarities between the goals of Roy’s dissident communist group and

34 A taluka, also known as a tahsil, is a revenue subdivision of a district.
35 Roy’s report to associates in Bombay Province, Dehra Dun, 25 May 1938, League of Radical Congressmen Files No. 1, Roy Archives, Dehra Dun, U.P., India.
36 Independent India (Bombay), 3 April 1938, p. 4.
37 Masani, op. cit., p. 67.
the CSP, and Narayan’s desire for left-wing unity, it is not surprising that efforts were made by the socialists for collaboration with the Royists. In fact, as the CSP has acknowledged, within a few months after the formation of the party ‘many members of the Roy group’ were taking ‘a prominent part in the activities of the Party and held leading positions in it. . . . Every known member of the group, with rare exceptions, was absorbed into the Party’.  

A Royist, Charles Mascarenhas, had been one of the original four members of the socialist group founded by Narayan at Nasik prison. Later, he became one of the founders of the Bombay CSP and, when the CSP was organized on an all-India basis, he was elected to its twenty-one member Executive Committee. At his prompting a group of Royists in Calcutta joined the CSP shortly after the 1934 Bihar conference and became co-founders of the Bengal branch of the party. One of them, Rajani Mukherji, was elected General Secretary of the Bengal CSP, and Royists at one time constituted a majority of its Executive Committee. In December 1936, Mukherji, already a substitute member, was elected to full membership in the party’s National Executive. The Royist Dharma Das Goonavardan also held high office in the Bengal CSP.

The most important unit of the all-India CSP was in the industrial city of Bombay, where many of the party’s early leaders, such as Asoka Mehta, Minoo Masani, Purshottam Tricumdas, Achyut Patwardhan and Yusuf Meherally, were active. Bombay was also a major centre of the Royists, many of whom joined the Bombay CSP. Among the most prominent of these, in addition to Mascarenhas, were: Maniben Kara, Secretary of the All-India Trade-Union Council (AITUC) in 1936; R. A. Khedgikar, Vice-President of the AITUC in 1937 and a member of the Bombay Legislative Assembly in 1937–39; and Dr M. R. Shetty, a founder of the Bombay Transport and Dock Workers Union. V. B. Karnik, another prominent Royist in Bombay,

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42 Interview with Rajani Mukherji, Calcutta, 13 December 1962.
43 *Congress Socialist Party: Constitution, Programme and Resolution, 1934*, adopted at the First Conference of the All-India Congress Socialist Party, p. 3.
44 Interview with Rajani Mukherji, Calcutta, 13 December 1962.
45 *Congress Socialist*, Bombay, 25 January 1936, p. 16.
did not formally join the CSP, but was active in the trade-union field. Tayab Shaikh made his base in Bombay, but was also engaged in organizational efforts on behalf of Roy throughout India. During the years 1933–35, however, he was in prison. Despite their number, Royists in Bombay were continually frustrated in their efforts to exert influence within the CSP owing to the unsympathetic attitude displayed toward them by such socialist leaders as M. R. Masani and Purshottam Tricumdas.

Royist groups were also active in the Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab and Sind branches of the CSP. In Maharashtra Royists were especially prominent in the Poona and Sholapur units of the party. V. M. Tarkunde, who later was to become one of Roy’s most trusted associates, was a secretary of the Maharashtra CSP. Other Royists who held important offices in this body were H. R. Mahajani, G. P. Khare and R. K. Khadelkar, a member of the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC). One of the Royist sympathizers in the Maharashtra CSP was a young man by the name of Y. B. Chavan, who became India’s Defence Minister and later Home Minister in Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s cabinet. In the Gujarat CSP, especially in the city of Ahmedabad, there was a sizable group of Royists, including Thakoresprasad Pandya, a member of its provincial Executive Committee, and Dasharathlal Mohanlal Thakar of the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association. Finally in South India, A. K. Pillai, one of the founders of the Congress Party, and later of the CSP, in the Kerala region, was a staunch supporter of Roy.

The Royists made an important contribution to the shaping of the programme and policies of the CSP in its early years. One of the central themes of the Royists was that Indians should demand their right to frame their own constitution by means of a constituent

47 Letter from Bombay associates to Roy, Bombay, 12 December 1934, File No. 111/2, Roy Archives.
48 Congress Socialist, Bombay, 1 May 1937, p. 18 and 8 May 1937, p. 17.
49 Independent India, Bombay, 20 June 1937, p. 2.
50 Interview with Justice V. M. Tarkunde, Bombay, 1 November 1961. Chavan broke with the Royists in 1939 on the question of support to the British war effort. To this day, however, he readily acknowledges his intellectual indebtedness to Roy. One of his closest confidants while Chief Minister of Maharashtra was the noted Sanskrit scholar and Royist, Tarkateertha Laxsmanshastri Joshi.
52 Independent India, Bombay, loc. cit., and interview with M. Govindan, Madras, 29 November 1962. Pillai was a member of the Legislative Council under the system of dyarchy and was for ten years a member of the AICC. He met Roy in 1928 on a trip to Germany.
assembly. This was stressed in a manifesto prepared by Roy and first circulated among Congressmen in 1930. About two years later this document was published under the title *Our Task in India*. At the First Conference of the All-India CSP in Bombay in 1934 the Royists were successful in their major effort to push the demand for the convening of a constituent assembly to the forefront of the party’s programme. The demand was not only incorporated in the ‘Plan of Action’ of the party constitution adopted at the time, but was also the subject of a resolution, which held that the ‘right of framing the constitution is the sovereign right of the Indian people and... the supreme authority which should promulgate the Constitution of India is the National Constituent Assembly’. This assembly, according to the constitution and the known views of the Royists, was not to be the result of an accommodation with the British, but was to be the culmination of a mass uprising against foreign rule. Substantial parts of the Royist manifesto were incorporated into the CSP platform adopted at Bombay. It will be shown later that the Royists also played an important role in the revision of the CSP programme in early 1936.

In a study conducted in India by the U.S. Office of Strategic Services during the war years it was observed that

there seems little doubt that the Congress Socialist party... was considerably influenced by Roy’s programme. It has been said that both the Royists and the Communists tried to influence the Congress programme and that the Royists won.

It is necessary to emphasize this point, since Indian socialists today, because of old animosities, minimize the role the Royists played in the formative years of the CSP.

**Roy’s Break with the Congress Socialist Party**

It was hoped, according to Narayan, that because of their early association with the CSP, the Royists would eventually merge with

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54 Congress Socialist Party..., pp. 9–10 and 20.


LEFT WING UNITY

the party. But this was not to be. When the CSP was first formed, Roy had felt that if its more radical leaders were encouraged the party might conceivably become, in his words, ‘the rallying ground of the radical elements of the de-classed intellectuals—the elements objectively heading toward the party of the proletariat’. Although he found several of the party’s leaders, such as M. R. Masani and Purshottam Tricumdas ‘objectionable’, he felt that some of them, such as Kamaledevi and Meherally, were ‘promising’. For this reason, he had urged his followers ‘to meet them half-way and guide them forwards’.58

He regarded the party as a whole, however, with disdain as representing merely a ‘vague, heterogeneous radical tendency in the national movement’.59 Given the nature of its politically disparate membership, he suspected that the CSP, if left to its own devices, would very likely ‘degenerate’ into ‘reformism’; i.e., ‘bourgeois-parliamentarianism’.60 Roy held, however, that nowhere had a strong communist party developed before such ‘reformist’ parties were split. He felt that in China, for example, the nationalist Kuomintang, which he also regarded as ‘petty-bourgeois’, had been the source of the most active cadre of the Chinese Communist Party. Consequently he directed his followers to join the CSP with the object, not of merging with it, but of splitting it and absorbing the ‘real proletarian elements’.61

In June 1936, an alleged Royist document was brought to the attention of the CSP executive in which Roy’s followers were exhorted to ‘liquidate’ the party. However, the matter was dropped when the two Royist members of the executive, Charles Mascarenhas and Rajani Mukherji, repudiated the document as spurious.62

On the eve of Roy’s release from jail in late 1936, the CSP, despite growing doubts about his intentions, issued a statement extending to him a ‘most hearty welcome’, and expressing the hope that ‘this veteran revolutionary’ would ‘utilize every opportunity to unify the anti-imperialist struggle and unite the socialist movement in the country’.63 Soon thereafter Roy received a visit from Narayan, the General Secretary of the CSP. Although Roy was critical of certain

57 Narayan, Socialist Unity and the Congress Socialist Party, p. 4.
58 Letter from Roy to Bombay associates, Dehra Dun, 5 May 1935, File 111/3, Roy Archives.
59 Ibid., 29 October 1934, File No. 111/2, Roy Archives.
60 Ibid., 12 March 1935, File No. 111/3, Roy Archives.
61 Ibid., 29 October 1934, File No. 111/2, Roy Archives.
62 ‘CSP Reply to the Royists’, loc. cit.
63 Congress Socialist, Bombay, 21 November 1936, p. 11.
policies of the CSP, Narayan left the meeting feeling assured of Roy’s co-operation and support. Roy’s subsequent behaviour came as a rude shock to the party.

Soon after the meeting Roy began to issue a series of public statements attacking the policies of the CSP. Finally, at a meeting of Royists in New Delhi in March 1937, a decision was reached to resign from the CSP. Furthermore, Roy instructed his followers to resign in groups at intervals, rather than en bloc, in order to create the impression of a collapse of the party. In order to secure maximum effect, each group resignation was to be accompanied by a press statement expressing dissatisfaction with CSP policy.

When the CSP Executive learned of the Delhi meeting, its members could not agree on a course of action. Masani called for the immediate expulsion of the Royists from the party. The party’s only response, however, was the issuance of a circular letter which accused both the Royists and the CPI of ‘fractionalism’ and warned them of the possibility of disciplinary action. ‘Fractionalism’ was defined as including any or all of the following activities: creating a group hostile to the party leadership for the purpose of capturing or splitting the party; libelling the party—the making of statements or committing of acts with the aim of discrediting the party; and attacking members of the party or a section of its leadership in order to cast doubt on their bona fides and thus isolate them.

At about the same time, three Royists, Charles Mascarenhas, Madan Shetty and Dr M. R. Shetty, were expelled from the Bombay CSP for working on behalf of Congress candidates instead of the CSP’s own candidates in the February elections to the Bombay PCC and the AICC. The first two were members of the newly-elected Bombay PCC. The CSP leaders suspected collusion between the Royists and the Congress right wing in an effort to keep socialists out of the AICC; for, after the elections, Maniben Kara, a Royist who had resigned earlier from the CSP, was co-opted on to the AICC with the support of a right wing Congressman.

From April through August, as planned, groups of Royists located in various provinces of India resigned from the CSP. As a result of these manoeuvres Roy and his group earned the undying enmity of the

64 Congress Socialist, Bombay, 21 November 1936, p. 11.
66 Congress Socialist, Bombay, 10 April 1937, p. 17.
68 Ibid., 6 March 1937, p. 6.
socialists. Narayan felt that Roy had acted in bad faith and that his behaviour had constituted a betrayal of the socialist cause. Writing some years later, he commented bitterly on the affair: 'After more than a year and a half of close co-operation our Royist friends left us with a parting kick'. 'The entire responsibility', he charged, 'for disrupting the measure of unity that had been achieved must be laid at the door of the Royists, and above all of Shri Roy'.

By alienating the socialists, Roy denied himself the support of a group that achieved a considerable measure of influence in the Congress Party in the latter half of the 1930s. The CSP had the sympathy of Jawaharlal Nehru, though he steadfastly refrained from joining the party. As we shall see, when Nehru was chosen to be President of the Congress Party in 1936, three of their members were nominated to the Congress Working Committee, and socialists were represented on several important committees. Moreover, a study of the votes taken at the annual Congress sessions and the session of the AICC between 1936 and 1939 has revealed that the socialists were able to attract during this period the support of approximately one-third of Congress delegates. Their influence, however, far exceeded their actual numbers. In 1936 the CSP could claim a membership of only two thousand, in contrast to the Congress claim of two million.

The Congress Socialist Party and the Communist Party of India

As indicated earlier, the CPI, as well as the Royists, engaged in factional activities within the CSP. Unlike the latter, however, the communists did not leave the CSP until they were forcibly expelled in 1940. The growth of the CPI during this period at the expense of its socialist allies stands in marked contrast to the decline of the political fortunes of the Royists and casts grave doubts on the wisdom of Roy's decision to adopt an independent course. It is a testimony to the foresight of those Royists, such as V. M. Tarkunde, Rajani Mukherji and A. K. Pillai, who had warned that such a move would not only weaken the nationalist left wing, but also condemn their group to virtual isolation within the Congress.
In obedience to Comintern policies as formulated in the late twenties, the CPI's initial attitude toward the newly formed CSP was one of unreserved hostility. The CSP, however, looked forward from its inception to co-operation with the communists, and there had been limited co-operation since 1934 between the two parties in the trade-union field. The CPI, in contrast, had failed to display good faith and as a result the CSP had adopted a resolution later that year expressly barring communists from membership in the party. Anticipating a change in the communist party's attitude toward participation in united fronts as a result of the 1935 Seventh Comintern Congress, the National Executive of the CSP at its Meerut conference in January 1936 reversed its previous policy and invited members of the CPI to join their party on an individual basis. The CPI was slow to respond to the Meerut invitation. Ingrained attitudes toward socialist and other 'petty-bourgeois' groups, whom they had been taught to loathe as obstacles to the growth of communism, were hard to overcome. Consequently, it was not until April that Indian communists began to enter the CSP. At the same time they were careful to maintain their separate organizational identity.

It was expected that, as a result of the alliance, the position of the communists would be strengthened within the Congress Party and the peasant leagues, where the socialists were influential, and, in return, the socialists would gain new adherents in the trade-union fields. It turned out, however, to be a disastrously bad bargain for the socialists. By joining the CSP, the communists, whose party had been banned in 1934, gained an additional legal cover for their activities. They had recently returned to the All-India Trade-Union Congress—an action which enabled them to operate legally within the limited sphere of the trade-union movement. Now with the support of the socialists they were able to work within the broad field of the nationalist movement and in a short time to secure high office in the Congress Party. By 1939, twenty members of the AICC were communists. One of their number, Mian Iftikharrudin, became President of the Punjab PCC. Neither the CSP nor the Congress Party were able to impugn his motives. Interview with Justice V. M. Tarkunde, Bombay, 1 November 1961.

References:

74 Rusch, 'Role of the Congress Socialist Party . . .', p. 343.
75 Narayan, *Socialist Unity and the Congress Socialist Party*, p. 34.
76 Ibid.
77 Deva, *op. cit.*, p. 117.
determine the exact size of their communist membership. Since the CPI was illegal, membership lists were not available and individuals did not always reveal their communist affiliations. Regardless of the exact number, the communists, through the CSP, were able to identify themselves with the nationalist cause. This was an immeasurable boon, for as nationalists they were able to gain the sympathy of a far larger audience than had been the case in the recent past when they had pursued a narrower, sectarian course. Claimed membership in the CPI rose from 150 in 1934 to 5,000 in 1942.80

In contrast to the fortunes of the communists, the socialists, as a result of the alliance, nearly lost control of their own party. By 1937, members of the CPI were holding a number of high offices in the CSP. Two of them, E. M. S. Namboodripad and Sajjad Zaheer, were Joint Secretaries of the CSP, and two others were on its Executive Committee. In the 1938 elections to the CSP Executive Committee, the communists, not satisfied with the 'official' list of candidates, which allotted them one-third of the seats and two of the four Joint Secretari- ships, sponsored an alternative list which would have given them a majority on the Executive. The communist list was defeated, but only by a very narrow margin.81

In the face of this and similar provocations, members of the CSP Executive could not agree among themselves on what to do and consequently matters were allowed to drift. As a result of exposures by M. R. Masani of confidential CPI documents which revealed the communists' intention of either capturing the CSP or destroying it, it had been decided as early as August 1937 to discontinue the policy of admitting communists to the party. However, those who had already joined had been allowed to remain.82 In an attempt to secure the expulsion of the communists, M. R. Masani, Asoka Mehta, Achyut Patwardhan and Rammohan Lohia resigned from the CSP Executive in May 1939.83 But it was not until May 1940 that their aim was accomplished. By this time the communists had become so well entrenched in the party that they were able to take with them from one-third to one-half of the party membership in Bengal and the Punjab, as well as the greater part of the party organization in Travancore-Cochin, Andhra and Madras, important areas of com-

81 Masani, p. 68–71.
82 Narayan, Towards Struggle, p. 175.
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munist influence today. Moreover, as a result of the split, the CSP eventually lost control of the All-India Students Federation, the All-India Kisan Sabha and the All-India Trade-Union Congress.

ROY AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA

Roy’s uncompromising attitude toward the CSP stands in marked contrast to his attitude toward the CPI. He had been expelled from the Comintern in 1929 because of his opposition to Stalin’s ultra-left policies and had returned to India in 1930 to oppose the new line. Although he was subjected to vilification and ostracism, he continued to hope for an eventual reconciliation with his old comrades. As the doyen of Indian communists, he regarded them somewhat solicitously, as adolescent children, who, though kindred in spirit, must be sternly rebuked for their errant ways. His behaviour was suggestive of the disillusioned communist, as described by Arthur Koestler, who is often uncomfortable in the company of political allies whom he considers right for all the wrong reasons, and in his heart remains faithful to ‘the addict’, who he feels is ‘wrong for the right reasons’.

At this time, the Royists, and the International Right Opposition to which they belonged, were still seeking reinstatement in the Comintern. Consequently, Roy was hopeful of an eventual merger between his group and the CPI. In March 1935, he wrote to his followers, urging them, with respect to Indian communists, to ‘attempt some conciliatory and persuasive move’, and advising them to talk with ‘the most sensible ones and propose fusion’. As a step in that direction, he suggested the convening of a unity conference—to be postponed until such time as he could attend personally—to endorse a mutually acceptable programme.

Roy recognized the need for unity within their ranks if the communists were to aspire to an influential role in the nationalist movement. Although not self-effacing by temperament, he avowed that he was willing to pay ‘the very heavy price of personal elimination for the cherished ideal of unity and reinforcement of the revolutionary move-

84 Rusch, ‘Role of the Congress Socialist Party . . .’, p. 354. Before the CSP-CPI split these last three areas were already under the control of E. M. S. Namboodripad, P. Sundarayya and P. Ramamurti respectively.


86 Roy frequently used such epithets as ‘adolescents’ and ‘noisy youngsters’ in referring to Indian communists. See, for example, ‘An Open Letter to the Executive Committee of the Communist International’, 1935. File No. 111/1, Roy Archives.

ment'. Should the members of the CPI agree to unification 'but insist on having my head', he said:

please let them have it. The unity would be worth it. Unless the party of the working class can become an effective political force and assume the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle, not in word but in practice, the political perspective of the country is dark.88

The unyielding attitude of the Comintern, and therefore the CPI, was a bitter disappointment to Roy.89

Reasons for the Roy-Congress Socialist Party Split

At the time of Roy's defection, CSP leaders generally attributed his behaviour to inordinate ambition.90 Similar motives were also brought forth to explain the disruptive tactics of the CPI. Truth, however, is seldom unidimensional, and narrow ambitions and larger purposes are often inextricably combined. Narayan came closer to understanding the reason for the failure of the left wing to unite when he wrote:

The basic difficulty in the path of unity was the ridiculous idea held by every miserable little party that it alone was the real Marxist Party, and that every other party had therefore to be exploited, captured or destroyed. The Roy Group was also a votary of this inflated creed. It was natural for it therefore to consider the development of another socialist party as unnecessary and harmful. It was much better to have a left platform which it could animate and dominate.91

As a devotee of an exclusive, Marxist creed, Roy felt compelled to resist any individual or group whose policies he considered inconsistent with the historical consummation he envisioned. 'Political Messianism', which holds forth the promise of a 'preordained, harmonious and perfect scheme of things' toward which society will inevitably evolve,92 makes no allowance for opposition. Consequently

88 Letter from Roy to Bombay associates, Dehra Dun, 12 March 1935, File No. 111/3, Roy Archives.
89 Letter from Roy to European associates, Dehra Dun, 22 April 1936, in Roy, Letters from Jail, pp. 185-7.
90 See, for example, Masani's comment that Roy left the CSP because it did not lend itself 'to the personal leadership of would-be dictators'. Masani, 'General Secretary Indicts M. N. Roy', loc. cit.
92 J. L. Talmon, in his Origins of Totalitarian Democracy, has argued persuasively that all existing political systems are derived from two schools of political thought which can be distinguished in reference to their attitude toward politics. These are
Roy could not permit his eschatological creed to be sullied by those whom he regarded either as pronounced opponents or misguided supporters. This is not to argue, however, that Roy's motives in seeking to undermine the CSP were altogether selfless. To his way of thinking, the pursuit of the correct political path involved not only the acceptance of his political views but his guidance and leadership as well.

Reinforcing this sense of exclusiveness are certain psychological factors operative in transitional societies such as India. A noted student of South Asian affairs, Myron Weiner, has observed that parties in India provide 'a source of identification and a new set of values' in place of those of village, caste and joint family.93 For many of its members the psychological advantages of maintaining their own party outweigh the political advantage of having a single leftist party and they may be expected to impede any attempt at political consolidation.

Roy steadfastly refused, in view of the disparate political orientation of its leaders, to regard the CSP as either socialist or a party. From his point of view, there were very real and important differences between his policies and those of the CSP which stood in the way of merger or even close collaboration between his group and the socialists. First, he felt that not only the ideological vagaries of its leaders, but also, paradoxically, its premature emphasis on socialism would condemn the CSP to political impotence. He argued that in the interest of maintaining unity within the nationalist movement, socialists should not press for the adoption of a radical social and economic platform by the Congress Party. As a corollary to this, he felt that the socialists were the liberal, empirical attitude, which presupposes politics to be 'a matter of trial and error and regards political systems as pragmatic contrivances of human ingenuity and spontaneity', and the totalitarian, absolutist attitude, which posits the existence of 'a sole and exclusive truth in politics'. These two traditions in political thought may be styled democratic radicalism and liberalism.

Talmon holds that democratic radicalism has its roots in the eighteenth-century beliefs in the rationality, innate goodness and perfectability of man and in the natural order as an 'attainable, indeed inevitable and all-solving end'. He calls this view 'Political Messianism'. In the eyes of its adherents, political ideas achieve legitimacy as derivatives of an all-embracing and coherent philosophy. In such a conception the field of political activity is expanded to embrace all human action. Politics becomes 'the art of applying this philosophy to the organization of society' with the end of realizing this philosophy in all fields of human endeavour. Such political behaviour was characteristic of the English independents, of the French Jacobins and of modern-day communists. The Calvinists based their faith on God, the Jacobins on nature and reason, and the Marxists on dialectical materialism (J. L. Talmon, Origins of Totalitarian Democracy, London, 1952, pp. 1–3, 249 and 253).

placing undue reliance upon Nehru to help win acceptance of such a programme among Congressmen. Second, he considered the socialists mistaken in sponsoring the principle of collective affiliation of labour unions and peasant leagues with the Congress Party. Finally, in contrast to the CSP’s opposition to either contesting elections or accepting provincial office under the 1935 Constitution of India, Roy was an advocate of both tactics.

Space does not permit a discussion of all the issues over which the Royists and the socialists disagreed. Consequently we shall examine only the first question—the degree to which socialist, as opposed to nationalist, goals should be emphasized—an issue which underlay all of the other disputes between the two groups. Since Jawaharlal Nehru was regarded by the socialists throughout the 1930s as a person who embraced both socialist and nationalist goals and would serve to link the two, it will be convenient first to examine Nehru’s role in the Indian nationalist movement.

**NEHRU AND SOCIALISM**

It was largely through Jawaharlal Nehru that the CSP hoped to influence Congress policy. In the early years of the CSP its leaders looked upon Nehru as one of their own and fully expected him to join with them and lead their party. At their CSP conference at Meerut, in January 1936, the socialists adopted a resolution recommending Nehru for the presidency of their party. But Nehru assiduously refrained from joining the socialists, although he was sympathetic to their outlook. This was largely due to Gandhi’s skill in handling Nehru and to the latter’s devotion to the nationalist cause above all other considerations.

Gandhi revealed his technique in controlling the volatile Nehru and the young and impetuous radical Congressmen he represented when he wrote that the ‘inexhaustible energy’ of India’s youth—like steam which is capable of producing tremendous power only if contained in a ‘strong little reservoir’—must be ‘imprisoned, controlled and set free in strictly measured and required quantities’. Acting in accordance with this principle, Gandhi championed Nehru for president in both 1936 and 1937. In doing so, Gandhi had to overcome considerable opposition from Sardar Patel and others on the Working Committee who looked askance at Nehru’s flirtation with the socialists. In 1937

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Gandhi had an additional obstacle—the party's traditional reluctance to allow the same person to serve as president for two years in succession. Only once before—in the case of Rash Behari Ghose in 1907 and 1908—had this been done.

Gandhi felt that Nehru's elevation to the presidency would serve to wean him from the socialists, and he assured his colleagues that if placed at the helm, Nehru would act responsibly and impartially in response to majority opinion among party leaders. Members of the Working Committee acceded to Gandhi's wish on both occasions. They knew that if Nehru got too far out of line, they could pull him back. Gandhi's manoeuvre worked. After Nehru had been asked to lead the party for a second time, in succession, M. R. Masani lamented, with justification, that his acceptance had deprived the CSP 'of its natural leader, who was so well fitted to lead it, to rally the radical forces'.

Contributing to Gandhi's success was Nehru's conviction that national independence must precede socialist reform and his consequent unwillingness to do anything which might disrupt nationalist unity or dislodge Gandhian leadership, which he felt was essential to maintain that unity and achieve independence. Nehru was convinced that the left could not provide an alternative either to Gandhi's leadership or methods. Only Gandhi, he felt, could hold together the disparate groups which together composed the Congress and only tactics based on non-violence offered any prospect of success. He did not interpret non-violence as broadly as Gandhi, however, to include avoidance of class conflict. Nor was it for him a matter of principle but of practicality. Although he would have preferred 'freedom with violence to subjection with non-violence', he felt that the left wing did not offer such a choice. Under Gandhi, a 'subservient and demoralized people' had, in the course of little more than a decade, developed a 'backbone and power of resistance and an amazing capacity for united action' which had enabled them to challenge 'the might of a great and entrenched empire'. He compared their accomplishments with those of India's would-be leaders who espoused 'a braver ideology' and found the latter decidedly wanting. As for communism, he observed that in most countries it was represented by mutually hostile groups 'incapable of united action and often forgetting the common foe in their mutual hatreds'.

96 Minoo R. Masani, 'From Lucknow to Faizpur', Congress Socialist, Bombay, 5 December 1936, p. 6.
97 Jawaharlal Nehru, Whither India? (2nd. ed. rev.), Allahabad, 1933, pp. 35-40. The first edition was published in November 1933, the second in December.
Nehru was convinced that it would be a serious tactical error to try to wed the cause of socialism with that of national independence. Socialist slogans, he had found, alienated not only many of the leaders of his party but also a large section of the Congress rank and file, many of whom might be persuaded to support more militant tactics if they were addressed in a nationalist, rather than an alien, socialist idiom. As a result of his own experience within the Congress Party, Nehru observed that 'even a discussion of socialism' introduced 'an element of confusion' and divided party ranks. He concluded that 'we must concentrate on political independence and that alone'. We must avoid, he said, any action which would weaken the 'joint front against imperialism'. It is not surprising that Nehru refused to join the CSP, which he frequently criticized for speaking in 'a language borrowed from Western Socialist literature', and which, he claimed, was seldom understood by the average Congressman.

NEHRU AND ROY

Nehru's assessment of Gandhi, as well as his definition of socialism, differed markedly from that of Roy, but on the question of the relationship between socialism, however defined, and nationalism they held remarkably similar views. This did not go unnoticed by observers of the contemporary scene, one of whom commented, shortly after Roy's release from prison, that his views were 'almost identical' with those of Nehru and ventured to suggest that Nehru 'is likely to find Mr. Roy a valuable and helpful colleague'.

But this was not to be the case. One of the reasons why Roy felt that the CSP could never develop into a revolutionary party was, to his mind, its excessive dependence on Nehru to lead the way. Roy himself sought to utilize Nehru in his efforts to radicalize the Congress, but with some hesitancy and for lack of any feasible alternative. He quickly became disillusioned with this line of approach.

Nehru and Roy first met in Moscow in 1927 and that acquaintance was renewed in India in 1930–31. Nehru had been impressed with Roy's intellectual abilities, but conceded that the admiration evidently had not been reciprocated. Through the years, Nehru recalled with that disarming candour which was characteristic of him, Roy 'wrote many an article with bitter criticism of me and my kind when he

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100 Tribune, Lahore, 4 December 1936, p. 8.
dubbed me with considerable truth as petty-bourgeois. He used harsh words which stung but ... I retained a partiality and a soft corner in my heart for him'.

Less than twenty-four hours after his release from jail in November 1936, Roy was conferring with Nehru at Bareilly and a few days later was Nehru's guest in his ancestral home, Anand Bhavan. But shortly before his visit Roy, referring to Nehru, had written in a letter to a friend that 'great men who are not really great ... are uncertain qualities'. 'Pseudo-great men', he had continued, were 'a tiresome lot', and 'conceit, covered by false modesty ... an incurable disease. And when the disease is made into a virtue, and applauded as such even by those who are expected to know better, the problem becomes baffling'. However he had concluded that in a complex situation it was best to be a realist and work with whatever material is available.

Far from sharing the prevailing opinion which looked upon Nehru as the socialists' natural leader, Roy regarded him, along with Gandhi, as the unwitting tool of the 'Old Guard'. Because he considered Nehru's attraction for the socialists beguiling, Roy was unsparing in his criticism of him. Nehru, he railed, is 'a thoughtless, vain, ego-centric, popularity-hunting demagogue', who 'is popular among the Congressmen with a "modern outlook" because his demagogy rationalizes Gandhi's irrationalism, and supplies a pseudo-socialist veneer to reactionary nationalism'. 'His modernism', he argued, 'serves the undemocratic and reactionary purpose of the Congress. Therefore, his present place has been conceded to him by the real bosses of the organisation'. As for Nehru's professed attachment to socialism, Roy contended that 'acceptance of the Marxist philosophy would never allow Nehru to stand in the relation he has always stood to Gandhi. His apparent advance towards Socialism and Marxism is the typical groping of the lonesome individual of the twentieth-century ... for a vaguely conceived new world'.

**Socialism and Nationalism**

In a series of letters, written in the years 1934-5 and addressed to the CSP, Roy argued that the formation of a separate socialist party within the Congress Party would result in the exclusion of the left wing from politics in the Congress.
the Congress leadership and the continued dominance of the Congress machinery by conservative elements.\textsuperscript{105} The maintenance of a distinct party, he felt, would have the effect of placing socialists outside the orthodox Congress fold and thus reducing their effectiveness. No amount of protest, he added, would alter the situation.\textsuperscript{106} Ultimately, he warned, ‘insistence upon keeping up the CSP will . . . compel you to leave the Congress’.\textsuperscript{107}

This prophecy proved ultimately to be correct. In 1939 a specially appointed constitutional sub-committee recommended to the AICC that the party constitution be amended to disallow membership to groups or parties opposed to the policy of the Congress Party.\textsuperscript{108} But this recommendation was later dropped by the Working Committee.\textsuperscript{109} In less than a year after the attainment of independence, however, when there was no longer a common enemy to compel unity, the constitution of the party was altered to deny membership to those belonging to political parties with distinctive constitutions and policies. The socialists, rather than abandon their separate organizational identity, decided at that time to leave the Congress Party.

Although both Roy and the CSP subscribed to the goals of national independence and a socialist society, they differed as to their order of priority. Upon his release from prison on 22 November 1936, Roy declared in a press interview that in the interest of national unity he was not prepared to espouse a socialist programme. ‘My message to the people’, he said, ‘is to rally in the millions under the flag of the National Congress and fight for freedom. Socialism or communism’, he continued, ‘is not the issue of the day, and socialists and communists should realize that the immediate objective is national independence’. ‘We should realize’, he concluded, ‘that the National Congress is our common platform’.\textsuperscript{110} Elaborating on this theme some months later,

\textsuperscript{105} Letter from Roy to the CSP, May 1934, in M. N. Roy, \textit{Letters by M. N. Roy to the Congress Socialist Party}, Bombay, 1937, p. 4. This is a collection of three letters—dated May 1934, May 1935 and February 1936—which Roy claims he wrote to the CSP. The CSP contends, however, that only the 1936 letter was received. (‘Resolutions of the Central Committee of the CSP, Calcutta, 26 October–1 November 1937’, \textit{Congress Socialist} [Bombay], 13 November 1937.) Whatever might be the case, it is clear from the record that the CSP leaders were aware of Roy’s views on the subject from the inception of the party. See, for example, J. P.’s refutation of this view at the Bombay Conference in 1934 (\textit{Congress Socialist Party: Constitution, Programme and Resolutions, 1934}, p. 32).

\textsuperscript{106} Letter from Roy to the CSP, February 1936, \textit{ibid.}, p. 52.

\textsuperscript{107} Letter from Roy to the CSP, May 1935, \textit{ibid.}, p. 29.

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{AICC Newsletter}, Allahabad, 1940, No. 5, 15 June 1939, pp. 3–4.

\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Ibid.}, No. 6, 30 June 1939, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Tribune}, Lahore, 23 November 1936, p. 16.
Roy maintained that socialism was inevitable provided all groups worked in concert to ensure the growth of the ‘necessary preconditions’, the most important of which was the attainment of national independence.\textsuperscript{111}

Because of these well-publicized views, Roy was accorded special attention by the Congress leadership on his release from prison. He was met at the prison gate by leaders of the local Congress organization, as well as by some of his followers.\textsuperscript{112} The following day, he journeyed to Bareilly to attend the U.P. Provincial Political Conference, where he joined the Congress Party and was elected a delegate to the annual party conference to be held at Faizpur in December.\textsuperscript{113} The Bareilly Conference passed a special resolution welcoming Roy to the Congress fold. At the end of the month, Roy went to Allahabad. He was met at the station by a member of the Working Committee, Acharya Kripalani, who escorted him to Nehru’s home, where he spent a week recuperating from his long confinement.\textsuperscript{114} In December he was given an enthusiastic reception at Kanpur, where, accompanied by political workers, he was taken on a grand procession, and, according to a contemporary press report, was ‘profusely garlanded by the public and showered with flowers amidst loud cheers’.\textsuperscript{115} Later at Faizpur, he was assigned quarters in the leaders’ camp next to Nehru’s cottage.\textsuperscript{116} Roy had been elected a member of the AICC and when it met shortly before the conference as the Subjects Committee he was given a seat on the dais\textsuperscript{117}—an honour usually reserved for the most important Congress leaders. Later, in his presidential address before the assembled delegates, Nehru welcomed Roy to the party as a veteran soldier in India’s struggle for freedom.\textsuperscript{118}

Despite the outward warmth of their greetings, Congress leaders were cautious in their relations with Roy. Gandhi, understandably, would have little to do with his long-time critic. When approached by Roy for help in financing his paper, Gandhi replied with a postcard suggesting that he ‘should render only mute service to the cause of freedom’. The very first issue of the paper carried an attack on

\textsuperscript{111} Independent India, Bombay, 19 September 1937.
\textsuperscript{112} Tribune, Lahore, 21 November 1936, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 24 November 1936, pp. 6 and 16.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 30 November 1936, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 6 December 1936, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 24 December 1936, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 27 December 1936, p. 3.
Gandhi entitled 'Science and Superstition' which prompted Gandhi to remark that Roy was his 'enemy number one'.

Other Congress leaders, however, though suspicious of his motives in joining the party, were willing to suspend judgment. In view of his public statements, he was regarded as a possible counterpoise to the socialists. As Roy was to recall in later years, 'there was a distinct desire to patronize me, though, not quite to pamper. It was suspected that the notorious revolutionary might have a joker up his sleeve'.

Soon after leaving jail, Roy had a series of meetings in Bombay with a number of Congress leaders, including Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Archarya Kripalani, to discuss to what extent they might be able to work together. It was reported in the press that the Congress leaders had referred in these private discussions to internal differences within the party resulting from the growth of a radical wing, and that Roy had reaffirmed his opposition to the formation of separate parties within the Congress. It was speculated at the time that the party leadership might find Roy more co-operative than the members of the CSP.

The socialists watched these developments with mounting suspicion. Roy had hoped to combine the forces of nationalism, shorn of Gandhian leadership, with radicalism. But in attempting to do so, he had felt it necessary to repudiate policies and programmes which had become synonymous with radicalism in India. Consequently he came to be regarded by the CSP as a heretic who had capitulated to the right wing.

His insistence on the dismemberment of the CSP was taken by some as evidence of this. Socialists, he counselled, should operate inside the Congress as a nebulous group in imitation of the right wing and outside the Congress as a tightly-knit conspiratorial party. They should 'function inside the Congress as a class, not as a party', he argued, and outside the Congress with an 'organizational form and method of operation suitable for a revolutionary working class party existing under the given conditions of the imperialist terror'.

If the immediate goal was national independence, Roy felt, the left wing should temporarily eschew radical socialist demands in favour of more moderate proposals. Consequently, he opposed such CSP-

119 M. N. Roy, 'Some Reminiscences', Independent India, Delhi, 1 April 1945, pp. 142-4.
120 Ibid.
121 Tribune, Lahore, 10 December 1936, p. 3.
122 V. B. Karnik, 'One Year', Independent India, Bombay, 21 November 1937, p. 2.
124 Ibid., p. 36.
sponsored resolutions as those calling for the confiscation of property without compensation and the collectivization of land. Instead of engaging in such vain efforts to amend the Congress platform, he believed, the left wing should concentrate exclusively on offering an alternative to the Gandhian programme of national revolution. The development of such an alternative, he reasoned, had been impeded by the formation of a narrow-based party within the Congress, the majority of whose members, he was convinced, were not prepared to rally under a socialist banner. The existence of the CSP, according to Roy, tended to divide Congressmen into socialists and non-socialists, when it would be more appropriate to effect a division between militant nationalists on the one hand and Gandhians and 'responsivists' on the other.

Roy's suggestion that the CSP should function as an amorphous group within the Congress Party was interpreted by the socialists as an attempt on his part to destroy what he could not dominate. The CSP Executive Committee charged that when Roy says there should be no socialist party within the Congress he really means 'that there should be only secret parties and caucuses, preferably turning around select individuals... For what Mr Roy is really attempting to do is to organize a secret party that will work within the Congress under his leadership.'

This was not an idle charge. The Royists indeed were operating inside the CSP as a secret party. Acting on instructions from Roy, representatives of various local units which had already been formed in Bombay, Calcutta, Poona, Banaras, Baroda and a few other places, assembled in late 1934, shortly after the formation of the CSP, in order to found the Revolutionary Party of the Indian Working Class on a national scale. The name was chosen by Roy, who had earlier rejected a proposal that the organization be called the Communist Party Opposition. The delegates adopted the call for a constituent assembly as their slogan and Roy's manifesto published under the title Our Task in India as their basic document. The Party's 'Plan of

126 I.e. those who were willing to co-operate with the British government in working within the framework of the 1935 Constitution of India.
128 'CSP Reply to the Royists.'
130 Letter from Roy to Bombay associates, 29 October 1934, File 111/1, Roy Archives.
131 See footnote 53.
Action and Organization’, formulated by Roy, directed that its activities be underground. Neither membership lists nor the composition of the Executive Committee were to be made known to the public and agitation was to be conducted ‘in the name of a more legal organization’ in which members of the group were to be active.132 Within the Congress Party they were to operate as the party of the working class which would come to the fore in the final stages of nationalist revolution to force a reluctant leadership on the path toward ‘democratic dictatorship’. Its more immediate aim was to work within the CSP in order to split it and siphon off its more radical members.133

Suspicious of the Royists’ motives, the socialists, understandably, could find little merit in their proposal that the CSP be disbanded. In his presidential address to the Gujarat Congress Socialist Conference in June 1935, Acharya Narendra Deva, while agreeing with Roy that the main task was to promote the anti-colonialist struggle, maintained that ‘such a struggle can only develop if we succeed in linking up with the economic demands of the masses and this object can only be achieved if there is a party within the Congress that persistently agitates for the acceptance of an economic programme’. ‘This task’, he stated emphatically, ‘cannot be performed by a diffused group’.134

A few months later, however, the CSP did acknowledge, at least indirectly, the validity of Roy’s warning that in attempting to give equal stress to both nationalist and socialist goals, they might achieve neither. Within the Congress Party, opponents of CSP-sponsored resolutions, even those which had nothing to do with socialism, frequently sought their defeat by alluding to their source. The bogey of socialism, Narayan was to complain bitterly, was dragged in on every issue.135

Consequently, at their annual party conference at Meerut in early

132 Roy, ‘Plan of Action and Organization’, File 111/1, Roy Archives. This is an unpublished hand-written document.

133 Interviews with C. T. Daru and Dashrathlal Thakar, Ahmedabad, 13 November 1962, and Dharatri Ganguly and Janardan Bhattacharya, Calcutta, 8 December 1962. The meetings of this party were conducted in a romantic conspiratorial atmosphere—at night, behind drawn shades, by candlelight and with papers arranged so that they could be quickly destroyed in case of an unexpected interruption (Interview with K. K. Sinha, Dehra Dun, 19 May 1962).


1936, socialist delegates endorsed a resolution which affirmed that the immediate ‘task of the party was not to convert the Congress into a Socialist Party’, but into a multi-class, anti-imperialist front. A clear distinction was thus made between the party’s immediate objective and its ultimate goal. The party has conceded that ‘Royist criticism played a part’ in strengthening the view that such a clarification of its programme was urgently required. While the party leaders agreed with Roy that socialism was not the immediate issue, they never accepted his suggestion that they should dissolve the party. Though distinct, the two goals of national independence and socialist reconstruction were interdependent and if socialism were not to be consigned to an historical limbo, they maintained, ‘the whole conscious direction of the nationalist movement must emanate from a Socialist Party’.

**ROY, GANDHI AND INDIAN NATIONALISM**

When Roy emerged from prison in 1936 he was a potential political force in India. The aura of mystery attached to his name as a former confidant of Lenin and Stalin and as a former agent of the Comintern who had been intimately involved in conspiratorial activities of a global nature assured him an attentive audience among Indian nationalists. His six-year incarceration at the hands of the British for his efforts on behalf of his country, even though many judged them as misguided, assured him a large measure of sympathy as well. A contemporary political figure, Subhas Chandra Bose, has observed in reference to Roy’s reputation at this time that ‘because of his revolutionary past... Mr M. N. Roy was a popular and attractive figure with a halo round his name. Young men flocked to him’.

But this advantage was quickly dissipated. Following the rupture between their party and the Royists, the socialists began a systematic attempt to thwart Roy’s designs by sowing disaffection between the Royists and the Congress leadership. Due to their influence within the Congress and the suspicions already harboured against Roy by the right wing, the socialists’ efforts met with considerable success. Long at odds with the communists, the Royists by their policies soon isolated

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136 ‘CSP Reply to the Royists’.  
137 Ibid. See also the resolution adopted on the subject at the All-India CSP Conference, Faizpur, December 1936, quoted in Congress Socialist, Bombay, 9 January 1937, p. 26.  
themselves from virtually all other groups within the Congress Party. The right wing, with whom Roy had sought to ingratiate himself, never accepted his profession of kinship with the goals and aspirations of Indian nationalism. Half a year after becoming a member of the Congress Party, Roy felt it necessary to disavow explicitly any ulterior motive in joining the Party. In a prepared speech before a group of Congressmen, he stated:

Let me tell you once and for all, very clearly that while I may have certain political ideas . . . I am as loyal a Congressman as any of you. There may be some notion that, being a Communist, it is not possible for me to be in the Congress as a loyal Congressman . . . and [that] I am waiting for an opportunity to spring a surprise on you. . . . I find myself in a rather peculiar position. One section of the Congress looks upon me with suspicion, as a dangerous communist intriguer trying to press through some insidious scheme, and another section, the Socialists, say that here is a man who is a traitor to Communism. . . . I say these few words because, lately, I have, painfully, found a feeling of distrust and suspicion about me on the part of some people.139

Roy was never able to establish his bona fides as an Indian nationalist. His frequent and caustic criticism of Gandhi and Indian tradition stood in the way. He was unable to play the role of an Indian nationalist, which he had cast for himself, for several reasons. First, he had spent the greater part of his life abroad, as a result of which he had acquired cosmopolitan views and tastes which reinforced the internationalist outlook he had imbibed with his Marxian philosophy. Second, he had embraced Marx's disdain for the rural peasantry and the narrowness of village life as compared with the urban proletariat and metropolitan sophistication. Finally, he shared the attitude, born of the failure of the populist movement, of the Russian Marxists toward the tradition-bound hinterland.

Roy was a persistent critic of Gandhi almost from the time he first appeared on the Indian scene. Gandhi was a nationalist, not only in the sense that he wanted to secure India's political independence but also in his attachment to Indian culture, and he appealed to Hindu religious values to gain support for the nationalist movement. In the debate between Roy and Lenin at the second Comintern Congress in 1920, Lenin had maintained that as a leader of a nationalist, anti-imperialist movement, Gandhi was a revolutionary; whereas Roy had insisted that 'as a religious and cultural revivalist, he was bound to be

reactionary socially, however revolutionary he might appear politically'.

In support of this view, Roy had cited Plekhanov's similar judgment of Russian Populist and Social Revolutionary movements, which Roy felt corresponded with Gandhism in that, believing in the special genius of the Slavic race, they had denounced capitalism as a Western vice and championed a return to the village and the revival of the mirs.

As was the case with Gandhi's followers in India, the nineteenth century Russian populist movement had been sustained by a vision of their country's future based on her traditional village unit—the commune. Like Gandhi, the populists had a deep faith in their own unique heritage, which if properly understood and employed, they felt, could enable their country to avoid the Western vice of capitalism. Instead of seeking to liberate proletarian energies, as the Marxists would have them do, the populists sought to identify with the peasantry, the vehicles of tradition, as the source of revolutionary power. Stress was placed on the resuscitation of the traditional village as the basic social, economic and political unit, and on spreading enlightenment throughout the countryside.

Like the Russian Marxists, Roy felt that any attempt at social reconstruction based on traditional social units—with their underlying system of customs, values, behavioural patterns and forms of organization—was doomed ultimately to failure and in the short run could only succeed in restraining social progress. Consequently, as a

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141 Plekhanov's early faith in the populist movement was shaken by the resort of a section of its members to terrorism, which he considered irrational and aimless, and by mounting statistical evidence that the village commune was a dying institution. In 1884 he published an attack on populism entitled Our Differences in which he held that, contrary to the views of his erstwhile allies, capitalism was the dominant economic force in Russia and that the hope of the future lay with the proletariat rather than the peasantry (Georgii V. Plekhanov, Our Differences in Selected Works, I, prepared by the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, London, 1961, pp. 141–400).
143 It should be noted that Marx himself, toward the end of his life, was unable to discount altogether the Russian commune as a basis for social reconstruction. In 1881 Marx wrote to Vera Zasulich that 'the analysis in Das Kapital offers no argument either for or against the vitality of the rural commune (mir), but ... [I am convinced] that this commune is the point d'appui for the social regeneration of Russia'. However, he added that this could come about only after a general revolution based on the urban proletariat. The isolation of the Russian commune rendered it incapable of serving as a revolutionary catalyst. (See David Mitrany, Marx Against the Peasant: A Study in Social Dogmatism, New York, 1961, pp. 56–7).
member of the Comintern he had failed completely to appreciate either Gandhi's appeal to the Indian people or his revolutionary potentiality. As early as 1922 Roy was prophesying Gandhi's 'impending defeat' on the grounds that he sought to utilize prevailing 'mass energy' to revive the selfsame heritage to which 'the masses' were 'objectively' opposed.\[144\]

Roy felt that Gandhi's style of political leadership was antithetical to the growth of democratic attitudes and perpetrated the values of subservience, submission and self-abnegation already enshrined in Hinduism. He characterized Gandhi's fasts as a form of moral coercion which impeded the development of habits of rational persuasion and his arrogation of complete discretionary power as authoritarian rather than democratic in outlook. For Roy, Hinduism was a slave ideology and Gandhi another in a long line of ideological jailers who for centuries had fettered the Indian mind in the name of spirituality. Instead of encouraging man to reach beyond his grasp, he argued, Gandhi would consign man to the suffocating restrictions imposed by the caste system, religious superstition and village life.

Roy was unsparing in his criticism of India's Hindu-based heritage, which Gandhi—and Indian nationalists of the Extremist school, such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak, before him—had utilized to evoke a virile, and sometimes virulent, religio-nationalist sentiment.\[145\] In the early 1930s Roy wrote from his jail cell in India to his friends in Europe that he was 'living in antiquity and the Middle Ages'. He confessed that he found 'conditions [in India] quite disgusting', and that he often felt like 'cleaning that all up, neat and wholesale'.\[146\] He regarded Hinduism as an 'ideology of social slavery'. India's so-called spiritual heritage, he contended, had resulted in 'political slavery for nearly a thousand years, economic backwardness, intellectual inertia and cultural degradation'.\[147\] Reflecting a sense of despair and frustration, Roy wrote that India's ignorant and repressed people were 'the product of a decayed civilization awaiting a much delayed burial'.

\[144\] Roy, India in Transition, p. 207.
\[145\] B. G. Tilak (1856–1920), 'the father of Indian unrest', alarmed Indian Muslims by his glorification of the seventeenth-century Hindu patriot, Sivaji, the scourge of the Muslim Moghul rulers, and by his sponsorship of 'cow-protection societies'. One of the arguments of Congress moderates such as G. K. Gokhale (1866–1915, against Tilak's tactics was that, however useful they might be in the short run ultimately they would divide the country into two hostile religious camps.

\[146\] Roy, Fragments of a Prisoner's Diary, Vol. III: Letters From Jail, pp. 16 and 69–70.
‘This country needs a Kemal Pasha’, he continued:

to chop off the ridiculous tufts on the heads; to make the wearing of moustaches punishable as culpable homicide; to drive pampered, idle, gossiping, but outrageously maltreated women out in the streets to work down their fat or cure their anaemia and to free themselves from the malignant curse of suppressed passion; to prohibit the irritating chanting of rigmarole in a language which few understand; and to do many other similar things.  

Throughout the years Roy continued to underestimate Gandhi’s role in the Indian nationalist movement. He failed to realize the extent to which the nationalist movement was dependent on Gandhi’s leadership and never faltered in calling for his replacement. By the 1930s, however, Roy had come to realize the magnitude of Gandhi’s accomplishments in having aroused the Indian people, consisting largely of illiterate and tradition-bound peasants with parochial loyalties, to a sense of political involvement. But to him this fell far short of developing genuine ‘class consciousness’ capable of disciplined, sustained and purposive action. To Roy, Gandhi was merely ‘the embodiment of the primitive, blind, spontaneous, spirit of revolt of the Indian masses’. He deplored Gandhi’s hold over his compatriots, and was convinced that neither political independence nor the kind of radical social and economic reform he so earnestly desired could be achieved under Gandhi’s leadership. Moreover, Roy was aware that in the Indian context appeals to traditional values could only be religious in content, and that a nationalism based on such appeals would ultimately prove divisive in so far as it served to estrange the large Muslim minority. At the time of independence, the Indian sub-continent was divided between a predominantly Hindu India and an Islamic Pakistan. The partition of India, the attendant communal rioting and Gandhi’s assassination at the hands of a Hindu fanatic were viewed by Roy as an indictment of Gandhi’s handiwork.  

149 Independent India, Bombay, 16 October 1938. In formulating my views on the relationship between the thought of Roy and Gandhi I have benefited by conversations with Philip Spratt in Bangalore in November 1962.  
150 After Gandhi’s death a new respect for him emerged in Roy’s thinking. Although he continued to reject Gandhi’s religiosity and nationalism, in evolving his philosophy of Radical Humanism he came closer to Gandhi in his emphasis on human solidarity, the relation of means to ends, the necessity of some form of economic and political decentralization and the rejection of party politics.  

The extent of Gandhi’s responsibility for the breakdown in relations between the
Although he alienated a large segment of Muslim India, Gandhi’s use of religious symbols shared by the overwhelming majority of Indians played a positive role in the nationalist struggle. In independent India, however, appeals to smaller religious, as well as regional and linguistic, groups constitute one of the gravest threats to the unity of the country. Political groups, including Indian communists, have not been reluctant to exploit such differences despite the threat to the Indian republic and the difficulty of building a viable all-India party on the basis of such minority appeals.

The successful political broker in the Indian contest is one who, respectful of India’s ‘great tradition’,\(^\text{151}\) is able to transfer traditional loyalties to modern political institutions, values and customs by presenting new ideas in familiar language. Such an approach is open to those political leaders who are not only familiar with Western political institutions and values but also retain a nostalgic attachment for the indigenous culture. Gandhi was such a leader. Exhibiting a form of populism, Gandhi was able to project himself as a living symbol of the Indian masses and to stigmatize his political opponents, whether British administrators or Indian socialists, as cultural aliens objectively hostile to the best interests of his people.\(^\text{152}\)

Recognizing the fact that in contemporary Asia nationalism is capable of generating the same level of mass enthusiasm as in nineteenth-century Europe, Roy sought to harness the moral force generated by nationalist revolution in order to convert it into a socialist revolution. But his alienation from Indian culture and society, his distrust of the peasantry and his atheism caused him to stumble. He sought to appeal to the anti-imperialist aspects of Indian nationalism but was disrespectful of its religio-cultural foundations. He recognized the existence in India of a wide social gap between the educated elite and the largely illiterate population and realized that the gap had to be bridged if his vision of society was to be achieved. But, in contrast to Gandhi, he was unable to do this.

Hindu and Muslim communities is a matter of some controversy among those knowledgeable in Indian affairs. On this question, however, Roy never changed his mind. To him Gandhi’s appeal to Hindu tradition always remained a major cause for Muslim separatism (Letter to author, dated 7 September 1967, from Professor Shanti Tangri, Wayne State University, who interviewed Roy in Dehra Dun in 1953).

\(^\text{151}\) For a discussion of the interrelationship between the ‘great tradition’ of a peasant society and culture and local communities of which it is composed, see Robert Redfield, *Peasant Society and Culture*, Chicago, 1956.

According to Mosca, leadership within heterogeneous societies accrues to those who are able to devise a political formula based upon ‘the special beliefs and the strongest segments’ of the society as a whole. Mosca’s theory of legitimacy, in which the political formula serves to rationalize the dominance of the ruling class suggests how masses of the population in a developing society may be mobilized in the process of creating a nationalist movement. Gandhi, utilizing an appropriate formula, was able to link the relatively small, urban-based political elite with the millions of rural India. In contrast Roy preferred to change Indian conditions to fit his Marxian political formula, rather than to adapt his formula to the exigencies of the given situation. Roy often spoke of the need for a renaissance in India as a prerequisite for the social revolution he desired. He might well have added that such a change would also be necessary for the acceptance of the kind of leadership he offered. Roy’s radical rejection of Indian civilization negated all his best efforts to win the acceptance of either the Congress leadership, its rank and file or the populace at large.

**Dissolution of the Left**

Although the CSP moved closer to the Royists’ position on the question of dampening socialist slogans in the interest of nationalist unity, the two groups moved farther apart on the question of the importance of Gandhi’s leadership to the nationalist cause. Until 1936 the socialists and Royists had shared the slogan of alternative leadership, which symbolized their intention of replacing Gandhian dominance of the Congress Party with left-wing hegemony. In 1936 the socialists abandoned this aim in favour of a composite leadership in which the left wing was to participate, but not dominate. They now felt that their former policy would lead inevitably to a split in the

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153 Mosca has contended that mankind is divided into social groups each with its distinctive beliefs, sentiments, habits and interests. Different social types may arise inside a single society where there exist urban centres subject to ‘rapid flows of ideas’ which ‘agitate the higher classes’. For Mosca leadership in such societies flows to those who possess a political formula based on ‘complexes of belief and sentiment which have the sanction of the ages’. Contrary to the Marxists, however, Mosca did not believe that the gap between the leaders and the led could ever be fully closed—even in a thoroughly modernized society (Gaetano Mosca, The Ruling Class, New York, 1939, pp. 71–2 and 106–14). I am indebted to Leonard Binder’s paper ‘National Integration and Political Development’, delivered at the 59th Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, New York City, September 1963, for suggesting the relevance of Mosca’s concepts to the study of political development.
nationalist ranks and seriously jeopardize the nationalist cause. The CSP henceforth was logically committed to supporting Gandhi's position within the Congress, even, if faced with the necessity, at the expense of its left wing. When Gandhi adroitly forced such a choice on the socialists in 1939 by compelling Congressmen to choose between his leadership and that of Subhas Chandra Bose, the result was catastrophic for the left wing.

In spite of Gandhi's opposition, Bose was re-elected as Congress President in 1939. At the annual Congress session at Tripuri at the end of the year, Pandit Pant introduced a resolution which reaffirmed the delegates' faith in Gandhian principles and practices and required that the President accept the wishes of Gandhi in the formation of a Working Committee. The resolution was adopted. This was in effect a vote of no-confidence in Bose, who had disagreed with Gandhi's conduct of the nationalist struggle and had made this a central issue in his campaign for the presidency. Although the socialists agreed with Bose on this question, they remained neutral on the Pant resolution and abstained from voting.154 The communists actually voted in favour of the resolution.155 By later refusing to co-operate with Bose on the formation of a composite Working Committee, Gandhi forced his resignation. Bose was replaced as Congress President by the Gandhian, Rajendra Prasad.

Defending the socialists' position on the Pant resolution, Narayan explained that although the CSP had voted for Bose in the presidential election they were withholding support for him now out of fear of creating a schism in the Congress Party. He felt that unless a Working Committee was appointed which met with Gandhi's approval, it would not be possible to maintain the unity of the nationalist movement.156

Bose maintained that if the socialists had voted against the Pant resolution it would have been defeated.157 This was also Roy's position. Following Bose's victory in the presidential election, Roy had counselled him to stand firm 'With courage and resolution' against any

155 V. B. Karnik, 'Congress Socialists and the Pant Resolution', Independent India, Bombay, 26 March 1939, pp. 203-205.
156 Tribune, Lahore, 13 March 1939, pp. 2 and 5.
possible challenge from Gandhi and the 'Old Guard'. He urged Bose not to weaken in the face of the threat of a split in the nationalist ranks, for he remained confident that the left wing could shoulder the responsibility of providing an alternative leadership.\(^{158}\) He argued that Bose should hold out for a Working Committee in which the left would enjoy a majority of at least sixty per cent.\(^{159}\) At Tripuri the Royists voted against the Pant resolution and sponsored an amendment which expressed confidence in both Gandhi and Bose. It urged Gandhi and Congress leaders to co-operate with Bose in the discharge of his duties. The proposal received only thirty-eight votes.\(^{160}\)

At Tripuri the socialists and communists chose nationalist unity under Gandhi rather than left wing hegemony under Bose. In retreat and disarray, the left wing never again reached the level of influence within the Congress Party that it had attained by the late 1930s.

In failing to combine their talents and aspirations, the socialists, Royists and Communists were unable to integrate their dual goals of social revolution and national independence.


\(^{159}\) *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 7 February 1939.

\(^{160}\) *Tribune*, Lahore, 10 March 1939, pp. 1 and 14–15 and 11 March 1939, pp. 1 and 15. See also 'Roy's speech on the Pant Resolution', *Independent India*, 26 March 1939, p. 221. The Royists' support of Bose in this instance was not based upon any illusions regarding his political views, which certainly could not be regarded as socialist.