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Pandering to Dictates of Global Finance

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Just a month ago, the Modi–Jaitley government had once again massaged the GDP figures, for the second time in two years, to make them look even better. The earlier revision had made them to be 5.1% in 2012–13, 6.9% in 2013–14, 7.2% in 2014–15 and 7.3% in 2015–16. The revision—caused by a change in the method of measuring GDP—had made the economy grow at more than 7% for 2014–15, making India one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Then, in January 2017, the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) revised the figures once again to make them look like a perfect stepladder of sustained growth—5.6% / 6.6% / 7.2% / 7.9% respectively. The growth rate for 2015–16 had been revised to a high of 7.9%.¹

**Table 1: India, Growth Rates, as Revised by
BJP Govt in 2015 and 2017 (%)**

	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16
Growth Rates, 2015 Estimates	5.1	6.9	7.2	7.3
Growth Rates, 2017 Estimates	5.6	6.6	7.2	7.9

The absurdity of these figures becomes obvious from just one statistic. The Index of Industrial Production data show that growth in factory output in the country had slowed down from 2.8% in 2014–15 to 2.4% in 2015–16, and the manufacturing sector, which accounts for over 75 per cent of the index, grew at meagre rate of 2% in 2015–16 compared to 2.3% in previous year. However, the CSO in its calculations has considered the manufacturing component of the GDP to have suddenly jumped from 5.5% in 2014–15 to 9.5% in 2015–16!²

However, demonetisation has had such a crippling effect on the economy that even the CSO has been forced to admit that the economy is expected to slow down in 2016–17. Predictably, the CSO has attempted to downplay the impact, saying that it expects the economy to grow at 7.1% in 2016–17 as compared to 7.6% the previous year. Almost immediately, other forecasters challenged its figure, with Icria expecting it to fall to 6.8% and HSBC projecting it to fall to 6.3%.³

Other figures actually project that the slowdown is much worse than that indicated by the above figures. Thus, for instance, factory output, measured by Index of Industrial Production, actually contracted by 0.4% in December 2016, driven by contraction in consumer goods, capital goods and manufacturing. It had risen by 5.7% in November 2016.⁴ Another set of data that again gives an indication on slowing economic activities is bank credit growth numbers. RBI data show that non-food credit growth slowed down from 6.7% in October 2016 to 4.8% in November and 4.0% in December. These figures were less than half of the corresponding figures for 2015—non-food credit growth increased by 8.8% in November and 9.3% in December 2015.⁵

Demonetisation particularly hit the informal sector hard, sending it into a coma. The informal sector consists of small scale manufacturing, most of the construction industry, perhaps three quarters of the remainder of the services sector, and the agricultural sector. While there are no official estimates of the number of jobs lost due to mass scale closure of small scale industries following demonetisation, it is for certain that lakhs of workers have been rendered unemployed and have had to return to their villages.⁶

Having saddled the economy with an entirely unnecessary slowdown in growth and massive rise in unemployment through demonetisation, the Central Government had a chance to partially undo the damage through Budget 2017 by significantly raising its expenditure relative to GDP, especially in those sectors most hit by the note ban. If ever there was a case for a more expansionary fiscal stance to revive demand in the economy, it was now. This would have helped increase demand in the system, and given a boost to employment generation.

In particular, since the economic pain caused by demonetisation was felt disproportionately by the poor, the Central Government was expected to take special

measures to alleviate their suffering by directing significantly increased spending towards the poor, through measures like increasing social sector spending, and increasing government expenditure on sectors like agriculture.

Jaitley and fiscal deficit

Unfortunately, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has done none of this in his Budget 2017–18. To please global finance, he has continued with the policies of neoliberalism that he has so assiduously been pursuing for the past three years and that were also pursued by the previous UPA Government. A key element of budget making under neoliberalism is reining in the fiscal deficit. And so, Jaitley has declared that he is going to further bring down the fiscal deficit to 3.2% of the GDP in 2017–18, from 3.5% achieved in 2016–17 and 3.9% in 2015–16.⁷ This policy of “fiscal prudence”, which constitutes the cornerstone of the government’s budgetary strategy, is staggering in its implications for the common people—who have already been devastated by the cyclone of demonetisation.

Fiscal deficit is just another term for government borrowings of various types. The government borrows when its expenditures exceed its receipts of all types. That India must bring down its fiscal deficit to near zero if it wants to become an economic superpower in the near future has become an economic gospel today. All the leading establishment economists, each and every economist associated with international financial institutions, every renowned management guru—all are in agreement that high levels of fiscal deficit relative to GDP adversely affect growth. Former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram in fact criticised Jaitley for not striving to bring down the fiscal deficit to 3% in this financial year.⁸

The fact is, the economic theory that the government must balance its expenditure with its income, that is, must bring down its fiscal deficit to near zero, is plain humbug. John Maynard Keynes, considered by many to be the greatest economist of the twentieth century, had demonstrated way back in the 1930s that in an economy where there is poverty and unemployment, the government can, and in fact should, expand public works and generate employment by borrowing, that is, enlarging the fiscal deficit; such government expenditure would also stimulate private expenditure through the “multiplier” effect. Even the governments of the developed countries

like the United States and Japan, when faced with recessionary conditions, have resorted to huge levels of public spending and high fiscal deficits.⁹

Despite this theory being a complete fraud, it is one of the conditionalities of the Structural Adjustment Loan taken by India from the World Bank way back in 1991, when India was in the throes of an external debt crisis. These World Bank dictated economic reforms, implemented dutifully by every government that has come to power at the Centre since 1991, have been given the grandiloquent name of globalisation.¹⁰

If this theory is humbug, why is the World Bank so keen that India reduce its fiscal deficit, and why is the Government of India so keen to implement this conditionality? The only reason why Jaitley is harping upon the theme of fiscal discipline is because it gives him an excuse to reduce government expenditures on the poor and transfer the savings to big corporate houses! This of course is going to sound amazing to Modi Bhakts—after all, Modi keeps singing *Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas*. Therefore, let us explain this in slightly greater detail.

The fiscal deficit is the excess of the government's expenditures over receipts. In all his three budgets presented so far, Jaitley has doled out lakhs of rupees as subsidies to the very rich. Had he really been concerned about the fiscal deficit, he could have easily reduced these mindboggling giveaways. But the government dubs these subsidies to the rich as "incentives", and justifies them in the name of promoting growth–development–entrepreneurism. On the other hand, the social sector expenditures of the government are given the derisive name 'subsidies' and are being drastically reduced in the name of containing the fiscal deficit. Not only that, these essential services are also being privatised—resulting in fabulous profits for the private sector.

Just a look at the extraordinary concessions given to the rich in the name of tax incentives in Jaitley's budgets presented so far will make our point clear.

Tax incentives to the rich

Every year, for the past several years, the budget documents have included a statement on the estimated revenue forgone by the government due to exemptions in major taxes levied by the Centre in the past year. This statement is included in the annexure attached to the

Receipt Budget in the Union Budget documents, and is titled: *Revenue impact of Tax Incentive under the Central Tax System*. We have compared the tax exemptions to the rich with the fiscal deficit for that year in Table 2. (The write-offs as mentioned in the budget statement are in corporate tax, personal income tax, customs duties and excise duties. In the data on tax exemptions given in Table 2, we have excluded the amount forgone on personal income tax, since this write-off benefits a wider group of people.)

**Table 2: Revenue Forgone by Central Government
Due to Tax Exemptions, and Fiscal Deficit
(Rs lakh crore)**

	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	Total
Revenue Forgone	5.49	5.51	5.50	16.5
Fiscal Deficit RE	5.13	5.35	5.34	

[Note:

A note on tax exemptions given to the rich in 2016–17 is required here. Just like it has changed the methodology for calculating GDP, it has changed the methodology for calculating tax concessions given to the rich in this year's (2017–18) budget documents. Under the new methodology adopted by the government and explained in the 2017–18 Budget documents, the Centre has differentiated between what it calls "conditional" and "unconditional" exemptions. Unconditional exemptions will no longer be considered for the purpose of calculating revenues foregone or the revenue impact of tax incentives. The new methodology does not affect the calculation for corporate taxes, but sharply brings down estimated revenue forgone in case of customs and excise duties.

Obviously, the distinction made between conditional and unconditional exemptions is an artificial concoction, meant to bring down the estimation of tax exemptions given to the rich. The statement on revenue forgone has been there in the budget documents since 2006–07; obviously, had there been some justification for excluding 'unconditional' exemptions from the calculation for revenue forgone, the previous UPA Government would definitely have used it too to lower the estimation for revenue forgone.

We have therefore used the older methodology to estimate the revenue forgone due to tax exemptions given in the case of customs and excise duties, based on data

given in the statement on revenue forgone given in the 2017–18 budget documents.

In case of customs duties, as per the older methodology, the estimated customs revenue impact of tax incentives is calculated based on data generated at the Electronic Data Interchange (EDI). This system does not capture the full data of imports, and so suitable adjustments are made. From this, revenue impact on account of Export Promotion Concessions is deducted, to get the net impact of tax incentives on customs duties revenues. As per EDI data, the total estimated customs revenue impact of tax incentives for 2016–17 (annualised) came to Rs 307,707 crore. The EDI captured 95.01% of the gross customs revenue. After extrapolation for data not captured by EDI, the estimated customs revenue impact for the whole year comes to: Rs 323,868 crore. Deducting from this net revenue impact on account of input tax neutralization schemes (Rs 57,065 crore), we get the revenue impact of tax incentives on customs duty side for 2016–17 by the old methodology to be Rs 266,803 crore.

In the case of excise duties, as per the older methodology, this is calculated based on data generated by the Automated Central Excise & Service Tax (ACES) system, to which is added revenue impact due to the operation of area based exemption schemes. For 2016–17, this works out to Rs 199,838 crore [Rs 180,502 crore (general exemptions, conditional and unconditional) + Rs 19,336 crore (area based exemptions)].

Therefore, based on the older methodology, the total projected tax exemptions for the year 2016–17, excluding exemptions given on personal income taxes are:

- Corporation taxes = Rs 83,492 crore
- Excise duties = Rs 199,838 crore
- Customs duties = Rs 266,803 crore
- Total = Rs 550,133 crore]

The total tax exemptions given to the country's uber rich by the Modi–Jaitley government in the three years it has been in power total Rs 16.5 lakh crore! That is an amount that equals 86% of the estimated gross tax revenues of the Central Government for the financial year 2017–18.

Low tax revenues

It is because of these huge tax giveaways to India's

richie rich that India's tax revenues are low, because of which our combined tax-to-GDP ratio for Centre and States put together is amongst the lowest in the world. This is admitted even by the Finance Minister in his budget speech this year. The *Economic Survey* of last year (2015–16) admitted that India's tax-to-GDP ratio at 16.6% is lowest among BRICS and lower than both the Emerging Market Economy (EME) and OECD averages, which are about 21% and 34% respectively. India's tax ratio is the lowest even among economies with comparable (PPP adjusted) per-capita GDP such as Vietnam, Bolivia and Uzbekistan.¹¹

In fact, the government's revenues would have been in a far worse state but for the fact that the government was able to take advantage of the fall in international oil prices to hike excise duties on crude oil and petro-products from 1.02% of GDP in 2014–15 to 1.61% of GDP in 2016–17, an increase of 0.6% of the GDP! It is because of this that despite giving away such huge amounts in tax concessions to the rich, the Modi Government's gross tax revenues as a proportion of the GDP have risen from 10% in 2014–15 to 11.3% in 2016–17 RE. The Modi Government has increased excise duties petro-products by nine times since coming to power in 2014. The Central Government currently charges Rs 17.33 for every litre of diesel and Rs 21.48 for every litre of petrol as excise duty.¹²

Table 3: Contribution of Petroleum Sector to Exchequer (% of GDP)

	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17
Central taxes/duties on crude oil & petroleum products	0.94	1.02	1.53	1.61
Out of which, excise duty	0.69	0.8	1.31	1.41

The Finance Minister had given several interviews in December 2016/January 2017 highlighting that demonetisation had led to a jump in tax collections, and had even given detailed data showing that direct tax mop-up increased by 12.01% while indirect tax revenue grew 25% during the period April to December 2017.¹³ However, the budget papers belie his claims! They do not reflect any significant increase in tax revenues in the current financial year. In fact, the corporate and income tax numbers for the budget estimates and revised estimates of 2016–17 are almost the same; while the

revised estimates for 2016–17 show an increase in indirect tax revenues by only 10.1% over the budget estimates. This, despite demonetisation and the two income disclosure schemes announced in the current financial year! Even though the Union Budget was

advanced by a month this year, because of which it is possible that the government does not have proper revised estimates for tax collections for this year, it also means that the government expects revenue gains from all these measures to be negligible.

Table 4: Gross Tax Revenues of Central Government, 2015–16 to 2017–18 (Rs crore)

	2015–16 (Actuals)	2016–17 (BE)(1)	2016–17 (RE)(2)	Increase, (2) – (1)	2017–18 (BE)(3)	Increase, (3) – (2)
Gross tax revenue	1,455,648	1,630,888	1,703,243	4.4%	1,911,579	12.2%
<i>Corporation tax</i>	453,228	493,924	493,924	0	538,745	9.1%
<i>Income tax</i>	287,637	353,174	353,174	0	441,255	24.9%
<i>Union excise duties</i>	288,073	318,670	387,369	21.6%	406,900	5%
<i>Customs duties</i>	210,338	230,000	217,000	– 5.7%	245,000	12.9%
<i>Service tax</i>	211,414	231,000	247,500	7.1%	275,000	11.3%
Non-tax revenue	251,706	322,921	334,770	3.7%	288,757	– 13.7%
GDP at Current Market	13,675,331	15,075,429	15,075,429		16,847,455	
Prices (2011–12 series)						
Gross Tax Revenue as % of GDP	10.60%	10.82%	11.30%		11.34%	

The 2017–18 budget estimates too do not indicate any significant rise in gross tax revenues over the 2016–17 RE figures. The Finance Minister estimates the gross tax revenues to go up by 12.2%, mainly powered by an increase in income tax collections of 25%. This however seems to be too optimistic a projection. This is more so because the projected nominal increase in GDP of 11.75%, on which the direct tax growth will depend, also seems to be on the higher side, as nominal growth in GDP has ranged between 10% and 10.7% during 2013–14 to 2016–2017.

Fiscal contractionary path

The gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) in the economy has been falling ever since the BJP Government came to power. The *Economic Survey 2016–17* admits: Private investment, which had been soaring at the height of the boom, slowed sharply to a 5% growth rate by 2010–11. By 2015–16, it had actually started to shrink, and in 2016–17 so far it seems to have contracted by more than 7%. To cushion the impact on the overall economy, public investment has been stepped up considerably, but this has still not been sufficient to arrest

a fall in overall investment. The *Survey* admits that GFCF has slipped into negative territory in first half of 2016–17—and this was before the storm of demonetisation hit the economy.¹⁴

It is elementary mainstream economics that with the investment falling, what is needed to pull the economy out of the deepening crisis is an expansionary budget, that is, the government needs to step up public investment. However, the ‘ultra-nationalist’ BJP Government, led by the Modi–Jaitley duo, is more interested in pandering to the whims of India’s foreign creditors and multinational capital, rather than protecting the nation’s interests.

On the one hand, the Finance Minister is seeking to reduce the fiscal deficit to please global finance. On the other hand, Jaitley continues to generously pay back the debt the BJP owes to the big corporate houses and the wealthy for funding its 2014 Lok Sabha election campaign, by continuing to give them enormous tax concessions. With the result that despite receiving a bonanza on account of petroleum duties, the government’s tax revenues continue to be very low, much lower than

other emerging market economies. Despite admitting that GFCF is contracting, the government's budget outlay for 2017–18 has not seen any significant rise. As a percentage of the GDP, the government's projected

budget outlay for 2017–18 has actually fallen to its lowest level since the BJP came to power in 2014, and is much lower than the 13.9% reached during the last year of the previous UPA Government.

Table 5: Union (BJP) Budget Outlays of 2014–15 to 2017–18 (Rs crore)

	2014–15 (Actuals)	2015–16 (Actuals)	2016–17 BE	2016–17 RE	2017–18 BE
Budget Outlay	1,663,673	1,790,783	1,978,060	2,014,407	2,146,735
GDP at Current Market Prices (2011–12 series)	12,433,749	13,675,331	15,075,429	15,075,429	16,847,455
Budget Outlay as % of GDP	13.38%	13.09%	13.12%	13.36%	12.74%

Further, as the increase in tax revenues projected by the government seems to be an overestimate, the revised budget outlay is in all probability going to be lower than this budgeted estimate.

More subsidies to rich

Even if the expenditure growth is slowing down, the budget outlay for the sectors that result in huge profits for the corporate houses that control the levers of power in the country cannot be affected. One of these sectors is investment in roads and highways. The allocation for the construction of highways has been stepped up from Rs 52,447 in 2016–17 RE to Rs 64,900 in 2017–18 BE, a huge increase of 24%! Virtually all of this is going to be doled out as grants to the private corporate houses in the name of Public–Private–Partnership (PPP). Let us explain this in greater detail.

The economists sitting in Washington/Paris/London keep coming up with innovative ideas about how to transfer government funds to the private sector. One such concept that has been embraced by the Government of India in a big way is this so-called PPP. Under this, the government invites the private sector to invest in infrastructure, provides the private investor a direct subsidy of up to 40% of the project cost, gives it land and other resources at concessional rates, guarantees the private partner a minimum rate of return on its investment (for instance, in the case of highways, the private investor is

allowed to collect toll charges from the users), and as if this is not enough, even the investment money is also often provided by the government in the form of long term loans at concessional rates. What a partnership!

Social sector expenditures

With growth in total budgetary spending slowing down, and the government continuing to dole out huge amounts to corporate houses, the sectors that have paid the price for the policy push to reduce the fiscal deficit are the social sectors.

But then how come Prime Minister Modi, leading intellectuals and the mainstream media hailed Jaitley's 2017–18 budget as a pro-poor and pro-farmer budget, and as a budget for the have-nots? The simple explanation: they are lying as usual.

Table 6 gives the BJP government's social sector expenditures for all the four budgets presented by Arun Jaitley, together with the last budget of the previous UPA Government. Strictly speaking, the figures for 2015–16 and later years are not comparable with the figures for 2013–14 and 2014–15. The reason is that in 2015–16, the Union Government accepted the recommendation of the 14th Finance Commission and increased the share of the states in divisible pool of Central taxes from 32% previously to 42%, and simultaneously cut the allocations for social sector ministries sharply, arguing that these cuts would be more than compensated by the increase in states' share in Central taxes.

Table 6: Union Budget, Social Sector Expenditures, 2013–14 to 2017–18 (Rs crore)

	2013–14 (A)	2014–15 (A)	2015–16 (A)	2016–17 BE	2016–17 RE	2017–18
Total Social Sector Exp.*	302,911	339,014	371,268	395,202	409,758	458,423
Budget Outlay	1,559,447	1,663,673	1,790,783	1,978,060	2,014,407	2,146,735
Social Sector Exp. as % of Budget Outlay	19.42%	20.38%	20.73%	19.98%	20.34%	21.35%
GDP at Current Market Prices (2011–12 series)	11,236,635	12,433,749	13,675,331	15,075,429	15,075,429	16,847,455
Social Sector Exp. as % of GDP	2.70%	2.73%	2.71%	2.62%	2.72%	2.72%

*Note that there is no rigorous definition of what constitutes social sector expenditures. In our definition, we have taken the definition given by CBGA in its analysis of the Union Budget 2015–16 (*Of Bold Strokes and Fine Prints: Analysis of Union Budget 2015–16*, Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability, March 2015, p. 9, <http://www.cbgaindia.org>), and from this, excluded the figures for the Department of Urban Development to arrive at a figure comparable to the figure for social sector expenditure given in the 2017 Budget Speech of the Finance Minister. Then, to this, we have added the figures for Department of Rural Development and Food Subsidy. So, our calculation includes the figures for: Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare+AYUSH, Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Minority Affairs, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Department of Rural Development, and Food Subsidy. A slightly different definition has been given in the *Economic Survey, 2013–14*, p. 232, and yet another definition has been given in *Economic Survey, 2014–15, Statistical Appendix*, Table 9.9, p. A140. Note also that our definition of social sector spending is a far more liberal definition than that adopted in the Budget papers for 2017–18, where the government has stated that its social sector expenditures for 2017–18 total Rs 195,473 crore.

From Table 6, it becomes evident that there is no significant increase in the government's social sector expenditures. They are projected to increase by only 11.8% over the revised estimates for 2016–17, which

means they will barely beat inflation. As a proportion of the budget outlay, they are expected to marginally go up by 1%, while as a proportion of GDP, there is no increase.

On the other hand, the budget documents also show that the total Central transfers to the States and Union Territories (including the States' share in Central taxes) as a percentage of the GDP are actually projected to fall in 2017–18 as compared to 2016–17 RE (Table 7). This fall in devolution of funds to the States is obviously going to adversely affect their social sector spending.

Table 7: Central Transfers to States, 2016–17 RE and 2017–18 (Rs crore)

	2016–17 RE	2017–18 (BE)
Total Central transfers to States and UT, including State's share of Central taxes	981,148	1,075,558
GDP at current market prices	15,075,429	16,847,455
Total Union Resources transferred to States as % of GDP	6.51%	6.38%

As it is, the total Central and States expenditure on social services in India is very low. As per the *Economic Survey 2016–17*, this figure as a proportion of the GDP was 7.0% during 2016–17 BE. This is far below the average social sector expenditures of the 34 countries of the OECD, for whom this figure is 20%; for the 27 countries of the EU, this figure is even higher at around

30% of GDP. It is also way below the social sector expenditures of 21 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, for whom this figure is 18.6% (in 2009–10). The above data make it clear that the social sector expenditures of the Centre and States combined for India are going to remain at the same dismal level in 2017–18.

The demonetisation has had a devastating effect on the livelihoods of India's poor. Had the Modi Government had the slightest concern for the common people of the country, it would have taken steps to increase its allocations for those sectors that directly affect the people, that is, the social sector expenditures. The anti-people nature of the Modi government becomes evident from the fact that the total social sector expenditure of the Union government, even on the basis of the liberalised definition given by us above, at Rs 4.58 lakh crore, is less than the total tax exemptions given to the rich, which total Rs 5.5 lakh crore.

Even if we drop this fact-based critical examination of the budget from a socialist perspective, and examine it purely from the perspective of mainstream capitalist economics, at a time when the rate of investment in the economy has precipitously fallen into negative territory, the government should have increased social sector spending as it would have helped boost domestic demand. It is now fairly well established that government spending

on social sectors such as education and health has significant positive multiplier effects.¹⁵ [The fiscal multiplier is an estimate of the effect of government spending on economic growth. A multiplier greater than 1 corresponds to a positive growth stimulus (returning more than Re 1 for each rupee invested), whereas a multiplier less than one reflects a net loss from spending.]

The sole reason why the BJP–RSS Government led by the Modi–Jaitley duo is not increasing the country's social sector expenditures and give a boost to domestic demand is to please the country's foreign creditors, who are demanding "fiscal prudence". In the name of reining in the fiscal deficit, the World Bank and the giant corporations of the Western countries are demanding that the government reduce its social sector expenditures so that the country's welfare services can be taken over by private capital and enormous profits made. And the Modi Government is surrendering to their dictates.

Such is the nationalism of the BJP–RSS. It is confined to unfurling giant sized flags in universities, and forcing people to stand up while the national anthem is being played in cinema halls—while on the ground, it is bowing to the dictates of international financial institutions and running the country solely for the profiteering of giant foreign and Indian corporations, betraying the interests of the common people.

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Between The Lines**Racial Discrimination Returns to UK****Kuldip Nayar**

It's sheer racialism. Four British nationals of Pakistan origin committed a crime of sexual exploitation and were sentenced to imprisonment. But the judge McClosky, in his own wisdom, said that after serving the sentence they should be sent back to the country of their origin.

I wonder if this would have happened to a white man, especially to Europeans. The judge without demur said in his verdict that the convicts' nationality should be stripped. The ruling by an immigration tribunal subsequently also cleared the way for the Pakistanis to be removed from Britain. They had acquired British citizenship by naturalisation.

According to the *Dawn* from Karachi, they were among nine men of Pakistani and Afghan descent convicted of luring girls as young as 13 into sexual encounters using alcohol and drugs. They were based in Rochdale, in northern England. Five of the dual nationals deprived of their citizenship were British Pakistanis, while two were of dual British and Sudanese nationality. The remaining six were Australian, Iraqi, Russian, Egyptian and Lebanese dual nationals. To this date 10 of the orders have been appealed against.

Among the four facing deportation is ringleader Shabir Ahmed, sentenced in 2012 to 22 years in jail. The other three are Adil Khan, Qari Abdul Rauf and Abdul Aziz. Ahmed, who was convicted of rape as well as other charges, remains in custody, while the other three men have been released on licence. Khan, Rauf and Aziz were convicted on conspiracy and trafficking for sexual exploitation charges. Aziz was not convicted of having sexual intercourse with any child.

The judge at the hearing in the upper tribunal of the Immigration and Asylum Chamber described their crimes as "shocking, brutal and repulsive". His decision rejected claims concerning human rights laws and a complaint of "disproportionate interference" with their rights. The case centres on a decision by Prime Minister Theresa May, when she was home secretary, to take away the men's citizenship "for the public good".

The number of people subject to the power, under which the Home Secretary can deprive dual nationals of their British citizenship if it is deemed to be in the public interest, has increased since the coalition government came to power. The measure was included in the 2006 Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act as a direct result of the July 2005 bombings in which 52 people died and more than 700 were injured. It was used only four times in the following four years, but has been used nine times since last year's general election.

The five victims of the gang who gave evidence in the 2012 trial were all white, and spoke of being raped, assaulted and traded for sex, being passed from man to man, and sometimes being too drunk to stop the abuses. The men, ranging in age from 22 to 59, used various defences, including claiming the girls were prostitutes. One British MP had demanded that the four men who appeared at the tribunal should be dep-or-ted "as soon as possible" saying "foreign-born criminals should not be able to hide behind human rights laws to avoid deportation."

This is somewhat similar to what President Donald Trump did soon after taking over. By an executive order, he temporarily blocked people from some Muslim-majority countries from entering the US on visas. This included the Green card holders who have the right to visit the US without having earned the nationality.

Like in the UK case, Trump's order did say that his order was to protect the American people from the threat of terrorism or criminal activities. But it doesn't necessarily do that. Instead, it points to the new president's serious thinking about putting the Islamophobia that was a central part of his campaign into practice. But Hillary Clinton who challenged him in the Presidential election has replied that they would defend the constitution of America. It does not debar anybody because America itself is a country of immigrants.

The very discussion on stripping nationality of a country's citizen is ominous. By declaring anybody anti-

national you can send him back to the country he once belonged. This will be very harsh on journalists and authors. They utilize the freedom of expression to run down their own country or politicians.

This is happening in India itself. Take the case of an online editor of a publication is facing the wrath of the Election Commission after the newspaper published the exit poll results after the first phase of election in UP. As many as 15 FIRs have been filed against the publication. Some time ago, even the owner of a national channel was arraigned by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry when he refused to tender an apology for what the channel had broadcast.

Some time ago, the ministry also defended the censorship. The minister explained that government had only one channel while the private sector had several. Therefore, the ministry had every right to use the official channel to put across the government point of view. I wish that this prerogative is used to describe the plight

of dalits or the minorities. But since the upper casts dominate the media, there is hardly any mention of the atrocities committed against the marginalized.

When it comes to India, at least there is no racialism. The attackers on the Parliament House and on Mumbai were tried by various courts and eventually sentenced. The convicts were Muslims. The emphasis on religion is itself bad. Saudi Arabia which is a Muslim country prefers Muslims to be in their midst. It is another story that they prefer Indian Muslims to Pakistani Muslims. Even the policeman there lets go the Muslims from India for any traffic violation while the Pakistanis are singled out for punishment.

The UK government will be blamed for racial discrimination if the order of the judge to send the convicts to their country of origin. Yet it must be admitted that racial discrimination is increasingly taking the centre of stage in the UK.

Mahatma Gandhi's Punyatithi

A function on January 30, 2017 at Jamia Millia Islamia, a Central University in New Delhi, to observe the 69th death anniversary of the Father of the Nation, was jointly organised by JMI and the Society for Communal Harmony set up in 1990 by Dr. BN Pande and the eminent Islamic scholar Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi aka Maulana Ali Mian. An eminent social scientist, Prof. Anand Kumar, former Professor at JNU and at present a Fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, delivered a thought provoking lecture on Relevance of Gandhi Today. The meeting was co-chaired by Dr. Talat Ahmad, Vice-Chancellor of JMI, and the doyen of Indian journalists and columnists, Kuldip Nayar, President of the Society for Communal Harmony. Prof. Tasneem Meenai, Dean of Students' Welfare, JMI, took great pains to organise the function very efficiently and ensured that the auditorium of the Faculty of Engineering and Technology was fully occupied by the faculty, the students and some other persons not connected with JMI. It was heartening to note the enthusiasm among the youth to know more about and follow the teachings of the Mahatma about whom Einstein wrote at the time of Bapu's assassination on January 30, 1948 at the hands of a Hindu fanatic: "The generations to come will scarcely

believe that such a man in flesh and blood ever walked on this earth." Prof. Meenai welcomed the guests and the audience. Dr. Syeda Saiyidain Hameed, noted writer, educationist, activist in women's causes, former Member of the Planning Commission and Vice-President of SCH, introduced the subject. She and Dr. S. Farooq, Chairman, Himalaya Drug Company, had coordinated the programme on behalf of SCH.. Besides other constructive and positive activities the SCH has launched a programme of observing the birth or death anniversaries of some outstanding national leaders who not only played a key role in the freedom movement but also worked hard to bring unity and harmony among the various creeds and castes in this great subcontinent. Those who have been presently identified for this purpose comprise Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Acharya Narendra Deva, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Sri Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, Sardar Bhagat Singh, Dr. Bishambhar Nath Pande and Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi. The Society invites intellectuals, cultural leaders and the youth to contribute towards achievement of its noble objectives of peace and harmony, social justice and egalitarianism.

– Chandrabhal Tripathi

Non-violent Action and Socialist Radicalism : Narendra Deva in India's Freedom Movement*

Anil Nauriya

The dynamic that linked non-violent movements for Indian freedom in the first half of the twentieth century with socialist participation in these movements along with socialist initiatives in peasant and workers' movements is reflected in the understanding that socialists led by Acharya Narendra Deva (1889–1956) developed especially on prevailing national and international class relations, particularly those between the imperial regime and dominant landed interests. While not wishing to confine themselves within a theoretical frame of truth and non-violence, Socialists theorized their participation in the non-violent movements. As the pre-eminent theoretician of the Congress Socialist Party established in 1934, Narendra Deva's understanding is of significance in providing an alternative Marxist and radical understanding of the Indian movement for freedom.¹ In writings on possible areas of agreement between Marxism and the Gandhi-led movements, Narendra Deva addressed matters concerning possibilities of convergence of the two strands of thought and method. This discussion traversed a fascinating range of issues, including matters concerning the ideological or organizational "ownership" of Marxism itself, ultimately confirming socialist participation in the Gandhi-led movements including the constructive programme of the Congress in the pre-independence period.

Born in the same year as Jawaharlal Nehru, Narendra Deva was to become a scholar of ancient India and of Buddhism, a lawyer and, after the Bolshevik Revolution, a keen student of Karl Marx and Lenin. He presided over the founding convention of the Congress Socialist Party held in Patna in May

1934. The early Indian socialists, like Narendra Deva, did not range themselves against the erstwhile Soviet Union or Marxism. The Congress Socialist Party came into being within the Congress as a Marxist party. Julius Braunthal notes, quite perceptively, that "(i)n its origins ... the Congress Socialist Party was not simply a Marxist party in the tradition of the European Social Democratic parties, but rather a party of the Bolshevik version of Marxism".² Narendra Deva stands at the head of the particular Indian Marxist tradition which was not part of the communist movement, associated itself organically with the national struggle, and also remained for a long time open to possibilities of co-operation with other Left groups, including the communists. Narendra Deva remained a Marxist throughout his life. Even as late as 1950 the Socialist Party was seen as a Marxist group having, in the words of Braunthal, "evolved from the Bolshevik version of Marxism to a Marxist version of humanitarian democratic socialism".³ In May 1952 at the Pachmarhi Convention of the Socialist Party, when Narendra Deva was away in China, Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, who was voted to the chair, took the opportunity to expound his doctrine, widely seen as marking the party's departure from Marxism. In the ideological ferment and the political developments that followed, Narendra Deva shared his thoughts on 3 September 1952 in a letter to Asoka Mehta, his party colleague, making it clear that he would rather give up the party than abandon Marxism.⁴ The position adopted by Narendra Deva, who was to live only for another three-and-a-half years, was in contrast to that of other leading figures, like Jayaprakash Narayan, who had by this time already turned their back on Marxism.

* Revised version of the paper 'Non-violent Action and Indian Socialists: A study of Narendra Deva in the freedom movement' presented at a conference titled 'Non-violent Resistance in South Asian History' held at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, 20–21 February 2014, which was later published as NMML Occasional Paper.

¹ He has been appropriately described as "the leading exponent in the socialist movement in India of Marxism". See Paul Brass, *Factional Politics in an Indian State: The Congress Party in Uttar Pradesh*, Bombay, Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 38.

² Julius Braunthal, *History of the International*, Vol. 3, (1943–1968), London, Victor Gollancz, 1980, p. 224.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

⁴ Madhu Limaye, *Age of Hope*, Delhi, Atma Ram & Sons, 1986, p. 335.

Narendra Deva's place in the history of Marxist socialism in India may be gauged from the remarks made by E.M.S. Namboodiripad, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader, at a function held at Teen Murti in New Delhi on 19 February 1989 to observe Narendra Deva's 33rd death anniversary. At this function, held around the time also of Narendra Deva's birth centenary year 1989–1990, Namboodiripad recalled that it was with Narendra Deva's speech at the Foundation Conference of the Congress Socialists held at Patna in May 1934 that he had first been exposed to Marxist socialism.⁵ Later he read Jayaprakash Narayan's "*Why Socialism?*", published in 1936.⁶ Another speech by Narendra Deva that influenced Namboodiripad was the one Narendra Deva made while seconding the Congress election manifesto at the All India Congress Committee in 1936.⁷

2. In the Freedom Movement

Brought up in an atmosphere suffused with patriotic feeling, Narendra Deva made an early translation into Hindi of Aurobindo Ghose's Bengali language articles on nationalism.⁸ He was drawn simultaneously to the Indian National Congress and the Home Rule League; of the latter Narendra Deva established in 1916 a branch in Faizabad district, United Provinces, where he was practicing as a lawyer, and became its secretary.⁹ Three years later he was a delegate at the Congress session held in Amritsar in the wake of the political crisis of 1919 and the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh.¹⁰ After the Nagpur session of the Congress in 1920, Narendra Deva suspended his legal practice and joined the non-co-operation movement.¹¹ No pre-independence Congress

movement thereafter was without some significant contribution or participation by him.

From a relatively early stage, Narendra Deva discerned the interconnectedness of many incipient developments. In 1921, an agrarian agitation in the United Provinces culminated on 7 January in police firing at Munshiganj in the Rae Bareilly district.¹² At least seven persons were killed and many were wounded in the agitation and the firing incident. The *kisans* (peasants) had been demanding restrictions on evictions and on forced labour and abolition of illegal cesses and exactions. The movement affected Pratapgarh, Rae Bareilly and many districts of Oudh. Narendra Deva did not view the non-co-operation movement and the peasant risings as competing phenomena; he saw the dialectic between these movements:

The strongly organized *kisans* compelled the Oudh officials to reconsider the rent-revenue legislations. Evictions by notice were stopped. ... At that time the non-co-operation movement was at its height. The Government did not want the Kisan agitation to get linked up with that movement. For this reason also the Government became more responsive to the Kisan demands.¹³

An understanding of this symbiosis between the national movement and the peasant and workers' struggles illumines Narendra Deva's political and ideological positions. Narendra Deva's involvement with the non-co-operation movement was expressed also in his association with the "national schools" that emerged

⁵ Based on notes taken by the author at the meeting.

⁶ For text see *Jayaprakash Narayan Selected Works*, Vol. 2, Bimal Prasad (ed.), New Delhi, Manohar, 2001, pp. 1–89.

⁷ A report of this speech is available in Hari Dev Sharma (ed.), *Selected Works of Acharya Narendra Deva*, (hereinafter SW-AND), Vol. 1, New Delhi, Radiant Publishers, 1998, pp. 76–77.

⁸ See "Jatiyata", in Acharya Narendra Deva Papers (VI to X instalments, printed material, serial no. 2), Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

⁹ See Mukut Behari Lal, *Acharya Narendra Deva*, Varanasi, Acharya Narendra Deva Samajwadi Sansthan, 1967, p. 1; Vishvanath Sharma, *Acharya Narendra Deva*, Benares, Samaj Vigyan Parishad, Kashi Vidyapith, n.d.; and Raghukul Tilak, "As a Speaker and Writer", in B.V. Keskar and V.K.N. Menon (eds),

Acharya Narendra Deva: A Commemoration Volume, New Delhi, National Book Trust, 1971, p. 111.

¹⁰ Sri Prakasa, "Combination of Greatness and Goodness", in Keskar and Menon (eds), op. cit., p. 121.

¹¹ "Acharya Narendra Deva", Yusuf Meherally in *Socialism and The National Revolution* by Acharya Narendra Deva, Yusuf Meherally (ed.), Bombay, Padma Publications, 1946, p. xi (representative selection from political writings of Acharya Narendra Deva). On the evolution of the non-co-operation movement see *Indulal Yajnik Papers*, (Serial No 16: Loose Articles; Indulal Yajnik, "Memories of Non-co-operation"), Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Teen Murti, New Delhi.

¹² "Kisan Movement in the U.P.", *Congress Socialist*, 28 November 1936; reproduced in *Socialism and The National Revolution*, Meherally (ed.), ibid., pp. 56–61 at p. 60. See also H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, 1921–22, Vol. 1, [Reprint], New Delhi, Gian Publishing House, 1990, p. 6 and p. 156.

¹³ "Kisan Movement in the U.P.", *Congress Socialist*, ibid., p. 60.

at the time. At the behest of Jawaharlal Nehru, he joined the faculty of the Kashi Vidyapith, the national university founded in Benares in 1921, which evolved into a famous seminary of the Indian freedom struggle. Of this institution he became the Principal in 1926.¹⁴

Associated with the Independence of India League established in 1928 by Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose, and others, Narendra Deva became, towards the end of the year, secretary of its UP provincial branch. In the midst of his commitments as an educationist, Narendra Deva also played a role in the agitation against the Simon Commission in Benares.¹⁵ The all-white Commission, intended to gauge India's "fitness" for further Constitutional development, had visited Benares in February 1928. Narendra Deva was thinking not merely in terms of Constitutional advance but also on the need for an economic programme that could be taken up or supported. In early 1929 he wrote to Nehru stressing the need for "providing intellectual food for our people"; towards this end he suggested that the Independence of India League should have a weekly paper, organize study circles and the like and also have a clear economic programme.¹⁶ Later in the year, the United Provinces Trade Union Conference was held under the Presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru at Kanpur on 7 September 1929. At this conference Narendra Deva urged that "the future constitution of India should pay due regard to the rights of labour" and emphasized the need to guarantee a minimum living wage, free education, and medicine and to declare land as "the property of the community and not of any individual".¹⁷ While Narendra Deva had come early into contact with

Nehru, his close association with Gandhi dates, according to the Congress leader Sri Prakasa, from the annual convocation of Kashi Vidyapith in 1929 where Gandhi delivered the convocation address in the last week of September.¹⁸ Later the same month, within a few days of the convocation at Kashi Vidyapith, Gandhi was named as Congress President at the All India Congress Committee session held at Lucknow, a nomination which he declined. Thereafter the names of Vallabhbhai Patel, with the positive glow of his recent leadership of the peasant struggle in Bardoli, and of Jawaharlal Nehru were in the field for the office.¹⁹ Indicating his preference for Nehru, Narendra Deva joined Balkrishna Sharma of Kanpur in seeking to create some pressure, such as it may then have been, on Patel not to let his name go forward.²⁰ This perhaps caused the first of the strains that would occur between Narendra Deva and Patel.²¹ Irrespective of these events, however, Narendra Deva was invited to deliver the convocation address at Gujarat Vidyapith which followed barely over three months later on 11 January 1930, with Gandhi presiding over the event.²²

Narendra Deva participated in the Civil Disobedience movement of 1930; he was arrested at Basti in the United Provinces in June 1930 and sentenced to three months rigorous imprisonment. News of the nature of the sentence, if not the arrest itself, seemed to have caused some surprise to Jawaharlal Nehru, then already incarcerated in Naini Central Prison, Allahabad.²³ Narendra Deva had already involved himself with peasant struggles and when, in the wake of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of 1931, the Congress in UP appointed a

¹⁴ "Acharya Narendra Deva", Yusuf Meherally in Yusuf Meherally (ed.), op. cit., p. vii.

¹⁵ Narendra Deva does not refer to this. But Raghukul Tilak, an associate of Narendra Deva, and himself a freedom fighter from the then United Provinces, mentions Narendra Deva's role in the Simon Commission boycott in his note on Narendra Deva in S.P. Sen (ed.), *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 3, Calcutta, Institute of Historical Studies, 1974, p. 237.

¹⁶ Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, 9 February 1929, SW-AND-1, p. 3.

¹⁷ SW-AND-1, p. 8.

¹⁸ Sri Prakasa, "Combination of Greatness and Goodness", in B.V. Keskar and V.K.N. Menon (eds), *Acharya Narendra Deva: A Commemoration Volume*, New Delhi, National Book Trust, 1971, p. 123. Sri Prakasa was the son of Dr. Bhagavan Das and close to Jawaharlal Nehru and Narendra Deva. He was general secretary of the United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee at this time. For Gandhi's convocation address on this occasion, see *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (CWMG), Vol. 41, pp. 463-466.

¹⁹ *Indian Annual Register*, 1929, Vol. 2, p. 262. Jawaharlal Nehru's name was proposed by Balkrishna Sharma of Kanpur, Patel's by Pandit Gourishanker. Apparently on Gandhi's intervention, Patel declined the consent to Pandit Gourishanker's proposal.

²⁰ Rajmohan Gandhi, *Patel: A Life*, Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1991, p. 181.

²¹ Narendra Deva makes an allusion to the September 1929 events a decade later in his statement on the Congress Presidential election of 1939, asking, "... is it not a fact that Mahatmaji experienced some difficulty in persuading Sardar Patel not to contest the ... election with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru". (*National Herald*, 28 January 1939, SW-AND-1, p. 146).

²² See CWMG, Vol. 42, pp. 387-390.

²³ Jawaharlal Nehru, "Prison Diary", in *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (SWJN), Vol. 4, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1973, p. 367.

committee to inquire into the prevailing agricultural situation and into such acts of the government as were in breach of the Pact, Narendra Deva became a member of the further inquiry committees set up for Gorakhpur and Basti districts.²⁴ The reports on Gorakhpur and on Basti documented, inter alia, police and administrative connivance in the reign of the zamindars and their illegal exactions.²⁵ In the following year when he led a batch of his students to participate in the no-rent campaign, Narendra Deva was again arrested in October and imprisoned in Benares District Jail from where he was released in June 1933.²⁶ At the beginning of 1934 Jawaharlal Nehru thought of Narendra Deva as a possible general secretary of the United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee in succession to Sri Prakasa who had wished, for personal reasons, to give up the assignment which he had held since 1928.²⁷ Narendra Deva's name was considered by Nehru particularly in the light of the fact that "the person who takes up the secretaryship must be prepared to go off to prison at any moment".²⁸

A few months later, in May 1934, the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) was formed within the Congress with Narendra Deva presiding over its founding convention at Patna. Various factors contributed to its formation, including the feeling among its initiators that the Congress was not doing enough to organize the peasants and workers. Nearly two decades later Madhu Limaye would point out yet another aspect which had contributed to the sentiment behind its formation, related not to Congress omissions as such but to an attitude taken up by the

Communists especially after 1928. Writing in 1952, Limaye observed: "Had the communists taken up a friendly attitude towards nationalism ... it is doubtful whether the CSP would have come into existence at all."²⁹ In July 1934, Gandhi visited Benares and a Socialists' deputation led by Narendra Deva called on him to press the socialist programme as outlined at Patna.³⁰ They had come to express their resentment especially of a Congress Working Committee resolution, adopted in June following upon the socialists' Patna conference of May 1934, and the reference in the resolution to "loose talk about confiscation of private property and necessity of class war", which the socialists saw as directed at themselves.³¹ Gandhi offered to place their suggestions before the Congress Committee but advised the socialists "to abide by the Congress decision without attempting to create unnecessary splits in Congress ranks or take over charge of the Congress machinery including its executive".³² The diary maintained by Mahadev Desai, Gandhi's secretary, suggests that there were at least two such meetings in Benares between Gandhi and the socialists on this occasion; Narendra Deva had made a number of observations and put some searching questions.³³ For example, he observed: "The constructive programme you drafted at Wardha is unable to lead towards the path of attaining freedom"; "(t)he Congress has made no effort to organize the Indian labour"; "(f)rom the viewpoint of independence a constructive programme is of no consequence"; "(i)f the political education of the people or their orientation about the economic principles is undermined, |freedom might not come for thousands of years"; and that "(i)f a mass organization of peasants and workers has

²⁴ *Agrarian Distress in the United Provinces: Report of the Committee Appointed by the Council of the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee to Enquire into the Agrarian Situation in the Province*, September 1931, republished, Gurgaon, Prabhu Publications, n.d., p. 49. The report can also be found as an appendix to B.R. Nanda (ed.), *Selected Works of Govind Ballabh Pant*, Vol. 5, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1996. The province-level committee comprised Govind Ballabh Pant, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, and Venkatesh Narain Tiwary. The police-zamindar nexus is also well-documented in the report and its annexures. In some other provinces there were at this time still more direct police interventions against the peasantry. See, for instance, Rev. Fr. Verrier Elwin, *In the Deserted Villages of Gujarat*, Bombay, published by Chimanlal J. Shah, 1931. Elwin wrote this a month before the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

²⁵ *Agrarian Distress in the United Provinces*, op. cit., pp. 190–197.

²⁶ SW-AND-1, p. 330.

²⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru to Sri Prakasa, 11 January 1934, SWJN, Vol. 6, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1974, pp. 84–87.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

²⁹ Madhu Limaye, *Evolution of Socialist Policy*, Hyderabad, Chetana Prakashan, 1952, p. 2. Cited after Braunthal, op. cit., p. 225. The language in the quote by Braunthal differs slightly from the words quoted by me here from Limaye's booklet but the meaning is the same.

³⁰ "Discussion with Socialists' Deputation", 27 July 1934, CWMG, Vol. 58, p. 253.

³¹ For the Congress Working Committee Resolution of 17–18 June 1934 see *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. 1, p. 300.

³² "Discussion with Socialists' Deputation", 27 July 1934, CWMG, Vol. 58, p. 254.

³³ "Dialogue with Narendra Dev etc...", 28 July 1934, Mahadev Desai [Mahendra Valjibhai Desai (ed.)], *Mahadev Desai's Diary*, Vol. 19, New Delhi, National Gandhi Museum, 2010, pp. 11–17.

to take place, it can be only on the basis of class and therefore class consciousness must be created".³⁴

Narendra Deva reminded Gandhi: "Capitalism today is sustained by British imperialism. You have already said that you did not object if class consciousness is awakened by non-violent means. We have become socialists only to attain freedom."³⁵ In a letter to Narendra Deva a few weeks later, Gandhi described the conversations as "heartly" but advised him and other socialists to think in terms of a "practical socialism" as against their "scientific socialism".³⁶ Yet the dialogue with the socialists gave impetus to a reflexive thought process in Gandhi, a process already underway in his creative tension with Jawaharlal Nehru. Fifteen days later Gandhi wrote to Nehru about books that Narendra Deva and his socialist colleague Minoos Masani had recommended: "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 Deva."³⁷ And within the next fortnight, towards the end of August, Gandhi had begun to give expression to his idea of leaving the Congress.³⁸ In a letter to Patel in the first week of September, Gandhi explained the reasons: he felt he had become a dead weight upon the Congress and his presence was estranging the intelligentsia from it; he referred to "the growing group of socialists" among whom he counted many "self-sacrificing co-workers"; and he desired that their "reason must be set free".³⁹ Gandhi's political connection with the Congress and with many leading socialists remained strong despite his formal retirement from the Congress organization which he announced in mid-September and gave effect to at the end of October.⁴⁰

Contrary to the oft-projected image of radical political figures being pushed to the margin of Congress politics, Narendra Deva remained, as we shall see, strongly entrenched within the Congress for much of the period till March 1948 when socialists parted company with the parent party. In April 1936, Jawaharlal Nehru, who had already had a fairly long association with Narendra Deva, included him in the Congress Working Committee that he constituted as Congress President; Narendra Deva would remain on it till March 1938.⁴¹ At this time Narendra Deva served also as the President of the UP Pradesh Congress Committee.⁴² The years 1937–39 saw Congress ministries being formed in various provinces, including UP, under the Government of India Act 1935. The CSP had decided not to join these ministries and Narendra Deva explained his position at the All India Congress Committee meeting at Delhi in March 1937.⁴³ He warned against the notion that the legislatures under the new Act would be "reservoirs of mass power"; he wanted the Congress to engage in such work as would be "conducive to strengthening the power of the masses".⁴⁴ In fact, the UP Premier, Govind Ballabh Pant had, in 1937, invited Narendra Deva, who had been elected to the UP Assembly, to join his government.⁴⁵ Narendra Deva, given his opposition to office acceptance, naturally declined the offer.⁴⁶ During these years he maintained the stance of a well-wishing critic, retaining his focus on mass struggle. The All India Congress Committee session at Delhi in September 1938 saw Narendra Deva lead a walk out on a resolution on civil liberties to which the Congress Working Committee had declined to accept an amendment of concern to kisans.⁴⁷

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 12–13.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 12.

³⁶ Letter to Narendra Deva, 2 August 1934, CWMG, Vol. 58, p. 274.

³⁷ Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, 17 August 1934, CWMG, Vol. 58, p. 318.

³⁸ Letter to Vallabhbhai Patel, 26/27 August 1934, CWMG, Vol. 58, p. 371.

³⁹ Letter to Vallabhbhai Patel, before 5 September 1934, CWMG, Vol. 58, p. 405.

⁴⁰ Statement to the Press, 17 September 1934, CWMG, Vol. 59, pp. 3–12; Letter to Rajendra Prasad, 30 October, 1934, CWMG, Vol. 59, p. 270.

⁴¹ *Indian Annual Register*, 1936, Vol. 1, p. 252; see also Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. II, Bombay, Padma Publications, 1947, p. 106.

⁴² Mukut Behari Lal, *Acharya Narendra Deva: Jeevan Aur Siddhanta*, Varanasi, Acharya Narendra Deva Samajwadi Sansthan, 1971, p. 14; see also *Acharya Narendra Deva Vangmaya*, Khand 1, New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 2002, pp. 400–401.

⁴³ *Indian Annual Register*, 1937, Vol. 1, p. 204.

⁴⁴ Idem.

⁴⁵ G.B. Pant to Jawaharlal Nehru, 19 July 1937 in B.R. Nanda (ed.), *Selected Works of Govind Ballabh Pant*, Vol. 7, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 189.

⁴⁶ C.B. Gupta, *Autobiography: My Triumphs and Tragedies*, Lucknow, published by Umakant Mishra, 2003, p. 51.

⁴⁷ Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. II, Bombay, Padma Publications, 1947, p. 106; see also *Indian Annual Register*, 1938, Vol. 2, pp. 278–279.

The resolution moved by Bhulabhai Desai referred to the increasing advocacy of violence “in the name of civil liberty” by “some people, including Congressmen” and reiterated the support to Congress governments on measures for “the defence of life and property”.⁴⁸ Narendra Deva and others apparently felt that the resolution, if passed as it stood, “would give a handle to the CID and police to harass Congressmen”.⁴⁹

Anxious that the national struggle be resumed early after the resignation of the Congress governments in 1939, Narendra Deva was keen on the Civil Disobedience programme conceived in the following year. However, he raised questions about the Individual Satyagraha programme which he found wanting in some respects.⁵⁰ He felt that the proposed agitation ought not to be confined to a mere expression of India’s right to oppose the war, as Gandhi’s statement had suggested, but be directed against the utilization of Indian human and material resources for the war. Be that as it may, Narendra Deva was for a while, until he was arrested in January 1941, provincial “dictator” of the individual civil disobedience movement in UP and acting President of the PCC.⁵¹ Narendra Deva was taken from Lucknow, where he was arrested, to Gorakhpur District Jail and then to the Agra Central Prison; he was released from the latter in September. He had reportedly taken ill in prison and Gandhi had expressed much concern over his health during the incarceration.⁵² The following year found Narendra Deva in Gandhi’s Sevagram on the eve of the meetings leading to the Quit India movement and he was involved in the drafting of some of the preliminary

resolutions in 1942. A resolution drafted by Gandhi in April 1942 called upon Britain to “let go her hold on India”.⁵³ Of this, Gandhi wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru: “Acharya Narendra Dev has seen the resolution and liked it.”⁵⁴ In the course of information-gathering by British intelligence on the financing of the struggle, at the end of 1942 it was also reported, inter alia, that “according to a CSP worker from Bombay”, Gandhi had in May 1942 handed over a sum of seven hundred thousand rupees, collected from a Bombay businessman for the Tagore Memorial Fund, to Narendra Deva and other CSP leaders “for the nationalist movement”.⁵⁵ Whether or not this was true, it attested to the growing acknowledgement of a closeness between the Gandhi and the socialists.

Given the state of his health, Narendra Deva’s presidential address at the All India Kisan Conference at Bedaul, Muzaffarpur in June 1942 had to be read out in his absence. He questioned the People’s War thesis canvassed by the Communist Party of India and asserted that the World War could cease to be an imperialist war only if India “could feel free and obtain a charter of freedom for her millions of Kisans and labourers”.⁵⁶ During Narendra Deva’s prolonged stay with Gandhi at his Ashram in the summer of 1942 there was much interaction between them. Whether or not Narendra Deva co-drafted with Gandhi a draft of the resolution asking for British withdrawal passed by the Congress Working Committee in July 1942, as one scholar has suggested, there is no doubt that he exercised appreciable influence on Gandhi’s thinking at this time.⁵⁷ On 8 August 1942,

⁴⁸ B.R. Nanda (ed.), *Selected Works of Govind Ballabh Pant*, Vol. 8, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 305.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 305n.

⁵⁰ Acharya Narendra Deva, “Vyaktigat Satyagraha Aur Azadi ki Ladai: Mahatma Gandhi Ke Vaktavya par Ek Drishti”, *Sangharsha*, 28 October 1940.

⁵¹ See Bhupen Qanungo, “The Individual Civil Disobedience (October 1940–December 1941)”, in B.N. Pande (ed.), *A Centenary History of the Indian National Congress (1885–1985)*, Vol. 3, New Delhi, All India Congress Committee (I) and Vikas Publishing House, p. 422; and Visalakshi Menon, *From Movement to Government: The Congress in the United Provinces, 1937–42*, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2003, p. 298n.

⁵² CWMG, Vol. 74, p. 268 and fn, p. 270, and p. 344.

⁵³ “Draft Resolution for A.I.C.C.”, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (CWMG), Vol. 76, New Delhi, Publications Division, 1979, pp. 63–65 at p. 64.

⁵⁴ CWMG, Vol. 76, p. 66. The resolution passed in May 1942 at the AICC meeting in Allahabad, not attended by Gandhi, was less direct, emphasizing merely what India would have done in relation to the War had the country been free. See *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (SWJN), Vol. 12, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1979, pp. 276–279.

⁵⁵ P.N. Chopra, *Quit India Movement*, Vol. II, New Delhi, Interprint, 1991, pp. 50–51. A year later, the office of the Secretary of State informed a British MP in regard to reports of this kind that these were largely “based on hearsay” and most such information “certainly does not amount to proof” (Chopra, op. cit., pp. 88–89).

⁵⁶ SW-AND-2, p. 28.

⁵⁷ For the suggestion that a draft of the CWC resolution was done jointly by Narendra Deva and Gandhi, see K.C. Mahendru, *Gandhi and the Congress Socialist Party, 1934–48*, Jalandhar, ABS Publications, 1986, p. 272. On this matter, Mahendru relies mainly on oral conversations or indirect materials. A noteworthy suggestion that Mahendru makes is of Narendra Deva acting at this stage as a bridge between Gandhi and Nehru.

Narendra Deva spoke at the All India Congress Committee meeting at Bombay in support of the Quit India resolution and on the following day he was arrested and later detained in Ahmednagar Fort.⁵⁸ He would not be released until 1945 after being moved in March of that year first to Bareilly Central Prison and next, in June, to Almora Jail. He continued to view the Quit India movement as a “majestic struggle” which breathed “a lofty spirit of internationalism”.⁵⁹

3. Narendra Deva’s Theoretical Construct

It was Narendra Deva’s view that “The Zamindari system in India could not be destroyed unless British Imperialism in India was destroyed. With the end of British Imperialism would also end the princely order in India. It was, therefore, absolutely necessary to concentrate on the ending of British Imperialism.”⁶⁰ That the colonial administration had utilized the landlords as the “underpinning” of their rule is well-documented.⁶¹ This alliance was not only embedded in the legal and economic structure but was also political. In the United Provinces too, Narendra Deva pointed out in 1938, the landlords’ party, the National Agriculturist Party, “was born as the result of the midwifery of Sir Malcolm Hailey”, the Governor of the province.⁶² That Hailey had put the weight of the “entire administrative machinery” behind the organization of this party is borne out by the evidence.⁶³ These efforts by Hailey went back virtually to the time of his appointment as Governor in 1928 and were made in the wake of the Report of the (nationalist) Motilal Nehru Committee to determine the Principles of the Constitution of India, which had recommended adult franchise entailing, if implemented, enfranchisement of millions of tenants; the Statutory

Commission headed by Sir John Simon was also then due to arrive in the UP.⁶⁴ Hailey’s efforts to build a landlords’ party became “the central theme of his governorship”.⁶⁵

The essential unity between Narendra Deva and other socialists, therefore, lay in their understanding that the socialist tradition could not cut itself off from or be at cross purposes with the national movement but should instead be in the vortex of it. As Narendra Deva would put it at a party conference held at Hardoi, United Provinces, in 1952: “...our party moulded Marxism to the conditions of our country and enriched it. Our party maintained that keeping distance from national movements in the colonies was not Marxist but opportunistic and reactionary; later the communists also accepted this”.⁶⁶

In an article and pamphlet written and published in 1950–1951 Narendra Deva observed that “no injustice is done to any Marxist principle by accepting Satyagraha. Neither does it amount to a synthesis of Marxism and Gandhism. Marxism has never been fond of violence. If the objective can be achieved by non-violent means, Marxism would give it (non-violence) topmost preference.”⁶⁷ Narendra Deva’s position was well-founded in his study of Marx and Marxism. In Marx’s speech at a meeting held in Amsterdam on 8 September 1872 at the time of The Hague Congress of the International Working Men’s Association, he had said:

We know of the allowances we must make for the institutions, customs and traditions of the various countries; and we do not deny that there are countries such as America, England, and I would

⁵⁸ A gist of Narendra Deva’s speech at the Bombay AICC on 8 August 1942 appears in *The Indian Annual Register*, July–December, 1942, Vol. 2, pp. 247–248.

⁵⁹ Yusuf Meherally (ed.), op. cit., p. 187.

⁶⁰ SW-AND-1, (Speech at Kisan Conference in Motihari, 29 February 1940), p. 212.

⁶¹ See, for instance, P.D. Reeves, “Landlords and Party Politics in the United Provinces, 1934–7”, in D.A. Low (ed.), *Soundings in Modern South Asian History*, London, Wiedenfeld and Nicholson, 1968, p. 262.

⁶² “Lecture on Political Parties in India”, Kanpur, 31 August 1938, SW-AND-1, p. 132.

⁶³ Reeves, “Landlords and Party Politics in the United Provinces, 1934–7”, in D.A. Low (ed.), *Soundings in Modern South Asian History*, op. cit., p. 265.

⁶⁴ John W. Cell, *Hailey: A Study in British Imperialism, 1872–1969*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 156–161.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁶⁶ Acharya Narendra Deva, “Hardoi Socialist Sammelan Mein Bhashan”, *Acharya Narendra Deva Vangmaya*, Khand 3 (1947–1956), New Delhi, Nehru Smarak Sanghralaya Evam Pustakalaya (NMML), 2004, p. 386. My translation of this speech was published as Acharya Narendra Deva, “The Socialists Prevented Perversion of Marxism”, *Janata*, 25 April 1993.

⁶⁷ Prem Bhasin, “The Heritage of Acharya Narendra Deva”, *Janata*, 21 February 1971. Bhasin quotes from Mukut Behari Lal, *Acharya Narendra Deva: Yug Aur Netritv*, p. 290. See, however, for the original source, Acharya Narendra Deva, “Marxvaad Aur Socialist Party”, *Acharya Narendra Deva Vangmaya*, Khand 3, op. cit., p. 241.

add Holland if I knew your institutions better, where the working people may achieve their goal by peaceful means. If that is true, we must also recognize that in most of the continental countries it is force that will have to be the lever of our revolutions; it is force that we shall some day have to resort to in order to establish a reign of labour.⁶⁸

Marx's implication was clear: the existence of certain circumstances obviates resort to violence.⁶⁹ This is why Narendra Deva insisted that acceptance of Satyagraha did not mean a *synthesis* of Marx and Gandhi. Even in later years, the Congress Socialist tradition was prepared to conceive of situations where force might be required. The democratic socialist Asoka Mehta seems also to agree with the Narendra Deva's interpretation when he writes: "As I have already said, this is true of negative states (i.e., states without democratic traditions: A.N); in their case there is no other alternative. Surely, you cannot capture Nepal from the infamous Ranas by winning elections, for there are no elections! You have to resort to extra-parliamentary, even insurrectionary methods in Nepal."⁷⁰

In studies on the period, many scholars have in recent years tended to employ a vocabulary that denies a prominent place to the Congress Socialist and to unlabelled Congress traditions in the organization of the peasantry. This is probably a mistaken approach as in most provinces the peasantry had, especially after the

entry of Gandhi into national politics, gradually become the backbone of the Congress support structure. The role of the unlabelled Congress in bringing this about was significant. This was a point that Narendra Deva recognized when he said in 1939, while warning of the dangers of "peasantism" that the "Congress, if it claims to be a national organization, will have to become pre-eminently a Kisan organization because the Kisans constitute the bulk of the organization".⁷¹ In this context it may be noted that the expression "Left" even now is occasionally used, restrictively, for the communist tradition alone. Many members of the Communist Parties are not even aware of the unlabelled Congress and Congress socialist contribution because their party literature seldom mentions it.⁷² Moreover, many socialists themselves now use the term "Marxist" interchangeably with "Communist". That there was a strong and vigorous Marxist tradition outside the Communist Parties therefore is seldom acknowledged. There is also a post-independence nomenclature complication connected with prevalent tendency on the part of many to identify the socialist movement in India almost exclusively with the Lohia tradition. While Lohia was a prominent socialist leader before independence, the ideology associated with his name is largely a post-independence development. Historically speaking, it is not synonymous with the Indian socialist tradition. The Congress Socialist Party (CSP), founded in 1934, was defined expressly in Marxist terms. The socialist retreat from Marxism came much later, and largely after 1947.⁷³ Narendra Deva, the doyen of

⁶⁸ Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977, pp. 292–294 at p. 293.

⁶⁹ Narendra Deva refers to Marx having "cherished the belief that in democratic England and America socialism could be achieved without recourse to violence". (Address of Acharya Narendra Deva, Chairman, Reception Committee, Fifth Annual Congress Socialist Party Conference, Cawnpore, 1 March 1947, reproduced in SW-AND-2, pp. 160–165.)

⁷⁰ Asoka Mehta, *Democratic Socialism*, Hyderabad, Chetana Prakashan, 1954, p. 63.

⁷¹ "Presidential Address at All India Kisan Conference", Gaya, 9 April 1939, SW-AND-1, p. 169 and p. 176.

⁷² For example, in his *The History of the Kisan Sabha*, Harkishan Singh Surjeet makes short work of the All India Kisan Conference held at Meerut in January 1936 under the Presidentship of the socialist Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay at which the decision to establish an "All India Kisan Congress" was taken. Surjeet writes: "The formation of AIKS was preceded by a meeting in Meerut in 1936 where the necessary preparations were made..." (see Harkishan Singh Surjeet, *The History of the Kisan Sabha*, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1996, p. 25). Yusuf Meherally, on the other hand, writes: "On the occasion of the Second Annual Conference of the Socialists at Meerut in January 1936, a Convention of Kisan workers from all over India was also held. Out of this meeting grew the All India Kisan Sabha." "Acharya Narendra Deva", Yusuf Meherally in Yusuf Meherally (ed.), op. cit., p. xiii. The general secretary's report at the Socialist Party's annual conference in 1948 stated: "It was mainly on the initiative of the Party, assisted powerfully by Swami Sahajanand Saraswati and later by Professor N.G. Ranga, that the All India Kisan Sabha was created". (*Report of the Sixth Annual Conference held at Kotwalnagar, Nasik, March 19th to March 21st, 1948*, Bombay, Socialist Party, p. 88).

In Sumit Sarkar's *'Popular' Movements and 'Middle Class' Leadership in Late Colonial India: Perspectives and Problems of a 'History from Below'*, (Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, K.P. Bagchi & Co., 1983) the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) is mentioned a couple of times in 95 pages, though about half the work is concerned with the 1930s and 1940s, and seen essentially as a "legal cover" for the activities of leaders such as P. Krishna Pillai, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, and A.K. Gopalan.

⁷³ Even in 1948 aspects of the report presented by Jayaprakash Narayan, the Socialist Party general secretary, at the Nasik session of the party, were criticized by party members as tending toward abandonment of Marxism. See "Debate on the report

Indian socialists, did not give up his commitment to Marxism.⁷⁴

As we have noted, Narendra Deva's speech and later Jayaprakash Narayan's *Why Socialism?* brought E.M.S. Namboodiripad to Marxism and Congress socialism. In his contribution to the Narendra Deva Birth Centenary Volume, Namboodiripad wrote:

The first memory that comes to my mind is of the speech that he delivered at the first preparatory meeting of the Congress Socialist Party held at Patna in May 1934. Listening to his speech was, in fact, my first exposure to the ideology of socialism as applied to Indian conditions. That was long before I read JP's *Why Socialism?*⁷⁵

The text of the 1934 speech by Narendra Deva was later published in Yusuf Meherally's classic compilation.⁷⁶ Narendra Deva's address at the founding convention of the Congress Socialists at Patna in May 1934 created, in Yusuf Meherally's words, "quite a stir".⁷⁷ Narendra Deva stressed that "The Russian experiment is slowly though surely helping the masses to take the centre of the world

stage."⁷⁸ He wanted an intertwining of the emerging forces and the national movement, urging that working class struggles and Congress struggles must synchronize: "All the great national struggles that have been conducted by the Congress have been preceded by strikes and other forms of industrial unrest. It is only when the two struggles have synchronized with each other that the national struggle has reached its highest water-mark."⁷⁹ In 1919, for example, the agitation against the Rowlatt Act had coincided with railway workers' strikes.⁸⁰ The same had been the case during the non-co-operation movement in the early 1920s especially in the south.⁸¹ Likewise, when the workers of the Assam-Bengal Railway went on strike in 1921 Gandhi had lent support to them.⁸²

Narendra Deva saw how the working class movement and the national movement's mobilizations in the countryside could lend strength to each other. Explaining the benefits of policy co-ordination, Narendra Deva argued: "One more advantage would have accrued to us as a result of such a policy. In India where the labour force is drawn from villages and where the industrial worker remains a villager at heart the worker can act as a standard bearer of revolution in villages."⁸³

of the General Secretary presented at the Sixth Annual Conference of (the) Socialist Party, Nasik, 19–21 March 1948", in Bimal Prasad (ed.), *Jayaprakash Narayan Selected Works*, Vol. 4, New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library / Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 2003, pp. 452–454.

⁷⁴ This is acknowledged, for example, in (i) N.G. Goray, "Father of Democratic Socialism in India", in B.V. Keskar and V.K.N. Menon (eds), *Acharya Narendra Deva: A Commemoration Volume*, New Delhi, National Book Trust, 1971, p. 88. Goray was a leading socialist; (ii) Brahmanand, "A Marxist who understood the Indian situation", *Sunday*, Calcutta, 27 January 1980, pp. 28–29. Brahmanand had edited *Towards Socialist Society*, a compilation of some of Narendra Deva's writings, published by the Centre of Applied Politics, New Delhi, in 1979; and (iii) Hari Kishore Singh, "The Rise and Secession of the Congress Socialist Party of India (1934–1948)", in Raghavan Iyer (ed.), *South Asian Affairs: Number One*, (St. Antony's Papers: Number 8), London, Chatto & Windus, 1960, pp. 116–140 at p. 131.

⁷⁵ E.M.S. Namboodiripad, "Acharya Narendra Deva: The Scholar Politician", in Prem Bhasin, Madhu Limaye, Hari Dev Sharma, and Vinod Prasad Singh (eds), *Acharya Narendra Deva: Birth Centenary Volume*, New Delhi, Radiant Publishers, 1990, p. 18. In his earlier work, *How I became a Communist* (Trivandrum, Chinta Publishers, 1976), Namboodiripad mentions the Patna Socialist Convention and Narendra Deva's address (p. 163). He does not here mention its influence upon him, while acknowledging further on the fact that Jayaprakash Narayan's *Why Socialism* "became our guiding document in our day-to-day activities for quite some time" (p. 166). However, this is spelt out in Namboodiripad's contribution dated 16 October 1956 sent to the editor of the socialist journal *Sangharsh*. Here Namboodiripad refers to various speeches by Narendra Deva, including the May 1934 speech, as having inspired not only him but all anti-imperialist young people who like him came into the socialist struggle in the fourth decade of the century. (E.M.S. Namboodiripad, "Ek Samyavadi Neta Ka Patra", *Sangharsh* [Acharya Narendra Deva Ank], 1956, Number 26, p. 126).

⁷⁶ Yusuf Meherally (ed.), op. cit., pp. 3–29.

⁷⁷ "Acharya Narendra Deva", Yusuf Meherally in Yusuf Meherally (ed.), *ibid.*, p. xii.

⁷⁸ Yusuf Meherally (ed.), op. cit., p. 7.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁸⁰ See, for example, Lajpat Jagga, "Colonial Railwaymen and British Rule: A Probe into Railway Labour Agitation in India, 1919–1922", in Bipan Chandra (ed.), *The Indian Left: Critical Appraisals*, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1983.

⁸¹ See, for example, C.S. Krishna, *Labour Movement in Tamil Nadu*, New Delhi, K.P. Bagchi & Company, 1989, especially pp. 173–177.

⁸² "Speech to Railway Workers, Chittagong", 31 August 1921, CWMG, Vol. 21, pp. 24–28.

⁸³ Yusuf Meherally (ed.), op. cit., p. 11. Interestingly, when in the aftermath of the Meerut-Maliana incidents in Uttar Pradesh in the late 1980s this writer, along with some others, met the CPM leader, B.T. Ranadive, to urge a working class intervention, the

There was yet another vital factor. While admitting “that the Congress today has defects and shortcomings”, Narendra Deva argued that “yet it can easily be the greatest revolutionary force in the country”, reminding the delegates that “We should not forget that the present stage of the Indian struggle is that of the bourgeois democratic revolution and therefore it would be a suicidal policy for us to cut ourselves off from the national movement that the Congress undoubtedly represents.”⁸⁴ There was here not merely depiction of the ideological stage of the national movement; there was also some introspection about those who made up the Left and what they themselves had gained from their involvement in the national movement: “Most of us today within the Congress are only intellectual socialists, but as our long association with the national struggle has repeatedly brought us into intimate contact with the masses, there seems to be no danger of our degenerating into mere theorists and doctrinaires.”⁸⁵

The 1934 speech by Narendra Deva is a basic and foundational document of Indian socialism, frankly Marxist in approach and hailing the Russian experience as “slowly though surely helping the masses to take the centre of the world stage”—a point Narendra Deva reiterates in 1939 at Gaya—and yet firmly locating the socialist forces in India in the vortex of the Indian national

movement. This was in accordance with the precepts initially set out in 1920 by Lenin,⁸⁶ whose writings had been studied very closely by Narendra Deva. The 1934 address also charted out the key role that peasants were expected to play in the Indian struggle. A few weeks before the Bombay session of the Congress, Narendra Deva advised that “mere diffusion of knowledge of socialist theories would not do” and it was necessary to move beyond a mechanistic approach: “We have also to study the Indian problems in a new light, i.e., from the Marxian point of view. We should not lose sight of the Indian background.”⁸⁷ That is, Marxism had to be applied to the specific conditions of time and place.⁸⁸ This did not mean that he was prepared to give up on the essentials of a Marxist understanding. Significantly, he opposed the proposal at the Bombay Congress in 1934 that “truth and non-violence” be substituted for “legitimate and peaceful means” in the Congress creed.”⁸⁹

Narendra Deva delivered the Presidential address at the Gujarat Congress Socialist Conference held at Ahmedabad on 23 and 24 June 1935. Skillfully maintaining the balance between internationalism and nationalism, he addressed the criticism that as internationalists they could not be depended upon in the fight for independence. Narendra Deva asserted that there was “no antagonism between independence and socialism.”⁹⁰

latter echoed a similar thought about the Indian working class being only “half a working class”, that is, rooted in the peasantry. The difference was that while Narendra Deva saw this fact as a basis for revolutionary mobilization in the villages, Ranadive used it to explain or plead for non-intervention by the working class in an inter-communal conflict. However, the mobilization done in the 1980s under the leadership of Shankar Guha Niyogi in the Chattisgarh area appeared to exhibit the possibilities that Narendra Deva had outlined in his 1934 speech. See in this context, Anil Nauriya, “What Chattisgarh Movement Means”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 30 November 1991, pp. 2735–2736.

⁸⁴ Yusuf Meherally (ed.), *ibid.*, p. 4.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁸⁶ See G. Adhikari, (ed.), *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India, Volume I, (1917–1922)*, People’s Publishing House, New Delhi, 1971 for Lenin’s Theses on National and Colonial Questions at the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920 and also for M.N. Roy’s supplementary theses and the changes made by Lenin in the latter. See also M.N. Roy, *Memoirs*, Delhi, Ajanta Publishers, 1964 (Reprint 1984), p. 379. There is some discussion of Lenin’s and M.N. Roy’s views on the role of Communist Parties in relation to nationalist movements in colonial countries, in my articles “Gandhi and the Indian Resurgence”, *Janata*, Bombay, 27 February 1983 and “Criticising Gandhi”, *Mainstream*, New Delhi, 27 January 1996.

⁸⁷ Acharya Narendra Deva, “The Task Before Us”, *Congress Socialist*, 29 September 1934, SW-AND-1, p. 36.

⁸⁸ This point was made repeatedly by Narendra Deva till the end of his life. In June 1952, speaking at a provincial party conference at Hardoi he argued: “...our party moulded Marxism to the conditions of our country and enriched it. Our party maintained that keeping distance from national movements in the colonies was not Marxist but opportunistic and reactionary; later the communists also accepted this”. See my piece, “The Ideology of Narendra Deva”, and translation of Narendra Deva’s speech in *Janata*, Bombay, 25 April 1993.

Nor did the early socialists nurture an allergy towards the Soviet Union or Marxism. The CSP organ in undivided Punjab during the Second World War, for example, was known as the *Bolshevik* and was produced by socialists like Yamin Dar (see K.L. Johar, *Unsung Torchbearers: Punjab Congress Socialists in Freedom Struggle*, New Delhi, Harman Publishing House, 1991, pp. 368–370).

⁸⁹ SW-AND-1, p. 38.

⁹⁰ “Presidential Address at the Gujarat Congress Socialist Conference”, Ahmedabad, 23–24 June 1935 by Narendra Deva, Yusuf Meherally (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 67.

As a matter of fact, socialism cannot be built without the conquest of power and in the present conditions of India the anti-imperialist struggle is only a prelude to socialism. We are not lacking in national pride either. Of course we hate chauvinism and do not subscribe to the notion of “my country right or wrong”.... Lest it should be doubted in certain quarters whether I am correctly stating the socialist position, I would like to fortify myself with the following passage from the writings of Lenin: “Is the emotion of national pride foreign to the Greater Russian Class-conscious proletariat? Certainly not. We love our language and our native land ... and it is for that reason specially that we regard with a peculiar hatred our past serfdom.... (and) ... our present serfdom.”⁹¹

Narendra Deva responded also to another concern, raised “from the right”, about the socialist role in the national struggle: “The other criticism is that we are disrupting the struggle for independence ... by raising the issue of class struggle at this stage. We may be forgiven for pointing out that under present conditions it is impossible to win independence without mobilizing the workers and peasants for the political struggle....”⁹²

To the Congress he urged that it pay greater attention to the working class; to the working class he issued the reminder that it was still weak. He advised that

... the working class can extend its political influence only when by using its weapon of general strike in the service of the national struggle it can impress the petty bourgeoisie with the revolutionary possibilities of a strike.... Unfortunately some of the working class leaders do not seem to accept this point of view.⁹³

Labour, Narendra Deva believed, could “with the application of proper tactics ... easily develop into a

mighty political force and can establish hegemony over the national movement”.⁹⁴ He identified 1928 as the juncture in time after which the working class leadership initiated its isolationist policy: “Ever since 1928 they have followed a policy of isolation and it is this suicidal policy which has isolated them not only from the working masses but also from the national struggle ...”⁹⁵ Opposing such sectarianism, Narendra Deva argued that “A party which that wants to establish its hegemony over the national movement must send its members to all the classes....”⁹⁶ “We regard ourselves as custodians of Congress honour ...”, Narendra Deva declared.⁹⁷ Narendra Deva’s address in Gujarat was very well received, recalled Dinkar Mehta who had participated in the Salt Satyagraha in Gujarat, was Joint Secretary of the all-India CSP between 1935 and 1940 and who later joined the Communist Party.⁹⁸ Even so, the address did not, Mehta maintains, help soften the attitude of the local Congress in Gujarat towards the CSP and Narendra Deva was viewed by some of the, presumably regional, newspapers as a “communist agent”; Mehta suggests that it was on account of the unsympathetic attitude of the local Congress that he himself started to spend his organizational time mostly outside Gujarat and often in south India.⁹⁹ It was not merely one end of the political spectrum that was difficult to bring around. Problems of socialist unity would continue to frustrate Narendra Deva throughout his career. In 1938 we find Narendra Deva lamenting: “... our Communist friends were not prepared to concede the Marxist character of our party. Efforts at unity hence prove futile but they show that the CSP has ceaselessly striven for unity in (the) socialist movement from its inception”.¹⁰⁰ He often recalled that the Nazis in Germany had benefited from disunity among socialists and communists.¹⁰¹

In the August 1936 speech, mentioned by Namboodiripad, Narendra Deva described the Congress Election Manifesto of 1936 as a revolutionary and not a

⁹¹ Idem.

⁹² Yusuf Meherally (ed.), *ibid.*, p. 68.

⁹³ Yusuf Meherally (ed.), *ibid.*, p. 70.

⁹⁴ Idem.

⁹⁵ Idem. A similar idea had been expressed by Narendra Deva in his Presidential address at the First Session of the All-India Congress Socialist Conference at Patna on 17 May 1934; see “Socialism and the Nationalist Movement” (1934), Yusuf Meherally (ed.), *ibid.*, p. 10.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁹⁸ Dinkar Mehta, Oral History Transcript, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

⁹⁹ Idem.

¹⁰⁰ SW-AND-1, p. 120.

¹⁰¹ Narendra Deva, “Fascism ka Vastavik Roop”, in *Rashtriyata aur Samajwad*, Banaras, Gyan Mandal Prakashan, 1949, p. 719.

reformist document.¹⁰² Narendra Deva made a point here also about the “communal award” announced in 1932 by the British Prime Minister, Ramsay Macdonald, setting out, inter alia, the proposed legislative seat shares among various religious communities and, within the majority community, a demarcation on the basis of caste. Narendra Deva said he was aware that “a few handful of people whether Moslem or Hindu” wished to take advantage of the “award” and asserted that “... a few Hindus who had been strongly opposing the ‘award’ would be the first in the field demanding separate electorate as against joint electorate”.¹⁰³ The Congress manifesto according to him had taken these facts into consideration and was crafted in a manner “as not to give a handle to any reactionaries”.¹⁰⁴ On “office acceptance” (in the provincial governments established under the Government of India Act of 1935), Narendra Deva differed with the election manifesto, saying that the question should be decided by the Faizpur Congress coming up in December 1936 rather than after the provincial legislative elections were over.¹⁰⁵ We have seen above that Narendra Deva declined to join the Congress Government that came to be formed in the United Provinces in 1937.

4. Kisans, Land Reforms And Land Struggles

With the enforcement of the Government of India Act, 1935 and particularly as a sequel to the provincial elections that followed in which Congress governments came to power in several provinces, peasant expectations from the new dispensation grew exponentially. The constitutional and political background to these developments was set out prior to government formation in a note by Narendra Deva, K.T. Shah, and Jawaharlal Nehru.¹⁰⁶ This reiterated the Congress Working Committee resolution of 7 July 1937 which had clarified that although the Congress would accept cabinet responsibilities, it did not subscribe to the doctrine of partnership as according to it “the proper description of the existing relationship between the British Government

and the people of India is that of exploiter and exploited....”¹⁰⁷ Narendra Deva was conscious of the limitations of the political and statutory framework in which these governments functioned. In his presidential speech at the Gujarat Congress Socialist Conference in June 1935 he made a thorough criticism of the 1935 Act and more particularly for its protection of vested interests.¹⁰⁸ In his speech on the Tenancy Bill in the United Provinces Assembly on 11 November 1938, Narendra Deva attacked the Zamindari system. The Zamindars had been given rights not based on equity and these rights must now go.

The Zamindars were not doing anything for promoting the good of the society. They were merely tax gatherers. The Congress was out to kill imperialism and since landlordism was the creation of Imperialism both of them must perish. In fact landlordism would live in India so long as Imperialism lasted. There should be no sympathy for the landlords who had all along joined hands with Imperialism to crush national movements.¹⁰⁹

Pleading for abolition of Zamindari (which happened subsequently) Narendra Deva declared that the Kisans were not satisfied with the Tenancy Bill.¹¹⁰ Even so, Narendra Deva had, as member of the Select Committee which examined the Bill’s provisions, influenced the drafting to no small extent. Ajit Prasad Jain who, as Parliamentary Secretary in the Congress government, had helped steer the Bill through the Legislative Assembly, would recall: “There was not one proposal which he had made that was not accepted, and there was no proposal which he had disapproved that was included; yet when Rafi asked Narendra Deva to sign the Select Committee Report, he declined. We felt annoyed. What other reason could there be except that the Congress Socialists wanted to show off their extremism?”¹¹¹

Actually, Narendra Deva’s concerns lay outside committee rooms on the need to strengthen the

¹⁰² SW-AND-1, pp. 76–77.

¹⁰³ *Idem.*

¹⁰⁴ *Idem.*

¹⁰⁵ SW-AND-1, p. 77.

¹⁰⁶ “Note on the Constitutional Impasse”, SW-AND-1, pp. 250–253.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

¹⁰⁸ Yusuf Meherally (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 78–84.

¹⁰⁹ SW-AND-1, p. 141.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹¹¹ Ajit Prasad Jain, *Rafi Ahmad Kidwai*, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1965, pp. 49–50.

movement outside. Although various kisan demands were pressed on the Congress, it is quite evident, as we have seen, that Narendra Deva was conscious of the statutory constraints within which the Congress governments were functioning. He did not wish to cede the opposition space to others. In his tour of UP in December 1938, Narendra Deva described the Hindu Mahasabha and the Nationalist Agriculturist Party as “dead organizations which had failed”; they “had no programme for the uplift of the masses, who were being ruthlessly exploited by capitalists and taluqdars and the zamindars with the help of British Imperialism”; the reason for their failure lay in the fact that “the leadership of those bodies was in the hands of capitalists and wealthy persons who hardly found time to attend to the needs of the masses”.¹¹² Earlier, in April 1938 Narendra Deva had spoken at the Delhi Provincial Congress Socialist Conference. He stressed the need to build class organizations and was equally firm that these organizations must not lose their anti-imperialist thrust by getting into an antagonist relation with the Congress. On the contrary, they must strengthen and reinvigorate it. They must also “quicken the pace of the social struggle in this country”.¹¹³ Similar points were being made at this time by Jawaharlal Nehru in his speeches

at Kisan meetings.¹¹⁴ As President of the All India Kisan Conference held at Gaya in 1939, Narendra Deva returned to the theme, acknowledging that it is the peasants’ support which had placed the Congress in power.¹¹⁵ He was able to add now that “Kisans constitute the bulk” of the Congress.¹¹⁶ Narendra Deva’s brief survey, in his address, of the growth of peasant organizations across the country and the origin of the All-India Kisan Sabha is significant as one of the authoritative socialist accounts of the growth of the kisan movement.¹¹⁷ In an article in November 1936 and in the Gaya address of 1939, the role of the non-communist and even pre-socialist peasant organizations is mentioned and frankly acknowledged by Narendra Deva. N.G. Ranga, a leading socialist and peasant leader in the pre-independence years, has also written lucidly about the path-finding struggles by peasants in south India and elsewhere.¹¹⁸

Interestingly, Narendra Deva, in his Gaya address lauds the Bihar Kisan movement as the “best organized unit of the All-India Kisan movement.”¹¹⁹ “The Kisans of Bihar,—men, women and children—have fought the grimmest fights against the Zamindar and have won many victories.”¹²⁰ About the United Provinces, Narendra Deva observed:

¹¹² “Speech at Partabgarh”, *National Herald*, 17 December 1938, SW-AND-1, p. 142.

¹¹³ SW-AND-1, p. 124.

¹¹⁴ See e.g., an official report of Nehru’s meeting with peasants at Doiwala, Dehradun in 1937 [subject files: Part IV, (D) Reports (1937), serial No. 22, Jawaharlal Nehru Papers, NMML]; for Nehru’s meetings in Bihar see Walter Hauser, “Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, 1929–1942: A Study of an Indian Peasant Movement”, Doctoral dissertation, Chicago, 1961, p. 126 (Microfilm, NMML, New Delhi).

¹¹⁵ SW-AND-1, p. 163.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

¹¹⁷ See, SW-AND-1, especially pp. 170–178.

¹¹⁸ See, for example, N.G. Ranga, *Revolutionary Peasants*, Amrit Book Co., New Delhi, 1949.

In North India, particularly Bihar and UP, organizations going by the name Kisan Sabha were active by 1928. The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha and the UP Kisan Sabha were represented at the All Parties National Convention held at Calcutta in 1928. The fact of pre-Congress peasant mobilizations (i.e., say, pre-1917 mobilizations) is more readily acknowledged in current writings than the fact of simply *Congress* or even *Congress Socialist* mobilizations of peasants prior to independence. A somewhat rare reference—to the role of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan in relation to the Punjab peasantry—is to be found in Master Hari Singh, *Punjab Peasant in Freedom Struggle*, Vol. 2, New Delhi, People’s Publishing House, 1984, p. 187. The Frontier Gandhi’s visit to rural Punjab in August 1931 drew more than a lakh persons, mostly peasants. Bilga came to be known as the “Bardoli” of Punjab. Ryot Sabhas were set up in several Assam districts by the 1930s largely on Congress initiative. (See K.N. Dutt, *Landmarks of the Freedom Struggle in Assam*, Gauhati, Lawyers’ Book Stall, 1958, pp. 69–70.) Also, Purshottam Das Tandon, identified in later years primarily as a “Hindiwallah” and conservative, emerged on the political scene in UP as a mobilizer of the peasantry. (See, for example, Majid Hayat Siddiqi, *Agrarian Unrest in North India: The United Provinces, 1918–22*, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1978, pp. 121–122; for the 1930s see also, “The Allahabad Tenants’ Conference”, *Indian Annual Register*, 1931, Vol. 2, pp. 304–308). Narendra Deva acknowledges Tandon’s role in taking up the cause of the Kisans (SW-AND-1, p. 171). Similarly, socialist leaders like Yusuf Meherally were also constantly on the move in later years. Meherally “had presided over a big Kisan conference held in Central Punjab in mid-1936”. (See Prem Bhasin, “Yusuf Meherally”, *Janata*, Bombay, Annual Number, 1997.) The Utkal Congress Samajwadi Karmi Sangh was formed in February 1933. This later became the provincial branch of the All-India Congress Socialist Party and the promoter of the *Krushak Sangh* in the province.

¹¹⁹ SW-AND-1, p. 171.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

Since the Congress took the reins of administration in its hands in these provinces the Kisan movement has looked up. The Kisans of U.P. are politically developed and can easily become the backbone of the peasants' fight for economic freedom but they have lacked organization so far.

This drawback is being remedied by the re-organisation of the U.P. Provincial Kisan Sangh, which has started functioning effectively.¹²¹

He identified Bengal as "a weak spot" in kisan organization and advised kisan organizations there to work with the various socialist parties and as far as possible with the Krishak Praja Movement.¹²² It is noteworthy that he does not in this context in Bengal suggest alliance with the Congress as a whole. The reason was obvious. The Congress in Bengal was known to be landlord dominated. In his address Narendra Deva acknowledged contradictions between the Congress and kisans in some areas where "the Congress organization is controlled by professional men, merchants and moneylenders of the city and as their interests collide with those of the rural population, they cannot be expected to safeguard the interests of the peasantry".¹²³ He recognized that

the level attained by the Congress organization is uneven in different provinces and as several committees are controlled by Zamindar elements... (i)n such places, peasants will not receive that assistance from the Congress committee to which they are entitled.... It is exactly in such places that the existence of the Kisan Sabha will be mostly needed...."¹²⁴

These inter-provincial comparisons need pursuing especially because of the paradox that Congress-initiated land reforms fared badly in Bihar where the Kisan Sabha, according to Narendra Deva, was strongest; the reforms were relatively more successful in UP both before and after independence. Was this related in part to the differential strategies pursued by kisan organizations in

the two regions? In his speech at the kisan conference at Motihari in February 1940, Narendra Deva made a critical point, often lost sight of in many later studies of pre-independence peasant struggles: "The Zamindari system could not be destroyed unless British Imperialism in India was destroyed."¹²⁵ According to him, "(i)t was impossible to remove poverty and unemployment without first removing British domination over India".¹²⁶ Essentially, as Narendra Deva maintained in his Gaya address in 1939, "the colonial exploitation from which the peasant suffers cannot be ended without achieving complete independence" and "as he cannot enjoy political freedom without political power, so long as India is in bondage it is necessary that peasants should strive for national freedom in co-operation with other classes".¹²⁷ So the Congress, as the "biggest anti-imperialist front working in India for the last 54 years" had to be strengthened:

We have great expectations from the Congress. If a few Zamindars manage to enter into this great organization, there is no danger; but, when the number is large and the Congress organization is captured and its policy and programme guided by the Zamindars then the danger becomes grave. It would be a bad day when Kisans and Kisan Sabha workers would sever their connection with the Congress. They should continue to be with the Congress in spite of the grave provocation. *They could not alter the Congress programme by walking out of the Congress.* (emphasis added)¹²⁸

Particularly after the outbreak of the Second World War, Narendra Deva was keen on resumption of the anti-colonial struggle; he found it odd that the United States, otherwise closely aligned with England, "is neutral while India is dragged into the war!" and attributed this to India's status as a "slave country".¹²⁹ While deploring the delay in resuming the struggle, he criticized "attempts to lower the Congress in public estimation":

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 172.

¹²² Ibid., p. 174.

¹²³ Ibid., pp. 168–169.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 162.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 212.

¹²⁶ Idem.

¹²⁷ SW-AND-1, p. 164.

¹²⁸ SW-AND-1, p. 212.

¹²⁹ SW-AND-1, p. 213.

We have full confidence in the Congress. We can make our voice intensely heard and its influence keenly felt through this great organization of ours. We can change its leadership if required, but we should not disturb the solidarity of the same. Let us strengthen the Congress. *Let the organization feel our strength.* It is a bad policy to have a separate organization other than the Congress. The Indian National Congress is the only all-India Indian political organization on national lines. This is the only national organization. The Kisan Sabha is a class organization, but class organization is not the only thing which is wanted; what is wanted is a truly national organization competent to speak in the name of the nation as a whole and this is the Congress. (emphasis supplied)¹³⁰

Congress initiatives on reform of land relations in the immediate pre-war were not inconsiderable; so also were peasant expectations from the Congress, often without adequate consideration for the statutory restraints under which Congress regimes functioned. In provinces like the UP, the reforms had the support of the bulk of the Congress. Some of the ground had been prepared for this by the report of the Congress Agrarian Enquiry Committee which submitted its report in November 1936.¹³¹ It was not always smooth sailing. In Orissa the reform Bill of 1938 was reserved by the Governor for consideration by the Governor General under Section 299 of the Act of 1935 and assent was withheld. The Bill had sought to reduce rents in Zamindari areas in parts of Orissa to the rate of land revenue payable in the nearest ryotwari areas with a compensation for the zamindars to be computed at 2

annas in the rupee.¹³² In Madras province the Congress government was considering that in the areas under the Permanent Settlement the ryot was the “owner of the soil” and also opted for restoration of the levels of rent existing in 1802 when the Settlement was made.¹³³ This could not be implemented before the Ministry resigned. The UP Tenancy Act of 1938 provided for security of tenure by giving all statutory tenants hereditary rights and placing restrictions on resumption of lands by the zamindars.¹³⁴ Provisions for arrest on failure to pay rent were done away with.¹³⁵ In the Bihar legislation rent increases made since 1911 were done away with, as were provisions for damages on arrears; interest was also reduced by 50 per cent.¹³⁶ The rent relief in Bihar was given on the basis of an assessment of areas where the rents had gone up steeply; in such cases rent reduction could go even to eight or ten annas in the rupee.¹³⁷ Occupancy tenancies were protected and ejection for non-payment of rent was restricted.¹³⁸ Sub-tenants could become tenants if they had been cultivating the land for 12 years.¹³⁹ Illegal exactions by landlords became penal offences.¹⁴⁰ Transfer of holdings by Kisans was made lawful subject to a fixed rate of commission to be received from the tenant upon the transfer.¹⁴¹ Rajendra Prasad claimed that the reforms in Bihar were “a solid achievement which perhaps no other province could boast of” and that “had the kisan leaders acted more wisely and in greater concert with the Ministry, they might have gained even more”.¹⁴² This claim can be questioned and it has been suggested that in Bihar, where the reforms were based on a compromise arrived at with the landlords, it was not possible for the peasants “to extract concessions like their UP counterparts”.¹⁴³ This is to some extent a

¹³⁰ Idem.

¹³¹ The Committee, appointed by the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee in May 1936, was headed by Govind Ballabh Pant and had as its members, Purushottam Das Tandon, Sampurnanand, Venkatesh Narain Tiwary, and Lal Bahadur Shastri.

¹³² Reginald Coupland, *The Constitutional Problem in India, [Part II: Indian Politics, 1936–1942]*, London, Oxford University Press, 1944, pp. 137–138.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 137.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 138.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 139.

¹³⁶ Idem.

¹³⁷ Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography*, New Delhi, National Book Trust, 1994 (First published, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1957), p. 456.

¹³⁸ Coupland, op. cit., p. 139; See also, Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 457.

¹³⁹ Thomas A. Rusch, *Role of Congress Socialist Party in Indian National Congress, 1931–42*, Doctoral dissertation, Chicago, (Microfilm, NMML, New Delhi), p. 232.

¹⁴⁰ Idem.

¹⁴¹ Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 457.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 459.

¹⁴³ Kaushal K. Sharma, “Nationalist Struggle and Agrarian Movement in Bihar, 1927–1947” in Kaushal Kishore Sharma, Prabhakar Prasad Singh, and Ranjan Kumar (eds.), *Peasant Struggles in Bihar, 1831–1992*, Patna, Centre for Peasant Studies, 1994, at p. 112.

paradox because of the strength of the kisan movement in Bihar to which Narendra Deva drew attention. One major source of conflict in Bihar was provided by the inability of the provincial government to prevent zamindars from keeping fallow such lands as they had purchased in execution of court decrees so as to prevent the creation of any other tenancy rights upon them.¹⁴⁴ An effort was made to deal with this problem through the Restoration of Bakasht Land Act of 1938 which was intended to restore lands sold in execution of decrees for arrears of rent during the depression years.¹⁴⁵ Bakasht lands were the “lands in possession of landlords, in which tenants had acquired occupancy rights ... which would be revived if given to settled Ryots”.¹⁴⁶ The working of the Act of 1938 was weakened on account of certain provisions of which the landlords took advantage.¹⁴⁷ Narendra Deva spoke in support of the struggles in Bihar for restoration of such lands “to the actual tillers of the soil” and in this connection condemned the incident at Amwari, in Saran district, where there had been a “brutal and cowardly assault, in police custody, on the renowned Buddhist scholar Shri Rahul Sankrityayan by the goondas of the local Zamindar”.¹⁴⁸ Narendra Deva paid tribute also to the “brave and dauntless Kisans of Rewara, where the biggest Bakasht fight was fought and won....”¹⁴⁹

One difference in the Bihar and UP situations was in the psychological atmosphere created by the Congress in UP; Narendra Deva’s observation in his presidential address at the All India Kisan Conference at Gaya in April 1939 about kisans constituting the bulk of the Congress organization was especially true of the United Provinces. In a letter to Nehru sixteen months earlier,

Narendra Deva had, as we note below, foreseen trouble in Bihar on account of the attitude of some Congressmen there. It is probably true that many kisan leaders too did not adequately recognize the constitutional constraints under which the ministries functioned. Interestingly, this omission continues to be reflected in some contemporary scholarship which proceeds on an implicit assumption of unlimited possibilities of reform and even revolution within a constitutional context of colonialism. The thought that it might have been useful and even rational to keep some measures for legislation in an independent India (much as several aspects of land relations in China would change *after* the 1949 revolution) does not figure significantly or at all in the scholarship on the period; there is a tendency to categorize the Congress-oriented movements into two mutually exclusive camps, usually described as “left” and “right” (or classified as non-compromising, revolutionary or, “popular” on the one hand and “compromising”, “reformist” or ‘elitist’ on the other), these appellations being determined merely or mainly on the basis of positions taken by specific individuals or groups within the colonial context of the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁵⁰ This tendency is to some extent a reflection of the specific left-wing politics of this period which often, by not paying adequate attention to the limitations of the colonial context, virtually outed itself by the time, on conclusion of the colonial period, that the new objective context might have enabled such political groups to have made a greater difference.¹⁵¹

Given the colonial ambit within which the provincial governments functioned, the debt relief measures proposed by the Congress governments were also fairly

¹⁴⁴ Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 459.

¹⁴⁵ Kaushal K. Sharma, op. cit., at p.118.

¹⁴⁶ Narendra Deva’s Presidential address at the All-India Kisan Conference, Gaya, 9 April 1939; SW-AND-1, p. 171.

¹⁴⁷ There is an illuminating discussion in Kaushal Sharma’s work, cited above, of some aspects of this legislation. One provision was that the land in question would not be restored to the original tenant if it had already passed to another tenant. This also enabled landlords to introduce dummy tenants and defeat the legislation. See Kaushal K. Sharma, op. cit., at p.118.

¹⁴⁸ Narendra Deva’s Presidential address at the All-India Kisan Conference, Gaya, 9 April 1939; SW-AND-1, p. 171.

¹⁴⁹ Idem. On the struggle in Reora (Rewara) and the role of Jadunandan Sharma, see Sho Kuwajima, “The Reora Satyagraha (1939): Its Contemporary Relevance”, in William R. Pinch, *Speaking of Peasants: Essays on Indian History and Politics in Honor of Walter Hauser*, New Delhi, Manohar, 2008, pp. 233–246.

¹⁵⁰ See, for instance, D.N. Dhanagare, *Agrarian Movements and Gandhian Politics*, Agra, Institute of Social Sciences, Agra University, 1975; Gyanendra Pandey, *The Ascendancy of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh: Class, Community and Nation in Northern India, 1920–1940*, London, Anthem Press, 2002; and Maya Gupta, *Experiment with Swaraj: The U.P. Legislative Politics, 1937–1939*, NMML monograph, New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 2003. For Narendra Deva’s account of post-revolution land reforms in China, see “Land Reform in China”, *Bulletin No. 19 of the National Geographical Society of India*, Benares, May 1953, being the text of his lecture delivered at the Society on 20 November 1952; also reproduced in SW-AND-4, pp. 3–8.

¹⁵¹ This is precisely the denouement that Narendra Deva had wished to avoid, but which in the end would overwhelm the socialists as well in 1947–48.

drastic. In UP, for example, the Congress Agrarian Enquiry Committee Report in 1936 had paid special attention to this matter, apart from questions of land tenure, tenancy, rents, and illegal exactions.¹⁵² An examination of some of the debt relief legislation brought forward at the time suggests appreciable progress in this sphere.¹⁵³ The UP Agriculturists and Workmen Debt Redemption legislation and the Money-Lenders' legislation of 1939 sought to scale down debts according scheduled rates of interest between 5 per cent and 8 per cent; it was also provided that debts would not exceed "the difference between twice the principal and the amount paid by the debtor towards the principal or interest, or both of the loan".¹⁵⁴ The Madras Debt Relief Act of 1938 abolished outstanding interest on debts incurred before 1 October 1932 until 1 October 1937.¹⁵⁵ The North West Frontier legislation closely followed the Madras law with some variations.¹⁵⁶ Caps were specified to the rates of interest at 6.25 per cent simple interest in Madras (as in the North West Frontier Province) and 9 per cent in Bihar.¹⁵⁷

Bad health dogged Narendra Deva. His Presidential address at the All India Kisan Conference in June 1942 at Bedaul, Muzaffarpur had to be read out in his absence. A report with some details of the Bedaul address has been reproduced in the second volume of his *Selected Works*.¹⁵⁸ According to Narendra Deva, the Second World War could cease to be an imperialist war only if India could "feel free and obtain a charter of freedom for her millions of Kisans and labourers". However, such differences over the characterisation of the war cast their shadow over the Kisan Sabha. Tall leaders like N.G. Ranga and Indulal Yagnik had dissociated themselves

from the Sabha by 1944. After the 1942 movement in particular, with the arrest of those then engaged in the struggle against British rule, the Kisan Sabha had come to be dominated by those who were affiliated with the communist movement. Narendra Deva expressed his deep disappointment with this state of affairs at a meeting of kisan leaders at Bombay after his release in 1945. A short report regarding this is reprinted in his *Selected Works*.¹⁵⁹ It is based on M.A. Rasul's account.¹⁶⁰ Narendra Deva's concern was understandable. The implications of this disarray in the Kisan movement would be serious, especially in the context of the evolving CPI line on the Pakistan scheme. Even otherwise, the split in the kisan movement between the socialists and Swami Sahajanand, the leader of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha (BPKS), was "reflected by 1941 in the division of the BPKS".¹⁶¹ This year marked also the break between Congress Socialists and the Communists in the All India Kisan Sabha, with rival organizations coming into being.¹⁶² This was prior to the still more severe socialist-communist differences which surfaced over the Quit India movement initiated in August 1942. As Walter Hauser points out about the break in 1941:

This left Sahajanand alone at the head of the Bihar movement and when he assumed the anti-national 'People's War' position with the communists in 1941–42 and stood apart from the popular August rising, the BPKS was to all intents and purposes dead; it could not sustain the loss of popular support which the Swami's actions incurred despite his subsequent break with the communists and his effort to seek new associations with the Congress.¹⁶³

¹⁵² *Report of the Committee Appointed by the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee to Enquire into the Agrarian Situation in the Province*, 1936; republished Gurgaon, Prabhu Publications, n.d.

¹⁵³ K.G. Sivaswamy, *Legislative Protection and Relief of Agriculturist Debtors in India*, Poona, published by D.R. Gadgil, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, 1939.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 367–368. The sequel to the Debt Redemption Bill was the UP Debt Redemption Act, 1940 which was enacted with changes by the Governor under his special powers in 1940, after the Congress ministries had resigned on India being dragged, without proper consultation, into the Second World War; the legislation was re-enacted after Indian independence through U.P. Act XIII of 1948. There are some differences in the interest rates specified in the original legislative proposals and the Act as passed.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

¹⁵⁶ *Idem.*

¹⁵⁷ Coupland, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

¹⁵⁸ SW-AND-2, pp. 27–28.

¹⁵⁹ SW-AND-2, p. 89.

¹⁶⁰ M.A. Rasul, *A History of the All India Kisan Sabha*, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1989, p. 339.

¹⁶¹ Walter Hauser, "Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, 1929–1942: A Study of an Indian Peasant Movement", *op. cit.*, p. 35.

¹⁶² N.G. Ranga, *Kisans and Communists*, Bombay, Pratibha Publications, n.d., p. 4.

¹⁶³ Walter Hauser, "Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, 1929–1942: A Study of an Indian Peasant Movement", *op. cit.*, p. 35.

There was now hesitation even in the Krishak Praja Party in Bengal to associate with Sahajanand. Humayun Kabir, representing the Krishak Praja Party, put his finger on the crux of the problem when he assessed the post-1945 scenario:

Our party is the strongest organisation composed of Kisans alone. It has been there since 1936–1937. Our party fought the elections in 1936 and is going to do so this time. When Swamiji visited Bengal, we told him we were ready to affiliate with his AIKS but not now. We will do so after the elections. *We have to fight the League in the elections, and affiliation at this moment will have an adverse effect on us. The question of Pakistan is to be decided in Punjab and Bengal.*¹⁶⁴ (emphasis added)

Narendra Deva and Humayun Kabir understood the critical role that the Kisan movement could have played by strengthening forces that may potentially have helped keep the subcontinent together. N.G. Ranga has written about the anti-sectarian struggle that had to be waged at this time in the Kisan movement.¹⁶⁵ Congress Socialists waged a spirited struggle among peasants and workers in the 1946–47 period against the divisive ideologies. Obviously disillusioned with the erratic policies pursued by the CPI, Sahajanand resigned as President of the All-India Kisan Sabha in March 1945 and established an all India Kisan body of his own.¹⁶⁶ By this time Sahajanand was veering round to Narendra Deva's position on Congress-Kisan relations. In January 1945 Sahajanand, in a letter to the Gujarat-based peasant leader, Indulal Yajnik expressed satisfaction at a statement made by the latter: "I am also glad that you emphasized the point that the Kisan Sabha would not come in conflict with the Congress in matters political and this also appeared in the Press."¹⁶⁷ A few days later in a statement of his own, Sahajanand said on 17 February 1945:

It must be borne in mind by all concerned that I want very much and am trying my level best for the consolidation, if possible, of both the Congress and the Kisan Sabha, the former as the national organ of Indian people fighting for complete freedom and full democratic rights and symbolizing our collective revolt against and resolve to fight out slavery and subjugation and the latter as the independent class organ of the Indian peasantry, fighting for their rights and interests and symbolizing their revolt against and resolve to fight out feudalism, capitalism and their allies and supporters.¹⁶⁸

In the event, these developments perhaps came too late in the day to make an adequate impact on the now fast-moving developments.

5. Religious-Sectarian Questions

Narendra Deva had warned in his Presidential address at the All India Kisan Conference in Gaya in 1939:

In certain parts of the country, where the bulk of landowners are not of the same religion as the mass of peasants, Kisan organizations have assumed a communal character. Such organizations have come into existence chiefly because the Congress organization of the province grossly neglected the interests of the peasants. The All-India Kisan Sabha has to contend with real difficulties in such places.¹⁶⁹

Religious-sectarian questions became important and would have a bearing on aspects of the Kisan struggles as well as the manner in which the socialists and the Left as a whole would relate themselves with the non-violent struggles for freedom. Narendra Deva was forthright on the religious-sectarian question. In June 1934 he had demanded that no member of any communal

¹⁶⁴ M.A. Rasul, op. cit., p. 340. As is evident also from Rasul, op. cit., p. 329, Swami Sahajanand developed differences related to such issues as the CPI's policy on the Pakistan scheme and this contributed to a schism in the All India Kisan Sabha at least by February 1945, if not earlier.

¹⁶⁵ See N.G. Ranga, *Revolutionary Peasants*, New Delhi, Amrit Book Co., 1949.

¹⁶⁶ Rakesh Gupta, *Bihar Peasantry and the Kisan Sabha*, New Delhi, People's Publishing House, p. 177. Gupta acknowledges: "Another crisis came in AIKS when Swami Sahajanand left it on questions relating to 'organization' and Communist Party's policy on 'Pakistan'."

¹⁶⁷ *Indulal Yajnik Papers*, File No. 23, "1942–45: Correspondence exchanged between Indulal Yajnik and Swami Sahajanand Saraswati regarding All India Kisan Sabha", (Letter dated 25.1.1945 from Swami Sahajanand Saraswati to Indulal Yajnik), pp. 16–17, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Teen Murti, New Delhi.

¹⁶⁸ *Indulal Yajnik Papers*, File No. 23, "1942–45: Correspondence exchanged between Indulal Yajnik and Swami Sahajanand Saraswati regarding "All India Kisan Sabha", pp. 20–21, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.

¹⁶⁹ SW-AND-1, p.168.

party should be a member of the Congress. He stressed the economic factor in resolving the Hindu-Muslim question. Speaking at a public meeting in New Delhi, he was reported to have attacked the Hindu Mahasabha who had no following and whose only aim seemed to be straining the relations between the communities¹⁷⁰

The UP Provincial Hindu Sabha and National Agriculturist Party, he saw in 1936 as being the “bulwark of reactionary forces”.¹⁷¹

According to M. Hashim Kidwai, among others, the proposal for a coalition government between the Congress and the Muslim League in UP in 1937 fell through on account, *inter alia*, of the opposition of “Congress-Socialists” and “Congress Communists”, both of whom feared that the land reforms programme of the Congress might be stalled as a result of such a coalition.¹⁷² This question, of whether to oppose the League or to ally with it, remained a classic Congress dilemma. Hashim Kidwai names Narendra Deva from among the Congress-Socialists, and Dr. Ashraf and Dr. Z.A. Ahmad from among the “Congress Communists” as being partly responsible for the alliance proposal not coming through. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote to Rajendra Prasad on the subject on 21 July 1937. Nehru referred to a meeting between himself, Maulana Azad, Narendra Deva, Govind Ballabh Pant, and others in which it was decided to “offer stringent conditions to the UP Muslim League group...”.¹⁷³ Interestingly, the autobiography of Dr. Z.A. Ahmad is silent on the subject.¹⁷⁴

On 10 December 1937, Narendra Deva suggested in a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru that in the elections to the *local* bodies due in 1938 possibilities might be explored for a “bloc of the Congress and the League for the specific purpose of these elections on the basis of a common ... programme”.¹⁷⁵ The letter is noteworthy for many reasons. Narendra Deva wanted to avoid a clash with the League in the elections to the local bodies. He was wary of Congressmen doing anything that might give a “handle” to the League to alienate the Muslims

from the Congress. He would have preferred Congressmen not to contest these elections at all. Hence the loud thinking on a possible “bloc” with the League. The proposal is not made without reservations; he was not sure if the arrangement would be “feasible” and was not quite clear about its desirability. Narendra Deva shared his doubts with Nehru over the question of a larger alliance:

It is clear in my mind that there can be no question of a compromise with the Muslim League as it is constituted today. That will mean compromise with the fundamental principles which govern us today for although the League has changed its creed and broadened its programme the truth is that there is no fundamental change either in its objective or in its programme. The leadership continues to be reactionary as before and unless it is altered no one can believe that the new programme will be put into action or honest efforts will be made to achieve the new objective.¹⁷⁶

The suggestion made by Narendra Deva in December 1937 with regard to *local bodies* (in contrast to his position in June–July 1937 when Ministry-making in the province as a whole was being discussed) appears to have been based on the expectation that the rest of the League could be isolated from its leadership. Ironically, while this may have been a possibility in UP in and around June 1937 it was perhaps no longer so in December 1937 even on a limited local body scale.

Narendra Deva questioned the position of the Muslim League and other communal-sectarian organizations with growing emphasis in the next few years. The crunch appears to have come with the land reform legislation of the UP Government. By November 1938 the Tenancy Bill was before the UP Legislative Assembly. Narendra Deva made some hard-hitting points. Continuing a theme he had dwelt on in May 1938 when he questioned the Muslim League’s commitment to independence, he saw the League as being the “props and pillars” of the Zamindari system. He argued that if the League was

¹⁷⁰ SW-AND-1, p. 34.

¹⁷¹ SW-AND-1, p. 80.

¹⁷² M. Hashim Kidwai, *Rafi Ahmad Kidwai*, New Delhi, Publications Division, Government of India, 1986, p. 104.

¹⁷³ See Valmiki Chowdhury (ed.), *Dr. Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence and Select Documents, Vol. I, 1934–38*, New Delhi, Allied Publishers, 1984, pp. 63–67.

¹⁷⁴ Z.A. Ahmad, *Mere Jeewan Ki Kuch Yadein*, Lucknow, Sankalpa Systems, 1997.

¹⁷⁵ SW-AND-1, p. 109.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 108–109.

really in sympathy with the kisans as claimed in its manifesto, there was no reason why it should not support the proposals made.¹⁷⁷

A month later Narendra Deva was in Partapgarh, declaring that organizations like the Hindu Mahasabha and the National Agriculturist Party were being exploited by zamindars with the help of British imperialism. Yet, while criticizing the Muslim League, he had still not lost hope. He was reported to have said that “the day was not far off when both the Congress and the League would march hand in hand, forgetting all communal differences, with the common object of fighting British imperialism and capitalists alike.”¹⁷⁸

A year later, in October 1939, he was moved increasingly to stress the similarities between the League and the Hindu Sabha, both of which he saw as representing vested interests.¹⁷⁹ In a lecture in February 1940 on communal problems, Narendra Deva observed that the League’s demands “were not only increasing but were being changed from time to time with the result that the League... was seriously thinking of dividing India....”¹⁸⁰

Unlike the organized communist movement, he saw through the fallacy of defining ‘nation’ on the basis of religion. As a Marxist, he realized that this was not secular nationalism. He therefore emphasized other factors in addition. He argued:

The language of the communities was not different, and in provinces, like Bengal and the Punjab, Hindus and Muslims spoke Bengali or Punjabi. Even in UP, where the problem of Hindi and Urdu was more acute, the two languages were really one, possessing the same grammar, the same style and the same vocabulary. In any literature *which had to be written for the masses*, this difference had to cease and neither of the tendencies to enrich

Hindustani with Sanskrit or Arabic words would succeed.¹⁸¹ (emphasis added)

Narendra Deva emphasized the role and importance also of other Muslim organizations apart from the League. He noted, for example, that the “Shias had disclaimed the Muslim League and so also (had) the Momins”.¹⁸² Earlier, in May 1938, he had observed that the Shias led by Wazir Hassan disfavoured separate electorates because with Sunni predominance they “had no chance of being returned”.¹⁸³ Later, in June 1945, he reiterated the authority of the Shia Conference to speak in the name of Shias.¹⁸⁴ The British authorities, in their bid to strengthen the League, never conceded this and similar facts. In his lecture on the communal problem in 1940, Narendra Deva stressed the Colonial role in dividing the communities, a continuing theme in Narendra Deva’s writings and speeches.

Narendra Deva differed sharply from the communist line after 1940 of equating Hindu-Muslim unity with “Congress-League unity”. According to him, “...unity between communities is essentially the result of a long process of integration. Pacts are, however, temporary expedients to serve temporary ends. But the unity of communities is a different affair. It is a slow and painful process”.¹⁸⁵

Pakistan, he maintained in June 1945, was no solution: “Pakistan or no Pakistan, the communal problem will have to be tackled all the same and can be tackled only by laying emphasis on the economic issues which equally affect the Hindu and Muslim masses of the country.”¹⁸⁶

He added:

I shall no doubt welcome a settlement of the communal question with the League, but this does not mean that I should advocate unity of action in the political field. Without identity of outlook and objectives such a unity will be either short-lived or

¹⁷⁷ SW-AND-1, p. 141.

¹⁷⁸ SW-AND-1, pp. 142–143.

¹⁷⁹ SW-AND-1, p. 200.

¹⁸⁰ SW-AND-1, p. 207.

¹⁸¹ SW-AND-1, p. 208.

¹⁸² SW-AND-1, p. 209.

¹⁸³ SW-AND-1, p. 135.

¹⁸⁴ SW-AND-2, p. 69. Wazir Hasan’s concern at the propagation of the idea that there were very few Muslims in the Congress and that the League was the true representative of the Muslims was set out early in his letter dated 11 February 1938 to Jawaharlal Nehru. (See *A Bunch of Old Letters*, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1960, pp. 276–277.)

¹⁸⁵ SW-AND-2, p. 68.

¹⁸⁶ Idem.

will only end in strengthening the reactionary forces in the country. Congress-League unity in the political sphere will prevent a new orientation in the League itself and will stabilize the present reactionary leadership. This, of course, does not exclude a joint front with the League on specific issues on which an agreement is possible.¹⁸⁷

In October 1946, he repeated this position.¹⁸⁸

At the Meerut Congress, in November 1946, Narendra Deva spoke at length on the nature of the League and characterized it as a “fascist body” with “gangster methods”. “The present hate complex must be ended. Mr Jinnah on the one hand says that he deplors riots but in the same breath says if Pakistan is not conceded the present riots will continue.”¹⁸⁹ Interestingly, Subhas Bose’s understanding of the League had been similar. He had described it as a backward clique with plutocratic vested interests.¹⁹⁰ While agreeing with Abul Hashem of the Bengal Muslim League that “the British imperialistic hand was behind the Bengal riots” (of August 1946), Narendra Deva was not willing to exculpate the Muslim League Ministry.¹⁹¹ At the same time, speaking at the Meerut Congress, Narendra Deva warned Hindus against a tit-for-tat policy. The Bihar riots had taken place only a few days before the Meerut session.¹⁹² Narendra Deva’s critique of Colonial policy on the inter-communal question and of communal-sectarian parties including the League and the Hindu Mahasabha is relentless.¹⁹³ He criticized the Hindu Mahasabha as a preposterous movement “launched by a group of reactionaries to mislead the masses in the name of religion”.¹⁹⁴ “Where were these people,” he asked, “when Mahatma Gandhi launched his campaign against untouchability and rejuvenated about six crores of Hindus?”

And further:

“Will these reactionaries support the economic programme of the Congress Government for abolition of

Zamindari and nationalization of the industries, which would ameliorate the lot of 98 per cent of the Hindu masses who are at present being exploited by barely 2 per cent of supporters of the Sabha?”

And that:

“The Sabha is trading on communalism of the middle classes who were fighting for the crumbs of petty offices for amongst the masses there was no difference between a Hindu Kisan or Muslim Kisan as both were equally exploited by Hindu and Muslim Zamindars.”¹⁹⁵

(To be concluded)

Books by Surendra Mohan

1. **Vikas Ka Rasta: Nai Arthik Neetiyon ka vishleshan..** Price 600 rupees.

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¹⁸⁷ Idem.

¹⁸⁸ SW-AND-2, p. 121.

¹⁸⁹ SW-AND-2, p. 133.

¹⁹⁰ T.R. Sareen, *Subhas Chandra Bose and Nazi Germany*, Delhi, Mouto Publishing House, 1996, p. 301. See also, *Subhas Chandra Bose: Pioneer of Indian Planning*, New Delhi, Planning Commission, 1997, pp. 138–139.

¹⁹¹ SW-AND-2, p. 130.

¹⁹² Report of the 54th Session of the Indian National Congress, Meerut, 1946, pp. 80–81 (Microfilm) Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

¹⁹³ For example. SW-AND-2, p. 130 and pp. 141–46.

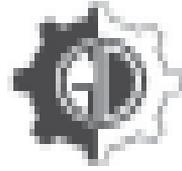
¹⁹⁴ SW-AND-2, p. 191.

¹⁹⁵ Idem.

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