

Chapter III

Popular Politics and the Minor Political Parties: 1920s to 1939

The Non cooperation movement drastically changed the character of the national movement in India. The constituency of national politics went far beyond its elite led national confines and Mahatma Gandhi's arrival on the political scene introduced several new dimensions to the nationalist politics. A crucial interplay of different factors laid the foundation of a new kind of politics challenging both the internal and external enemies. The involvement of new social groups in the national movement widened the scopes for searching a new political order articulating new socio economic issues which had never taken into consideration previously. The decision to merge Non Cooperation movement with the Khilafat causes provided the base for organizing a broad mass movement with support from both the Hindus and the Muslims inspite of several limitations. During and aftermath of the Non Cooperation movement the Congress leadership successfully promoted the causes of popular misery with a new language of political strategies and from this point the hitherto undefined factors figured the subsequent courses of national movement in India. In the pursuit of 'discovering' as of 'making' the nation¹ the Congress leadership found new constituencies of support which projected the narrative of a popular politics, more significant in terms of its hidden potentialities to capture a huge political audience.

By accommodating the peripheral social groups into the struggle, the Congress leaders had tried to translate the demands of these groups into one homogenous anti British movement.² Such a mobilization regardless of all vertical and horizontal differences of Indian society appeared to be risky in terms of maintaining the power relations from a multi class political platform. The party's problem of organizing an alternative politics of capturing mass support against the alien rulers without resolving the conflicts among the people themselves exposed the limitations of the Congress as mass political organization within a few years of the new episode. The dichotomy between mass action and elite called action in different levels of politics and the Congress problem of integrating various aspirations of various people into the principle of anti imperialism made it difficult to determine the new pattern of politics where the varied dynamism of regional socio economic conditions were as much as important like the political actors involved in the levels of mass mobilization. By acknowledging the necessity to link the truths of Moderate and Extremist ideas Gandhi transcended different political currents at different points of time, that is by slowly creating scopes for the 'counter hegemonic' politics of the Congress over the common people against the 'hegemonic' character of the imperial rule which sought to achieve its authority over the casteist, communal and parochial segments of colonial society.³ Therefore an effective leadership of nationalist struggle has had to crystallize the different currents of politics to evolve their respective realities so that both of them could be accommodated within one political process.⁴ The credit goes to Gandhi and Congress equally for evolving an exclusive language and idiom of mass politics that could make sense to the peasants specially---a new technique of

political action and a mass oriented political organization was too much necessary to provide an ideological rationale for the anti British popular sentiments.

The extent of involvement of the peasants into the national movement was indeed a crucial one ⁵, but the actual puzzle began when a good number of examples have been shown to prove the obligations of the Congress leaders in taking a pro peasant stand in a given situation and its natural tendency to sanction only the permitted participation of the peasantry in the movements involving compromise and including consensus of termination.⁶ Thus the role of the leadership in case of the popular movements becomes difficult to determine. The questions how did the leadership involve itself in organizing the popular movements or if they only responded to the popular pressures and popular discontents generated confusion into the total scenario. It can't be denied that from the Non Cooperation era a large number of leaders with both rural and urban belongings provided these popular grievances a more coherent focus and the Indian peasantry being habituated with sporadic revolts fought under their traditional leaders were found to be ready to adjust with the new situation coming out of their way.⁷ The question of ideology remains crucial here not in the sense of an objective force but in the sense of an objective basis of political activity.

The minor political parties had their different mechanisms to carry on the struggle for each and every strata of Indian society including the intelligentsia, the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie, youth workers artisans women and even the landlords. Being equally challenged by the

divisions of caste, class, regionalism and religion , the minor political parties time to time made temporary adjustments with what the situation demanded and sometimes their (un) happy marriages with communal or castiest ideologies made it easier themselves to get incorporated into the imperialist ideological discourse.

It is pertinent to note that the Non Cooperation movement initially was started in the urban areas but in course of time it spread to the villages and the undercurrent of peasant political consciousness flowing beneath the constitutional political waves soon began to expose the bankruptcy of a struggle hitherto being fought without addressing the issues of the peasantry. In Bengal a chain of factors like bad harvest, post war inflation, unemployment etc linked up with the agrarian crisis precipitated by the war. Growing dissatisfaction not only among the peasants but also of the professional classes, industrial workers small businessmen, landlords and overall the educated employed youth contributed substantially on widening the political horizon of the masses.⁸ However, it should not be concluded that the Congress under Gandhi motivated the peasants only rather the peasant participation in the Non Cooperation – Khilafat movement should be seen as a part of the enthusiasm fashioned by the sporadic Praja (tenant) movement⁹ emerging as an important political force in Bengal by the early 20s in accordance with the same process that had brought the new Muslim leadership under limelight.¹⁰ The polarization of politics into communal line was in fact matter to be galvanized in near future; the symptoms of sectarianism could hardly be avoided even in early 20s. Side by side the necessity of mobilizing the peasant masses into a broad oppositional movement

opened up new scopes for greater maneuverings by the organizations and leaders from the sphere of a politics ordered according to the legal political principles of the colonial state and also by the nationalist enterprises seeking to appropriate the popular movements within the structure of an alternative national organization of state power. The possibilities of mobilization created under a historic context should be scrutinized in terms of that political action informed by its own consciousness functioning within a new structure of 'class struggle'¹¹ The complex design of 'class struggle' and the problem of 'consciousness' created several other channels of inquiry in case of late colonial Bengal because here within larger context of social formation the 'conscious' leadership provided by the urbanized middle class brought a number of unforeseen problems with the subsequent development it hardly had any control over. The most significant development could be seen in the formation of new parties of mass mobilization although their programmes and activities never followed any simple linear process of interaction with the dynamics of class struggle especially in the countryside of Bengal. In 1920s the entry of the new leadership into the Congress organization at district and provincial levels was one of the major developments in Bengal. In many occasions this new leadership wished to perform from the same political administrative structure laid down by the colonial state and in many cases they failed to acknowledge the danger of incorporating the popular movements into the bourgeois political movement based on the notions of constitutional principles and capitalist economy. It should be mentioned in this connection that the people who refused to be incorporated, had their own methods of resistance and the consciousness which informed them had a definite role

to play in constructing the sense of a community, maintained organized leadership under Gandhi definitely felt the necessity of uniting different sectional regional interests but in time they were found to be lacking the art of mass mobilization in a true nationalist pattern. In the beginning of 1920s a vertically linguistic affinity and regional belongings had the tremendous possibility of weakening the boundaries of elemental and economic groupings, the task of 'mobilization' did not become an easy one for the parties because the problem of identifying the 'classes' in a clear economic term always remained a conflicting one. For the minor political parties particularly which owed its origin to one or more factional disputes of a major party, the primordial bonding were seen to be appropriated in terms of the narrower interests less fitted with the appeal of nationalism. The course of popular politics followed by different minor parties was bound to fall within the pre determined limitations of a mass movement and the reasons they were at a dilemma in every crucial level of decision making largely owed to changing structure of power relations in Bengal country and especially beyond the state domain of political activity.

I

The Swaraj Party emerged as the most prominent minor party in the first half of 1920s. ¹¹It was expected that the party would be able to politicize the masses by supporting some real demands of the 'people'. The validity of the politics what this party desired to practice lasted as long as it could sustain the spirit of anti British agitation but it lost its relevance as soon as the narrow vested interests emerged in most of the important

political functions they wanted to perform within an institutional political set up. ¹²The institutionalization of politics worked as a general criterion for the success of an organized domain of state politics and the latter as mentioned earlier always showed an inclination towards integrating the idioms of popular politics into its own political boundaries indeed with a transformative approach. Das's zeal to organize the labor and peasantry went hand in hand with the main programmes of the party i.e. the attainment of Swaraj by 'the people of India by applying all kinds of legitimate and peaceful means' and was thus to see that the power exercised by the bureaucracy was recognized as flowing from the people of India .the success of such a plan largely depended on to what extent the party could utilize an autonomous subjectivity of unanticipated mass action while exercising a different structure power relations conducted through an institutional language of political culture.

The efficacy of a non communal class based organization became evident when the peasants and workers party (renamed as the Workers and the Peasants Party) appeared in 1926 with twelve Muslim members out of its sixteen members. ¹³ The Labour Swaraj Party was originally formed under Muzaffatr Ahmed, Qutubuddin Ahmed, and Hemanta Kumar Sarkar and Quzi Nazrul Islam in 1925 This party had tried to maintain its independent character from the very begining yet options were open for the for the members to join either the Congress or the Swaraj Party for. Actually the Labour Swaraj Party and the Workers and Peasants Party drew its support basically from the 'left wing of the national movement' and particularly of the Swaraj Party. ¹⁴ In this perspective it became important to trace out the relationship between the WPP and the

Communist Party of India. It was expected that the communists could function largely through the WPP to reach the masses and the WPP would act in a way of 'an organized left wing will endeavor to secure the adoption of a militant programme of mass action by existing organizations' and not in the nature of an 'international class party of the proletariat'.¹⁵ The notions of legality stayed as the prime factor behind the idea of organizing a revolutionary mass party as a part of the Congress while maintaining a strong communist control over it at the same time. The main difference between the WPP and Communist Party laid on the formers proposal of permitting a collective membership of different mass bodies including the trade unions and the later's proposal of only individual membership.¹⁶ The Workers and Peasant parties were launched primarily to politicize the masses in absence of a mass based communist part. It was a tuff decision for the communists to chose between a legal mass party working as a left wing of the Congress and an independent but illegal Communist Party. Very naturally they opted for the former even though contradictions regarding the very nature of this party had never been sorted out. The changing ideas of M.N Roy in this regard could be cited as the best example of the inherent tensions the communists were passing through at that time."¹⁷ Roy was too much eager to utilize WPP as a mere 'cam fledge' for the illegal communist party.¹⁸ S A Dange and some others leaders preferred the left wing mass party within the Congress with the object of radicalizing the Congress movemet.¹⁹ The WPP organizations were the best tool before them to serve the twin purpose of transforming the Congress towards a leftist orientations will as the prepare the conditioned for the emergence of a Communist party in the true sense of the term because the congress, they

thought had failed to reflect the hopes and aspirations of the eighty percent. The expectations of the later group were fulfilled to some extent that already in 1927 three members of the WPP of Bengal were elected to the Bengal Provincial Congress committee and two were elected to the All India Congress committee.²⁰ But neither the communists nor the WPP could claim the credit for radicalizing the politics in an independent fashion. The logic of establishing a Communist Party had never been wiped out because 'it is only due the banner of the Communist Party', mentioned M N Roy 'that the masses can be organized and led into the national struggle'.²¹ The gradual absorption of 'given theory' by the Indian communist should not be interpreted as catalyst behind the sectarian politics adopted by the Indian communists by the end of 1928. The performance of the WPP was not very good in terms of establishing a working class hegemony over the national movement but it had recorded some success in terms of providing an anti imperialist platform to organize the labour unrest across the country. In this connection it must be referred that India had a working class with its own distinct class consciousness.²² In case of the Bengal jute mill workers it could be noticed that the peasant past of those workers actually created a kind of midway existence of them that they had continued to sustain the community consciousness of his peasant self against the working class consciousness.²³ The term 'class' unlike the classical Marxist way here denoted one of the complex factors of identity formation²⁴ where the question of horizontal unity among the workers stayed as a subject of making and unmaking. The community loyalties of the workers created condition for vertical alliances of the elements in the social hierarchy across class barriers and this process often created cleavages with the

class along and impeded working class cohesion.²⁵ These factors had a direct impact on the language of working class politics from late 19th century.²⁶ As a result the question of 'class formation' as well as 'class consciousness' was appeared to be a process of contestation between a numbers of institutions like the political parties , the trade unions, the mill owners and above all the dichotomy of class and community consciousness as well.²⁷ After the rise of the Communist Party the language of popular politics had inserted some new agencies of political mobilization and the different forms of social ties among the workers were proved to be the immediate political fabric for working of the political parties . In fact in the 1920s it became obvious that the political language of class awareness²⁸ adopted by the right wing nationalists was full of contradictions. Their silence on the issues of 'class antagonism' as well as their lack of understanding of the bondages of caste and community identities present in a class , had little to offer with the changing rhetoric of working class politics as a whole while the evolution of the WPP was expected to strengthen the forces of the left in the national movement and on the other it would prepare the way for a powerful class leadership of the revolutionary peasants and the workers.²⁹ The new political mechanism of this party opened a phase of grater informant of the workers into the political process as well as it had shown the zeal for building up a working class constituency on the realm of nationalist political tinkering.³⁰ Its attempts to build a working class constituency led this party to an open confrontation with the Swarajists and the Congress on the issue of the scavengers.³¹ Here some pertinent questions may arise. Did the workers remain passive respondent? Did they have any voice in redefining the course of labour politics according

to their own political vision? If it was so then how did the workers negotiate with the 'outer' influences? It was true that the workers were not matured or trained enough to take up the lesions of a 'revolution' but in a numbers of occasions the workers were seen to identity the issues of wider political significance. It was not sure whether the WPP was utilized by the workers as a simple barraging force or in many occasions the leaders were compelled to support such demands which had hardy any resemblance with their ultimate objectives.³² Some times these parties were also crippled by some technical difficulties and the workers themselves initiated the whole movement without any direction from outside. It was evident in case of the Jute workers strike in Bengal. In one of the strikes at the Fort Gloster Mill at Howrah, the WPP affiliated jute workers union failed to perform their work according to the demands of the situation because the workers had already lost their faith on these outsider 'babus' who were suspected to have connections with the management.³³ The difference of opinion among the leaders themselves weakened the very source of strength and their socio cultural difference with the workers limited the scopes for widespread popular movements in the industrial field.³⁴ However the pattern of working class politics in the forth coming decades witnessed a numbers of shifts against the background of new political development in a post depression scenario. This period was too much crucial for the intensification of state sponsored communalism among the workers. The language of radical politics was proved to be vulnerable in face of growing sectarianism among the workers.

In late 20s it was found in Bengal that both the radical nationalists and the communists were ready to move with a common propaganda.³⁴ For the colonial government the left nationalists were much more dangerous than the theoretical communists because any alliance between the radical forces were to strengthen the anti government movements. It seemed essential for the government to make some understanding with those interest groups whom the lefts particularly the communists threatened.³⁵ The landowning and the trading classes were expected to become the most dependable ally of the government even if no alliance was possible between the government and the capitalists.³⁶ On the question of maintaining industrial peace the capitalists whether European or Indian were ready to accept some legislative measures and for the government these attempts were to much necessary for neutralizing the working class militancy to the most possible extent. ³⁷The general strike of 1929 marked the turning point of labour movement in Bengal.³⁸ However, internal squabbles and legal checks restricted the chances of an organized protest from the WPP in Bengal.³⁹ However, the WPP in this period had shown some wide ranging possibilities including that of a left consolidation. But for the sake of a 'true communist 'party , the gradual liquidation of the WPP after 1929 indeed worsened the situation for the workers to carry on its united struggle against the joint repression of the government and their native partners.⁴⁰

After 1929 a good number of minor communist groups emerged on the political scene along with a new trend of youth radicalism .It would be misleading to describe these organizations as self sufficient political parties rater they should be treated as a link between revolutionary

nationalism and the ideal of communism in a general sense of the term.⁴¹.. The formation minor communist parties was the part of the same experiments what the Indian communists had done in case of the WPP and they repeated the matter in near future as well. These parties were to act as a transitional organization which could lead these people towards 'real communism' under the strict guidance of the communists themselves.⁴² Unfortunately most of these minor parties were either dissolved or joined the major communist wing within a few years of their formation. The Young Comrade League emerged as a youth wing of the WPP in 1928.⁴³ Its political effectiveness largely depended on how could it successfully adjust itself with the complexities of nationalist movement and its objectives were proved to supportive in this sense.

The object of the League is to organize a radical and militant movement of the exploited and oppressed young man and women for the redressal of their immediate grievances and the establishment of the independent republic of India on the basis of the social and economic emancipation of the masses.⁴⁴

The Young Comrade League infact served to be a connecting link between the communist movement and the ex revolutionaries of the Anushilan and the Yugantar.⁴⁵ So the League always received financial as well as moral support from the communists of Bengal. Even the programmes of this party were formulated to justify the importance of the communist party in Bengal.⁴⁶ The leaders like Dharani Goswami or Gopen Chakrabourty wanted the WPP to cooperate with the National Congress, now they took a very peculiar stand on the very mechanism of the minor communist parties.⁴⁷ From the same pandal of the Provincial Congress Committee at Rajshahi 1930 , the Young Comrade League

leaders charged the Congress for their compromising tendencies and they denounced the Civil Disobedience Movement as a 'spontaneous mass revolt without a clear revolutionary programme and without revolutionary leadership'.⁴⁸ At the same time a good number of Young Comrade League leaders went to the remote areas of east Bengal villages with a view to mobilize the peasants against the exploitation of the zamindars and mahajans.⁴⁹ Their entire scheme of work took a crucial turn when civil disobedience programmes of the Congress attained some currency in Bengal countryside. It was this period when the militancy revolutionaries like the Yugantar, Anushilan and other groups posed a treat to the government and the political understanding between radical Congress leaders and the communists caused headache for the government specially in the East Bengal countryside.⁵⁰ Here the common peasants indifferent places openly discarded communism, and the local leaders openly encouraged as the government officials and zamindars suspected, a kind of 'non payment complex' among the peasants particularly in the areas where the Hindu zamindars were predominant.⁵¹ It was alleged that the communists by taking advantage of the general economic crisis after the great Depression were taking recourse to various ways, either in mass meetings or in secret conclaves by which people in general, peasants and cultivators, specially Mohammedans are asked to make a common cause against moneylenders, traders and land lords. The local market which is owned by the local zamindars been boycottedgeneral foodstuffs are not so easily available as before.'⁵²

It was resulted in a polarization of the rural population into the tenants and rent receivers. But these efforts did not prove to be beneficial for a political party because the non payment movement actually remained as an economic issue in the early 1930s⁵³ Before the Congress could play a positive role in this respect, the peasant leaders successfully put forward some radical economic programmes on class line. In some cases the reluctant leaders were pushed forward by the peasants from bellow or some times the more enterprising leaders motivated the peasants from above. The activities of the Young Comrade League fell into the second category although the peasant response was not at all same in different places. The social background of the leaders had played a crucial role in this situation⁵⁴ Most of the Young Comrade League workers like Sudhanshu Adhikari, Pramatha Bhoumik, Bishnu Adhikari, Nagen Sarkar, Moni Singh, PramathaGupta, and Nirad Chakrabiurty etc represented the high caste Hindus who had to work mostly among poor tribal and Muslim peasants. ⁵⁵Despite a kind of apathy towards the Congress, these local level leaders were quick to realise the importance of the Civil Disobedience movement in Bengal. They did not hesitate to ally with the Congress left wing and even with the official Congress workers for an easy going of the Civil Disobedience movement in different areas of east Bengal countryside.⁵⁶ Such a combination was to being effective as long as it coincided with the discontents and the aspirations of the peasants. But these leaders did not realize the actual important of class politics in this situation because it was understood either in narrow economic terms (it was to provide some new economic benefits or to secure the existing ones) or in a mere constitutional terms (it was to provide sole legislative facilities). Such an understanding

arrested the scopes for a wide spread political struggle (not in the name of 'class' only) based on an ideology if nota theory. The minor communist parties and other radical forces failed to bridge the gaps between narrow economic struggles and the broad socio political struggles demanding a total transformation of peasant consciousness.⁵⁷ It was evident from the Kishoreganj Riot of early 30s in Maymansingh.⁵⁸ Since 1929 the Young Comrade League leaders had developed an anti *mahajan* sentiment among the poor peasants there. The credit of convincing the peasants also went to poor Muslim singer cum peasant, Abdul Jalil whose compositions moved the peasants in support of the Young Comrade League leaders.⁵⁹ Despite a numbers of limitations like government repression and others, these leaders had left no scope to organize these peasants on pure class line. Even one Sangrami Krisak Bahini was formed with the rebel peasants of Pakunia and Hosennpur areas. It was a combined effort by the leaders like Wali Nawaz, Nagen Sarkar, Khondakar Dalu Mia and HatemAli.⁶⁰ Surprisingly the peasants first attacked a Hindu moneylender of Pakundia without being properly directed by the leaders, soon they looted shops and houses belonging to both Hindu and Muslim ,moneylenders.⁶¹ Their next target was a Hindu moneylender cum talukdar Krishna Chndra Roy, who was brutally murmured after a short confrontation.⁶² Everywhere the indebt peasants wanted to destroy the debt deeds to evade payment while the poor peasant took interest in looting the property of these rich mahajans and talukdars. ⁶³A good number of historical account has been written on the nature of the Kishoreganj Riot including the most balanced one by Sugata Bose.⁶⁴ Definitely the rupture of rural credit and the subsequent change in class power created the possibilities for new bond between the

peasants on religious line, ⁶⁵ but why the movement so quickly took a communal turn was an issue likely to be answered within the so called theory of government repression and the arrest of the leaders at the high time of the movement. What was a non communal peasant movement on economic terms, now turned into a communal riot by simply agencifying some outer elements like the *mullahas* and *maulavis*.⁶⁶ These elements had intense influence over the peasants but one should not simply accuse them for the communal twist in Kishoreganj. Here the movement was initiated by the communists, carried on by the peasants leaders and was taken into control by the communalist politicians including some quasi political groups like the Krisak Samities or the Anjuman-I Islamias.⁶⁷ The Young Comrade League failed to sustain the spirit of a peasant insurrection in Kishoreganj and ultimately a serious ambiguity emerged regarding the objectives and motives of the participants. Apart from the maulvis, a section of the Congress and Hindu Mahasabha activists also aggravated the situation in Kishoreganj.⁶⁸ The disturbances throughout the central and north western east Bengal were characterized in terms of a Hindu victim hood. The immured works of the Young Comrade league failed to check such tendencies from the inception. Here laid their lack of understanding of the importance of the struggle to be fought both on the terrain of ideology and practices. It was also evident in the relative adherence to militant revolutionary programmes the Young Comrade leaders had emphasized from the beginning. In spite of educating their cadres for an overall transformation of the peasant consciousness on ideological line these leaders only encouraged an immediate recovery of the peasants from existing anomalies. This limitation also affected their relationship with other political parties. It was evident from the very

short-lived alliance the Young Comrade League made with the Congress left, the radicals and with a section of the local Congress leaders. When the Congress left became busy with the infightings within the rank of the Congress after Gandhi's retreat in 1932, the Young Comrade League leaders were made responsible for the riots and the pro Congress Hindu zamindars placed their demand before the government to ban this party as early as possible.⁶⁹ The Communist Party raised revolutionary peasant slogans before the public to capture public impression in support of the movement. The peasants of Bengal were asked to stay with the militant peasants of Kishoreganj, but all of these efforts were not sufficient for mobilizing the people in great extent because already the nationalist press successfully put forward some contradictory reports on the Kishoreganj incident with an open consent in favour of strong government interference there.

The situation is a serious one and if the authorities do not want the tragic scenes of Dacca to be repeated in Mymensingh they should lose no time in tackling it with firmness and determination.⁷⁰

The Kishoreganj uprising was proved to be a testing ground of the nascent community groups in Bengal. Indeed the arrest of the Young Comrade League leaders soiled the spirit of militancy movement a lot; it could not be denied that this party took the lead in organizing the youth forces into the realm of popular politics of Bengal. The factors of success or defeat were of little value for this phase of communist movement in Bengal, the endeavors and militant spirit of the youth works of this party raised immense hopes and aspirations before the common masses of this province.

The fate of the minor communist parties remained almost same throughout the early 30s. The parties working on the youth and labour front faced the common difficulties. The Bengal youth League came into existence in 1930.⁷¹ In the early years this organization jointly worked with the Bengal Provincial Students' Association –the student wing under the influence of Subhas Chandra Boser. Later this party shifted its allegiance to communism and joined with the Bengal Labour Party. Now, this party truly became one of the advocates of labour interests in Bengal. It supported the strikes of the post and dock workers in Calcutta in 1934 jointly with the Communist Party and the Labour Party.⁷² But in terms of the student politics in Bengal this party could hardly been found to play any constructive role like the All Bengal Students Association (ABSA) or the Bengal Provincial Students Association (BPSA). Apart from observing an 'Unemployed Week' in 19345, the Youth League had contributed nothing important into the political aspirations of the youths.⁷³ The credit pf organizing the youths almost went to another organization called the Chatra Yuba Samsad which worked under the direct control of the Calcutra committee of the Communist Party. Infact these minor communist parties were caught within the same theoretical dogma about Gandhi led mass movements like the CPI. They did not even correlate themselves with the Congress led national moment irrespective of the fact that the Civil Disobedience movement for the first time offered them a wonderful chance to establish an alternative hegemony over the masses. A great amount of their energy was lost for organizing a common anti Gandhi platform like the 'League Against Gandhism' as early as in 1934.⁷⁴ The first rank leaders of the Youth League, Labour party and the Communist Party were involved into this programme. The political

programmes of the Youth league had revealed the strength of its ideals at least for a limited period of time. It was proved that ideological strength was not enough for the success of popular politics because other than ideologies some historical experience was essential for radicalizing the national revolutionary sentiments as well as to politicize the other classes. These parties missed one point that the establishment of a new social order largely depended on the regeneration of the cultural forces so that egalitarian order could be established. Unless and otherwise the youth were made conscious of the very nature of inequality and crisis in the society, be it an economic, casteist or communal, the true ideal of communism would not take root. Most of the minor communist parties hardly paid any attention to wipe out the social divisive forces instead they concentrated mostly on some economic and political demands. The WPP, The Youth League, the Labour Party and others were seen to use the slogans 'Lal Jhanda Ji Jai', 'Inkilab Jindabad', 'Mazdur Kisan Hukumat Kin Jai'⁷⁵ at different occasions but no slogans were raised for fighting the caste prejudice among the workers. These parties even stayed in disarray when aggressive communal speeches were delivered to capture public sentiments both among the workers and the peasants. The slow progress of communalism into the popular political front could be seen also among the rank and file of the peasant workers especially when the Praja Smities were appeared to make their presence felt among the peasants. In a letter (12.2.29) to Muzaffar Ahmed, Hemanta Sarakar from Kusthia informed that.

The work of the peasant conference in progress.....The party of Samsuddin Ahmed is making agitation against us. Rajib Tarafdar made Afsar Maulavi the president of a meeting yesterday and formed the Nadia branch of the Bengal Rayot Conference.

Samsudin and Afsar Maulavi made speeches in the meeting against the peasant conference. In am getting no help from the Hindus here. Besides this a section of the Mohammedans is against us. The Congress party is carrying the propaganda against me.⁷⁶

Internal conflicts and external pressures seemed to have been a regular feature of communist movement of Bengal in this stage. Mistrust and leadership problem had created so many schisms within these parties that the local leaders often asked for inference from the top. In case of the Workers and Peasant Party it was very much frequent. In a letter to Muzaffar Ahmed dated 7th February, 1929, Gopal Basak from Dhakeswari Cotton Mills Workers Union, Dacca may be put here as an example.

All our comrades have got more or less defects and we had in time mercilessly criticized in our meeting and tried sincerely to correct them, it would not have made such misunderstandings and mistrusts with which e are confronted now.Doubts have arisen in my mind with regard to the party...some have gradually secured admittance in our party and they want to drive both myself and you away from it They want to establish their own supremacy by utilizing 'Labour' as a cats paw. I want to have your opinion about them.⁷⁷

Regarding the state of working class strikes, same type of accusations were placed before Muzaffar Ahmed, the chief guiding force of the WPP in Bengal. " When there is actual need for your assistance your party does not seem to be unanimous for help, while certain men are allowed to take big in your party's name with its apparent approval"--- some K. Ghosh informed Ahmed in a letter dated 16th February, 1929.⁷⁸ Most of the minor communist parties met with the same fate of complete breaking down of their internal order and discipline within a short period of time,

however, the parties which arrived on the popular front in the 30s had faced with some greater difficulties than the so-called factionalism of government repressions.

The Communal Award of 1932 brought a change into the class relations in industrial and agrarian sectors. The idea of horizontal alliance between the workers and the peasants on pure class lines was proved to be a myth now because the indemnification of communal tensions opened new channels of political coalition what Bengal had never experienced before. The more communist parties specially the youth parties took a lead in this period because of their comparative open-mindedness and broad outlook. Apart from economic issues, these youth parties had paid attention to some social issues like early marriage, dowry, remarriage of widows, inter caste dining, abolition of casteism, improvement of primary schools etc. They even talked about a model agricultural firm so that the peasants could earn independently.⁷⁹ In most of the youth conferences held in different districts, communist ideas were delivered before the audience besides national issues like complete independence.⁸⁰ Interestingly the Indian Proletarian Revolutionary Party⁸¹ happened to be the only party which realized the importance of Civil Disobedience in India and unlike the CPI it had tried to reap advantages from the spontaneous mass upsurges of 1931 at least in the district level. *Samya* and *Gananayak* were the organ of this party. In the later several revolutionary slogans were published like '*Chasi Majur Shason Pratisthita Hauk* (Let There Be the Rule of the Peasants and the Workers) or *Shreni Sangram Jaiyukta Hauk* (Class struggle be victorious) etc.⁸² The party members were known as *Gananayak* Group.

After a few years of intensive works this party merged with the CPI.⁸³ As an alternative to revolutionary terrorism and Gandhian non violence, one less highlighted Samyaraj Party for a few years made its mark in the popular political arena.⁸⁴ It was resulted from the efforts of the radical section of the Swarajists in Bengal with a WPP connection. From 1928 onwards Samyaraj Party started its action on communist line of violent mass movement in Calcutta. In a letter dated 10th November, 1930 by some Abani Balli (Abani Choudhury according to a secret Government letter no 13/BOI/24-IV) to one unknown recipient, informed that, You know perhaps that since may 1st Niren Sen, Aghore Sen, Badal Ganguli and Sudhin Chakraborty left the WPP and started a people's party along with Miss Pravabati Gupta which had gone into liquidation in two months. Then these people and many others had started a Samyaraj Party which exists till today.⁸⁵

In comparison to the other parties the Samyaraj party was truly militant in nature. Individually this party formed unions among the scavengers, carters, dock workers, jute workers and transport workers and sometimes with the help of the Bengal Labour Party and Bengal Kirti Kisan party---the communist organization of the working class Sikhs in Calcutta.⁸⁶ It was their credit that the Samyaraj Party openly denounced Gandhi and his politics in every political occasion while the other parties failed to show that courage.⁸⁷ It was perhaps the single party which took equal interest in peasant, labour and youth movements. In Mymensingh it had acted as an ally of the Young Comrade League⁸⁸ while in the youth front it had worked with the All Bengal Students Association⁸⁹ and with the Workers League in the labour front.⁹⁰ Irrespective of the fact that this party had never shown any restrictions in cooperating with any of the

existing communist groups, it had always maintained its individual identity from the politics of the Bengal Labour Party, Young Comrade League, Workers' Party of Bengal or the Karkhana Group.⁹¹

On the light of the above discussion it must be pointed out that peasant issues did not get primary attention from most of the minor communist parties barring a few exceptions like the Young Comrade League or the WPP in an extent. Most of these parties got confined ultimately into Calcutta and its suburb lacking a grass route connection with the agrarian politics of rural east Bengal. Here they had to depend either on the local Krisak Samities or on some radical Congress workers. It was only after the adoption of United Front line⁹² that the fate of communist movement had changed in Bengal. In spite of the ban imposed of the 13 minor communist parties and pro communist groups in 1935,⁹³ new possibilities were opened for the communists in this period. However, tactical confusions and political realities in India made the united front line an impossible one in Bengal. The CPI was seen to avoid any clash with the Congress rightists carefully at a time criticizing them for compromising with the imperialists and their Indian agents. The police reports stated that while executing united front policy with the Congress, the CPI secretly carried on the policy of violent revolution as a corollary to the Satyagraha movement of the Congress.⁹⁴ In a province like Bengal where the communists were forced to work under the legal cover of some other parties, the policy of 'exposure through participation' was proved to be vulnerable;. It was stated that. 'The struggle against national reformism will have to be based much more than hitherto the concrete exposure of every national reformist maneuveringson advancing

concrete proposal for the struggle against imperialism as against the conciliatory maneuverings' ⁹⁵At the same time it was urged in the Communist Review that 'there being no other alternative than secret work in Bengal, it would be best to concentrate under the legal cover of the Congress upon the correct work of the party and this would also help in the All India Congress work of the party comrades'.⁹⁶ The real implication of this type of politics was proved to be incomprehensible for the inexperienced communists who had no practical knowledge on how to tackle the challenge of becoming a true communist(entirely on Bolshevik model) at a time making adjustments with existing realities. The political bewilderment of the communists became more acute in the realm of popular politics from late 30s in Bengal.

II

In order to have an understanding of the political language of popular politics it is necessary to check the agrarian issues employed by different minor parties in politicizing rural Bengal after the 'great economic depression'. The crisis in production relations and the emergence of a newly enfranchised rural electorate created some exclusive opportunities for the all existing parties including some new one like the Muslim League or the Krisak Praja Party (hereafter KPP) in the thirties. All of these parties were very much interested in transforming peasant consciousness towards their desired course of action, legitimized by a certain norm of ideology. By sanctioning a huge enlargement of the rural electorate including a rural weightage to the Muslim seats (111 out of 117),the India Act of 1935 ⁹⁷ extended the chances of transforming

peasant consciousness around an ideology of anti urbanism which was successfully exploited in complementing casteist and communal ideologies on the eve of the election of 1937. During this period one question emerged whether the peasants could equally be treated as a 'class' like the workers or if so then how much such notion of a 'peasant class' was viable on its own. The success of party politics in rural Bengal largely depended on how such issues were tackled either by mere constitutionalism or by extreme radicalism because a happy marriage of this two type of politics could at best be employed for organizing the peasants towards systematic class demands. Unfortunately none of the parties were skilled enough to radicalize the agrarian issues under the new constitutional arrangements while providing minimum scopes to the peasants for legitimizing their own consciousness of becoming a class of its own.

It can not be denied that by 1920s the peasantry in Bengal was on the process of emerging as a class and an essential linkage had already been established between the peasants and a more radical type of anti imperialist movement. At the time of the Khilafat movement a new Muslim leadership put forward the demands of a vast section of the peasants in Bengal in their status as tenants or *praja*. Such organized effects culminated into an influential praja movement throughout the decade centering around a good numbers of praja samities all over the east and north Bengal.⁹⁸ The leaders continuously voiced some basic demands like a) reduction of rent b) abolition of illegal exactions c) reduction of interest rate and the d) abolition of the landlord's fee on transfers of ryot's land. The establishment of the Nikhil Banga Kisan

Praja Samity (hereafter NBKPS) in 1929⁹⁹ boosted up the possibilities of an organized praja movement in Bengal. The programmers of the NBKPS emphasized the urgency of abolishing zamindari system and the establishment of the Democratic Self Government.¹⁰⁰ Both of these objectives were of prime importance for the *samity* to capture peasant support as well as to articulate the interests of a new Muslim middle class gaining currency in Bengal after the withdrawal of the Swrajya Party from the arena of legislative politics in late 20s. This new Muslim leadership shared a strong radical sentiment with the communists although their agitations did not find any practical meeting ground except some few occasions because of a basic suspicion that the communists had no sympathy for the Muslims in general. Apart from its 'official distance' from the Congress and the Communists, the praja movement in early thirties could not maintain any separate identity because the Bengali Muslim peasants were found to get available for any real movement, so long the cause remains morally valid. The example of Tippera Krisak Samity could be shown here because in Noakhali Tippera region the Muslim leaders of this *samity* were found to preach the message of 'Bolshevism' among the peasants in a close connection with the Congress.¹⁰¹ However it was generally the Congress left under Subhas Bose which helped the radical leaders of the *samity*¹⁰² in launching non communal militant movements throughout the region in early thirties. It remained perhaps the sole organization which for a considerable period of time sustained the spirit of secular populism in their programmes and activities especially during the anti moneylender and anti landlord movements by 1934. On the other this *samity* could easily be credited for diminishing the line of difference between communism and 'true'

Islam¹⁰³ at least in the level of practice. It was evident from the sense of solidarity what the *samity* supporters shared on a pure class line even as being provoked by other identical appeals. Unfortunately they could not transform such consciousness into an independent class action irrespective of the fact that they had the essential elements including the 'outside' forces which could provide necessary ideology and organization what these peasants were lacking to become a class for its self. But in real place it did not happen. The emergence of the Krisak Praja Party as a faction of the Nikhil Banga Praja Samity (hereafter NBPS) ¹⁰⁴ changed the entire situation by introducing an alternative form of politics simultaneously challenged by some other political variations initiated by the United Muslim Party ¹⁰⁵ and the Muslim League in later years.

In the post Depression era the emergence of a section of prosperous peasants popularly known as the *jotdars* ¹⁰⁶ raised some new possibilities in agrarian Bengal. This section of the peasantry became the prime beneficiaries of the new constitutional arrangements because no other segment of the rural society was in a position to obtain opportunities from these new arrangements.¹⁰⁷ While the rentier and money lending classes were under pressure due to the loss of income and high prices, the poorest section of the peasantry were to fall into extreme misery. The root cause of peasant discontent in the vast region of east Bengal in the 30s could be situated on this background of extreme hardship which left the peasants with no choice but to respond to the call of every political party be it of the communists, the socialists, the nationalists, the Krisak Praja Samities¹⁰⁸ or even the communalists. For this reason the 30s of late colonial Bengal might have been described as one of the most productive

phases in the history of popular politics in terms of constructing new identities for the masses in general and the peasants in particular. This task of constructing new identities or to transform the existing one was done differently by the minor parties working among the peasants. The name of the KPP comes first in this regard because it emerged as the sole political organization which for a considerable period of time captured the imagination of the peasants in an uniform manner so that a sense 'commonness' could have been achieved against the zamindars and moneylenders. However the mechanism of this so-called unity was different from the communists at times. The most common problem encountered by all of the parties remained within the framework of appropriating interlocking identities in the discourse of Muslim peasants. The language of class released possibilities for articulating the dual identities of 'Muslim' and 'peasant' in a same discourse. But in a bid to achieve quick electoral success, this language of class had never been deployed beyond the limits of anti zamindar movements whereas the class identity could at best be employed in the spheres of social transformation at large . On the other it was this intense social engagement which allowed the language of religion a hold over the class affiliation of a Muslim peasant thereby shifting his status into a communal one. Until the foundation of separate organization of the Muslim peasants as a homogeneous unit both of this twin affiliations, as instances showed, were provided with separate rooms at a risk of situational overlapping by one another. The Swarajist ¹⁰⁹ apathy for permitting agency to the peasants in the 20s increased the chances of addressing the issues so far had been treated more or less separately by the individual leaders whether silently or overtly. It was a result of the

maneuverings jointly made by the rich peasants and non cultivating classes that in the mid thirties peasant agitation on class lines were no longer remain a threat for a more confident government which now turned its attention towards the 'constitution oriented politics initiated by the KPP and the United Muslim Party (hereafter UMP). The government infact found this parties a suitable ally against the communist although at the same time it maintained some sort of reservations about the political bodies formed as a 'part of the electoral organization of a political party'.¹¹⁰

The gradual pre-eminence of the KPP over the political arena itself signaled some major shifts in the level of popular polices in agrarian Bengal. The most important one was the ascendancy of one praja identity over other corresponding identities so that the lower strata of the peasantry could at best be identified with the higher echelon of the peasantry within same bracket. The addition of the term 'krisak' before the *Praja* Party in 1936 on the demands of a section of the party¹¹¹ indicated the importance of attracting the lower peasantry so that a homogeneous movement could be organized either by pacifying or by channelising peasant belligerency into a desired course of action. It was an unique unity .Questions may arise why the lower peasants joined with the tenure holders and the propertied peasants in spite of fundamental differences in interests and why even the spirit of militancy could not be sustained in several areas where already the peasants were seen to be moved on class lines.¹¹² In the first instance it may be answered simply that in absence of a well structured class based party, the poor peasants failed to cross the limits set by their immediate patrons while in the

second instance as in case of the Tippera Noakhali region the peasants were bamboozled by the camouflage of their immediate patrons who reached directly to the peasants with radical programmes like abolition of zamindari or other pro peasant legislative measures. It was an unprecedented event in the history of Bengal because the immediate class enemy of a poor peasant took the position of his liberator on virtue of a minor political party which in time emerged as one of the major parties of the province like the Congress or the Muslim League a little after.

The political arithmetic of Bengal was changing quickly before the election of 1937. In terms of a new political coalition between the traditional Muslim aristocrats and the prajas mostly representing the well to do jotdars, the KPP appeared first to utilize one for the sake of the other. Both of these sections were eager to achieve electoral success and required the support and protection of the other. But none of these groups were ready to give up an inch for the betterment of the cultivators. Even the radical revolutionary programmes taken by the KPP did not satisfy a majority of the leaders. However it could not be said how far the presence of a good number of radical leaders within the KPP¹¹³ influenced the revolutionary programmes of the party reflected in its election manifesto.¹¹⁴ But an undercurrent of class dynamism and revolutionary radicalism always remained within the party which could have been seen in growing factionalism during the working of the new ministry after election. This radical spirit of the party had never relieved the Muslim aristocracy and a section of the praja leaders although the KPP in reality did not bother about a through change of the existing society on socialist structure. With a mixed representation from different

strata of rural society, the KPP emerged as the meeting point of different interests. The Election Board ¹¹⁴ of the party was constituted in a manner that both the progressive middle class and conservative landed class could get a chance to accommodate the agrarian issues in their respective language of politics. But it was a risky attempt because they had hardly anything in common with the lower peasantry except strong abhorrence against the Hindu landed interests. Definitely there were some leaders like Shamsuddin Ahmed of or Abdul Karim ¹¹⁵ who seriously cared for the peasants but the majority of the leaders did not have a predetermined principle and a clear vision of their programmes. It was true for the entire praja movement in Bengal. A numbers of conflicting interests had never make it free from mutual suspicion and even the erstwhile veteran leaders like Akram Khan, Abdul Momin, H.S Suhrawardy Abdul Hamid, Rajibuddin Tarafdar, Tamizuddin Khan and others preferred to refrain from joining the KPP in 1936 and continued with the Praja Samity. It proved to be fatal for the movement itself because within a few months these people joined a new party ¹¹⁶ which had little to do with the 'krisak praja' politics in Bengal.

In this regard one point should be mentioned that the main allegation brought against the KPP was that of its Congress and communist connection which had less in common with the *Muslim interest in Bengal. The KPP was alleged for its open adherence to Congress and secret connection with the communists in several public statements made by Moulana Akram Khan. ¹¹⁷ Khan and his associates wanted the Praja Samity to become a 'non communal Muslim origination' in a fashion the Congress was working as a 'non communal Hindu organization'. ¹¹⁸ But

such a tactics of 'non communal communalism' did not work for KPP because the issue of Muslim solidarity remained as a 'false cry' ¹¹⁹ for the party which was to simultaneously with the Congress and the communists in different levels of popular mobilizations. As long as the KPP worked on pure economic lines, it had to face the charges of being a pro Hindu, pro Congress and pro communist organization. Interestingly the UMP openly alleged the KPP for advocating class struggle before election ¹²⁰ while the later had yet to confirm the different notions of class between whom a true economic war could be fought. However all of these allegations were provided with an anti Muslim overtone because neither the Congress nor the Communists, according to the anti Haq faction were sympathetic with the cause of the Muslims. The merger of this faction with the UMP in 1936 forced the KPP to take up some new challenges which had nothing to do with its basic programmes. An 'unnecessary' but explicit question of Muslim solidarity was put before this party there by shattering every alternative possibility what the KPP could offer for the poor peasantry of Bengal. Right from its inception the UMP tried to brand KPP not 'a purely Muslim organization' ¹²¹. The urban based landed aristocrats of the UMP had the blessings of the Dacca Nawabs ¹²² and they emerged as the most powerful electoral alliance against KPP. They scored their first success when a section of the *praja* leaders joined them but they failed in the second test when Haq snubbed their proposal of a united struggle. They were left with no other way but to seek help from out side Bengal. These outside elements bought a new twist into the situation when a new business lobby under the guidance M.A Jinnah clamored for Muslim solidarity all over India. A group of non Bengali Muslim businessmen in Calcutta became active

simultaneously. From the beginning these people tried to assert that only Muslims could look after the interests of their fellow Muslims. They even demanded that the government should only recognize communal trade unions¹²³ and the Muslim League should be entertained with the capitalists in the official level for every important economic decision¹²⁴. In Bengal this group formed their own platform' the Majlis Party before election and began to manipulate other parties like the UMP or the Bengal Provincial Muslim League (hereafter BPML) on the line of all India Muslim solidarity over the provincial issues.¹²⁵ But they did not get the success overnight. Not only they failed to convince Haq on the question of getting into the League after a short but dramatic phase of mutual consensus, the BPML now appeared hostile to the Muslim League Parliamentary Board. The BPML which had hitherto been remained defunct and isolated now came under the influence of some the *praja* leaders who were holding different posts in the BPML at the same time.¹²⁶ On the question of enhancing the power and prestige of the All India Muslim League ((hereafter AIML) in Bengal one letter dated 4th December, 1936, by S. Suhrawardy to Jinnah could be mentioned. On the eve of the election he wrote:

I do think the question of the Bengal Presidency Muslim League should be taken in hand.....Nevertheless it is of importance for the future maintenance of the party. Unless we have our sort in a vast organization we cannot maintain the party together. We must have branches everywhere so that party opinion will compel the members to abide by their pledges. It is not possible to have an organization of the Parliamentary Board in any logical form with a hostile Bengal Presidency Muslim League running side by side.....It is necessary for you therefore to put the finishing touch and start afresh.....¹²⁷

Within a few months after the election Suhrawardy again paid his concern that,

The necessity for having Moslem organization is so imperative that I am afraid we shall have to take up the work soon. If you want to run the League here, we are prepared to assist but if you are really lukewarm about it and do not very much care whether we should run the League here or not, please let me know so that we can start our own separate organizationI would of course like to point out to you that the present condition of the League is undemocratic and the future body should not have a subscription of more than four *annas* a year.¹²⁸

But a careful Jinnah had never taken any hasty decision regarding Bengal. He did not even trust Suhrawardy like the non Bengali trading community of Calcutta. Among the twenty members committee appointed for conveying a provincial branch of the League, six were from the business community and four were from Dhaka Nawab family. Surprisingly Suhrawardy was missing while Ispahani and Khawaja Nuruddin were included into the committee.¹²⁹ This trend clearly indicated the pattern of politics the Muslim League was going to play for Bengal. It also set some other problems before the Bengali Muslims. The issue of Bengali vs. non Bengali Muslim identity remained as one such problem among them even after the birth of Pakistan. They were forced to solve another puzzle when they were asked to become a true Indian and a true Muslim at the same time. Although the gradual but successful mobilization of the ML after election solved the problem of identifying the true enemy for the time, the Bengali Muslims hardly get any safety or security from the 'invisible' enemies working in and outside the community. The common masses specially the peasant and the laborers

became the worst sufferers of competing loyalties and fragmentary nature of politics in post election years. They were pushed into the background of extreme bewilderment when a KPP League entente was made for the sake of administering Bengal. This entente emerged to decide the fate of the millions as a situational need and such adjustments, as it was proved earlier, could not ripe any fruitful result for the overall improvement of the population.

The election manifesto of different parties revealed some interesting points in terms of popular political demands. Not only the KPP's 14 point manifesto stood close to that of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee (hereafter BPCC) and in general its agrarian programmes received heartiest support from the Congress left. The outlawed communists, the Kisan Sabha¹³⁰ leaders, the trade unionists and the pro communist labour leaders tried to use the platform of KPP for their own political benefits.

Keeping in view the above situation , the sub regional variations of agrarian politics in east Bengal required a special mention. Parallely with the KPP, the pro communist Kisan Samities evolved a kind of predominance over the peasantry specially in the regions of Tippera, Noakhali and Mymensingh .¹³¹ However under the policy of 'united front', it remained quite difficult to differentiate between the CSP, CPI, Kisan Sabha and the Congress. They were seen to work sometimes from one platform. The Praja Party dissidents also made a common ground of interests with the CPI and the Congress. The class consciousness of the peasantry in several time came to be identified with the 'no rent' movements under the Congress while in other time the non Congress

peasant movements reflected the sense of belonging among the peasants under communist influence. Here the peasantry was not very fragmented and some common set of interests bounded them together.¹³² In fact in mid thirties neither the Congress nor the CPI had two many alternatives in regard to their political commitments. Although the Congress attitude towards the tenancy legislations (as in case of the Tenancy Amendment Act of 1928)¹³³ smashed up its repute to greater extent in the past, now it turned towards organizing class based movements of the peasants against their Hindu masters. One should not see it as a political benevolence on the part of the Congress rather the situational compulsions forced the party into the tide of organized peasant movements on class lines. The CPI preferred Congress to work with at a time when the official banning of the party disturbed its general course of action for a long period of time. But for the Congress the task of recovering its image did not become an easy one. In early thirties the Congress was closely connected with the local Krisak Samities in the Tippera region.¹³⁴ The wave of Civil Disobedience movement attracted a large numbers of Muslim peasants into the fold of the Congress and the no payment campaign of the local Krisak Samities stirred up their expectations to a high extent. Keeping in view the arguments of Sugata Bose,¹³⁵ it could be said that with the rupture of rural credit in the aftermath of the Great Depression of the 1930s, the social equilibrium in east Bengal countryside was torn apart because the previous dependence of small peasant economy on the talukdar and *mahajan*¹³⁶ was lost. The scarcity of credit in the post Depression period ended the justification for further repression from the part of the mahajans and automatically the anti mahajan grievances turned into violent movements in different areas.

The spirit of the Krisak Samities received considerable strength and vigor from the anti *mahajan* sentiments of the peasants in Tippera Noakhali region. But the situation took a hasty turn when the Krisak Samities were drawn into the platform of electoral politics after 1935, factional rivalry and ideological differences grew at large within the Samities as an indivisible part of the new system. Ashrafuddin Choudhury, one of the leader of the krisaks Samities in Tippera had a strong connection with the Congress while Ashimudin Ahmed developed a relation with the communists.¹³⁷ Ashimuddin and his associate Yakub Ali were more interested in organizing the peasants on pure class line and the former defeated zamindar Faroqui in the Tippera Central Constituency in the election of 1937.¹³⁸ Before the assembly election the Krisak Samities of these regions either had a Congress allegiance or had sympathy for the communists. The KPP in the meantime had tried to give an impression of unity to the Krisak Samities but Fazlul Hun's pro Congress inclination did not make all the leaders satisfied. Ghulam Sarwar of the Noakhali Krisak Samity openly criticized Huq and his party for their adherence to the Congress.¹³⁹ What was surprising that Sarwar conveyed his desire for making an electoral alliance with the UMP which had nothing to do with the cause of the peasants.¹⁴⁰ The ascendancy of Ghulam Sarwar in the Krisak Samity signified the influence of the non peasant elements into the movements because Sarwar himself was an eminent pir of that region. He was elected in the assembly on Krisak Samity ticket from Noakhali.¹⁴¹ It indicated the Congress failure to get the support of the Muslim masses in that region as well as the efficacy of non Congress and non communist language of peasant politics in spite of a Samity – Communist connection in the region in general. The understanding

between one non cultivating group like the rural *ashraf*, *maulavis*, and *pirs* with the rent collecting Muslim jotdars was appropriated into the political language of Islam and the traditional Islamic influence in Noakhali ¹⁴² worked for its success in mid thirties. After the election what became too much interesting was the said involbment of some pro communist Krisak leaders into violent acts against the Hindu mahajans with the help of Muslim communal leaders. ¹⁴³

Keeping in view the natural pattern of Hindu zamindar-mahajan relation with the Muslim peasants, it becomes difficult to make out the real limits of communal violence and economic movements in rural Bengal particularly when the non communal political forces remain at stake for different reasons. This non communal pro peasant forces might have become one determining factor in either neutralizing or subduing the communal forces in rural Bengal but as in case of Noakhali Tippera region they were kept in a state of extreme vulnerability right from their appearance into the domain of electoral politics. ¹⁴⁴ The Congress bonding with the Krisak Samity lost its charm on account of the decision taken by the high command on the issue of forming a coalition government with Huq. ¹⁴⁵ It was in fact a great loss for the non communal forces when Huq himself officially joined the Muslim League. Such a decision was proved to be frustrating for the fate of the non communal forces in Bengal including the KPP. The peasants in general were least bothered about the nature of party manipulations in the top. In a stratified society of rural east Bengal the peasants were more attached with their factional patrons and such ties evolved conflicts in different levels of horizontal or vertical alliances of the agrarian society. In this situation peasant mobilization by

outer forces was not at all easy unless the local patrons develop a kind of understanding with the outer elements on the basis of practical necessity. In several occasions it was noticed that the outsiders successfully made their way into the peasant society with the help of their local allies be it the religious leaders, the rural *ashrafs* or even the immediate patron of a lower peasant.¹⁴⁶ The strong economic bonding between the poor peasants and their immediate patron not only restricted the former to get a clear conception of their position as a class different from the upper peasants in terms of immediate economic interests and distant political objectives. The KPP appealed most to the upper echelon of the peasantry because the idea of doing away with the zamindari system simply mesmerized them. Its revolutionary programmes aroused great amount of expectations among the upper strata of the peasantry specially the tenants or Praja of the revenue collecting zamindars. It was this section which not only weakened the class consciousness of their immediate clients i.e. the lower peasants but also made a common ground of interests with the lower peasants against the Hindu zamindars by simply exploiting religion as an ideology for legitimizing their action. If one could explore the revolutionary character of the lower peasants under organized and independent class action, it would be the communists but a great range of misconceptions regarding the socio political atmosphere of rural east Bengal arrested their growth as an independent self sufficient party in mid thirties. The other option left before the lower peasants was the Congress which was failed to devote its fullest strength, as was seen in case of Noakhali, in employing even its own supporters like Ashrafuddin in wide spread economic movements.¹⁴⁷

In the regions where an exploiting Hindu *zamindar* was prominent the peasants could easily be moved on class lines.¹⁴⁸ Here the pro communist and Congresses *Krisak Samitis* came to an understanding with the KPP before election while in some other areas the KPP had to take the support of the Namasudra peasants.¹⁴⁹ KPP's commitment to the abolition of the Permanent Settlement without compensation definitely had some impact in the *zamindari* areas but it could not be said that how far the illiterate poor got impressed. In fact the manifestos were published to impress the educated middle class who had an important role to play for mobilizing popular opinion. For the average masses in east Bengal the election was nothing more than a 'fun show' which might have aroused some excitement against the *zamindari* and *mahajani* exploitations.¹⁵⁰ But such an excitement did not become a motivating spirit for the voters to cast his vote against the *zamindar*. They were greatly moved by the personal charisma of a leader rather than the allegiance to the party politics because none of the parties had a solid organizational base among every section of the populace. It could be seen in case of the schedule caste seats.¹⁵¹ In spite of a strong bonding with the anti *zamindari* stand of the KPP (most of the *zamindars* were caste Hindus), these section more or less remained indifferent to the party because the KPP did not make any methodical attempt to convince the schedule caste voters due to the absence of a grassroots organization and a comprehensive plan. Interestingly the party did not even dare to contest the schedule caste seats while the Congress did not put any candidate in the Muslim constituencies¹⁵². A very interesting picture comes out of these calculations that a secret understanding had already been made between the two on the question of political expediency.¹⁵³ But in case of the commitments made before the election a

clear difference could be noticed in terms of radical land reforms. Due to the interest of the landlords (the main support base of the Congress) the BPCC talked about a general modification of the land tenure system and one can find a similar tone in the ML's Manifesto which promised to make some constitutional measures to eradicate the evils of the Permanent Settlement and ,if possible , to make a proper replacement of the system.¹⁵⁴None of these major parties were ready to let down its landed aristocrats, however, the suggestions offered by the ML seemed to be more rational than that of the BPCC or the KPP.

It may be mentioned here that question of the depressed class did not get a formal consideration from any of the minor political organization. They were either hesitant or reluctant to tackle the issue separately although the All India Congress Committee tried to incorporate the subject into its official programmes in several occasions. The so called 'depressed class' leaders hardly paid any serious attention to the problems of the under-*rai*yats and *adhiars* after Depression because most of these leaders who were rich peasants themselves found the new constitutional opportunities, according to Rajbanshi leader Upendranath Barman, more lucrative for their own financial benefits.¹⁵⁵ On the other the urban middle class leadership of the 'depressed class' who had hitherto been indifferent to organizational work , became more and more conscious about the peasant electorate on the eve of the election because the new constitutional arrangements promised a numbers of concessions which these leaders were looking for a long period of time. It was the high time for other parties and political organizations too to incorporate the lower caste masses into their fold or at least into the mainstream political arena but not a single party

showed such sense of political benevolence before election. One can find the role of the KPP more astounding than others. In spite of being a party for the peasants irrespective of caste and creed, the KPP did not take the risk of disturbing its actual support base i.e. the rich peasantry at any cost. On the other its open reluctance for contesting the schedule caste seats stipulated its anxiety for keeping up its Muslim support base intact. It seemed that the KPP was bound to contest only the Muslim seats unless it would have been difficult for it to counter the assertion that the interest of the Muslims could only be protected by the ML in Bengal. One can see here a kind of situational adjustment on the part of the KPP what was proved to be unfortunate for the development of quality politics in Bengal.

The Congress Socialist Party (hereafter CSP) or the CPI could have been another alternative for the low caste peasantry. Due to the restrictions on it the communist parties¹⁵⁶ could not move freely among the peasants and they had to take recourse of either one or two of the other existing parties. In the early thirties the Young Comrade League did some serious organizational work among the peasants in Mymansingh, Dhaka, Khulna, Maldah and Rajshahi on communist line¹⁵⁷ and later the *Krisak Samities* organized movements in different areas of east Bengal under strong influence of the communists.¹⁵⁸ Before the assembly election in 1937 the CSP and many communist workers under the banner of the Congress went on door to door campaigning among the lower class peasantry.¹⁵⁹ But it may be noted in this connection that the CPI had never recognized the *praja* movement as original peasant movement rather they branded it as a *jotdar - talukar* movement.¹⁶⁰ they hoped for organizing movements by the peasants themselves not by the vested interests. For this reason the

KPP never welcomed the communists into the rank and file of the party and always took even a deaf ear to the criticisms of its radical section at the time of enjoying the ministerial power.¹⁶¹ The Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha (hereafter BPKS) with a good number of communists and socialists emerged as the most viable alternative to the sectarian politics of the caste associations and the elite oriented movements of the Congress in early 1937.¹⁶² In the Comilla session of the All India *Kisan Sabha* (11th to 14th May 1938) in Bengal only 34,000 representatives came from the province and Kamini Kumar Dutta, a lawyer by profession chaired the Reception Committee.¹⁶³ The most interesting observation which came out of this session was on the issue of the agricultural labourers. Most of them belonged to the lower castes and in Bengal their condition was really serious than the other segments of the peasantry. In his presidential speech Swami Sahajananda stated,

Of late some people have begun a tirade against the Kisan Sabha in the name of the agricultural labourers. According to them *kisans* are exploiters. Their object is not so much to serve them as to flirt with *zamindars* who are common enemy of both *kisans* and *khet mazdoors*.....The attempt to wean away agricultural labourers from the Kisan Sabha is ruinous.....The attitude of the Kisan Sabha towards the *khet mazdoors* has so far been that the *kisans* should count them as their kith and kin, treat them accordingly and give them living wage to the best of their capacity....The Sabha believes that a revolution is accomplished and sustained only by the lower classes of society.¹⁶⁴

A kind of urgency could be traced from the part of the leadership here to convince the agricultural laborers as well as to make the *kisans* aware about the duties towards their class allies. Side by side the *kisans* were asked to be alert about the vested interests that had been instructed to

spoil peasant unity forever. The allegations were appeared to put against the Congress because in Bihar a rival *Khetihar Mazdoor Sangh*¹⁶⁵ had already been organized under the direction of some Congress leaders like Rajendra Prasad. The necessity of providing political agency to the agricultural labourers was heard for the first time from the platform of the Kisan Sabha in 1938 and it exposed the limits of the minor parties which did not show any exigency for redressing this issue. Even the classification of the agricultural labourers as landless peasants and a subtle politicization of the subject completed one very important task up till then been ignored by the others. In addition the Swamiji stated,

The small peasants are the backbone of the *Kisan Sabha*. The *khet mazdoors* are after all landless *kisans*. Those who had lands yesterday have none today and those who have them today will lose tomorrow, and thus, while possessed of lands, they are *kisans*, and deprived of them, we call them *khet mazdoors*.¹⁶⁶

In the election of 1937 the Kisan Sabha contested only in Tippera and Noakhali and in the other districts supported either the Congress or the KPP candidates. It was nothing but an adjustment because none of these parties were compatible with the aims and objective of the Kisan Sabha. The programmes of the KPP definitely attracted the Sabha for the time but a little after it was proved to be a mistake. In Bengal the Sabha always worked as a supportive power of either of the Congress or the Communists. On the one hand it lacked an independent outlook and on the other the organizational weakness messed up its appeal among the vast section of east Bengal peasantry.¹⁶⁷ It was seen that in the initial years with a membership around 50,000 (by 1938-39) the Kisan Sabha movement failed to sustain any deep-rooted impression among the

peasants mainly for its organizational weakness. As far as the east Bengal peasantry was concerned, the *Sabha* did not provide anything unconventional because the demand for *zamindari* abolition, redistribution of land etc had already been raised by other parties. What was really exclusive in their programmes was the observation of memorable 'Days' like 'May Day', 'Debt Cancellation Day', 'Kisan Day', 'Legalization of the Communist Party Day', 'China Day' etc all over the province.¹⁶⁸ Such type of programmes was organized so that the Bengali peasants could identify themselves with the peasant interest all over India and abroad. But it could not be said that to what extent the Bengali peasants were able to identify themselves with the novelty of that subject because the election results clearly reflected that for the Bengali peasants the choice was really very limited. In general it was only the ideology of anti imperialism which could form an agreement between the different strata of the peasantry that was separated otherwise on the basis of additional identities. But unless the notion of Indianans could not be established, such type of agreement could not be at work properly. For the success of this process an overall socio economic change was necessary. It could be asked then how far the supposed 'elite' organizations like the Kisan Sabha was dedicated for this cause. The constraints of situation arrested the growth of this organization to be a platform for transmitting the anti imperialist consciousness, if not national consciousness, among all categories of the peasants. In spite of the high-sounding official speeches delivered before an educated audience by some intellectual speakers, the agricultural labourers remained more or less absent from the rank of the Kisan Sabha throughout the province. It could not be said that they were obsessed with

those peasants with some considerable land rather it could be said that a fear of alienation always enforced the Kisan Sabha leaders to maintain some distance from the so-called 'minorities' of the bulk of the peasantry. It included the poorest section of the peasantry mostly belonging to the lower caste share croppers, agricultural laborers etc – equally exploited by the zaminders; well to do peasants and the middle peasants. In general the communists were more worried with those issues that were of concern to greatest section of the peasantry. The demand for reduction of existing taxes, eradication of illegal ceases, abolition of the zamindari system were among those popular issues which were to fetch benefits to every section of the peasants.

In this connection it must be pointed out that the people who assembled under the auspicious of the Kisan Sabha had little in common in terms of class base of the party. Perhaps one sense of disappointment with the Gandhian policy of agrarian politics always brought them together in spite of ideological or methodical differences.¹⁶⁹ As an example the stands taken by the CSP and the CPI could be pointed out respectively. The later put more emphasis on the political aspects of agrarian economy while the former was more interested in the economic aspects along. Grass root political works were basically done by the CPI because the CSP did not have an organizational strength like the CPI and it had been seen to work from the top.¹⁷⁰ The imperceptible but decipherable presence of Gandhi never made the Kisan Sabha free from ambiguities over communism and its open fascination for the leadership from the well to do peasants fetched little response from the poorer section of the peasants. It was only after 1940 when the CPI established its full control

over the party, the class outlook of the party took a quick shift.¹⁷¹ It was visible in the neo popular trends of agrarian politics in the years before partition. But the ideological confusion of the CPI and the CSP over the questions of defining agrarian social structure and of providing actual agencies to the social classes did not come to an end even in the last few years before the partition of the province.¹⁷²

The 1937 election results brought out a numbers of new features in the political scene of Bengal. The most important was the gradual replacement of the minor political parties by the major ones. The shift of the KPP from being a minor party to a party with ministerial power could be acknowledged as one of the striking developments in late 30s. The detachment of the Congress from active legislative affairs so long had made the minor parties an indispensable element of Bengal politics. As soon as the Congress and the Muslim League i.e. the two major parties stepped into the politics of Bengal, the dominance of the minor parties was on dwindling as a whole. The basic difference between the historians on the actual strength of a party after election indicated the nature of uncertainty and confusion among the parties.¹⁷³ Many candidates did not even disclose their party identity while some others were included into a party after the submission of the nomination papers independently. The results clearly showed that none of the parties would emerge as the sole representative of any of the religious communities in Bengal. It became evident only that the League had greater influence on the urban constituencies while the KPP on the rural seats. It was not certain whether the call for Islamic unity influenced the Muslim voters in the urban areas or any other consideration made them interested for the

League. Apparently it could be said that for the middle class Muslims the election was proved to be the idea option or securing their economic and professional interests against the Hindus and they thought the League to become the most suitable party for that purpose. On the other the non Bengali Muslims were more attracted towards the all India character of the League which had promised for the protection of Muslim interests specially the business interests of the Muslims all over the country. Surprisingly the Congress did not get all Hindu votes rather the Schedule castes formed their own Schedule Caste Party to get into the new ministry. In the general seats the Congress had a comparatively easy fight because the KPP did not contest it and the Congress faced either the Hindu Sabha or some independents as opponents. But such pre poll understanding between the Congress and the KPP brought nothing fruitful for Bengal because they failed to arrive at an agreement on the question of forming a coalition ministry. Here the role of the left wing parties remained crucial. Neither the CSP nor the communists or the Radical Democrats favored the idea of accepting office unless the government would release the political prisoner's unconditionay.¹⁷⁴ Niharendu Dutta Majumar, Krishnbinod Roy and other socialists from Bengal were supported by the all India authority on this issue.¹⁷⁵

A good numbers of reasons were shown for not forming a KPP Congress coalition ministry by the Congress leadership in Bengal. The Congress did not bent a bit on the question of giving priority to the issue of releasing political prisoners before any other programmes while for the KPP the economic emancipation of the peasantry became the first necessity. Apart from these technical reasons some other 'non official'

reasons were present on the background of the whole question. It became more evident from the letters exchanged between Gandhi and Subhas Bose in 1938 on the question of joining the KPP ministry and ousting the League from office. Here Sri Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, a friend of Gandhi and the finance minister of the coalition ministry emerged as one of the mischievous elements. He stuck to office at a time when most of the BPCC leaders wanted him to get away from the 'communal'- 'reactionary' ministry. But the decisions on Bengal were taken already by Gandhi and his friend elsewhere before Bose and others could do something. In a reply letter to Gandhi in 21 December, 1938, Bose stated,

I do not know what has happened since I left Wardha to make you alter your view so completely that you now write- 'I am more than ever convinced that we should not aim at ousting the ministry etc.' The papers say that after I left Wardha Sjt N.R. Sarkar, Sjt G.D Birla and Moulana Azad Sahib have seen you. Evidently you have altered your (view?) after talking to them. The position therefore, is that you attach more value and importance to the views of those three gentlemen than to the views of those who are responsible for running the Congress organization in Bengal.¹⁷⁶ He again mentioned that,

As long last early in November Sjt. Nalini Sarkar had been convinced that he should resign from the Haq ministry..... What made him renege from the position within one week, I do not know. Your influence is going to be used not to get him to stick to office at a time when even his closest friends want him to get out of the Haq ministry. It has astonished me that you did not feel it necessary to even consult me before you arrive at a decision on such a serious matter.¹⁷⁷

In spite of his promises to Bose N R Sarkar did not resign from the KPP League ministry and the possibilities of a KPP Congress coalition went into oblivion. It became obvious from the above letter that G D Birla and

Moulaza Azad had something definite role to play into this entire situation. Moulaza Azad had a strong contention that in the Muslim majority provinces, Muslim ministries should be allowed to continue in office while Gandhi himself did not like the idea of forming coalition ministries.¹⁷⁸ But in case of North Western Frontier Province, Sindh and Assam Congress formed coalition ministries and in case of Bengal Subhas Bose arrived talked about a immediate pull down of the ministry.¹⁷⁹ However in case of Bengal the situation was different. The invisible intrigue of Birla and his Marwari friends of Calcutta remained crucial at this juncture of Bengal's history. The business interest of the non Bengali Hindus might have been at risk if a Congress KPP ministry could bet at office on the basis of Hindu Muslim unity.¹⁸⁰ Such a unity had a tremendous influence of the development of the idea of a Bengali nationalism which had nothing in common with the strong Hindu sentiments the non Bengali business communities were more familiar with.¹⁸¹ Without being falling into dilemma of calling Gandhi 'anti Bengal' and 'Hindu communal', one may see here the link between Gandhi and Birla who at any cost wanted to serve the interest of non Bengali capital in the province. His own Gujrati *bania* origin and his 'saintly' style of politics gave Gandhi a special position in the eyes of the pious Hindu and Jain merchants although it raised the risk of alienating the Muslim businessmen in general.¹⁸² The growing involvement of the Congress with the Gujrati and Marwari business interests not only made it a mere 'Hindu Party' but also spoiled the very chance of establishing a 'secular' understanding with the popular parties in Bengal.

Thus the fate of Bengal was left on the hands of some non Bengali elements against the expectations of the most popular leaders in Bengal. Both Bose and Huq remained as a mere witness because everything was arranged a little before they could hope for something different. Hindu Muslim unity on the basis of common Bengali identity had never been appreciated by the leaders from top and in this regard a striking similarity could be seen between the all India leadership of the Congress and the League. Jinnah and his non Bengali Muslim friends from the landed and commercial circle, as it was proved in numerous occasions, had shared little in common with the Bengali Muslims except some superimposed sentiments like 'Islam in Danger' or the Hindus – 'a common enemy'.¹⁸³ It was these major parties like the Congress and the League which won the ultimate game thereby leaving the minor parties like the KPP a little or no scope to explore the language of popular sentiments in an independent fashion. Here one may find the repetition of the events of 1923 when the hopes for a Hindu Muslim understanding on common Bengali identity was crushed first time by the outer pressures for the sake of some 'other' causes. It became obvious within two years that had the coalition been a reality, Bengal politics could have developed through an alternative channel and it might have opened new scopes for keeping communalism in check.

Out of this overall political development after the assembly election of 1935 what was turned out to be a shock was the gradual shift of the KPP into total oblivion. In the coalition with the League and non Congress Hindus, Fazlul Huq had to incorporate considerable numbers of zamindars because in that situation in the words of Partha Chatterjee, 'this

was the only kind of Ministry Fazlul Huq could make'.¹⁸⁴ Soon after the formation of the cabinet by Huq a voice of dissent stirred up within the KPP on the ground that the Krisak-Praja interest was not represented sufficiently in the new ministry. None of the popular KPP leaders was selected in the ministry except Huq himself and Syed Nauser Ali. Shamsuddin Ahmed, the secretary of the party was excluded from the cabinet due to his ultra radical stand on the popular issues. Even the Governor and his European allies did not give their consent in favour of Shamsuddin.¹⁸⁵ The protest of the Shamsuddin faction led to the formation of one Rebel Praja Party against Huq.¹⁸⁶ A helpless and friendless Huq was put 'on one side of the fence' thereby leaving him at the mercy of the League and his propertied allies.¹⁸⁷ It was seemed that **there would be no escape for Huq but to join the League and accordingly** on 15 October, 1937 Huq joined the League with an assurance of unconditional support to Jinnah. He even declared that he would suggest all the members of the coalition to join the League. It was one of the tragedies Bengal had seen after the death of C R Das.

It was the starting point of the decline of KPP's politics in Bengal. It also marked a sudden shift in popular support from KPP to the Muslim League. However it should not be denied that the radical section of the KPP had some secret link with the communists and these people representing the *Jotdar* interests in the assembly, developed a close connection with the '*krisaks*' in the villages. It was a kind of political dualism because they had never paid attention to the interests of the share croppers and agricultural labourers rather took note of the issues directly related to their class interest like the abolition of Permanent Settlement,

included as the first programme into the election manifesto of the KPP. Abul Mansur Ahmed truly pointed out that '.....Many a KPP leader would have sharply drawn back from the Praja movement had the KPP dared to champion the rights of the share-croppers'.¹⁸⁸ It was also one of the major issues on which the Kisan Sabha differed from the KPP.¹⁸⁹ Far from being a practical opposition, the radical rebel leaders endangered the spirit of populism in Bengal. None of them were truly committed to their position rather were more interested in ministerial power. The acceptance of office by Shamsuddin and Tamizuddin Khan proved it a little later.¹⁹⁰ What they had done actually was a final rupture of the KPP and earned the resentment of the Muslims. As soon as the internal feuds of the KPP came up to the Muslim masses, the non communal secular programmes of the party turned into a false cry before them as a natural corollary of the situation. The need for a major Muslim party grew smoothly instead of a minor party like the KPP hesitant to take the Muslim cause openly. The Muslim mass excitement in Calcutta on the eve of the no confidence motion brought by the rebel group under the banner of one Independent Praja Party¹⁹¹ was an example of Muslim public opinion in favour of the League ministry because already the status of Huq had gone astray in the eyes of his Muslim friends. Everywhere in the capital communal forces were getting aggressive against the KPP dissidents and accused them of giving up to the 'Hindu' Congress.¹⁹² But the non communal forces including the leftists could not take advantage of the situation and remained more or less tactical on that subject. Even when Tamizuddin Khan directly charged the ministry for fostering 'a false and insidious cry of religion in danger',¹⁹³ none of the other parties went for his support. The Congress was thinking in

terms of a prospective coalition with the KPP and the others because the leaders like Sarat Bose did not want to loss a charismatic leader like Huq in near future at any cost. The Congress in Bengal thought of a Congress KPP coalition or a KPP ministry with Congress backing either by diplomatic maneuverings or by tactful negotiations with the KPP and its enigmatic leader. They were least concerned with the all India Congress politics, thinking on a totally different line. The all India leadership had a keen desire for getting back the Muslim masses from the yoke of the League and it would not be possible, they counted, unless the Muslim ministers were guaranteed assurance of the Congress that the interest of the Muslims would best be protected by the Congress than by the League or its European allies. Such a policy had never been welcomed by the Bengal Congress, nor had they been interested for making any common ground with the non Bengali Muslim leaders against the British rather they had a mind to utilize the popular image of Huq to get a easy access to the Muslim masses in rural Bengal. They took prior cognizance on the issue of Bengali nationalism with a mutual assent by Bengali Hindus and Bengali Muslims a long before Jinnah could claim grounds on the Two Nation Theory. Sarat Bose showed great enthusiasm at this point. He reached at some understanding with the Independent Praja Party leader Tamizuddin Khan to unite the radicals.¹⁹⁴ He also pressurized Gandhi to make the Scheduled castes to be in agreement with the Congress against the unpopular measures of the ministry.¹⁹⁵ One Independent Schedule Caste Party was formed in 18th March, 1938 with the backing of the Congress and Jogendranath Mandal, the leader of this party sharply criticized the cabinet as a 'medley of interests, uniting only on the common ground of exploitation of the poor'¹⁹⁶ at the time of the

no confidence debate. However the calculations of the Congress were proved to be wrong because it was already late to take any further decision on the fate of Bengal. The Congress effort to manipulate the KPP members not only embittered the communal situation in and outside the legislature but also transformed the basic character of the coalition ministry. It was left on the mercy of the League which in turn successfully made itself the true representative of the Muslim masses. In its various public statements the League was seen to attract the masses in a way nobody could think it a year before. One such statement clearly brought out the difference between the League and the KPP that,

The Muslim League members of the legislature have remained loyal to the Ministry; they form the majority of the coalition party....with a very few exceptions, they have remained true to their pledge....They have shown that they are the real representatives and the trusted friends of the 'Krisaks' and the 'Prajaks'.¹⁹⁷

Although the Huq ministry scored a great amount of success on the basis the legislative measures, the League within a year had proved itself more competent to make full use of the credit. In fact the twofold identity of Huq both as the president of the Bengal League and the KPP at a time, shattered the least possible image of the later because the very existence of a minor party might have been at risk if it could fail to remain independent out of the control of a major party like the League. In Bengal the All India Muslim League claimed its status as the major Muslim organization at the expense of the KPP. It was the League which urged in January 1937,

'Muslim Voters, Beware! Do you want Congressmen to rule Bengal? If not—Send Fazlul Huq To the Wall: Smash Up the Praja Party.'¹⁹⁸

Just after a year it claimed,

...Now we have decided to work together...Ours a completely common aim and ideal. Mr. Huq is the President of the Krisak Praja Party as well as the League. So , for the greater interest of the community every Muslim should assemble under the banner of the Muslim League.¹⁹⁹

Had Huq not joined the League, the situation might be different in Bengal. But the desertion of most of the KPP members left no choice for Huq but to join the League. Some sources show that the Congress refused Huq for second time when he tried again to come to an agreement with the Congress before joining the League finally.²⁰⁰ The fate of KPP was left at the hands of the two major parties who in time distorted the language of popular politics in Bengal. One must not make Congress solely responsible for such predicaments but they should not even underestimate the political indecisiveness of Huq in this respect. His bewildering statements not only exposed the bankruptcy of his politics but also made the people conscious about his political dualism.²⁰¹ It seemed that he wanted to make KPP a party 'for a purely economic programme' specially when he declared 'A Muslim ,while remaining member of the Praja Party, could well join the League carrying out its political programme'²⁰².But what he did not understand that in new constitutional arrangements it would not be possible for any political party to work only in political or economic grounds. He was not certain that whether in a Muslim majority province like Bengal, the line of difference between the League and the KPP had hardly bear any

justification for a common Muslim either a peasant or a middle class professional. In a province where most of the peasants were Muslim, the issue of their economic emancipation did not go for a clash with the issue of Muslim solidarity and from this point Huq had tried to kill two birds at one stone. He was totally mistaken because in terms of their class composition these two parties could never meet within one historical context. The impending rift between Jinnah and Huq proved it adequately within two years.

The KPP League coalition depended a lot on the support of the Europeans. The later in turn developed a strong bonding with the propertied elites. It was a risky coalition which had paid its greatest concern for arriving at hegemony over the economy and politics in Bengal. As soon as the Hindu *bhadralok* were transformed into a statutory minority in the newly constituted assembly, communal anxieties increased in different fields of professional opportunities. In late 30s popular political dimensions received an immediate impetus when peasant and labour politics arrived in particular historical contexts against the background of a well organized political structure. The KPP emerged as the first political party to grasp the gravity of the situation that its most popular reforms attracted the common masses more than the other minor parties working into the arena of popular politics. The most important popular measures what the new ministry had taken were, the Bengal Tenancy Amendment Act (1938), the Agricultural Debtors' Act (1938), the Moneylender' Act (1940) and the Communal Ratio Rules (1939).²⁰³ The first bill was brought on September 1937 but in face of a strong opposition from the zamindars and the Europeans, the bill was kept in

abeyance for a year. The Maharaja of Burdwan collected the signatures of ten thousand zamindars against the proposal²⁰⁴. Even a Muslim zamindar Sir A H Gaznavi openly asked for a joint action by both Hindu and Muslim zamindars against the bill²⁰⁵. Surprisingly the pro Hindu news papers who supported this agitation, took no notice of the issue when the bill was passed finally.²⁰⁶ The Act ensured the abolition of landlord's transfer fee, their right of preemption, the right to release rent by certificate procedure and the realization of all illegal impositions on the tenants.

It was these popular measures of the Huq government which checked all of the dissenting tendencies in and outside the legislature. The 'rebel' KPP members had attempted to forge unity either with the Congress or with the communists but a KPP-CPI-Congress triumvirate had never been a reality in the rural political arena. In some occasions a CPI-KPP joint movement was launched against the exploiters in the areas of Jessore, Khulna, Bakarganj etc²⁰⁷. But such joint movements did not convert into a longstanding political action. Even the rebel KPP leaders failed to provide any original programme before the masses in spite of their open understanding with the Congress and a secret connection with the communists. The Congress hesitation to take up the peasant's cause and its self imposed restrictions on the left wingers did not encourage the KPP dissidents like Shamsuddin or Nausar Ali to opt for an alliance with this party rather they found the Kisan Sabha more enthusiastic on the popular issues.²⁰⁸ The infiltration of some KPP leaders into the pro communist Kisan Sabha in late 30s proved that the KPP had no longer remained as the most trusted organization of all categories of the

peasants and the pro communist Kisan Sabha actively entered into the front of landless peasants and agricultural labourers. Question may be asked that how far this Kisan Sabha was acceptable to the Muslim peasants in general. The election of 1937 brought out the fact that it was not necessary that the Muslim peasant would only support the Muslim League alone but in the early 40s the Muslim League had almost captured the imagination of the Muslim peasants by completely holding back the other political forces. During this period the communists launched various struggles in support of some other parties but the Muslim peasants at large remained more or less indifferent to the call of the communists. Although one veteran communist leader claimed that,

We had taken the initiative to mobilize the Muslim peasants under the banner of the Kisan Sabha. In some cases we did not fail. There were no riots in the countryside ; a substantial section of the Muslim community even rallied under the Red Flag.....But the points to remember is that, if the communal riots had not spread to the countryside in Bengal ,this was largely because of the part played by the Kisan Sabha and the Communist Party. One can not ignore this.²⁰⁹

However such an opinion should not be taken for granted in all the occasions. In fact the communists took numbers of years to be a monolithic party due to internal and external pressures. Until the 40s the outlawed communists received a few chances to transform the peasant movements into independent class actions. They had to work from the platform of either one of the non communal parties. A numbers of issues other than the popular one diverted their attention from the very beginning. If they could devote their highest form of energy independently only in the popular front, the fate of Bengal would become

different. The post election political developments in Bengal disappointed the communists because there was little likelihood of wining over any of the parties inside the legislature for the support of an anti imperialist programme. 'The New Age' conveyed that,

.....how is the anti Imperialist Movement going to be organized and strengthened inside the legislature.....The Congress is there, in opposition it is true, but it is controlled by the Right—the Praja Party is there but its leadership is capitulating to Imperialism—a few independents belonging to working class or peasant organizations exist, as detached individuals with not very great weight in any of the larger organizations. Who then will take the initiative in putting forward the minimum anti Imperialist platform? Obviously it would to be the job on the INC but the INC is not popular with the Praja Party and the Independents are afraid of losing their identity if they ally with it entirely.²¹⁰

III

In this situation the idea of one united front between the working class, the peasants and the petty bourgeoisie came out as the most suitable alternative before the communists. They also paid a great deal of attention towards the CSP in Bengal so far had been dismissed as 'an insignificant little group of petty -bourgeois intellectuals led by a disreputable set of people, more rightist than the Right.'²¹¹ The historical necessity of the CSP came to be realized on the occasion of organizing the 'left' or the 'progressive elements' to develop the united front between the masses within and outside the Congress with all other radical anti imperialist organizations.²¹² The proposal of a United Front Parliamentary Committee was endorsed by the proposal of a Peoples United Front Conference where, it was expected, the Congress, the

Labour Party, the Krisak Samity the CSP ,the Trade Union Congress ,the Students Federation and if possible the Praja Party would rally the masses in support of the popular demands.²¹³The initial ebullience of the leaders began to get evanesced because of the absence of one minimum programme supported by both the Congress and the KPP. The fundamental difference between these two parties over the economic issues ²¹⁴ messed up the prospects of a united struggle by all the progressive forces. But the idea of left unity had never lost its significance in politics. Already from 1936 the CSP and CPI agreed to work jointly. Under the guidance of P.C Joshi , the journal National Front brought out the draft thesis on 'The National Congress and Working Class' on April 17,1938.It declared,

It would not be possible for the communists to become a political force in the country unless we make a decisive turn in our whole attitude towards the Indian National Congress,.....unifying the entire Left and its socialist core to implement the policy of building up the United National Front on the basis of the National Congress and of which policy we must forward as the most consistent and sincere champions.²¹⁵

Within six months the paper unequivocally proposed the idea of left consolidation with the Congress socialists, Royists, Congress lefts and others so that the left sectarian mistakes could be corrected.²¹⁶ But their mutual disparities could not be surmounted overnight and the idea of left unity remained as an experiment suffering from inner contradictions. From a strategical point of view the CSP opposed the CPI basically on the question of a armed struggle in India. CPI unequivocally professed its faith on violent insurrection²¹⁷ while the CSP strongly condemned it. They adopted peaceful means to reach the goal although such a method

differed from the Gandhian concept of non violence .²¹⁸ The CSP did not want be a shadow of Russia –the single socialist state in the world and never allowed its cadres to develop any extra territorial loyalties like the CPI. CSP's prolonged attachment with the Congress led mass movement did not sanction them to get into the creed of Marxism totally while their basic consensus with the Communists over the ideological matters encouraged them to enter into an agreement with the later.²¹⁹ The CSP leadership even thought about a United Socialist Party with all the anti imperial radical forces²²⁰ so that the leftists could get a common platform to cooperate with the nationalist movement in India. For the success of this party the CSP even dared to allow the communists into the party at its own risk ²²¹ and at the Meerut conference of 1936, advocated the necessity of an united front with all the leftists forces working in the arena of popular politics.²²² The Bengal Labour Party and the Bengal branch of CSP and the Anushilan activists of Bengal reached at a point of mutual understanding ²²³ ,however, the dissident communists like the Royists did not come to an agreement with the CSP or the CPI at any cost.²²⁴ Right from its inception M.N Roy advised the CSP to put more emphasis on the anti imperialist programmes on a Congress line rather than on socialist line. However sincere efforts were made by both of these groups to work jointly at least in the field of trade unions ²²⁵ and up to 1936 they maintained more or less a balanced relation in spite of some alleged disruptionist activities from the part of the Royists.²²⁶ But CSP's open adherence to the official CPI at Meerut not only dissatisfied MN Roy and his group but also widened the breach between the CSP and the Royists to an extent that in 1937 the secretary of the Bengal CSP Gunada Majumdar informed the India authority about the objectivity of Royists

from the rank and file of the CSP in Bengal.²²⁷ It had been seen that the CSP largely depended on the Royists in the local levels and the gradual detachment of the Royists from the CSP helped M.N Roy to form the League of Radical Congressmen at the expense of the CSP.²²⁸ At the beginning Roy perhaps tried to pressurize the official communists by accepting individual membership of the CSP, but the Royists did not have the strength to check any further move of the CSP towards the official CPI. They even failed to convince the CSP on the issue of accepting office after the assembly election of 1935.²²⁹

It is to be mentioned in this situation that the CPI CSP understanding did not prove to be a real one. The non communist elements in the Bengal Labour Party were proved to be problematic for the success of a joint operation.²³⁰ **Already the Labour Party communists and the official Communists clashed in a number of occasions.** At the Bengal Provincial Students' Federation at Khulna in 1938 labour leaders Promode Sen, Biswanath Dubey and others differed with the communists like Biswanath Mukherjee, Salil Sengupta, Sushil Dasgupta and others.²³¹ Socialists like Jyotirmoy Sen, Arun Sengupta and Arun Roychudhury etc were also present in the occasion.²³² The Communists who came from the Labour party were of the opinion that the students should be attracted to the Communist Party while the other group believed in organizing a united mass student movement.²³³ On the other side the apparent intimacy of the CSP and the CPI was proved to be a marriage of convenience. The realities of their relationship went open when M. Masani, the CSP leader, published a booklet called 'Communist Plot against the CSP' in 1938 to expose the 'sinister motives' of the CPI

to take a complete hold over the CSP.²³⁴ The basis of such allegation was a CPI circular called, 'Plan of Work—CSP-9.5.38'.²³⁵ Labour Party leader Niharendu Dutta Majumdar had differences of opinion with the CPI leader Somanath Lahiri on the issue of CSA-CPI unity. The former expressed his resentment against the CSP in a leaflet called 'Labour Party's Reply to Masani's Communist Plot'²³⁶ while the official CPI emphasized the need of CSP-CPI coalition in a leaflet called 'Unite with the CSP again'.²³⁷ However in Bengal, the official CSP did not found a strong footing independently because of the numerical strength of the CPI members in the provincial executive. The communist intimacy with one of the two groups of the Bengal CSP again infused a great degree of misunderstanding within the party itself especially when Gunada Majumdar tendered his resignation in July 1938 owing to the political manipulations done by the communists in favour of the second group under Dr Suresh Chandra Banerjee and Dr Charu Chandra Banerjee.²³⁸ Such disputes were bound to hit the so called unity of the CPI and the CSP because it seemed almost impossible for the communists to be loyal to two political parties at the same time. Side by side the inclusion of the communists into the CSP challenged the very character of CSP as a political party of its own rather it was left open to work as a joint front with the CPI. Nevertheless, the CSP also suffered from a kind of political dualism like the communists. It was a fact that the party did not make itself free from Congress spheres of influence and its concurrent effort to work on both the socialist and anti imperialist fronts was proved to be a failure.²³⁹ Neither the Royists nor the CPI members were satisfied with this move while the CSP's acceptance of the Marxian line as a Gandhian alternative. It moved this party to a point of uncertainty because they

could not free themselves from the charm of Gandhian ideology and unfeasibly tried to attain the very spell of Gandhian appeal with the help of the neo Marxian interpretations. Their attempts to compromise between the Marxists and non Marxists elements into the party were ended into an unconscious indulgence of other leftists to exploit the CSP for their own advantage.²⁴⁰ It was what exactly happened in Bengal. In fact the idea of left unity was appeared to be a false cry under colonial compulsions. No real unity could have been achieved in absence of a well documented political methodology accepted by all the leftist parties irrespective of their ideological differences.

CSP's open commitment to Marxian socialism in the Faizpur Thesis²⁴¹ (adopted by the party in the Third Annual Conference in 1936) turned up the expectations of other leftist forces so far had been lacking essential resources to work independently. Side by side the basic dilemma of the CSP over the Marxist and non Marxist forces into its composition restricted its development to work as a pure Marxist Leninist Party. In this respect the Faizpur Thesis should be viewed as an intellectual effort to reflect an ideological homogeneity at least in the level of decision making.²⁴² Such a commitment, however, was far from being a consistent one, it was proved to be a matter of attraction for the other leftist forces working as 'non conformist' Marxists –the Anushilan converts²⁴³ and the ex revolutionaries of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (hereafter HSRA).²⁴⁴ In spite of their official affiliation to Marxism –Leninism, these people followed an alternative path outside the organizational mechanism of the Comintern and the CPI from a separate platform of action. They developed their own

understanding of the sudden shift of the CPI from 'left sectarianism' to the policy of 'United Front' in 1935 as a mere surrender to the directives of the Communist International without making any proper judgment on the existing class relations in India. This type unity, the Anushilanites thought, would offer the bourgeoisie specially the rightist bourgeoisies a golden chance to make the leftists submit before their will. ²⁴⁵

The Anushilan Marxists introduced separate trends of Marxist politics in India outside the institutional order of the Comintern and the CPI. At the Ramgarh session on the Congress (1940), this political group styled itself as the Revolutionary Socialist Party of India.²⁴⁶ The thesis adopted by this group in 1938 confirmed their ultimate aim and immediate objectives on the background of a proposed socialist state in India by overthrowing the imperial power and ousting the bourgeoisies under the leadership of the proletariat in alliance with the peasantry. ²⁴⁷ In order to transform the Congress into an anti imperialist front, the party members were asked to work inside the Congress as an independent class organization of the peasantry and the labourers so that the bourgeoisie reformist leadership could be isolated from the rank and file of the Congress.

In 1938 the primary question before the Anushilan Marxists was whether to form a separate party or to work through some other party having close resemblance to their ideas and programmes. In absence of sufficient financial resources, they decided to join the CSP- the only alternative left before them except the CPI and the Royists. In the language of Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, Jayprakash Narayan, the CSP leader 'appealed to us not to start a separate party but to join hands with them and thus make the CSP a real All India Revolutionary Socialist Party.Then we took our

final decision with this understanding that for a certain period we would keep our existence separate existence and then merge.²⁴⁸ Tridib Kumar Choudhury, the leader of the Anushilan group informed that about one quarter of the membership of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association including Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee joined the CSP along with almost all the Anushilan members irrespective of their difference of thinking on Marxism.²⁴⁹ Unfortunately within a year the Anushilan Marxists working in the CSP got disappointed due to the political inadequacy of this party and to some extent were forced to form a new party on Marxist Leninist line. This new party as mentioned earlier took the name Revolutionary Socialist Party of India with an objective of establishing a new popular political trend against the very 'disappointed' and 'disguisted',²⁵⁰ politics of the CSP and the 'illusionary' politics of the official CPI in India.²⁵¹ In the Tripuri session of the Congress in 1939, the CPI was seen to come out with full confidence in Gandhian leadership by simply throwing all their revolutionary slogans to the wind. In search of a unity of all the national forces, the CPI now turned towards the magnetic spell of Gandhian leadership and tried its level best to wean over right wing leaders for the sake of a National Front with all the anti imperialist forces be it a bourgeoisie or a proletariat. This shift in their poison could be explained on the background of the mounting danger meeting head-on the Soviet Union. They thought that the communists must do anything to boost up the anti British movement in India so that the enemies of the Socialist fatherland could at least be warned.²⁵² Condemning the stand taken by the CPI, Ajoy Ghosh, the CPI leader asked,

Has not the Tripuri meant the smashing up of the entire Left including the Communists? Were they not obsessed with the ideas of unity and did they not, therefore, try to placate every body and end by placating none? Did they not in their eagerness for unity vacillate at every step, renounce their entire political line and even their fundamental principles? ²⁵³

In late 30s none of the leftist forces were seen to produce a synchronized language of politics because in a numbers of crucial occasions suspicion and mistrust spoiled the very strength of these leftist parties to launch a joint movement. Even though the Congress Socialists, the communists ,the League of Radical Congressmen and the individual leftists cast their vote in favour of Subhas Bose in the post of the Congress President in 1938, the spirit of such unity had lost its significance within a year.²⁵⁴ In search of a national unity, both the CPI and the CSP shattered the prospects of a united movement 1939 even if the decision was not taken unanimously by all the leftist parties working on the popular front in different provinces. After making a close observation over the leftist parties in Bengal, the Intelligence Branch of Bengal informed in 1939 that, the Bengal Labour Party, the League of Radical Congressmen , the Communist League of Soumen Tagore and the official CPI --the well known communist parties were functioning independently with regular 'quarrels over their respective ideologies and methods of organization' ²⁵⁵ In a special note prepared on the communist movement in Bengal, the Intelligence officials particularly pointed out about the separation of the Bengal Labour Party (referred as an appendage to the communist party for trade union organizations) of Niharendu Dutt Majumdar from the CPI in 1939 due to the repeated clashes between Dutt Mazumdar and Muzaffar Ahmed—the leader of the CPI in Bengal.²⁵⁶ conflicts were

further aggravated by the anti communist and anti rightist attitude taken up by Dutt Mazumdar in Tripuri. Although the Bengal Labour Party and the CPI had been working as a single party from 1937 in the industrial, agrarian and student front of politics, they in general lacked the essential stamina to take up the growing challenge of communalism in each and every sphere of popular political front.

The same thing was also true for the Royists in Bengal. The followers of M.N Roy in Bengal devoted their almost energy in their efforts to regain a position for Roy in the Bengal Congress. In spite of his being able to gain a few followers in Calcutta, 24 Parganas and an almost insignificant numbers in Dacca, Barisal, Rangpur and Murshidabad,²⁵⁷ M.N Roy did not achieve a strong foothold as a political party in Bengal. Originally the Royists were interested in the idea of forming a revolutionary working class party but their entire attention was turned towards developing a left nationalist front inside the Congress afterwards. It was from this position that he began to criticize the 'sectarian' attitude of the Communist International presented in the Draft thesis of the 6th Congress as a model without the required tactical intelligence.²⁵⁸ In the early 30s Roy put his own understanding on communist political development in India. He thought the Congress itself had the petty bourgeoisie elements under the domination of big bourgeoisie and it would be the task of the communists to liberate the former and make it prepared for revolutionary programmes. But such a task, Roy envisaged, could not be performed by the communists directly due to some official constraints—so one 'transitional' party should be formed under the guidance of the communists for the purpose of entering the Congress and organizing the

leftists and the petty bourgeoisie elements towards revolution.²⁵⁹ But such a model of 'transitional party' was proved to be a confusing one (as in case of the WPP) in terms of its methodological orientations and its organizational relation with the CPI. Since 1935 continuous efforts had been made by the Royists to ally different forces into the platform of the trade unions under the umbrella of the All India Trade Union Congress (hereafter AITUC). In Bengal already a strong centre of the Royists had been formed in early thirties. It was due to the efforts of Tayyab Sheikh and Rajani Mukherjee that in Calcutta the Revolutionary Party of the Indian Working Class (RPIWC) was formed under the influence of Roy's line of thinking.²⁶⁰ During this time Dharitri Ganguli, one of the important student leaders of Calcutta became the principal source of inspiration behind the Royist politics in Bengal²⁶¹ The fundamental ideas of this party were reflected in a local Bengali journal called the '*Juger Dabi*.' One Committee of Action for Independence was established under the purview of the RPIWC where, in the words of Tayyab Sheikh,

more and more (were) being daily recruitedand more than 30,000 leaflets...were published and distributed throughout the city (Calcutta) and suburbs as well as in the districts. We have been able to extent our activities through this literature in Bihar and Orissa.²⁶²

The efforts of the Royists throughout the country found its organizational expression in the League of Radical Congressmen in 1937. Since then one regular office had been maintained by the Royists at 110A, Harrison Road, Calcutta, with Hari Chakraborty as general secretary and Jibanlal Chatterjee as organizing secretary.²⁶³ From 1937, immense trade union activities were carried on by the Royists in Bengal with the other forces

including the CPI, CSP, the Bengal Labour Party, and the Communist League of Soumen Tagore in a close interaction with the AITUC.²⁶⁴

In this period the essential features of labour radicalism took a hasty turn towards communal antagonism. Ideal examples of this development could well be cited from Bengal jute workers' belt. The government sponsored trade unions for Muslim workers played the most crucial role here for institutionalizing the growing communal animosity among the labourers. The entire maneuvering was performed by one mischievous alliance of the propertied interests in Bengal including the British capitalists, Hindu businessmen, Muslim landholders and some Hindu landed aristocrats. The Depression years brought extensive disorder in the agrarian sector of Bengal. The jute production sector suffered a lot because jute was the main cash crop in Bengal and a great amount of British capital was invested in the jute industry of Bengal.²⁶⁵ The general fall in the jute prices all over the world had a direct impact on the over productive tendencies of jute in Bengal. In an atmosphere of world wide slump in jute prices, the manufactures sought the support of the state to restrict the working hours in the mills to make a proper balance between its production and the requirements of a shrinking world market.²⁶⁶ The consequent pressures of the Indian Jute Mills Association on the government to curtail the working hours in the mills did not get any positive response. The government apprehended that such a decision would bring extreme hardship for the depressed peasantry who had already been trapped between the puzzle of increasing debt and declining prices for their production. The restrictions on working hours meant a heavy lose of demand in jute which in turn would become a source of

peasant discontent in east Bengal countryside while in the industrial belt lack of employment opportunities could have been transformed into large scale agitation by the workers. Nevertheless, the crisis in the jute industry put forward one idea that in assistance of a business friendly local government the interests of the British industrialists could be protected successfully by sufficiently representing their interests into the new constitutional set up. Side by side the growing tendencies of labour radicalism precipitated the need for an urgent understanding with the propertied interests in Bengal so that colonial capitalists could become one counter hegemonic force in provincial politics. The non Bengali Muslim businessmen appeared to be a readily available ally of the British business lobby because both of them required each other to safeguard their interests for different reasons.²⁶⁷ In a resolution of 1933, the BPML declared that 'it is incumbent on the Muslims to encourage such traders who are trying to develop the home trade and industry.'²⁶⁸ The success of the League candidates in the urban constituencies also indicated its prospective potentials to carry on the Muslim business community into its side. However for both the groups one pro-Muslim business friendly government became one of the urgent requirements so that legislative measures could be adopted in favour of their respective class interests. It is to be mentioned here that the Congress could no longer be at the confidence of the British business lobby for a numbers of reasons.²⁶⁹ Even a good number of Hindu landed interests were seen to build up strong anti congress views in face of a growing threat from the lefts. The declining status of those Hindu landed aristocrats in face of the changing structure of land relations in the thirties, fostered two fold possibilities among them. On the background of the huge influx of the socialists and

communists into the party, radical tendencies were developed amongst a few of them who had already lost their roots in landed property whereas some others had provoked a language of reactionary conservatism in the political life of Bengal.²⁷⁰ Their growing frustration against the 'radicalized Congress' came to be reflected through the new formed Nationalist Party before the assembly election. Some of them were associated with the Bengal Land Holders' Association and at any cost were eager to protect their own feudal interests. Even the communal sentiments of the Hindu and Muslim landed elites were seemed to get neutralized in response to their class interests. Just like their Hindu counterparts the landed section of the Central National Mohammedan Association of Calcutta also paid their concern on the fate of the Permanent Settlement to the Governor General.²⁷¹

In fact the ministerial structure of the new government of 1937 was turned into a political imbroglio of mutually consenting but individually conflicting forces. Such a combination itself was proved be risky for the fate of Bengal. As the constituencies were divided into communal basis, the European business lobby appeared to be one of the balancing factors of the new coalition government. The survival of the new ministry largely depended on the support of the European business lobby in the assembly. Edward Benthal, the chief of the Bird Hilgers managing Agency House and one of the leading personalities of European business circle, pointed out that , 'What a powerful position we have got with the government if we care to use it constructively in the *right way*.' (Italics mine)²⁷² This *right way* meant nothing more than a manipulation of the politics of the government for the sake of the British capitalist

developments in Bengal. Benthall's intimacy with Nazimuddin, Ispahani and G.D Birla could be cited as an example of capitalist class consciousness against the radical tendencies of the working class in India. But what became too much surprising was the shift of a great numbers of workers from a mere radicalism to communal political action. The vicious coalition of the propertied interests contributed in their way to institutionalize the communalization of labour politics to a considerable extent but no one can overlook the fact that the leftist trade unions were seized to take their hold over the workers who were coming into the grip of a different political paradigm in late thirties.

Under the sinister scheme of building up one reactionary trade union of the Muslim League, labour minister Suhrawardy employed a very interesting mechanism of communalizing the labour issues. He had developed an extensive programme of labour welfare under the guidance of the Bengal National Chamber of Labour. It was promoted and financed by the ministry of labour. This state sanctioned union of the Muslim League developed a network of understanding between the government, the mill owners and the workers.²⁷³ Surprisingly this union (popularly known as the white union) had never take a deaf year to the demands of the Hindu workers rather adopted more or less a totalitarian approach in handling the labour issues. This type of strategy was proved to be a double edged weapon to check the increasing militant trade unionism among the workers. The White unions were intended to impress the workers particularly the Muslims with some non economic '*reforms*' including the establishment of some mosques in the Muslim majority belts. Above all their regular attempts of making a peaceful settlement of

labour disputes increased the appeal of these unions among the workers. All of these efforts in general energized the workers with a degree of confidence on the League unions, at a time alienating a majority of the workers from the spell of militant trade union movements. It was a kind of sophisticated maneuverings from the part of a mischievous government to make the workers turned back from the hold of the 'red flag' unions. The over ambitious Suhrawardy did not even take a second thought before asking the British capitalists for financial help to construct a network of state supported trade unionism against the 'red flag' unions.²⁷⁴ The most dangerous part of his scheme included that if required, the government would sponsor communal disturbances into the areas of extensive labour unrest.²⁷⁵ In fact the so called labour welfare programmes were adopted to convince the workers to make a compromise with the government sponsored unions while in certain cases the unions were seen to mobilize the religious sentiments of the Muslim workers so that the growing class consciousness of the Muslim workers could have been crippled forever in favour of their existing community consciousness. The situational unity of the Red trade unions with the All India Trade Union Congress in 1935²⁷⁶ indeed infused a great degree of inspiration among the workers but the real spirit of a militant movement could not be sustained even after the election of some popular left candidates in the assembly election of 1937. However, it would be wrong to victimize only the white unions and the Muslim League for the failure of the left trade unions. The tactical mistakes and circumstantial limitations of the leftist unions, affiliated to different minor parties should be taken into consideration in this regard. One of such mistakes was that most of the strikes organized by them seemed to be generated

from top by the labour leaders of the assembly. One official report informed that,

It seems that these strikes are by no means entirely economic in character, they are undoubtedly being fomented by labour representatives in the Legislative Assembly of whom the most prominent are Suresh and Sibnath Banerjee, N Dutta and A M A Zaman representing territorial labour constituencies of the 24 Pargana, Howrah and Hoogly districts.²⁷⁷

Nevertheless, the expansion of electoral reforms created exclusive possibilities for a certain kinds of politicians to invest in specific identities across class lines. Consciousness based on the loyalty towards religious community emerged as the most effective instrument to mobilize the workers even at the expense of their territorial or linguistic consciousness. All of these contesting identities dissipated the cohesive organism of a class by itself. But it is not necessary to assume that the class consciousness of the workers ceased to exist when their community loyalties were at work either by themselves or by external forces. Both of these identities could have been at place if the colonial state remains at the centre of focus of workers' resistance. The real problem of the left trade unions in the late thirties stayed in the context of identifying the actual enemy of the working class movements.

In spite of a numbers of historic achievements the KPP League ministry failed to satisfy a majority of the population. However the sharpest criticism came from a section of the Hindus especially on the Bengal Secondary Educational Reforms Bill, the Communal Ratio Act and the Calcutta Municipality Amendment Act. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, one of the noted educationist and an influential member of the provincial

legislature (He was elected from the University Constituency) emerged as the strongest critic of the ministry. The last 'Bill had no other aim', according to Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, "but to reduce the Hindus to a position of inferiority in a Corporation which affects a city where, whether one likes it or not, the Hindus predominate." The pity of it is that the bill has not evoked that countrywide protest which it certainly deserves. The Hindus, thanks to the uncertain policy of the Congress, seem to be doomed!"²⁷⁸ The introduction of quota system for the Muslims in the government was another instance of 'injustice' because it would not only deprive the well qualified Hindus from better appointments but also encourage even the non Bengali Muslims to fill the quota if suitable Bengali Muslims would not be available. It was a psychological blow for the educated Hindus slowly jeopardizing their existence 'in the land of their birth.' Interestingly Shyama Prasad Mukherjee unequivocally charged the Congress for betraying the Bengali Hindus and openly condemned its faltering mentality on representing the Hindu electorates at the time of crisis.²⁷⁹ Even that he called it their 'sacred duty' to defend Hindu rights at a time when 'legislative and administrative measures were either adopted or advocate to deliberately to curtail Hindu rights in Bengal.²⁸⁰ Shyama Prasad did not conceal his disappointment on the attitude of the Bengal Congress as well as the very response he got from Sarat Bose and Subhas Bose on the issue of standing by the Hindu cause in Bengal. The reluctance of the Bose brothers precipitated the coming out of a separate political body –the Hindu Mahasabha in Bengal. In the words of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee,

'Subhas and I had a talk on one day about the political situation in Bengal. One evening Sarat Bose and we two had a long discussion. I asked them to take up the Hindu cause in Bengal so as to render it unnecessary for us to organize a separate political body. They expressed their inability to do so -first because they thought it might still further rouse Muslims, and secondly, because they themselves being well-known 'Non Communal Congressites' could not openly do what I asked them to do.'

281

One may see here how the necessity of a strong Hindu political organization found its justification into the disapproval of the Congress leaders to project the Hindu cause. The rationale for reorganizing one minor political party came within the constraints of a major party like the Congress. Its failure to form the ministry in 1937 and its sheer negligence to stand by the Hindus offered Savarkar a golden chance to play his card in Bengal. In the words of Mukherjee,

Being then greatly perturbed at the helpless position of Bengal Hindus whom the Congress failed to rouse and protect some of us was drawn to Savarkar's influence and it gradually took root. Nirmal Chatterjee, S.N Banerjee, Asutosh Lahiri and other pressed me to join the Mahasabha.²⁸²

A new language of militant Hinduism was expressed in the all India conference of the Hindu Mahasabha, held at Calcutta in December 1939. It was the high time in Bengal politics. A numbers of new political developments appeared to take a hold of the situation. Such developments were not at all unexpected because already the communal polarization of the province took its final shape and all the new political trends were indicating towards the coming danger in the next decade.

Notes and References

1. The British did not have a belief on the concept of an Indian nation. It was only after the introduction of the mass struggle in India politics that the Indian National Congress had to perform the twin task of confirms the standards of a nation and to remake it according to the requirements of the situation. See, Gynandries Pandey, 'Congress and the Nation; 1917' in Richard Sission and Stanley Wolpart (ed.) *Congress and Indian Nationalism; The Pre Independence Phase*, Barkley, 1988. pp.121-125
2. See, Gynandries Pandey, *Ibid.*
3. Eleanor Zelliott, *Congress and the Untouchables 1917-1950* in Richard Sission and Stanley Wopart, *op.cit.*, pp.182-198.
4. See Bipan Chandra, 'Elements of Continuity and Change in the Early Nationalist Activity', in Bipan Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, New Delhi, 1979,
5. Dhanagare described some general characteristics common to Gandhian peasant protests. They involved single class or class consisting generally the rich peasants. Side by side attempts were made to integrate the poorer sections of the peasantry and landless peasantry by constructive programmes. *D N Dhanagare, Peasant Movement in India, 1920-1950*, New Delhi, 1983, Chapter iv.
6. In this regard Dhanagare has observed that Gandhian Congress peasant protests invoked compromise and included consensus on termination. Congress led peasant movements involved conflict between peasant groups and the British Raj, they did not encourage any conflict within Indian society and between classes or castes. In an analysis on the relationship between the Congress and the peasant movements in Bihar

and UP, Marx Harcourt pointed out that that it was very ambivalent in nature. At the time of agitation or civil disobedience the peasants were proved to be very useful but in times of agitation the party leadership saw them as dangerous allies. see, D N Dhanagare, *op.cit*, pp.5-6; Marx Harcourt' *Kisan Populism and Revolution in Rural India* ; *The 1942 Disturbances in Bihar and East United Provinces*, in D A Low (ed.) *Congress and Raj; Facts of the Indian Struggle, 1917-47*, London, 1977. p, 328. Also see, Gynandries Pandey, ' *Peasant Revolt and Indian Nationalism; The Peasant Movement in Awadh, 1919-1922*', in Ranajit Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies I, Writing on South Asian History and Society*, New Delhi, 1982, pp.143-197..

7. For details see Gynandries Pandey, *Congress and the Nation, 1917-1947*, in Richard Sisson and Stanley Wolpart (ed.), *Congress and Indian Nationalism*, Barkley, 1988, Hitesh Rajan Sanyal, ' *Congress in Southwestern Bengal; The Anti Union Board Movement in Eastern Medinipur, 1921* ', in Richard Sisson and Stanley Wolpart (ed.) *op.cit*. pp.352-56.

8. See Rajat Kanta Ray, ' *Masses in Politics, The Non Cooperation Movement in Bengal 1920-1922*, in, *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol, XI, No.4, 1974; J. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power; Indian Politics, 1905-22*, Cambridge, 1972, p.358; Iftikhar-ul-Awwal, ' *The Problem of Middle Class Educated Unemployment in Bengal, 1912-1942*, in *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol XIX, No.1, January-March, 1982.

9. For details on the Praja movement see, Harun-or Rashid, *The Foreshadowing of Bangladesh; Bengal Muslim League and Muslim Politics, 1906-1947*, Dacca, 1987, pp.28-31, Shila Sen, *Muslim Politics in*

Bengal, 1937-47, New Delhi, 1976, p.20-21. Abul Mansur Ahmed, *Amar Dekha Rajnitir Panchchar Bachar*, Dhaka, 1968, pp.60-61, 151.

10. Harun-or Rashid, *op.cit.* pp.28-31.

11. For a detail of the Swaraj Party see Chapter I of the present study.

12. *Ibid.*

13. For the aims and objectives of the party see Goutam Chattopadhyay, *Communism and Bengal's Freedom Movement*, New Delhi, 1971, Appendix D, pp.177-179.; Muzaffar Ahmed, *Communist Party of India ; Years of Formation 1921-1923*, Calcutta, 1959, p.23.

14. G. Adhikari, *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India, Vol II*, New Delhi, 1978, p.676

15. G. Adhikari *op.cit.* Vol III, B 1979, pp.34-35

16. M N Roy, *A Letter from the Indian Comrades*, Meerut Conspiracy Case, *ibid.*

17. For details see *Genesis of the Workers and Peasants Party of India*, Introduction Adhikari, *op.cit.*, Vol II, p.98 ; G Adhikari, *op.cit.*, vol II, chapter v and vi

18. For the details of M N Roy's Ideas see M N Roy, 'Imperialism and Indian Nationalism', in *Inprecor*, Vol 8, No.1, 5th January, 1928.

19. See G Adhikari, *op.cit.*, Vol II, Chapter VI.

20. G Adhikari, *op.cit.*, Vol III, B, p.118

21. *Ibid.*, Vol II, pp.20-21

22. There is a common assumption that Indian working class did not have class cohesion or even the features of class formation. Within the working class itself there were too many signs of conflict. As far as the working class was concerned, class was not the fundamental unit in India rather the main point was community and Indian working class in a

numbers of occasion had exhibited the traits of community consciousness ageist the expected class consciousness. See, Dipesh Chakrabourty, *Rethinking Working Class History; Bengal,1890-1940*, Princeton, 1988, pp.216-17.. Ranajit Dasgupta on the other hand observed labour politics in late 19th century Bengal in an era of transition from individual protest to class protests. He more or less echoed the classical Marxist understanding of the question of working class formation in colonial India.see,Ranjit Dasgupta, ‘ *Material Condition and Behavioral Aspects of Calcutta Working class, 1875-99*’, Occasional Papers, No.22, Centre for Studies in Social Science, Calcutta, 1979. also see, R S Chandravarkar,’ *Worker’s Politics and the Mill Districts of Bombay Between the Wars*’, in Baker, Johnson and Seal (ed.)*Power, Profit and Politics, Modern Asian Studies*,15(3),1981,pp.603-47.; Subho Basu *Does Class Matter; Colonial Capital and Workers Resistance in Bengal; 1890-1937*,, Delhi, 2004,pp.5-18

23. For details see, Parimal Ghosh, *Colonialism, Class and a History of the Calcutta Jute Millhands,1880-1930*, Hyderabad,2000,pp.1-21.

24.The classical Marxist historians analyzed ‘class’ as a social group with a common relationship to a means of production, common means of surplus product and a common relationship to those who sell their labour to earn their livelihood. However, Marx himself described the class formation in a way that when a class becomes aware of its interests and showed the ability to pursue its interests it becomes a ‘class for itself’. See Marx and Engels, *Selected Works, Vol 3*, Moscow, 1969, p.473

25.Dipesh Chakrabourty,op.cit.pp.216-217;Subho Basu,op.cit.pp.5-18.

26. Ranajit Dasgupta , *op.cit.*No.22

27. The working class in Bengal was characterized by a number of fragmented identities. Besides having a flexible social ties, there had been differences between the workers on the basis of wage pattern, skills, condition of work place, gender, employment provisions etc. All of these aspects along with the influences of nationalist movement helped to shape up the labour politics in colonial Bengal. These issues have been discovered by R S Chandravarkar in *The Origin of Industrial Capitalism in India; Business Strategies and the Working Classes in Bombay 1900-1940*, Cambridge, 1994. Samita Sen has highlighted the gender issues in the Bengal jute industry, See Samita Sen, *Women and Labour in late colonial India; The Bengal Jute Industry*, Cambridge, 1999.

28. *The Karmi*, 1st year, January, 1922, vol 1, No. 5, pp. 63-4

29. G Adhikari, *op.cit*, Vol. III B, 1979, pp. 34-35

30. For a detail of the aims and objectives of this party see the First All India Workers and Peasants Party Report, in G Adhikari, *op.cit*, Vol III, C, p. 740 also see the Political Resolution, *Ibid*, p. 720

31. In 1928 the WPP organized scavengers strike in different places of Bengal. The WPP organized one Scavenger's union with Pravabati Dasgupta as the president and Muzaffar Ahmed as the Vice President. The scavengers went on strike twice in early 1928. After a clash between the police and the strikers the Corporation authority at last consented to meet their demands of the scavengers. It was more or less a successful strike. led by the WPP in Bengal. See Report for the seven days ending the 7th March, G B ,IB, 1928. ; *Ibid*, 11 July, 1928.

32. For details see Panchanan Saha, *History of the Working Class Movement in Bengal*, Delhi, 1978, p. 109.

33. In the Fort Gloster jute mill at Howrah went on strike against the mill management. The WPP supported Bengal Jute Workers Union failed to move the strikers from outside and the workers followed their own course of action. See Subho Basu, *Does Class Matter; Colonial Capital and Workers Resistance in Bengal; 1890-1937*, Delhi, 2004, p.214

34. In Bengal the nationalists and the communists together set their attack on the mill owners and the government. Mostly in the European owned industries labour strikes were undertaken by both of these forces on the basis of a common propaganda. See Home Poll, Letter from Government of Bengal, 19th December, File No.18/xvi/1928; Home Poll, Note on the Communists and the Congress by Home Secretary H G Haig and Home member Cerar, File No.18/xvi/1928

35. Home Poll, File No.18/XVI/1928, Note by the Home Department.

36. *Ibid*, Sir George Rainy to H. G Haig, Secretary Home Department, 12 January, 1929

37. *Ibid*.

38. The strike of the 15,000 workers at the three mills of Bauria lasted three months from 16 July to 16 January, 1929 and it has been described by Muzaffar Ahmed as the 'largest ever strike' of the jute workers of Bengal. The strike emerged on the issue of 60 hour working week adjustment and in a number of mills the workers went on strike for the new working hours. See Muzaffar Ahmed, *Amar Jiban O Bharater Communist Party, 1920-1929*, Vol II, Dhaka, (Incomplete), 1974, p.45.

39. Though the WPP affiliated trade unions successfully controlled the working class movement in Bengal but difference of opinion among the leaders themselves often created unnecessary problems in the party. Side by side legal restrictions often made these leaders alienated from the

workers on strike. Apart from this linguistic problems also limited the possibilities of wide scale mobilization of the workers by the leaders when most of the workers happened to be either illiterate or non Bengali in origin. See, Subho Basu, *op.cit*, p.215

40. For a detail account of the dissolution of the WPP see Joshi, Shashi and Bhagwan Josh, ' *Struggle for Hegemony and Power* ', Vol III, New Delhi, 1994 pp.108-119; Aditya Mukherjee, *op.cit*, pp.1-15

41. See Introduction, Laushey, David M, *Bengal Terrorism and the Marxist Left: Aspects of Regional Marxism in India, 1905-1942*, Calcutta, 1973

42. See Aditya Mukherjee, *The Workers' and Peasants' Parties 1926-30: An Aspect of Communism in India*, Studies in History, III, 1&2, 1981. Also reprinted in Bipan Chandra, ed., *The Indian Left: Critical Appraisals*, New Delhi, 1983, pp.1-45.

43 The leaders of the All Bengal Youth Association formed the Young Comrade league in 1928b as the youth wing of the WPP. The name Young Comrade League was given by Philip Spratt. The Bengali name of the party was *Tarun Bandhu Dal*. Dharani Goswami, Abdul Halim and several other communist leaders were associated with this party from the beginning. G Adhikari, *op.cit*, Vol III B, p.116; Dharani Goswami, *Bharater Communist Andolaner Trisher ek Adhyay*, in *Parichay*, September-October, 1973, p.135, cited in Mortuza Khaled, *A Study in the Leadership*,; Muzaffar Ahmed and *The Communist Movement in Bengal*, Calcutta, 2001, p.36.

44. G Adhikari, *op.cit*, Vol III ,C pp,97-98.

45. *Ibid*

46. The Statement of Programme and the policy of the Young Comrade League consisted of six sections. 1. What is the Youth Movement 2. Our Grievances 3. What is the Remedy 4. The Ideas of Today 5. What We Shall Do? 6. Our Programme of Practical Work for the future. *Ibid*, p.96
47. See, Gopen Chakraborty's statement in the Meerut Court, p.147, *Ibid*, ppp.95-96
48. See Satyendra Narayan Mazumdar, *Amar Biplab Gignyasha, 1st part, 1927-1945, Calcutta, August, 1973, pp.145-146.; Inprecor, 4th September, 1930*
49. Except Calcutta the League opened its branch in Maymarsingh, Dacca, Khulna, and Rajshahi to mobilize the peasants on class line. In the areas where the zamindar was prominent, anti zamindar and anti moneylender activities became popular among the peasants. See Pramatha Gupta, Je Sangramer Sesh Nai, Calcutta, 1971, pp.38-42; Satyendra Narayan Majumdar, *In Search of A Revolutionary Ideology and Revolutionary Programme; A Study in the Transition from National Revolutionary Terrorism To Communism*, New Delhi, December, 1979, p.166
50. Pramatha Gupta, *op.cit*, pp.38-42
51. For the observation on Mymansingh, GB Home Poll, File No.511A/1930
52. GB Home Confidential political Branch, A B Dutta to the Political Secretary, 4th December, File No. 849/31(1-9)
53. GB, Home Confidential Political Branch, File no.849/31(1-9), 4 December 1931
54. Pramatha Gupta, *op.cit*, pp.38-42
55. *Ibid*.

56..GB Home Poll, File No. 511A/ 1930; GB Home Poll, File No. 873/1933

57.For a detail analysis see, Mridula Mukherjee, *Peasants in India's Non Violent Revolution*, Theory and Practice New Delhi,2004,p..

58.In the Kishoreganj subdivision of Mymansingh the peasants started an anti mahajan campaign with an attack on the house of a Hindu money lender .Young Comrade League leader Nagen Sarkar and Wali Nawaz led the 'Sangrami Krisak Bahini' mostly with Muslim and tribal peasants.to fight the rural oppressors. But in a spontaneous manner this goon raided the zamindar houses. After an attack on the house of one Hindu moneylender Krishna Chandra Roy the economic character of the protest took a communal coloring and gradually several riots took place in the region of Kishoreganj However, it was a commonly believed version of the incident. There were many other versions of the Kishoreganj incident. See GB Home Poll, File No, 613/1930.; *Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 26 August, 1930, p.833

59.Pramatha Gupta,*op.cit*,pp.38-42

60.See Nagen Sarkar, '*Young Comrade League Samparke Sankhipta Biboran*' in Dharani Goswami (ed.), *Parichay*, Year 44, No.4, 1974, Calcutta, pp.445-446

61. G B Home Poll, File No.613/1930

62. Nagen Sarkar,*op.cit* pp.446-447, Tanika Sarkar, Bengal,pp.112-113; *ABP*,16 July,1930.

63. The District Magistrate of Mymansingh reported that the disturbances in Kishoreganj were generally caused by the economic problems of the peasants. The main objective of the peasants was to destroy debt deeds to evade repayment of debts. The poor peasants were also interested in

looting the property of the moneylenders and the Hindu moneylenders were not threatened as Hindus rather many Muslim moneylenders were also threatened or looted by the peasants.GB, Barrow's to Chief Secretary Hopkeyns, 18 July, 1930, File No.613/1930.

64.Sugata Bose, *The Roots of Communal Violence in Rural Bengal; A Study of the Kishoreganj Riots 1930*, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol 16, No 3, 1982, pp.489-91

65.*Ibid.*

66. After the arrest of the Young Comrade League members, the communal elements took the leadership of the movement. The Khademul Islam, a Muslim voluntary organization came into being into region with a communal overtone. The coming of the communal forces from outside also diverted the movement from its original character .However it was difficult to establish the actual role plied by these communal elements. Most of the local religious leaders were coming from the lower middle class and peasant families and very naturally they enjoyed an upper hand in mobilizing the peasants there. Te peasants in part of Kishoreganj were even motivated by a rumor that the Government had granted them Swaraj and they could do anything to attack the moneylenders. All of these incidents were the part of the same process which destructed the movement from its actual aims and objectives. See Pramatha Gupta, *op.cit*.pp.40-47; GB Home Poll., 613/1930; Dharani Goswami, *Akti Krisak Sangramer Kahini, Parichay*, Autumn (November)1969.

67.*Ibid*

68. Nagen Sarkar, *op.cit*, pp., 448-449; Satyandra Narayan Majumdar, *op.cit*, p.167

69. The government was supported by a large number of native partners in suppressing the movement in Kishoreganj. The Hindu and Muslim zamindars, the Hindu Mahasabha, a section of the Congress, the native capitalists had arrived in support of the government. The zamindar of Kishoreganj and the Congress MLC of Bengal Satis Chandra Roychoudhury demanded before the government to ban the Young Comrade League as soon as possible. G B Home Poll, File No, 18/III/1930. Fortnightly Report on the Political Situation of Bengal of the second half of February.1930

70. *ABP*, 18 July, Calcutta,1930,p.2; 17 July, p.3

71. G.B Home Poll, File No, 7/20/1934 & K.W, Serial Nos.1-4; Subodh Roy (ed.) *Communism in India; Unpublished Documents, Vol 1,1925-34, Calcutta,1980,pp.421-22 ;*

72. *Ibid.*

73. *Ibid.*

74. See, *Ganashakti*, Vol I, No.2 October,1934

75. G B Home Poll, File No. 7/20/1934 & K.W, Serial No.1-4, Subodh Roy,(ed.),op.cit,p.422.

76. G B, I B Translation of a Bengali letter dated 12.2.29 to Muzaffar Ahmed by Hemanta Sarkar, Kusthia, Nadia, and File No. 168/22

77. GB,IB,copy of a letter dated 7th February,1929 from Gopal Basak (Dhakeswari Cotton Mill Dhaka) to Muzaffar Ahmed,File No.168/22

78. GB ,I B Translation of a Bengali letter dated 16.2.29 to Muzaffar Ahmed by K Ghosh, File No. 168/22

79. GI.IB DIG report Calcuta, 1929

80. GB, IB, DIG Weekly Confidential Report, 20.2.29, Faridpur, Youth Conference, 16.2.29, and Weekly Confidential Report, Murshidabad, No Date.

81. The Indian Proletarian Revolutionary Party was formed in Hoogly in 1931 with the initiative of Panchugopal Bhaduri, Bijoy Modok and Kali Chandra Ghosh. Saroj Mukherjee, Harekrishna Kongar had a close connection with this party. See Tusshar Chattopadhyay, *Swadhinata Sangrame Hoogly Zela'*, Calcutta, 1983, p.112

82 See, articles, i). Suggestions About a New Path, 1933, (ii.) India On the Path of Revolution., 1933, (iii) Lenin Day, 1934 iv) The Present Programme of Workes, 1934 v) To the Workers, 1934 etc. Home Poll, File No.7/20/1934. Jagannath De, Bijoy Choudhury, Helaram Chatterjee actively worked with this party. Home Poll. File No.7/20/1934; Saroj Mukherjee, *Bharater Communist Party O Amra, (Ourselves and the Communist Party of India), 1st Part (1930-41)*, Calcutta, 1985, pp.46-47.

83. Saroj Mukherjee, *Ibid*, p.74

84. *Ibid*. p.67

85. GB, IB Extract from a letter dated 10th November, 1930, from Abani Balli (Original secret letter no.13/BOI/24). File No.168/22. For special emphasis see the letter from B Mukherjee (ADDL, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, Calcutta) to Mr. Cowgill, IP, IB, Simla. File No.168/22, no.178b8-c, 16th July, 1932.

86. GB, IB, File No.929/1935

87. Saroj Mukherje, *op.cit*, pp.45-47. The Samyaraj Party specially took the cause of the unorganized workers like the carters, scavengers, coolies, coachwans and factory workers who were the ill affected victims of the society after the Great Depression. GB, IB. File No.1201/33.

.88. In Mymansingh Satya Bagchi, Abdul Jalil, Binoy Base were on the lead of the party and here the party worked in a close connection with the Tarun Bandhu Dal or the Young Comrade League.GB, IB, 1201/33.

89. The All Bengal Students Association was established in 3rd February, 1928 .It was given a final shape in a conference held at the Shradhananda Park, Calcutta in 1928, 22nd-25th September. The president was Jawaharlal Nehru and the chief guest was Subhas Basu. Here Badal Ganguli served his duty as a member of the executive committee. See *ABP*, Sep, 26, 1928.

90. Workers' League was established in 1936 with the initiative of Ajit Dasgupta. Labour leader Nepal Bhattacharya for a time being became the president of the party. It had its influence over the unions of motor workers, pres workers, engineering and metal workers. Saroj Mukherjee,*op.cit*,p.63-65.

91. The Workers Party of Bengal was formed as a part of the Workers' Party of India in 1932. The main task of the party was to politicize the party workers on Soviet line. It was blessed with the support of Third International in India. It was organized mainly by Abdul Halim especially among the unions of transport workers, jute workers, match factory workers and others.GB Home Poll. File no. 7/20/34. The Karkhana Group was formed mainly by Bhabani Sen and Nepal Bhattacharya. Later M A Zaman got associated with this party. They used to publish a paper called 'Karkhana'.Saroj Mukherjee, *op.cit*,p.63.Also see letter from B Mukherjee (ADDL,Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, Calcutta) to Mr. Cowgill,IP,IB, Simla.File No.168/22, no.178b8-c,16th July,1932.

92. The United Front thesis of George Dimitrov was adopted after long discussions by the Communist International. The 'Dutt Bradley' thesis, prepared by R. Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley of the Communist Party of Great Britain had explained this new line of action in the 'Inprecor' on the name of 'The Anti Imperialist People's Front'. It suggested the Indian communists to join hands with the left wing leadership of the Congress to transform it a mass platform of anti imperialist national revolutionary movement. See R.P Dutta and Ben Bradey, '*The Anti Imperialist People's Front*', *Inprecor*, 16 (II), 29 Feb, 1936, pp.297-300

93. These 13 organizations were, 1. The Calcutta communist Party 2. The Calcutta Port and Dock Workers' Union 3. The WPP Bengal 4. The Calcutta Committee of the Communist Party 5. Kirti Dal 6. The Workers' Party of India 7. The Indian Proletarian Revolutionary Party 8. The Bengal Jute Workers' Union 9. The Bengal Match Factory Workers' Union 10. The City Motor and Transport Workers' Union 11. The River Steam Navigation and Indian General Navigation and Railway Company Workers' Union 12. The Youth League, Bengal 13. The Chatra Yuva Samsad; GI Home Poll, File No. 18/3/35.

94. GB IB, File No. 364/38(1) (September 1938—June 1939)

95. GI, Home Poll, File No.7/9/1935—Unpublished Manuscripts, International Press Correspondence, Article—'*Problems of the Anti Imperialist Struggle in India*'. Vol.15, No.10.

96. For details see 'Special Case for Bengal'. Communist Review, (organ of the Bengal committee of the Communist Party), Vol II, No.2, October, 1935. GB Home Poll File No. 7/10/36.

97. See, Jaya Chatterjee, *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition 1932-1947*, Cambridge, 1994, p.68.

98. Abul Mansur Ahmed, *Amar Dekha Rajnitir Panchash Bachchar*, Dhaka, 2006, pp.45-47
99. In July 1929 twenty five Muslim members of the Bengal council formed the Bengali Muslim Council Association .Here on the suggestion of Shah Abdul Hamid of Jamalpur and on the motion of Fazlul Haq, the Nikhil Banga Praja Samity was formed.Moulana Akrm Khan was elected its secretary .Maulavi Mujibar Rahman, Moulavi Abdur Rahim, Fazlul Haq, S.H Suhrawardy and Abdul Momin were elected vice presidents while Maulavi Samsuddin Ahmed and Tamizuddin khan became the joint secretaries of the party. For details see ,Humaira Momen ,*Muslim Politics in Bengal ; A Study of Krisak Praja Party and the Election of 1937*, Dacca,1972,p.76.
100. *ABP*, 14 Sep, 1936.
101. GB Home Poll, No 105/ 1931.
102. The leaders of the Samity were actively involved in anti British violent activities. Mukuleswar Rahman, Abdul Malek, Kamini Kumar Dutta, AbdulMalek were charged with seditious activities. Lal Mia, Boro Mia, Krishna Sundar Bhowmik etc were attached with this Samity. G.B Home Poll 245/1931; Report of the District Magistrate of Tippera dated 23 December1931, GB Home Poll File.No 849/31(1-9).
- 103.Home Poll.No.105/1931
104. The Nikhil Bengal Praja Samity was formed in 1929.Akram Khan and Abdur Rahim became its secretary and president respectively.Fazlul Huq, Mujibur Rahman, Abdul Momin, Shamsuddin Ahmed, and Tamizuddin Khan joined this party. It was the first political party organized by the Bengali Muslims on non communal and economic ground to safeguard the interest of the Bengali Muslims specially masses.

It was the first regional minor party in Bengal, exclusively Bengali in character without any parent organization out side the province. It marked a shift form the previous trend of Muslim politics dominated mostly by the propertied aristocrats of the community without any actual concern for the peasants in general. Abul Mansur Ahmed, *op.cit*, pp.45-47

105. The United Muslim Party was formed in 1936 with Nawab Khawaja Habibulah and H. S Suhrawardy as the president and the Secretary respectively. Mostly representing the landed, commercial and business interest, the United Muslim Party appeared as a challenge to the radical peasant leadership of the Nikhil Bengal Krisak Samity. (renamed as the Krisak Praja Party in 1936 t Dacca).It was under the influence of Fazlul Huq , a new charismatic larder from the rural Bengal that the city based leadership of the Samity became insecure and these people including Akram Khan and Abdul Momin joined the new United Muslim Party in 1936. Fazlul Huq charged the party as a 'ministerial party' while the United Muslim Party described the Krisak Praja Party as 'not purely a Muslim organization'. It indicated the sharp division within the Muslim politics in early thirties centering round the city- mussosil, religious-secular, zamindar-peasant dichotomies. For details of the United Muslim Party see *Star of India*, 25 May, 1936,pp.1-5 also see, *Ibid*,18 July,1936,p.3, and *The Statesman*,16 June,1936.

106. The term ' Jotdar' has used to describe a class who owned sizeable portions of village lands as tenants of the revenue collecting zamindars and they cultivated the land with the help of sharecroppers, tenants and hired labourers.They used to enjoy under their possession social authority of the village headship and the economic authority of money lending and

they had immense control over the poor peasant in Bengal. The Hindu zamindar and Muslim Jotdar conflict is a common theme of 20th century Bengal's history. This conflict becomes more crucial when it is viewed with the background of the communal realities of rural Bengal. The conflict between the Hindu zamindar and Muslim Jotdar of east Bengal originated several important developments in late colonial Bengal including the rise of the Krisak Praja Party, the separation of the Muslims from mainstream politics and also to some extent the factors leading to partition. As the head of the rural credit structure and the village landholding, the Jotdar had a definite role to play in the socio economic life of rural Bengal. For details see Rajat and Ratna Ray, *Zamindars and Jotedars ; A Study of Rural Politics in Bengal*, *Modern Asian Studies*,9,1,1975, pp.88-102

107. Sugata Bose,, *Agrarian Bengal: Economy, Social Structure and Politics 1919-1947*, New Delhi, 1987,pp.130-145.

108. GB, Report on Administration of Bengal.1934-35.p.xxx.

109. For a detail on the Swarajists policy towards the peasants see, Goutam Chattopadhyay, *Bengal Electoral Politics and Freedom Struggle,1862-11947*, New Delhi,1984,pp.89-116.

110. GB, Home Poll No.168/1936(1-2)

111. It may be assumed that on the demand of some radical leaders of the Praja party, the term 'krisak' was added before the Praja Party inspite of a strong opposition from the conservatives. For details see Abul Mansur Ahmed, *op.cit*.p.85-86

112. GB, Home Poll, File No.384/1932.

113. For details see Abul Mansur Ahmed, *Amar Dekha Rajnitir Panchhas Bachar, Dacca, 1970*, p.111 ; Shila Sen, *Muslim Politics in Bengal, 1937-1947*, New Delhi, 1976., pp.74-79.
114. For the election Manifesto of the KPP see Appendix I.
115. At the 4th Annual conference of him Nikhil Bengal Praja Samity in Dacca, 1936, Samsuddin Ahmed was elected as its secretary. However, the exclusion of Shamsudin from the list of the ministers in the KPP-League coalition ministry became the leader of the rebel KPP group in the assembly. He had radical ideas and he had connecting with the communists also. *Star of India*, 15 July, 1936, *Ibid*, 15 March, 1938. Abdul Karim served as the senior vice President of the Nikhil Banga Praja Samity .For his biography see N K Jain, *Muslims in India; A Biographical Dictionary*, Vol I, New Delhi, 1979, pp.14-5.
116. This new party was called the United Muslim Party. It was founded by Nawab Habibullah, Nawab Musharaf Hossain, Khwaja Nazimuddin and others. In 1936 Akram Khan-Abdul Momin faction of the Nikhil Banga Praja Samity joined it later. See *The Statesman*, 25 May, 1936; *Star of India*, 25 May, 1936.
117. Akram Khan and his associates made statements before the public to boycott KPP for its open adherence to the Congress and a secret belonging with the communists. See the leaflet distributed with *Dainik Azad* on the eve of the legislative council election in 1937. It was signed by more than 300 workers and leaders of the Nikhil Banga Praja Samity. *Dainik Azad*, 27 December, 1936, Calcutta, p.10.
118. Abul Mansur Ahmed, *op.cit*, p.166.
119. For details see, *Star of India*, 16 June ,1936, p.5
120. *Star of India*, 24 June, 1936, p.5

121. *The Statesman*, 16 June, 1936.
122. *Star of India*, 25 May, 1935.
123. *Ibid*, 14 August, 1936, *Ibid*, 25 August, 1936, p. 1.
124. *Indian Annual Register*, 1943, vol 1, Calcutta, p. 167.
125. *Ibid*, p. 287.
126. Fazlul Haq, A Momin. Mujibar Rahman simultaneously held the post of vice presidents of the Praja Samity and the Bengal Provincial Muslim League. Abdul Karim was the President of the Bengal Provincial Muslim League and the Vice President of the Nikhil Banga Praja Samity. See *Star of India* 22 June, 1936, p. 5.
127. Quaid-i-Azam papers, File-458, pp. 1-2, cited in Harun-or Rashid, *Inside Bengal Politics 1936-1947, Unpublished Correspondence of Partition Leaders*, Dhaka, 2003, p. 57.
128. *Ibid* pp. 9-10
129. Harun-or-Rashid, *op. cit*, pp. 45-46
130. For the details of Kisan Sabha see, M A Rasul, *A History of the All India Kisan Sabha*, Calcutta, 1989, pp. 3-7.
131. In cases of the districts like Bakharganj, Mymansingh, Faridpur, Khulna and Tippera the Kisan Samity had an understanding with the KPP and here it captured 25 of its total 41 seats. In Noakhali this alliance won only two seats while Noakhali had a legacy of militant peasant movements on class line. It was supposed that the absence of a Hindu zamindar class in this region led to the success of the Muslim League candidates. For detailed analysis see *Return Showing Results of Elections in India 1937 in British Parliamentary Papers, 1937-38*, Cmb. 5589, and Vol. XXI, cited in Harun-or Rashid, *Forshadowing Of Bangladesh, op. cit* ... p. 77

132. Floud Commission Report, VI,p.362.
133. Enayetur Rahim, '*Provincial Autonomy in Bengal, 1937-43*', pp.158-9
134. The victory of the Independent candidates in *zamindar* dominated areas like Rajshahi and the success of some *zamindars* in Bogra, Tangail, and Tippera proved it. In the Tippera region the Krisak Samity did not get the expected success while in Dhaka the *zamindari* link of the ML candidate fetched success for him . In some other areas like Rangpur, the Muslim *jotdars* favored the ML because they did not find the economic theme of KPP too much suitable for mobilizing the Muslim peasants. These trends indicated a multidimensional pattern of politics in east Bengal. For details see *Return Showing Results of Elections in India 1937*, Harun-or Rashid, *op.cit*, p.77
135. Sugata Bose, *Agrarian Bengal, Economy, Social Structure and Politics, 1919-1947*, Cambridge, 1986, p.181.
136. *Ibid.*
137. GB, Home Poll, File No, 303/1937, Home Minister Nazimuddin to Inspector General of Police, 16 May.1937.
138. GI, Home Poll, File No.18/1/37; Jaya Chatterjee, *op.cit*, p.88
139. GB, Fortnightly Report forms the Commissioner of Chittagong Division for the 1st half of September, 1936, Confidential File No.56/36.
140. *Ibid.*
141. *ABP*, 1 February, 1937.
142. Sugata Bose, *op.cit*, pp.184-85.
143. For a detail of the no rent mentality of the peasants in the region under pro communist Krisak Samity and communist leaders see GB, Home Poll, and File No.283/38.

144. See *ABP* 17 January, 1938; Sugata Bose, *op.cit*, pp.208-213.; Governor's Fortnightly Report, 2nd half, December, 1937.
145. See, Abul Mansur Ahmed, *op.cit*, pp.135-38
146. Humaira Momen, *op.cit*, pp.60-61.
147. Governor's Fortnightly Report, 1st halves, June-July, 1937; *ABP*, 6 September, 1937.
148. For a detailed analysis see, *Tajul Hashmi, Towards Understanding Peasant Politics in Bangladesh; A Historical Perspective since 1920, Journal of Social Studies, vol. 42, 1988. pp.122.*
149. *Ibid.*
150. *Ibid.*
151. *Indian Annual Registrar, vol. 1, 1937, pp.59-60.*
152. For details see, Enayetur Rahim, *Bengal Swasthasan, 1937-1943, Dacca, 2001, pp.96-98.*
153. Humaira Momen, *op.cit*, pp.55-6
154. For details see Appendix I.
155. Upendranath Barman, *Thakur Panchanan Barman Jibansmriti, Jalpaiguri, 1387 B.S, pp.60-61*
156. Chandi Prasad Sarkar, *The Bengali Muslims, A Study in Their Politicization (1912-1929), Calcutta, 1991, p.68*
157. *Ibid.* p.187
158. Chandi Prasad Sarkar, *op.cit*, p.187
159. See, *Tajjul Hashmi, op.cit.*
160. *Ibid.*
161. *ABP*, 17 October, 1937.

162. For a detailed study on Kisan Sabha movement see N.G Ranga and Swami Sahajananda Saraswati, *History of the Kisan Sabha Movement*, Madras, 1939, pp. 132-138
163. M.A Rasul, *A History of the All India Kisan Sabha*, Calcutta, 1989, pp. 22-23
164. *Ibid*, pp 29-30
165. M A Rasul, *op. cit*, p. 29
166. *Ibid*, p. 29
167. *Ibid*, p. 23
168. *Ibid*
169. For a detail study see Madhu Limaye, *Evolution of Socialist Policy*, Hyderabad, 1952, pp. 1-5.
170. For details see M A Rasul, *op. cit*, p. 294-36 f.
171. *Ibid*
172. *Ibid*.
173. See the *Return Showing Results of Elections in India, 1937, Cmd, 5589, Vol. XXI*, India Office Library Records, cited in, Harun-or Rashid, *op. cit*, p. 77.
174. Congress leader Kiran Sankar Roy informed that ‘.....soon after the general election Mr Fazlul Huq, the then leaders of the Praja Party, met prominent members of the Congress Party and had several talks regarding the formation of a coalition. But these talks were inconclusive and no agreement as to policy and programme was actually arrived at. One of the main points of difference was what the parties should do if the political prisoner of which there was a large number at the time was not released forthwith. The Kisan Praja Party while willing to put pressure for the release of political prisoners did not agree that the Cabinet would

resign if the political prisoners were not released immediately.' *ABP*, July, 1941,p.7.

175. *Indian Annual Register*, Vol 1, 1937, pp.192-93

176. Quoted from unpublished letters in the possession of Nirad C Choudhury-the private secretary of Sarat Bose. For details see Leonard A Gordon; *Bengal- the Nationalist Movement; 1876-1940*, New Delhi, 1979, pp.284-285.

177. *Ibid*.

178. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*,LXVI,,1978-79,p.405

179. See,the latter dated 21 December, 1938 from Subhas Chandra Bose to Mahatma Gandhi, from unpublished letters in the possession of Nirad C Choudhury,cited in Leonard Gordon,*op.cit*,285.

180. Leonard Gordon,*Ibid*.

181. See Claude Markovits,*Congress Policy Towards Business in the pre Independence Era*, Richard Sission and Stanley Wolpart,*op.cit*,pp250-270.

182. *Ibid*.

183. *Indian Annual Register*,*op.cit*.pp.192-93

184. Partha Chatterjee 'Bengal Politics and the Muslim Masses 1920-1947',*The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*,March 1982,vol.xx,No

185. Anderson to Linlithgow ,7 April 1937,Bengal Governor's Report to Viceroy,R/3/2/2/p.3,cited in Haran-or Rashid,*op.cit*.p.232

166. GB Governor's Fortnightly Report, 19 August, 1937

187. *Ibid*

188. Mansur A.M,*op.cit* ,pp.180-181

189. A.Rasul ,*Krisak Sabhar Itihas*, Calcutta ,1969,p.84

190. For details, Md Abdur Rahim, *The Muslim Society and Politics in Bengal-1757-1947*, Dhaka, 1978, pp.52-57 and Al Sayed ed. *Fazlul Rahman Khan, Anudar Itihaser Ek Dasak 1937-1947*, Dhaka, 1997, pp.79-116
191. *Star of India*, July 30, 1938
192. *Star of India*, May 27, 1938.
193. Governor's Report, Brabourne to Linlithgow, August 6, 1938
194. See Khan, Tamizuddin Khan, *The Test of Time; My Life and Days*, Dhaka, 1989, pp.138-45
195. *Ibid*, April 17, 1938. Sarat Bose alleged that who framed the Tenancy Bill had sided with the vested interests against the peasantry. Also see, R Copland *Indian Politics 1936-1942*, London, 1943, p.28.
196. ***Bengal Legislative Assembly Proceedings, 10 August, 1938***
197. *Star of India*, 24 August, 1938, p.6
198. *Star of India*, 13 January, p.5
199. Suhrawardy's speech at Mollar Hat, Khulna, 15 January, 1938, *Azad*, 20 January, 1938, p.8
200. It seemed that the Congress high command asked the KPP to join the Congress by totally dissolving its separate identity and Huq did not agree.
- For details see Lal Bahadur, *The Muslim League, It's History---Activities and Achievements*, Agra, 1954, p.238. Copland Reginald, *The Indian Problem*, Part II New York, 1944, p.28.
201. See Harun-or Rashid, *Forshadowing of Bangladesh, op. cit*, pp.54-74.
202. Letter of Fazlul Huq to Jinnah dated Jan 23, 1941, vide *ABP*, dated Jan 29, 1941.

203. See Md Abdur Rahim, *The Muslim Society and Politics in Bengal, 1757-1947*, Dacca, pp.253-257.
204. *Bengal Legislative Assembly Proceedings*, Vol.LI, no 4, Sep 30 1937, p.2293
205. *Star of India*, May 27 1938
206. Home Fortnightly Report, 1st half May 1937 and 2nd half, June 1938
207. *Ibid.*
208. A Rasul, *op. cit.*, pp.70-71
209. Abani Lahiri, *Post War Revolt of the Rural Poor in Bengal : Memoirs of a Communist Activist*, Interviewed by Ranajit Dasgupta, Calcutta, 1999, p.64
210. 'Taking Stock After the Elections in Bengal', Nityananda Chowdhary, Organizing Secretary, B.P.T.U.C. published in 'The New Age', April, 1937
211. *Ibid.*
212. Abdullah Rasul, *op. cit.* pp.3-40
213. *Ibid.*

The popular demands of the proposed conference were,

1. For Complete Independence.
2. For the rejection of the salve constitution
3. For a constituent assembly freely elected by the Indian people
4. For the immediate release of all political pensioners detunes and interneers
5. for repeal of all anti democratic legislation
6. For freedom of press, meeting and speech
7. For 50% reduction in land rent and revenue
8. For abolition of all feudal dues and labor

9. Cancellation of peasant and working class debts .
10. Land to landless peasant labourers.
11. 8 hour day
12. Freedom to strike and picket
13. Insurance against sickness and old age benefits
14. Free and compulsory primary and secondary education
15. Minimum wage.
214. See the Election Manifesto of the Krisak Praja Party and the Muslim League in Appendix I and Appendix II
215. *National Front* ,April 17,1938
216. *Ibid*, Editorial, October 16,1938
217. See S Rai Choudhry, *Leftist Movements in India*, Calcutta, 1977, pp112-122
218. See the message of Jay Prakash Narayan, the General Secretary of the All India Congress Socialist Party to the General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee, cited in Bimal Prasad,*op.cit*,pp.82
219. All India Congress Socialist Party ; *Report of the Second Conference*; see General Secretary's Report,p.40
220. Limaye,*op.cit*,p.6
221. *Ibid*
222. Jayprakash Narayan, *Towards Struggle*,*op.cit*, p.170
223. Cited in Vandita Varma,*op.cit* p.170
224. The Royists objected that there was no necessary for a joint anti imperialist platform. They did not want to strengthen the CSP or the Congress left wing as a whole and at any cost wanted to check the Communists coming in contact with the CSP. Actually he wanted to

strengthen his own group and wanted to establish his views on that of the CSP. See Vandita Varma, *op.cit* pp.172-173

225. Refom of 1935 onwards, the Royists emerged as an important group in the trade union movement. It was the Royists who brought forward a spirit of unity in the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC). An agreement was made between the executive council of the CSP and the AITUC that the later would provide scopes for the former to work in the trade unions. As a result the CPI also got a chance of capturing positions in the AITUC. See, V.B Karnik, *Indian Trade Unions—A Survey*, Bombay, 1966,p.88

226. Although the CSP the Royists and the Communists worked jointly within the AITUC in mid thirties, each of them was eager to increase its own influence by using the platform of the AITUC. On the other the Royists like Rajani Mukherjee, Mukundalal Sarkar, Sudhin Pramanik, Jatin Mitra and others had tried to put Roy at the forefront to make their presence felt at the union. Though the Royists wanted to make M.N Roy the president of the Nagpur session of the AITUC, CSP leader Suresh Chandra Banerjee was elected president at the session. Apart from this petty conflict, the CSP and the Royists clashed mainly on the issue of joining the ministry after the election of 1937. The CSP alleged that that Roy himself had opposed office acceptance but voted for it. The Royists even were accused of spreading false rumors against the knowledge of the CSP. Thus in 1937, one communist member of the CSP requested Jayprakash Narayan to take disciplinary action against the Royists for 'disruptionist' activities. See, Letter of V B Karnik to Sudhin Pramanik , 2 August, 1937,GB, I.B File No 248/26, and GI Home Poll, File No. 18/4 /37

227. Vandita Verma, *op.cit*, p.174
228. *Ibid*.
229. See Goutam Chattopadhyay, *Bengal Electoral Politics, op.cit*, pp.143-146
230. The Bengal Labour Party merged with the Communist Party in 1937. Since then the latter had been utilizing the platform of the former for trade union organizations in Calcutta and adjoining industrial areas. Signs of disagreement appeared towards the end of September when Muzaffar Ahmed, Somnath Lahiri, Abdul Halim, Soroj Mukherjee and others insisted the liquidation of the Labour Party in the interest of the CPI-CSP unity and the formation of one United Socialist Party. It was against the will of the noncommunist Labour leader Niharendu Dutta Majumdar who wished to extend his party on an all India basis. As a result of this rupture the BLP parted their ways with the Communists. GOB, IB, 'Note on the Development of the Communist Movement in Bengal,' File No.364/ 38(1)/ (Sep 1938-1939)
231. Abani Lahiri, *op.cit*. pp.27-28
232. *Ibid*.
233. GB, I.B, 'Note on the Development of the Communist Movement in Bengal', File No.364/38 (1)/ (Sep 1938-39)
234. *Ibid*; For details see, *Indian Communist Party Documents*, Bombay, 1957, Document No 3, p.36
- 235 GB, IB, Note on the Development of the Communist Movement in Bengal', File No.364/38 (1)/ (Sep 1938-39)
236. *Ibid*
237. It did not materialize due to the neutral stand taken by the All India Congress Socialist Party and the official CSP in Bengal under Gunada

Majumdar over the issue of forming the working committee according to the wishes of Gandhi. *Ibid.*

238.*Ibid.*

239.For detailed study on this issue see Jayprakash Narayan, *Socialist Unity and the Congress Socialist Party*, Bombay, 1942, pp.25-26; Sajjid Zaheer 'Unity is Strength' in the 'Congress Socialist', March 5, 1938,

240.*Ibid.*

241.The Faizpur Thesis was adopted on December 23 & 24 ,1936. General Secretary of the party Minu Masani declared that 'at Meerut in January 1936, (Meerut Thesis) the Party (CSP) took shape as a Marxist Socialist Party . At Faizpur the role of the party would define its tasks in terms of transforming the Congress into a powerful anti imperialist front. Form the Faizpur decisions it was evident that here was a party committed to Marxian Socialism and leading anti imperialist people's movement towards the ultimate goal. Both the ideals of popular struggle and national revolution were incorporated into the new programme of the party.All India Congress Socialist Party Documents, 1937, pp.56-65

242.*Ibid*

243. Staying in various detention camps during 1938-39the Anushilan revolutions came in a close contact with the ideals of Marxism-Leninism. A section of the Anushilan Samity members who were being attracted towards Marxism did not find it possible to come in accord with the left sectarian approach of the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International. They sought to follow an alternative path outside the organizational structure of the COM intern and the Indian official communists. After several scrutiny they came to a conclusion that the CPI's policy of shift from left sectarianism to the united front

policy was directed by its allegiance to the dictates of the Soviet and it had no relation with the existing relation of class forces in India vis-à-vis the forces of imperialism. Ultimately these people opted for a new path of non conformist Marxism and got converted into the Revolutionary Socialist Party of India. For a general analysis see Tridib Choudhury, 'Historical role of Anushilan Samity in the Indian Revolutionary Movement' in 75th Anniversary of Anushilan Samity ,9 a *Souvenir*), Calcutta, 1977, pp.1-69.

244. The Hindustan Socialist Republican Association was formed in 1928 as a revolutionary group. They had studied Marxism-Leninism in the early 1930s when they were in jail, and decided to function independently of the Communist Party and Communist International. Most of the members of this organization later joined the Revolutionary Socialist Party . See V.N Bajpai, *The Extremist Movement in India*, Allahabad, 1974, p.233; Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, *In Search of Freedom, Calcutta, 1967*, pp.206-210

245. *Ibid*

246. In the Anti Compromise conference at Ramgarh Subhas Chandra Bose moved the leftist parties towards an uncompromising struggle against the British. The Anushilan group within the CSP joined in the conference. The Anushilan Marxists did not like the Gandhian mania of the CSP that even after pursuing an anti war policy, they could not move out of its own , independent of Gandhian leadership. Thus the Anushilan Marxists took the final decision in Ramgarh of separating itself from the CSP and formed a new party of the Marxist Leninist revolutionaries named as the Revolutionary Socialist Party of India. Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, *op.cit*, p.533

247. *Ibid.*

248. Jogesh Chatterjee, *op.cit*, pp.513-4

249. David M Laushey, *Bengal Terrorism and the Marxist Left: Aspects of Regional Nationalism in India 1905-1942*, Calcutta, 1975, p.125

250. Jogesh Chatterjee, *op.cit*, p.533

251. This type of assessment of the CPI has been reflected in the Thesis and Platform of Action of the Revolutionary Socialist Party of India (RCPI) 5th impression 1946, pp.13-17.

252. See, Overstreet and Windmiller, *Communism in India*, Bombay, 1960, p.170; *National Front*, April 3, 1938.

253. *National Front*, March 19, 1939, p.101

254. *Ibid.*

255. GB, I.B, 'Note on the Development of the Communist Movement in Bengal', File No.364/38 (1)/ (Sep 1938-39).

256. *Ibid.*

257. *Ibid*

258. For a detail analysis of the politics of M.N Roy see G.P Bhattacharjee, *Evolution of Political Philosophy of M.N Roy*, Calcutta, 1971, p.72; Dipti Kumar Roy, *Leftist Politics in India; M.N Roy and Radical Democratic Party*, Calcutta, 1989, pp.10-11; GB, Home Poll, Notes on the Communist Situation in India, 1935-1936 File no.322/36

259. The importance of 'transitional' party has been described in M.N Roy, *The Future of Indian Politics*, Calcutta, 1971. (Preface)

260. Cited in Dipti Kumar Roy, *Trade Union Movement in India*, Calcutta, 1990, p.36

261. *Ibid*

262. *Ibid*, p.37

263. GB, I.B, 'Note on the Development of the Communist Movement in Bengal', File No.364/38 (1)/ (Sep 1938-39).
- 264.GB, Home Poll, File No,572/39,'Note on the Communist Situation in India',
- 265.Sugata Basu,*op.cit*
- 266.Subho Basu,*op.cit*,pp226-229.
- 267.*Ibid*,pp.233-238.
268. A. M Zaidi,ed,*Evolution of Muslim Political Thought 1857-1947*
Vol. IV p.156
269. For details see, Aditya Mukherjee, *Imperialism, Nationalism and the Making of the Indian Capitalist Class, 1920-1947*, New Delhi,2002,pp.40-74;Sashi Joshi& Bhgagwan Josh,*op.cit*,pp.131-134
- 270.Aditya Mkhherjee,*Ibid*.
- 271.Subho Basu,*op.cit*,pp.226-229
- 272.Subho Basu,*op.cit*,p.237
- 273.GB,Home Poll. File No.326/1937.
- 274.Subho Basu,*op.cit*,p.256
- 275.*Ibid*.
- 276.*Ibid*.
- 277.GB Fortnightly Report on the Political Situation in Bengal for the years 1928-39,(Report on the Political Situation in Bengal for the 1st Month of March,1937)File No.90/1928.
278. Ashim Kumar Dutta ed, *Shyama Prasad Mukherjee; Leaves From A Diary*, New Delhi,1993,p.26
- 279 *Ibid*.,p.28
- 280.*Ibid*
- 281.*Ibid*,pp.33-34
- 282.*Ibid*.p.29