

**THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS: A STUDY
OF IT'S DECISION MAKING PROCESS AND
POLICY FORMULATION 1947 - 1955**

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SMT. ROOPLEKHA BORGOHAIN

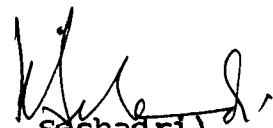
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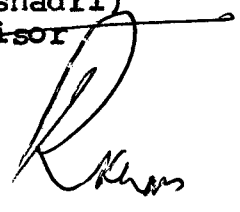
Dedicated to my parents

CERTIFICATE

The research work presented in this dissertation has been carried out in the School of Social Sciences, Centre for Political studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. The work is original and has not been submitted in part or full for any other degree or diploma of any other University.


(Rooplekha Borgohain)
Candidate


(K. Seshadri)
Supervisor


(Rasheeduddin Khan)
Chairman

New Delhi-110067
Date: July 1980

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R Borgohain
Rooplekha Borgohain

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CHAPTER 1INTRODUCTION

Decisions and particularly political decisions are an integral part of the governance of any country, be it socialist democratic or authoritarian.¹ The government's primary task is to make decisions; decisions which lay down priorities which prescribe the future course of action and which give direction to society indicating how, where and to what purpose the political and economic power of the nation should be used. Decisions move the wheels of government. Although decisions are being arrived at all the time, at various levels, not all of them interest us. It is only the decisions concerning major public policies that are of importance to us. A study of the decision making process can also throw light on how the government pursues various policies, which policies are adopted and why, how are these policies arrived at, who are the chief participants in the whole process etc. The various decisional dilemmas are therefore resolved by people who are involved in the making of the decision and not given to us by some supernatural powers like manna from the heavens. Decisions are therefore the outcome of the interaction of people who come together to meet the problem of collective choice. Decision making is a rather complex and lengthy process. The behaviour of the state

becomes to a large extent the behaviour of the decision makers and as a result much depends on how the decision makers perceive state action. The making of a choice becomes a very important aspect of the decision-making process. Normally the goal or objective which the organisation wants to achieve is laid down quite clearly and then the decision-makers weighing all the pros and cons of various alternatives available to them, makes the most suitable and rational choice.² Their course of action is of such a nature that it enables them to reach the prescribed goal as quickly, efficiently and effectively as possible. A number of factors both internal and external to the organisation influences the decision-making process.³ What is decided is policy and these policies, which are about various problems and issues, affect the different interests within or without the organisation in different ways.

Decision-making in a nation is, however, not the prerogative of only the government. The decision-making process is a phenomenon common to all organisations, be it formal or informal.⁴ In this study the focus is on organisational decision-making. The content and form of the decisions, as well as the factors influencing it may however differ from organisation to organisation. In politics therefore the process of reaching a decision becomes not only rather complex, but also of crucial importance. In a parliamentary form of government the party in power plays

the most decisive and important role in the nation's decision-making and very often there are no clear and distinct lines dividing the party decisions from the governmental decisions. A study of the decision-making process within the ruling party therefore cannot be delinked from a knowledge of the same process in the government. Party men are also government men and there is constant interaction between the two. They together in fact give shape and content to most of the major policies. What is common to both the party and the government are the leaders who actually shape decisions. Broadly speaking, therefore, decisions comprise of the following: (1) an organisation (informal/formal) within which the process takes place, (2) previously defined goals or objectives, (3) people who make the decisions, i.e. the political actors, (4) identification, recognition and knowledge of various alternatives, (5) external and internal setting, (6) deliberation and the making of choice, (7) appraisal and assessment. Underlying the whole process is the phenomenon of rationality.

In India, the Indian National Congress (I.N.C.), which is and has been the single largest party, has been at the helm of national affairs both before and after independence. After Independence, India chose the parliamentary democratic form of government, and ideally according to the Indian Constitution, Parliament and Cabinet are responsible for all crucial decisions. However, it was the Indian National Congress, having won massive mandates from the people and

having formed the government, who played the decisive role in the nation's decision making process and policy formulation. Out of all the policies formulated by them, perhaps the most important was the one on Socialism, which they chose out of a number of alternatives available to them. This study is an attempt at analysing the decision-making process within the Indian National Congress regarding its policy on Socialism, culminating with the 1955 Avadi Resolution, where the party for the first time officially adopted the Socialist policy as its prime goal and objective. This was not an overnight decision made in haste, rather it had matured over a period of time and was the culmination of a long drawn out process in which a number of factors both internal and external to the party had interacted and influenced it decisively. However, several factors had combined to hasten the process of adopting this policy in 1955. The Indian National Congress therefore came to accept the objective of Socialism, through a rather gradual but fairly complex process. The Party's Socialist policy is no doubt important and significant, but what is of equal importance and relevance is the intricate and complex process through which the decision was arrived at, and it is this process that is our focal point of analysis. We seek to answer questions like who were the key actors, what forces did they represent, what were the interlocking developments that led to the decision, what was the underlying ideology, etc. We will also examine the

internal and external factors influencing the process as well as the turning points and important events and pressures which were at work, besides examining how the different groups within the Congress helped or hindered the adoption of the Socialist programme. Identification of the major areas of conflict or consensus would also be an important aspect of this study.

The various theories of decision making as expounded by different political theorists like Simon, Snyder, Lasswell, and others, perhaps are not exactly applicable to the process as it occurred within the Congress party. No doubt some of the general principles as laid down in these theories are to be found in the process that took place within the Congress e.g. the actors, the external-internal setting, the prescribed goal, the making of choice, alternatives available, etc. But congressmen never consciously applied or functioned according to any of them. We will be studying the decision-making process in the Congress, keeping in mind the above mentioned theoretical limitations.

The present Prime Minister, Mrs Gandhi has called the Congress, the prime instrument of the Indian revolution,⁵ while others have gone to the extent of saying that with the fate of the Congress has been linked the destiny of India, and that the congress is a potent instrument of socio-economic change.⁶ Yet others have found it a model example of party building in a developing nation.⁷ Exaggerations apart, one can hardly deny the important role the Indian National Congress has played and is continuing to play even today.

The basic philosophy implicit in socialism was the inspiration and goal of the Congress not only after independence but since the beginning of the current century. It is to be found in the election manifestos, in the speeches of the leaders is echoed in the five year plans, etc. The basic features of the socialist policy appealed not only to the Indian National Congress, but also appealed to a wide ranging group of people. It has been significant to both the parties of the left as well as the parties of the right,⁸ who freely make use of the term socialism, not necessarily always implying exactly the same thing. In fact, the word, unfortunately, has been so used and misused that it only distorted the meaning of the term and has created more confusion than clarified matters. As C.E.M. Joad had pointed out, albeit in a different context, socialism was like a hat which had lost its shape because too many people had worn it. However, we will concentrate on the Indian National Congress and the meaning they gave to socialism and the form in which they applied it to the Indian conditions, because of the prominent role played by the Congress in the politics of the nation.

The Indian National Congress was established in 1885, and in the early years it did not have any definite economic programme as such, for they concentrated primarily on political matters. Prior to the 20s of the present century, the nationalist leaders did not have a very clear idea of what

Socialism meant although some references were made occasionally to the term. It was only in the second decade of the 20th Century, that the term became more familiar and more popular. Certain events within India, as well as outside India, was responsible for this changing attitude. In the mid-twenties, India was in a state of ferment. The ideas and movements preceeding 1927, had by then spent themselves out and there was an increasing restiveness among the peasant and workers. They along with the students were getting more and more vocal and active and the challenge to the ideas of the early nationalists was becoming imminent from the new trends from both inside and outside the country. Mass action without a very clear cut ideology, as preached by Gandhian politics on the one hand, and the Swarajist Council entry programmes on the other hand, without any deeper social motivation, fell quite short of the aspirations and desires of the masses. The various reforms like the Government of India Acts of 1909 and 1919 which had been introduced till then, had showed up glaringly their inadequacies and the Congress was having to cope increasingly with not only all these developments but also the increasing demands of the people. The Indian National Congress was realising gradually that the time had come to extend their objectives from just Swaraj to include a more specific and explicit commitment to social and economic justice if it wanted to increase its mass appeal and support, a factor most essential to the Congress, for achieving its

political objectives. At the same time, thanks to British Imperialist policies, the economic growth of the country had been severely retarded. The large masses were living in abject poverty and misery. There was hardly any industrialisation and the peasant economy was thrown into a period of permanent and acute crisis. The foundations of the old economic order was broken which led to the destruction of the self-sufficiency of the old village unit and the "subjugation of the entire peasant world to the vagaries of money and market economy".⁹ The Britishers had also created new, exploitative organs like the Zamindars and the jagirdars. Pressure on land, fragmentation of holdings, famine, starvation, etc. became the hallmark of the Indian economy. The political and economic urge of the masses was by then beginning to reach gigantic proportions and the need for a fundamental, revolutionary and radical change was felt by many. This inherent dynamism of the country, went a long way in influencing the Congress to take on a more radical stand.

Outside India, an important event had taken place, which again had far-reaching consequences for the country and the Congress party. The Russian Revolution had been successful in establishing a new socio-economic order and this had a direct and stronger bearing on the thinking of the people in India. As P.C. Joshi pointed out "in the peculiar situation in which India was placed, the Russian example seemed to provide a unique possibility of rejecting westernism, with-

out rejecting the concept of progress. Nationalist leaders gradually became full of praise and admiration for the Russian experiment and they propagated the message of the Revolution among the masses in India. The October Revolution had helped the radicalisation of Indian politics. The bogey of Bolshevik 'threat' to India which the British had raised did not fool the national leadership."¹⁰ The Revolution also influenced the post-war national movement in India, not by accepting its programme or methods of struggle, but by positively reacting, lauding and accepting some of its main features. The flood of information¹¹ of the Russian experiment in the 20s and 30s had therefore set many a mind thinking and they saw in the Soviet model a possible and good model of development and progress. The Revolution had also brought to light certain problems similar to the problems in India and it showed how an oppressive, exploitative order can be overthrown by the common man. The right of the people to freedom was proclaimed by the Peace Decree signed by Lenin, it also proclaimed the right of nations to independence. There was a growing realisation that nothing short of complete independence would be acceptable and further, that independence should also lead to a socio-economic transformation and finally the establishment of a Socialist State. Therefore, although prior to 1927, a small group of people encouraged and enthused by the Soviet example had committed themselves to Marxism and the Socialist ideology, it had become popular only by 1927. Prolonged discussions were taking place within

the Congress as to what course of action to take next, and what path of development should be adopted for a backward country like India, in order to achieve development without the evils associated with it in West Europe. The Socialist alternative seemed to be a better alternative.

Even prior to the Revolution in Russia, the Socialist philosophy as evolved by Karl Marx, F. Engles and subsequently enhanced and enriched by the debates and discussions of the world communist movement, was becoming more and more popular and had become one of the most powerful ideologies guiding the destinies of mankind in their never ending search for establishing the ideal world to live in and the banner of mankind's progress was taken on by this ideology. To the countries of the Third World, underdeveloped and backward and suffering from the oppressions of the colonial yoke, it had a special appeal, for it projected a future based on public ownership of the means of production and distribution, promised the establishment of the rule of the people, talked of eradication of every kind of exploitation, sought to deliver the people from the imperialist and neo-colonialist oppressions, bring a planned crisis-free development of the economy, relieve them of the poverty and misery, promising to work purely in the interests of the people as a whole, thereby ensuring a rapid economic and cultural development, culminating in genuine social justice and the development of the individual. It is not surprising, therefore, why this philo-

sophy caught on so easily in India - the search for new ideas had led the nationalist leaders to socialism.

In 1925, the Communist Party of India was established. Swearing in the name of Marxism-Leninism, they were advocating a radical transformation of the socio-economic set up in the country. Given the growing expectations of the people, the Communist Party of India with its promise of a future which was just, humane and egalitarian was a potent threat to the Congress. As the Congress could hope to retain its mass support only by broadening and radicalising its own stand, it started making a number of efforts in that direction. Socialist ideology found support within the Congress itself and in 1934 the Congress Socialist Party was formed. The founding fathers who were mostly middle class intellectuals had been drawn to both the ideology of nationalism and socialism, and they considered that the Indian National Congress was the only nationalist organisation in the country and that it was from the Congress that the struggle for freedom should be carried out. They acted as a ginger group inside the Congress. They sought to commit the Congress to a Socialist programme. As Narendra Deva, the foremost among the Congress socialist, in his Presidential address put it, "The party has come into existence as a result of a group of congressmen in the course of the struggle. They came under the impact of the Socialist thought of the world. They saw that a crisis had come over democracy in the west and that parliamentary institutions were crumbling on all sides. They found the world in the midst of a grave economic crises which

did not seem to end. They found that it was Russia alone which had made substantial advances towards socialism and that in the midst of surrounding gloom, it was the only hope of the poor, the oppressed and the downtrodden for whom it was a great inspiration today because it was a precursor of a new era for the masses of humanity."¹² These young socialists like Jayaprakash Narayan, Ram Manohar Lohia, Narendra Deva and others, who were not dependent on the old guard led by Gandhi, were very forthright and open in their advocacy of socialism. The crisis in the world capitalist system only helped to spread socialism among the people. The socialists began to put pressures on the Congress High Command to carry out a more vigorous and popular programme.

Workers and peasants parties were also coming up during that period, and strikes and agitations were on the increase.¹³ The peasant associations although supporting the Congress, strove to commit the national leadership to break away from the large landholding and industrial classes. In fact, one of the important leader of the Kisan Association, Ranga had said that as long as feudalism and capitalism were not done away with, real and substantive power could not come into the hands of the masses. Hence their abolition is a necessity for and condition precedent to Swaraj. The kisan marches succeeded in bringing the peasant movement to all India attention. The Kisan Sabhas agitated for their own programme of agrarian reforms and were organised and worked closely with the Congress Socialist Party. Trade unions and

working class movements were also becoming increasingly stronger. Huge working class strikes of the railways, the textile workers, jute mill workers, etc. drew the attention of the Indian National Congress and had influenced it to a great extent. The Communist movement had emerged in a particular form in China as well, and with relative success. These events in the neighbouring State had also direct consequences on the national movement and its leaders in the Indian National Congress.

Given these conditions, the Indian National Congress was struggling to keep pace with all the new developments and was trying to accommodate the new forces which had been demanding from it, rather persistently a redefinition of its goals, review of its ideological stand, and a re-examination of its strategy. This was in fact the "seed time of Socialism in India."¹⁴ There was therefore a phenomenal upsurge of interest in Socialism not only among the youth and the students, but also among the educated and the terrorist groups. In spite of the impetus provided by all these developments both inside India and outside it, the process of adopting the Socialist policy in the Congress party was not a smooth and quick one, without any hurdles. In fact, the party organisation was such, that it proved to be a major drawback in this process. The composition of the party also proved to be another major drawback. In spite of 'young India' showing such a considerable interest in Socialist ideology, as an alternative source of inspiration, the Congress still had a

very big conservative group within it. To the right wing leaders the expansion of Socialism within the Congress were rather ominous developments. Even Gandhi had openly admitted "I have fundamental differences with them on the programme published in their authorised pamphlets."¹⁵ The Congress was still firmly rooted in the hands of the rightists for compared to them, the socialists were insignificant in number. Although a large number of congressmen did not accept many of Gandhi's ideas, especially those relating to economic matters, there was no doubt on the score that they still gave their loyalty only to him and not to his critics. The rightist element most of the time predominated the Working Committee and other major organs of the Congress party. They viewed with great alarm the activities of the Congress Socialists and took measures to cut them to size, whenever possible. Sardar Patel was one of the important leaders of this conservative right wing. They did not hesitate to censure the Socialists, whenever possible. Even then the Socialists had been able to lodge socialism institutionally within the national movement.

Gandhi too believed in some form of socialism, but his socialism differed in form and content from the Marxist-Leninist concept of the term. His Socialism was founded on ideas of non-possession trusteeship, non-violence and human equality. His opposition to Marxist Socialism was based on disagreements not with its ultimate objectives, but with the means advocated. Further, he was quite sceptical of Socialist

internationalism and decried the socialist enthusiasm for violence and authoritarianism. His objection of class war and raising of individual liberty to the very heights, made him disagree with the socialists, on many points. Gandhi believed in the doctrine of trusteeship and hoped that the just rights of the poor would be secured through non-violent means. In 1927, he had written "My ideal is equal distribution, but so far as I can see, it is not to be realised. I, therefore, work for equitable distribution."¹⁶ Gandhi wanted to bring about a psychological revolution, and his passion for social justice, brought him closer to the basic idea of socialism. But he could never bring himself to accept it in the form it unfolded in the Soviet Union. Therefore, Gandhi was a socialist of a kind, but above all he was a pragmatist. To him the immediate compulsions of the situation was to have a composite national movement, incorporating all the diverse interests and tried to avoid any internal conflicts which would weaken the movement, for the main purpose had yet to be achieved. Hence, although he differed from the socialists on many vital issues, an open confrontation leading to a split was avoided at all cost. In fact, it had become the politics of accommodation. Besides the Congress socialists the rightists and Gandhi, the other leader who influenced the whole process very decisively was Jawaharlal Nehru.

In the Congress movement, the principal and for some years the only exponent of socialist ideas, Nehru, represented the most characteristic response among Congressmen to the challenge of socialism. Although the Congress had been domi-

nated by the educated middle class, it was nevertheless a party of all nationalists, irrespective of their class situation. The Congress had therefore become an amorphous collection of diverse groups, united by only one factor, i.e. the achievement of independence. Although Nehru was a strong supporter of socialism, more often than not he played the role of the mediator. Nehru, gave all his support to the socialists, but never formally joined it. His penchant for mediation and compromise came to the fore many a time and helped to enhance his own status and prestige, besides making him acceptable to most of the groups in the Congress. He put forth proposals which very often reflected the consensus within the party. Although the rightist elements in the Congress did not like his radical tone, Gandhi, master tactician that he was, not only understood Nehru's psychology to perfection but even made use of Nehru's radical stand to advantage. Given the situation in the country and the increasing economic demands of the masses, Gandhi knew Nehru could rally round him the thousands of left minded people both within and without the party and thereby become a uniting factor, something which was for Gandhi of the utmost importance, at that time. Gandhi was able to convince even the rightist in this score. As E.M.S. Namboodiripad points out "Gandhi saw the advantage of having, at the head of the organisation launching the struggle, a 'socialist' who could talk to the people in terms of revolutionary struggles and radical transformations but who would subordinate his radical views to

the tactics of compromise with the British, pursued by the Congress."¹⁷ Nehru, 'the leftist', was elected to the high office of the Congress President in two consecutive years not because the rightists did not prefer Gandhi, but because they hoped in this way they could wean him away from taking an extreme stand. Gandhi was sure Nehru could be made to halt, literally speaking. On the other hand, the socialists found that Nehru was doing much to popularize socialism among the masses. Although at times, the socialists became quite impatient with Nehru's lukewarm attitude, they had high hopes on him as their spokesman and leader. The Congress party was not a cadre based party with a dedicated, ideologically motivated membership. This proved to be a severe limitation to the party's efforts at adopting the socialist policy.

Congress socialism therefore became a synthesis of many streams of thought as well as the dictates and compulsions of the times consisting of the extreme radicals on the one hand, and the liberals on the other hand. Congress had become a kind of federal arrangement holding together different factions, groups, lobbies, coteries, etc. Nehru was certainly not the only advocate of Socialism within the Congress, though he was certainly one of the most vocal and active radical leader. Among the others was Subhas Chandra Bose, who had worked in close collaboration with Nehru in the initial years. Because of the influence of these varied factors, congress

Socialism although adhering to some of the basic features as propagated by its creators, took on a distinctly different form. This synthesis was of such a nature that it appealed to the many divergent groups within the party. However, it is important to note that since Jawaharlal Nehru played a rather decisive and crucial role in shaping the policy of Socialism within the Congress, to a large extent his definition of the term became synonymous with the Congress definition of Socialism. Nehru was the chief architect of post-Independence India. Therefore, to get an understanding of Congress Socialism, we have to turn to Nehru's understanding of the term.

The origins of Nehru's Socialist ideas go far back to the days when he was a student at Cambridge. The Fabians had kindled his initial interest in Socialism. Later, however, Marxist philosophy had a deeper impact on his thinking and writing. By 1930s, his ideas on socialism had more or less crystallised and he set about imparting a socialist vision to the national movement. In a collection of essays in his "Whither India", in 1933, the influence of Marxist theory and socialist philosophy had become quite prominent. Asia, he wrote, was in a turmoil, and had become the battle ground for competing ideologies of imperialism and nationalism. To Nehru, independence had meant a complete break with the British connection and that political freedom cannot be delinked from economic freedom, that both went to-

gether. The economic goals, which he specified meant the abolition of class privileges and divesting of all vested interests. In fact the controversy over Dominion status revealed the intellectual and temperamental differences between Motilal and Jawaharlal. Nehru also tried to integrate nationalism and socialism, and pointed out that Indian socialism should be Indian in nature, and that although the examples of the Russian Revolution and the Chinese achievement could be kept in mind, they certainly could not be duplicated in Indian conditions. The Marxist philosophy, he took, but tried to apply it to conditions immediate and familiar to him. Nehru's socialism was therefore, primarily conditioned by the socio-economic and political conditions prevalent at that time. Referring to Karl Marx from whom he had got his intellectual, analytical and scientific approach, Nehru had said, "He seems to me to have possessed quite an extraordinary degree of insight into social phenomenon and this insight was apparently due to the scientific method he adopted."¹⁸ Realising that the scientific historical process was on its way even in India, he gave a new direction to it, i.e. he wanted it to be a non-violent revolution through constitutional means "free from dogma". His persistence on constitutional means is traced back by historians to his abhorrence of the dictatorial methods and aggressive ways of the communists. The influence of Gandhi and the Gandhian philosophy on Nehru

was not of any small measure either. In fact, his belief in revolution of the non-violent type can be traced to the Gandhian method of peaceful, democratic and constitutional method of doing things. Gandhi's ethical edicts on the right means and noble ends seem to have been deeply ingrained in Nehru's mind. "Ends were shaped by the means that led to them and therefore the means had to be good, pure and truthful."¹⁹ He was also influenced by Gandhi's ideas of decentralisation and rejuvenation of village and development from the bottom. He believed that the sense of participation must be developed in all people and this is possible only through decentralisation of political and economic power. Around 1920s, Nehru had been quite ignorant of labour conditions in field and industry. But his first visit with the Congress workers in rural areas had introduced him to a vista of new experiences, which had at that time filled him with intense enthusiasm and excitement, and had helped convert him to Marxism, at a more rapid pace. Nehru had written, "Looking at them, their misery and overflowing gratitude, I was filled with shame and sorrow, shame at my own easy going and comfortable life and our petty policies of the city which ignored the vast multitude of semi-naked sons and daughters of India, sorrow at the degradation and overwhelming poverty."²⁰ Subsequently, Nehru's participation in 1927, as a delegate along with other radical spokesmen at the Brussel's Conference²¹ also known as the Congress of the Oppressed Nations, had a further impact on his outlook. In fact, the fervent espousals of socialism later and his broad

internationalism can be traced to this period, where he met with communists, socialists, racial nationalists from all over the world. His pronouncements during that period was filled with Marxist jargons. Nehru was also a member of the League against Imperialism. He condemned in no uncertain terms all forms of imperialism, in a press statement he gave at that time. He had in fact drafted and moved a Resolution on India, which declared that "this Congress further trusts that the Indian National Movement will base its programme on the full emancipation of the peasants and workers of India, without which there can be no real freedom." Nehru had come up with a number of anti-imperialist and pro-socialist resolutions in 1927, at the Madras session of the Indian National Congress. He had forcefully brought out the influence of world forces on Indian events and warned his countrymen of the possible dangers of the war. Nehru had, even at that time declared that the national goal for him was the cooperative Socialist Commonwealth and talked of international ideal of a world federation of socialist states. He made a vigorous attack on feudalism for its antiquated values, capitalism for its concomitant evils and imperialism for its enslavement of people and their economic exploitation. Nehru's visit to Russia had indeed been significant. Patricia Kendell in "India and the British" claimed that "Vodka had gone to his head."

Nehru's socialism first and foremost envisaged the establishment of a classless and a casteless society and



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the eradication of all forms of inequality and exploitation. These basic tenets of socialism remained in fact in his definition of the term. Nehru had said "Today we see a society in which there are tremendous differences between man and man - great riches on the one side and great poverty on the other. Some people live in luxury and without doing any work, whilst others work from morning to night...this cannot be right. It is the negation of justice. It is the fault of the system and it is upto us to change this system which permits of exploitation of man by man and produces so much misery."²² In 1936, he had summed up his idea of social goals as well as the method to be followed in the following words: "Our final aim can only be a classless society, with equal economic justice and opportunity for all, a society organised on a planned basis for raising of mankind to higher material and cultural levels to a cultivation of spiritual values, of cooperation, unselfishness, the spirit of service, the desire to do right, goodwill and love ultimately a world order. Everything that comes in the way will have to be removed, gently if possible, forcibly if necessary and there seem to be little doubt that coercion will often be necessary. But if force is used it should not be in the spirit of hatred or cruelty but with dispassionate desire to remove an obstruction."²³ Peace, Freedom, Humanism, Equality and unity became the hallmarks of socialism. "Peace is a precious commodity, necessary for any progress,"²⁴ and "freedom for a nation and the people may be and is, I believe

always good in the long run, but in the final analysis freedom is a means to an end. That end brings the raising of the people in question to higher levels and hence the general advancement of humanity."²⁵ Nehru had quite categorically stated that he believed that the key solution of India's and the world's problem was in socialism, and when he used the term, he used it in its scientific economic sense and not, as Nehru put it, in a vague humanitarian way. Nehru was the first to admit that his bourgeois background was responsible to a larger extent in shaping his definition of socialism. Therefore, although he was fascinated by the radical changes in the old order of things in Russia, during his visit there, he had strong reservations on the methods used. In 1928, he had written, "I am very far from being a communist. My roots are still perhaps partly in the 19th Century and I have been too much influenced by the humanist-liberal tradition to get out of it completely. This bourgeois background follows me about and is naturally a source of invitation to many communists. I dislike also much that has happened in Russia and especially the excessive use of violence in normal times. But still I incline more and more towards a communist philosophy."²⁶ Therefore, his partiality towards socialism was a fact, no one could deny.

Nehru's socialism was based not on communist regimentation or class war or proletarian dictatorship. Nor did it mean that state ownership of all the means of production or the abolition of private property based on persuasion, edu-

cation, legislation and functioned within the framework of parliamentary democracy. On the point that socialism meant the abolition of private property and or the abolition of classes, Nehru was quite categorical. He was, however, not very clear on the question of the methods and means of achieving it. He did not seem to be favourably disposed to the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a necessary part of socialism, and regarded such dictatorship as a Russian phenomenon. As P.C. Joshi pointed out "Nehru's conception of socialism was synthetic to the point of being eclectic, it is best to characterise it as a vision which is as much socialist as humanist."²⁷ Whereas the socialist groups in the Congress functioned with varying degrees of effectiveness, the impact of Nehru was fairly steady all through. With the impetus provided by Nehru, the socialists and other compulsions, the Congress party moved slowly and steadily towards socialist policies and programmes, and in spite of the dominance of the conservatives, the party as a whole increasingly identified itself with socialist policies in its programmatic declarations. The high points in this process were the 1929 AICC, 1931 Karachi Resolution, Lucknow Congress of 1936, the Faizpur Agrarian Programme of 1937, the August Resolution of 1942, etc.

In most of these, Nehru had a major hand. The 1929 AICC had stated that "in order to remove the poverty and misery of the Indian people and to ameliorate the condition

of the masses it is essential to make revolutionary changes in the present economic and social structure of society and to remove gross inequalities." Nehru made use of his Presidential office, time and again to spread the message of socialism, e.g. as in 1936. He was primarily responsible for the 1931 Karachi resolution of the Congress on Fundamental rights and Economic policies. The 1931 Karachi resolution was a combination of Nehru's socialist language and the teachings and techniques of Gandhi.²⁸ It also for the first time widened the scope of the term political freedom, to encompass the removal of exploitation of the masses and bring to them real economic freedom. The Resolution spoke of safeguarding the interests of the industrial workers, ensuring decent standards of living, reforming the system of land tenure, etc. In 1938, Subhash Chandra Bose, as the Congress President, set up a National Planning Committee with Nehru as Chairman. Both Gandhi and Nehru had an agrarian bias. While speaking of socialism, they particularly emphasised the importance of peasants and their organisations. In fact, the 1937, Faizpur Congress Resolution dealt with the agrarian problems in a detailed way.

Nehru's speeches reveal that prior to independence his admiration, passion and advocacy for socialism was at its height. His attitude led him not only to many a confrontation with the intolerant conservatives, but also with the more tolerant and relatively more sympathetic Gandhi. After Independence, however, as Prime Minister of the country, Nehru was faced with the task of implementing all that he

had been advocating thus far. In his capacity as Prime Minister, Nehru played a more important role in shaping party policies. However, he had to work within certain important parameters which imposed a number of limitations on Nehru. Firstly, the composition of the Congress party had not changed very much in spite of the vociferous and active socialists. It was still not a cadre based, ideologically motivated party and the conservative wing in it, under the leadership of Vallabhai Patel was still very strong. This group at most times did not allow the Congress to adopt any radical policies, and even when the Congress did adopt such policies, the conservative wing, gave its acceptance, with the greatest of reluctance. The role it had played therefore, prior to independence continued. Nehru made efforts at breaking this, but did not always meet with success. After Patel's death, however, things became better as the conservatives were more or less leaderless. The Congress party therefore did not prove to be a great help to the 'unconservative' Nehru. At the same time, Nehru was also aware of the fact that the Indian bureaucracy was not the best possible answer for the implementation of the now progressive policies and programmes. He also realised that he would have to be more or less totally dependent on this very bureaucracy for the implementation of the policies, he formulated. The bureaucracy India inherited from the Britishers was an elitist organisation which was ignorant and impatient of mass feelings and needs. For removed from

the masses, living in their 'ivory tower', conservative by nature, they were not mentally attuned to drastic, revolutionary socio-economic changes. Given these limitations, therefore, Nehru had to revise time and again his original stand on socialism, and what it should mean. His socialism and was therefore free of all dogmas. He wanted to bring and establish socialism in India in a peaceful way. The reorganisation of the country on socialist lines in a peaceful democratic manner became the important stand of the Congress party. Nehru chose the path of planning to establish socialism in India. He wanted to remove the disparity between the haves and have nots by organising the economic forces more rationally, thereby making it more dynamic and equitable and all this through planning. To Nehru, therefore, planning became the stepping stone to socialism. The basic objectives of a planned economy was meant to be the removal of poverty, the attainment of economic and social justice, and strengthening of the base of economic self-reliance. Having seen its successful working in Russia, he believed that planning could play an equally crucial role in India and help build up initially the backward, underdeveloped economy and later give to the people abundance and prosperity. In Nehru's opinion planning is for generations, and takes into consideration multiple problems. Nehru also emphasised the role of the State in planning, though he did repeatedly say that the consent of the people should also be taken into consideration. By adopting the method of planned economy, he was trying to avoid the anarchies and anomalies of an uncontrolled market economy.

In the post-independence period, Nehru was also faced with the problem of a very weak, nascent bourgeoisie, who were incapable of investing in huge multipurpose projects which were necessary for the progress of the country. At the same time, the state too did not have enough capital to invest in all sectors of the economy. On the one hand, progress and the establishment of socialism was necessary, on the other hand, these limitations both in the private and the State sector existed. Nehru solved his dilemma by adopting the policy of mixed economy. In the Industrial Policy resolution of 1948, he opted for a mixed economy in which both the public and the private sector would exist as part of a planned economy, but where the public sector would have control over the commanding heights²⁹ of the economy. Although Nehru had advocated the expansion of public sector or State control of industries with priority, he also believed the process of the industries becoming publically owned would be a gradual one. However, in the framework of Nehru's socialism, the role of the State was considered to be relatively important for developing the economy and for creating the necessary overheads for a socialist development. For greater production and a step towards socialism, nationalisation of all existing industries became the basic issue. But he did not believe in hasty nationalisation and to avoid any conflict between the State and the private entrepreneurs and to disillusion the private sector from the policy of immediate nationalisation, he clearly specified the areas of public

control. Nehru believed that private and public enterprise should coexist, not on a competitive but on a cooperative basis. Nehru wanted democratically planned collectivism. By this, however, he did not mean a total abolition of private property. He considered it a waste of money and a certain amount of obstruction to production by nationalising all industries and paying huge amounts as compensation. He believed that it was a question of utilising our resources to the best advantage and going ahead in consultation with the people concerned including representatives of commerce and industries and other interests, so that we may get the best value for our money and the same time, not upset things that are going on."³⁰ In the business community there was a distinct lack of confidence and even fear of socialisation. But Nehru, understanding this, stated that to increase production, the need of psychological atmosphere of safety and the psychology to produce more in the business community was needed. Nehru even stated that the private sector could share with the State and launch its investment programme in conjunction with all economic development programme in the country. Control of a limited kind was the kind of socialism he had evolved, because of the pressures all around him.

Nehru's socialism was therefore not based on either class struggle or the dictatorship of the proletariat. Neither was it based on communist regimentation, state ownership of all the means of production and the abolition of all private property. It was rather based on persuasion, education, legisla-

tion and functioned within the framework of parliamentary democracy. He also believed that without a sound agricultural base there would be no stability in the economy or any possibility of development towards industrialisation. Besides this the food problem of India also had to be solved. "Land reforms have a peculiar significance because without them more especially in a highly congested country like India there can be no radical improvement in productivity in agriculture."³¹ From this point of view of distribution, he realised that the present inequitable system of land distribution caused extremes in living standards. To meet these objectives, Nehru favored the abolition of the zamindari system³² and worked towards the security of tenure for the tenants he wanted reduction in the rent and favored collective or cooperative or joint farming, as an ideal, suited to the nature of peasants and conditions of India. He wanted cooperatives to be the basis of agricultural development because land which is the biggest private sector would also be socialised to some extent in due course of time when these would be no great problems of production and distribution as it is today. It was perhaps Nehru's democratic spirit that led him to believe in gradual land reforms with consent and through compromises. In fact gradualism had become quite the hallmark of Congress socialism.

To decentralise political and economic power, Nehru introduced the ideas of village Panchayat and village cooperatives. Through these decentralised units, Nehru wanted that they should function as the forums of people's participation

among the villagers. As such, he had later introduced different types of cooperatives, during his Prime Ministership, for this purpose. He believed that governmental interference should not come in conflict with private entrepreneur, even though the objective of the socialistic pattern of society involves maximum public control of industry - this Nehru said can take place in due time, without unnecessary haste. He had also wanted India to be industrialised, as early as possible, and was all for science and technology. He stressed the need for establishing basic, heavy and key industries. At the same time Nehru did not discard village and cottage industries, rather he wanted a coordinated effort of both these types of industry. "But we must always remember that the development of heavy industry does not by itself solve the problem of millions of people in this country. We have to develop the village and cottage industry in a big way."³³ He advocated for a stable government and pointed out that stability is the prerequisite for economic development. His slogan of "production was the first essential" was also important. His point was that India wanted wealth and this can only be produced with increased production. "Ultimately more wealth can only come from more production of all types and kinds of goods."³⁵ The aim, as put forth by Nehru, was the expansion of the productive capacity of the nation in every possible way, and a simultaneous absorption of labour power of the nation, preventing unemployment. He even advocated the equilisation of income and if possible freedom

to chose one's occupation. In the socialist state of his dream, "the vast differences that exist today will disappear completely and class distinction which are essentially based on differences in income, will begin to fade out" (Discovery of India).

He did not deny the possibility of violence or class conflict in bringing about economic progress because "economic interests shape the political views of groups and classes,"³⁶ and there is bound to be conflict. It was better however, according to Nehru to bring about changes on persuasion rather than compulsion or favor, for eliciting the cooperation of the people for economic progress. To lessen this compulsion, Nehru had adopted the policy of compromise at every step. He also stated that in a democratic set up, "there is a limit to the amount of compulsion that we can exercise,"³⁷ apart from the desirability of compulsions, wanted to bring social change by compromises and consent, not individual, but the consent of the community as a whole. As far as technological advancement was concerned, he opined that the fault was not with the machinery but with the misuse of it. If the big machinery was controlled on behalf of and for the good of the people, then the evils of the machine would no longer be there, i.e. public control of machinery would automatically be beneficial to the people as a whole.

Nehru's conception of socialism cannot be called crystal clear. He was a pragmatist and a politician first and foremost, and his brand of socialism was conditioned by the needs

of the time. This lack of clarity of the definition of the term is to be found at the party level too. At one point Nehru had stated "I am glad you agree with it, that we want a socialistic pattern of society. That is a phrase which means in one word socialism. Do not imagine that it means anything other than socialism. A socialistic pattern is socialism. Some people make fine distinctions among socialistic pattern, socialist pattern and socialism. They are exactly the same thing without the slightest difference."³⁸ Not everyone was happy with Nehru's understanding of the term. Subhas Bose had for example castigated him in no uncertain terms thus, "You are in the habit of proclaiming that you stand by yourself and represent nobody else. At the same time you call yourself a socialist sometimes a full blooded socialist. How a socialist can be an individualist as you regard yourself beats me. The one is the antithesis of the other." But the vagueness of Nehru's socialism was something which had been always there, in his mind, and was reflected even at the party level.

Nehru's attempt had always been to explore the possibility of socialist transformation through democratic political structures, through legislation and wanted to push the Congress itself in the direction of socialism. In his task of establishing an egalitarian order, Nehru faced a big challenge in the form of the tradition-bound, conservative society.

The party organisation provided the internal setting within which the whole process took place. The Congress party organisation is pyrramidical in nature. At the central level are the AICC, the Annual session and the Congress Working Committee, with the President right at the apex. Although the AICC and the Annual Sessions are supposed to broadly lay down the policies of the party, it has been found in practice it is the working Committee which plays the predominant role. Working Committee discussions are normally based on either the agenda or on previously prepared notes or draft resolutions. A general discussion of the resolution or agenda is followed by a discussion, review of the scope of the resolution and a scrutiny of the final draft resolution, before it is finally passed. The Working Committee resolutions are usually long drawn out containing as many details as is possible, contained normally in a number of supplementaries. Those resolutions apart from setting forth the substance of Congress policy also seeks to create favourable public image of its policies, besides acting as guidelines to the rank and file within the Congress. From the time of its creation, the Congress Working Committee with a short gap during the time of Gandhi's reorganisation, the Congress Working Committee had always been elected by the AICC. Since the Congress party does not have a very efficient or big secretariat of its own, most of the work on policy issues is done at the ministerial level, especially by the Cabinet ministers on the Congress Working Committee.

Therefore the ministers come fairly well armed with the information and data, prepared after innumerable consultations, formal and informal, at their respective ministers - and what happens as a result of this is that by the time the Congress Working Committee as a whole can meet, the general structure and content of the resolution has already been determined and only those incorporated which are thought necessary, keeping in view the impact the resolution would have on different groups in the party. During Nehru's time, the period under study, the Prime Minister has been found to play an important role in determining the agenda of the Congress Working Committee which is normally prepared by the Party President and the General Secretary.³⁹ It was Nehru's habit to submit resolutions summarizing government policy for ratification by the Congress Working Committee and the AICC. Nehru had also increased the number of invitees to the Congress Working Committee meeting since 1951, when he took over the Presidentship of the Congress. Prior to independence, the Congress Working Committee had functioned according to Kochanek, more or less as the Cabinet of the national movement. After independence, however, the Congress Working Committee suffered some setback, but it still remained the most powerful decision-making body within the party. The procedure in the Congress Working Committee is similar to that practised in the AICC, where the President gives a brief summary of development between AICC sessions. An occasion for

spontaneous dissensions presents itself at the close of deliberations when the Prime Minister summarizes his observations subject of his own choosing. The decision-making style of the Working Committee seems to have changed little since independence. The Committee arrives at decisions through a process of consensus and votes are seldom taken. Members consider themselves collectively responsible for Working Committee decisions and except when the leadership is divided, members have not attempted to challenge the Committee's decisions openly before the AICC or the Annual sessions persistence of this tendency to use the Congress Working Committee as an arena for informal discussions and debates with the tendency to respect the integrity and privacy of exchanges within the Working Committee and among the Working Committee members has made the Working Committee composed as it has been since 1951, as Congressmen drawn predominantly from the parliamentary wing at the Centre and in the State was an excellent means of achieving Centre-State coordination as well as party-government cooperation.

The study of the decision-making process in the Congress is complicated by the fact that there is a lot of overlapping between the party and the government decisions. As has been pointed out "The great decisions in India are usually made within the Congress party and the members of the Congress in Parliament probably do more to shape these decisions as party members than as members of the central legislature."⁴⁰ It is

a fact that almost all the leading Congress Members of Parliament simultaneously hold some important post or posts in the party hierarchy, i.e. in the AICC, Congress Working Committee, etc. There is therefore, clearly a great deal of interlocking and close liaison between the leaders and main organs of the Congress party and the Congress Parliamentary Party. Some party members have from time to time objected to the eclipsing of the party by those in the parliamentary wing but the organisation has failed to respect the Parliamentary leaderships role on the Congress Working Committee.⁴¹

"Traditionally the Congress Working Committee had provided policy leadership in the form of official resolutions for the more broadly based party organs - the AICC and the Annual sessions, and the ability of the mass organisations to act independently of the leadership has been kept within limits."⁴²

However, this does not simply mean that the AICC and the Annual session are mere rubber stamps without any real power. Although the AICC and the Annual session have not been able to modify or change official Working Committee resolutions very often, they neither have been totally ignored. Their criticism have often been taken note of and they have often acted as sounding boards of the party sentiment and has acted as the communication links between the leaders and the mass members.

The AICC also enjoys other indirect powers, for example, when there are discussions at the level of the Congress Working Committee and when the Working Committee resolutions have to be approved by them. Under these circumstances, there are

frantic efforts at trying to win over different factions within the larger body. As decision making is a highly secretive process, we would have to depend on inferences drawn from the available material. We will depend on the various resolutions passed by the party, the debates and discussions that went on, the election manifestos and other primary source materials, like the publications brought out by the party, e.g. the report of the general secretaries, the letters of the Party Presidents, the various circulars, speeches of the individual members of the party etc., Government resolutions, policies, debates and discussions would also be considered to the extent it throws light on the working of the process within the Party.

There are any number of books written on the Indian National Congress by both Indian and foreign writers. However, most of the books are of a historical nature, providing an excellent background information on the history of the Congress, but very little analysis. Some of the more recent books have, however, given a more critical, analytical and comprehensive study of the party. The emphasis and the focal point has differed from book to book, whereas some have emphasised on the organisational aspects, others have done a detailed study of some of the important policies, etc. Although the Indian National Congress had played such a historic role in Indian politics, whose decisions have had far reaching consequences both internally and externally, surprisingly enough there have been very few books on the decision-making

aspect. S. Kochanek's book stands out as a helpful exception. By focusing on this process therefore, we seek to provide a new ~~view~~ as well as a relevant and a dynamic perspective to the study of the Indian National Congress.

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CHAPTER 2HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Ever since the middle of the 19th Century, India witnessed the growth of different associations and groups who had come up to ventilate the grievances and aspirations of the people. There was a growing political consciousness and awareness amongst the masses which made them restive and discontented with the existing state of affairs. Opposition to British imperialism and agitations against exploitation, became the order of the day. The crisis in the capitalist system in the 20th century along with the establishment of the Socialist State in Russia provided further incentive to the revolutionary changes taking place in the thinking of the people. The attraction towards socialism and the desire to establish an egalitarian society was therefore on the increase. The 1955 Avadi resolution of the Indian National Congress was the culmination of this process. In this chapter, we want to study the decision-making process in the Congress, vis-a-vis its policy of socialism, prior to Independence.

Established in 1885, the Indian National Congress was formed with the specific objective of ventilating the grievances of the impoverished masses of the country, and became the first effective all-India political organisation. Early Congressmen strove to achieve their limited political objec-

tives through constitutional and peaceful methods.¹ They asked for patriotism and nationalism, and eschewed violence in any form. With the rise of the extremists in the Congress, who were impatient and intolerant of the gradualism of the moderates, the nature of the demands put forth by the Indian National Congress had undergone important changes. The extremists were very critical of the moderates admiration of the British Parliamentary institutions. Initially the Congress demands were rather moderate, but as the aspirations of the people grew, and dissatisfaction with British Imperialism became rather strong, the Congress had to gradually broaden their policies, to encompass first political freedom from British colonialism and later economic freedom and the establishment of an egalitarian society.

In spite of all the efforts made by the moderates and the extremists, the Congress had, however, still not become a mass organisation. It was with Gandhi's arrival on the scene that the Indian National Congress became truly broad based. As the national liberation movement gained momentum, an increasingly large number of people joined the Indian National Congress and the Congress not only became the most important platform representing the diverse interests, but took on the complete leadership of the movement. As the only important representative and spokesman of the national aspirations, the Congress was able to attract a wide cross section of the people, and soon it was no longer composed of only the middle class intellectuals. Not only people from

different castes, communities and groups joined it, but they also came from diverse economic backgrounds, professing different ideologies. The Congress, therefore became a conglomeration of a wide range of interests; rightists, leftists and Gandhians, together found a berth in the party.

This composition of the Indian National Congress became one of the most important factor shaping the Socialist policy in the party, for all the different groups tried to pull the Congress in their direction. Prior to independence, in the interest of the national liberation movement, the unity of the party was considered to be of utmost importance. Hence every effort was made to reconcile and accommodate many varying interests as was possible, in order to avoid any head-on collision, which would be negative to the interests of the party and the freedom movement. On the other hand the Congress was also faced with the mounting economic aspirations of the people. In the process of trying to accommodate all these interests, the very content and form of socialism in the Congress became quite different from the orthodox definition of the term. Congress Socialism was therefore a synthesis of the major trends within the party. By 1934, the leftist wing in the Congress had become fairly strong and they formed the Congress Socialist Party, which sought to work as a ginger group in the Congress. However, the leading core of the Indian National Congress had always been rather conservative and not given to radical ideologies and changes.

There were therefore two very distinct streams of thought in the party. Gandhi though by and large a conservative, was also a master strategist and he played primarily a mediating role. He realised that the immediate compulsions of the situation demanded a composite national movement incorporating all interests and doing away with conflicts, which would weaken the movement, when it had yet to achieve its main goal.

After the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement, the socialist challenge had become more intense. Jawaharlal Nehru in the initial years gave strong support to the socialists, even though he did not formally join their organisation. No doubt, he was attracted to the basic principles of socialism, but he would not go whole hog with the Congress Socialist Party, whom he criticised along with the Communists for their failure to adopt and adjust socialism to Indian conditions. It has been alleged that Nehru's blow hot, blow cold attitude was because on the one hand he wanted to full advantage of his friendship with the Congress Socialist Party for his confrontation with the right wing while on the other hand, he was quite intolerant of them. Although Gandhi may not have had any quarrel with the ultimate goal of the socialists, he was at total variance with the socialist ideology and the means to achieve this end.² The opposition to socialists postulates therefore came mainly from Gandhi and his followers, and although many of them did not accept many of the Gandhian ideas, most of them tended to give their loyalty

to him only rather than others. Gandhi was impatient of Nehru's radical speeches too, but he was far more restrained, in his dealing with Nehru as compared to others in the conservative wing, for he realised to what advantage he would use Nehru's radical stand. Although it seemed that the "Congress continued with Nehru as the chief exponent of socialist ideas and Gandhi as their reluctant opponent,"³ the differences between the two were never serious enough to bring a split in the party.

The socialists, however, not suffering from any psychological dependence on Gandhi, as Nehru did, clash with the old guard several times, resulting in long bitter debates in which the Congress leaders were continually under fire e.g. J.P. had declared "Gandhism has played its part" and "it cannot carry us further" and "hence we must march and be guided by the ideology of socialism."⁴ The socialists, however, suffered from many contradictions which weakened their position, and they did not capture the leadership of the Congress when the opportunity arose in the form of the Gandhi-Bose conflict in 1939. Given Nehru's weakness when it came to brass tacks, the limitations of the Congress Socialist Party and the power that Gandhi still wielded on the majority, the acceptance of the socialist policy in the Congress may not have come at all, but for the imperative conditions both within the country and the party which were becoming too strong to be ignored by any section of the people. The Congress had to therefore open its doors to socialism. In this chapter we will study

the unfolding of this whole drama, the people involved, the events that took place, the debates and discussions and the various resolutions through which the socialist policy came to be an important part of Congress policies. The milieu, social and economic, within which the Congress functioned is of vital importance.

The failures of the mass movement of 1921-22, had led to a split in the Congress between the pro-changers and no-changers and there was an uncomfortable quiet in the country. However, prolonged discussions were continually taking place within the Congress as to what course of action to take next.⁵ Socialist literature was trickling into the country, with news of the triumph of the Russian Revolution and the establishment and consolidation of the Socialist State. There was a growing realisation that nothing short of complete independence would be acceptable and further that independence should also lead to a socio-economic transformation and finally the establishment of a socialist state. This was quite clearly reflected in Nehru's speech⁶ when he stated that political and economic freedom cannot be divorced. Thus the thinking within the Congress, albeit within a small group was undergoing rapid transformation and Nehru was perhaps the most active leader of the new cause during that time. The Congress party as a whole, however, had not really started thinking in terms of socialist policies. Nehru had been strongly influenced by his visit to Russia and his meeting with radicals from all

over the world in the Brussels Conference. The other militant radical leader was Subhas Chandra Bose, who hailed from Bengal. He gave all the support to Nehru in the initial years and they both went on a whirlwind tour of the country, organising and addressing various youth leagues, students and workers unions all over the country. Subhas Chandra Bose was attracted very much to the principles of socialism for its concern for the upliftment of the poor, and to him socialism meant the realisation of Daridra Narayan.

By 1927, Nehru had plunged deep into Congress politics, with renewed vigour and his role at the Madras session of the Congress was particularly notable. He presented a number of resolutions with an aggressively anti-imperialist and pro-socialist slant. Swaraj and Socialism became the twin goals for Nehru. He attacked the evils of feudalism and suggested root and branch solutions. Nehru's radical resolution reflected the impatience and discontentment of the nationalist youth in the Congress, but Gandhi found support in the more conservative elements, who were still not thinking in terms of radical changes and complete independence. In a forceful way, he had pointed out the influence of world forces on Indian events, and had warned his people of the dangers of war. To Nehru, "the national goal was a cooperative commonwealth, and the international ideal of a world federation of socialist states."⁷ Nehru was still in the minority in the Congress, and he did not find much support from the conservative majority, even Gandhi was quite impatient with Nehru's professions. In fact,

it was as early as the Madras session that the differences between the radical Nehru and the conservative Gandhi became apparent, although they had been working together and were quiet close to each other. Gandhi, in a fairly aggressive attitude stated that political action which was ahead of public opinion would be both ineffective and dangerous and said that the Congress was in the process of being reduced to the level of a "school boys' debating society."⁸ However, even though the radical tone of Nehru's speeches occasionally veering on the extreme made Gandhi slightly uncomfortable, there was no question of a total break between the two—a thing which had seemed imminent during that time. Gandhi was a master strategist and psychoanalyst and perhaps he understood Nehru as no one else did. It was almost as if by openly attacking Nehru, Gandhi had served the purpose of testing the strength of Nehru's loyalty and attachment towards him and realised that in spite of all his radical views, Nehru would not make the final break with him. This scene was to be enacted several times, in the subsequent years. As far as Nehru's attitude was concerned, there were innumerable speculations. Some had suggested that Nehru's attachment to Gandhi was strong enough to prevent himself from making a complete break with Gandhi. Whatever the reservations of the conservatives may have been, the fact remains that Congressmen were becoming more and more attached to the socialist policy.

The whole of 1928, was a period of great ferment and the radicalisation of Indian politics had taken place, and radical talks became the order of the day. 1928 witnessed two important developments, from the point of view of the Socialist movement. "The popular sway of young left nationalist congressmen talking of socialism and the growing pressure on the Congress for a revision of the nationalist programme to include complete independence as the immediate political goal and a statement of economic objectives obviously socialistic, which would appeal to the masses."⁹ There was a marked development by the communists too, who were able to mobilise more and more support from the masses. Most of the time the party however functioned more or less outside the periphery of the Congress, like some other leftist groups. Since its creation, the party was faced with the dilemma of whether to adopt a relationship of conflict or cooperation with the national party and it is perhaps a fact that the party made little impact on the freedom struggle, and did not contribute much to the radicalisation of the Congress policies. It is claimed that the party's social base was mainly middle class, though its ideology was working class ideology. The Congress was, however, forced to wake up to the challenge they posed, and the promises they held to the masses. The communists had even joined the Congress party (to broaden their mass base, no doubt) and were therefore fairly well entrenched in the national party. Subsequently they even formed a united front with the socialists. The "Lucknow Agreement" between the two

opened out many opportunities to them, resulting in increased activities in not only the Congress Socialist Party, but also in the Kisan Sabhas and Trade Unions. Thus the socialists and the communists became an integral part of the Congress, which to a certain extent led to the radicalisation of the Congress policies. The "Dutt-Bradley Thesis" urged the communists to work unitedly with the Congress and the other groups like the socialists, trade unions, etc. This situation, however, did not last long. Differences of opinion cropped up between the socialists and the communists. Much to the dislike of the socialists the communists were capturing power in many pockets, especially in southern India and finally, the communists broke off completely from them. Although the socialists and the communists were not very big numerically, they had certainly managed to make the Congress wake up to the realities of the time, and revise its policies in the light of it all. The Congress was only too aware of all these happenings, but fortunately for them, the communists had been gradually, because of various limitations, isolating themselves from the Civil Disobedience Movement. The leftists within the party had, however, reasons to feel happy for their influence within the party was definitely on the increase, and the events of 1929 was ample proof of this.

On May 24-25, 1929, at Bombay the AICC passed a resolution which stated "In the opinion of this Committee the great poverty and misery of the Indian people is due not only to

foreign exploitation in India, but also the economic structure of society which the alien rulers supported so that the exploitation may continue. In order, therefore, to remove this poverty and misery and to ameliorate the conditions of the Indian masses, it is essential to make revolutionary changes in the present economic and social structure of society and to remove the gross inequalities." This resolution is relatively little known, but it is significant to the extent that within the Congress party the seeds of a socialist programme was sown for the first time and was no longer limited only to the contributions of individual members of the party.

The Lahore Congress in 1929, was the beginning of a new phase where the organisation was headed by a leftist, who was however in the minority in his own working Committee. In 1929, it was Nehru (the 'leftist') who was elected as the President of the Congress, for the first time. His election to that office was not because the majority wanted him, in fact they actually wanted Gandhi. But Gandhi had declined in favour of Nehru, because, to put it in his own words, "He (Nehru) is rash and impetuous say some. The quality is an additional qualification at the present moment. If he has the dash and the rashness of a warrior, he has also the prudence of a statesman. He is undoubtedly an extremist, thinking far ahead of his surroundings. But he is humble enough, and practical enough not to force the pace to the breaking point. Hence the nation is safe in his hands."¹⁰ Gandhi

had therefore understood Nehru well, and the party as a whole had become much more open to the socialist policy. Nehru had taken the opportunity of condemning both capitalism and imperialism and advocating state ownership of the means of production and distribution and exchange and called himself a socialist and a republican. It was therefore at Lahore that socialism was advocated for the first time, from the Presidential Chair. This was also the period of the Salt Satyagraha, and Gandhi wanted a 'socialist' with stature and a following, to head the Congress organisation, so that the masses would be attracted to it through talks of radical social changes, etc. In the light of this, the need to make Nehru the President was understandable.

In the same year, in his Presidential address at the AITUC, at Nagpur, Nehru had stated that "bourgeois as the outlook of the National Congress was, it did represent the only effective voluntary force in the country. As such labour ought to help it and cooperate with it and influence it keeping however its own identity and ideology distinct and intact."¹¹ He had expressed the hope that "the course of events and the participation in direct action would inevitably drive the Congress to a more radical ideology and to face social and economic issues." Nehru had been able to appreciate the mass awakening brought about by Gandhi unlike the communists and had realised that the role of the Congress was fast changing, that it was becoming more and more "the vehicle both of national urge for political independence and the proletarian

urge for social change."¹² He had further hoped that at a later stage perhaps it would be possible to push the Congress in the direction of socialism. He had in fact added that the Congress had become "the most effective and radical organisation in the country and it is easier to work in great changes in the mass mentality through it, rather than through any other means."¹³ For quite some time, Nehru was one of the most vocal advocates of the cause of socialism within the Congress, but another person in whom he found tremendous sympathy for the same cause was Subhas Chandra Bose. Ever since the Madras resolution, Bose supported Nehru in piloting the "independence resolution", lent support to him in forming the Indian League of Independence, etc. After Nehru resigned from the Presidentship of the AITUC, after his election as the President of the Congress, Bose took up that post himself. By and large, however, Congressmen were still rather conservative in their thinking and outlook and Nehru must have been rather lonely most of the time. That all he said was not mere verbal exercise was evident by the fact that 15 months after the Lahore Congress, he created every pressure ~~he~~ could for the adoption of the Karachi Resolution. Thus, Nehru's individual contribution to the adoption of a socialist programme in the Congress, was not a small one. As Nehru ^{however} matured as a politician, his ideological commitment seemed to give way to the needs and compulsions of strategy.

If the 1929 resolution was important in the history of the Congress, the Karachi resolution of 1931 can be said to be the starting point of Congress socialism for it was for the first time that a specific socialist programme was laid down. As it was becoming more and more impossible for the Congress to ignore the change in the climate of opinion, the 1931 resolution had become unavoidable. Through this resolution the Congress, therefore attempted to re-define its programmes and policies. Although Gandhi was quite impatient of the radical talks of Nehru and the others, he was also conscious of the widespread discontent among the people and the spread of terrorism. Strikes were also becoming more common. By 1930, March 5, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact had been drawn up. Although this agreement was endorsed by the Congress, it was not very popular among the radicals. Nehru had to move the resolution in the Karachi Congress, which was held soon after the agreement. As Gandhi's supporters were stronger, the radicals did not have much of a say. Even the labour and the working class organisation opposed the Pact and the idea of the Round Table Conference which included many loyalists. The "Fundamental Rights" Resolution came as a concession to the disgruntled left. In Nehru, Gandhi saw and found the ideal person who could secure the allegiance of the youth to the ideology and programme of the Congress. Nehru's election to the President of the Congress was perhaps an important tribute to the youth of the country. The Karachi resolution had rather boldly and

categorically demanded that political freedom should include economic freedom for the millions of starving people, if the removal of exploitation of the masses was to be a reality. This was therefore, a more detailed outline of what the Congress proposed to do for the masses. The resolution was no doubt drafted by its mentor, Jawaharlal Nehru, but Gandhi's influence could also be seen. The resolution had been however, very cleverly worded, for one could not find anything in it, which was detrimental to any of the interests represented in the Congress. Perhaps the only specifically socialist item was the one related to state ownership and control of key industries.

Most of the radicals were, however, quite dissatisfied with the resolution. Bose was one such, who out of sheer disappointment in Nehru, in whom he had reposed much hope, had said "with a popularity only second to the Mahatma, with unbounded prestige among this countrymen with a clear brain possessing the finest ideas with an upto date knowledge of the modern world movement that he (Nehru) should be found wanting in the essential quality of leadership, namely the capacity to make decisions and face unpopularity if need be, was a great disappointment,"¹⁴ and further added that "this was meant to placate the socialist elements in the Congress." This indicated the dissatisfaction of the socialists both within and outside the Congress of the inadequacies of the resolution. Abolition of private property

and vested interest, for example, was nowhere in the resolution. However modest, the Karachi resolution was certainly an important step forward - and Gandhi's backing to it, was of special relevance. It is to be noted that much before the Karachi resolution, in which the Congress had adopted a definite policy towards the industrial workers, the Congress had been taking an active interest in the industrial labourers' problems. This was because labour unrest was on the increase and the Congress could no longer afford to ignore it. In 1920, the AITUC, the first All-India organisation of labour was formed. In 1921, B.P. Wadia, one of the important leaders of the AITUC rightly stated "It is very important to recognise the Labour Movement as an integral part of the National Movement. The latter will not succeed in the right direction of democracy, if Indian working classes are not enabled to organise their own forces and come into their own. Unless this is done for all classes of labourers...even the Montagu Reforms will only succeed in transferring the power of bureaucracy from foreign to native hands, that is not democracy."¹⁵ In 1931, Bose had also categorically stated that the salvation of India was in socialism, thereby giving more weight to the importance of socialism. He had, however, desired that India should evolve her own brand of socialism, in keeping with the general ethos of the nation. In spite of all this, the socialist ideas did not quite get integrated with the main currents of the national movement.

The further exposition of socialist theory in 1933, in a book entitled, "Whither India" by Nehru, was able to make Congressmen more aware of its positive qualities and the need to adopt it in India. By 1933, Nehru's ideas on socialism and its application to the movement and as part of the party ideology has crystallised more concretely. In "Whither India", he had written "India's immediate goal can only be considered in terms of the ending of the exploitation of the people. Politically it must mean independence and a severance of the British connection which mean imperialist dominion. Economically and socially it must mean the ending of all special class privileges and interests. The whole world is struggling to this end. India can do no less and in this way, the Indian struggle to freedom lives up with the world struggle." "Nehru's socialism was different in many important aspects from the Communist Party of India approach especially regarding the question of political instrument through which the struggle for socialism is to be conducted, the essence of the Communist Party of India approach was the application of the theory of class struggle to the problem of the formation of political parties, the consolidation of the working class, its transformation into an independent political force. Nehru had more or less rejected the theory of class struggle and refused to work with any other party organisation, socialist or others which were outside and independent of the Congress. In an article entitled, "Further Criticism", writing about the importance of the Congress Party, Nehru had said, "I shall gladly and

most willingly work with this great organisation, which has done so much for the country, even though it would not go far enough from my point of view and so long as that is the case, no question can arise of my thinking of any other organisation."¹⁶ Nehru's pamphlet "Whither India" gave a definite socialist orientation to the entire thinking of the Congress. In any case in the years between 1930 and 1932, many top leaders were in jail and the prisons all over the country, were converted into something like debating clubs of congressmen. This intense debate also went a long way in convincing the vast masses of congressmen that freedom for India should mean not only freedom from the foreign yoke, but also economic freedom for the toiling masses.

Slowly and gradually all these new trends found a safe berth in the Congress itself, for apart from the increasing activities of the left among the rank and file, Congressmen found inspiration and support from leaders like Nehru and Bose, whose ideas were beginning to influence some of the highest policy making bodies of the party. However, in spite of all this, many were yet dissatisfied with the inability of the left wing nationalists and others to provide an organisation, united leadership, who were able and willing to challenge Gandhian and moderates and take over control of Congress. The obvious drawbacks of the Gandhian methods of dealing with things had resulted in a lot of dissatisfaction among the masses, who wanted to change the existing set up in

the party. Early in the 30s this group began to organise themselves and in 1934 the Congress Socialist Party was formed. This group influenced Congress policies for many years after its formation, its primary interest being to push the Congress towards more and more progressive policies. The Congress Socialist Party was a combination of three distinct groups - the orthodox Marxists, the social democrats of the British Labour type, and those believing in democratic socialism, tempered by Gandhian concepts of decentralisation and the use of non-violent civil disobedience. Jayaprakash Narayan, Narendra Deva belonged to the first group, Minoo Masani and A. Mehta to the second and Ram Manohar Lohia and Patwardhan to the third group. Therefore, although they made use of Marxist terminology, they were never affiliated to the second or third international, nor were they exactly dedicated to the dictatorship of the proletariat. They endeavoured to remove the discrepancy between the objectives of the Karachi resolution of 1931 and the actual policies of the Congress. The leaders made a valiant attempt at bringing about a left wing unity, and this did have an impact on Congress policies and Congress resolutions, for some radical land reforms, nationalisation of selected industries, some labour laws, reorganisation of the Congress with greater representation of the left in it, and greater consciousness of mass contact, etc. were to be found. In his Presidential address at the first session of the All-India Congress Socialist Party Conference, held in

1934 at Patna, Narendra Deva had said that in spite of criticisms, they would like to continue working within the Congress party, inspite of the fact that the Congress had some defects and shortcomings. It was still the greatest revolutionary force, according to him. He pointed out that although its goal was Marxism, one has to look at the objective situation at that time. His point was, in his own words, "and he will be a short-sighted and very narrow socialist who will refuse to take part in a national struggle simply on the ground that the struggle is being principally conducted by the petty bourgeois elements of society, although he will make ceaseless efforts to give it a socialist direction. In the peculiar conditions of India, the socialist can very well work within the Congress and combine the national struggle with socialism."¹⁷ In the same address he further pointed out that the impact of the Russian experiment has had on India and especially on the masses. The need, he said was to widen the social base of the national movement, was becoming more than obvious and the socialism was in the air. It was hoped that even though the Congress may accept the socialist programme in a mutilated form, at present, it would however strive to make it their goal and try to achieve it. In any case certain new conditions had imposed new tasks for the Congress, for the working classes were slowly becoming more politically conscious. The Congress had to therefore redefine and reshape its policies. Narendra Deva had pointed out that the AICC would be meeting

shortly and that certain concrete proposals should be placed before it on behalf of the socialist movement. "We have to devise ways and means", he wrote, "to resuscitate and reinvigorate the Congress. I know it is not such an easy task."¹⁸ He also pointed out how deeply the industrial and agricultural crisis was deepening. The socialists had also stated that nationalism and socialism goes together and that socialism could be established simultaneously with freedom, and Congress was the instrument through which they hoped to achieve this goal. They tried to make Congress accept collective affiliation of different organisations, e.g. peasants and labour organisation and reject constitutionalism. Nehru in the initial years gave all out support and even financial help but he never became a formal member of the Congress Socialist Party. This combined effort of the leftists was even responsible for the election of Subhas Bose to the Presidentship in 1939, inspite of the opposition of the conservative elements in the party. The Congress to a certain extent begun to reflect some of their policies and views through their resolutions and to that extent the Congress Socialist Party felt the Congress had travelled left. Dismissing the Karachi resolution as non-socialist, they offered their own programme.

To the right wing leaders these developments were becoming rather ominous. Gandhi too had said openly, "I have fundamental differences with them (socialists) on the programme published in their authorised pamphlets."¹⁹ Nehru's progressively leftist outlook coupled with the formation and demands of the

Congress Socialist Party brought a sharp reaction from the rightists in the party. In a resolution passed by the Working Committee in June 1934, which was quite typical of them, they said, "in view of the loose talk about the confiscation of private property and necessity of class war,"²⁰ the Committee considered it necessary to remind congressmen that the Karachi resolution "neither contemplates confiscation nor advocacy of class war. The Working Committee is further of the opinion that confiscation and class war are contrary to the Congress creed of non-violence."²¹ Nehru reacted sharply to this, "the resolution", he said, "was loosely worded and exhibited a certain amount of ignorance on the part of the framers as to what class war was. It was obviously aimed at the newly formed Congress Socialist Party. There had, as a matter of fact, been no talk of confiscation on the part of any responsible member of this group. There had, however, been frequent reference to the existence of class war under the present conditions. The Working Committee resolution seemed to hint that any person believing in the existence of this class conflict could not even be an ordinary member of the congress. Nobody had ever accused the Congress of having turned socialist, or of being against private property."²² Nehru made further accusations at the Congress who he said was aiming at gaining the support of the "men of property" because of the coming legislative assembly elections. The Congress Working Committee's action was an instance of how these men were trying to win over the moderate and conservative lobby in the country. He was perturbed about the Congress executive

showing no signs of moving towards the progressive path. In 1934, therefore the conservative wing of the Congress was dominant, and since 1930, under the leadership of Azad, Motilal, Gandhi, etc. the Working Committee of the Congress had come to acquire pre-eminence over the AICC. The Congress Socialist Party therefore found a formidable obstacle in the conservative wing of the party. The provincial units of the Congress enjoyed wide powers and autonomy of action at that time, and each one had a towering (conservative) personally. The Congress Socialist Party therefore had to reckon with such forces entrenched in the Congress at all levels, particularly at the provincial and district levels. What was more difficult for them was the fact that the provincial leaders could easily check the entry of radical elements into the Congress and hinder the implementation of national policies. Gandhi too took a rather moderate stand. When Nehru had reacted to the Working Committee resolution in 1934, Gandhi had replied thus "I have looked up the dictionary meaning of socialism. It took me no further than where I was before I read the definition - What will you have me to read to know its full content? I have read one of the books Masani gave me and now I am devoting all my spare time to reading the book recommended by Narendra Dev."²³ Such talk could not have heartened or encouraged any of the socialists in fact it must have disappointed them. Nehru accused the Working Committee of deliberately encouraging vagueness in the definition of their ideas and objectives and

that its resolution "showed an astounding ignorance of the elements of socialism, that it was painful to read it and to realise that it might be read outside India."

Apart from the obstacles the conservatives put in their way, the Congress Socialist Party had many other problems, e.g. it suffered from many a contradictions within it and its attempts at trying to unite disparate groups was harmful to it in the long run, and the composite leadership theory did not hold good. Another drawback the Congress Socialist Party faced was that its mass membership base was not in the party organisation itself but in the trade unions and peasant organisations, etc. and active members of these organisations therefore provided normally the support to the Congress Socialist Party. It was also characterised by a very small central policy making body, constituting of a handful of important leaders. Some of their leaders were even in the habit of making unilateral decisions and acting for the party against the majority views of the National Executive itself e.g. Jayaprakash Narayan had done that a number of times. The leaders occasionally tended to be authoritarian in nature. It was also characterised by "evidence of indiscipline". Although they were able to maintain a fairly high degree of consistency concerning their basic assumptions and programme for the Congress, they failed to however maintain it, for the strategy, tactics and organisational decisions necessary to implement their own party's policies. When left unity reached a point in 1939, where a

bid for capturing or splitting the Congress through Subhas Bose's election, might logically and successfully have been made, they chose to withdraw support and remained neutral in the open Congress resolution and sought to mediate a compromise. Although theoretically tightly disciplined, but in practice they functioned quite loosely, e.g. the party leadership hesitated for three years before expelling the communists. Whatever may be the drawbacks of the Congress Socialist Party, the fact remains that they were able to influence the Congress rather strongly, into accepting socialist policies and programmes. Subhas Bose was fairly critical of what he called the Congress Socialist Party's Fabian approach and according to Sampurnanand Nehru's "attitude was one of amused contempt" towards them. The conservatives had been so deeply entrenched that even Nehru, as President of the Congress had been unable to get its constitution revised, in order to admit representations of trade unions and peasant organisations to the AICC. Subsequently the Congress even reprimanded those Congressmen who in their opinion were supporting independent organisations which they felt would damage the effectiveness of the Congress as the leading organisation and spokesman of nationalism on behalf of all the popular grievances. With regard to the Kisan Sabhas, especially, the Congress was of the opinion that they should be no more than parts of the Congress front for independence, whereas the Kissan Sabhas agitated for their own programme of agrarian reforms and a programme that was much more radical than the Congress agrarian programmes.

The socialists had therefore made all out efforts put 68
pressure on the High Command to proceed with a more vigo-
rous and popular programme.

In 1936, Nehru had posed two rather important questions on socialist policy "one is how to apply the socialist approach to the Indian conditions and the other is how to speak of socialism in the language of India."²⁴ He had also made a distinction between short term programme on the basis of which the Indian National Congress should try to mobilise the masses for the national movement and a long term model of socialism which could be put into effect only after the achievement of freedom. When the Congress met at Lucknow in 1936, Nehru was again made the President. He was even permitted to take three members of the Congress Socialist Party, i.e. Jayaprakash Narayan, Narendra Deva and Patwardhan into the Working Committee. His Presidential speech was that some characterised it as a plea for "pure communism". This session oriented Congress policy on the international questions and laid down the basis of India's socialist foreign policy of non-alignment and peace with all the countries. It also called on the Pradesh Congress Committees to study the land question and submit their reports to be considered at the next congress. Nehru also constantly drew attention to the land question, in his Presidential address. In this way, the Congress was moving ahead with the adoption of the socialist policy. But it still had not formally and categorically incorporated it in the party programme. When Nehru was elected the President in Lucknow, 1936, he stated that "I do not want

you to have me under any false pretences. Most of you know my views on social and economic matters...yet you chose me as President."²⁵ He enunciated his conception of socialism rather clearly, and in the history of the Congress, this was perhaps one of the most emphatic assertion of socialist principles from the Congress seat of power, and represented not only an important stage in the evolution of Nehru's Socialist thought, but also of Congress socialism. "I am convinced", he had said, "that the only key to the solution of the world's problems and of India's problems lies in socialism." What particularly alarmed the right wing was his statement, "I should like the Congress to become a socialist organisation and to join hands with the other forces in the world who are working for the new civilisation." "When I use the word socialism," he further added, "I do^{so} not in a vague humanitarian way but in the scientific, economic sense. Socialism is however something even more than an economic doctrine, it is a philosophy of life and as such appeals to me....It means the ending of private property except in a restricted sense and the replacement of the present profit system, by a higher ideal of cooperative service....In short, it means a new civilisation radically different from the capitalist order." Despite Nehru's qualification, the rightist elements in the Congress did not approve of it. On the other hand, the Congress Socialist Party took it as a moral and political victory for them. This encouraged them to become more vocal and critical. Nehru's stand, coupled with the increased activities of the Congress Socialist Party had upset

most of the conservatives, and aggrieved by the criticisms of the Congress Socialist Party, Prasad, Patel, Rajaji and 4 others from the Working Committee resigned. They wrote to Nehru saying "the preaching and emphasis of socialism particularly at this stage by the President other socialist members of the Working Committee while the Congress has not adopted it is prejudicial to the best interests of the country."²⁶ Nehru was therefore chided, for his leftist opinion and speech. The right wing made it clear that they would adhere to the policy pursued by the Congress since 1920 which meant the Gandhian methods and programmes. They also pointed out that if Nehru continued to pursue a socialist programme, then he cannot be assured of their cooperation. A crisis situation regarding its policy on socialism had developed in the Congress. The threat of the right wing was all the more significant in view of the forthcoming general elections. The crisis increased and the resignations were tendered. Prasad wrote a lengthy letter in which he expressed his resentment over "the campaign against us". On behalf of the rest, he also wrote "we feel we owe it to you to tell all this in frankness, in our minds, and if you feel anything needs to be done, you may do it as you deem best....I am writing this as a result of the consultation and on behalf of all of us." The main person with whom they had consulted was Gandhi. A petulant Nehru wrote to Gandhi and received his reply on 8th July 1936 in which Gandhi revealed the consummate tactician he was. Referring to Prasad's letter of withdrawal

he informed Nehru that it was first sent to him and after he had seen it, it was sent to Nehru. He then went on to mildly chide Nehru for having taken an unjust view of the letter and "exaggerating its implications". He advised Nehru to be more tactful "Why should you not allow your humor to play upon the meetings of the Working Committee" and finally came the ruling "If they are guilty of intolerance, you have more than your share of it. The country should not be made to suffer for your mutual intolerance." Nehru never rose to the heights of the Lucknow Congress again, and from now on pragmatism and compromise were words which were freely used. Nehru had been made to feel "the chill discomfort of isolation"²⁷ which perhaps motivated him to bury his doctrinal hatchet once and for all. He grew more closer to Gandhi, and was duly rewarded by being offered the 'crown' again. As he grew closer to Gandhi, Nehru's estrangement with the Congress Socialist Party grew. The Congress Socialist Party more or less had to go at it alone, and along with the communist party (which was enabled to join the work with the favour by the United Front line of the Comintion) considerably broadened and strengthened the trade unions and kissan movements and though by the end of the decade the overall success of the leftist movement had its impact on the Congress, their position of strength within the party was not in ascendance. Nehru too gradually started revising his stand especially of class struggle given the conditions in India. How different was his latter stand from what he had written earlier in his Autobiography - "our final

aim can only be a classless society with equal justice and opportunity for all a society organised on a planned basis for raising of mankind to higher material and cultural levels to a cultivation of spiritual values, of cooperation, unselfishness, the spirit of service, the desire to do right, goodwill and love ultimately a world order. Everything that comes in the way will have to be removed gently if possibly, forcibly if necessary, and there seems to be little doubt that coercion will often be necessary. But if force is used it should not be in the spirit of hatred or cruelty but with dispassionate desire to remove an obstruction." In the Lucknow session, "the President was out of tune with the majority of the Working Committee. The three new friends taken into it would with him, make a good four or more than a fourth of the Committee. Nehru had offered his resignation at the very outset, but he was persuaded to remain and continue. Continue he did, but with qualms of conscience which created uneasy feelings in his breast."²⁸ Therefore, although both in 1929 and 1936, Nehru was given the 'crown' of Presidentship and asked to thereby take over the leadership. His policies were rejected. This was the kind of contradiction to be found in the congress right through, as far as its attitude towards the socialist policy was concerned.

By 1936, the All-India Kisan Sabha had established itself and it held its first session simultaneously with the Lucknow session of the Congress. The active leader of the All-India Kisan Sabha, Ranga, had appealed to in a Manifesto

for collective affiliation with the Congress. Nehru who was the President-elect at that time strove hard to adopt Ranga's proposal, but the conservative majority in the High Command acted rather cleverly. They avoided a direct veto and kept the issues for discussion in the AICC, where the majority carried the day and the proposal was rejected. However, the Kisan groups had made an impact which even Gandhi could not quite ignore. He therefore agreed to appoint an agrarian sub-committee of the Working Committee to make recommendations for "improving the conditions of the kisans".

The next Congress met at Faizpur in 1937, under the Presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru. The eve of the Faizpur session had brought to light the sharp differences between the right and the left. Nehru had warned Congressmen and drawn their attention to his socialist bias and asked them to consider it all before electing him as the President of the Faizpur session. Although Patel's name had been recommended, he had declined, but his withdrawal "should not be taken to mean that I endorse all the views of Jawaharlalji stands for. Indeed, Congressmen know that on some vital matters my views are in conflict with those held by Jawaharlalji. For instance, I do not believe that it is impossible to purge capitalism of its hideousness."²⁹ There had been therefore very basic differences between the leaders of the rightist and the leftist group, Patel and Nehru on very fundamental issues and approaches. Patel's withdrawal in favour of Nehru he said was because "the Congress President has no dictatorial powers. He is the Chair-

man of our well built organisation. He regulates the proceeding and carries the decisions of the Congress as they may be arrived at from time to time. The Congress does not part with its ample powers by electing any individual no matter who he is."³⁰ He would be absured for one to treat this Presidential election as a veto for socialism or anti-office acceptance. I have expressed my views on socialism and point out how this colours my outlook and my activity. I have further expressed myself often enough against office acceptance and whenever opportunity occurs, I shall place this view point before the Congress, but it is for the Congress to decide this issue directly and on full consideration of it and not as it were by casual, and indirect vote. I do believe that political independence is the paramount issue before the country and the necessity for a joint-united action on this is incumbent on all of us."³¹ Both right and left, however, did realise that this was not the time for petty squabbles, because of the graveness of the problem the country was facing at that time.

The 1937 Faizpur Congress considered the reports submitted by the Pradesh Congress Committees and adopted a comprehensive resolution on agrarian programme. The Lucknow Congress had asked all Pradesh Congress Committees to study the land question and submit their reports.³² Since the land system differed from province to province, the Congress had decided to first draw up a comprehensive agrarian programme. In the Uttar Pradesh, Pradesh Congress Committee, P.D.Tandon and Lal Bahadur

Shastri played a prominent role. In fact Shastri's Report became more or less the background of the Faizpur Agrarian programme. This resolution which laid down the scheme of tennurial reorganisation which would be in conformity with the concept of a welfare and socialist state, laid the foundation for cooperative farming - an important step towards evolving a socialist pattern of the agriculture. Ranga had noted that within a very short period, i.e. between the Lucknow and the Faizpur sessions, the All-India Kisan Sabha had come to "weild an extraordinary influence on the Indian National Congress."³³ Nehru had played a rather prominent role in this and what was of more significance was that he had been able to get Gandhi's approval for the adoption of this far reaching programme of agrarian reform. This subsequently even became part of the Congress election manifesto in 1937.

The Agrarian programme adopted at Faizpur had incorporated most of the demands put forth by the All India Kisan Sabha. Among other things, it talked of reduction in rent and revenues, cancellation of arrears for rent, abolition of all feudal dues and levies etc. It brought cooperative farming to the forefront and very significantly came to the very brink of recommending zamindari abolition by upholding the need for "radical change in the repressive land tenures and land revenue systems."³⁴ Nehru himself had been quite forthright "the land system cannot endure and an obvious step is to remove the intermediaries between the cultivator and the State,"³⁵ after which "cooperative

and collective farming must follow." The conservative elements however still remained cautious and suspicious of the whole effort and they openly took the stand that (Working Committee) against collective application and any change in the Congress constitution permitting this. At the AICC in Calcutta in October 1937, B.G. Kher, made it plain to Nehru that he would not allow him to create labour trouble in Bombay and no important congressmen met him when he went there.³⁶ When the socialists in accordance with their programme and promises took the side of the peasants and workers, many Congress ministries took strong action against them. C. Rajaji in Madras and K.K. Munshi the Home Minister of Bombay were particularly successful in this. Therefore, although the Kisan organisations supported the Congress in 1937 elections, they always suffered from the feelings that the Kisan workers were being purposefully excluded from the ticket and that "pacts and understandings were being made with the reactionaries." The All-India Kisan Sabha subsequently severed relations with the Indian National Congress. In all fairness, one must point out however, that certain reform measures were undertaken by the new ministries around 1937, however limited their programme may have been. As R.P. Dutt points out "On the urgent question of debt, measures were adopted for cancelling a proportion of old arrears, as in the Madras Agriculturists Debt Relief Act, for an immediate moratorium, as in the U.P. and Bombay Tenancy legislation was carried. In some cases remission of land revenues were granted. The 40,000 Dublas or tied serfs in Bombay were liberated."³⁷

By the next annual session at Haripura, in February, the intolerance of the Congress towards the activities of the Kisan Sabhas had only increased. This hostility became so strong that the Reception Committee prohibited any kisan rally within the Congress meeting ground. As Sitaramayya reported "there were boards of the Kisan organising themselves into huge parties marching 100s of miles. They found a cause, a flag, a leader. The cause of the kisan was not a new one but had been upheld all along by the Congress. The flag they chose to favour - Soviet flag of red colour with hammer and sickle. Almost everywhere there were conflicts between Congressmen and kisans over the question of the height and the prominence of the flags. The leaders of the Kisan movement were many and they toured the country far and wide and they strengthened and consolidated their party and pitted it against the Congress."³⁸ Early in 1938, the All-India Kisan Sabha had launched a vigorous agitation for the immediate implementation of the Faizpur programme including zamindari abolition and peasant marches had been organised in Punjab, Bihar, Maharashtra, Bengal, etc. Later on, the All-India Kisan Sabha slipped from Congress to communist control. The conservative group found the situation getting out of hand gradually and at Haripura it found its predominant position seriously threatened. The immediate cause being the election of the fiery nationalist hero, Subhas Chandra Bose, whose allegiance to the socialist platform was made quite clear

by him, to the post of the President of the Congress. Gandhi, along with his supporters made a valiant effort at regaining as much of control as possible by pushing through a resolution on Kisan Sabhas, which dissociated Congress from the activities of Congressmen, "who as members of the Kisan Sabhas help in creating an atmosphere hostile to Congress principles and policies."³⁹ The atmosphere was changed with mutual dislike and in the following year, i.e. 1939, at Tripura Gandhi and the conservatives were poised for a confrontation with the socialists. The capturing of the leadership of the Congress was important to them both, for the nature and content of the party policies depended to a large extent on the nature of the leadership.

At Tripuri, Gandhi converted the election of the President an open test of his own strength in the party. Gandhi's supporters, the majority of the Working Committee acting on his instructions withdrew support from the incumbent President Bose and asked him to endorse their candidate Sitarammaya. However, Bose had the backing of the Congress Socialist Party and the communists and with their help refused to oblige and decided to run for a second tenure. The results of the election must have been a stunning blow to Gandhi, for Bose was re-elected and Bose in the open session proposed a radical new action programme in his Presidential Address and even talked of close cooperation with organisations like the All-India Kisan Sabha. Gandhi had however still not given in and he promptly declared that Sitaramayya's defeat was his

own. This was followed by the resignation of twelve out of the fifteen Working Committee members. Simultaneously, Gandhi's supporters introduced a resolution at the open session requesting the delegates to reiterate their confidence in Gandhi's leadership by "requesting" Bose to appoint working committee having Gandhi's approval. In the absence of this there was the imminent threat by Gandhi to break off all ties with Congress. All this put the Congress Socialist Party in a big quandry. They could have of course come out of the Congress. However, they did not do so and one reason given was that the time was not opportune for drastic measures. Coming from the Congress Socialist Party who had been all through rather vociferously demanding radical changes, making every bid to capture the leadership, etc. this was a very disappointing move. Gandhi had in the meantime withdrawn all cooperation from the President and refused to have any of his followers sit on a 'compromise' Working Committee. Subhas Bose had finally accepting defeat, resigned on May 1939 and the AICC declared R. Prasad the new President. Prasad was Gandhi's man. Bose would not have had to resign, had he found some support from the Congress Socialist Party - his hopes, however, were belied. Nehru too, at this rather critical juncture chose not to go beyond a mere verbal expression of sympathy with Bose. At Haripura, when Bose was the Congress President, he was allowed to take a number of leftists into his Working Committee. In other words, a number of sessions held between

1929 and 1938, were presided over by leftists, and yet the Congress leadership were firmly and consistently non-left in its political outlook. Leftists were tolerated in the leadership of the Congress primarily because the leadership headed by Gandhi was sure that they (leftist) would not obstruct the rightward march of the Congress as a whole. Thus, the Congress, because of the role the right wing played, only inched forward in the process of adopting socialism, but progress they did. In all fairness, one must point out that the Congress did try to organisationally accommodate as many people from the left wing as was possible for them, by giving them representation not only on the Working Committee, but also in the Constituent Assembly and even in the provisional Cabinet.

In the 1942 quit India resolution the party had again adopted a socialist political programme, in however mild a form it may be and towards socialist economic goals in its 1946 election manifesto. Unfortunately all these fell quite short of a fullfledged socialist programme. At the annual Congress session at Meerut in 1946, some informal talk had gone on for naming a Socialist as General Secretary of the Congress, which was considerably important, as well as for increasing the representation on the Working Committee. By this time the old guards were mellowing a little and their hostility had become less harsh. Gandhi too had changed his views substantially and had even accepted socialisation of the economy and was

more in agreement with the socialists by now. In fact Gandhi had even gone to the extent of suggesting Narendra Deva or Jayaprakash Narayan as possible candidates for the Congress Presidency in 1947. Beginning in 1946, leaders like Mehta, J.P., Iohia and others resolved to eschew doctrinaire political thinkingⁱⁿ favor of pragmatic and empirical analysis of India's problems as a necessary first step in evolving a new 'democratic socialism' related to Indian realities. In reexamining their former basic assumptions they created new objectives and their ideological goal was a "democratic socialist society", a synthesis of realism, Gandhism and Marxism. It was to be achieved by non-violent means, to be decentralised and democratic in political and economic structure, to emphasise the importance of peasant and voluntary group action. There was a shift in method from the urban, trade union revolutionary and agitational to the constructive, rural, non-violent and parliamentary. There was therefore an atmosphere of give and take and this was primarily because the freedom of the country was becoming of foremost importance at that time. Gandhi made efforts at avoiding the expulsion of the socialists and these tactics of accommodation led the socialists to delay their withdrawal from the Congress. The conservative majority, however, were still hesitant, according to them the socialists should remain prominent in the Congress only in a minority status. It was the Patel group who also blocked the selection of a socialist general secretary of the

Congress as well as the election of more socialists to the AICC, the Working Committee or the Constituent Assembly in 1946.

Given the contradictions within the Congress Socialist Party, the strength of the right wing leadership, Nehru's vacillating role, and the conservative ideas of Gandhi, it became difficult to easily adopt the socialist policy for all these people acted as a check to any such effort. However, given the development of the radical wing in the party and whatever their contradictions, their vociferous activities, the conditions within the country, the encouraging events in the socialist world, the growing consciousness and aspirations of the masses, the Congress could no longer afford to ignore the need to adopt socialist policies, however limited in scope and stage by stage they moved ahead. With independence came the need for the concrete formulation and implementation of these policies of the Congress had to live up to all that it had been preaching thus far.

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Chapter 3

Dynamics of Congress Decision-Making
Pre-Plan Period 1947 - 1950

On the eve of Independence, India still suffered from acute disparities rising out of a highly stratified society. The chaotic conditions of partition had created innumerable problems. The inegalitarian economic and social structure, the refugee problem, zamindari system, low productivity, fissiparous and disintegrative forces etc., were the major drawbacks of the system. There was also an acute food shortage. Although 80% of India's population were engaged in agriculture the country had to spend above 100 crores annually for importing food from abroad.

While grappling with the challenge posed in the post-Independence years, Prime Minister, Nehru and the Congress were only too aware and conscious of the basic urges behind the national liberation struggle - the urge to root out poverty and to build a new India on a egalitarian principles. The INC had promised many things prior to Independence and with Independence, when it took over the administration of the country as the undisputed leader of the nation with steam roller majorities, it was faced with the difficult task of putting into practice all that they had been preaching thus far. There were two clear options open to them i.e., either to proceed on purely capitalist lines or follow the socialist model. Since the Congress had been openly advocating socialist

policies, especially because of all the hopes it had raised. Everyone was looking to the Congress to bring about a new order, and to better their lot. They realised that had they opted for the capitalist model then the conditions of the majority of the peasants would not improve and only the small landowning class in whose hands all the assets and power were in any case concentrated, would be the only ones to benefit. As the Congress was supposed to be the spokesman of the masses it could ill afford to take recourse to such measures. The consolidation and integration of the country was important to the Congress but what was more important it seem was to find a commonly acceptable means to tackle the various problems. To maintain the harmony, unity and integrity of the nation was what they told they were interested in the survival and hegemony of the party was what they were actually working for, but without making it too obvious. The socialist policy came in handy at a time when the Congress was on the horns of this dilemma. The entire decision-making of the Congress subsequently must be understood in the light of this. The I.N.C., which was a basically middle class organisation, with a very strong conservative wing, no doubt must have found it extremely difficult to keep the balance between the demands of the vested interests and the poverty struck masses. As a result their words and policies sought to pacify the masses, while their actions worked in the interest of the bussiness lobby. Whatever conflict and bargaining went on, within the Congress in the process of decision-making was limited to only the

charmed upper circle - the handful of leaders at the very top of the organisation. The nameless masses remained totally outside it, and were never a party to those decisions that shaped their future.

Nehru, had many a time asserted that the chief task of the national movement was to end all forms of exploitation which politically implied independence and severance of the British connection and economically it meant putting an end to all class privileges and vested interests and the ultimate establishment of socialism. He had pointed out that the interests of the "dumb millions" be preserved and safeguarded and the realisation of human welfare should be of the utmost importance. In his famous "Tryst with Destiny" speech, Nehru had explained the socio-economic aims of independent India in the following words: "The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity. The ambition of the greatest man of our time has been to wipe every tear from every eye. They may be beyond us, but as long as there are tears and sufferings, so long over work will not be over. And so we have to labour and to work hard to give reality to our dreams".

As the socialist leader, Narendra Deva pointed out "the Congress must lay down a new programme and give a clear lead to the people about social objectives that it would pursue

if it has to survive. The Congress could either strive for a democratic state or for a totalitarian state. A democratic state in the present context must have socialist leanings and must lend all support to peasant movement labour movement and the expansion of mass education. The establishment of a democratic state would clear the way for building a socialist state".¹ For the Congress, political, economic and social freedom and equality became closely connected with the principles of democracy for without democracy both freedom and equality may become a remote possibility. "Our Swaraj will be democratic. It will be the rule of the people, by the people and for the people and therefore we can safely say that the objective of the Congress shall be the establishment and maintenance by all peaceful and democratic means (including strikes and satyagraha) of a socialist democracy in India in which power rests with peasants, workers, artisans as well as with brain workers, which means a socialist democracy in India in which power rests with the totality of the people".² The Congress had become even more sure, now that if democracy should not seem to be a mere formality, then it must be based on some sort of economic equality.

On the one hand the Congress claimed to be the spokesman of the masses, but on the other hand it was also controlled by the business community in the urban areas and the landowners in the rural areas. During the national movement, this had not become very apparent because of the more urgent problem

of attaining freedom, and the Congress had been able to retain within the organisation people of different ideologies and socio-economic background without it harming the unity of the party. After Independence, the Congress had taken on a tremendous responsibility, and in order to achieve its goals, it had to change its class composition. As the socialist leader Narendra Deva pointed out - the establishment of a socialist state could not be brought into existence by the Congress with its existing class composition. The Congress which had undergone changes in its class composition during the movement of 1921, 1931 and 1942 has still not become an organisation that could be turned into an instrument for building up a socialistic state. There was the absence of "a class based party organisation" among the peasantry, all of which proved to be major hurdles in the adoption of socialist goals and programmes.

When one asks the question to what extent does business influence the formulation of Congress policies, the answer is not very clear. It is a fact, however, that right from the very early days of its formation, the Congress had been taking help from the business community. Nehru had in 1945, vehemently denied that the business community financed the Congress and stated that the Congress carried on almost entirely on petty subscriptions and that the 'normal' work was financed by the membership fees primarily. However, Nehru himself confessed that in, 1937, when the Congress was

contesting the national and provincial election, the party had solicited some big industrialists for their contribution.³ Gandhi himself had never been averse to the help given to the party by the industrialists. Besides, Gandhi's peaceful non-violent method of change, being a tremendous source of relief to the business community encouraged them to give large ad-hoc donations and they maintained a fairly cordial relationship with Gandhi all along. All this coupled with the fact that the majority of the Congress leadership (the conservative wing) gave them support, not only encouraged the business community, but also entrenched them in the party. No doubt, their links with the party were indirect, for one would rarely find an industrialist a member of the party organisation as such. The approach of the business group to economic development was somewhat as follows - it favoured rapid development and aid from government sources, like maximum government aid and protection of industry and minimum of government control. They accepted the socialistic pattern of society as this policy presupposes a mixture of the private and the public enterprise, with considerable flexibility of operation. Committed as it was to the masses, the Congress kept up its rhetoric of socialism, but on the other hand it tried to appease the business group too. The Congress government was therefore found to alternately admonish business for its shortcomings and give reassurances about its future. Although many efforts were made to bring about a

socialist society, steps were also taken to promote and assist Indian business through protective tariffs, financial aid, tax concessions and giving new industrial investments. Efforts at removing any bottlenecks that may emerge in private fields were also continuously made. Perhaps, the best picture of the nature of the business communities demands, can be seen in a Plan formulated by them prior to Independence called the Bombay Plan. When planning was adopted, the Congress wanted to negate the anarchies and anomalies of an uncontrolled market⁴, and through planning the Congress sought to establish socialism in the country. The attempt was to bring socialism through legislation. It is however a fact that the whole planning effort in India almost inevitably bolstered business organisation whether it was with regard to transport facilities, new materials or licensing of new capital issues. In the rural areas, the landlords wielded a similar influence on the Congress party. Given these therefore it seems the party adopted the method of reform through democratic political institutions. As a result of this, two contradictory tendencies became fairly well established in the Congress. While on the one hand, the national party executive continuously paid lip service to socialist principles of state ownership, regulations, control over key sectors, of the economy curbing any form of concentration in the economy, on the other hand, the national Congress government continued to pursue liberal economic policies and incentives to private investment. This

was justified on the ground that the need of the hour was maximum production. On this, both Nehru and Patel were in complete agreement with each other. It showed that the differences of opinion between the two were not so vast after all, especially where the basic things were concerned. The influence of the business group on Congress policy making is therefore apparent, and in the light of this it is not difficult to understand perhaps, why, although Congress progressively moved towards socialist policies it was of a rather subdued nature.

The Congress party organisation and its parliamentary wing worked in a way which was complementary to each other, and together they shaped the socialist policy of the Congress. With independence, once Congress formed the government, there was a close interaction between the government and the party, since party men were also government men, the possibility of divergences between party and government policy was remote, although certain amount of 'healthy' conflict and confrontation was not ruled out. When Nehru was the Prime Minister, he was certainly not insensitive to the party opinion, which he sought to incorporate in the resolutions in order to make out a more workable consensus. The party's role was therefore very important and whatever policy was formulated at the level of the party was reflected in some form in the government policies. There was normally a broad agreement and perhaps a good example would be of how the general strategies for the

Indian economic planning was evolved over a period of several years. The decision making process within the party had therefore not changed much since independence, for the party arrived at decisions through a process of consensus and votes were rarely taken. Members normally adhered to the principle of collective responsibility, except when the leadership was divided which was rather rare. Even then, some agreement was arrived at mostly after some debates and discussions.

By 1946, the conservative stalwart of the Congress, Patel, had grown very powerful in the party and neither Gandhi nor Nehru were the important power wielders in the Congress. Patel was however supposed to be an important lieutenant of Gandhi especially in the years of freedom struggle. He had also played a very prominent role in the building of the local and state party units. Patel, who was the treasurer of the party was strongly opposed to the socialists and virtually dictated terms to the various wings of the party. Even Gandhi could not get his support when Kriplani was put up for the post of President of the Congress. Again, when Kriplani resigned as Congress President in 1947, and Gandhi had suggested J.P. or Narendra Deva for the post, it was firmly rebuffed by the Working Committee. It seemed that till the time Gandhi worked in favour of the status-quo, the party gave him full backing. When he tilted slightly to the socialists, in his choice of nominee for the Congress President,

became a loner in the party. Patel even went to the extent of deleting names of socialists. In fact after Gandhi's death in February 1948, Patel was successful in bringing about a change in the party constitution which prohibited the continuation of organised groups within the Congress. Subsequently, no member of the Congress could be a "member of any other political party, communal or other, which has a separate membership, constitution and programme". Between 1947 and 1950, therefore it was Patel, the then Deputy Prime Minister who seemed to have^{had} a great deal of power in the party.

As Nehru was far more acceptable to the widely differing groups in the Congress, he became Prime Minister. Nehru's constant effort however had been to gradually dislocate the conservative's stronghold in the party, and capture power for himself - this opportunity was provided to him only towards the end of 49 and in 1950, especially after Patel's death. In 1950, Nehru made a valiant effort at putting one of his men as the Congress President, but P. Tandon, Patel's candidate won and from then on the confrontation between the conservative wing and the so called radical wing became quite intense. Nehru did not accept the membership of the C.W.C. and he along with some of his colleagues kept away. But later, they joined the C.W.C. on a rather flimsy ground and finally after Patel's death, Nehru was able to establish his supreme hold over the party. All this showed that strategy was far more important than ideology.

Patel shared most of the major responsibilities with Nehru in the functions of the government and also in the shaping of the policies. But Patel in fact considered it rather shocking that Nehru took independent initiatives to collect information to set the broad principles of policy on matters falling within the range of Patel's ministerial responsibilities. Nehru on the other hand was impatient of any restrictions put on him and insisted that the Prime Minister had to be "more responsible than any one else".⁵ With the departure of the C.S.P. from the Congress in 1948, the hands of the conservatives was further strengthened for very few socialists stayed back in Congress. This position however lasted only till 1950, things changed quite distinctly after that period. The Congress shaped its policies, especially its economic policy in such a milieu - the constant tug of war left an unmistakable imprint on the socialist policy of the Congress. However, it is important to point out that all through, the Congress continued to adopt policies and programmes, which was of a fairly radical nature, in spite of the influence of the conservatives.

It is important to note that perhaps it was primarily because of the right wing stalwarts that the Congress could not go whole hog in adopting a socialist programme, but Nehru too was not behaving in a very radical manner, in spite of all his professions. The needs of the time, plus the class

character of the party, as well as his own liberal outlook were still important restraining factors. Even after Gandhi's death, Nehru could not really free himself of all that he had imbibed from Gandhi. Take for example Nehru's attitude regarding the importance of the party vis-a-vis government, prior to and after independence. When Nehru was fighting for independence, he held the view that "it is manifest that the Congress is more important than any ministry. Ministries may come or go, but the Congress goes on till it fulfills its historical mission of achieving national independence for India".⁶ After assuming power, however, Nehru had changed his stand, and pleaded for a strong central authority. A task that the governmental agencies alone can adequately handle, "the congress organisation is in bad shape, it cannot be improved except by altering the general atmosphere in the Country. And that obviously can be done by only governmental agencies".⁷ Gandhi's presence had made it difficult for them to throw out the socialists, in spite of Patel's great keenness, but after Gandhi's death, no such restraint existed any more. As N. Deva pointed out in the Nasik conference in 1948, "I have been so far advocating that we should not quit the Congress. Today I am telling you that we must get out of the Congress. It is not that we are in a hurry to quit ... the Congress is compelling us to get out of it. Once the Congress President asked us to drop the prefix "Congress" from our party name. He also pleaded that our party doors be thrown

open to non-Congressmen. He suggested that this would enable us to continue in Congress. We did all that he wanted at Kanpur in 1946. Today they have adopted a constitution which has left us no other alternative".⁸

The socialists in their bid to capture the party, after Gandhi's assassination charged the Home Minister Patel, of neglect of duty, due to age, overwork, and friendliness to communal forces and thus they hoped to break Patel's powerful hold over the Congress. They sought positions in the Cabinet, the C.W.C. etc. However, Nehru, true to his style, rallied behind Patel. Even public did not seem to be against Patel. In the bargain it was the socialists who got discredited and rather than staying in the party as an unorganised minority, they deemed it more fit to leave the Congress. From whatever data are available on the social origins of the active members of the party, one can make out that almost half of all Congressmen who joined the 1930s were recruited from the prosperous proprietor castes and class. During the initial years of independence, especially between 1947 to 1950 the central Cabinet had a large representation of the conservative interests. All this indicates, what elements actively influenced the decision making process in the party. The fact remains however that in spite of all this limitations Nehru did project a fairly radical image and though in a limited manner, he did make efforts at pushing Congress nearer the socialist ideology.

Under his leadership, the Constitution, parliament and the ruling party along with the Planning Commission had endorsed egalitarian, socialist, programmes at least on principle. There was, therefore, a continuation of the pre-independence tactics.

The AICC in November 1947, at New Delhi, at its very first meeting after independence, gave top priority to the question of economic freedom. This resolution, which the Congress adopted was rather significant for it spelt out quite concretely for the first time, the aims of the Congress after independence. The bias towards socialism was quite obvious, even though the word as such was not used. The resolution said "Political independence having been achieved, the Congress must address itself to the next great task, namely the establishment of real democracy in the country and a society based on social justice and equality. Such a society must provide every man and woman with equality of opportunity and freedom to work for the unfettered development of his or her personality. This can be realised when democracy extends from the political to the social and economic spheres. Democracy in the modern age necessitates planned central direction as well as decentralisation of political and economic power in so far as this is compatible with the safety of the state, with efficient production and the cultural progress of the community as a whole. The smallest territorial unit should be able to exercise effective control over its corporate life

by means of popularly elected Panchayats. In so far as it is possible, national and regional economic self-sufficiency in the essentials of life should be aimed at. In the case of industries, which in their nature must be run on a large scale and on centralised basis, they should be so organised that workers become not only cosharers in the profits but are also increasingly associated with the management and administration of the industry. Land with its minimal resources and all other means of production as well as distribution, and exchange must belong to and be regulated by the community in its interest.⁹

The same resolution further stated that the aim of the Congress should be to evolve a political system capable of combining efficiency of administration with individual liberty and an economic structure which would be able to yield maximum production but "without the operation of private monopolies and concentration of wealth and which will create a proper balance between urban and rural economy. Such a social structure can provide an alternative to the acquisitive economy and private capitalism and the regimentation of a totalitarian state".

By May 1947, Gandhi had started holding a whole series of talks with the Congress and socialist leaders in order to thrash out a plan for the development of the country. By this time Gandhi had become more considerate towards the socialists,

but not so his supporters. In fact, Gandhi even discouraged socialist leaders from leaving the Congress. "Mahatama Gandhi", Narendra Deva wrote "was of the view that though freedom was achieved, the Congress should remain a national organisation and that the parties should be allowed to function within the Congress. Congress leaders hastened in the wake of Gandhi's death to adopt a new Constitution, forbidding the socialists to function as a group within the Congress".¹⁰ Gandhi, after the attainment of independence was seriously concerned with the problem of the reconstruction of the Indian polity, and so were the socialists, and to that extent only there was agreement between them.

In July 1947, the socialist leader, Narendra Deva, said in Lucknow that the Centre had not become fully independent and if the Congress wants to flourish in the future then it must change its policies radically. He warned that if this change was not brought about then the Congress would remain only an election fighting machine where jobbery and corruption would increase. He was quite convinced that the leadership of the Congress continued "to be as reactionary as before and unless it is altered no one can believe that the new programme will be put into action even if honest efforts will be made to achieve the new objectives".¹¹ Factors such as the (a) class composition of the Congress party, (b) the lack of revolutionary leadership, (c) the failure to establish a tradition of struggle, (d) the adoption of a policy of

constitutionalism and compromise, (e) the conspicuous absence of a coherent and scientific social philosophy of national reconstruction would, it was pointed out, recoil on the party.¹² Nor could the Congress become "an instrument for building up a socialist state". Narendra Deva was also critical of the party 'cause' he felt that in order to ensure victory in the elections, the Congress had allowed a new class of vested interests to join its fold. These interests included (i) aristocracy, (ii) a set of semi officials belonging to the class of Sarpanch in the village, (iii) conservative and communal forces. The Congress had realised by then that the radicalisation of the agriculture would mean the reorganisation of the existing village economy also, a process which may come into conflict with the old social and economic structures. At the same time the support base of the Congress party was also on the increase. Between 1948 to 1950, the Indian communists had been following armed insurrectionary methods in Telengana causing much concern to the Congress Ministries. During this period it had also adopted a fairly militant policy against the government. Given the multi-dimensional problems that the Congress faced, it chose to proceed as cautiously as possible, without antagonising any interest as much as possible.

Therefore, although Nehru had been making much of socialist policies, after he assumed power, he took a very different stand for he said "it is counter revolutionary to put the

accent on socialism at this moment"¹³ and when he formed the government, the class character of the men he chose to head the ministries exposed the depth of his commitment to socialism. His colleague from U.P., G.B. Pant even went to the extent of bracketing the socialists with the communists and totalitarians.¹⁴ With regard to the land problem, the then Congress President, R. Prasad, convened a conference in December 1947, of Revenue Ministers at New Delhi. The conference arrived at the decisions that as far as the question of paying compensation to the intermediaries was concerned, they could not lay down any uniform policy as such, and the reason given was that the zamindari settlement in the various provinces differed widely and it was felt that each province should be left free to deal with the question according to its resources, and keeping in view the financial stability of the country. Cottage industries were encouraged to be fully established. Towards the last part of December in 1947, the Government of India's Industries Conference was convened to bring about management-labour collaboration and for the maintenance of industrial peace through this. It was also hoped that through this, maximum production by avoiding all causes of friction between employers and the labour could be brought about. It laid down the tone of the government, which was their wanting to resolve all disputes through negotiations, conciliation and arbitration. Industrial peace, it must be noted, would have primarily helped the bourgeoisie, to multiply their assets. The working classes,

being deprived of the right to strike, could not have bettered their situation in any way.

By 1948, the Congress was beginning to realise that it was not enough to make mere promises for the future and that the government must give concrete demonstration of its intentions, if it wanted to retain the confidence of the masses. Besides, the influence of the party was, according to some, beginning to decline slightly. In order to prevent this undesirable process, the party had to overhaul its policies thoroughly and lots of people began to talk of the need for revitalisation of the Congress. Although the central and provincial governments had been successful in partially solving some of the complex problems the country was facing, it had not been able to do very much and the economic, political and social conditions of the country was still in a state of flux. The economic front especially had not been very cheerful. As was reported, the balance of payments had changed from a considerable surplus to a relatively big deficit and India had "been running an adverse balance of trade on her overall foreign trade".¹⁵ Between 1948-49, India's dollar currency deficit was also on the increase, in spite of big financial help from international organisations like I.M.F. etc. On the one hand the conservative wing's leader Patel continued to make reassurances to the business community and was rather short with the socialists, and on the other hand Nehru continued to appease the radicals both within and without the party.

Patel and Nehru came into conflict a number of times and as many times made public clarifications that they had nothing against each other. The party's policy and the government's policy overlapped to a large extent.

Patel was always careful to woo the industrialists and keep them reassured. He emphasised that both labour and capital should compose their differences and try for the common end of expanding production. He warned those who were trying to promote a conflict between these two agents of production, for this would deal a disastrous blow to Indian industries, without which labour cannot survive. He said "I am sure these ministers would like to secure your cooperation in making India industrially great. You will also see that Cabinet represents the various sections of India's political life. All the ministers are popular representatives, they represent you as much as they represent the poor. You should therefore disabuse yourself of any impress that the Cabinet is in any way hostile to your interests. We all realise that no country can prosper without industry. Nor can labour in the modern sense survive without industry".¹⁶ Therefore, Patel tried to give a "friendly" warning to labour, and his words clearly indicated his conservative approach. On nationalisation he said "you should realise that industry has to be established before it can be nationalised. In U.K. they have a labour government, but despite the fact that they are not going ahead with nationalisation, at any rapid pace. The

result is that the labour government does not have to shoot people in order to maintain the industrial peace and keep up the pace of production".¹⁷ Patel's leanings towards the western capitalist model was quite apparent, and his intolerance of nationalisation fairly obvious, and what was more significant was that these ideas got incorporated in the policies of the Congress. Patel, had not made any reference as such to the evils of an industrialised society and the exploitation that is inherent in them. On the plea, that rapid development was the aim of nascent underdeveloped India, he encouraged the expansion of a capitalist model, and quite openly so. The socialists dislike for him was duly reciprocated by him. Patel referring to the decision reached in Delhi on the question of food decontrol after prolonged consultations with provincial government, trade representatives and representatives from the socialists and mentioned how within a few days there was a volte face by the socialists who began to protest against the decontrol policy - Patel wanted to know if this was the sense of responsibility displayed by those who accused government of outmoded ways - and so the tussel continued till the socialists left the Congress. Nehru and the Industries Minister too repeatedly asked for industrial peace, at least for three years and persuaded industrialists and labour leaders to agree to it - thereby paving the way for industrial development and since the means of production and distribution remained primarily in private hands, encouraged

the growth of capitalism. People were told that it was the exigencies of the times that led them to such decisions. In fact, broadcasting from AIR, Nehru had made an impassioned appeal to the people to increase production by creating industrial peace.¹⁸ He pointed out that the industrial unrest only paralyses the country's economy and the production of that time was not enough to maintain the large population of the country. Production meant wealth (for whom the question was never asked) and without it the country could not progress. No doubt, Nehru said, the question of distribution was important and wealth should not be concentrated in a few hands, but people must realise that production comes first, and what the need of the time was - a supreme effort to augment production in fields and factories so that it was possible to see the "India of our dreams". The Congress however, time and again kept talking of the need for a socialist state. Kamraj Nadar for example in the 43rd Tamil Nadu Political Conference in his Presidential address said that the Congress had now ceased to be an organisation fighting for freedom, as freedom has been won. It had to now change its creed and what better creed than to work for a socialistic form of state in which there would not be extremes of poverty and richness, where everyone would have full scope for his talent to rise to the height of his genius. A state of affair where there would not be oppression of the weak by the strong and every one would have equal opportunity in life. He added that some

mischief makers had created alarm in the minds of the people by spreading false rumours that private property would be abolished and that some form of communism would be introduced. Nothing is further from the truth he said.¹⁹ In the new society, labour would attain a new dignity and respect, but he too appealed to industrial workers and especially the textile workers in Coimbatore not to resort to strikes and asked them to remember the industrial truce for 3 years urged by the Prime Minister. At the same time he appealed to mill-owners not to embark upon hasty retrenchment either. Congressmen therefore kept alive the issue of socialism in the Congress, but never lost sight of the fact that industrialists need to be pampered too.

Patel continued to warn labour to be beware of "youthful leaders who are toying with the interests of the country and indirectly with the interests of labour itself".²⁰ His warning was stern for he said that if they did not produce more than they were doing, they would have to perish. He further warned them that the role of the socialists was more destructive than constructive for the socialists who were still inside the Congress were working contrary to the Congress programme of increasing production and then to top it all - "the socialists had been talking of leaving the Congress - if they want to go out, the door of the Congress is open. But if they do not go and persist in their present obstructionist policy we shall have to show them the door".²¹ To Patel, the future of India

depended on whether the country stepped up production of food, cloth, iron etc. This he said was necessary not only for consolidating the freedom which it had won. He wanted to know when there was really no difference of opinion between the Congress and the socialists over policy and programme, as illustrated by the last AICC meeting, why should they behave in this disruptive and disintegrative manner. The country he said needed two things, peace and second consolidation, and he asked the socialists to join hands with the Congress in formulating a five year programme and carry it out in a constructive manner, instead of the negative role it has been playing thus far. He reassured the business community time and again that the government had no intentions of entering the field of business and trade which was, he said, the sole preserve of the business and commercial community. The mercantile community's reputation has suffered some loss and therefore it was essential according to him for them to endeavour to resolve their good name. His point that industrial truce did not mean there would be no justice done to labour²², was to appease that section, in case he had a revolt in his hands. He advised labour that if it had any grievances, they should seek arbitration without resort to strikes, and if they failed to produce enough to meet the needs of the country, they would not be able to keep pace with the progressive nations of the world. On the question of compensation to be paid to the zamindars, his conservative bias becomes obvious. He

stated that the Congress government is bound by the election manifesto to pay adequate compensation to the zamindars and the government should not be afraid of the socialists or communists in honoring a pledge that they had given²³ (irrespective of the question of at what cost to the peasantry and the toiling masses). Otherwise, it would amount to robbery and it would mean the going back on a solemn understanding, which would be unworthy of the Congress. No wonder that the Congress, given the attitude of some of its stalwarts like Patel could not make headway in adopting a totally radical programme. It is not surprising, therefore when on January 28, the C.W.C. adopted the following resolution which said "Having regard to the supreme urgency of stepping up overall production to relieve hardship and by acute shortage of essential commodities in the country, the working committee welcomes the timely lead given by the Industries conference convened by the Government of India last December It is, however, distressing that while the country was looking forward to a period of industrial peace and a vigorous production drive as envisaged by the Industries conference there have been during the last few weeks, some ugly manifestations of labour trouble ... in certain areas there have been strikes and lockouts which is a rude shock to the country and clearly constitute a threat to any programme, economic reconstruction and self-sufficiency. The Working Committee therefore condemns these developments which hinders progress and prolongs hardships to

the community in general and poor particularly. The Working Committee appeals to the employers and labour to implement the decisions of the Industries conference to employers and to redress without loss of time all legitimate grievances and to labour to understand their rights as well as obligations."²⁴ No doubt the INC had pledged itself irrevocably to the cause of the toiling masses, whether they be workers in the fields or factories and tried to do things which would mitigate their hardships, but labour was also expected to keep itself above any group or party. As a concrete example of the party's desire to help the healthy growth of trade unionism in the country, it was said, the Congress decided to encourage the INTUC which is devoted to the cause of labour. The Working Committee made it clear that Congressmen should not join any other organisation and should actively support the INTUC.

The AICC with a view to drawing up an economic programme in accordance with the principles laid down by it in 1947, appointed a fairly high powered committee with Nehru as the Chairman. This was the Congress Economic Programme Committee. Its purpose was the radicalisation of economic policies and the report, was Nehru's brain child, which laid down the blueprint for India's future path of development. In fact most of the subsequent plans and policies of the Congress have their roots in this Report. The Economic Programme Committee,

further pushed the Congress on the road to socialism. At its meetings on January 22/25²⁵ the recommendations made by the sub-Committee on Agriculture, small scale and village industry, large scale and heavy industry and cooperative distribution. These recommendations had been incorporated in a single report which was submitted to the Congress President, Prasad, which was subsequently discussed in the next AICC. The "aims and objectives" of the report is its starting point. It aimed at a quick and progressive rise in the living standard of the people through the expansion and growth of production. It recommended the full use of man power and the material resources of the country. The fixing of ceiling for incomes and the achievement of a minimum national productive efficiency. Further, it recommended, equitable distribution of the existing income and wealth and the prevention of the growth of disparities. With the progress of industrialisation the widest diffusion of opportunities for occupations through the economy based on decentralisation and compatible with the requirements of an adequate standard of living and the country's internal and external security, national and regional self-sufficiency and a proper balance between rural and urban economy. The main point was an agriculture - i.e. minimum levels of assured production of food, cotton and building materials on a scheme of balanced cultivation, and the removal of the intermediaries. A varied pattern including individual, cooperative, collective and state farming was

also envisaged; collective and cooperative farming was given a lot of emphasis. It also sought to demarcate the respective spheres of large scale, small scale and cottage industry in order to avoid economic insecurity. Protection of cottage industry was sought to be implemented through state control of competing large scale industries, grant of subsidies, method of price equalisation etc. The Congress Economic Programme Committee submitted its report to the Working Committee which was later endorsed by the AICC. On February 17, of the same year a Congress backbencher moved a resolution which demanded that the government should adopt immediately a socialistic policy "based on the principle of nationalisation of key industries and cooperatives and collective farming and socialisation of the material resources of the country".²⁶ This resolution reflected the objectives of the Economic Programme Committee. However, even though at the party level it found prompt acceptance, at the government level, Nehru was hesitant. This was, therefore, another typical example of the dual policy played by the Congress leadership. Nehru rejected the resolution moved by the backbencher declaring that the government had not yet worked out its economic policy. For the Economic Programme Committee suggestions had been invited from Congressmen in the hope that when the report was finally passed "they would bear the impress of their collective wisdom".²⁷ After the adoption of the Economic Programme Committee Report, the Bombay AICC appointed a Stand-

ing Economic Committee of the AICC with Nehru as the Chairman to see to the implementation of the Economic Programme Committee's Report. A detailed study was followed by an equally detailed recommendations to the Working Committee and the government on the steps to combat inflation, and the formation of a National Planning Commission at the earliest possible. The Economic Programme Committee also stated that steps should be taken by which the cottage Industries Board can be made really effective. Regional self-sufficiency was also projected as an important aim, with regard to all types of industry. Steps should be also taken to encourage small scale and cottage industry on a non-profit line. As far as state take over was concerned, it advised that the process of transfer from private to public ownership should commence after a period of five years and only in special cases after a competent body so advises, decide on an earlier transfer. The existing system of managing agency in the private industries was recommended to be abolished as early as possible. Private industry would be subject to regulations and control in the interest of national policy in industrial development. The aim was therefore to have a balanced progressive economy which regulated distribution and to control wages and the prices of agriculture as well as to build up the cooperatives which would be multi purpose also. The agricultural and land policy which the Committee advocates is also based on its preference for the

smaller as against the bigger units of production and on its desire to curb if not altogether do away with profit motive in production. The predictions which the report shows for peasant proprietorship is incompatible with the occupational freedom of the individual which the committee must wish to encourage, therefore some recommendations were mutually conflicting. Para 13 dealt with the question of how private industrial profit should be taxed to prevent accumulation of wealth in a few hands and para 14, asked for the nationalisation of banking and insurance. In short, although the word 'socialist' as such was not used, the report of the Economic Programme Committee was such that it visualised clearly a socialistic future. This report was approved by the Congress at its Jaipur session in December 1948.

In the mean time, the industrialists were getting restless at the radical tone of the Congress. A deputation of leading industrialists, led by Sir Homi Mody²⁸ expressed to the Prime Minister their grave concern and doubts and apprehensions regarding the future economic policy of the government, especially in view of the recently published report of the Economic Programme Committee. Nehru when faced with this accusation admitted that certain discrepancies might have occurred in recent statements of policy made by the different members of the Cabinet, but hastened to reassure them that the government had not yet arrived at a policy.

The report, he said was only a rough blue print and not a final document. He said that he gave increased production first priority. Later, perhaps some definite statement of policy would be given, but in any case, Nehru said, the goodwill of the industrialists would always be considered necessary, and in any case the change would be a gradual process taking stock at every stage of new factors coming into play - and the industrialists were quite satisfied. Thus, Nehru in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee recommended certain very radical policies, but in his capacity as the Prime Minister and when confronted by the industrialists, he was hesitant and unsure, even though he was quite aware of the need for change. He said, "Most of us and certainly so far as I am concerned I believe that the time has come for a rapid change of our economic system ... I think far too many of our friends and our own countrymen here and others continue to think in terms of an age which has more or less passed. They continue to adhere to what might be called the 19th century economic ideology, which may have been very good in its time, but which is not applicable today... I think many of the ills in the world today are due to the fact that the particular economic system which grew in the 19th century, does not fit in with circumstances in the middle of the 20th century"²⁹ - and yet all the time Nehru was in fact promoting the capitalist system.

The Economic Programme Committee's Report became quite a controversial issue. It was criticised by some who thought that it had not gone far enough and others said was a revolutionary departure which would completely upset our economy and was in fact "a sudden jump to socialism". The Report had in fact moved towards a socialist state to a large extent in spite of all that the critics had to say. In February 1948, the C.W.C. formulated the fundamental principles on which the future constitution of the Congress should be based. "The object of the Congress", said the resolution, "is the establishment of a cooperative commonwealth in India based on equality of opportunity, and social, political and economic rights and aiming at world peace and fellowship". The word socialism had not still found place in the Congress policies.

S.P. Mookherjee, a prominent Congressman and a minister had said on the one hand that exploitation could not be tolerated and egalitarian principles are to be upheld, on the other hand talked of forgetting issues and put emphasis on production. He too seemed to reflect the 'double think' of the Congress. S.P. Mookherjee had stated "... no government can and will allow exploitation of one section of the people by another, nor will public opinion tolerate the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a fortunate few to the detriment of the welfare of the millions. But all our hopes and aspirations will be battered to pieces if we are not prepared

to observe complete industrial peace and concentrate all our energies on providing to the maximum of our capacity".³⁰ The socialists were extremely critical of the party's and the government's economic policy and in a resolution, the Executive of their party said that the Government of India had no economic policy as such and that they were "acting as agents of capitalists einterests". The resolution des-
crined the drive for increased production as a "bogey" and said that the government's "policy announcements, economic legislation, utility corporations and manipulated budget have all been calculated to fatten the capitalist class".³¹ When they formally decided to make the break from Congress the socialists stated that the Congress was not the vehicle which would usbe in a socialist state. "We worked with the Congress because of our conviction that there would be socia-
lism. Congress cannot perform the task. We have to do it".³² Ashoka Mehta opinated that the Congress was no longer the liberating instrument it was and that the Congress was in danger because of the authoritarian bias, of being overwhelmed by anti-secular, anti-democratic forces.

In April 1948, the government's Industrial policy resolu-
tion was presented. It was a compromise formula between Patel and Nehru, and laid down the fundamentals of mixed economy. S.P. Mookherjee the Industries and Supply Minister presented the Bill to Parliament, which was subject to detailed debate.

The main point was that the Government of India proposed to set up a National Planning Commission to formulate programme of development. Under the present conditions, the mechanisms and the resources of the state may not permit it to function forthwith in industry as widely as may be desirable. The industries have been divided into three spheres namely those that should be exclusively the monopoly of the state, those that have been left to private enterprise and the rest of industries normally left open to private enterprise individual as well as the cooperative. The state will also progressively participate in the field. Expansion of cottage and small scale industries also envisaged. Participation of foreign capital also discussed which will be regulated in national interests. It purports to lay down the aims and objectives of the government's policy in the field of industrial production, the spheres of activity respectively of the state and private enterprise. The relations that should obtain between employers and workers and connected subject the goal is stated to be a continuous increase in production by all possible means side by side with measures to secure its equitable distribution. This is the immediate objective. There is a wider objective namely the establishment of a new social order where justice and equality of opportunity shall be secured to all the people.

During the debate on the Industrial Policy Resolution, S.P. Mookherjee said in the Lok Sabha that India's present

economic conditions compared to the other countries, was quite bad, that independence was not an end in itself and India should try to create a society where equal opportunity and social and economic justice would prevail. Practical and effective steps should be taken to put an end to the era of exploitation and staggering backwardness, he further added. K. Rauthanam moving an amendment³³ appointed approved of the policy but also pointed out that there was much confusion with the term socialism. He pointed out that it is not through slogans and shouts that the reconstruction of the economy can be brought about. He wanted the minister to clarify which industries were expected to be taken up by the provincial governments. He protested against the increasing tendency towards concentration of all power in the country for they knew what the central government meant. Further, he hoped that the central government would announce the plans very soon.

Mr. Masani welcomed the statement which he said laid down the foundations of democratic socialism.³⁴ It aspired to equality of opportunity, it avoided monopoly, private or public. He also thought it was a categorical rejection of totalitarian communism and an advance towards democratic socialism as tried out in Britain, Sweden etc. He welcomed the role the state would play and said that the resolution envisaged partnership of capital and labour in the profits

of industry, its control and management, that this would be much more revolutionary than mere, nationalisation. K.T. Shah³⁵, General Secretary of the National Planning Committee was disappointed with the resolution's acts of commission and omission that the National Planning Committee's list of industries had been curtailed. It was also pointed out that this policy was intended to provide equality of opportunity. There was no definite period given within which the state should come into its own. N.G. Ranga supporting the motion, said that the resolution had made a great advance in the right direction and that it was a definite triumph of Gandhian socialism over capitalism and that K.T. Shah's criticisms were unjustified. Khandhubai Desai - labour representative extended his support to the "general terms" of the policy. But warned that the government must regard themselves against the manouring of the capitalist class.³⁶ Nehru said "we call on every section of the people whatever may be the difference of opinion in respect of political or economic ideology to come forward at this critical time in the history of the country to put their shoulders to the wheel for the purpose of introducing those very changes in the economic structure of society which would take the country to the desired goal".³⁷

In an article entitled "Congress Policy Outlined" on 24th April 1948, Shankkar Rao Deo had said "the type of cooperative commonwealth envisaged by it (Congress) would be based on equality of opportunity and of political, economic

and social rights. In the state the Congress wishes to build, power must rest in the peasants and workers ... It does not necessarily mean that there should be no privately owned or administered enterprise at all. He further went on to say that planning and control is in the hands of society, then it would benefit the workers and the peasants. The role of the cooperative movement was upheld as important, for he believed that this was a non violent form through which a classless society can be established, and where class antagonisms become an anathema. "It would seem", he further added, "that it is on this point that Congress ideology differs from orthodox socialism. It is the spirit of association in which each seeks his own benefit - through that of the whole that forms the Kernel of a cooperative commonwealth which might as decades pass enable us to present for world acceptance an Indian brand of socialism based on our heritage of a non-violent compassionate culture - a socialism not merely scientific and technological but also humane and humanitarian.

Speaking on April 27, 1948 Nehru had said that there was much in common, when the AICC's declared economic policy and that of the government and gave the assurance that the government were doing and would continue to do their best to put the AICC's directives into practice. Shankarao Deo, speaking on the same occasion where a 9 man standing committee with Nehru as the Chairman was constituted to implement the general

economic programme of the AICC had already given its general approval to the report of the Economic Programme Committee of the AICC, and the AICC had given its specific approval to the aims and objectives given in the report. He further stated that the AICC had appointed the Committee in order to consider the implementation of the general programme and make recommendations from time to time to the Working Committee. Further elaborating this point, he said, "True democracy cannot be established unless there is real decentralisation of power and production. We have to see that the decisions taken by the government are in the same direction as desired by the Congress. It is the policy of the Congress to avoid the evils of private capitalism and totalitarian regimentation of wealth. The Congress was to follow a middle path and that was the key note of its industrial policy".³⁹ Mr. N.G. Ranga who had commended the resolution for unanimous acceptance by the House stated that there was much in common between the AICC report and the government of India's economic policy and the Congress had established if not a socialistic state, at least a nationalist state with a steady tendency towards a scientific socialist state. He had added that if the government programme fell short of the AICC objectives it was the duty of this body to set up machinery to see that its industrial policy was followed by the government and that due to the exigencies of the time, the government may make amendments but nothing else. Nehru, in turn, stated that no doubt it

was the duty of the government to carry out the general outlines of the policy that the AICC placed before the centre, but at the same time it would be impossible for any government to function if it was dictated to.⁴⁰ Although the government plans may not come upto the expectations of the people, still they would try to keep the fundamentals of the objectives of the AICC in mind, as much as possible. Nehru pointed out that although there was much divergence between the government and the AICC report, still "the government's plan is generally in line with what is suggested by the AICC's sub-Committee's report".

The bussiness community, as was natural, was rather upset over the tone of the Congress and government with regard to the economic policy. Mr. R. Hirachand, Chairman of the Engineering Association of India, Bombay branch, reflects this fear when he said in a speech, "... if the workers want to break the bussiness contracts and kept out, the existing economic order they might as well demand the break up of the existing social order. Where is the limit to all this? Why should they not go to communism and Bolshevism or any absurd experiment than any outside country may invest".⁴¹ It is precisely this kind of a feeling that influenced the Congress leadership to tone down its economic policies. Rajaji at Bengal Chamber of Commerce for example appealed to the industrialists to cooperate wholeheartedly with the government and to make the nation strong, shed their scepticisms and get

reconciled "to this change of habitat".⁴² The Finance Minister Mathai also stated that under the government's declared industrial policy, the private enterprise would still have good scope left and the government is giving a number of concessions to aid new industries apart from their policy of protection of existing industries. The policy of double think therefore continued to persist in Congress decision making vis-a-vis its policy of socialism, as the leadership tried to grapple with the innumerable problems and please the different sections of the people within and without the party.

The socialists were very hard on the Congress and their criticisms extremely strong. As N. Deva pointed out that the declarations of socialist objectives only serve as a mask to cover the true character of the Congress. "The discrepancy its profess on and practice cannot deceive intelligent persons. It is wrong to think that socialism will grow out of the dominant nationalism of the Congress by a single process of declarations and speeches ... the path that the Congress is travelling will lead to a cul de sac and will not enable it to solve the urgent problems of today. With the Congress enthroned in the seat of power, new fangled theories are being propounded ... the Congress has become an adjunct of the government and has lost its freedom to initiate social struggles, therefore it believes more in legislative action than in a people's movement to renovate and reeducate itself".⁴³

However, hard hitting, the socialists may have been, the fact remains that the Congress was slowly adopting more and more radical policies that Nehru and a group of Congressmen were in favour of socialism was a fact, but given Patel's and the conservative's position at that time, they could not make much of an advance, hence the dilution of the policy at every stage. Whereas Patel asked industrialists not to bother about the vague talks of nationalisation, and gave a categorical assurance that the government was not thinking of embarking on any revolutionary changes, such as large scale nationalisation, Nehru in an 80 minutes speech to FICCI made a vigorous defence of the government's policy and advised business, politicians, labour and others to adjust themselves to the changing conditions in the world. He deplored "the excessive pessimism"⁴⁴ that had been expressed in certain quarters.

In 1949, Nehru had visited the U.S.A. in the hope of getting aid and help from them and tried to secure from their British friends as much as they could give, resulting in the Colombo Plan which stated the lines along which India could develop her economy. Slowly however it was realised that neither U.K. nor U.S.A. were prepared to give assistance for the transformation the country's economy "from a dominant agrarian to a growingly industrial one".⁴⁵ As these countries were primarily interested in India for its cheap raw materials, they 'advised' the Indian leadership to go ahead with a

basically "agricultural plan". It was at the same time becoming clearer that the Soviet Union was also willing to give assistance without involving high profits or exploitation of the kind that one got used to from the capitalist world, leading to a gradual shift in the attitude of the leadership. This hardening of attitude towards the giant of the capitalist world, helped in further strengthening the socialist policies at home. The general groping and period of experimentation of the initial years had taught much to the leadership and their dependence on socialist policies increased.

In 1949, the Industries (Development and Control) Bill was passed.⁴⁶ The broad objectives was frankly stated to be to enable the central government to implement their industrial policy as laid down last April. The Bill authorised government to direct ownership to hand it over to a person or authority nominated by the government to be seen by them. In September of the same year the Constituent Assembly adopted Art 24 in the draft Constitution on compulsory acquisition of property, moved by Nehru. But what was a great significance was the publication of the reports of the Congress Agrarian Committee. This was considered to be an important e.g. of the 1st major product of socialist Gandhian collaboration on outstanding public issue after independence. On the other hand, the report conceded that a capitalist agrarian structure could achieve maximum efficiency in production, but on the other hand it

rejected such a form on political grounds because it would lead to the exploitation of one class by another. It stated that full protection for private property rights in land would perhaps lead to longer ownership to mechanise production and as a result ultimately displace smaller and less efficient producers. The Committee pointed out that collective farming which could have led to improvement in production, and elimination of economic exploitation was not considered suitable on the ground that the individual peasant would get subordinated to a large army of technicians and bureaucrats. The Committee therefore favoured "an agrarian pattern of intermediate sized village, based on cooperative associations as the best safeguard for the legitimate interest of both individuals and the community". They also insisted on a number of egalitarian qualifications to the complete ownership rights and banned subletting. The report hoped that at some point of time all land in the village would ultimately come under cooperative management and that family farms would gradually disappear after a period of time. The propertied classes were therefore in a way warned, the masses were however only vaguely aware of the various measures the government proposed to take for the improvement of their lot. The Committee went into all aspects of the land question and sought to abolish all forms of landed parasitism.

Nehru's radical stand, brought him into conflict with the conservatives in the party many a time. By the end of

1949, Nehru was once again talking of a Planning Commission but the idea met with a certain amount of resistance from not only the conservative leader Patel, but also senior government officials. At that time however, the private enterprises were not being able to adequately deal with the continuing economic crisis and this only helped to strengthen Nehru's stand.

In January 1950, the Working Committee after a long and detailed debate finally agreed to a resolution calling for the creation of a Planning Commission. However, far from endorsing government control on industry and land reform in agriculture, Patel prevailed once again in deleting a passage from the original draft which defined the purpose of planning in the following way "the progressive elimination of a social, political and economic activity or organisation of society and the anti-social concentration of wealth and means of production".⁴⁷ What Nehru could finally manage by way of compensation was a statement that linked the work of planning to the objectives of the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Constitution. The final draft of the Cabinet resolution that established the Planning Commission on March 15, singled out three principles as special terms of reference in the preparation of a plan. The Planning Commission was from the outset relegated to an advisory status and all recommendations on plan policy had to be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration and approval. The conservative side of the draft

outline had become obvious as early as August 1950. The C.W.C. on January 18th endorsed the principle of mixed economy.⁴⁸ It was reported that the discussions centred around a "blue print" of the economic policy on the basis of the Gandhian ideal which was finalised a day before and given to the C.W.C. for consideration.

The FICCI meeting of that year had nothing new to say, there were the same criticisms of controls, fear of nationalisation etc. The Congress President subsequently called a conference of the Chief Ministers of States and Presidents and Secretaries of the P.C.C., to discuss an "immediate plan" and the Congress adopted an 'objective' resolution which stated that an overall balanced economy should be aimed at, rationalisation of production, industry and agriculture should be aimed at and attained and efforts should be made to bring about "a definite rise",⁴⁹ in the standard of living of the the people. This conference's recommendations were later endorsed by the C.W.C. In September of 1950, there was quite a trial of strength between the conservative leader Patel and Nehru, regarding the choice of the Congress President. Both sides tried to rally support for their own candidate, but Patel's candidate Tandon finally won, and it was established that Nehru's hold in the Congress was yet weak. This was a big defeat for Nehru. However, the C.W.C. in a 4 hour sitting on September 20, 1950 endorsed Nehru's proposal for the establishment of a welfare state in India.⁵⁰ The Congress

also welcomed in the same resolution, the establishment of the Planning Commission by the Government of India when the Working Committee passed the Subjects Committee endorsed resolutions on 3 major issues. Nehru had posed, it set the seal of approval on the approach he had favoured. There were supposed to be no wide differences between Tandon's view and Nehru's but it could not be denied that the accent was definitely different. Tandon was a convinced Gandhian in his approach to the social and economic questions. He was for increasing production but not by industrialisation on a western line. He sought solution of the poverty of the country in cottage industries and in those other 'leisure time occupations' which would not disrupt the rural community, thereby protecting the human and moral values of the time. It is largely by way of concessions to the Gandhian group that the Committee adopted another resolution, which urged the government to give more support to Khadi and village industries by purchasing their products as much as possible. While discussing the necessity of a certain amount of control along with planning, Jagjivan Ram had said "we should try to remove the drawbacks of controls and not do away with controls themselves".⁵¹ He then went on to say that as they had accepted the mixed economy at present, it was inevitable that incentives would be given to the industrialist, but it was also clear that full cooperation of the public was necessary to make any planned economy successful and that "the government was not willing today to

look to the interests of capitalists alone, but those of the workers and the peasants also". In a discussion amongst the party men, he pointed out that at the present moment they were not concerned with what economic system they should adopt, capitalism, socialism, or communism. Their main task was increased production which alone could solve their immediate problems.

Rajaji on September 23, 1950 commenting on the Nasik session of the Congress to P.T.I., touched on the most important question for the Congress at that time - the Patel, Tandon and Nehru conflict and competition, when he said "there could not have been a more thumping vote of confidence in the Prime Minister than what was by implication given at the Nasik meeting ... I fully realise Nehru's difficulties but I think the session under Tandon has made it easy for Nehru to continue guiding the affairs of the nation not only as Prime Minister but also by his presence in the party. I believe that the state of affairs in our country demands the continued guidance of both the Prime Minister and the deputy Prime Minister. I do not share the view of those who fancy that the governance of the country would improve if either one or the other of these two retire. I share the view universally held by the common man and woman that these two leaders must work together"⁵²

Mahtab in a statement issued said that the most important resolution for now was the one on economic programme and pointed

out that since Congress had by a majority of votes decided on the system of controls as a measure to realise the objectives included in the Congress resolution on economic programme, every effort should be made in this direction of efficient working of controls and all controversies with regard to controls should be buried. In October, Patel issued a statement in which he stated that the Congress was the strongest organisation in the country and that he did not have any difficulty with Nehru. When Tandon became President of the Congress, Nehru and his colleagues refrained from joining the C.W.C. But towards the end of 1950, in October to be more precise, Nehru joined the C.W.C. and the reason he gave was that he felt that he could pursue the policies laid down in Nasik better by being in it! Tandon's reaction to Nehru's constant attempts at capturing the leadership of the party was - "it may be technically correct that the Congress President has a right to advise the Prime Minister. There may perhaps be a interpretation which could be read into the Congress Constitution. But one cannot forget reality. The Congress President cannot interfere in the day to day work of either the government or the Prime Minister. It is just not practicable. It is however clear that the Prime Minister belonging to the Congress party is bound to carry out the Congress mandate and policies".⁵³

In September 1950, Kripalani with some other dissident socialists and Gandhians had formed the Congress Democratic

Front' in a bid to reform the party from within. Nehru had privately endorsed the Front's aims but never joined it. When Tandon directed Kripalani to dissolve it, and Kripalani threatened to resign, Nehru maintained his characteristic silence. In fact, the pressure that was being built by the Democratic Front on the Congress leadership, indirectly helped Nehru, for it was awakening his opponents. It was only after Patel's death that Nehru took the first step towards intervention by introducing unity resolutions. Around November, over 25 M.Ps had asked the Congress President to permit the former Congress socialists and other Congressmen with socialist views to regroup themselves within the Congress.⁵⁴ They pointed out that the socialists had left because of the decision of the party that there could be no organised party within the Congress with a separate Constitution and programme. But since the Democratic Front had been formed, it was pointed out that it was only fair to allow the former C.S.P. and others to regroup themselves within the Congress and give them a chance to work according to their ideals and persuade the Congress for the adoption of a socialistic programme. The tension within the party was increasing and Nehru was only biding his time. Patel was a sick man and dieing. Although all resolutions of that time were passed, it was not without bitter differences being evident in it. The Tandon-Kripalani battle had led many Gandhians to secede from the party and the leadership of the Congress became anxious to prevent

further defections. When the Planning Commission issue had come up, the resolution had been so drafted that the policy of the proposed planning board was made acceptable to the Gandhians without preventing the Congress socialists from accepting it. Although the policy Nehru followed at this time could not be characterised as rigid socialism, but it did lay a great deal of stress on economic planning. The Planning Commission which was set up in 1950 in its draft outline promised much. It said "Planning in a democratic state is a social process in which in some part every citizen should have the opportunity to participate ... In a totalitarian country, planning is in the hands of all powerful central authority. This makes the implementation of plans easier and facilitates the achievement of results relatively quickly. But the acceptance of a totalitarian system involves a sacrifice of certain basic values and while some of its immediate results may appear promising, they are attained under conditions of hardships and sufferings. Democratic processes are more complicated, they make larger demands on the state as well as on the people, but they are an essential condition of growth from within and therefore of sound and enduring progress"⁵⁵ was. The private sector it said, would continue to play an important role both in production as well as in distribution. The principle emphasis was on agriculture and irrigation because of the serious food problem in the country. In its plan for industrial development, the Commission stressed

the importance of development of small scale industries along with large scale industries. However, till 1950, the plans were still on paper, it was only from 1951 onwards that Planning was implemented in the country.

Although Patel had passed away in December of 1950, his close associate Tandon was still quite firmly installed in the post of Congress President. During this period, a number of concessions were made to the Gandhian group in the Congress, and a number of debates and discussions went on in the party. The scope for dissent was yet fairly big. Nehru's efforts to capture the leadership of the party, however, continued unabated leading to innumerable frictions and tensions in the party. A broad consensus on the need to ultimately establish a socialist state was certainly there in the Congress. The right wing-left wing conflict of the pre-partition days had stayed on till 1950, early 1951. With Nehru becoming the Congress President in 1951, this conflict got more or less submerged.

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Chapter 4

Dynamics of Congress Decision-Making
Plan Period 1951-54

India stepped into the period of planning from 1951 onwards, the first plan being for a duration of five years. Nehru's dream of bringing socialism to India, through planning and legislation, in a peaceful, gradual and democratic manner, seemed to be becoming a reality. The objectives of planning had already been specified in the draft resolution prior to 1951 and these now had to be implemented. Promises of the Congress had to be put into practice.

The socio-economic conditions of the country at that time did not provide much of a relief for they were still the years of stupendous problems, of which food scarcity was of course very important, followed by high prices of imported commodities on account of wartime inflation followed by a period of decontrol, shortages of raw materials, natural calamities like earthquakes, floods, draughts, rehabilitation of displaced people etc.¹ Imports from other countries were also not readily forthcoming. The Congress leadership, Nehru included were also conscious more than ever that the economic and political problems of the country had created innumerable difficulties and hardships for the people and what was of greater concern to the leadership was the fact that these economic and political problems were leading to mass discontentment which were manifesting themselves in the form of strikes etc. They were also only

too aware that the left political parties were only looking for an opportunity to transform this growing mass dissatisfaction against the interests of not only the ruling class and the government, but also against the Congress Party. Hence even the most conservative element in the party realised it could not really shut itself off from the radical policies and ideologies which the masses were demanding. This kind of a realisation enabled Nehru to put forward fairly progressive policies, without much delay and opposition. In spite of these opportunities however, Nehru did not really take up a very radical position. In short, Nehru was maintaining, though subject to shifting political and economic conditions, the Gandhian method of a two pronged strategy, where both class conciliation and an indirect attack on the social foundations of exploitation found place, for Nehru maintained his friendship with the propertied classes, even while he kept making promises to establish an egalitarian society. He also introduced legislation through which the private sector would be brought under more effective public regulation and control and strove to remove the exploitative aspects of the zamindari system in the rural areas, but he never really launched a genuine frontal attack on the institutions of private property. In Nehru's words "the work we are starting today is the beginning of a far reaching social revolution", but he went on to add further, "we are now talking in terms of a big revolution a peaceful revolution, not of turmoil, and the breaking of

heads ... of peaceful transformation".² Thus, Nehru set the pace and trend of the kind of revolution he and the Congress wanted for the country. Peace, gradualism, unity and conciliation of the propertied classes became the important means through which Nehru sought to establish his socialism in India. He at the same time stated that he believed to a large extent on the principles of socialism and that "our ultimate aim is as far as I can understand it, is to establish a classless society. When this will be achieved depends on us, on the conditions existing in the world and a 100 other things These things could not be achieved in any dictatorial manner. It was only by adopting the proper method and means, keeping in view the conditions obtaining at a particular moment that any progress could be made in the achievement of this aim".³ Therefore, although Nehru began with fairly radical promises, he ended up in a very mild and ineffective way. The dual policy was continuing. No sweeping constitutional changes were brought about, though radical policies were being "adopted" all the time.

The formation of the Bhodan Movement by V. Bhave in 1951 had to a certain degree influenced the party thinking. The decision of the socialists to work together with the KMPP, had however proved to be a considerable threat to the Congress. The socialists were not only suspicious of Nehru, but were also fairly antagonistic towards him, and they could

rarely bring themselves to come to any agreements as such with him. The socialists, KMPP alliance may have proved to be a potential threat to Congress interests. The Sarvodaya's argument was that the social reforms could not be effectively accomplished by legislation from above. Lohia and his group on the other hand, who were the exponents of the Gandhian-Marxist synthesis felt that constructive work was a necessary part of a political action programme. Nehru expressed his sympathies with all these groups, but never did he go all the way with any one of them. His attempt was to create a broad consensus acceptable to all, within the party, by rallying it around the tasks of economic development.

Around 1953, the Conference of the Asian Socialists, had taken place and India had also sent her representatives. This naturally had some spill off onto the Congress economic policies. As early as in the 1951 election tour in Hyderabad, Nehru had stated that real progress could be achieved in India only when its economy was built on socialist principles, but, he cautioned, one should not expect miracles. Citing the example of China, he said, both the people and the government, were determined to establish socialism, and yet according to their own leaders, it will take not less than twenty years to reach the goal, implying perhaps how much longer it will take in India. Thus, although he raised a lot of hopes on the one hand, on the other hand he saw to it that too much was not

expected of the Congress. However by the end of November, and beginning December many Congressmen, Nehru included visited China and a spirit of competition which had been developing over the years reached its peak and the Congress government, declared openly for the first time, in 1954, that the aim was to achieve a 'socialistic pattern of society'. Subsequently, the party in 1955, at its historic Avadi session adopted a similar resolution. In spite of all the various radical talks, it is important to note, that the fear psychoses of the business community had been decreasing over the years as they came to a better understanding of the Congress policies, and partly because of all the reassurances they received, during that period, both in words and deeds from the Congress government. From strong suspicion, they changed over to enthusiastic acceptance of the government's policies. On the eve of the 1951 elections, the socialists and Gandhian forces were widely scattered. Nehru realised that he would no longer enjoy the support of these groups, who had articulated effectively the various policies of the party in the past years. This knowledge may have also led him to adopt a more conciliatory stand on policy matters, for he did not wish to arouse the opposition's (mainly the conservatives) wrath. In this way, he no doubt hoped to subtly but surely get his way. He, however, could not avoid a certain amount of confrontation occasionally but none were serious enough to jeopardise either his position in the party, or change the policies radically.

Although Patel's death strengthened Nehru's position in the party, he was still not "all powerful" till Tandon, Patel's nominee, remained the President of the Congress. The efforts of both Nehru and Tandon to keep the leadership of the party in their hand, led to many tensions in the party. Many moves were made to install Nehru as the President, and the intra party conflict had reached a precarious position, and Tandon even threatened to resign. Subsequently, Nehru's close associate, R.A. Kidwai resigned both from the government and the party precipitating the crisis further. Nehru further augmented the crisis by threatening to resign himself⁵ both from the C.W.C. and the Central Election Committee and wrote to the party President Tandon, about the same. At the Bangalore session, Nehru could not get Tandon to reconstitute the W.C. and the Central Election Committee and therefore thought that the only course open to him was to resign. Attempts at resolving the crisis, however, went on. Given the critical phase of the country, people could think of any alternative leadership if Nehru really resigned. On the AICC on the other hand, Tandon seemed to have had a substantial majority.⁶ It seemed unlikely for a while that that body will let him go or will ask for the wholesale resignation of the W.C. for Tandon had made it clear that he would have no committee imposed on him. The Nehru-Tandon conflict, reminiscent of the Gandhi-Bose conflict reached a peak, where Nehru insisted on reconstituting the W.C. and Tandon refusing to do so. Since

an alternative to Nehru could not be thought of at that time, Tandon was more or less driven to resign, and Nehru became the President. Soon after he announced his own 15 members C.W.C. and R.A. Kidwai rejoined the Congress. With Tandon's resignation, and Nehru's ascendancy to the Congress Presidency, the opposition in the party weakened considerably and Nehru more or less reigned supreme. None of Nehru's colleagues could be said to have had sufficient prestige or popular standing through which they could challenge his 'advice' effectively. Although the Congress party leaders complained sometimes bitterly in private about Nehru's "doctrinaire" socialist views, none of them could really bring themselves to voice their opposition. In fact, they openly supported him in the annual and other party meetings.

Ever since the Nasik Congress and particularly after Patel's death the basic question for Nehru had consistently been, whether he would stay merely as the head of the government only, a position which was obviously not acceptable to him. However, the fact that nobody both within and outside the party were able to think of any alternative leadership to Nehru, helped to encourage him a great deal, as well as strengthen his position. In fact, many Congressmen had expressed the feeling that it was only under Nehru's leadership that the Congress party could face the electorate with a certain amount of confidence, and that barring Nehru, there was no

leader of the Congress who can hold together the different groups and factions in the Congress.⁷ Nehru however, inspite of his enhanced power, moved with great caution - and here his skill as a master strategist became obvious. He used, for example, his new found authority to select the working committee, with a great restraint. He did not fill it up with his own supporters as was then expected of him. Conservative opinion continued to flourish under his leadership and found more than adequate representation. Even those who disliked Nehru realised, he would not purge at least immediately the national leadership, make way for his own supporters. The maintenance of the nation's unity and the party hegemony no doubt was foremost in the mind of Nehru. It was through this that he hoped no doubt to maintain the status quo so favourable to him and the party leadership. His choice was therefore naturally to use the old Congress strategy of conciliation and cooption rather than confrontation.

Nehru, in a bid to show that he wanted to make an all out attempt to make the Congress adopt socialism not only in words, but also in deeds stated "I had a feeling ever since the Nasik session and before of different pulls in the country and different pulls and ideas in the Congress that was why I brought forward certain resolutions in the Nasik Congress to clarify as to what the Congress stood for, and they were adopted without any difficulty. Nevertheless, I had a feeling that they

were not acted upon in the country as they should have been if they were thoroughly believed in and there was always a pull in a different direction and people seemed to say or whisper, well these are the fads of Nehru, let us humour him and let us go our way".⁸ Presumably, the implication was that what had been left undone, would be undertaken by him.

What was not a very healthy sign, however, was that gradually the intolerance of groupism in the Congress was becoming more and more apparent. In 1951 only, the C.W.C. adopted a brief but strongly worded resolution⁹ warning Congressmen against the formation of groups and parties within the Congress. The Committee also made it clear that Congressmen could not criticise policies of the Congress government, except perhaps in the Committee meetings or party meetings. It was perhaps a warning to the Democratic Front group, and the Committee further warned that any activity contrary to this would be regarded as a breach of discipline. This resolution was more or less unanimously adopted, during Tandon's Presidentship and even though there was speculation that the Prime Minister may take a different view of the matter they came to nought. Nehru stated that he did not want to provoke any crisis and claimed that he stood for the unity of the Congress. In fact, he did make several attempts at bringing about a harmonious working of the Party, through a number of unity resolutions. But Kripalani who was bargain-

ing for positions in the Congress Committees, was quite adamant, and inspite of the persuasions and discussions finally left the Congress along with his supporters to form his own party, the K.M.P.P. With their departure the vocal minority in the Congress had been reduced very considerably. However, because of the forthcoming elections in 1952, the Congress no doubt found it expedient to play a rather cautious role and hence they made a number of appeals to the people to keep their doors open to the Congressmen who had gone out. Nehru even went to the extent of saying that there were no basic differences in so far as the immediate objectives and methods were concerned from the other parties and stressed that a common programme should be strived for. All these gestures were made, not so much because the party was sorry to see a section leave it, as it was because of the immediate compulsions of the time.

The N.D.C. had been created in 1952 primarily to give an opportunity to the Chief Ministers of the States to voice their opinions regarding social and economic policies, but even there, voices of dissent were very rare, and more often than not it was the Prime Minister's voice as the Chairman of the N.D.C. that ultimately prevailed on most of the national policies. Therefore from 1951 onwards it was primarily Nehru who played the predominant role in Congress decision-making and he personally gave content and form to the economic policies

of the party. As a result, the Congress advanced towards socialist goals a trifle more rapidly than before, but certainly not as rapidly as it should have.

In July 1951, the Congress adopted the draft election manifesto which set out the basic principles of the party, in the social, economic and political life.¹⁰ The manifesto was drafted by Nehru himself. It made some concessions to the Gandhian group. The draft stressed the need to value the moral and ethmical bases of national life and make that the condition of political action. Its promises had a familiar ring and was no doubt meant to reassure people, e.g., land reforms, prevention of the fragmentation of holding, cooperative farming, preference to agricultural labourer in the allocation of newly reclaimed lands, encouragement of cottage industries etc. and reiterated government's policy of mixed economy, controlled distribution of commodities which are in short supply and maintenance of relative prices. A new feature was the proposal to make a planned effort to canalise the unused time, skill and other resources on a voluntary basis for the economic and social betterment of the community. In short it promised much to the deprived sections, the common man and projected a future based on egalitarian principles, thereby progressing further in its efforts at establishing a socialist state. However, the word socialism was not yet officially incorporated by the Congress. The Congress of October-November 1951, approved the election manifesto and

stated that it believed that the establishment of a planned economy is essential for the most effective utilisation of the country's resources.

The Congress and Nehru, therefore, never gave up attempts at maintaining their socialist image and credibility. To this end Nehru had taken the initiative of holding discussions with the P.S.P. leadership in 1953, on the question of having a possible coalition. These efforts, however, were by and large confined to the leaders of the party, for many Congressmen were not aware of what was happening and those who knew were extremely reticent about it. Apart from wanting to maintain the socialist image, the political situation in Hyderabad State and possible developments in Andhra had also influenced Congressmen at that time, to seek a coalition with the P.S.P. with the hope that a stable government could be formed. The general feeling however was one of perplexity over the Congress leadership's attempts for a coalition.¹¹ Most of them wondered, why there should be a coalition at all, when they enjoy an overwhelming majority in the House. Many even wondered how the inclusion of a couple of P.S.P. members in the Cabinet would suddenly fill the country with new enthusiasm for the implementation of the plan. Most Congressmen, however, welcomed the return of some distinguished members of the P.S.P. like J.P. and Narendra Deva. The P.S.P. members were equally disturbed over the attempts at coalition. It was suggested

and was probably true, that Nehru was irritated at the thought of the Congress under his leadership being described as a party of the right, by the critics. It was perhaps hoped that a merger would give a face lift to the Congress and a much needed new colouring, making it seem more progressive and radical. The Congress President Nehru, even told the members of the C.W.C. about his attempts at the coalition. Several members of the W.C. however expressed the feeling that there existed a serious divergence of opinion between them and the socialists. The P.S.P. they pointed out criticised the five year plans and maintained a very different stand on foreign policy etc. In any case, the members of the C.W.C. were quite categorical that if at all there was to be any coalition, then the AICC approval was definitely to be taken. In short, the Congress went along with Nehru's economic policies mostly, but on the issue of the coalition, he met quite a bit of resistance and finally the whole idea had to be dropped.

Much emphasis was put on planning, by the Congress, in their bid to keep up a progressive image. 1951, therefore, saw the first few steps being taken in the planning process, a plan which was conceived against the background of the problems, already stated and from which much was expected by both the leaders and those who were led. The ten year programme for land transformation had been launched and was under implementation. Planning, it was hoped would help to

overhaul this backward, under-developed economy, ease the situation, solve the various problems and push India well on the road to progress, leading ultimately to the establishment of an egalitarian state. It was a plan to see through the years of transition and bring back some equilibrium in the national economy and set the ball rolling for future development.

Nehru had persistently stressed the need for the "democratic approach" in dealing with planning. His stress was on avoiding dogmatism of any kind and he stated that as the plans progressed they might be changed to suit the changing circumstances. The first five year plan had made a definite advance over the 6 year plan that had been formulated after a fairly detailed examination of the resources and schemes. The planning method of establishing a socialist state ultimately was suggested both by the Congress and the government. Economic equality and social justice were considered as conditions indispensable for the survival of democracy and the reduction of disparities in both income and wealth, were considered the sine-qua-non of planning. In short, economic equality and social justice (basic features of socialism) became the factors of foremost importance for the Congress. The Planning Commission pointed out that large scale investment by the State on the basic development was a major instrument of bringing about this economic equality and through this the innumerable agriculturists and other rural workers in the country would be able

to build their economic strength.

The abolition of zamindari, the substitution of usury by a system of credit facilities at reasonable rates, the fixing of ceilings and fair rents for tenants, security of tenure for the cultivation were all included as objectives of the plan to bring about economic and social equality.¹² Having reviewed the land reform legislation enacted in some of the States, the Commission recommended for giving greater security to the tiller and pointed out that the main aim in the reorganisation of agriculture should be increased production as well as making cultivation as profitable as possible. The Commission, after reviewing the problem of planning industrial development stated that the Industries (Development and Control) Bill should be passed without the loss of any more time. Although the Central Board of Industries had been suggested by the Parliament's Select Committee, the Commission had made the additional proposals of establishing Development Councils, It also provided the means through which the structure of planning in public and private sector is to be built up and how the field of rural planning, all units, starting with the smallest, should gradually be able to play an active part in formulating and executing programmes.¹³ The plans were, therefore, progressive and it promised much by way of establishing a juster society. Needless to say it was Nehru who was the guiding spirit, though like-minded colleagues in the party, government and the Planning Commission gave the required and

the right kind of support in formulating the plan.

The Subjects Committee of the Congress, in October 1951 unanimously passed the W.C. Resolution on Economic programme.¹⁴ The resolution approved not only the election manifesto but also stressed again the need for planned economy and the resolution further stated that the aim of planning must be the progressive removal of economic and cultural inequalities in order to establish a cooperative commonwealth. Nehru seemingly, became more critical of the capitalist system and more forthright in his desire to establish a socialist state and declared that the capitalist system of society had to be changed and it was in the process of being changed.¹⁵ At the same time, he insisted that it was not something that is easy to attain and that it may yet take time. The Congress, therefore, welcomed the draft 5Yr. Plan and called upon the nation and in particular all Congressmen to offer the fullest cooperation in the execution of the national plan. The party further pointed out and rightly so, that government should take effective steps to fulfill the objectives and called for the cooperation of the community as a whole. It also brought out another important point, that the administrative machinery of the State had to be attuned to present day needs in India, for the effective working of the national plan. It added that "the Congress stands for the progressive extension of the public sector according to the resources and personnel available ... the private sector should function in close accord with

the public sector in the fulfillment of common national objectives".¹⁶

How radical was the Congress stand could easily be judged by gauging the reaction of the business community who had maximum to lose from the radical policies. When the Planning Commission's draft outline of the first five year plan was concluded, the industrialists and labour representatives approved the general approach of the plan and stated that in the conditions of the country, the plan was realistic and modest and was in consonance with the Constitution and the principles of democracy.

After Independence and especially after Nehru became both President of the party and the Prime Minister of the nation, there was a good deal of harmony and coordination between the party and the governmental policies. The government for example passed the Industries Development and Regulation Act of 1951 (brought into force in 1952) which provided for the ordered development of industries under government regulation and control, and although the private sector industries were free to develop on their own lines, in certain circumstances in national interests, the government could exercise control and regulation over them. This act sought to emphasise the need for associating capital with labour for the development of industries and was obviously an attempt at augmenting maximum production. It also perhaps sought to show people the

initiatives being taken by the Congress government in the progressive development of the nation's economy. Development Councils had also been established for different industries which would advise the government on the problems of industries concerned and recommend the steps to be taken to raise productivity and improve efficiency. The Planning Commission had advised the establishment of these Councils.

In 1952, the Congress won the general elections with a majority and formed the new government, and Nehru was unanimously elected leader of the Congress party, in the new Parliament. With this, Nehru's position in the government and the party was further reinforced. In February, Nehru, as the Congress President issued a circular¹⁷ stressing the need for the Congress to function in future as a compact political party. With a well defined economic programme and without any factions or sectional groups. This may have been to maintain party unity, but it reduced considerably the opposition in the party.

Nehru as well as other members of the party and government, spoke in no uncertain terms of the merits of a socialist state and it seemed that Nehru's primary task was to popularise the 5 year plan and make it as acceptable as possible amongst as large a number of people as was practicable. After referring to the attempts made since independence in the direction of planning in individual industries and sectors, Nehru

in 1952 said, "I do not pretend to say that this report of the Planning Commission is a perfect document for the integrated development of this country. But I do say that it is an attempt, if you like a feeble attempt to do that and to view the problem in an integrated way, keeping realities before us. It is an earnest attempt at planning an integrated development of the country".¹⁸ In this way, Nehru had time and again felt it necessary to keep reassuring the people of the good intentions of the party and government, regarding the plans, in order to perhaps sustain the interest and sympathy of the people for the line of economic development and means of achieving socialism which they had laid down. He never forgot to stress the democratic approach in dealing with planning. Other members of the party and government spoke in a similar way and their words reflected the same policy lines laid down by Nehru.

Mr. G.L. Mehta, who was a member of the Planning Commission and Chairman of the Tariff Board pointed out that the five years in which the plans were to be implemented are of crucial importance to every Indian. He cautioned that if there is no proper progress in the economy during this period then the foundations for the future would be rather weak, and then one could not guarantee what would happen in the future. Mehta, who was talking to the Rural Chamber of Commerce, told that the Planning Commission's first aim was

to solve the economic problems the country is facing. Referring to the Commission's draft report he said emphasis had been given to agricultural development because "we want more raw materials and more food", and that agricultural development will lead to greater purchasing power for the villagers. He stated that an integrated industrial development was necessary in order to avoid unhealthy competition so that the small and big industries could fit into each other. He also felt that both the handloom and mill industries could progress hand in hand.¹⁹

C.D. Deshmukh, the Finance Minister, stated that he found it silly that the opposition made constant reference to imperialist powers and strings, inspite of repeated denials on the part of government. He said that it would have been easier to deal with their observations if they had said, "These are our ideas on the subject, we do not believe that mixed economy will work as a very suitable instrument of political progress. We have something on the model of communism or socialism as an answer ... let no one own the instruments of production. One could then discuss these things, may be some of these ideologies may call for the sacrifice of something that we on this side regard as very important - the working of a proper democracy, the maintenance of full freedom and of speech and the sustenance of any effort which in the other system is continued only by a hit and chance

method".²⁰ He further stated that the kind of democracy that the Congress had conceived for the country had in it the "germs of it's own continuance". Surveying the general economic situation prevailing in the country in 1952, he said that even though there was a fall in prices, it did not indicate the beginnings of recession or even of depression. He assured the people that the government was quite aware of the problems in the country and that it would take adequate measures to see that production and employment were not affected by a disorderly movement of prices.

When he had initiated the debate in Parliament on the first plan, Nehru pointed out that the plan was the result of consultations involving many groups. When the Prime Minister's motion seeking a general approval for the popularly elected Chamber for the plan was moved, among those who voted against were the members of the Communist group and allies of the P.S.P. and the national democratic groups. The amendments moved by the opposition were rejected by voice votes. This was but natural, given the numerical strength of the Congress.²¹

Nehru, commending the five year plan to the House of people, had said²² that this was the first attempt in the country to bring the whole picture of India, agricultural, industrial, social and economic, in one framework of thinking and that it was a "tremendous thing attempted and done". The agricultural aspect was stressed "because if we do not have

our agricultural front strong than the industries we seek to build would not be on a strong basis". The ultimate aim, it was told, was to put an end to the great differences between the rich and the poor people, and that in the ultimate analysis, everything would be removed which comes in the way of this process, but removed in a friendly way. Nehru further said "we in India have reacted completely to the laissez faire policy. We have a private sector which we wish to encourage, must fit in with controlled economy. Hence freedom of enterprise would be somewhat limited ... when I think of all this ... something vaster comes before me ... the mighty scene of nation building ... but we are trying to catch up as fast as we can with the industrial revolution". Referring to the big gap between the estimate of the cost of the plan and the resources which are available, Nehru said, it is hoped that "we may be able to find more resources. We may get some help from outside, we have got some already".

Nehru subsequently initiated the debate of the plan in the Council of States²³ and covered almost the same points he had put forth in the other House. He said the plan was an attempt at "an integrated development" of the country aimed at "progressive socialism". On private and public sectors industry, he said "it is our intention that the public sector of industry should grow and progressively grow at the expense of the private sector".

In the final version of the first 5 year plan, one could see the definite stamp of Nehru's new found authority

over national questions. The controls to be exercised over the private enterprises were also becoming obvious and at the same time the strategy for peaceful development of the economy remained consistent. It is true that in the final version of the first plan the undiluted capitalist form of development was rejected and a number of measures for land reforms were introduced, and the change over from individual to cooperative pattern of economic activity was given a lot of importance. In short, through the objectives laid down in the plan, the Congress could easily claim that it had moved ahead in the establishment of an egalitarian state. It was therefore to be socialism through planning, gradually and in a democratic way.

For the Congress, the acceptance of the plan by the nation would have been ^a feather in its cap, for the plan incorporated most of the major issues suggested by the Congress for the development of the Indian economy. The plan also recommended the community development programmes which served many purposes. It kept the socialist and Gandhian element happy with it. It was a method of bringing about changes without involving a frontal attack on the propertied classes. In the words of the planners, equality and social justice became "both the means and the goal of India's development and the entire planning effort". Nehru through the plan managed to retain the tactical separation between an accommodative party ideology which sought to reassure the propertied classes

and an economic strategy which would bring institutional changes and speed up popular support.

Nehru personally made every effort to popularise the plan amongst the people and the party men as much as possible. When he went to Travancore Cochin on a visit in 1952²⁴ he is believed to have commended the five year plan to the Congressmen in his address. At that time the proceedings were not open to the Press, but it was learnt that Nehru took the opportunity to stress the need to mobilise enthusiasm for the plan, and to take it as their duty. Nehru emphasised that they had somehow got to get the plan going and once they have done that, it would be possible to lay the foundations for rapid progress.

Almost all the top leaders of the Congress spoke in a similar vein and Rajaji had added his little bit when he said that the national plan would crumble into waste paper, if people did not work hard. "I can add nothing to the fervent appeal made by our illustrious and beloved Prime Minister. It's quite a new adventure for the government, working under and through democratic institutions to frame and execute a long term plan. The five year plan that India has adopted is based on two assumptions, one that government can and will take all measures firmly to hold the price line and so that all men will sincerely and intelligently put forth labour in the nation's interests as the planners have planned".²⁵

The decisions in the party were taken somewhat on the following line. Certain policies, goals and objectives were laid down by the Congress leadership, which percolates down to as many Congressmen as is possible and a general consensus is obtained. After that the party adopts it in the form of a resolution and the government gives concrete shape to it and sees to the implementation of these policies. While replying to the opposition, whether in the government or in the party (which became increasingly rare) party leaders again and again specified their stand on economic policy. Their stand did not vary much over the years, except for some emphasis here and there.

The Minister for Planning, G. Nanda, for example, winding up the four and a half day ^{Lok Sabha} debate²⁶ referred to above, claimed that the plan was a radical one seeking to abolish privileges and unearned income and realise social and economic equality. However, like Nehru, he too cautioned that all the objects could not be attained in the next 3 years, but hastened to add it would be achieved as rapidly as possible with each successive plan. He claimed that if they forced the pace it would only be harmful in the long run. The minister added that the Planning Commission believed in "gradualism" and said "we want rapid changes, but we also want that the development should be orderly and peaceful. Subject to that let us go as far as we want to and as fast as we can". In an attempt

to point out that the plan was the outcome of a number of consultations, he stated "it can be categorically said that there was no kind of narrow political view at all in our mind", and he sought to reassure the people that the plan was not supposed to serve the interest of any party. The minister also pointed out that between the period of the draft outline and the emergence of the final plan, consultations were held with various party leaders, and expressed his surprise at the party leaders who had alleged that they had not been associated and their views not taken into consideration. The minister confidently commented "let the members examine the contents of the draft outline and the contents of the final plan. They will see evidence of the impact of whatever opinions they had expressed and their suggestions finding a place in the document"

The C.W.C. which met in June 1952, sought to consider the economic programme which should be pursued by the central and state legislature.²⁷ The Committee had a general discussion of the five year plan and Nanda, who was the minister for Planning, played a prominent role explaining the various points raised. Two points of view were put forth in regard to the plan, one section laid emphasis on decentralisation and utilisation of the enormous man power and labour available in the country. The other point placed before the Committee was to take up the big schemes and go ahead with them and increase production quickly. Those who favoured this view

pointed out that the Planning Commission had not ruled out any small scale industries or village industries or minor irrigation projects. While the reforms contemplated were mainly the abolition of zamindari and land tenure reform, the question of cooperative farming for increasing agricultural production and preventing fragmentation also figured in the Committee's deliberations.

Around August of 1952, the C.W.C. discussed in details the land reforms.²⁸ The discussions had taken place on the basis of various notes circulated separately by the Planning Minister Nanda, the Secretary-General of the Congress Parliamentary party, Mahtab and an independent member of Parliament, Sardar Lal Singh. There was a broad agreement on the point that there should be no intermediary between the tiller and the State. The Committee however left it to the discretion and judgement of the various states as to how they would solve this problem. They had arrived at this decision keeping in view the fact that conditions differed widely from state to state. They also decided that the maximum individual holdings would also be left to the states to decide. Everyone however agreed that there was the need to have cooperative farming and encourage its development as much as possible. These progressive measures were indeed welcome from a fairly conservative party like the Congress. It was not, however, only ideological commitment that brought this about. The results

of the 1952 elections had shaken the complacency of the Congress a great deal. The election results had shown that the socialists and left parties were quite strong and that the position of the Congress had weakened somewhat. As Ashoka Mehta pointed out that in terms of the votes polled, the socialists and the KMPP had ranked next to the Congress in popularity. This was a fairly big threat to the Congress, which motivated it to review its policies and take stock of the situation, if it wished to retain its position of power.

Around September 1952, the C.W.C.²⁹ in its meeting expressed the hope that the immediate programme of the five year plan will lay adequate stress on the achievement of food self-sufficiency, growth of basic and small scale industries and increasing opportunity for employment. The text stated "the great and urgent task before the people of India is to direct all their energies in a disciplined and organised way towards economic progress, greater production, more equitable distribution and the raising of the standards of the people and thus to realise the objectives laid down in the Constitution" and what is of significance was "in order to do this the rate of economic progress will have to be quickened and deliberate steps will have to be taken to bring about equality and progressively reducing disparities of income and property. Advance must be based on a transformation of the structure of the economy of the country, enabling greater capital formation by all feasible methods and a greater investment in development

schemes which will expand employment and increase the purchasing power of the people". The AICC terminated with the hope that the immediate programme of the five year plan will lay adequate stress on the achievement of food self-sufficiency as well as the growth of small and basic industries and an increasing opportunity for unemployment.

Later, a resolution on economic policy draft was moved by the C.W.C. N.V. Gadgil³⁰, while giving his arguments pointed out that through this resolution the Congress was trying to carry out the obligations stated in the preamble of our Constitution, in order to reconstruct society on a new basis. He stressed that trade should be based instead of competition and private profit on cooperation and service of the community. S.N. Aggarwal who had seconded the resolution looked at it as a landmark in the history of the Congress because it went furthest of all Congress resolutions on economic reconstruction. The main point of the resolution being the progress of the country's economic life based on peaceful and cooperative work. Mr. Shastri, taking part in the debate stated that Congressmen should render active help in the implementation of those policies especially like the work community projects. All the amendments which had been put forward were withdrawn finally and the resolution passed. Nehru took the opportunity to clarify that this was not a mere expression of pious wishes but an affirmation of their faith in certain fundamentals and he quite categorically stated that it was not merely some

wishful thinking, for he knew that that would not help anyone. He went on to say that it would be wrong to say there was nothing new in the resolution. No doubt the Congress had said these and so many things even in the past, but what was new was the fact that it was being said when Congress had been invested with a great responsibility. Through this the Congress leadership sought to reassure the masses that their's was not merely a pious declaration. The fact that all amendments were withdrawn and the resolution passed, was significant for it showed up how ineffective was the opposition in the party. In fact this session of the Congress in Indore was noted chiefly for the changes in the Congress Constitution in order to better coordinate the work of legislative and organisational wings of the party - these changes did help to reinforce the tendency which had been on the increase i.e. to strengthen the Parliamentary wing at the expense in terms of real powers of the party.

While the Congress continued to reassure the masses, it simultaneously continued to keep the business community as pleased as possible. Business men continued their tactics of going on demanding and getting as much of concession as they could from the government. When a group of industrialists³¹ had met the Commerce and Industries Minister, T.T. Krishnamachari in May 1952, they told him that owing to several factors such as fall in purchasing power, restriction of credit and comparative improvement in supplies, several industries had

been finding it difficult to maintain production, because of the fall in sales. A readjustment of the import and export policy was called for in the light of these factors. The spokesman of the industries said they would continue to cooperate with the government in maintaining and increasing production, but the flow of production could be sustained only by steady demand, resulting in quick sales. Hence, they said, the government must look into their problems.

The Minister had reassured the deputation that their point of view would be taken into consideration and he said government was well aware that industry was passing through a difficult time both in India and abroad. The Minister hoped that with the cooperation of all concerned it would be possible to overcome the present difficulties and to maintain and improve production. In June 1952, in the House of the People, T.T. Krishnamachari stated that he did not propose to walk into the communist trap and dispossess foreign industry. He also added that the government had complete control over every industry, whether it was owned by a foreigner or an Indian. "If foreign interests at time attempt to interfere with the sovereignty of the people than I shall recommend to the Prime Minister that the foreign interests should be eliminated".³² As far as trade with Russia was concerned, he wanted to know why the Russian Embassy did not ask its trade Commissions to go around and canvas bussiness as the other embassies did. T.T. Krishnamachari told a meeting of the Indian Merchants,

Chambers Bombay, that the government was not wedded to any doctrinaire policy about the suitability or otherwise of nationalisation for the development of Indian industries. He in fact stated that government would encourage private enterprise to play its part in the country's industrial development to the extent that it could undertake and accomplish the tasks required of it in the sphere of industrialisation.

Not only capitalists at home were kept happy, but those outside the country were also kept reassured. The new Ambassador to the U.S.A. while making his first major speech³³ in 1952 on his country's commercial policies in an address to the Far East American Council of Commerce and Industry said, in India's "mixed economy" some measure of public control was necessary and unavoidable but private enterprise still had ample scope. He further added, "India believes in a democratic system of governance, it's Constitution provides full rights and freedoms for the individual. These are rights which the people of India cherish and which the government of the land is fully determined to maintain. It is not, therefore, open to them to adopt methods of economic development which involve coercion or bring about a realignment of productive forces nor do they believe in violent short cuts for achievement of objectives. The government and the people are not prepared to trade human liberty for some schematic conceptions or sacrifice fundamental moral value for a creed". He however clarified that India was not either prepared to go on waiting indefinitely for any

economic and political system which does not produce beneficial results. He spoke of the role of the foreign investor, in India and said that a free flow of foreign capital would be welcome particularly because it would ensure the supply of capital goods, technology etc.

All attempts were therefore made to woo outside help and aid, and Nehru himself had given his blessings to the same. C.D. Deshmukh had expressed the hope that "the realisation that the people of this country are doing the utmost in their power to help themselves, will widen the flow of assistance from our friends outside".³⁴ Sure enough, when the World Bank aided mission came to India³⁵ to study the situation and held a series of discussions with the management of various companies and government representatives, they showed their favourable disposition to the Indian needs, and it paid rich dividends in the form of more aid to the country. Foreign aid was therefore given a fair amount of encouragement, even if it was from a capitalist country, which would certainly never encourage socialist policies in the aid receiving countries.

When the NDC was formed in 1952, it too expressed its general approval and acceptance of the objectives and priorities and programmes embodied in the five year plan. The land policy which was incorporated in the draft five year plan was also given its approval. Therefore, another forum had by its approval, reinforced the Congress economic policies.

On the agrarian question the Planners had endorsed the recommendations of the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee to establish a ceiling at three times the "family holding". Ceilings were imposed on both the land under the direct cultivation and ownership and to the amount of land that could be resumed from the tenants at will for the purpose of personal cultivation. It also laid down that if owners did not act to resume their holdings, tenants, would be protected by a five year lease and legal rent was to be not more than 1/4th or 1/5th of the produce. The Planners also provided that all tenants of non-resumable land should be permitted to acquire full ownership rights in return for compensation to the landlord at rates established by legislation etc.

In spite of all these provisions, the recommendations for land reforms and cooperative village management, however, fell short of the generalised attack on private ownership rights in land that had been typical of the 1949 Report of the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee. The Planning Commission too through its proposals reflected the attempts of the Congress at making moderate land policies, compatible with the practice of accommodative politics. The Planners did not suggest any time table as such for the achievement of the ultimate goal of cooperative village management, and yet the Planners believed that their proposals for land reforms represented an important victory for the goal of a socialist pattern. Their recommendations for

ceilings and cooperatives had been endorsed by the Cabinet, the Lok Sabha and the Congress party. In 1953, Nehru claimed that they had been able to achieve quite a lot for "we have gone some way towards this end by putting an end to zamindari, jagirdari etc."³⁶

Although there was speculations around 1953 that the Congress objective of "cooperative commonwealth" may be changed into a "classless society based on democratic socialist principles" - it did not quite materialise as early as that. But in January of 1953, the Congress session that met, took on the most important task of chalking out a definite programme of action for Congressmen throughout the country by which the nation's energy could be concentrated on the implementation of the five year plans.

When the Subjects Committee of the Congress met on 17th January, 1953, it discussed Nanda's resolution of the 5 year plan.³⁷ Although 17 amendments were moved, all of them were withdrawn or rejected (as had become the practice). Mr. Sethi from Madhya Bharat, in the debate that ensued, alleged that the Congress was losing touch with the masses. Unless they reformed, the services and took adequate steps to see that they were enough to show that the services were far from imbued with honesty and spirit of service. Mr. Sethi stated that he wanted to draw the attention of the Congress High Command to the state of affairs in the services. Mr. Ramaswami (Mysore) moved an amendment that the policy of land the tiller

must be laid down in the five year plan. The people who were actually producing the wealth in the country were not satisfied, and the plan did not quite contemplate that the land should belong to the tiller. He pointed out that it was precisely because of these reasons that the Congress had not been able to answer the challenge from other political parties. V. Subba Rao had tabled the amendment urging a policy of decentralisation and recommending corrupt village economy. Tirumal Rao from Andhra wanted the resolution to call on "the public services of the central and state governments to put forth their sincere and patriotic effort in the implementation of the plan. He pointed out that the country was impatient for a very speedy development and that other political parties were giving gratuitous advice to the masses. The C.P.I., for example, was vociferously critical of the Congress and they were telling the masses they possessed a formula and prescription with a certified table "direct from Russia". He further stated that the socialists who were only a handful preached like 'modern bhikkus' and he urged that no legislative interference should be there in the implementation of the plan. He condemned, red tapism and concluded that if the Congress failed in this country, there was no alternative except complete autocracy.

Nanda, while replying to the debate, stated that most of the amendments tabled, would not have arisen had the members taken the trouble to go through the plans properly.

He said it was incorrect to say that the resolution appeared to be more a resolution of the government rather than the Congress. In fact, the plan was the people's plan and the report of the Planning Commission had devoted a considerable space to the great necessity for public cooperation. He, however, accepted that the success of the plan depended on the efficiency of the administration. He added that the deal of the Sarvodaya was kept in view while drafting the plan, though the word itself may not have been mentioned. The plan had also taken care to see that large scale industry did not flourish at the cost of cottage industries, the minister added. The resolution however was unanimously accepted.

Immediately after this, the Committee adopted unanimously a resolution appreciating the Bhoodan Movement.³⁸ The resolution that was moved appealed to the people, especially Congress workers to give active support to it. It was also pointed out that it was not possible to establish the cherished goal of classless society without solving the complex problem of land, which could not be and should not be distributed by force. The Steering Committee adopted it, but Nehru had pointed out that it was received as a non-official resolution. While talking of the plan, Nehru had indicated that the five year plan is a party plan, and the best chance of getting the people as a whole, to work it is to recognise this. In spite of the efforts of the Congress to try to make out the plan to be the outcome of a number of consultations, it was known fairly well

that it was only towards the last stage of the formulation, did a rather perfunctory attempt to consult a number of parties and individuals were made, and only a few things here and there had been incorporated. The plan therefore could not really be considered a nationally approved plan, as the Congressmen were making it out to be.

When the Congress met for its 58th session on 18th Jan., 1953, Nehru's presidential address, once again contained much on the five year plans. In a survey of the achievements made since independence and the problems before the country, laid stress again on the implementation of the five year plan. Describing the plan as "modest but with far reaching consequences", and "I have no doubt that if we succeed in implementing this plan, we shall then be in a position to go ahead at a much faster pace. The abolition of zamindari, jagirdari and like system should be contemplated as rapidly as possible. A ceiling should be put on land and cooperative farming should be encouraged".³⁹

When the C.W.C. met later, in May in a resolution on social and economic programme for the country, it urged that every effort should be made to quicken the pace of the Congress more especially in regard to land reform and industrial growth. The resolution said "since the attainment of independence, economic and social programme have become matters of urgency and the pace of such progress has to be swift enough in order

to yield adequate results the Congress has welcomed the first five year plan as the basis of national advancement and every effort should be made towards implementing this plan in full".⁴⁰ The Working Committee also desired that every effort should be made to quicken the pace of progress more especially in regard to land reforms and industrial growth. It went on to say that the major test of the success of any plan is the measure in which it deals with the problem of unemployment, for in a welfare state, unemployment should have no place and the opportunities for work should be available to all those who desire it. The Committee however noted that it may not be possible to achieve all this in a short period. Maulana Azad voiced opinions similar to other Congress leaders when he said, "the country will be judged by their efficacy in solving the problem of unemployment. It is an essential condition for a welfare state that there shall be no unemployment. If India wants to be a welfare state, it must create conditions for full employment as early as possible. In this connection, emphasis has been placed on progressive introduction of measures such as compulsory savings, small scale national savings ..."⁴¹

S.N. Aggarwal, the Secretary of the Congress said that he attached great importance to the resolution on social and economic reforms which was passed by the Working Committee in a press conference.⁴² As far as the problem of unemployment is concerned, the Congress through its governments would try

to resolve it on all fronts, he added. The resolution had mentioned the reorganisation of the administration to achieve good results. Such statements by the leaders of the Congress, coupled with the fact that most of the resolutions on economic policies were unanimously passed were definite indications that the Congress was moving forward in adopting progressive policies.

Regarding the policy of mixed economy, in 1951, Nehru had specified clearly that the policy the Congress party was pursuing was a one of "mixed economy", while replying to the critics of the party's policies and programmes. He said, "we have been criticised for our economic policies and some are perhaps justified. But I feel that the criticisms would have had more weight if they had been based more on facts. Inevitably, our policy has been that of what is called a mixed economy with a public and private sector. A policy of pure laissez-faire is not feasible and must therefore be rejected. The only alternative to a mixed economy is something in which the private sector hardly plays any important part We have felt that there is still an honourable place for private enterprise, but if we have a national plan, as we must, the private sector must accept the objectives of that plan and fit into it. To what extent there should be a private or public sector must therefore be judged by the results achieved. Any plan will involve certain controls, certain priorities and the adjustments of conflicting claims. It involves also a balance

between the present benefits and future progress.⁴³ Further explaining the basic factors which influenced the government in placing a programme of mixed economy for the country, Nehru in 1953 had said that there is a tendency in over collectivisation for democracy to be thrown overboard. The government, he further stated, had no desire to take on an extreme left or an extreme right position, they were not in favour of either the free unrestricted private enterprise or for complete elimination of private enterprise. He also stated that India adopted the planned or controlled economy which meant that the economy of the country would be given a proper direction so as to produce real benefit to the masses. By controlled economy he meant more effective controls and not a multitude of controls all over.

In 1953, the Commerce and Industries Minister introduced in the House of People a bill to remove "some of the difficulties experienced in the working of the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act", perhaps in a bid to make their policies more effective. At the same time in the Working Committee resolutions adopted at that time by the Congress, it was evident that the serious consequences of the deterioration in the economic conditions of the country had been becoming more and more apparent to the Congress, and the fact that economic and social progress had not been all that quick. As Balwant Rai Mehta, General-Secretary said, "the INC has more than once declared its approval of the first five year plan", and urged all Congressmen especially

to work hard for its success. "In the Soviet Union", he pointed out, "we must remember that the key to their success can be traced to the manner in which they associated the people in the formulation of the plans as well as their implementation".⁴⁴ Valuable discussions held with political parties and various other bodies, it was stated helped in broad basing the plan. Even though the Congress leadership realised that the plans had not been a roaring success, none of them agreed to budge even an inch from the basic policies.

All this while however, the Congress never failed to keep the business community reassured. Obviously it was a very reassured FICCI who approved of the objectives of the 5 year plan as laid down by the government. It passed a resolution pledging the whole hearted and active cooperation of the business community in the implementation of the plan. While recognising that the plan envisaged a dynamic and continuous process of nation building, the FICCI hoped that the Planning Commission would continue to examine from time to time its policies and targets with a view to ensuring the maximum benefits to the country. The resolution was moved by Birla and was passed by the FICCI.⁴⁵

Nehru was able to, no doubt, keep the balance between the different groups and factions in the party, and thereby was able to preserve the hegemony of the party. But rivalries between different groups was not uncommon, and each one tried to pull the Congress in their direction. However, these

differences were never serious enough to jeopardise the party unity. An understanding of the working of these groups no doubt would provide a comprehensive picture of Congress decision-making.

At the Hyderabad session, in 1953, the Congress in its bid to keep every group happy had adopted two resolutions which were passed to demonstrate the party's commitment to Gandhian principles. One was on the Bhoodan Movement and the other regarding cooperatives. The first plan had not made much of a provision for decentralised economy on Gandhian lines as such and the growth of unemployment midway through the first plan, was attributed by the Gandhian groups to this factor, and because of the neglect of village and cottage industries. The Gandhians felt that the standard of living could be improved and the reduction of unemployment and underemployment could be brought about by modelling the Indian economy on their pattern of decentralisation. The introduction of the western style socialism based on large scale industries would, they feared destroy the way of life of the people. The government however did not quite accept the Gandhian analysis of the cause of unemployment, though they made some concessions to them.

The Congress President Dhebar had given active and strong support to Gandhian economic ideals. The Gandhians in the Congress were convinced that India's economic problems

could be solved through village and cottage industries, and other Gandhian ideals, and they continued to press their cause in the Working Committee. They asked the Committee to approve a proposal which asked to survey the extent to which state governments carried out the recommendations on village and cottage industries contained in the first plan. Shriman Narayan, another ardent Gandhian promised to undertake the task of collecting the required data. Talking to a press conference the enthusiastic Gandhian stated that the Congress would at a session of the AICC to be convened at Ajmer "chalk out a definite programme regarding the economic policy of the Congress, particularly relating to land reforms and the development of large scale, small scale and village and cottage industries".⁴⁶ However, the subsequent Working Committee meetings proved that Shriman Narayan had overestimated the extent of Congress approval on these issues. Narayan addressed a circular letter to the Congress Chief Ministers enquiring about the implementation of the plan's recommendations. When the Working Committee met informally prior to the Ajmer session of 1953, they were sharply divided on the issue, resulting in a deadlock. Whereas one group strongly supported the Gandhian desire to prevent "unhealthy competition", the second group advocated the establishment of large scale modern industries. Later, when the full Working Committee met, Narayan had more shocks in store for him. Dr. B.C. Roy, Chief Minister of West Bengal, who was

known for his unsympathetic view of the Gandhian economics, raised several objections, especially of the events of the weeks that had preceded the meeting. He protested the harrassment from "numerous circulars" issued by the AICC. He also complained that he had been reading a good deal in the press about an informal Working Committee meeting, and yet he had never been officially informed of the discussions, nor he said were the discussions incorporated in the official official minutes of the Working Committee. However, Nehru true to his style tried to pacify the Chief Minister and reassured Roy that the circulars were harmless and well intentioned and that there was no need to throw up so much dust. Nehru broke the deadlock by proposing some resolutions and by stating that no decisions had been taken in the meeting from which Dr. Roy was absent. The Ajmer Resolution showed up once again, the efforts of Nehru to steer a middle path between those who wanted large scale industries, and the Gandhians, for the resolution called for both large scale and cottage industries. The compromise efforts served to allay the fears of the Gandhians to a certain extent.

The socialists outside the Congress were slowly gaining ground. They were even being credited with the power to do things at least as well as the Congress, and there were speculations of the possibility of the P.S.P. replacing the Congress as the ruling party. All this caused a lot of alarm in the

Congress quarters and hastened the process of adopting a socialist policy. There was a realisation that things were not shaping up as it should, and the question as to who was responsible for such a state of affairs was in the minds of all the people. Some felt that the responsibility lay with the state, whereas others blamed the private capitalists. This battle of private versus public was joined by ex Finance Minister and the then Minister Deshmukh. Mathai pointed out that "those who advocated the adoption of a policy of stepping up investments in the private sector demand that the freedom and burden of taxation, on the capitalists be reduced. This is the most concrete manner in which they ask first to encourage greater investment of private capital. This however is a demand which it is impossible for the state to consider since it will upset the budgets of the central and state governments not to speak of knocking the bottom out of various projects in the plan. Deshmukh stated "there has been a change in world conditions and here we come to factors over which we have no control, and which could not be fore-told. There has been a change in world conditions, as I have said, a general change over from a seller's into a buyer market'. In other words the much advertised improvement in the level of production was a result of the boom in the world market which made its appearance in the wake of the Korean war and its aftermath. Now that the boom is slowly giving place to a depression in the capitalist world market to which our economy is tied "adjustments" have to be made to these changes. Such a long

drawn out justification to protect the capitalists interests!

The Minister for agriculture came out openly against the very idea of fixing a ceiling on land holdings.⁴⁸ This view of the central minister for Agriculture was strongly supported by the majority of states Ministers for Agriculture who had gathered for a conference in Delhi. This opposition of the central and state ministers for agriculture to the programme of fixing a ceiling on holding was so revolting to the General-Secretary of the INC, S.N. Aggarwal, that in an editorial article in the AICC Economic Review, dated 15th October, he openly came out denouncing the agriculture minister and the state ministers for flouting decisions of the AICC. In fact although the ceilings issue had played a role at a series of three Working Committee meetings, the difficulty of reaching a consensus prevented the passing of an official resolution as late as January 1953, which came after holding innumerable informal talks and formal sessions. Most of the resistance to the ceilings issue came from the state leadership, but the central Congress leadership was by and large in favour of ceilings and this was incorporated in the final version of the first plan. Subsequently after the party endorsed the land reform resolution however the Working Committee found it necessary to pass a series of resolutions in an attempt to make the Congress ministeries at the state level to actively try and implement the various provisions of the plans. The Working Committee had in fact passed a number of resolutions

on the land problem, demanding redistribution among landless labourers, collection of the requisite land data, fixation of ceilings etc.

By 1954, the term socialism was being more frequently and openly used, at the party and the government level. In his Presidential address in January 1954, Nehru referred to the rural development and other problems of development. He said "our strength lies not merely in the cities but much more so in the country-side where thousands of millions of our people dwell ... unemployment, on a large scale casts a blight on many groups lives and is one of our major problems. We cannot remove it by some magic but we can gradually put an end to it by proper planning and hard work ... as for nationalisation most of us accept, the broad principles of socialism, though we may not agree on any dogmatic approach to it. Where nationalisation is obviously beneficial, we should not hesitate. Indeed, we have built up already a large number of magnificent state owned undertakings and their number is growing. Why should we use up our slender resources in the acquisition of old industries when we want to start new ones? Each question must be examined on its merits. We must remember that the complicated problems of any country are not solved by a blind attempt to copy some other. The U.S.A. is a great and highly industrialised country - are we to introduce their methods and techniques in our underdeveloped economy? Or are we to copy the Russian method regardless of their applicability

here? We have to face the problem of a heavily populated and underdeveloped country which is trying to make good in a democratic and peaceful way. On no account are we prepared to adopt the method of violence or any other methods which we consider wrong. This is not only a principle we stand by, but good practical politics, for methods of violence would inevitably produce conflicts and disruption and put an end to all progress".⁴⁹ We quote Nehru at length here to indicate, how even, as late as 1954, the Congress was still rocking between the capitalist and the communist world, and how foggy their own concept of socialism was, inspite of the fact they had been using it so often. No doubt, as time went by, as the frustration of the people increased, they realised they had to resort to more and more socialist slogans to control the restive masses and they indeed did, as stated before start using the term more frequently, but the fact remains, they were still not absolutely clear on this issue. They were simultaneously aware that the building of basic and key industries was heavily dependent on foreign investment and private sector industries. Hence, they were chary of speaking of nationalisation as an obvious solution.

The new principles and directions of social and economic policies were settled by late 1954. As a result of Nehru's initiative, the problem of formulating an economic development strategy was subsequently considered from a dual perspective. It was agreed that over the period of 10-15 years, India should

advance towards a socialist economy in which the public sectors share of investment and output in organised industries was significantly increased relative to that of the private sector and during this same period the foundations of a self-reliant industrial economy should be created and the problem of unemployment solved.

The business community continued to make their demands from a sympathetic government. The FICCI at its 27th annual session adopted a resolution on unemployment and economic development, and appreciated all that had been done by the government - for industrial and general economic development of the country. They however felt that the rate of progress was quite disappointing and therefore suggested that various measures for creating the proper climate in which private enterprise may freely function and called on the government to remove the numerous barrier which stand in its way. P.M. had given a very sympathetic hearing and reassurance to them.⁵⁰

Nehru towards the later part of 1954, expressed the desire for wanting to resign from Congress Presidentship. He had more or less achieved what he had wanted to i.e., of gaining the supreme position and hold of the party, of shaping the policies of the party according to his principles and ideas. The Congress found a comparatively unknown figure - U.N. Dhebar to succeed Nehru, perhaps with the hope of keeping him as a mere figurehead. Congress planners were also becoming increasingly

interested in China's economic programme, because of what they considered to be striking similarities in the experience and problems of the two countries, especially cause it served as though, both the nations were dedicated to moving towards similar social and economic goals. High ranking officials of the Congress party, Parliament, the Minister for Food and Agriculture, the Planning Commission, etc. visited China. Both Nehru and Mahalanobis visited too and came back convinced that "China provided a better model of development for India than the advanced western countries". Nehru also found "one of the most important and impressive things that is happening in China is the rapid growth of agricultural and industrial cooperatives."⁵¹ He was sufficiently persuaded of the relevance of the Chinese experience for India to recommend in late 1955, that a special duty team be sent there to enquire into the causes of "the phenomenal growth in agricultural cooperatives". The recommendations of the Committee of Direction of the rural credit survey were, in fact, designed not only to remedy the economic weaknesses of agricultural cooperative society, but to refashion them so that, like their organisational counterparts in China, they might facilitate government regulation and control over agricultural savings and surpluses.

The Kumarappa Committee on Agrarian Reforms Committee of 1948 had submitted its report which influenced all schemes and reforms subsequently proposed by the Congress as well as the legislative measures adopted by the States. However,

although this report influenced Congress government policies, it was never formally accepted by the Congress! On the question of ceilings as in other matters, difference of opinions continued in the Congress, though it could not make very much of an impact on the policies as a whole. As Malaviya pointed out "we are surprised to observe that the Union Minister for Agriculture, Dr. Punjabrao Deshmukh openly opposed the basic principles of fixing ceiling on existing land holdings and observed that such a policy of interference with rural life would "recoil on us. Deshmukh is of course entitled to his own views in the matter. But these must be regarded as his personal opinions and not the view of the Planning Commission or the G.O.I. or the Congress. It was thus, not possible for the agricultural ministers' conference to arrive at any conclusions contrary to the decisions of the Planning Commission and the AICC".⁵²

It was around November 1954, that Nehru categorically and openly stated a socialist state was what he had in mind. While addressing N.D.C. Nehru observed that the picture he was having in mind was definitely and absolutely a socialistic picture of society. He was not using the word in a dogmatic sense at all, but in the sense of meaning largely that the means of production should be socially owned and controlled for the benefit of society as a whole. He emphasised, however, that there was plenty of room for the private enterprise, provided the main aim was kept clear. While considering it

"immoral" to base society purely on the acquisitive society, the Prime Minister said he had no intentions of doing away with private enterprises. While discussing the industrial policy⁵³ of the government, Nehru told the N.D.C. that some revision of the 1948 policy was called for. At the meeting of the Congress Parliamentary party too, Nehru explaining the government's economic policy reiterated that India's goal was a socialistic economy. In a backward country like India, there could be no other goal. Since in India conditions were different, the method too would differ, Nehru stated. Nevertheless Indian policy would be directed towards the same goal of a socialist economy, as China or Russia. Nehru characterised the criticism of the economic policy of the government made by the P.S.P. as unrealistic. When the Congress talked of socialism the P.S.P. seemed to resent it, Nehru stated, "as if socialism is their copy right".⁵⁴ Nehru repeatedly said that whatever one might feel, the country was definitely moving towards a socialistic pattern of society. The Lok Sabha on 22nd December set its seal of approval for the country's economy to be progressively fashioned on a socialistic pattern of society. The House accepted an amendment moved by Congress member. The amendment read : This House having considered the economic situation in India and the policies of the government ... is of the opinion that (i) the policy of the government is in harmony with the policy statement of 1948; (ii) the objective of our economic policies

should be a socialistic pattern of society; and (iii) towards this end the tempo of economic activity in general and industrial development in particular should be stepped up to the maximum extent possible".⁵⁵

Although the Congress commitment to socialism was welcomed throughout most of the country, it created a split among the Gandhians. The most orthodox warned that the Congress commitment was a radical departure which might cause greater defections. However they may have expressed themselves, the Gandhians were still concerned about things and the implications of socialism. They tended to mistrust those who conceded a place to village and cottage industries out of non-idealistic motives. The 1954, parliamentary resolution on socialistic pattern, did cause a certain amount of uneasiness amongst the business community, but the ministers of the time always hastened to reassure them. There was, therefore, not much of criticism of the government's economic policy as there was of the Constitution amendment Bill, whose provisions were a logical follow of the former. In other words, though progressive economic policies were accepted, attempts to fix ceilings on land holdings and the distribution of excess land with little compensation produced a number of controversies. In any case, by this time, the firm control of Nehru over the party, the disappearance of effective opposition in the party, were factors that were fairly well established. The government resolution set the ground and paved the way to the 1955 Avadi resolution of the INC.

1. Fourth Year of Freedom, 1950-51, I.N.C., New Delhi.
2. Nehru on Community Development, p. 22.
3. The Hindu, December 13, 1951.
4. Ibid., December 16, 1951.
5. Ibid., August 11, 1951.
6. Ibid., August 16, 1951.
7. Ibid., August 11, 1951, reported "Enquiries show that there is no one in the C.W.C., who dares to think in terms of an alternative leadership in the present critical situation facing the country."
8. Ibid., August 22, 1951.
9. Ibid., April 9, 1951.
10. Ibid., July 14, 1951.
11. Ibid., March 4, 1953.
12. Fourth Year of Freedom, 1950-51, I.N.C., New Delhi.
13. Ibid.
14. The Hindu, October 19, 1951.
15. Ibid., December 13, 1951.
16. Congress Bulletin, No. 6, October-November 1951, p.206.
17. The Hindu, February 15, 1952.
18. Ibid., December 17, 1952.
19. The Hindu, May 13, 1952.
20. Ibid., June 8, 1952.
21. Ibid., December 20, 1952.
22. Ibid., December 16, 1952.
23. Ibid., December 17, 1952.
24. Ibid., December 24, 1952.
25. Ibid., January 8, 1953.

26. Ibid., December 20, 1952.
27. Ibid., June 3, 1952.
28. Ibid., August 11, 1952.
29. Ibid., September 14, 1952.
30. Ibid., September 15, 1952.
31. Ibid., May 17, 1952.
32. Ibid., June 18, 1952.
33. Ibid., October 25, 1952.
34. Ibid., May 25, 1952.
35. Ibid., July 2, 1952.
36. Congress Bulletin, No.4, May 26, 1954.
37. The Hindu, January 17, 1953.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., January 18, 1953.
40. Ibid., May 18, 1953.
41. Ibid., May 28, 1953.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid., July 8, 1951.
44. New Age, June 1953.
45. The Hindu, March 9, 1953.
46. See S. Kochanek, The Congress Party in India: The Dynamics of One-Party Dominance, Princeton University Press, 1968.
47. New Age, November 1953.
48. Ibid.
49. The Hindu, January 23, 1954.
50. Ibid., March 7, 1954.
51. Ibid., November 14, 1954.
52. New Age, August 1954.

53. The Hindu, November 10, 1954.
54. The Hindu, December 3, 1954.
55. Ibid., December 22, 1954.

The Avadi Resolution of 1955

The 60th session of the Indian National Congress which was also the diamond jubilee session was significant and historical. It was here for the first time that the Party's former avowed objective of a 'Cooperative Commonwealth' was extended to include "planning with a view to establishing a socialistic pattern of society."¹ This then was the culmination of a long drawn out process, and the Congress for the first time in its history formally accepted the Socialist policy. Although Congressmen had been freely using the term before and the Party had passed and adopted many a resolution which incorporated the basic features of socialist policy, they had never at the party level, before 1955, accepted it formally. There were certain events which led to this decision in 1955. Perhaps the most important reason was that the first five year plan was coming to an end and discussions regarding the second plan were already well on their way. The success of the first plan though limited had to be sustained and enough enthusiasm generated for the second one. Nehru's, and thereby the Congress method of bringing about socialism to the country had to be made a success - credibility and legitimacy had to be conferred on the plans. In the success of the plans lay the success of the chief

architect of Congress decisions, Jawaharlal Nehru. Hence around 1955, it became all the more necessary to take resort to radical policies and slogans, than ever before.

The second general elections were also round the corner. Over the years, the Party's hold over the masses had been slipping and the Congress was rather worried about its prospects in the forthcoming elections in 1957. Once again the Congress leadership understood that the only way in which the masses could be won over was by projecting a progressive image, primarily through adopting Socialist resolutions, a method which could be easily understood, grasped and accepted by the commonman. It was becoming increasingly important to reorient Congress policies to establish the impression that the Congress, having brought freedom to the country and succeeding in its struggle against imperialism, is now going to make a success of pushing forward the country to the progressive and revolutionary path of Socialism. In other words, a leftist facelift was necessary and Avadi came as the answer. At the same time both the leaders and the rank and file, the business lobby and others understood that the acceptance of the Socialist ideology, as a part of Congress policy would do them no harm and the status quo would be maintained. Hence, the Congress leadership sought to, it seemed, keep every section satisfied - a strategy which was for them, perhaps the only effective way of maintaining Congress unity and thereby Congress hegemony.

The Congress party leaders were also alarmed at the growth of the left movement in the country, and the fact that the Communist Party was gaining ground, must have proved quite nightmarish to the Congress. They never let any opportunity to condemn the left parties, ever go. Nehru took the lead perhaps in his lashing and bitter criticism of the Left. In fact, everytime Nehru spoke of Congress Socialism, he also in the same breath condemned the Communists. He reiterated that the Socialism he and the Party had in mind was very different from orthodox Marxism which he characterise~~d~~ as doctrinaire. He seemed to link, this ideology with the Communist Party and in no uncertain terms condemned them both. Such speeches differed so very radically from what Nehru had been saying prior to independence. But by now Nehru had mastered the art of playing a double game, i.e. talking of Socialism on the one hand to keep the masses satisfied and rejecting orthodox and doctrinaire Socialism, in order to keep the vested interests happy. It must be noted however that this strategy was not new to the party in any way; the only difference was that it was refined and developed further, and used to advantage, from the Party point of view by Jawaharlal Nehru. As had been acidly suggested in the Times of India, one of India's leading dailies, the term cooperative commonwealth might have become "too clumsy and unwieldy a stick to beat the opposition with",¹ and that, socialism sounded more radical, but ultimately socialistic pattern of society was taken, to adopt itself to the Prime Minister's all too flexible approach.

Not only the Communists but also the Socialists and other opposition parties were a potential threat to the Congress, and through this 'progressive' policy the Congress wanted "to take the wind out of the sailes" of the opposition. It was the aim of the Congress to make the Indian electorate think that the Congress will be the most able to deliver the goods. The Leftist slogan, it was realised had a certain amount of political appeal which could very effectively disarm the critics. The ground for the 1955 Avadi resolution had been more or less set by the 1954 government bill. Therefore, when it came it did not bring any great surprise to any one.

U.N. Dhebar, the then President of the Indian National Congress had considered the Avadi session as one of the important landmarks of the Congress and the nation, providing a new faith and a new value.² It resolved to banish the exploitation that had been eating into the vitals of society. It was meant to be a pledge to give to the people the ultimate ownership of the national wealth and resources, and resolved to provide the Indian people with control over the means of production and distribution. The Avadi resolution, according to Dhebar was also an effort at the establishment of an order in which everyone will have equal opportunities of self-development and an equal share in the national assets. Further, it hoped to achieve the target of equitable distribution founded as he said on the canons of social justice. The resolution also wanted to ensure the fruits of freedom are shared by all alike and not monopolised by only a few.

"The Avadi Congress Resolution is a pledge to provide bread to the hungry, cloth to the naked, roof to the shelterless, the light of education to the dark illiterates."³ The Congress President denouncing every form of exploitation, stated that it was time people realised that no one can possibly flourish on the toil of others. He cautioned that if the masses were kept in this position of deprivation then a volcanic situation will arise which will burst, with disastrous results someday soon; that "freedom is a double edged sword and equitable distribution of wealth is the only way to maintain it and avert catastrophic results."⁴ He further went on to say how the Indian method of establishing a socialist society was different from the orthodox Marxist method and yet as important and as relevant and useful a method. "The Indian method of ending exploitation", he said, "is different. It is not the Marxian way. Marx died nearly a century ago, but exploitation has not ended, it is still dominant today. The remedies for exploitation suggested by Marxist philosophy of determinism are quite faulty and incapable of completely eradicating exploitation. Marxism suffers from a weakness which has been removed by the Mahatma....He taught that real strength did not consist in guns but in the people's determination to achieving peace through proper means." He added rather grandiosely that with freedom, India had completed one phase of her struggle and with the adoption of the Avadi Resolution, it launched on the new venture of building a new India. The Avadi resolution, therefore in however elastic form it may be,

did express the radical and progressive thoughts of the Congress. The Congress, it seemed by taking up the Socialist banner in 1955, hoped to perhaps appeal to as many elements as possible and bring them to their cause, as well as arouse the interest of the people to the programme laid down by the party. He also characterised the Avadi session as the third big step in Congress history, in keeping with the first pledge to achieve independence in 1929, followed by the pledge to consolidate freedom when the Congress took over in 1947. The adoption of the Socialist ideology therefore was accompanied by a hasty assurance the Congress had not adopted a 'doctrinaire socialism', that it was no imitation and was biased on India's experiences. The advocates were particularly allergic to the concept of class war. India was considered to have a particular genius through which she can reconcile the conflicting interests of these classes and sections of people.

Nehru's visit to China towards the later part of 1954, had also influenced the Congress leadership to speedily adopt the Socialist policy in 1955. Throughout all this the business lobby however were kept quite happy and reassured. Nehru had spoken in the early part of January itself in details, about the question of working towards a socialist economy, in short he was injecting doses of socialism before the final drama of the Congress session at Avadi. His party colleagues helped him in this process. While advocating the Socialist ideology, he also simultaneously pointed out the absolute necessity of increased production and the national he gave was that if the country does not

produce more wealth all the schemes of distribution will fail because there would not be anything to distribute. So the problem which was of urgent importance, Nehru said was how to combine more production with more employment. In an underdeveloped country like India, he said, Socialism would come very slowly. He cited the example of China and said even in that country, its leadership had accepted the fact that it would take a long time to achieve the Socialist economy in its true sense. Referring to the amendment to the Constitution Bill introduced some days before, Nehru pointed out that it was fairly detailed and lengthy and an enormous amount of thought had gone behind the whole thing. He further pointed out that it was decided only after a great deal of discussions had already been done in the Cabinet, in Cabinet Committees and in a special committee with the Chief Ministers, whom he had summoned.⁵ Thereby Nehru was trying to indicate that the decisions were broad based and took into consideration different view points. However, in fact, it was only a handful of men at the apex of the Congress organisation, who really took the major policy decisions. The Congress leaders however made every attempt to camofluge this issue. Nehru went on to say that when it was referred to the State government, there was a great deal of difference of opinion, not perhaps on principles, but on the approach to this question. He regretted that the Supreme Court had taken a rather rigid stand on the issue of private rights. He stated that the Congress and the government acknowledged private rights of course but there should be no such thing as the private

right coming in the way of a public right or social reforms. Attacking the Communists and Socialists (the Congress party's keen opponents) Nehru said that the Communists talk of seizing all properties, whether it is foreign or Indian without paying compensation. Nehru reasoned that the public sector may become slack if there was no private sector to compete with and in any case all this would take time. Nehru's attempt was therefore to project a benevolent image of the Congress to both the vested interests and the common man. Talking of the agrarian sector, he stated "I do not say we have a very firm agrarian base, but its fairly satisfactory now....We shall make it stronger in the course of the next few years. The time has come to lay a greater stress on heavy industries."⁶

At Baroda, on the 5th of January 1955, Nehru repeated his appeal to the people, i.e. to take the country towards the goal of a Socialist state, where there will be no caste or class and everyone would have equal opportunity.⁷ That the image of the Congress both within and without the country was important to its leaders. This was apparent in Nehru's statement of how the world had applauded the great achievements of the nation. He said that the older generation had two dreams, one removal of British rule and the other, elimination of poverty among the masses. The first dream had been realised and they were now striving to realise the second. It was now for the younger generation to complete the realisation of this second dream. Referring to the planning efforts, Nehru stated that the government hoped to create

wealth in the country and also to ensure equality of distribution of this wealth that was produced. He reiterated that the government did not seek to make the rich only richer at the cost of the poorest sections of the society and that their aim was to establish a classless society. He appealed to the people to eschew provincialism, linguism, casteism and communalism, which he said hampered the progress of the country and India's strength lay in her unity.

The resolution of 1955 at Avadi, went through several stages and several committees. It had a rather smooth passage through the Steering Committee, the Subjects Committee as well as the plenary session.

A Steering Committee of the Congress party was asked to draft a resolution embodying the political and economic policies of the party to put before the Avadi session of the Congress. The Congress President elect U.N. Dhebar nominated all the members. The discussion on the economic resolution was initiated with particular reference to the ^{then} recent pronouncements of the Prime Minister on the objective of socialist economy. Except for likely reiteration of the need to place emphasis on this aspect, the economic resolution, it was stated at that time, did not contain any major departure from declarations hitherto made in congress resolutions. The Steering Committee consisted of 15 members, of which Nehru and Pant were prominent members. This Committee was to function till the new Working Committee was formed. One of

the resolutions suggested that the first article of the Congress Constitution in respect of the creed should be changed. Article one of the Constitution said, "the objective of the Working Committee is the well being and advancement of the people of India and the establishment in India by peaceful and legitimate means of a cooperative commonwealth based on equality of opportunity and of political, economic and social rights and aiming at world peace and fellowship." It was one Mr Avadash Prasad Sinha (Bihar) who had given notice of a resolution suggesting that in the place of "Cooperative commonwealth" the expression "Socialist control" be inserted.⁸ Mr Balwant Rai Mehta functioned as the President of the Steering Committee. He told at the conclusion of the meeting that the draft before the committee were necessarily tentative and could be modified by the committee at its meeting in Madras. However, even at that time, informed sources envisaged very little scope for any further change in the draft resolution on foreign policy or any other policies. In fact the discussions at the committee level were reportedly conspicuous for a lack of controversy.

During that time, in the FICCI meeting,⁹ the business lobby put forth their reactions and demands in the manner typical of them. They stated that "the Committee of FICCI have been following with great interest the discussions both in Parliament and outside on government's economic policy in recent weeks. Government spokesmen have made statements which in so far as they seek to clarify the policy are welcome.

The Committee have always been of the view that in a country as large as ours with economic problems, so numerous and complex, there is plenty of constructive work to do, both in the private and public sectors." It further stated that the "pressing problems are a challenge which both the State and the people must take up and there is no room for doctrinaire attitudes which seek to limit the scope for initiative or mar the atmosphere for a concerted effort to increase production and employment. Greater productivity are pre-requisites for a stable democracy and for sustained economic development. As the Prime Minister has rightly pointed out in the course of the economic policy debate in Parliament recently, what we are aiming at is production and employment." We have quoted at length the FICCI resolution to show how successful the Congress leadership had been in sustaining the confidence of the business lobby, the vested interests. They even went to the extent of suggesting that when there were so many things to be done, and when on the whole the total resources available in the country was limited the only positive approach was to see how best they could achieve the desired results. They stressed the point that unless private enterprise is given full scope the general interests of the country will be adversely affected. In conclusion the committee restated and re-emphasised that the task of building up India should be deemed as one large scale enterprise in which both the State and the people cooperate and where it will be possible for both the public and private

sectors to work and expand. These mild and general terms in which the FICCI worded its resolution was indicative of the fact that they wanted to avoid any sharp criticism of the government. The resolution neither betrayed any nervousness over the reference to a "Socialistic pattern of society" in the resolution passed by the Lok Sabha. The Committee seemed to have preferred to take the Prime Minister at his word that he does not believe in any doctrinaire approach to the problems of Indian economic development.

Nehru, in the message of the souvenir at the even of the Avadi session hoped that the session would be a landmark in the country's history as well as the Congress' history and hoped that it will give a lead which will enthuse and energise the country and bring all people of goodwill to the task of building up a new India. "Every Congress session," he said "was important in its own way. We are passing through an important stage in India's journey onward and are facing problems of great magnitude both internationally and in the domestic field. In foreign affairs, India has played a notable part which has added to our responsibilities. But ultimately it is our position in India itself that counts." Recalling all the problems in the economic and social front, the country had faced, Nehru stated that it is very creditable that India had been able to achieve quite a lot. He made repeated references to the 2nd Plan, revealing his anxieties regarding the acceptance of the plan.

Real progress, he said would only come when the political, social and economic work of the country is integrated, for there can be no progress on one front ignoring the others. In Rajahmundry,¹⁰ Nehru pointed out "we are trying to plan so that in 10 years time we can put an end broadly speaking to unemployment in India and at the same time raise the standards of living of the people. All this cannot be done by some decree or slogan. It would mean hard work and cooperative effort." Nehru criticised the activities of the C.P.I. and said it was impracticable for anyone in this country to carry on "in the out of date and foolish manner in which the CPI does."¹¹

How important the Socialist slogan was from the point of view of elections, was shown when at Vijayawada, Nehru had said the talk of achieving a socialist welfare state was a tremendous one and they had to work very hard for it. Nehru was addressing an election meeting there. He said that neither he nor the party were afraid of communism (and thereby exposing his nervous fear of the communists) and that they do not oppose communism as such and that if there is something good in it then they are prepared to adopt and make it their own.¹²

Speaking on the eve of the Avadi session, Nehru pointed out how the Congress had always stood in the past for the common good of the people, especially the poorer section and how Gandhi had identified himself with the poorest in

the country. He further went on to say that the Congress stands for broad socialism. "I am glad," he said, "to say now that the Congress is defining its goal or is going to define in more precise terms and it will leave no doubt about it. So we are now engaged in this great adventure of taking the 360 million people towards this goal of the socialist society in India. We are particular to see that unemployment is ended and everyone has work. This is a great thing to which we have to work hard."¹³ He also stated that the means, Gandhi had taught to achieve these objectives would be adhered to. If these words, these objectives, would not win over the masses, what would have? Talk of the socialistic pattern was therefore very much in the air and Nehru coupled it with, master strategist that he had become, the concept of the Welfare State as the twin objectives, which the Congress has implicitly accepted. Nehru even very cleverly said that the Congress may clarify the objectives in the present session, but it will not mean a departure from its creed. He also pointed out that it is not necessary to aim at injuring others or to spread the spirit of hatred and violence. At Avadi, the attempt, therefore was to define the party's own position as a political party as precisely as possible.

The Steering Committee said that "the establishment of a socialist pattern of society" is where "the means of production are under social ownership and control, production is progressively speeded up and there is equitable distribution of the national wealth."¹⁴

In another resolution on economic policy, the Steering Committee explained "a socialistic pattern of society as envisaging the State" initiating and operating large scale schemes providing of services such as power transport, etc. having overall control of resources social purposes and trends and checking and preventing evils of anarchic industrial development by maintenance of strategic controls."¹⁵ They emphasised that the public sector should play an increasingly larger role in the establishment of basic industries and the Committee also stated that there was an urgent need for the private sector, and accorded them a 'definite place in our economy at present'. Therefore the stress on mixed economy continued, helping to keep every side happy. The only difference was that on the face of it at least the stress was now more on public control and socialist principles and goals. It is also interesting to note that the terms "socialist" and "socialistic" occurred alternately in the two resolutions adopted by the Committee. Whereas the 1st resolution declared that the objective is to be a "socialistic pattern of society", the second said "the national aim is a welfare state and a socialist economy." That Nehru was not really being guided nor was the party being guided by any doctrinaire approach was proved by the fact that they used the terms socialised economy and socialist economy very often interchangeably. It was reported in fact, in the Hindu that talks with the Congress leaders did not bring out clearly whether the goal of developing a society moulded on a socialistic pattern has been

conceived from the top or is it the result of a pressing urge from the rank and file. Such a dilemma was perhaps understandable because although the initiation of a major policy, internal or external has practically been the exclusive prerogative of Nehru since independence, he and the Congress leadership, took the utmost care to make out, as if it was a collective decision, arrived after a lot of discussion from a big cross section of the people. The Subjects Committee discussed the issue after the Steering Committee had passed the resolutions. The Subjects Committee adopted unanimously the economic policy resolution moved by Nehru.¹⁶ Although several amendments were moved during the debate, they were all withdrawn later. Speaking on the occasion, Nehru stated that they were trying to make India a welfare state by putting an end to the private sector. He reiterated with greater emphasis most of his earlier suggestions like greater production through an integrated system of production considering the whole of India as a national sector, nationalisation, abolition of zamindari, speedy progress, etc. He never failed to point out how even in China the whole process would take time. This only showed how concerned and aware Nehru was the development of the neighbouring State. No doubt Nehru wanted to play a dominant role in world politics and therefore could not afford to let China overshadow India.

Mr R. Venkataraman, seconded the resolution and said that although some might be critical of it because it did not lay down a set remedy, it was not their aim to deceive people with prescriptions, which might lead them nowhere,

though they might sound attractive. He also stated that it was on the basis of the experiences of the first five year plan that the economic policy had been drafted. Another Congressman from Tamil Nadu, supporting the resolution said that read together with the resolution on "socialistic pattern of society", adopted earlier, they were ineffect, establishing "a charter of economic liberty and salvation for the country."¹⁷ The first phase of the struggle according to him had been fought and won primarily under Gandhi's leadership, that the second phase of "the feudal revolution" was guided by Patel and the third, "the economic revolution" had Nehru as its mentor.

Such statements only drove home the point that Nehru had full control of the party and its incumbents, and his position and policy decisions was accepted by more or less and the majority of the Congressmen with utmost loyalty. Party of this acceptance also stemmed from the fact that the partymen realised how useful was the Congress economic policy for the survival of the party. The resolution was supported by congressmen from many other States, with only slight differences of opinion here and there. Mr Thirumal Rao, e.g. wanted Congress to give a clear lead as to what the various industries would be in the future.¹⁸ Replying to the debate Nehru emphasised the interrelated native of private and public sector, which would lead to increased wealth and finally the socialistic society. There was no doubt, he added, that only the peaceful means would be used

to achieve these goals. He also stated that if the State could not do something, why should not the private enterprise start it, if it fell within the requirements of the plan. The Congress Subjects Committee finally, unanimously passed the resolution. Other senior and close colleagues of Nehru repeated much of the same things. Maulana Azad, e.g. said¹⁹ that the term "socialistic pattern of society" was used with a specific purpose, i.e. not to tie the country down to any particular dogma or doctrine and that India should endeavour to build up a society befitting her own genius and suited to her own requirements. He also stated that the resolution was only a restatement of what the Congress had been declaring from time to time. It was primarily to indicate to the Congressmen and remind them of the direction in which they were moving and the purpose for which they should strike. The Maulana too did not spare the socialists and stated that they had mixed up the end with the means and were pursuing dogmas with childish fanaticism. Nationalisation, he said, was only a means to an end. He explained that the Congress sought to achieve "the equitable distribution of wealth" and further he made a distinction between 'personal wealth' and 'national wealth'. He further stated that the Congress did not wish to tie itself down to any doctrinaire theories and miss the target in the bargain. The Congress, Maulana Azad said, did not agree that every means of production from A-Z must be nationalised. He reassured the people that the Congress was in no way digressing from its old path. To quote him, "If any member

thinks that we have raised a new slogan, he should disabuse his mind of it at once. Some people thought that through this ^{the} Constitution of the Congress was sought to be changed. I would like to assure you all that even for a single minute the shadow of such a thought did not cross our minds. The Constitution of the Congress remains intact. We are only reminding you all of the path we have to continue to follow." It was also to help the Planning Commission to remember that it had to use all its resources to the fulfilment of this ideal and this ideal and this ideal alone, the Maulana added. He also pointed out that many may ask the question why at this particular time only has it become necessary to use the new phrase instead of the one in use, i.e. cooperative commonwealth. He said this need arose because "as you know, we have launched up on planning in our country. The first five year plan has nearly run its course and only about a 1½ year of its life remains. We are now concentrating on the second one. In all this planning, we have to make clear both the planners and the people whither we are going?)" He discussed how the world was divided into two blocs - the capitalist and the socialist and that the professed aim of both was that society should be properly set up so that people may benefit from it. The real thing, however, according to the Maulana was the distribution of wealth and that the main task now for the nation was increased production and unless wealth is increased it could not be distributed. He at the same time assured the private sector of having its "full place" in adhering the

socialistic pattern of society. The Congress, he stated fully supported the point of view that the private sector should receive governmental help to increase production and said that they would stick to the 1948 policy strictly in which the private sector, has been assigned a very clear role. Maulana Azad had moved the resolution and Kamaraj Nadar had seconded it. Mr U.N. Dhebar ruled out a point of order raised by Sardar Amar Singh²⁰ who said that the resolution on the socialistic pattern of society could not be moved as long as the ideal of cooperative commonwealth as laid down in the Congress Constitution was operative. Mr G. Bhat (Rajasthan)²¹ moved an amendment to the resolution substituting the words "socialistic pattern" to "sarvodaya pattern of society", where the means of key industries will be under social ownership or control, where there was decentralisation of economic structure affording, full employment and increased national production. Mr Bhatt said that the Congress was losing sight of the Sarvodaya system of economy as laid down by Gandhi. In a plea for the sarvodaya group, Mr Bhatt strongly appealed to the Congress leadership and the decision makers of the Party and asked whether the Congress should go after the socialist pattern "when we have our own system based on our needs". His complaint was that the socialist pattern was being thrust from the top without its having evolved from society. Mr G. Tiwari from Madhya Bharat, moved²² another amendment to the resolution, which replaced "socialistic pattern of society" to the

"establishment of a society as envisaged by Gandhiji." Mr Tiwari also stated that his amendment would incorporate Mr Bhatt concept of sarvodaya. There were others like Mr Krishnanand (Mahakoshal) who wanted the word "equitable" to be substituted by "suitable". Mr N.V. Gadgil's amendment wanted the principal means of production should be not only under social ownership but should also be under social management. He was also of the opinion that those in charge of the destiny of the country should have some definite period in their mind within which the objectives embodied in the resolution would be achieved. There were yet others like A.P. Sinha²³ (Bihar) who reminded the Committee that only two ways were before them either dictatorship and communism or the democratic way and socialism and that there was no third way. He asked those industrialists who displayed patriotic fervour during the freedom struggle to come forward with the same enthusiasm for building up a new society for the relief of millions of poor people of the country. In a slightly exaggerated way he stated what the Maulana had moved was not merely a resolution it was a pledge given to the 36 crores of Indian people.

Congressmen like G.H. Deshpande²⁴ (Maharashtra) said that he opposed all the amendments and supported the resolution as it stood. The slogan "socialistic pattern of society" was not anything new and was more or less a new interpretation of the original objectives. However, it

had been able to bring a new enthusiasm among the masses. "It had electrified the atmosphere during the last few weeks. When they spoke that phraseology, people understood that the Congress meant it seriously and was intent on wiping out the disparities in society...produce an atmosphere conducive to the successful working of not only the current plan but the succeeding ones too." Referring to the means to be adopted to achieve these objectives, he said that the Congress would never adopt violent or non-democratic methods. Mr K. Chatterji (Bengal) however felt that the resolution did not go far enough, though he did welcome the resolution. He felt that a more detailed explanation of what the socialistic pattern stood for was necessary and that this would help to keep the support of the large masses of people, who may otherwise get carried away by "the catchy slogans of the communists".

Maulana Azad, while replying to the debate brought forth many important points, one of which was that the term Sarvodaya did not imply any economic programme even though it was a beautiful word to express the dawn of a new era. The Socialist State, he said implied class war, and the Congress was determined to eschew violence. He made a reference to Shri Radhakrishnan's talk with Stalin where the former had told the latter that land must belong to the tiller, no doubt but in India it was hoped to be achieved through peaceful means. This was met with a rather sardonic "Is that so...well go ahead" by Stalin, who had

also added with a laugh, "But I don't think that can be done through peaceful means." Maulana tried to say that they (Congress) were now proving it to Stalin and others that they are executing what they had promised. He told Gadgil that no one was thinking in terms of handing over state enterprise to private management and therefore he should not worry on that score. All the amendments were withdrawn except one, which got the support of only one person - and the resolution was passed amidst great cheers.

Both the Maulana and Nehru had been over anxious to make it clear that no violent break with the past was being envisaged, that some via media was being sought, in keeping with the genius of the people. It was time and again stated that the resolution favoring socialistic pattern of society was claimed to be perfectly compatible with the Congress Constitution as well as the Preamble to the Indian Constitution and the Directive Principles of State Policy.

The Subjects Committee of the Congress also passed a resolution on land reforms urging the government to take all possible steps to secure reasonable stability in the price level of agricultural commodities and stressing the need for giving adequate credit facilities to the rural areas, etc. This was therefore another step forward. The Resolution²⁵ was moved by Nanda, Minister for Planning and was seconded by S.N. Aggarwal. Mr Nanda also took the opportunity to point out that it would be incorrect to think that the resolution defining the economic goal of the

Congress as the establishment of a socialist society, would only be a dead letter. The Congress had been only inspired by socialist aspirations and with this it had taken the first practical step towards the achievement of that ideal. He also pointed out that this resolution fitted in with the decision to have a socialistic pattern of society and a socialist economy. He even went to the extent of urging the credit facilities to the rural areas, not only to prevent exploitation of the masses, by the money-lenders but also to enable the rural population to market their produce. Mr Nanda hoped that the resolution would go a long way in ameliorating the lot of the agricultural people. Nanda also welcomed the decision of the government to accelerate the pace of land reforms and to implement the recommendations of the Planning Commission in this regard under a phased programme. Replying to the debate, Nanda, dealt with two main points, raised by the members. It had been urged by more than one speaker that the principle of ceiling on land holdings should be extended to convert other forms of income as well. Nanda entirely agreed with this proposition and went on to say that social justice was something indivisible and all sectors of the population must be dealt with without any discrimination. He, however, pointed out that a beginning had to be made somewhere and that it was considered wise to commence from a sector where changes might not adversely affect the means of production and create the very problem which it was intended to resolve.

He also pointed out that with regard to industries and other sources of income, the existing system of taxation was exercising a certain kind of restriction and control though there might be need to proceed further in this direction. Y.B. Chavan²⁶ (Maharashtra) said that it was essential to set up cooperative warehouses if agricultural prices were to be stabilised. Rural credit facilities should also be extended in an increasing measure to the peasants. As regards, land reforms, Mr Tripathi²⁷ said that more reform would not take them far. They must take a leaf out of what America had done to stabilise their economy, i.e. in 1930, when there was a heavy slump and mass unemployment the New Deal came into the picture. The resolution was however passed unanimously at the Subjects Committee.

When the 60th²⁸ session met, Nehru moved the resolution on socialistic pattern of society. In his rather impressive speech, Nehru further clarified that it was not merely a vision and an aspiration rather it was a pledge which everyone must take to meet the challenging future. He said that everything from then onwards would be governed by the ideal of a socialistic society. Briefly tracing the history of the development of the Congress, Nehru said that it would be noticed that step by step the Congress was taking the country forward. Whenever the proper time came, it took mighty steps. But the Congress, he said, was certainly not adventurist. "This freedom struggle," Nehru said, "all the

time gained in its social context, in its economic context and now the time has come when we shall march further in this direction and declare openly what we have often said - that the type of society we are aiming at is the socialistic society." Curiously enough, Nehru added "what exactly the socialistic society is in details, I do not propose to go into and many may argue about it. You may possibly have a welfare state without a socialistic pattern, but you cannot have a socialistic pattern without a welfare state." Nehru then said that they wanted to have both for a number of reasons. He, however, cautioned those who wanted quick results, saying that will not be possible. He referred to India's own needs and her individuality which would, he said fashion the type of socialism they adopt. He did not deny that there was a class conflict but the point was, how does one meet this conflict? - the method of course was to be a peaceful method. He also said that "what is new in this resolution is that we have impressed the old idea in words which make it clear beyond any doubt. What was a little wrapped up before has been opened and presented clearly to the whole world. This resolution clarifies this idea and draws the attention of the people to it in a more forceful manner." "Our eyes", he said, "were always set on the goal of establishing a socialistic pattern, but now we have to fix our gaze on it, more sharply in order to make greater efforts to build the socialistic pattern. This would also help in formulation of the future

five year plans in the right perspective." Reports from the Avadi session, however, implied that the implications of the resolution had not been fully understood by the more thoughtful sections of the Congress, and the leadership was accused of speaking in riddles and being quite vague. Non official resolutions were disposed of, rather perfunctorily and the resolution approving the government's proposal for constitutional amendment was passed with practically no discussion. The leadership, it is understood, also showed itself to be no less orthodox in rejecting the suggestions to impose a ceiling on salaries and incomes in the private sector, as being unrealistic and likely to make for trouble. It was Nehru with his dominating personality and charismatic appeal who was more or less in control of the entire show at Avadi. He was to be found everywhere enthusiastic and happy. All this is only an indication of the fact that apart from these at the apex of the Congress organisation, the rest of the party men, played a fairly insignificant role in the decision making process of the party. In fact, it seemed as if the whole session hinged on one personality - that of Nehru. It is also important to note, however, that the fairly unknown Congress President, , was all humility on the one hand, but was absolutely firm when the discussion strayed from the scheduled path. Critics point out that if the purpose of the session was to discuss the issues before the people and associate them with the deci-

sions arrived at, that was not at all evident during the session. The fact that all the official resolutions were passed with hardly any amendment and most of the unofficial resolutions were easily disposed off was an index of that. As was reported by Hindu "even during discussions of the official resolutions by the Subjects Committee, enthusiasm which waned a little when the social and economic policies were being dealt with was already waning when international affairs came up and died by the end of the agenda dealing with constructive work, Bhoodan, etc."²⁹

Even the labour organisations, gave their endorsement and approval to the Congress policy, without any major amendment³¹ e.g. the INTUC. Their resolution said that "if the plan is to lead the nation towards its declared aim of a socialistic pattern of society it should provide everyone in the country particularly in the villages with the means of decent livelihood, adequate clothing, shelter, etc." It further stated that the Government of India policy to establish a socialistic pattern of society was a landmark in the history of peaceful revolutions which aimed at social and economic freedom through peaceful democratic means. The resolution further stated that in the present circumstances within the framework of the present mixed economy with private sector functioning under more and more controls and regulations, a greater and speedier elimination of the vested interests and their subordination in the larger interests of the nation is envisaged. They

even stated that the decision of the government to amend the Constitution was indicative of the fact that the determination of the government to remove the main impediments in the path of progressive realisation of this policy. They pledged full support to the government of India policy in this respect.

The Sarvodaya group in the Congress though not big in terms of numbers nonetheless did have some influence on Congress decision making from time to time. Regarding this issue, they were not quite in sympathy with the socialist ideology, still they gave their support to the government policy - perhaps hoping that the government will concentrate more on the development of small scale and cottage industries and thus provide more employment. Nehru referring to the suggestion of some members demanding that the word Sarvodaya³¹ should be substituted for "socialistic pattern of society" in defining the ideal of the Congress. Nehru said that no doubt he liked the term, but they would be deceiving themselves if they put it in a resolution, for it conveys a different meaning and that Sarvodaya work was being effectively done by Vinoba. In Mr Dhebar, the Congress had found a President who was no doubt Nehru's choice, but also a Gandhian - known for his sincere and hard work.³² He laid a great deal of stress on small scale industries and cottage industries. Through him to a large extent the Sarvodaya demands were reflected. The fact that so much of stress was given to socialism, in keeping with the Indian way of life and the

Indian genius, critics felt, were in order to accommodate the Sarvodayas. However even though they were accommodated, the Congress leadership were not totally in their favour and in favour of their policies. The Swatantra³³ Correspondent, e.g. brought up the opposition of the Sarvodaya wing to socialism and expressed the opinion that Dhebar had been chosen Congress President, because there was some fear about how the older members of the Congress wedded as they were to Sarvodaya were going to look upon the new ideal of socialism. They pointed out, Dhebar was the only man in the whole session who mentioned truth, non-violence, constructive work, khadi, etc. Dhebar was considered as "the mouth-piece and champion of the cottage industry in the private sector, while Nehru carried the responsibility for "the array of reforms lined up for the public sector." The new President and the new slogan, the Eastern Economist opined, was imposed from above "in an effort to change the character and methods of the Congress and make mass contact" outside the present rank and file.

The Avadi resolution said, "In order to realise the object of the Congress as laid down in Article one of the Congress constitution and to further the objectives stated in the Preamble and the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Constitution of India, planning should take place with a view to the establishment of a socialistic pattern of society, where the principle means of production are under social ownership or control, production is progressively

speeded up and there is equitable distribution of the national wealth. New Age reported that the Congress leaders tried to make out as if there was no one opposed to the goal because of their commitment to it. However, the facts are different because "every capitalist, landlord, oppressor of the people knew, whether the Congress leaders speak the language of Sarvodaya, Ramraj or the language of Democracy and cooperative commonwealth or socialism and classless society, their practice is one of protecting and preserving the interests of a handful of princes, landlords and foreign and Indian monopolies. That is only those sections and elements within or without the Congress which had bitterly attacked Nehru when he spoke of complete independence as against dominion status anti-imperialist united front as against the unity of the right wing elements inside and outside the Congress, those very elements hail him today when he is ostensibly leading the country to the Socialistic society."

The Socialists outside the Congress, however, opined that the Congress resolution was a mere eyewash. The Congress they said should be completely purged of reactionary elements and completely reorganised if it wants to establish a socialist state. Narendra Deva, e.g. pointed out that "the very fact that not a single member of the Congress Parliamentary Party stood up in opposition to the resolution sponsored by the Prime Minister showed that the whole atmosphere was unreal."³⁴ It was, they said, more out of respect for

Nehru's wishes than because of any inner convictions that the Congress solidly voted for the resolution. They, however, welcomed the change for according to them it was an indication of the growing strength of democratic socialism. As the National Herald's editorial put it "it might not mean socialism, but to talk socialism is better than not to talk it. It will help people to think Socialism."

The Avadi resolution therefore came at a time when the country was facing a big challenge - in the form of the increasing urge of the people to progress, etc. The compulsion of the time was for rapid advance, so as to bring about far reaching social, economic and industrial changes. The challenge was, of course, according to Nehru, to bring about these speedily and effectively by peaceful democratic means. In fact, before Nehru had gone to China, he had been quite distressed over the fact that progress was being showed down by various decisions of the Courts.³⁸ The fact that coal fields were not owned by the State and that oil refineries had been established by private enterprise had strengthened the feeling that the industrial policy "had been honoured more in breach than in its observance." There was the general feeling that the purpose and direction of both the Congress and the government was lost sight of. It was also believed that the younger elements in the Congress had approached Nehru and had asked him to do something positive and constructive soon, especially to silence the critics of the Party. Added to all this was the fact that the

general elections had to be fought very soon. in Andhra and this was also playing in the minds of the Congress leadership and the fact remained that in new India the welfare of the common man was far more important than any other interests. Broadcasting on the All India Radio, Dr Rajendra Prasad said that India is determined to bring about a true welfare state in which not only does every citizen enjoy equal rights but also equality of opportunity in all spheres of life. As INSAF³⁵ of Hindustan Times stated, Nehru wanted democratic India to run a friendly race with communist China and earn the latter's respect. The Free Press Journal Correspondent reported from Avadi that he had not been able to find out from Congress leaders whether or not they intended to go "one step ahead of a welfare state" and that "almost every member" had "but a vague idea of what is meant? and Pandit Nehru was "brilliantly vague". However, the impact the Avadi resolution was supposed to have had on the Leftist opposition, did materialise. The effect on the Praja Socialist Party was rather disastrous. The maintenance of unity within the party had for some time become none too easy. There were dissensions and rifts in the party. Asok Mehta, e.g. welcomed the Congress decision saying that the socialist ideal had now become non-controversial, only the means of achieving the end remained to be determined and the Praja Socialist Party's task now was to force the pace of social change rather than sit it. At the other extreme was Lohia, who described Avadi as a fraud.

The Chairman Narendra Deva, took the centrist and what in the circumstances was the logical position for the Praja Socialist Party. However, neither the availability of the centrist leadership nor its wide acceptance within the party had helped to resolve the endless 'crises' which had become almost endemic for the Praja Socialist Party.

The much needed face lift of the Congress had come to fruition through the Avadi resolution. The decision-makers took the basic features of the resolution and incorporated in the 1957 Election Manifesto - no doubt with the hope of winning the elections with a thumping majority. The manifesto said "the basic objective of the Congress it must be repeated are democracy and socialism and the methods have to be peaceful...caste and class have no place in the socialist order that is envisaged by the Congress."³⁷ The third plan too made special references to this policy, "the accent of the socialist pattern of society on the attainment of opportunity for all...economic policy and institutional changes have to be planned in a manner that would secure economic advance along democratic and egalitarian lines." The victory of the Congress in the general elections proved that the purpose of the Avadi resolution had been served.

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CHAPTER VICONCLUSION

The Indian National Congress became not only the dominant political organisation in Independent India, but also became the prime organ of decision-making and policy formulation. Since the Congress policies more or less became the nation's policies, it is important to study the process through which these policies were formulated within the party, as well as the factors which influenced the process. The Congress kept talking about socialism and used socialist rhetoric very often, but it did not officially adopt it until 1955, in its now fairly well known Avadi Resolution. From our study of Congress decision making regarding its policy of socialism it becomes apparent that socialist rhetoric was often used as a part of party strategy rather than for any very strong ideological commitment to it. This can be said to be true by and large to both the post independence and the pre-independence years.

The party obviously did not function in a vacuum. It functioned in a very definite socio-economic and political milieu, both internal and external, which influenced the party's decision-making process in a number of ways. Some individuals in the party may have been genuinely in favor of the socialist policy, but by and large the party was fairly conservative in nature. To understand Congress deci-

sion-making, we have to take into consideration the characteristics/features of the party organisation, its composition, the nature and role of its leadership and most important its class character, for all these factors together shaped the decision-making process of the party.

The Congress party which is pyrramidically organised, "parallels the Indian administrative organisation from the highest national level down to the lowest level of Panchayati Raj."¹ At the national level the party is further divided into different wings, e.g., the Annual Sessions, the AICC, The Congress Working Committee, etc. While the AICC almost functioned like the unofficial Parliament of the nation, the Congress Working Committee functioned more or less like the Cabinet of the country. The powers of the Congress President depended to a large extent on the personality of the incumbent, who could more or less dictate terms to the party, as Nehru did, or be a mere titular head, as most other Congress Presidents had been. The party tolerated a certain amount of dissensions uptil Nehru became both the Prime Minister and the Congress President.

From then on, till his death, Nehru's position was unquestioned and unchallenged and he reigned supreme. Prior to Independence, Gandhi had enjoyed similar powers, position and prestige in the party, when his word was accepted by almost all the party members without much of an opposition. However, it was perhaps only during Nehru's time that certain oligarchical tendencies had crept into the process of deci-

sion-making in the party. This was partially because, after Patel's death, there were hardly any imposing Congressmen left, who could put up an effective opposition to Nehru. Once the party formed the government, the Parliamentary wing of the party no doubt enjoyed greater powers, a phenomenon which was absent in the pre-independence days. From our study it seems that all the major decisions of the party were taken at the national level. However, even at this level, it was perhaps the AICC and the Congress Working Committee which played the most important role. Very often the Congress Working Committee became the sole decision-making unit of the party. As the formal adoption of a policy at the level of the AICC was quite necessary, the AICC too had a fair share in the decision-making process of the party.

Our study has also shown that normally after the various policies are formulated at the topmost level, they seep down gradually to the lower rungs of the party hierarchy, and become acceptable to the party as a whole. It is a rare occasion when the lower rungs shape, formulate or influence party decisions. It is to be noted, however that even though the topmost leadership is more or less solely responsible for formulating policies, they cannot totally ignore the wishes and demands of the other party members, whatever level of the party organisation they may belong to. It is also true that when on a particular issue a sufficiently large group takes a common stand, then it can act

as an effective pressure group on the policy formulators, e.g. as the Congress Socialist Party had ^done. These occasions however are few and far between. By and large Congressmen lacked ideological clarity and their level of consciousness was not very high either. However, the leadership of the party did not suffer from these drawbacks and were the most articulate sections of the party. Differences of opinion over issues were quite a common feature sometimes even leading to resignations. However, there seemed to be a broad consensus on most issues. The role of the charismatic leader was also important in Indian politics, as one stalwart followed another. These men subdued to a large extent, the rank and file into meek submission and acceptance.

Although the AICC, the Congress Working Committee, and other such units of the party held meetings for debating, deliberating and discussing the various policies, in fact very little opposition was ever put up and the policies were accepted and given sanction to without any significant changes. Very often it seemed that the party's organisational units were used not so much as to get the opinion of a highly diversified mass membership as to "push down" policies to all levels, so that these policies became commonly acceptable. It has also been pointed out by some authors, e.g. S. Kochanek that the various committees arrived at decisions through consensus and that votes were seldom taken. This consensus however need not have meant that there was always an

absolute acceptance of the policy. It may have been due to a certain amount of ignorance and lack of consciousness or plain submission to the leadership's decisions.

Although it seemed democratic functioning was maintained in the decision-making process, it was in fact quite often a highly centralised process where the leadership were considerably authoritarian and their responsibility to the others fairly weak and remote. On the face of it therefore it did seem that the Congress had a highly developed method of consulting its members on policy issues but in fact it was a handful of men, the party stalwarts, commanding power both in the party and the government who actually made most of the decisions. This was especially true in the post-Independence years. Most of the resolutions were very cleverly worded. The ambiguity of the resolutions helped the Congress leaders to keep the various factions in the party quite satisfied and happy for the resolutions could be interpreted in so many different ways.

After independence, there was extensive interaction between the Cabinet, the Working Committee, the AICC and the Parliament. After Nehru took over as Prime Minister, he developed the technique of almost always getting Cabinet approval for party policies for example on planned development.

His role in the party and the Cabinet were subject to a number of criticisms. N.V. Gadgil points out that Nehru proved to be the link between the Working Committee and the Cabinet and that very often he took advantage of this position, to impose his point of view on the Cabinet. "He would persuade us by arguing that the plans or schemes approved

by the Cabinet were not acceptable to the Working Committee and schemes which the Cabinet rejected but the Working Committee favoured would be presented to the Committee with all the administrative difficulties involved in their execution. These manoeuvres enabled him to get through whatever he wanted. This was possible because there were no joint meetings of the Cabinet and the Working Committee. Occasionally a Minister got an opportunity to give his views to the Working Committee but because of Nehru's presence in the Committee, frank expression of opinion was rare."²

To get a better understanding of Congress decision-making, a brief analysis of the class character of the party becomes necessary. The Indian National Congress has been right from its inception a middle class organisation. The bourgeoisie no doubt were never formal members of the party, but they had exercised a very firm control over the party, and its leadership, which in fact meant that the bourgeoisie influenced the decision-making process of the party in a major way. In fact it is our belief that no other factor played as important a role in Congress decision-making. The control of the Indian bourgeoisie over the party had not been there right from the beginning, it was something that grew over a period of time. Although their entry into the scene was a little late, their influence and control was as strong as it possibly could have been.

In the very early years, although the leadership of the party did not belong directly to the bourgeoisie they represented their interests and encouraged the development

of industries and thereby the growth of the industrial bourgeoisie in the country. If they championed the cause of the capitalists growth rather vociferously, it was not because their vision was limited by the narrow interests of the industrial capitalist class but because they believed that the industrial development along capitalist lines was the only way to regenerate the country's economy. These people therefore although not belonging to the bourgeoisie, represented their interests and gave impetus to the development of industries and thereby the industrial bourgeoisie. This is important because this kind of thinking stayed on within the Congress even after. At that time, however, the bourgeoisie were too small and insignificant and the leading men of commerce and industry did not even pay the proverbial pie to finance the early nationalists.

The rising industrial class had however become sufficiently strong and conscious by 1905 and they gradually began to enter the orbit of the nationalist movement during the first decade of the 20th Century. They gravitated more and more towards the Congress, which provided the leadership to the national movement. They gave enthusiastic support to the Swadeshi and boycott movements for it helped to further their own vested interests. The Indian National Congress which had been composed of primarily the intelligentsia and the educated middle class, secured a 'broader' base from 1905 onwards. By 1919-1920, the industrial bourgeoisie had gained fair control

of the Congress and shaped its programmes and policies. They even determined indirectly no doubt the form and method of struggle to be conducted. Their control over the Congress was exercised in a number of ways, most important being through financial aid. Nehru himself had ultimately admitted that the business group had provided the party with sizeable financial assistance, and knowing the characteristics of the bourgeoisie this assistance of course could never have been with 'no stings attached'.

The Indian industrialists worked in close cooperation with their counterparts in the rural area, the zamindars. They therefore did not favour radical agrarian reforms. While the zamindars invested in industries and banks, the banker and the industrialist had landed interests. All this had resulted in the increasing control of a small group of men not only in the economic but also over the social, political and intellectual life of the people. Therefore among all the social forces which came up in India during the freedom struggle, it was the national bourgeoisie, comprising the industrialists and the land owners who played the most significant and decisive role in guiding the national movement and the Congress party and determined the nature and content of the national policies. The Congress by and large, and most of the leaders therefore worked under the shadow of the vested interests and it was this that led the Congress to be so conservative in its deeds and actions. None of the Congress leaders really failed to, both before

and after independence, look after the interests of the bourgeoisie.

When Gandhi came into the scene around 1918, he no doubt made the national movement and the party more broad based, and brought within its ambit some of the peasantry and the working classes, but the essentially bourgeois character of the party was retained successfully. In fact it has also been suggested, with justification, that Gandhi worked in close collaboration with the capitalists and helped them to maintain their hegemony over the movement and the party. One such example was, when Birla was making a number of attempts to 'tame' the 'radical' Nehru. The internal evidence of Sir Purshottamdas's letter and Birla's of April 20, indicated that Gandhi was quite in the picture and was associating Birla in various ways.³ Gandhi had successfully met the needs of the national bourgeoisie by exerting pressure on imperialism through mass struggle and at the same time limited that struggle and directed it to safer channels, everytime it proved too threatening and thereby safeguarded the interests of the propertied classes. Gandhi's justification for the withdrawals and compromises were always watched in metaphysical and ethical terms, giving a semblance of high morality to his actions. Instead of working for a programme of substituting socialist relations he strove to humanise capitalist social relations. His concept of trusteeship for example, drives home this point. Gandhi's economic policies were by and large con-

servative. He considered communism to be ill fitted to Indian conditions. This class character of the party determined the decision making process of the Congress in a significant way.

Prior to Independence, although a number of important leaders played a very decisive role in the party, it was Gandhi, who overshadowed the rest. Having tremendous mass appeal and commanding the respect and allegiance of most of the Congressmen, Gandhi was the dominating force in Congress decision making. It was therefore, of little surprise that the vociferous Congress Socialist Party could not make much headway inspite of its active and ideologically committed workers. Gandhi had the added advantage of having the majority of the Congressmen siding his conservative and moderate policies. The right wing of the Congress in fact followed the Gandhian line fairly implicitly. There may have been many who were opposed to Gandhi's policies especially his economic policies, but they did not generally oppose him openly and gave their support whenever the occasion arose. Gandhi's ace lay in the fact that he had been able to completely win over Nehru and thereby broke the very backbone of the socialists. Had Nehru not been 'kept in check,' at that time, the socialists perhaps would have had greater confidence and thereby may have made more progress than they actually could. Gandhi and the conservative right wing of the party also reaped the benefits of the basic contradictions inherent in the Congress Socialist Party.

Young Nehru may have been sincere in his efforts at establishing socialism in the country, but his dependence on Gandhi was more overpowering. Nehru's respect for socialism and socialist policies were high, but his affinity to Gandhi as a man and for the Gandhian methods was higher still. Nehru's Lucknow address therefore became both his highpoint and his swan song. Nehru had perhaps even in the earlier stages realised the importance, necessity and utility of the Gandhian strategy and perhaps he accorded greater importance to strategy than to ideology. Therefore it was Gandhi who really ruled the roost and his ideas, his values, his tactics and strategy became synonymous with Congress ideology, values, strategy, etc. Given his conservative ideas, the Congress policies could not certainly have been radical, progressive or forward looking policies which would change the status quo.

The Congress leadership, Gandhi included were confronted with a number of changes in their environment which forced them to take a fresh look at their policies. They realised that in order to safeguard their interests it had become necessary to change their stand somewhat. One important factor that influenced the Congress was the growing aspirations of the people resulting from the spread of education, interaction and growing consciousness of the people. The Russian revolution too had shown the masses that it was possible to achieve a truly just and humane society. All

this had aroused a great deal of expectations amongst the masses. Congressmen had also been coming under the influence of progressive and radical ideologies and the Congress Socialist Party had been formed in the party. Subhas Bose the radical Congress leader from Bengal, was also busy spreading the message of socialism to the peasantry and the working classes. Given these challenges, therefore, Gandhi and his colleagues no doubt felt it expedient to introduce a progressive outlook for the Congress, but, and this is important in a gradual and moderate way, so that the status quo is not jeopardised. It was here then that Gandhi's qualities as a master strategist and supporter of the vested interests became apparent. He realised that a certain amount of socialist rhetoric coupled with some forward looking policies was necessary if the Congress was to survive successfully. The Lahore, the Karachi and the Lucknow Congresses are cases that stand out as important examples.

Gandhi also managed to maintain a composite national movement, in spite of the pull in different directions by the different elements in the party, by evolving a process of keeping a balance of all the diverse elements in the party. He did this, by ameliorating and pacifying the diverse groups and was successful in keeping the party together, even though many a time it had reached a near breaking point. For Gandhi, struggling for freedom, party unity was of foremost importance. It was equally important to retain the support of the masses. Hence unity at any cost was the need of the

time. He may have also realised that too much of resistance to progressive policies may have only precipitated conditions, resulting in a situation dangerous to them. He laid great stress on the so called democratic method which became an integral part of his strategy and means to contain too radical a transformation.

The right wing, however time and again saw to it that the Congress did not really go too far in adopting socialist policies. If they relented on the one hand, they tightened the reins by the other. This kind of a strategy stayed on in the Congress even in independent India. The right wing had been initially, quite genuinely afraid of Nehru's Socialist leanings, hence the over reaction to Nehru's Karachi address. However, they gradually realised that Nehru's "bark was worse than his bite" and the right wing managed to almost always carry the day. Here it is important to clarify that the term "right wing" was only a relative term as compared to the Left wing. The 'left wing' fell far short of the other leftist parties in India. Right from the beginning the party did not have a very firm mass base and its social base even in 1947, was quite weak. Towards the latter part of the national movement, while the masses were moved into action, they were never politically organised and the gulf between the leaders and the masses remained unabridged. Besides, the political activity of the masses was rigidly controlled from the top and the top meant the spokesmen of the bourgeoisie.

After independence, Gandhi's mantle fell on Nehru, the chosen successor. Nehru further developed and refined the methods and strategies Gandhi had employed. Although, initially Nehru had made quite a concerted effort at supporting and helping the socialists, he very cleverly refrained from becoming a member of that group. Nehru had made use of the socialists, perhaps in the same way and for similar reasons the right wing had made use of him. Each actor, each decision-maker therefore tried to play his cards to the greatest advantage possible, making use of all the strategies at hand. Nehru's political actions were far more sober than his ideological flights. Besides, his failure to build a political base of his own, lack of active work among or even contact with workers and peasants, his attachment and subservience to Gandhi and his refusal to form or side with the socialist groups, etc. enabled the bourgeoisie to maintain its control not only over the party but also over him. After Independence, in fact, they worked and cooperated with him in the task of building up the nation's economy, but of course on basically capitalist lines.

The Indian proletariat though a growing number constituted hardly 4-5% of the working population. They were predominantly of the pauperised peasants and trained artisans who became wage earners. The Indian working class developed national and class consciousness much later than the intelligentsia and the educated middle class. Besides, they were doubly exploited by the British imperialists as well as the

indigenous capitalists. They therefore could not develop as a strong force and give dynamic leadership to the movement. The peasantry was one step worse off than the proletariats. They were perhaps the most deprived section, living in conditions of the most backward social relations and the most archaic forms of exploitation. The heavy oppression falling on the peasantry was such that it kept them fairly suppressed. The proletariats too had their connections with the countryside. All this made it possible more than ever for the petty bourgeois leaders of the Indian National Congress, working in the interests of the capitalists, to go ahead with their policies without much of a resistance or opposition.

The left parties in India, by their bungling inept ways, further strengthened the hands of the bourgeoisie. Prior to independence "the self-isolation of the communists from the anti-imperialist mass struggle, alleged to be a purely Congress movement, created confusion in the communist ranks. It helped to increase the disbelief in the strength of the proletariat and the growth of its class consciousness among communist intellectuals."⁴ Their inability to develop an indigenous strategy and free themselves from the 'advice' of Soviet Russia, their ideological confusion, their oscillating attitude towards the national movement and the subsequent split in the party, led to the weakening of the party. In its weakness lay the strength of the Congress and the bourgeois leadership of the Congress. Given these conditions, therefore, it would have been easy for Nehru and the Congress under his leadership to

follow the capitalist path of development openly, as they were inclined to do. However, certain other factors proved to have mattered more and for those reasons the Congress had to carry on with its socialist rhetoric even while building up a capitalist economy. The difference being that capitalist development in India differed very greatly in form but certainly not in content from the same development that occurred in the other countries of the world.

Nehru had realised that had they blatantly followed the capitalist path, they would have almost immediately antagonised the vast masses of the country. These people's aspirations, hopes and desires had been raised. Very high both by the fact that India had attained freedom and also because the Congress had promised them much in independent India. The party would have committed political suicide had they gone against the promises they made to the people. Grappling with the post-independence politics, Nehru realised that if the masses were not kept happy and the varying interest groups in the party not satisfied then party unity may be jeopardised. Partymen realised that without the Congress organisation to back them, they were almost ciphers.

In the international scene, Nehru was faced with the example of China and Russia striding ahead and putting into practice all that he and the party had been advocating thus far. Without disturbing the status quo, it was therefore becoming very necessary to maintain a progressive outlook. May be it was a sense of competition with China that led Nehru to adopt the

Avadi Resolution at 1955. No doubt, the Communist Party of India was not a very formidable force but one could not deny that its influence was slowly spreading in the country. In the light of this Nehru realised it was more than ever necessary to give a leftist facelift to the party. Keeping this in view it becomes quite understandable why the Congress leaders along with Nehru, who were advocating socialism in so many words and resolutions, never really spared an opportunity to criticise the communists. The outcome of the 1952 elections had further convinced Nehru that if the Congress had to survive as the most powerful national force in the country, it would have to retain its mass support by adopting policies favourable to the working classes.

Although Nehru desired, whether for tactical purposes or because he truly wanted to bring socialism to the country, he was hampered in the task by the nature of the Indian bureaucracy.

The administrative system was such that it was geared to the needs of a highly centralised imperialist government. They were elitist in nature and far removed from the realities of the Indian conditions. Living in their ivory towers the administrators by their profession, socio-economic background, their educational background and by virtue of their training, were rather conservative and not given to radical changes. Nehru, being aware of the limitations of the bureau-

cracy was perhaps compelled to go slow with the socialist policies. After all there was not much point in formulating progressive policies when the implementing agency, the generalist bureaucrat, was so conservative. As La Palambora pointed out "In so far as developmental goals imply highly specialised administrative roles in either public or private sector - the persistence of administrative generalists will constitute an impediment to economic change."⁵

It is to be noted however that the conservative bureaucracy was only one small part of the reason why the Congress did not want to go full swing with socialist policies.

After Gandhi's death, Nehru had more or less taken on the predominant position in the party, but for some time he had to function within certain limitations. He was restrained to a great extent by the presence of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and an area of tension and conflict developed within the party. When Nehru had differed with Gandhi, it was not on the basis of one equal with another, for Nehru was by far Gandhi's junior in age, experience, mass appeal, etc. The Nehru-Patel confrontation, however, was one of equals because of which the clashes were of a more serious nature. In the initial years of freedom, although Nehru had become Prime Minister, the post of Party President still eluded him, primarily because of Patel's opposition. As a result, Nehru's position in the party and the government was still a little weak. Howsoever strong Nehru's popularity may have been among the masses, the party machine was more or less firmly in Patel's hands. Till

this position remained there was not much difficulty for the party and Cabinet colleagues to openly disagree with Nehru. Finance Ministers and Food Ministers came and went as differences of opinion cropped up between them and the Prime Minister. J. Mathai resigned in protest against "too much planning" and S.P. Mookerjee and K.C. Neogy and others followed suite. When Nehru therefore was faced with the opposition put up by Patel, he did not command a very strong position in the party, a position which he desperately needed at that time. However, when he did achieve that position in the party, there were no opponents worth the name left in it. The two men seemed to be quite different from each other. Patel was more of a conservative and he criticised labour severely and continuously reassured the business community; keeping them as happy as possible. Nehru on the other hand seemed much more progressive, severe with the business community, and far more soft on the working classes and the peasantry. Nehru openly advocated radical and progressive policies, but it seems this was done primarily in a bid to project himself as a progressive and thereby endear himself to the masses. No doubt Nehru missed the Socialists who had left the Congress in 1948, for in them he had found strong supporters and sympathisers for the socialist cause. Instead he had to depend on the yearnings of the petit bourgeoisie for progress.⁶ Nehru however still had a few kindered spirits in the party. As C. Rau points out "Maulana alone

remained of the old guard and A.Kidwai a close worker was a willing associate. He enjoyed the goodwill of Rajaji and men like Dr B.C. Roy, Pandit Pant, Krishna Sinha. But he was yet the only socialist and had a socialist outlook."⁷ In other words, although Nehru got help by the able administrators, economists, etc. whom he had made ministers, none were staunch socialists as the Congress Socialist Party had been.

Nehru himself in spite of his talks of socialism, was quite a conservative in action. While choosing his Congress Working Committee, whether prior to or after independence, he was careful to see that the right wing majority got more than their share of representation. Therefore it would be quite incorrect to lay the total blame on the right wing for the slow progress of socialist policies in the party. As K.P. Karunakaran points out in his book on Nehru, pp. 20

"Very few Prime Ministers in a democracy could remain that long as the head of the government as Nehru could. This was partly because he was a very shrewd politician and partly because he symbolised the area of agreement among the different political and social groups....Nehru was the socialist theoretician of the most well organised conservative party of India."

The Congress party, as far as the socialist policies are concerned, followed Nehru's typical style of getting agreement for broad principles of socialist transformation even while giving its sanction and blessings to the conservative economic policies, as was incorporated in the draft outline of the First Plan. The differences between the Economic Pro-

gramme Committee's Report and the 1948 industrial policy resolution was indeed very striking. The national party executive endorsed Socialist principles of State ownership, regulation etc. to curb economic concentration. On the other hand the national Congress government pursued liberal economic policies and incentives to private investment - justification being that maximum production was required. When the Congress Economic Programme Committee had created a certain amount of uncertainty in the minds of the business community and they rushed to point out that it was contrary to the guarantees received from the government at the Industries Conference in December 1947, promptly came the 1948 government Resolution as the answer to allay their fears and anxieties. In fact, what the business community wanted, the Congress gave them, e.g. minimum control and maximum State aid and the government tackling all the bottlenecks the private sector was facing, licences etc. Until Patel's death, the government had taken a series of decisions on constitutional arrangements that set very narrow limits on the country's powers for direct implementation of economic and social reforms. Although the Patel group was opposed to planning, the incompetence of the private sector strengthened Nehru's hand to the extent that finally the Working Committee after a long debate agreed to have planning for the country. The Industries (Development and Control) Bill of 1949, was also formulated to enable the government to implement the objectives of 1948. Labour unrest is bound to take place, when unequal distribution and exploitation and monopoly thrives. Strikes, etc. cannot be avoided if the

labour wants to get a better deal from the vested interests. Therefore, the industrial truce, did not work so much in favour of labour as it did for the vested interests.

Following Patel's death, Nehru became almost the sole determining factor in Congress decision making. At a time when the world was divided into two clear blocs, each controlled by a super power, in order to maintain one's own identity Nehru realised it was important to pursue a policy of non-alignment. Had India favored any one group then there would have been the danger of being completely swamped. In order to avoid the pitfalls of both the Capitalist and the socialist path, Nehru devised the compromise formula of mixed economy. Thereby he was able to maintain an equidistance from both the super powers which kept them both happy. Aid and help flowed into the country not only from the United States of America but also from the Soviet Union. The policy of mixed economy, championing both a private and a public sector, and the ultimate establishment of socialism through planning in a democratic way proved to be satisfactory to both the super powers. In the home front for similar reasons it was able to keep both the masses and the business lobby happy. The mixed economy was not a path of development traversed before, a form of development which was to be a synthesis of the qualities of both capitalism and socialism in such a way

that the status quo remains unchanged. It was a groping, an experiment, a stake, which Nehru and his colleagues in their wisdom felt would pay rich dividends to the party and the vested interests.

The Congress in its bid to maintain party unity, made a number of efforts at accommodating the sarvodayis in the party by way of incorporating some of their policies and by helping them in a number of ways. This in spite of the fact that Nehru was quite openly critical of Sarvodaya economic policy and stated that it was no answer to solve the economic problem of the country. Therefore all the complexities of decision-making was more or less geared to the short term needs for party unity and for ensuring the survival of the party leaders.

Although the Congress party leaders complained bitterly against Nehru, officially they supported him. Those who came into conflict with him either finally submitted or went out e.g. the Democratic Front. Nehru was quite often intolerant of the opposition within the party and the government. When C.D. Deshmukh accused Nehru and some of the senior leaders (Maulana, Pant) of the Cabinet for arriving at decisions in an unconstitutional manner, where "decisions had been taken and announced on behalf of the Cabinet by certain unauthorised members of the Cabinet, including the Prime Minister, in matters concerning the reorganisation of the States." Nehru lashed back and in his hard hitting

answer stated that "there was more consultation on this than on any other subject we have had since I have been P.M."⁷ (the issue being a decision taken about the administration of Bombay City.) Nehru further stated that P.M. was the "lynch pin of the government".⁸ Congressmen could not think of replacing Nehru however because there was a vacuum in the leadership, which can be understood by the frequent question asked at that time "After Nehru who?". Even if they had been able to replace Nehru, the basic strategy, policy and ideological commitment, would have remained the same. With Nehru, the Congress had the advantage of being able to give greater credibility to their socialist programmes and policies, and a personality acceptable to almost all the groups.

Although Nehru faced oppositions in the party, he however did get support from a number of quarters - from his close colleagues in the Party, the Parliament and the Planning Commission. However, none of them had the stature of a man like S.V. Patel or Nehru himself. Liaquat Ali Khan, e.g. who joined the Interim Cabinet, when the Muslim League entered it was supposed to be an important "Leftist in the Cabinet". The budget he presented in 1947 was considered sensational, as he brought the Excess Profits Tax and increased the Surcharge, Tax and the Corporate Tax. Pandit Pant too was a great source of strength to Nehru and supported major decisions of the Prime Minister. Maulana Azad

too was a close associate and comrade in arms, as was R.A. Kidwai. They helped Nehru steer many a progressive resolution both in the Party and the Cabinet. An activist group of "progressives" had at the end of 1957, formed the Congress Socialist Forum. These were the same men who gave a good deal of support to the Prime Minister's socialist policies. "The leading lights of the Forum were the powerful trio: Krishna Menon, upon whose advice Nehru leaned more than on any one else's in those days; K.D. Malaviya, an aggressive controversialist and highly unorthodox but successful minister, anathema to foreign oil companies and Indira Gandhi, Nehru's daughter."⁹ Other colleagues like G. Nanda also strengthened Nehru's stand, especially in matters of planning, as did to a large extent the Deputy Minister S.N. Mishra. Nehru's strongest point perhaps was that he had the backing of the people for the socialist policy.

If we study and analyse the consequences of the various economic and political policies of the government, it is seen that it has been consistently helping and developing one section of society in India - the national bourgeoisie. Once the bourgeoisie has power it keeps it. In order to multiply their assets the bourgeoisie strives to better the economy more and more by greater industrialisation going in for heavy industries and betterment of sciences and technology and this is precisely what the Indian bourgeoisie through the Indian National Congress had tried to achieve.

The

No doubt certain progressive measures were undertaken, e.g. the 1948 Factories Act, had no doubt, brought a certain amount of relief to the workers. The subsequent Act of Minimum Wages in the same year has been amended a number of times and has further looked after the interests of the working class. But, these were too insignificant, to be of great relevance or importance, for the general condition of the working class remained as before.

As almost about 70% of the country's population derive their livelihood from agriculture, the agrarian question occupies a very important place in the country's political, economic and social life. Almost half of the national income is derived from agriculture. Therefore, unless and until some radical and revolutionary changes are brought about in the agrarian set up, there can be very little progress in the country. This radical change is necessary because the Britishers had introduced a really exploitative system in the form of the zamindari and the ryotwari system, where the peasants lived a bare hand to mouth existence. The large chunks of profits were being expropriated by the big landlords themselves.

Prior to Independence, some attempts at removing some of the worst features of the land tenure system had been made but nothing that radically changed the basic structure. With the coming of the popular governments after the 1936 elections to the Provincial Assemblies, some legislation protect-

ing the interests of the tenants had been introduced, for those were the days of mass upheavals of the peasants in some of the zamindari areas. In certain areas laws were enacted to protect the tenant from eviction without giving any reasons for it, e.g. in Bombay. In Bihar, illegal eviction by zamindars were made a penal offence and the rent enhancements between 1911-13 were cancelled. In M.P. similarly ejection of tenants were prohibited. In U.P. the Tenancy Act of 1939 gave permanent and habitable occupancy rights to many.

However, the first comprehensive statement on land policy was contained in the Report of Agrarian Reforms Committee appointed by the Indian National Congress in 1948. It gave its full support to the abolition of zamindari and intermediaries of all kinds. The Committee had also recommended ceilings and cooperative farming.

In the first five year Plan, the government clarified further its stand on Land Policy, by endorsing and recommending the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee report. The first plan's emphasis was on agricultural produce and sought to remove the disparities in wealth and income, remove exploitation and give security to the tenant and worker.

The zamindari or intermediary tenures existed predominantly in U.P., Bihar, Hyderabad, Bengal, Madras, etc. The Zamindari Abolition Acts in these States subsequently empowered the State governments to acquire all rights of inter-

mediaries on payment of compensation. The transfer was 260 however not a smooth one. The big zamindars, in order to avoid this, went to fight their battle in Court and innumerable legal complications arose. They were successful more often than not. Their claim, which the Court supported was that it went against their Fundamental Rights guaranteed in the Constitution Section 31. The Parliament, however, took a fairly bold step by amending the Constitution in 1951. A new article 31-A was introduced which stated "no law providing for the acquisition by the State of any property or any rights therein...shall be deemed to be void on the ground that it was inconsistent with any of the Fundamental Rights conferred by Part III of the Constitution.

Legislative measures were also taken up by various States for regulation of rent. The Tenancy Legislation took into account, this factor as well as security of tenure and the conferment of ownership of tenants, e.g. the Bombay Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act 1948 (and amended in 1957). These legislations sought to make leasing of land unattractive and finally leading to the termination of the system altogether.

Subsequently laws imposing ceiling on the amount of land one could hold, were also enacted, even though the criteria to determine the level at which ceiling should be imposed were difficult to determine. A lot of problem had come up regarding compensation to be paid. The Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee had also recommended cooperative farming and the first five year plan endorsed the same. It said "for reasons mentioned...it is important that small and medium farmers in particular should be encouraged and assisted to group themselves voluntarily into cooperative farming

societies..." This too was later sought to be implemented by the government. As R.P. Dutt in 'India Today'¹ states "In the social and economic field the new Ministries attempted a very limited programme. They did not attempt to tackle the heavy obstacles represented by the existing land system and the economic regime under imperialism.... Certain immediate measures of legislation were carried out, especially in relation to the peasants. On the urgent question of debt measures were adopted for cancelling a proposition of old arrears, as in the Madras Agriculturists Debt Relief Act, for an immediate moratorium, as in the U.P. and Bombay, for scaling down of debts and for the limitation of the rate of interest. Tenancy legislation was carried, aimed to afford a certain degree of protection against ejection to cancel enhancements of rent, to remove irregular additional dues...."

The land reforms in India came in various stages: (1) abolition of intermediaries or zamindari rights, (2) tenancy legislation aimed at reduction of rent, security of tenure and purchase of land by tenants, (3) ceilings on individual holdings, (4) cooperative farming. This presents the chronological order in which these measures were introduced.

As land reforms fall mainly in the jurisdiction of the State government it is very important what kind of an attitude they adopt. The land reform legislations have taken different shape in different States, taking into consideration the peculiarities of those States.

All this goes to show that the Congress government had made several attempts at reforming the agrarian set up in its efforts at bringing socialism to the country. The Congress party policies in this matter was of course the determining factor. Without denying the attempts made we must also point out that truly radical reforms cannot really be brought about by the political power is in the hands of the ruling class. Thus, we find that although the zamindars have been removed, a new class of exploiting landlords have come up. In U.P. e.g. although the zamindars have gone, the Bhoumidhars and Girdars have been created. The Bhoumidhars were the former zamindars, who had tremendous powers in the question of ownership of land, etc. The tenancy legislation have shown that the implementation of the law has been far from satisfactory. Besides, the laws have become so complex that most of the peasantry do not understand them. Land records were not kept properly and the top officers connived with the big landlords. Land Ceilings also were never properly implemented. The CPI(M) publication⁷¹ "Focus: Handbook of Statistics" showed in a table on the achievement of land ceiling measures, that when initially surplus land in excess of ceiling in the beginning was declared it was approximately 63 million acres and finally the land actually distributed by the government was only around 1.2 million acres. There was no consistent policy regarding ceilings and this has led to different types of ceilings in different states. Therefore although a certain amount of progress had been made in the land reform legislations the problem has not been solved satisfactorily so far.

The delay in the legislation, the number of loopholes in the recitals and the exceptions provided all gave ample opportunity for the landowners to circumvent the law by means of benami transactions and conversions. As noted earlier, the bureaucracy was not fully equipped to put into practice, the spirit of the legislation.

In the first post-independence years, the economic policy was weak and compromising. The bourgeoisie hoped to initiate a process of independent capitalist development through collaboration with imperialism. The first five year plan inspite of a bold facade and progressive declarations, did not aim at any structural change in the economy and was actually a mere summary of the projects already in progress or even in file.

Planning has totally failed to create a stable and extensive material and technological basis for increasing agricultural productivity which will make Indian economy less vulnerable to adverse seasonal factors. Statistics show that there has been no appreciable reduction in the disparities in the ownership of land between 1953-54 and 1959-60 in spite of voluminous enactments of land reform measures during the period.

The dislike and even unconcealed opposition to the radical programme advocated by the left reflected the attitude of the big business and other vested interests. State intervention and planning was regarded by them as methods to further their aims. What they really opposed was all

measures for any radical change in the structure of the economy and society. India had inherited a monopolistic industrial structure and the subsequent policies of the Congress government has only further strengthened these clearly visible monopolistic tendencies. Public and private sector were to coexist not on competitive but on cooperative basis. Planning did not mean total abolition of private property. Gradual land reforms, became the method of transferring the economy and hasty nationalisation was not encouraged. As this was the case, then what of Socialism? We go back to the point made earlier, that socialist rhetoric was used to a large extent, by the Congress to further their own vested interests. The entire decision-making process in the party was geared to this essential fact.

Sometimes, Nehru sounded sincere and genuine, but his actions proved otherwise. As the Congress had a majority in Parliament, it was easy to carry through the various policy resolutions almost unanimously. Amendments, debates, etc. were only secondary. The business lobby being encouraged by the Congress governments policies, made greater and greater demands and even asked government indirectly perhaps, not to come in their way through their socialist policy. The interaction between the democratic institutions and the capitalist system led to tussles over decisions relating to those enterprises which gave maximum profits to them, but which were not necessarily the ones which would lay the foundation of a healthy economy. The struggle for power in the social and

political fields also got reflected in the competition to get investments by the government. Here again, the government was compelled to invest in places which were not necessarily the most attractive. It was this group who stood to gain maximum from the industrial truce, mixed economy, Industrial Policy Resolution of 1948, etc.

To sum up, after Patel's death the decision-making process of the Congress was controlled almost solely by Nehru. "After 1947, his image was that of a supreme leader of the Indian nation who did not even have a close second. He did propagate views which appealed to some sections or other or which was based on a class approach. But the main thrust of his policies was against the fragmentation of Indian politics and he made the necessary compromises to maintain the national cohesion."¹² At the most a handful of close and like minded colleagues aided and helped Nehru in making the various decisions. This was especially true to the Party's economic policies. The Party functioned as the spokesmen of the bourgeoisie and reflected their interests in all the policies. At the same time they tried to keep abreast of the changing needs and demands of the times and considered the Socialist policy suitable and helpful to retain their mass support. In the ultimate analysis it seems the survival of the party and the safeguarding of its interests was, if not as much, a little more important than ideological commitment. To the extent the Socialist policy helped the Party achieve its own ends, they adopted it to the extent it went against their interests, they rejected it.

The conflict and the bargaining that went on in the Congress was therefore primarily an intra class affair, rather than an inter class phenomena. It is possible to comprehend the entire decision-making process of the Congress only in the light of this.

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