

Chapter IV

Minor Political Parties and Bengal Politics: 1939-1947

The final debacle of the leftists in the Tripuri session of the Congress of 1939 was resulted in the formation of a Left Consolidation Committee by Subhas Bose for the purpose of bringing together the quarreling factions of the lefts. The committee set the ground for the unification of the entire radical anti imperialist elements on the basis of a minimum programme. The CSP, the CPI and the Royists apparently showed their eagerness to work with the Left Consolidation Committee but stood against the idea of joining the proposed new party of Subhas Chandra Bose. After his formal resignation from the Congress Presidentship, he declared the formation of Forward Block on 3rd May, 1939 as a left platform within the Congress at a public meeting in Calcutta.¹ Among its three major objectives the idea of consolidating the leftist forces or launching an uncompromising struggle against the British had carried with it a direct appeal to the masses as well as to the other left parties.² But the very objective of winning over the majority section of the Congress indeed opened the scopes for further explanation and confusion. In fact the leftist forces in 1939 had a numbers of reasons to defend their own position and the platform of left consolidation broke up under pressures from different angles. On one point all most all the important forces agreed with the other that in no circumstances they would join the Forward Block and if possible organize their own independent party.³ In case of the CPI, the situation was a bit tricky because of their general sympathy for the line of United Front which did not allow them to take a reactionary stand against

the rightists under Gandhi ⁴. Yet, during the initial years, 1939-40, both the Forward Blok and the CPI in Bengal conducted joint movements for some age old demands like the release of the political prisoners and particularly the Communist led Student Federation in Bengal worked actively with the Forward Block at the time of the removal of the Howell Monument in July 1940.⁵ However, being caught in the dilemma of having to choose between left unity and national unity, the CPI at last took its decision in favour of the National Front strategy.⁶

Other than CSP, the Royists also failed to keep their promises and eventually struck the first blow at the Left Consolidation Committee in 1939 by simply betraying the Leftist cause on an important issue.⁷ M.N Roy transformed his Radical League into a separate party called the **Radical Democratic Party** in 1940. He criticized the Forward Block for not adopting any ideology worth the name and brought allegations against the CSP for its surrendering approach towards Gandhism.⁸ However, in a letter to the editor of the 'Forward Block', a political weekly, one S. Lal, an independent observer, attacked the Bengal League of Radical Congressmen for carrying on 'baseless propaganda' that the Forward Block had no programme different from the Congress group. In his opinion,

The Leaguers in Bengal have been and are playing directly into the hands of the Rightists and the opportunists. I take it that they do not oppose the Forward Block and other Leftists in Bengal simply for the sake of opposition.....because they have said many a time that the opposition should always be prepared to take up the responsibilities of

leadership....they want to replace the present Left leadership of Bengal by an 'Alternative Leadership' consisting of Gandhi-ites and famous opportunists.⁹

In fact these parties were more guided by personal preferences than by solid objectives or programmes. They shifted their stand so rapidly that no one could make a final decision on these parties. Their overall composition remained more or less same. Apart from the revolutionaries, students, mill workers, high caste well educated Hindus were the major recruits of those parties barring a few exceptions. No doubt, a general crisis of ideological ambiguity persisted within the rank and file of these parties and it had a direct impact on the very confidence of the masses aspiring for some revolutionary changes beyond the tedious political discourse of the major political parties.

One can not deny the fact that if the CSP and the CPI could have organized the leftist block after Haripura in 1938, the Forward Bloc would not be a necessity at all.¹⁰ One noted CPI leader Saroj Mukherjee later on accused the Royists for not cooperating with the left consolidation efforts.¹¹ At a time he also charged the CSP for their pro rightist sentiments. Growing suspicion within the CSP against the CPI, according to Mukherjee, not only damaged leftist unity within the Congress but also ruined the image of the CSP before its followers.¹² Nevertheless, why did the leftists ultimately parted their ways, Bose recalled in 1941, 'remains a mystery to me up to the present day'.¹³ Either these parties were getting anxious to lose their individual identities or they were in a dilemma to choose between socialism or anti

imperialism as their primary objective. In Bose's view a 'genuine' leftist should have to fight simultaneously with the imperialists and their Indian allies along with the double faced Congress rightists who were at a secret deal with the British imperialists.¹⁴ 'Those who are prepared to face Imperialism but shrink from a clash leftists' with the Rightists' under a plea of 'unity', were termed as 'pseudo-¹⁵' by Bose and he hoped the Forward Block to become a genuine leftist organization by simply eliminating the pseudo- leftist elements through a natural historical process.¹⁶

Researchers and historians till now have contributed numbers of pages in examining the currents and cross currents of politics on the eve of the Second World War. The emergence of the Forward Block and the subsequent tussle between the Rights and the leftists has been treated as one of the most crucial developments of late colonial politics in India. The primary enthusiasm shown by the minor leftist parties towards the left consolidation programmes and their shifting of position a little after, still engages a researcher into an in-depth study of the events of 1939-1940. But what makes one more curious is the attitude of some Bengali leftists who did not dare to raise a voice of dissent before the decisions taken by the High Command of their respective parties. A good numbers of CSP leaders from Bengal openly asked justification for revising the stand of the party without having any prior consultation with the provincial leadership. One statement by some Suresh Chandra Deb, explained the reasons of his joining the Forward Block in the following way.

I have been an enthusiastic member of the Congress Socialist Party since its inception...But circumstances have forced me to resign from that party...Since the Tripuri Congress we had been expecting a general conference of the Party which would have given the members an opportunity to making their voices heard in the higher circles of the party but in this we have been disappointed. I have been attracted and impressed by the bold dynamic lead given by the 'Forward Block' and I have, therefore, joined it as a member. ...I would not have voluntarily resigned from the Congress Socialist Party and I wish the party had given individual liberty to its members to join the "Forward Block." But I am constrained to resign because until I do so I can not become a member of the "Forward Block".¹⁷

The Forward Block attracted a large number of supporters from the CSP, the Anushilan Communists, official communists, trade unionists and the Kisan Sabhaists. Personalities with strong Congress connection like K.F Nariman, Satya Pal, S. Sardul Singh Caveeshar, Shnkar Lal, Abdul Rahman, Mr Hosmani had worked with the party with some first grade trade union and Kisan leaders like Indu Lal Yagnik , Niharendu Dutta Mazumdar and others.¹⁸ However, the alleged communist control of the CSP, strained relationship of the Congress and the CPI working within it, lack of understanding between the CPI and the other communist parties specially the Anushilan Marxists and the Bengal Labour Party , difference of opinion within the CSP on the issue of maintaining relation with the CPI and the Royists and the growing antagonism of the Congress right against Leftist consolidation -- were some of the problems of leftist movement in Bengal on the eve of the Second World War.¹⁹ Situations became clumsier when one minor party merged with another and the second entered the third one for tactical reasons, even though that the first one had hardly anything common with the last one. In Bengal the

outlawed CPI might have some programme oriented similarity with the Bengal Labour Party and for some practical necessities they preferred a joint movement with the Labour Party at the same time CPI's working with the CSP on the United Front issue might have some tactical grounds,²⁰ but such a combination did not necessarily ensure any advantage for the Labour Party which remained under pressure for a while to get involved with the CSP as part of communist interaction with the socialists.²¹ However, the non communist elements of the Labour Party did not show any interest to the CSP for its alleged fascination for Gandhi and openly criticized the communist idea of National Front a 'theory of class collaboration with the reactionary Gandhian bourgeois leadership of the Congress.'²² In the provincial party conference of the CPI at Chandan Nagar in 1938 the internal squabbles between the CPI and the Labour Party showed that it would not be possible any more to make a eyewash on unity and within a year in Tripuri they finally parted their ways.²³ One should not close his eyes to the fact that the final departure of the Labour Party leaders from the CPI caused a serious uproar in Bengal political arena because on the one hand it ruined the least possible hope for a joint endeavor towards labour liberation and exposed the ideological inconsistency of the both in terms of objective and modalities on the other.²³ During the last two years of the 1930s conflicts between the leftist parties went to the bitter end specially on the response of Niharenu Dutt Mazumdar (Secretary of the Bengal Labour Party) to Mr. Ben Bradley's (communist leader of Great Britain) call for a united front by all colonial people against German fascism.²⁴ To Dutta Mazumdar it was nothing but a call for the Indians to join the war and he unequivocally criticized Bradly for distinguishing between two types of

colonial rule; one of fascism and one under imperialism, retaining bourgeoisie democratic front at home.²⁵ Commenting on Dutta Mazumdar's stand, communist spokesman Bhawani Sen remarked, 'This is nothing but the superb lesson of Economism which treats trade union politics on a par with Socialist politics. Dutta Mazumdar looks upon the world as a genuine trade unionist...to a trade unionist, limiting his vision to the confines of collective bargaining among employers and employees; there is no difference between the politics of disarmament conference and the politics of world war, between fascist military rule in colonies and limited civic rights under bourgeoisie democratic imperialist state.'²⁶ This statement itself spelled out the basic enigma of trade unionism in relation to a movement by the 'genuine' communists.' The Labour Party always stood in favour of a workers and peasant party under the guidance of its most conscious elements instead of a party of petty bourgeoisie lacking a working class leadership like the CPI.²⁷ Right from its inception the Labour Party turned up the language of labour politics by providing sufficient encouragement to the 'conscious' elements of the workers unlike the CPI which had paid a little or no attention to this aspect of labour politics. Actually the existing trade unions be it of the CSP, the WPP or the Labour Party, paid their attention entirely on the subject of class movements without any prior calculations on the very multiplicities of a colonial context where the term 'class' itself was subject to determination. Already the government and its propertied allies had successfully isolated the 'red flag' unions and identified the fundamental mechanism of sustaining its influence over a considerable segment of the workers.²⁸ The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 pointed out the shifting of such mechanism into a new phase of politics when the

spirit of populism lost its essential stimulus into the flimsy ground of political uncertainties and ideological hollowness.

The different stands taken by the minor political parties on the Second World War brought unprecedented changes in Bengal politics. The establishment of a separate party by the ex Anushilanites seemed interesting because they could either join the Forward Block or continue with the CSP.²⁹ But none of this option was taken for granted. In a article, 'An Appeal To Socialists' , Niharendu Dutta Mazumdar penned the anxiety of the socialists that ' If the socialists joined the Forward Block today they would be swamped by Left nationalists who would carry the day and drag socialism into its trail'.³⁰ He brilliantly used the argument that since the Forward Block was not a party, but a bloc, so the socialists should not think twice before joining it to fulfill 'the important task of building up a United Mass Proletarian Socialist Party'.³¹ But the Anushilan Marxists had their own understanding of the situation. They definitely supported the Forward Block on the idea of waging an uncompromising anti imperialist struggle but could not find anything convincing in the proposed objectives of the party. As far as the objectives were concerned, the Anushilanites were more interested in a classless society rather than any 'loose path' followed by the Forward Block without any concrete ideology³². On the other the Anushilan Marxists had some reservations about the different 'non Marxist' elements within the Forward Block with which, Tridib Choudhury (noted leader of the Revolutionary Socialist Party) mentioned, 'the RSP (Revolutionary Socialist Party) did not feel it could associate.'³³ The obscure attitude of the Congress on the world war made it almost a

necessity for the minor political parties of Bengal to take its own decision.³⁴ It was one of the crucial moments in late colonial India when the minor parties could have been at work with a minimum programme of action. But in reality the minor parties chose their individual course of action whatever the domestic and international situation had permitted them.

For the imperial state the support of the political parties was a necessity because the war required the state to place extraordinary demands to society and it wanted to check every possible nationalist tendency during the war. The Calcutta War Committee was formed by the government to secure support for the British war efforts. Surprisingly no leader of the minor political parties was included in the list of the committee members except two from the *Hindu Mahasabha*. Apart from the mainstream Muslim League leaders, some industrialists, landed aristocrats and a huge number of journalists were interested to join the committee.³⁵ It indicated that minor parties including the KPP and the leftists parties were not considered to be trust worthy or faithful to the war effort of the government rather the government placed their entire trust on the Muslim League and the traditional support base of the Congress i.e. some landed aristocrats and financial magnets. Including the imperial government was perhaps more anxious on the suspicious nature of the communist leaflets and books published in favour of the socialist ideas. A good number of antiwar seditious left lets by the communists were intercepted in 1939 like ...

1. Bolshevik 2. The Communist 3. *Juddher Bazare Chatkal Shramikder Sangram* (Fight of the Jute Mill workers' during the War)

4. *Samrajyabadi Juddha o Communist Partyr Ghosona* (Imperialist war and the declaration of the Communist Party 5. *Juddher Samaye Swadhinatar Jannye Juddha Karo* (Fight for Independence when the war is waging) 6. *Bangla Desher Pratyek Naranarir Kache Communist Partyr Abedan* (An appeal of the Communist Party to every men and women of Bengal) 7. *Samrajyabadi Juddho Pratirodh Karo* (Resist the imperialist war) 8. *Comunist Party's call to Students* 9. *Jan Bahan Shramkder Prati Communist Partyr Dak* (Call of the Communist Party to the motor vehicle workers).³⁶ Surprisingly the militant spirit present in the pamphlets and the posters confirmed its leaning towards a socialist struggle in the wake of the war. This type of endeavor, present in the Bengal provincial party unit, was not committed fully to the policy of the all India leadership of the communists which asked its cadres to function from within the Congress. The posters like '*Notun Diner Alo* (Light of New Days), and leaflets like '*Communist Party ka Chatkal Mazdoor Ke Naaam Salam* (The Salute of the Communist Party to the Jute Mill Workers)³⁷ were issued for addressing the jute workers. In different areas of east and west Bengal economic programmes of the communists went hand in hand with their anti war propogandas. One should not forget the fact that despite their being weak in numerical strength and organizational support and working within the Congress, the communists put an effective challenge before the government and the native oppressors. Apart from inculcating a new spirit among the jute workers in urban areas, they led the jute cultivators to ask for protection from a slump in the war time jute prices as well as demanded a war bonus...³⁸ Not only the communists but the CSP should equally be credited for organizing movements among the peasants of Mymonsingh, Comilla,

Tippera, Dinajpur, Rangpur in the last few years of 1930s.³⁹ However the later's gradual detachment from the peasant front of Bengal weakened the movements of the Kisan Sabha and had left a profound impact on the unity of the Kisan Sabha and the Kisan Samity in several regions of east Bengal.⁴⁰ The late thirties exhibited immense potentials for communist movement in Bengal. In almost every district the party committees were formed except Darjeeling and Cooch Behar.⁴¹ In early forties communist activities slowly gathered momentum in these geographically and politically distinct regions.

In this perspective it is to mention that the official call for a 'united front' by the COM intern did not necessarily become inevitable in rural Bengal. Different groups appeared occasionally in sharp contrast with one or the other backed by a political party. One such group called the Kishoreganj Sub divisional Congress Communist Party emerged out of a cleavage between the Congress and the communist workers of Mymonsinh under the leadership of Nagen Sarkar, an ex detenu in 1940.⁴² Apart from delivering revolutionary speeches, the group often shouted the slogans like 'Down With Communist Party' and 'Long Live Revolution'.⁴³ In western Bengal, specially in the region of South 24 Pargana, the Communist League of Soumen Tagore initiated struggle among the peasants independent of the Kisan Sabha. In the estate of Sir Daniel Hamilton at Gosaba, paddy looting, forcible possession of khas lands by the peasant agitators sensationalized the total situation under the influence of the League.⁴⁴ However, in different regions of north Bengal the leftist parties had shown a unique sense of unity at the time of recruiting members from different levels of politics. A considerable

portion of these people later joined the CPI during the post war mass upsurge throughout the country. In Fulbari of Dinajpur one Rup Narayan Roy from an influential jotedar family joined the Krisak Samity after being inspired by the speech of communist leader Bankim Mukherjee in 1938.⁴⁵ many activists were drawn from non agriculturist class or lower middle class. In Dinajpur Kali Sarkar, Krishnadas Mohanta, Ganen Sarkar etc came come form a middle class background.⁴⁶ Rregarding Kali Sarkar one of his former colleague mentioned that '.....Kali Sarkar became so much so much a part of the life of the peasants that it did not seem that he belonged to a different class. I was surprised to see him wearing anklets of bells and dancing along with the peasants, singing songs of the Tebhaga struggle composed by him'.⁴⁷

Under the leadership of Khemeshranjan Chattopadhyay, Nripen Roy, Tarapada Dhar and Amar Raha, the **Communist League of Soumen Tagore** also opened its branch in Dinajpur in late thirties.⁴⁸ In this period ex Anushilan and Jugantar members also attempted to carry on the popular struggle towards a meaningful destination. The increasing influence of the Revolutionary Socialist Party in Dinajpur was an example of such endeavor.⁴⁹ It was these parties and organizations which contributed a lot in organizing the famous sharecroppers' agitations in the frontier regions of north Bengal in late 30s specially in the areas of Dinajpur, Rangpur and Jalpaiguri.⁵⁰ However, the communists did not like to recognize the fact that other than the CPI any other party could have done anything for the peasants in these regions. Bibhuti Guha, one of the noted peasant leader of that region himself accepted that he had been earlier drawn towards the Royists or Soumen Tagore but in the

version of a veteran communist no one in Dinajpur belonged to Roy's party except a few among the middle class.⁵¹ Soumen Tagore, according to his version might have some contact with Gangarampur. The basic problem of the leftists in this region was that the leadership of none of the parties--- be it the Revolutionary Socialist Party or the Revolutionary Communist Party lived among the peasants in the villages. None can deny the fact that unlike the non communist parties the communist activists lived among the peasants, observed their problems closely and the middle class activists gradually changed their lifestyle.⁵²

This present discussions does not provide enough scopes to make a review of the movement, however, a special reference should be made on this first class based challenge to the jotedars' power in north Bengal. From 1938 onwards in Jalpaiguri the CSP and its peasant wing tried to cover the distance between the cities based middle class and the peasants.⁵³ CSP first emphasized the need to popularize leftist movements among the peasants and the labourers and in 1938 one non Congress Krisak Samity came into being. Chunilal Basu, Madhab Dutta, Gurudas Roy and Sachin Dasgupta were the leading figures of the Samity. In the Moidandigi conference of 1939, demands were raised for a separate peasant organization by the peasants themselves so that the peasants could make their voice heard without the interference of upper classes.⁵⁴ This type of effort undoubtedly set the trend for future course of peasant movement in this region. From this conference the CPI officially constituted its district committee with those leaders and workers who had already shown their commitment for the cause of the peasants. Md.Khijimuddin, Radha Raman Barman, Dinanath Barman,

Umesh Barman were a few peasant workers present in the executive committee of the Samiti.⁵⁵ Just like Jalpaiguri the minor parties worked hand in hand at least for a time, in several other areas before and after the war. But no sense of unity could have been shown at the time of the war when at least one common programme and principle was necessary to check the imperial motives. One, who could make headway of the situation, was the Congress---but it failed totally in its bid for gaining some advantages for India and her people from the British government. This major party was left with hardly any alternative but to wage an individual Satyagraha in October, 1940.

The Radical Democratic Party was the first minor party which pleaded for support to the British government in its anti Fascist war against its previous pro Congress position continued up to the summer of 1940.⁵⁶ One official source informed that M N Roy perhaps was intended to increase 'his influence in Bengal and may emerge as the leader of the terrorist parties which aim at dominating the Congress in that province'.⁵⁷ In this respect it may be pointed out that the stands taken by M N Roy in 1939-41 were full of contradistinctions and it was nothing but an expression of political opportunism that he had shown to break his political isolation. Unlike other leftist parties, Roy concluded that the war as a war of accident and a clash between revolutionary and counter revolutionary forces, not of democracy and fascism. Thus the war, he maintained, would lead to the victory of revolutionary forces that is the defeat of fascism and India's interest would best be served by taking a part in British war efforts.⁵⁸ The Revolutionary Socialist Party, unlike the CPI, continued to follow its anti war stand even after the German

onslaught on Soviet Union ⁵⁹. During the Quit India movement of 1942, this party enthusiastically contributed in it. This party was in a strong opposition to the CPI and the Radical Democratic Party who meant that anti fascists had to support the war efforts of the allied powers.⁶⁰ During the 'Quit India' phase one group within the Revolutionary Socialist Party opted for underground terrorist activities and the other preferred a direct involvement with the peasants and the workers. From the very beginning the Revolutionary Socialist leaders were in favour of an understanding with the other leftists in Bengal. On 3rd September, 1942 they took a joint resolution on the future course of the August movement with the Forward Block.⁶¹ Sibdas Ghosh, Amar Mukherjee and leader other Revolutionary Socialist leaders were present in this conference along with the Forward Block leader Panchanan Singh.⁶² But the internal divisions of the Revolutionary Socialist leaders specially that of Anil Ghosh, Sibdas Ghosh and Manmothnath Ganguli blocked the very prospects of an united venture in Bengal.⁶³ In Bengal the Forward Block and the pro Block organizations like the Youth League, Sri Sangha and the Bengal Volunteers had done extensive work in favour of a joint anti war forum with the other leftist parties. Throughout 1943 Pramatha Banerjee, Santosh Basu Hemprabha Majumdar and other Forward Block leaders were seen to maintain friendly relations with the Revolutionary Socialists and the Congress Socialists in Bengal.⁶⁴ Anil Roy and his wife Lila Roy were at the forefront of various popular movements under Forward Block. It is to be noted that from outside Subhas Chandra Bose tried to make connections with Hemanta Basu, Purnachandra Das, Atindranath Basu, Satyaranjan Bakshi, Satrya Gupta Nalini Guha, Bijoy

Dutta and others. They stayed as the most trustworthy lieutenants of Subhaschanda in Bengal. Organisations.⁶⁵

Another minor party, organized by Soumen Tagore in 1934 went for something different than the policies espoused by the others. Right from its inception the Communist League neither liked the ultra leftist sectarian approach of the official communists nor did it shown any interest in the tactics of united front.⁶⁶ This party denounced both the Congress and the CSP as not being capable of achieving a proletarian revolution in India because of their reactionary bourgeoisie character.⁶⁷ In Bengal Kamelesh Banerjee, Indra Sen, P K Roy, Karuna Roy were among its principal figures.⁶⁸ In order to justify the objectives of establishing a revolutionary government and a republic of the proletariats, the Communist League changed its name as Revolutionary Communist Party of India at the third party conference in 1938. However, some other sources inform that the party of Soumen Tagore changed its name as Revolutionary Communist Party of India in March 1943 to make its stand clear from that of the CPI on the Quit India issue.⁶⁹ Soumen Tagore and those who followed him in the Revolutionary Communist Party had a strong belief on the theory of a Permanent Revolution where in the first place bourgeoisie democratic revolution would be passed into the phase of a socialist revolution and in the next step it would lead to a revolution all over the world.⁷⁰ The outbreak of the Second World War, thus, emerged as a chance of overthrowing the imperial rule and setting up of a revolutionary government at the end of the democratic revolution. Denouncing the war as 'an imperialist predatory war for redistribution of the colonial world',

the party called on the impoverished nations not to help the 'warmongers'.⁷¹ This party was keen to turn the Quit India movement into a revolutionary one rather than falling into the line of passive resistance even though a large number of leaders including Soumen Tagore were jailed soon after the war began and remained imprisoned until the end of the war.⁷² From within the jail (April 1943-October 1945) Soumendranath sent some very important articles and instructions for his followers. Revolutionary Communist Party was one man party and the instructions sent by Soumendranath were followed to carry on the struggle outside. 'Revolution and Quit India' (published in the 'Red Front' in October 1942)⁷³, 'Onward From 1942' (published in the 'Red Front' March 1943)⁷⁴ and 'Quit India in Retrospect' ('Red Front', August 1945)⁷⁵ were the three most important documents of the party written by Somendranath. In these documents Soumendranath sharply criticized Congress and the other left parties. He concluded that the Congress only wanted to take over the state power from the British; it had no revolutionary motive at all. The Congress infect betrayed the people and sabotaged the Quit India movement by leaving them totally on their fate. The people were left for sacrifice--- either 'Do' or 'Die' but, Soumendranath asked, what to do and why to die for? The Congress leaders were not there to answer this question.⁷⁶ (Almost all the top ranking Congress leaders including Gandhi went to jail or kept interned during the movement).The 'Historical Development of Communist Movement in India', ⁷⁷edited and published by the central politburo of the party, was proved to be a valuable analysis of the party on the nature and attitude of the other left parties active during the Quit India phase. On the position of this party one government source informed,

This party did not spare any one of the minor left parties. The CSP, the Forward Block, and the Revolutionary Socialist Party were equally charged of being a mere appendage of the bourgeoisie Congress and were condemned as 'fake leftists' having practically no contribution into the Quit India movement. However, the Revolutionary Communists went to the point of extreme when the CPI and Royists were at the target.⁷⁹ With a limited organizational strength the Revolutionary Communists took part in the Quit India Movement in some areas of 24 Pargana, Nadia, Murshidabad, Birbhum and Calcuta.⁸⁰ Leaders like Pannalal Dasgupta, Arun Banerjee, Sanat Roychudhury etc had participated in various forms of popular protest including that of a strike or sabotaging British war efforts.⁸¹ But in the final evaluation its ultra leftist sectarian approach might have emerged as one of the basic reasons of it not being a mainstream political party apart from its organizational weakness.

It was during this phase when most of the Revolutionary communist leaders were going underground; some existing workers of the party became part of the pro Trotsky Bolshevik Leninist Party. This party, established before the launch of the Quit India movement, had a firm belief on the theory of Permanent Revolution like the Revolutionary communists and put greater emphasis on the leadership of the working class for such a revolution in India with the support of the poor peasants and agricultural proletariats.⁸² They simply attacked Gandhi as 'counter revolutionary' and discarded the Stalinist notion of transforming the imperialist war into a 'people's war'.⁸³ Although this party supported the Quit India cause, they did not find anything convincing in the

mechanism of civil disobedience . They went for a transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war and had attempted to convert the August movement into a revolutionary one involving the workers and the rural proletariats.⁸⁴ In 5th September 1942 Revolutionary Socialist Party leader Rabindra Sen and Trilokya Chakrabourty had directed from jail that The Revolutionary Socialist Party would launch a joint movement with the Bolshevik Leninist Party although this proposed movement did not become a success due to increasing police repression against those parties.⁸⁵ Kamalesh Banerjee, Indra Sen, Dhruvajyoti Majumdar, Karuna Kanta Roy, was a few among the founding figures of Bolshevik Leninist Party in India.⁸⁶

Most of the recruits of these parties were the converted terrorists drawn from a small section of the *bhadralok* class which it self represented a minute fraction of the total population in Bengal. It is difficult to make a proper calculation of the numerical strength of these parties because of their interactive structure of membership. In a period of government repression and political uncertainties, member of a party often shifted his position for either tactical maneuverings or situational necessities. The establishment of the Bolshevik Party in 1939 by some of the leaders of the former Labour Party in Bengal indicated the overall crisis of the leftist movement in India. Whether these leaders were expelled from the CPI or they themselves left it was not clear. Contradictory versions form both of the sides added an extra confusion into the matter. However, these parties misused a great amount of energies over their confrontations on the issue of leftist unity or national unity. Out of the total scenario what makes one perplexed was the dramatic change in the line of

thinking of the CPI after Nazi Germany's attack on Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. CPI's decision on 13 December, 1941 to revise its 'anti imperialist' war stance to a 'People's War' stance mechanically encumbered the party with extra responsibilities.⁸⁷ It required a total reversal of its political mission in India as well. Logically this decision meant the calling off all mass struggles of all classes within India and making India available on the side of the allies with her all resources. Already in the party had criticized the CSP's line as one of 'mutual adjustments' between the Socialists and the Gandhites, Subhas Bose was accused of 'disrupting national unity'.⁸⁸ After June 1941 it was CPI's turn to make every possible effort to convince the others. From an open confrontation with the government to the affable collaboration with it, the **CPI's stance ran counter to the anticipations of the others. One official source mentioned,**

In July 1942, the government of India decided to raise the eight years old ban on the Communist Party to enable it to come out into the open and demonstrate its pro war professions in a practical way. This experiment, which was not without an element of risk proved to be justified. Apart from conducting pro war propaganda, the communists did not participate in the Congress inspired disorder which broke out in 1942 (they were, indeed to weak to do otherwise).....The party has nothing like the mass following of Congress or the Muslim League but relies for support on the allegiance of three sections of the public, namely the industrial workers, the poorer class of the peasantry and the student community .Of these the most politically are the trade unionists who number about 2,50,000. ⁸⁹ (Italics mine)

Although the lifting of ban from the communists might have done as an experiment, it was provided with an opportunity to test the political

competency of the communists on its individual capacity. Out of the total scenario what emerged were the contradictions between the common communist workers and their leaders on the issue of 'people's war' stance.⁹⁰ In Bengal the grass root cadres rightly realized that they could not make themselves detached from the popular forms of struggle in the remotest corners of the province. It was evident from the participation of the communist cadres into various forms of protest during the Quit India movement in Bengal... Explaining the stance of the communists in the Quit India movement communist leader Jyoti Basu wrote that for the sake of democratic and economic rights of the masses, the communist cadres continued to organize popular movements during the struggle.⁹¹ One contemporary student worker Societal Roychudhury tried to convince his mother in an intercepted letter that 'We will stop the Japanese at any cost. It does not mean that the government has become our friend. We do not want a change of our master, so we will stop the Japanese. It will bring our self independence and then it will be easy to fight the British imperialists'.⁹² these type of commentaries were of prime significance for understanding the communist response during the early forties. But where the communists had done a mistake was in their overall party mechanism. They did not make any safeguards for their measures. There should have at least a way and means from the part of the communists to make their efforts justifiable before the people specially the middle class *bhadralok* in Bengal. Whatever little influence the party had wielded over this section of society went into complete jeopardy on account of the communist somersault. As the anti fascist 'people's war' stance logically meant the breaking off of every forms of class struggles in India--- be it of the peasants or the workers, the anti

communist parties did not left a single scope to make the CPI responsible for withdrawing labour strikes and peasant movements in Bengal.⁹³ In this perspective it should be mentioned that some of the leftists had themselves withdrawn from the popular front of struggle and devoted their whole energy into the struggle for independence. The CSP as an example had their thought of suspending the class struggle for the time being so that the opportunity of an imperial war could at best be utilized for the sake of national independence. One such very interesting venture of the socialists was to establish contact with the army. Some letters (one of it was written on August 24, 1943 by some Ratnamoye Devi, an inmate of Mahila Ashram Wardha, to her fellow classmates of the Presidency College) and a few leaflets seized on August 31, 1942 from the Congress office Calcutta were in the form of an appeal addressed to the American and British soldiers stationed in India. Two such alleged leaflet was in cyclostyled Hindi—‘*Sipahio Ab Hamare Bhai Ho*’, another one was ‘*Shahbash Hindustan Police Ke Sipahi*’.⁹⁴ However, the police report informed that until March 23 1943, the All India Socialist Party had not taken any final decision regarding the future policy of involving the army.

In the Calcutta -Howrah industrial belt the CSP workers like Sibnath Banerjee, Abanishwar Mishra, Sudhanshu Mishra, Baidyanath Ganguli, Debendranath Roychudhury, Atul Basu and other got involved into sabotage activities and called strikes in the arm factories.⁹⁵ Nihar Mukherjee of RSP, Niharendu Duuta Majumdar of Bengal Labour Party and Sibdas Banerjee of CSP were active at the striking areas of Bengal Chemical works and strikes at Kashipur factories.⁹⁶ In this region the

various forms of anti British struggle emerged as part of their long drawn resistance movement in the industrial belt. However, it was equally pertinent to raise the expectations of the popular forces for class demands at a time of nationalist struggle so that the popular forces could make an easy identification with the parties.

The task of convincing the masses against the fascist powers was not an easy one. The policy of building an anti Fascist front together with the jotedars and the landlords, the communist leadership had later admitted was a 'as an error'.⁹⁷ Simultaneously they defended their policy on the ground that that the peasants did never join hands with their immediate exploiters and continued to move against the exploitations of those rural elite. To some extent the peasants themselves saved the communist leaders from embarrassment in the rural areas. But the continuing conflict between the 'people's war' programme and the ground realities of peasant consciousness in the villages opened up several controversies within the policy making process itself. As far as the common Bengalis were concerned the communist call for anti Japanese resistant slogans were full of political expectations especially when the whole of Bengal was threatened by a possible Japanese attract at any moment. It could be one of the excellent opportunities for rallying the masses in large scale anti fascist movements. However, the communists totally missed the chance. In a colonial situation where the native exploiters were acting as a support base of the foreign exploiters, anti fascist or any immediate anti Japanese sentiments could not be materialized without addressing the issues the exploited masses were more accustomed to. The communist effort of bringing the masses into world political front was bound to take

an image of 'unpatriotic treachery' because they had already withdrawn from the long drawn class movements without making any prior settlement of those issues of class interests. For a political party which emerged as a revolutionary force of the neglected poor— it was really unexpected. In the party there were tendencies of asking for an indirect support from the masses in favour of their traditional class enemies—the native exploiters including the feudal lords, the industrialists or the business magnets because in the anti fascist world war, the British government in India, the communists concluded, might not be at any difficulty or risk from the domestic popular forces, politically volatile as well.⁹⁸ However, one thing became too much clear that a sheer despondency had immediately captured the public imagination on the very objectives and programmes of the CPI. Even though the CPI demanded the immediate release of the Congress leaders who were arrested during the Quit India movement including Gandhi, it continued to stick to the pro war policy and desperately dismissed the popular movements as a senseless act of the 'fifth columnist'.⁹⁹ It had failed to convince most of the Indians specially the common Bengalis most of whom at that time were getting impatient for immediate freedom—a long awaited vision they had discovered already in the uncompromising struggle of Subhas Chandra or even in the slogans like '*Do or Die*'. The communist effort to balance its attack on the bourgeoisie nationalist leadership by criticizing bureaucratic oppressions failed to cut the ice because the demands like lifting of ban from the Congress or the release of the Congress leaders were neither backed by any widespread mass action nor these were made out of a change of their new policy of

'people's war'. The party itself had admitted it.¹⁰⁰ One of the official sources confirmed that,

latterly, however, pro war propaganda (of the communists) has been allowed to fade out of the picture almost completely because of the situations and troubles in the realm of peasants and labourers outside the legislative political twist.¹⁰¹

In Bengal the CPI could make an impact at least on an objective reality that here the Gandhian method of non violence had never been welcomed wholeheartedly and in the wake of a probable Japanese attack large scale anti fascist mobilization of the people could have been done only by coalescing their regular class confrontations with the struggle against fascism by simply making them aware of the hazardous situation ahead if they could not do so. Even if the communists were too much worried about the fascist aggression all over the world, they lacked the very understanding of the domestic dangers coming out of a sheer wave of communalism within and outside the constitutional political arena. The other minor political parties hardly took any risk to expose themselves before the challenges of a preconceived language of politics because a considerable portion of their energies were lost either in getting away from bureaucratic repression or in making the most suitable efforts for an immediate shutdown of the Raj. Surprisingly a good number of high caste Bengali *bhadraloks* even went to the extent of getting enthusiastic about a supposed connection between the Nazi claim of pure Aryan blood¹⁰² and their self proclaimed legacy of the same. For them Hitler was the savior, a hero who would destroy the citadel of imperialism all over the world.¹⁰³ These sense of racial superiority, even if less

documented, fitted well with the growing annoyance over casteist and religious issues throughout the province. In this circumstance any sluggish type of politics was not to appeal much in Bengal. The leftist parties even if aroused the people in a numbers of occasions, in the whole lacked the essential charisma to win public imagination at the end. One party which could make an exception was Forward Block. This party was alleged to make secret connection with Germany by the government¹⁰⁴ although the allegations had left practically no negative impression on the image of this party or its leaders. In Bengal it was Subhas Bose who over the years characterized the example of an undaunted struggle against the British and their junior native partners. He remained even intolerant of the camouflaged nationalists lacking a true militant spirit. The image of Basu as a true patriot stayed at high forever in Bengal. The communists failed to realize this truth, as if they did not want to realize it. They categorically pointed out Subhas Bose as 'fifth columnist' and his path nothing more than a 'national disruption'.¹⁰⁵ In this period the charges and counter charges of 'treachery' and 'fifth columnist' stalled the relation between the socialists and the followers of Bose on one side and the communists on the other. Leaders like Manikuntala Sen later repented that, the "frequent use of the term 'fifth columnist' indeed became ridiculous. Those who did not follow communist line were tagged as a 'fifth columnist. It was a complete blunder."¹⁰⁶ Later, in the 'Report on Reformist Deviation' of the Second Congress (1948) of the party, it was admitted that,

.....Due to our misconception over imperialism we made objectionable comments on the CSP, the Forward Block and the other leftist parties. We called them 'fifth

columnist' although imperialism itself appeared as the 'fifth columnist' at that moment. In doing this we lost the support of a many. It was one of the reasons that in the post war period the leftist supporters took part in anti communist propagandas in a huge number." ¹⁰⁷

The self criticism of the CPI continued even a decade after partition

"...the communists called Netaji Fascist agent, a traitor. We are sorry for that. We were right in our analysis that the policy of Netaji was wrong. But it was our fault that we called him a traitor. He was a patriot and he fought for India's independence". ¹⁰⁸

Unfortunately these explanations were a quite late affair. The psychological distance between the CPI and the other leftist parties could not be surmounted even at the time of the ultimate catastrophe in 1947.

II

The leftist parties mainly were evolved around one particular personality or a fixed ideology, the fundamental focus of the party cadres changed according to the political necessities. This feature at the same time could become one of a strength and weakness of the respective parties. It was found that as long as these parties could have acknowledged the primacy of the Congress, the task of taking decision on the political future of the country stayed more or less on the hands of the later. But when this major political party seemed to get ineffective due to a special political circumstance the minor parties were to face the criticalities of the moment. Side by side it should be remembered that one undercurrent of challenging the notion of a 'necessary' Congress leadership was active always inside the party organizations of some of the minor parties and

they used to generate this spirit into a new trend of mass politics if situation permitted. But in absence of a viable alternative of a national force like the Congress, communal forces began to sweep Bengal's social landscape from 1943 onwards. This communalism was a bit different from the previous trends. It had now emerged as a political project implicated equally by the colonial state, the Muslim League and the *Hindu Mahasabha*... However, no one can deny the fact that in Bengal already the forces of communalism had replaced the spirits of nationalism and it had become too much evident from the helplessness of the Congress in face of a growing communal frenzy. In fact the Congress brand of nationalism did not fit well with the judicious version of 'Hindu nationalism' promoted by Gandhi ¹⁰⁹ and the juxtaposition of the communal variant of Hindu nationalism with that one espoused by Gandhi put the secular brand of Congress nationalism in severe crisis. It was even misconceived and misinterpreted. Here actually the problem began. Although the concept of communalism do constitutes a threat to the idea of Indian nationalism in general (the overarching concept of Indian nationalism encompassed the universal nationalist spirit of the freedom movement with a concept of nation state), the term Hindu nationalism has always been equated with the idea of communalism.

¹¹⁰Further more 'Hindu nationalism' often becomes 'Hindu Communalism' by simply nullifying the fact that 'communalism' and 'nationalism' are not comparable at all because communalism does not necessarily produce its own ideology rather it is more likely to appropriates other ideological forces towards their respective objectives while nationalism itself is an ideology not a mere historical condition.¹¹¹

Hindu nationalism got benefited from the Congress brand of nationalism

because the latter's challenge to state hegemony indirectly encouraged the development of one alternative to the Congress (an self sufficient representative of the Hindus) by the colonial state. But when these ideologies of Hindu nationalism and Congress brand of Indian nationalism went on to be a sole claimant of the vast Hindu community it put the later into another terrain of political oscillation. On one hand the Congress brand of nationalism had to combat the colonial compulsions and on the other it had to assimilate the class interest of the peasants and workers into a 'bourgeoisie hegemony'. This dilemma of the Congressite nationalism went up to the independence and it was due to this dilemma that it failed to tackle the issue of Hindu nationalism and the forces like the Hindu Sabha or the *Hindu Mahasabha* took the total advantage of the situation. **Minor political parties especially that of the leftists never took this point seriously.** It was because of the fact that almost all the leftist parties in Bengal did not make a close analysis of the real spirit of Indian nationalism. They devoted their full attention towards a violent overthrow of the British rule to make it a Russian dreamland and totally neglected the real strength of India nationalism which had developed its cherished tradition of liberal ideas and democratic endeavors. Their uncompromising militancy and an oscillating political chemistry with the major political parties did not cater the very urgencies of Bengal politics in 1940s and they more or less remained helpless in face of a growing communal frenzy all over the province. The Forward Block at least made an effort to neutralize the communal tendencies by diplomatic maneuverings but it was not at all enough for the precarious situation ahead.

The unexplored episode of *Hindu Mahasabha*- Forward Block negotiations in early forties unfolded the inner anxieties of situational political adjustments especially when these two parties had engrossed into bitter quarrels over some sensitive issues. It was one of the unhealthy developments in Bengal where Subhas Chandra Bose and Shyama Prasad Mukherjee had to face an open fight in the Calcutta Corporation election of 1940.¹¹² If the duo could make a joint front against the Muslim League, the situations could have been a bit different. Shyamaprasad directly condemned Subhas for the failure of the Forward Block -Mahasabha understanding in spite of some initial efforts of agreement from both of the sides.¹¹³ The joint board of the two parties (consisting Subhas Bose, Sarat Bose, Rajendra Chandra Dev, S.N Banerjee, Sanat Kr Roychoudhury and Shyamaprasad Mukherjee) came to an end soon due to 'Subhas's attitude'---- Mukherjee recalled in his diary.¹¹⁴ In his view Subhas was 'adamant' to have his candidates of choice in the election and 'one night after a long and hated discussion Sarat Bose broke the joint front'.¹¹⁵ It was nothing new in constitutional politics that pre election understanding of the political parties had broken down due to mutual dissensions over the candidature issue but what was new here a further political mileage gained by the *Hindu Mahasabha* and the Muslim League out of the situation. The overall satisfactory performance of the Hindu Sabha in the Calcutta Corporation election marked the beginning of a new era in Bengal politics and this victory of the Sabha ¹¹⁶(won fifty percent of the seats) indicated the defeat of Subhas Bose whom, Shyamaprasad Mukherjee wrote, 'Gandhi's followers in Bengal feared to challenge'.¹¹⁷ For the Hindu Sabha it was a gain of two ends. It had shown its credibility to become the sole

mouthpiece of the Hindus in Bengal whom the Congress had failed to take into confidence. It was more or less clear now that in any future political developments the Hindu Sabha would no longer be in the second row rather it might become instrumental at the time of taking any important political decision. The essential episodes of the pre partition politics in Bengal later proved the viability of such postulation. However, Subhas Bose's entering into an understanding with the Muslim League in April 1940 over the election of Aldermen and the Mayor of the Calcutta Corporation further complicated its relationship with the Hindu Sabha and the later had left no chance of making advantage from the situation.¹¹⁸ The Muslim League -Forward Block understanding could be marked as one of the striking developments in the last decade of partition and it was during this time that the Forward Block had made itself too much exposed to public criticism.¹¹⁹ The official Congress and the *Hindu Mahasabha* brought the common charges that Subhas Bose 'had sold the interests of the Hindus' or the League Forward Block understanding had turned Subhas 'into a pliant tool in the hands of the Muslim League'.¹²⁰ Almost all the leading news paper condemned Subhas Bose for betraying the Hindus.¹²¹ Thus the Hindu Sabha did not face any problem to convince a large section of the Hindus that whatever Subhas Bose had done, it was only to have the Corporation under his control. A few lines from Shyamaprasad would be enough to make the point clear.....

The great liberator and leftist who regarded Gandhi , Jawaharlal and the rest as moderators, and branded them as 'compromise-Walla has' was not hesitant to install a League Mayor and placate the League for his own purposes.¹²²

But surprisingly Shyamaprasad did not mention anywhere what this 'purpose' of Subhas Chandra was other than to control the corporation single-handedly.¹²³ Subhas Bose, once the great supporter of CR Das, strongly stated that,

We.....do not regard the communal organization as untouchable....During the last three years, repeated attempts have been made to bring about a rapprochement between the Congress and the Muslim league....Those who had not objected to that attempt which had failed ultimately, now strongly object to the present attempt, because it succeeded. We regard the present agreement with the Muslim League as a great achievement not in its actuality, but in its potentiality.¹²⁴

The Hindu Sabha itself was not free of its own purposes. The **attack on Subhas Bose and Forward Block** was proved to be instrumental in drawing indirect support of the official Congress group which could make at least a point of agreement with the *Hindu Mahasabha* on this particular issue. In the last few years before partition the unofficial relationship shared by these two parties set a new trend of political opportunism in Bengal politics. The colonial state side by side encouraged the *Hindu Mahasabha* in order to put a check on the radical section of the Congress while the KPP and the CPI remained at the border line of the entire decision making process before the years of partition. No one can deny the fact that in Bengal the *Hindu Mahasabha* emerged not as a necessity but as a priority of a section of Hindus who had lost their confidence on the Congress for a while.. However, it was only in the wake of the Second World War in 1939 when Vinayak Damodar Savarkar came to Bengal, the two Hindu *Sabhas* in Bengal

reached an agreement on how to strengthen the Hindu cause in face of a continuous communal aggression.¹²⁵ From this time the *Mahasabha* successfully motivated the traditional support base of Congress specially that of the zamindars and rich businessmen who had already been upset by radical tendencies shown by the Bose brothers in and outside the constitutional political arena. The non Bengali business community, who had been an important financial base of the Congress in the past, emerged as the chief financial patron of the *Hindu Mahasabha* in the 40s. Once who had helped to raise funds for Subhas Bose's Congress like the Birlas or the Khaitans now went on to finance the 21st session of the All India *Hindu Mahasabha* in Calcutta in December, 1939.¹²⁶ But the task of the *Mahasabha* was not a easy one. But it did not mean that the Bengal Congress was totally lost in face of the challenges from *Hindu Mahasabha* rather after the throwing out of the Bose brothers from the party it was seen that the Bengal Congress openly stood for the Hindu interests and regained its previous confidence a lot. The throwing out of the Subhas Bose and his groups in the early forties from the official Congress concluded the chapter of the radical and secular forces in this organization and from this time the party became too much exposed to the spirit of communalism. For a minor party like the *Hindu Mahasabha* the basic problem remained at its organizational spheres once its monetary requirements had been solved in an extent. Thus it was seemed not very surprising that during the Dacca riot in 1941 the *Mahasabha* worked hand in hand with the Congress for the support of the affected Hindus there.¹²⁷ While the excellent organizational network of the Congress worked in favour of the *Mahasabha*, the former might get some financial relieves on account of its connection with the later.¹²⁸

It is to be noted here that the commercial interest of the Marwari businessmen of Calcutta got a further boost during the Second World War and the war time politics of the *Mahasabha* fitted well with the economic interests of their new friends.¹²⁹ The *Mahasabha's* policy was in full agreement with the policy of utilizing the British war efforts in so far as it helped in militarizing and industrializing India.¹³⁰ It was very much interesting that *Hindu Mahasabha* had taken a completely different stand on the war as far as the other minor parties were concerned. Surprisingly the Congress did not make objection on the pro war policy of the *Hindu Mahasabha* at a time when it was launching frontal attack on the other minor parties specially the leftists which took part in the British war efforts against the national interest. The *Hindu Mahasabha* asked the Hindu youth to make use of the technical military training offered by the British government and to takes lessons for the production of war materials.¹³¹ Such type of training was necessary, according to the *Mahasabha* for a whole scale militarization and industrialization of the country. One can see here how the very stand of the *Mahasabha* on the Second World War maintained a wonderful accord with the very objectives and requirements of the party that their agenda of demanding the recruitment of Bengali Hindu youths into the Indian army finally received a kind of official stamp at the time of the Second World War.¹³² In fact the *Hindu Mahasabha* had an intention to radicalize the notion of a powerful Hindu race with professional military training by simply participating in British war efforts although it was evident that the *Mahasabha* secretly tried to make connection with the Axis powers. It has been known that one speech of Savarkar was published in various

news papers in Germany and one press note on this particular speech was sent to Rashbihari Basu in Japan.¹³³ Some sources inform that both of these leaders had exchanged letters on the issue of opening a branch of Hindu Mahasabha in Japan.¹³⁴ However this dual policy of the *Mahasabha* during the war did not earn anything important rather the different approaches of the Congress and the *Mahasabha* on the war indirectly offered the new Governor John Herbert a chance to provoke the one against the other.¹³⁵ For the British the *Mahasabha* was more preferable than an ambivalent Congress which banned participation in the war efforts after December 1939 unlike the *Mahasabha* which had granted individual participation of its members in the war committees.¹³⁶ A more tactful government here rightly realized that if the *Hindu Mahasabha* could gain some extra strength, the Congress could easily be kept at bay and it would happen only if the communal cards were played properly. Being continuously threatened by the growing communal frenzy in the province the caste Hindus would rally to the *Mahasabha* and the Congress would be segregated totally from the political scene—such type of hypothesis from the part of the government was occupied with some further connotations and it seemed too much obvious that the other forces would definitely make their individual calculations on that subject. However, these two parties seem to have never fought each other on an open front rather the indefinite chemistry between these two camps puzzled the political observers in a numbers of crucial occasions prior to the partition of the province.¹³⁷

When the *Mahasabha* started its real journey as an important political force in Bengal, a few obstacles appeared there to make it a bit tricky to

tackle the situation. Apart from the British and the Muslim League the Hindu community itself had some resentful elements which could raise problems before any project of Hindu consolidation by the *Hindu Mahasabha* in Bengal. Although the Bose Congress, mentioned as the first element in Shyamaprasad's diary,¹³⁸ might be kept under check, the *Mahasabha* had to meet resistance from the second and third element i.e. the Communists and a section of the Scheduled Castes respectively.¹³⁹ Whereas the long drawn demand of a separate anti Hindu political identity was very much common with the Schedule Castes in Bengal, a comparatively new but dangerous problem came from the Communists. For the *Hindu Mahasabha* it was really very difficult to tackle the communists who had extended their support to the Pakistan demand of the Muslim League but at the time condemned the Hindu Sabha as 'communal and reactionary'.¹⁴⁰ The CPI's resolution adopted in its central committee meeting in September 1942 suggested that "Every section of the Indian people which has its contiguous territory as its homeland, common historical tradition, common language, culture, psychological make-up, and common economic life would be recognized as a distinct nationality with the right to exist as an autonomous state within the free Indian Union or federation and will have the right to secede from it if it may so desire".¹⁴¹ CPI's intellectual support to the Pakistan resolution stirred up controversies at different levels. However, when the 'Imperialist War' had given way to the 'People's War', the CPI could hardly ignore the Muslim League as a mere political body because its willing cooperation with the government had strengthened the hands of the anti Fascist powers indirectly. Remarkably CPI's newly assumed perception of communalism as a problem of growing nationalities did not

take any serious notice of the Hindu nationalistic ideas within the Congress rather continued to refer the Muslims a separate 'nation' demanding only the right to self determination .¹⁴² For the CPI the Pakistan demand was 'unreal in religious sense' but valid in economic and political sense. Such a stand of the CPI identified Congress a mere representative of 'one dominant nationality' which was in a position to throttle the voice of the less developed nationalities in an independent India and this stand of the CPI remained too much conflicting to cater the ideas of National Front or National Unity at the time of crisis.¹⁴³ During the Quit India movement-a 'national crisis', to use the CPI parlance, the Muslim League and the *Hindu Mahasabha* appeared to be the political forces with which the communists could join hands for the sake of national defense and national government since both of this parties did not join the Quit movement for different reasons. But in an atmosphere of rising indecisiveness no logical calculation was possible at all.¹⁴⁴

Apart from these interesting developments *Hindu Mahasabha* joining hands with Fazlul Huq , (a person who himself had moved the Pakistan Resolution 23 March 1940, on Jinnah's request just a year before) roused severe controversies in Bengal.¹⁴⁵ Huq's approach on the ongoing war differed vehemently from the other parties including the Muslim League itself. Governor Herbert noticed that Fazlul Huq continued to support the British war efforts in defiance of Jinnah because he thought that it would likely to establish the safeguards the Muslims were searching for long in Bengal.¹⁴⁶ Indeed Huq's pro war approach was a bargaining counter to take full opportunity for the Muslims in Bengal. It had another dangerous side, the Governor predicted, any split between the Bengal League and

any problem threatening the KPP League understanding might be turned into an attempt to bring into office the 'most undesirable elements of the Congress Party i.e. the Bose faction.'¹⁴⁷ What Governor Herbert had predicted in 1940, became too much obvious within a year. It was normal that after being expelled from the Muslim League Fazlul Huq had no other alternative but to seek for new partners since the Krisak Praja Party was not able to form a ministry on its individual capacity. If he did not join with others specially that of the *Hindu Mahasabha*, he might have the opportunity of building a separate political force along with his own KPP in a manner similar to that of Subhas Bose after the Tripuri episode. In a letter to Jinnah, dated 10th June 1941, Khwaja Nazimuddin, one of the loyal lieutenants of Jinnah from Bengal, apprehended that, ...at the present time, it will be fatal to give Mr Fazlul Huq an opportunity to raise the standard of revolt. There are many cries that may be raised in his favour and although he may not have a very following but still it can be sufficient to divide the Muslims in Bengal and do a lot of harm.¹⁴⁸

However, his assumptions were not proved to be tenable on the ground of an unconvincing number of the KPP followers in Bengal. Shyamaprasad Mukherjee who had once ridiculed Subhas Bose as 'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde'¹⁴⁹ now looked for support from the Bose Congress to form the Progressive Coalition ministry in Bengal. He rightly realized that without the support of the Bose Congress the proposed ministry could not remain in office for a day and it was of his credit that one atypical coalition ministry was formed in December 1941 under the premiership of Fazlul Huq.¹⁵⁰ As soon as the Governor Sir John Herbert accepted the resignation of Huq League coalition ministry the Progressive Coalition

Party emerged on the scene.¹⁵¹ The total strength of the new party was 119 including Forward Block led Congress, Huq's personal followers, the Samsuddin faction of the KPP, defector members of the Muslim League, Independent Schedule Castes, Nationalists, Anglo Indians and Labour group.¹⁵² The new ministry involved heterogeneous groups and the colonial authority itself was conscious that 'it would be a quite considerable thing if it held together for nine or twelve months'.¹⁵³ It was the first ministry in Bengal which was composed and controlled mainly by the minor political parties although the ministry was assured the support of the official Congress group under Kiran Shankar Roy and others. It was the moment from where the minor parties could arrive at a position of taking Bengal into the desired course of politics without being threatened or jeopardized by any anti Bengal or intense communal design. But it did not happen. In the Sirajganj conference of the Muslim League Jinnah criticized the Governor for the establishment of the new ministry.¹⁵³ The Suhrawardy Nazimuddin group of the League put every effort to demoralize the new ministry and tried to convince the Governor that this ministry was misusing the Defense of India Rules against the legitimate activities of the Muslim League but also was trying to break Muslim solidarity in Bengal.¹⁵⁴ As soon as the League ministers were thrown out of power their anguish and frustration took recourse to exacerbating communal frenzy all over the province. Their secular mask had been dropped out. Intense mass contact programme were made on behalf of the League to hackle Fazlul Huq before the community specially in the rural areas of east Bengal—the actual ground of his popularity.¹⁵⁵ Situation was changing very rapidly, everything was going out of control and the pro nationalist secular forces were either getting

subverted or a bit apprehensive to take any timely decision. In this regard one may put questions that why the Muslim League leaders were going unchallenged against Fazlul Huq and his new formed ministry. They were propagating against a person who had enjoyed immense popularity once in the Muslim majority areas of remote east Bengal. The initial success of the League's mass contact campaign particularly against Huq revealed the fact that in an era of constitutional party politics no leader could stay at high for long only on the basis of his personal popularity rather the support base of his party must be kept intact to remain in public imagination for ever. The KPP under Huq had been reduced to a party of the *Jotdars* in the last few years and it lost its essential character of being the most trusted mass party of that time. The KPP led by Samsuddin Ahmed (the rebel KPP faction emerged during the KPP League coalition ministry) was no where to wage a mass movement but to pressurize Huq on certain popular issues ¹⁵⁶. In a letter dated 3rd June 1941, Raghbir Ahsan, Secretary of the Calcutta District Muslim League and a member of the Working Committee of the Bengal Provincial Muslim League wrote Jinnah,

Now the present position is that Mr Huq is losing the confidence of the League minded Muslims as well as sane people. Mr Huq's Praja Party exists only on paper with no office, no organization, no branch and no party fund and no paper. The Krisak Praja Party which exists is a different body and is in the hands of K. B Abdul Momin and Mr Shamsuddin Ahmed both of whom are opposed to Mr Huq. The League defeated it in all elections to the local bodies and District Boards. It has no power to stand against the League provided the League stand solid and firm and work hard for the people. ¹⁵⁷

In this condition Fazlul Huq took the most risky decision on his part by joining Shyamaprasad Mukherjee. By including Shyamaprasad Mukherjee into the new ministry Fazlul Huq himself provided his opponents the much awaited chance of stimulating the communal consciousness among the Muslims. From the first month of 1942 the opponents of Huq from the Muslim League side arrived on the scene with a pre planned design of humiliating the new ministry before public. The press controlled by the League was tuned up with such campaigns and they made it their vow to deliberately identify Huq 'a traitor' who had betrayed his Muslim brothers.¹⁵⁸ Sinister intentions of the anti Huq circle were quite evident from calling the new ministry the 'Shyama- Huq' ministry or one of a '*Mahasabha Raj*',¹⁵⁹ however, Shyama Prasad was the only representative of the *Hindu Mahasabha* in that ministry. In fact Fazlul Huq was made guilty of breaking Muslim solidarity in India by raising the Bengali and non Bengali question in relation to all India politics.¹⁶⁰ However, within a few years the question of Bengali Muslim interests vis -a-vis Non Bengali Muslim interests became one of the germane themes of partition politics in Bengal.

It was almost certain that in a faction ridden political situation it was not possible for any minor party to sustain its spirit without taking recourse to a major party full of financial resource and a solid support base in any form. As far as the leftist parties were concerned, official restraints often restricted their growth to become a moving political force like the others. In this situation the only way out for the minor parties remained in their capacity of building democratic organizational base in the interior of the province so that one consistent net work of workers could be employed

for the sustenance and development of the party. For electoral success ideological commitment was necessary but the extent of practicing that ideology depended largely on the organizational base of the party unless and otherwise no popular leader could claim agency for ever in the realm of organized politics. In absence of a solid organizational base and dedicated workers the individual existence of the minor parties might be at risk. In some occasions especially when these parties were appeared to be regional in character, their separate identity might have been eclipsed under the overarching authority of an all India party. In case of the KPP the matter was the same. This party had to bank mainly on the personal charisma of its leader who did not have the scope or time to build a base for his party in every nook and corner of the province rather a typical east Bengali sentiment always distanced the party from the urban areas of west Bengal. The organizations of the party were more or less confined within the Muslim majority areas of rural east Bengal while the urban centric Muslim intelligentsia or the business group found nothing appealing in the pro peasant character of this party. This party had to suffer mainly on two grounds. One was the rural urban dichotomy and another was the Bengali-non Bengali conflict. In between these dialectics there was the problem of situating Muslim consciousness especially at a time when non communal mass movements were launched by different communist and leftist parties from the later half of 1930s. Until the formation of the Progressive Coalition Ministry in December 1941 Fazlul Huq had been the President of both KPP and the Bengal Muslim League without having a solid organization for his own party. The signs of dismantling of his party were evident from a few days after the KPP-League coalition ministry was installed in the province. For the Muslim

League the task was a bit easy to declare that there was practically no difference between the KPP and the Muslim League. '.....ours is 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', ¹⁶¹--- commented Suhrawardy at a public meeting. The political dualism of Huq even encouraged the Congress to join hands with the anti League faction of the KPP but it was in vein because the political reputation of the Congress was not very much steady among the Muslims of rural Bengal. In this regard it must be mentioned that the KPP did not get the financial backing of the non Bengali Muslim business group specially that of the house of Ispahanis instead a staunch opposition from it.¹⁶² The non Bengali Muslim industrialist and business classes like the Ispahanis, Habibs, Memons, Khojas, Bhras, Adamjees and others had remain the supporter of the Muslim League and they formed the backbone of Pakistan movement.¹⁶³ Star of India --the mouthpiece of Muslim interests in Bengal was backed by a Calcutta merchant Haji Dawood Adamjee .¹⁶⁴ The Muslim industrial and business class easily understood the economic opportunities offered by the Pakistan proposal to their class interests. Jinnah himself belonged to a Khoja business family¹⁶⁵ and he could value the importance of the Muslim industrial and business class for the success of his ultimate mission. The KPP in this regard stayed far behind the Muslim League in Bengal. Neither it became a communal Muslim party nor did it stay as a popular party with solid organization and definite socio economic backings. Another minor party the *Hindu Mahasabha* was proved be more tactical in that perspective. While the Muslim League expanded its power in Bengal at the expense

of the KPP, the *Hindu Mahasabha* emerged at the expense of the Congress in Bengal. Right from its inception it had the backing of the Hindu landed aristocracy and the non Bengali Hindu businessmen and unlike the KPP it successfully increased its numerical strength and organizational base in Bengal irrespective of any rural or urban or Bengali non Bengali priorities. From any side it had nothing to loose. As soon as the Progressive Coalition ministry was formed in 1941, the Muslim League had intensified their cry for Muslim right for self determination because the issue of betraying their community interest now had taken a concrete shape in the anti Huq propaganda meetings.¹⁶⁶

In this situation the every single effort of Huq for Hindu Muslim unity seemed quite innovative. In a sharp contrast of the 'Two Nation' theory he highlighted the idea of 'common nationalism' at a meeting in the Town Hall at Calcutta on 20 June 1942¹⁶⁷ in the presence of the Congress, the *Hindu Mahasabha*, and the KPP, Liberal Federation and Progressive Muslim League members. It would not be unnecessary here to make a briefing of Fazlul Huq's own contentions on the Pakistan Resolution of 1940. Not in the name of Islam rather in the interests of the Bengali Muslims he wrote that,

We have to remember that the 3 Provinces geographically adjacent to Bengal are Assam, Bihar and Orissa. In Assam, the Muslims are only 35%; in Bihar 10%; and in Orissa barely 4%. It is therefore evident that Bengal, as constituted, can not form autonomous states with the geographically autonomous provinces. If, however, Bengal has got to be divided into two the result will be that the Eastern zone which will be a predominantly Muslim area will be surrounded by 4 provinces in which Hindus will be in a majority. It is, therefore no use hoodwinking the Muslims of Bengal that the formula which may hold good in the Punjab will also hold good in Bengal. At the same time Bengal Muslims realize that they have got to fall in line

with the rest of India. We depend upon the Quid –i-Azam to modify the Pakistan idea so as to enable the Muslims of Bengal also to assert their self determination along with the Muslims of other Provinces and also members of other communities in all the provinces. ¹⁶⁸

In no case Fazlul Huq was ready to compromise with the interest of the Bengali Muslims but not at the cost of the rights of other communities. It was not at all surprising, the Star on India reported, that Huq was thinking in terms of a separate state for Bengal. In this scheme of Bangistan movement the Hindus and the Muslims of Bengal would be placed under to autonomous units comprising the territories of Western and Eastern Bengal respectively. ¹⁶⁹ On the light of the above report no one can say that Fazlul Huq was opposed to the idea of Pakistan rather it was one of the modified version of the Pakistan proposal Huq himself had moved in Lahore. ¹⁷⁰ This type of scheme had nothing to do with the 'Akhand Hindustan' or 'Anti Pakistan' ¹⁷¹ idea of the *Hindu Mahasabha* and for the Bengal premier no midway tactics was viable enough to tackle the opposing sentiments. The political dualism he had espoused during his first premiership was of no value at this juncture of history instead the policy of making a bit unconventional coalition mainly on the basis of his personal popularity became one of the unfortunate mistakes ever done by him. The political career of KPP now went into a state of oblivion, every where in the province the Pakistan scheme of Jinnah earned ground level popularity among the Muslims masses within next few years and the anti feudal sentiments of the Muslim peasants had been channeled towards a different direction. It was indeed a matter of credit that within last five years the Muslim League had innovated one

communicative ideology for the Muslim elites and the masses as well so that the fundamental ideals of the League could have sanctioned by the majority of the Muslim masses of Bengal. Inherent weakness as well the external pressures from a more powerful political force, if not an enemy, left no other alternative for KPP but to make an unconscious capitulation before the communal forces specially after the decline of the Progressive Coalition ministry which failed to have a 'legitimacy' for itself from either the Muslim *ashrfs* or the bulk of the Muslim peasantry. However, the justifications for the failure of the ministry should not be sought out only from the political tussles between Huq and his Muslim League opponents. It was far trickier than the actual scene. The Forward Block was proved to be a headache for the government ever since Subhas Bose had left India in search of new friends against the British on the wake of the war. The British government was quite sure that in no situation the anti British Forward Block would not be in a position to get any extra mileage from the Progressive Coalition ministry. Already Sarat Bose was arrested in 1941 for security reasons ¹⁷² and the members of the Forward Block and those in the Bose family were interrogated. The government had admitted that '..... it goes without saying....that it would be impossible to contemplate Sprat Chandra Bose as a Minister' and 'his contacts with the Japanese were an additional reason for exercising the greatest care in his case'. ¹⁷³ The approach of the Muslim League was not so very different from the government on this matter.

The Fifth Column Activities are growing in Bengal. The Fifth Column Bengal ministry is encouraging them...At present, Bengal is like a big magazine of Gun-powder ready to explode at any moment.....thanks to the Muslim Quislings who have

surrendered Muslim Bengal to the Mahasabha just as Mir Jafar surrendered Bengal to Clive....¹⁷⁴

The usage of the term 'Fifth Columnist' indicated how imitative the politics had become in this time. The League leaders were using the same phrases frequently referred by the communists while in the eyes of the former communism, the totalitarian creed, was the 'greatest danger facing Islam in the present world'.¹⁷⁵ Even though the Forward Block had two members there in the ministry, Santosh Kumar Basu and Pramathanath Bandhopadhyay,¹⁷⁶ the party had make no serious attempt to transform this prospect into legislative opportunity. The lack of confidence shown on the part of the Forward Block was mainly caused by organizational weakness and absence of proper leadership after Subhas Bose. This party was left on its own fate especially after the arrest of Sarat Bose. As far as the communal sentiments were concerned the arrest of Sarat Bose ended the least possible hopes for Hindu Muslim amity in Bengal. Neither Shyama Prasad Mukherjee nor Fazlul Huq was fit for replacing Sarat Bose in Bengal legislature because none of this leaders were equally acceptable to the Hindus and the Muslims of Bengal. It could not be denied that at a certain level of politics it was really very difficult to make a distinction between Forward Block and the Congress and a separate entity of the Forward Block was yet to mature. For the Muslim masses the Forward Block did not make any difference with the Congress and such sentiments remained unchallenged more or less until the partition. Surprisingly the Congress connection of the *Hindu Mahasabha* did not make anything negative for the later instead a continuous showing down of the secular image of the Congress itself. In case of the

KPP the matter was totally different as far as its relation with the Muslim League was concerned. In fact the major political parties from the early forties appeared to take a binary position in Bengal politics, however, their basic attitude to the socio political questions differed vehemently. From late 30s the Congress was seen to demarcate between political struggle for independence from other kind of socio economic struggles because the former question, they concluded, required immediate attention and the other issue would be resolved automatically with the coming of political independence.¹⁷⁷ The most interesting feature of this argument was that same sort of conclusion was drawn in favour of the communal question that it was not a religious but a political and economic problem, generated by the 'political reactionaries' for their own class interests and these issues would come to an end with the attainment of political independence.

The first question which should be in every Indian's heart at present is the question of the independence of the country. Pakistan and such other questions can only be decided after independence is achieved and the government restored to the people of the country.¹⁷⁸ This sort of arguments ran on the Nehruvian line of scientific politics where communalism was to be treated as a political problem and a matter to be settled with political discussions from top. It was the observation of Nehru that the communal propagandas did not affect the reputation of the Congress as a party fighting solely for political independence rather it provoked the middle class Hindus against the Congress for not taking the Hindu cause openly against the Muslim League.¹⁷⁹ It was not the case that the *Hindu Mahasabha* was provided with the agency of taking the

Hindu cause against the Muslim League rather it was evident that Congress policy on the communal issues now took a turn towards a more restricted and well defined course of action committed to electoral success and systematic mobilization of the masses from the top. During the election campaign in 1946 nationalist Muslims and number of *Khaksar* volunteers from outside Bengal were employed in support of the Muslim Congress candidates against the League.¹⁸⁰ The election results also indicated how the Congress politics had been changed from the election of 1937 to 1946. If these changes could be seen as signs of maturity then it must be said that it provided the party some better knowledge to tackle the counter nationalist forces than earlier. The minor political parties except the *Hindu Mahasabha* fell short in this respect. The older ones were seen to move between the same circle of mutual allegations and factional squabble; the relatively new parties got engaged into wider problems less attached with the local political affairs.

At a time when economic emergencies like food crisis, black marketing, hoarding and other problems were to leave a evil shadow over Bengal, the Progressive Coalition ministry did not take or failed to take any radical socio economic programme for the masses. The Premier had to make it sure that no anti Hindu (particularly the Hindu *bhadraloks*) legislative measures would be entertained by the ministry because the support of the Hindu *Magadha* was vital for its survival. But he simply overlooked the fact that no upliftment of the masses could have been done unless the privilege and priorities of a section was challenged. As a natural corollary he lost the game on two sides. In spite of the *Hindu Mahasabha's* presence in the coalition ministry the Hindu *bhadralok* had

never been relieved from the panic and fear of getting jeopardized by the Muslims of Bengal. Not *Hindu Mahasabha* but the Forward Block could have been the first choice of the Hindus but it did not happen. On the other Shyama Prasad Mukherjee had little to offer the majority of the Bengali Muslims. There was no scope for a radical agrarian programme for the Muslim peasants into his scheme for Bengal.¹⁸¹ He was more concerned about the interests of the middle class Hindu *bhadraloks*---the section he himself belonged to. As a result during the Quit India movement the *Hindu Mahasabha* and the Forward Block were seen to get completely isolated from the Muslim masses. In the east Bengal countryside it was visible that the Muslim masses remained totally indifferent to the posters of the Forward Block that the Indian National Army of Subhas Bose was waiting at the border to free India.¹⁸² *The Star of India* had warned them to keep distance from the 'sharks and shoals' that in no condition the fortune seekers could deceive the common Muslim masses.¹⁸³ No wonder that the frequent use of the terms 'quisling' or 'Fifth columnist' by the CPI and some leftists further strengthened the hands of the so-called well-wishers of the Muslim masses in Bengal. However, towards the end of December, 1945 when the prospects of a general election was going high, the communists shifted their stand not too much different from the popular feeling. The post war upsurge in Calcutta was carried in a way of emotional built up over Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and his Indian National Army (hereafter INA). Although the Kohima campaign of the INA (March- June 1944) ended in a failure and many of the INA soldiers were taken prisoners back to India, However, people did not believe in the report of his death.¹⁸⁴ the legend of Bose and his army were bound to create

crescendos of protest in Bengal following a popular outburst over the issue of 'the immediate and unconditional release' of all the INA prisoners. Now the CPI, to quote from the memoirs of H.A. Barari, "gave a call for the observance of INA Defense Day in December 1945, saying that though the INA had chosen a wrong path, yet its members were 'misguided patriots' and that the British government had no right to try them. As a matter of fact, such quibbling cut no ice with the ordinary people, who saw through the smoke-screen of their opportunistic jugglery with words."¹⁸⁵ What was the position of the Forward Block at that time? Did they fully utilize the opportunities in favour of their party programmes? It was a pertinent question. One must not close his eyes from the fact that the 'Great Escape' of Subhas Chandra Bose, from India affected the development of the Forward Block in different ways. Apart from creating a vacuum in the level of leadership the departure of Bose and his subsequent interactions with the Fascist powers brought this party under sharp torture and suspicion from the British police and its intelligence. A formal ban was imposed on the party on 23 June 1942 after which many party workers went underground to continue their struggle. On the basis of an alleged connection between the Forward Block leaders and Subhas Bose outside India, a huge number of Forward Block leaders were put beyond the bar including Sardu Singh Kavishee, the acting President of the party.¹⁸⁶ Even though Sarat Chandra Bose was not the acting member of the party, he was taken behind the bar under the Defense of India Rules on 11 December, 1941. The government was even worried about his place of detention. One official source stated that, "There is much to be said against keeping him in Bengal; for it will be impossible to prevent communication between him in any jail and his follower outside. Thus it

would be possible for him in a Bengal jail to continue the plotting which it is the aim of the arrest to stop.¹⁸⁷

The government was anxious for two reasons. They did not want Sarat Bose to be taken away by the Japanese from the jail and be a source of help to them and a danger to themselves. Side by side they wanted to make it sure that under no circumstances the followers of Bose including that of the Forward Block could establish a connection with Sarat Bose. This matter was clear from another statement of the Intelligence Branch. In response to a appeal from Bivabhati Devi to transfer Sarat Bose from Coonoor to Calcutta in 1944, it was apprehended that,

Sarat Chandra Bose's return to Bengal at this juncture, even in custody, would undoubtedly create enthusiasm in *these groups*, which know very well that when Subhas, went from the country he left his Indian interests in his brother's hands. *They would look to Sarat Chandra Bose for leadership, for guidance and advice* (Italics mine) and the circumstances resulting in his return would make it very nearly impossible for preventive action to stop danger, because association with his family would be inevitable and there is no doubt that some of his family members are involved in what is going on now and are ready to aid Subhas Bose in such ways as they can.....If Sarat Bose contrived to get away and worked 'underground' in Bengal, he would be a very great danger in present circumstance....¹⁸⁸

Here the words 'these groups' definitely includes the Forward Blok which was left in a state of disorder after the departure of Subhas Bose and arrest of Sarat Chandra Bose. If Sarat Bose could get at least a chance to guide these people even in underground, this party might take the advantage of the existing situation in the province. But the most

interesting part of this story was the re-joining of Sarat Bose into the Congress on Gandhi's request. Amiyanath Bose, one of the close observers from the Bose family, regretted that, "it was a great political blunder on the part of Sarat Bose... Sarat Bose, by rejoining the Congress, deprived himself of an opportunity of becoming the rallying point of an armed revolution, for which India became ripe in November, 1945."¹⁸⁹

The countrywide popular upsurge especially on the issue of the INA trial in 1945 indeed infused some extra vigor and dynamism into the rank of the Forward Block workers that Ramesewar Banerjee and Abdus Salim were killed in police firing at a protest rally on 21 November, 1945.¹⁹⁰ Interestingly the country's political leaders even though voiced the unanimous demand for the immediate release of the INA prisoners without trial, they had failed to get away from old political conflicts and mutual condemnations. At a public meeting organized in support of the INA prisoners at Calcutta it became quite apparent. To quote from Barari,

At this meeting I saw how strained the relationship between the leaders of the Congress and the INA on the one hand and the communists on the other. The Congress leaders came out openly to give vent to their displeasure over the latter's collaboration with the British and the Allied Powers during the country's freedom struggle.¹⁹¹

Politically these leaders had missed the point that the resumption of nationalist and popular forces after the war could be hampered if no united action was taken against the imperialists. The Congress policy of

opposing militant popular confrontation at this stage had strengthened the hands of the Raj including a regrouping of communal and feudal forces. At a time when the general election was round the corner, the Congress seemed to take no risk but to return to its traditional support base more vigorously than before. It was the time for new adjustments. Already the *Hindu Mahasabha* expressed its desire of setting a national coalition party with the Congress,¹⁹² and by late 1945 the Congress workers who had taken legal cover in *Hindu Mahasabha* now returned home with an essential Hindu colourings.¹⁹³ It could not be denied that the minor leftist parties and the communists made an successful attempt to channlise the popular upsurges with various protest rallies and student strikes.¹⁹⁴ CSP-RSP led student organizations, procommunist student orignations were joined by the Muslim League students and the striking labourers from the industrial areas. One official source pointed out,

Students are playing a prominent part in the demonstrations and a general trend of determined lawlessness is noticeable among the younger elements. Some Muslim students have joined in the demonstrations and there is now a move to get the Muslim community as a whole to join in. Communists have joined in the demonstrations, which are being supported by large sections of labour.¹⁹⁵

The real importance of these popular movements laid not in the united action of the Hindus and the Muslims but in the formation of a left alternative arising out of the so called left critique of 'bourgeoisie betrayal'. But the leftist parties did not show any unity in themselves that they could make a total assessment of the Congress policy. If the communists could take the leadership of the left parties during the post war popular movements, the left alternative as a whole might become

more sensible to understand the situation. The left parties fell short to realize that Congress sympathy to the INA prisoners and the revolutionary speeches by the Congress leaders were nothing but election propagandas accommodating the popular sentiments indirectly. The Congress did not dare to make its capitalist friends nervous and remained restricted on the issues of popular confrontation in view of the forthcoming election in 1946. A confident Birla conveyed that, "There is no political leader including Jawaharlal Nehru who wants to see any crisis or violence...Popular impatience and the prevalent atmosphere are responsible for these strong speeches".¹⁹⁶ The communist call for a Congress, League and Communist unity¹⁹⁷ was of no value in a situation when pragmatic political issues were seemed to be more important than anything else. The Congress was to keep its business support intact and the League was to convince the Muslims on the economic usefulness of Pakistan. In this perspective what was needed a wide spread political consciousness of the masses under the communists so that the popular movements could get into the nationalist movement out of its own political consciousness. The post war peasant and labour movements more or less remained as parallel but partial movements against exploitation ---they did not evolve as anti imperialist power struggle connecting all democratic elements of the society.¹⁹⁸ However, it was not so easy for the communists and the leftists having practically no powerful financial resource or large scale organization in Bengal. However, the post war unity shown on the part of the RSP, CSP and the CPI on popular issues ¹⁹⁹ failed to get a reflection in the election result of 1946. Out of the eight labour seats the communists got only two while the Congress managed to get five.²⁰⁰ The party's explanation went on the line that

either the Congress manipulation of INA issues had swept the workers or the workers specially those from Non Bengali Hindu origin considered Congress more fit for protecting Hindu interests than the communists while a large section of the non Bengali Muslim workers rallied behind the Muslim League.²⁰¹ The Forward Block was still under ban, however, it seemed that the resolutions and programmes²⁰² taken by this party in February 1946 were not enough to combat the mounting spirit of communalism. It was too late to make the people convinced again on the very essence of class struggle or a classless society. However, the party's stand on uncompromising anti imperialist struggle remained intact.²⁰³

The election of 1946 was fought tactfully by the two major political parties-the Congress and the Muslim League. Contrary to its previous success, the Hindu Mahasabha managed to sustain the only seat of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee while the Congress obtained eighty six seats in general constituencies.²⁰⁴ However, the electoral weakness of the Hindu Mahasabha did not make an impact over its growing preponderance in national matters. Politically and economically the Hindu Mahasabha was more stable than the other minor parties. Unlike the CPI it had never been on attack from the Congress even though some of its leaders had been in ministries in August 1942.²⁰⁵ The period prior the election was proved to be a time of test and self realization for the Mahasabha. Since 1941 a large section of the Schedule castes were getting closed to the Mahasabha and their contribution was no less important in the Mahasabha's project of articulating a political language of extended Hindu community in Bengal. The alignment of a section of the Schedule castes with the League ministry(Jogendranath Mandal,

Pulin Bihari Mullick from the Namasudra community and Premhari Barman from the Rajbanshi community)²⁰⁶ definitely put a pressure on the Mahasabha. This current study does not provide scopes for evaluating the course of schedule caste politics in Bengal. However, it must be mentioned in this regard that Mahasabha's intense campaigning among a large section of the lower castes throughout the early forties brought several changes into the identity formation of the marginal Hindus and in a numbers occasions, these people now began to confront their Muslim opponents not simply as a caste community but as a representative of the entire Hindu community.²⁰⁷ This shift was one of the particular features of their movement in the forties. If a section of the lowers castes were employed by the Mahasabha in the Hinduization programmes, the similar section was found to get involved into class oriented programmes... It was the efforts of the communists and partly the socialists that after the formation of the Kisan Sabha and different pro communist Krisak Samities and the Scheduled castes hailing form the peasant background received the most desirable impetus in fighting the age old exploiters. It seemed quite interesting that different minor parties had tried their luck among the Scheduled caste constituencies but it was the Communist Party which emerged separately from the others. It is to be mentioned here that in spite of the intensive communist activities among a segment of the peasants during the war and the famine, growth of communal politics did not face a retreat among the peasants in general. It was particularly due to the cause that the leftist forces during the war could not move on a similar line in the peasant front. Jay Prakash Narayan in a special notice instructed the CSP workers not to cooperate with the CPI in widespread peasant movements.²⁰⁸ In spite of an increase in

membership during 1942-45 in the Kisan Sabha, the organizational dynamism of the party got missing.²⁰⁹ The gradual departure of the Forward Block and the CSP from the Kisan Sabha platform weakened the solidarity of the Sabha to a great extent and for the Muslim League it was an excellent opportunity of testing its power among the bulk of the Muslim peasantry in Bengal. As far as the lower caste Hindu peasantry was concerned, their allegiance to caste, class or religious identity remained juxtaposed during this time. One may ask that why the CPI could not check the wave of communalization in the areas of its influence as in case of the northern districts of Bengal. One of the main reasons behind it was the opposition of the party to the Muslim *jotdars* and the propertied peasants equally with the Hindu zamindars and the Marwari traders.²¹⁰ Had the protest of the CPI been restricted in character the consolidation of the Muslim propertied class under the League would have been delayed. The CPI failed to put an alternative programme of the League before the election of 1946 and the new league secretary Abul Hashim even successfully endorsed the teachings of Islam under the garb of radical land reform programme—mostly borrowed from the slogans of the Kisan Sabha in Bengal.²¹¹ The ideal of Pakistan put forward by this new section of the League leadership was quite different from that of the Lahore Resolution. It was more economic in nature and more sympathetic to the priorities of the Bengali Muslim in particular.²¹² Throughout the last few years before partition a long series of controversies appeared inside the Bengal Muslim League on the question of balancing Bengali identity with that of the demand for a separate homeland for the Muslims.

The famine condition opened a chance for the Hindu Mahasabha to penetrate into the lower caste Hindu peasants also. They took more or less a sectarian approach in conducting relief activities. One of the chief exponents of the Mahasabha's relief works —the Bengal Relief Committee even assured to provide special assistance to the Hindus where they were numerically and economically weak.²¹³ The Social implication of these programmes was very much important for the Mahasabha. The famine works of the Revolutionary Socialist Party and the CSP did not get much attention in this condition.²¹⁴ *Mahasabha's* programmes swiftly extended its middle class and upper caste Hindu social base among the lower caste masses of famine ridden areas. However, one official source informed,

In an attempt to regain the prestige a committee to be known as 'National Relief Committee', which was to include all parties except the *Hindu Mahasabha*... was formed on 17 September, bewitch a framework of Forward Block leaders.²¹⁵

It was the efforts of the communists and partly the socialists that after the formation of the Kisan Sabha and different pro communist Kisan Samities the Scheduled castes hailing from the peasant background received the most desirable impetus in fighting the age old exploiters. It seemed quite interesting that different minor parties had tried their luck among the Scheduled caste constituencies with an objective to full fill their political mission in different ways; it was the Communist Party which emerged separately from the others. It is to be mentioned here that in spite of the intensive communist activities among a segment of the peasants during the war and the famine, growth of communal politics did not face a retreat among the peasants in general. Apart from the other

reasons it was particularly due to the cause that the leftist faces during the war could not move on a similar accord in the peasant front also. Side by side the Radical Democratic Party also went on opposing the CPI for its pro British policy but at the same time it joined in similar accord with the CPI on the Pakistan demand of the Muslim League.²¹⁶

The CPI was standing at the most vulnerable stage of its history at this time. It was to recover its war time image. The government was well aware of the dangers of communist influence among the masses; it offered the party a kind of political discount in organising the peasantry for the support of the anti Fascist front. Thus from 1942-1945 the CPI collected as many as fifty thousand recruits for the Kisan Sabha and infused a new language of consciousness among the victims of the famine comprising mainly the agricultural laborers, sharecroppers, poor peasants and a section of the middle peasants. Interestingly the *Hindu Mahasabha* pointed out that the communist relief works were supported by the League ministry and the communists kept themselves out of the relief works organized by non official organizations.²¹⁷ However, such contentions were left unnoticed because almost all the parties were seen to utilize this disaster for their political ends. The party paid attention on the paddy huskers, artisans and the village manual workers and especially on the destitute women. One may ask that why the CPI could not check the wave of communalization in the areas of its influence especially in the northern districts of Bengal despite its support for the Pakistan demand. One of the main reasons behind it was the mobilization of the poor peasants and the *bargadars* against the Muslim jotdars and the propertied peasants equally with the Hindu zamindars and the Marwari

traders during the famine.²¹⁸ Had the protest of the CPI been restricted in character the consolidation of the Muslim propertied class under the League would have been delayed.

The result of the 1946 election was proved to be the milestone in the history of the second partition in Bengal. Almost all the political parties had to take some lesions from the result. One of the most striking features of the result sheet was the total shut down of KPP from its position a decade before. The Bengal Provincial Muslim League secured the highest number of votes by completely subduing the others Muslim groups. The Congress virtually swept the polls in general seats and its prime opponent the CPI entered the assembly with three seats. The Hindu Mahasabha lost five seats to the Congress except the seat of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee however the contest of these two parties went of without existment.²¹⁹ The Bengali Hindus preferred to vote for Congress which was to take care of their interests more effectively than the *Mahasabha*. The Congress *Mahasabha* fight on the polls seemed to have been an eye wash for numbers of reasons but it was not the truth that the Congress replaced the *Mahasabha* as the sole representative of the Hindus. A considerable numbers of people form different levels of the society were still under the spell of the *Mahasabha* and there were some tasks other than the electoral politics, to be played by the *Mahasabha* in the immediate years before partition. From now it became more or less obvious that in the future course of politics the minor leftist parties would have to very cautious. Except the communist success in three seats, the other left parties were no where after the election. The Radical Democratic Party failed to capture any seat while the other parties even failed to place their

candidature in the election. It was proved that the Royists in Bengal were more isolated than the communists. The India workers especially those belonging to the India Federation of Labour²²⁰ were ready to cast their vote in favour of the Radical Democratic Party, still this party was miserably defected in the election. It was perhaps due to the reason that the Radical Democratic Party leaders were so deeply preoccupied with the political developments of the country that its trade union activities were largely neglected and whatever work they had done in the labour field was under continuous pressure from the communists. After his entry in the jute worker's belt in Barrackpore in 1945, Gour Kishore Ghosh, one young worker of the Radical Democratic Party was severely beaten by the communists there for speaking out against their platform and against their candidates.²²¹ The success of the trade union movements largely depended on the political set up of the country and the disaster of the Radical Democratic Party in the election put the future of its policy of political trade unionism in question.²²² The defeat of the leading communist labour leaders Bankim Mukherjee, Somnath Lahiri and Md Ismail indicated that the communists were yet to get lessons of constitutional politics and electoral tactics.²²³ In almost all the labour seats around Calcutta and Howrah the communist lost the fight including a few seats in Noakhali and Mymansingh. Besides this the CPI had to choose one less famed Jyoti Basu (he was elected from the seat reserved for the railway workers and was supported by the leftist wing of the Muslim League) as the new leader of the elected communists in the legislature because the other two selected leaders did not know English well.²²⁴ Interestingly this communist group inside the assembly had tried to become a third alternative while outside the legislature they took more

or less a balanced attitude to the Congress and the League and the League Communist understanding did not survive for long. Not only the communists but the leftists in 1946-47 were nowhere to take hold of the situation. A detailed analysis of the communist defeat was published by the party after the election.²²⁵ During the communal carnage of Calcutta on 16th August 1946 the party leaders made a futile attempt to channelise communal sentiments of the people into anti British spirit of popular movements. In a statement published in the Communist mouthpiece *Swadhinata*, Somnath Lahiri appealed the Hindus to be restraint and accommodative during the riots and requested the Muslims not to join in anti Congress propagandas of the Muslim League and to focus only on the actual objective.²²⁶ Although on the date of the Direct Action Day²²⁷ the Muslim workers saved the Hindu workers from the rioters in different places, on the whole they did not get remarkable success in preventing non Bengali Muslim workers from joining the League meeting and strike programmes. The call for Direct Action on 16th August 1946, by the League following the crucial episodes of Cabinet Mission Plan and the withdrawal of the League from the interim government²²⁸ signaled the departure of League from constitutional path of action although the Muslim League leaders were not very sure on the nature of this proposed 'Direct Action'.²²⁹ Side by side the degree of Premier Suhrawardy's involvement in the Great Calcutta Killing and the actual statistics of the victims from both of the communities has also remained uncertain ever since and perhaps will remain so always. Nevertheless, in a letter to Sardar Patel, G L Mehta pointed out that KPP leader Fazlul Huq and ex speaker of Bengal legislature Nauser Ali were forced physically to accept the policy of the League and most of the

nationalist Muslims in Bengal were threatened to take up the cause of the Muslim League directly.²³⁰ In his reply, however, Sardar Patel did not take any interest on these so called 'nationalist' Muslims who had been staying outside the League or the Congress in Bengal.²³¹ It was not the Congress but the Hindu Mahasabha who urged the anti League Muslims and the Hindus not to observe *hartal* on 16th August, 1946 because the proposed *hartal* would help the League in securing their demand, i.e. the Pakistan.²³²

The recrudescence of communal riots in the Muslim majority areas of Noakhali Tippera one month after the August violence created an phobic condition in Bengal when Hindus and Muslims started seeing each other as enemy.²³³ The lose of property, insecurity of trade and commerce and the failure of the government to save the lives once again set the partition issue on fire. Now it was the turn of the *Hindu Mahasabha*. In December, 1946 they formed the Bengal Partition League²³⁴ with an idea of partitioning their province into Hindu and Muslim majority areas. It found readily available supporters among Hindu zamindars, businessmen, industrialists and a few Bengali intellectuals. They unequivocally stated:

If 23 percent of Muslim minority in India can demand self determination and autonomy to the extent of absolute right to of separation from future Hindustan, than the 45 percent of Hindu majority in Bengal (a west Bengal including Darjeeling, Dinajpur excluding some thanas, Malda, four thanas of Rajshahi Burdwan Divisions having 69 percent of Hindu majority) can demand the same rights and privileges from future Pakistan.²³⁵

This proposal of the *Hindu Mahasabha* was in sharp contrast of the proposals put by the Bengal League. The Bengal League leaders had viewed the Pakistan scheme of the Lahore Resolution in terms of *two* independent states of the Muslim majority areas ²³⁶ and they envisaged different shapes for the Eastern zone of the proposed Pakistan.²³⁷ However, the non circulation of this distinct ideal of Pakistan during the election of 1946 and Jinnah's deliberate attempt to refrain from any concrete ideal of the scheme up to 1946 indicated that the Muslim leadership were not at all ready to sacrifice the electoral battle for any untimely controversies over the actual character of Pakistan.²³⁸ Once the goal was achieved the central leadership of the League took its stand on clear cut basis. In order to avoid any further dispute on the issue of Pakistan from Bengal Suhrawardy was chosen to move the official resolution on the issue in the open session of the Muslim League Legislator's Convention in April, 1946.²³⁹ What Jinnah had done with Fazlul Huq in 1940, the same type of politics had been played once again in 1946 with Suhrawardy. However, it was this Suhrawardy who proposed for a united sovereign Bengal along with Abul Hashim and some Hindu politicians a few months later. Although in January 1947 these leaders were taking in terms of a united sovereign Bengal, it was only after the *Hindu Mahasabha's* move for the partition of Bengal in early 1947 that the common Bengali nationalism of Suhrawardy and Abul Hashim went on high especially when the hopes for a free state of Eastern Pakistan were lost. The proposed idea of a united independent sovereign Bengal had its own socio economic grounds of practical appeal, however, ²⁴⁰ it remained as a romantic but suicidal move for the Muslim League leaders in general. It seemed that this proposal gained

some currency basically on the assumption that if there had to be any partition of India then Calcutta might have allotted to west Bengal of being a Hindu majority area. In fact Governor Burrows had something in his Partition Scheme although at the same time he put reasons behind making Calcutta a free city.²⁴¹ It was perhaps for these reason that Jinnah expressed his anxieties on a 'truncated Pakistan' and put his tacit approval behind the united sovereign Bengal.²⁴² It would be, he thought 'a sot of subsidiary Pakistan'²⁴³ and with Muslims in major would not remain long outside the West Pakistan. Unfortunately unlike Suhrawardy, Sarat Bose and Kiran Shankar Roy, two other exponents of the proposed united Bengal scheme failed to convince the Congress High Command on the issue. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee in a series of letters informed Sardar Patel about Sarat Bose's 'enormous mischief'²⁴⁴ and Patel asked Bose to take a 'united stand' with the Bengal Congress²⁴⁵ or to be precise the *Hindu Mahasabha*. In great despair Sarat Bose warned that the 'future generation will, I am afraid, condemn us for conceding division of India and supporting partition of Bengal and Punjab...'²⁴⁶

One may see here the rapport of the *Hindu Mahasabha* with the Congress in the final hours of partition. The other minor parties were seen to get more or less perplexed on how to express their disapproval and to what extent. Interestingly the Forward Block at a meeting in Calcutta in March, 1947 denounced the transfer of power hastily, its Bengal cadres sent a memorandum to the All India Forward Bloch high command to reconsider its policy of opposing the Bengal partition plan otherwise it would be difficult for the Bengal Forward Block to survive in an atmosphere of growing support for the partition movement.²⁴⁷ But it was

not known that to what extent partition was recommended by the people and what percentage of popular opinion was involved in support of partition. Opposing the plan of united independent Bengal, the KPP asked for a referendum on the question of united Bengal in a united India or partitioned Bengal in a partitioned India. Humayun Kabir requested Suhrawardy to justify his recent professions of 'racial unity of all Bengalis' by passing a bill or at least a joint resolution accepting joint electorate for the province and inviting the Congress in the Bengal legislature to join his cabinet on the basis of joint responsibility.²⁴⁸ The Communists stood for a united and free Bengal in a free India in accordance with the policy of exercising the right to self determination by both the communities in their homeland. They apprehended that in the proposed independent Bengal Anglo American capital (86% of the total investment at that time) would get an easy entrance and it would have a monopoly even over the non Bengali capital. (14% of the total investment at that time). Bhabani Sen, the CPI secretary of Bengal asked for a coalition government in Bengal with the consent of adult voting, joint electorate, equal representation, nationalisation of foreign capital and abolition of zamindari.²⁴⁹ However, Abul Hasim did not come in any understanding with the communists who had already distorted the united Bengal scheme as one of greater Bengal (Hashim and Suhrawardy tried to eradicate the misgivings of the Hindus by including the districts of Manbhum, Singhbhum, Purnia from Bihar, and the Surma Valley of Assam) where the Muslims, they envisaged, would be in minority.²⁵⁰ Gandhi to some extent was convinced and agreed on leaving the fate of Bengal on the will of the Bengalis at that time but the Nehru -Patel group successfully convinced him about the trick of this proposal for dividing

the Hindus and the Schedule caste leaders.²⁵¹ The series of letters exchanged between the leaders like Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, Sardar Patel, Sarat Chandra Bose and Mahatma Gandhi in the months before partition²⁵² focused on the vulnerability of common Indian nationalism at this stage in Bengal and the age old practice of managing important political issues at the elite level without the sanction of the masses again put Bengal into dangerous consequences. It is to be noted in this respect that the germ of Bengal partition could be found not in Bengal but in the organized world of elite politics designed by the all India leaders of major political parties and the British government equally. Nehru had serious objections on Mountbatten's proposal of 1st May, 1947, (here Bengal and Punjab would have had the independent position) which would encourage, Nehru thought Balkanization of India along with many 'ulcers in India'.²⁵³ Later on this so called 'Plan Balkan' got converted into 'Plan Partition' which sealed the fate of united independent Bengal forever. After long debated discussions on transfer of power Mountbatten came with a final plan in 3rd June, 1947 which was approved by both the major parties—the Congress and the Muslim League.²⁵⁴ Surprisingly, no single representative from Bengal was present in the 2nd June meeting on the subject. None of the major parties of Bengal could emerge greater than the will and authority of the leaders from others parts of India. As this study do not provide scopes for investigating the details of pre partition political development in India, it is not possible here to make a vivid examination of the events leading to partition. Still it must be pointed out that none of the minor political parties except the *Hindu Mahasabha* had their voice in the end game of empire.²⁵⁵ Not only this, the entire voting episode of 20th June in both the houses of Bengal

legislature was proved to be a show because the decision of partition had already been taken elsewhere and the legislatures in no sense had given the mandate of the people to take the final decision on their future. What remained of the whole drama was the vote of the communists in favour of partition. The other minor parties were nowhere to utter a single word on this ultimate disaster of 1947 even though all of these parties condemned partition in a sharp critical manner. Unlike the Radical Democratic Party who accepted the Mountbatten plan as a fait accompli, the Revolutionary Socialist Party declared that both the transfer of power and the partition of the country was nothing but a 'backdoor deal between the treacherous bourgeoisie leadership of the Congress and imperialism'²⁵⁶; the Revolutionary Communist Party characterized it as the 'result of a political conspiracy hatched by British imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie'²⁵⁷. For the CSP it was an act of 'surrender'²⁵⁸ while the Forward Block declared it in terms of a partnership of the bourgeoisie with British imperialism.²⁵⁹ The Bolshevik Party also condemned partition and independence as an act of 'betrayal'.²⁶⁰ All of the existing minor parties did not pay any interest in scrutinizing the causes that why they had failed to mobilize the people against the so called betrayers whereas their attachment with the people had been more profound than the others. They happened to be the real actors of unorganized politics in Bengal, but ultimately the major parties took an easy hold of that realm of politics by simply leaving the minor parties in state of non existence and sheer silence. The historical puzzle of party politics got dissolved with the disappearance of undivided Bengal in 1947. Only the Bay of Bengal remained as mute witnesses. It becomes true that the political leadership of the minor political parties were left with no choice but to

surrender before the political cross currents what swiftly rebalanced their Bengali priorities with that of a all India demand for separate homeland of the Muslims.

Notes and References

1. For a detailed account of the origin of Forward Block see Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle, 1935-42*, Calcutta, 1952, and *Crossroad*, Calcutta, 1962, pp. 174-75. Also see *Forward Block Er Panchas Bacharer Sangram, Rajnaitik Dalil*, Calcutta, 1990, pp. 10-13
2. Ashok Ghosh and Dr Rathin Chakrabarty (ed.), *A Short History of the All India Forward Block*, Calcutta, 2001, pp. 27-28.
3. Although the CPI stood by Subhas Chandra Bose in all his fight against the Congress fight but they did not join the Forward Block because they thought that it would lead to a cleavage in the Congress and would hamper the anti imperialist movement in India.. At the time of the first conference of the forward Block in 1939, the so-called leftist consolidation broke up and the Royists, the CSP and the CPI withdrew from the Left Consolidation Committee on the . Most of the parties specially the CSP insisted that national unity was the primary requirement of the time and without Gandhi's association in it, it would not be a success. See the *National Front*, Vol II, no 19, 18 June, 1939, p. 309; Nipendranath Mitra, (ed) , *The Indian Annual Registrar*, 1939, Vol. II, pp. 360-2
4. For a detail accounted the CPI's stand on this issue see Overstreet, Gene D and Windmiller, Marshall, *Communism In India*, Bombay, 1960, p. 168; *National Front*, Vol II no 6, 19 March, 1939, p. 96
5. See Goutam Chattopahyay, *Subhas Chandra Bose, The Indian Leftists and Communists*, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 26-27
6. See *New Age*, Vol 5, May 1939, p. 501; Overstreet and Windmiller, *op.cit*, p. 170

7. Goutam Chattopadhyay, *op.cit*, p.81
8. For details see *Indian Annual Registrar*, Calcutta, 1940, p.344
9. See S Lal, In a Letter to the Editor, *League of Radical Congressmen; Its Propaganda Role Examined, Forward Block*, Saturday October, 28, p.9, cited in *Forward Block Collected Volume I*, Calcutta, 2008
10. In the thesis called 'Forward Block-Its Justification' Subhs Bose conveyed that upto 1937 the leftists grew within the Congress in influence and numbers. After 1938 the process suffered a check. "After Haripura. Leftists belonging to different parties began to put their heads together with a view to devising ways and means for Leftist strength....The proposal then was to form a Left Bloc ...both the CSP and the National Front at first took the idea of the Left Bloc with great enthusiasm, but they ultimately gave it up....there is no doubt that if the Left Bloc had been launched in time, it would have taken the place of the Forward Block." Cited in Goutam Chattopadhyay, *op.cit*, p.84-85
11. Saroj Mukherjee, *Bharater Communist Party O Amra Calcutta*, 1985, p.131
12. *Ibid.*
13. Goutam Chttopadhyay. *op.cit*, p.85
14. Goutam Chattopadhyay, *op.cit*, p.86
15. *Ibid.*
16. For the objective and programmes of the Forward Block in detail see Appendix III
17. See the news tiles, Sj Suresh Chandra Deb explains the reasons of his joining the Forward Block, *Forward Block*, Saturday October, 28, p.9, cited in *Forward Block Collected Volume I*, Calcutta, 2008

18. Asoke Ghosh & Rathin Chakrabourty *op.cit.* pp.27-28
19. GB, I.B, Note on the Communist Movement in Bengal, 364/38(1),
September 1838-39
20. The CPI had merged with the Bengal Labour Party in 1936 for sake of one communist party in India specially under the influence of the National Front theory. It was deiced that the labour party would be the legal cover of the illegal CPI . the labour leaders did not like the idea of Socialist unity because they believed in the two fold character of the national movement. One against the reactionary nationalist bourgeoisies and the other against British imperialism.. The Labour Party communists strongly opposed the idea of a CSP- CPI understanding because. They thought , it would destroy the real character of a communist unity India as well as destruct the objective and character of the national movement
GB, I.B, Political Circulars Issued by the Secret Section of the Bengal Labour Party, (On Communist Unity' by J/K) File. No.726/39; Bhabani Sen, *Rajnitik Sanghathanik Report*, Calcutta, 1943,p.23-24
21. GB, IB, Political Circulars issued by the Secret section of the Bengal Labour Party, see the article 'Question of United Front and Nature of the Struggle', File. No. 726/ 39
22. *Indian Politics; 1941-44*, Draft Political Report of the Politburo of the Bolshevik Party of India, published by the Politburo of the Bolshevik Party of India, Calcutta, June, 1944, p.1
23. Bhabani Sen, *op.cit.*, pp.15-16
24. For details see, Somnath Lahiri, *Somnath Lahiri Rachanabali*, 1931-1945, Calcutta, 1985, pp.174-175

- 25 See Bhabani Sen, *'The Vision of Economism; , Forward Block, Saturday October,28,p.9,cited in Forward Block Collected Volume I,Calcutta,2008.*
- 26.*Ibid.*
27. See Political Circulars, *'The Role of the Indian Bourgeoisie and Our Task'* ; Bhabani Sen,*op.cit* pp.4-5
28. See Subho Basu, *Does Class Matter, Colonial Capital and Workers Resistance in Bengal; 1890-1937., Delhi, 2004,pp.256-262.*
29. Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, *In Search of Freedom,Calcutta,1967,p.533*
- 30.*Forward Block,op.cit.pp.9-18*
- 31.*Ibid.*
- 32 Jogesh Chandra Chaterjee,*op.cit,p.531*
33. David. M Laushey,*Bengal Terrorism and the Marxist Left; Aspects of Regional Nationalism in India 1904-1942, Calutta,1975,p.130*
34. The Congress adopted the policy of individual satyagraha campaign to protest the war peacefully.. A large number of Bengal Congress workers did not pay any serious attention to it rather they became impatient to launch more active programmes without any restriction from the High Command. For a detailed analysis see GB, Home Poll, and Confid.s-24/40 (41) .
- 35.*ABP, 21 June,1940*
36. GB, I.B, 'Note on the development of the Communist Movement in Bengal', File No.364/38 (1)/ (Sep 1938-39).; Home Poll,Confid. W-60/41,1941
- 37.Home Poll,Confid 37/25/1940,
- 38.*ABP, 2nd March, 1940*

39. Satyen Sen, *Gram Banglar Pathe Pathe*, Dhaka, 1970, pp.98-109
40. On the eve of the Second World War in 1939 the Congress Socialist Party took a turn from the peasant front of Bengal got engaged more on other affairs. It was a set back for the peasant movement all over the province and the pro government Muslim peasant organization appeared on the scene. Abdullah Rasul, *Krisak Sabhar Itihas*, Calcutta, 1969, p.92
41. For a detail see Saroj Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit* , pp.155-58.
42. GB, Home Poll, File No. W-184/1940
43. *Ibid.*
44. G.B, Note On the Development of Communist Movement in Bengal, File No.364/38(1), September, 1938-1039)
45. Satyen Sen, *op.cit*, pp.82-83. For details on the peasant movement in Dinajpur in late 30s see Malay Shankar Bhattacharjee, '*The Voice of Timing; Agrarian Unrest in North Bengal*' in *Studies in Micro history in Some Parts of India and Bangladesh 1857-1947*, Calcutta 1987, p.166; Sushnata Das, *Purba Banglar Kayekti Zelar Communist Andolon; Akti Ruprekha 1937-1947* in Abdul Wahad (ed.), *Itihas Anusandhan*, 8, 1993, p.494' Ajit Roy, '*Smritite Dinajpur Zelar Krisak Sangram*', Dhananjay Roy (ed.) *Tebhaga Andolon*, Calcutta, 2000, p.33, Kamal Siddiqui, '*Tebhaga Andolone Krisak Pratiridh Charitra*', Syed Anwar Hosen Muntasir Mamun (ed.) *Bangladeshe Pratirodh Andolon*, p.379
46. Abani Lahiri, *Post War Revolt of the Rural Poor in Bengal : Memoirs of a Communist Activist*, Interviewed by Ranajit Dasgupta, Calcutta, 1999, pp.47-48
47. *Ibid.*

48. Biswanath Chakrabarty, *Dinajpur Jelar Rajnaitik tihās, Raiganj, 1392, pp. 57-72* Abani Lahiri---*Tiris Challiser Banglai; Rajniti o Andoloner Avignyata Prasange*, Calcutta, 2006, p. 78

49. Ajit Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 33

50. For Jaipaiguri see Paritish Dutta, (ed.), *Karotoya Theke Tista*, Calcutta, 1991, pp. 45-55

51. Abani Lahiri, *Post War Revolt...*, *op. cit.*, p. 42

52. *Ibid.*, pp. 40-44

53. Paritosh Dutta, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-55

54. *Ibid.*

55. *Ibid.*

56. M N Roy proposed for a conference in Calcutta to support the British war efforts. He was the first to support the Government in its anti Fascist war against the Congress policy of 'conditional support. The government was not much convinced of his stand because they thought that he had separated himself from the Congress in expectation that the Congress would be declared illegal soon. The British government in fact was not impressed with his shifting positions in the last few years before the outbreak of the war. See *Resolution of the League of Radical Congressmen*, Meerut, October, 1940, cited in V.B Karnik, *M.N Roy, Political Bioliography*, Bombay, 1978, pp. 457-458; M N Roy papers, NMML.

57. GB, Home Poll, Confid. 452/40 1940

58. For a detail of the Radical Democratic Party's policy towards the war see, *India and War, 1942*,. It was widely believed during this time that M N Roy received an amount from the Government as reward for his support to the war. L.P Sinha, *Left Wing in India*, Muzaffarpur, 1954, p. 523

59. See *Thesis of the RSP on the Russo- German war- Intensify National Struggle 'On to the Defense of USSR*, Calcutta, 1941, pp.15-18

60. The government assumed that the RSP, the Forward Block and the Congress might have an agreement to hamper the war effort of the government. GB 102/42 1942, See *On National Struggle of August, 1942*, Calcutta 1942

61. GB IB, Confidential, File No. 704/41.

62. *Ibid*

63. *Ibid*.

64. GB, Special Branch, File No. SN 653/43 II.

65. Ashoke Ghosh and Rathin Chakrabourty (ed.), *op. cit*, p.36

66. For the approach of Soumen Tagore to the CSP and the CPI see *Congress Socialism ?*, Calcutta 1930

67. *Ibid*, For details see Soumen Tagore, *Bourgeoisie Democratic Revolution in India*, Calcutta 1939,

68. Robert J Alexander, *International Trotskyism, ; Trotskyism in India*, *Revolutionary History*, Vol I, NO.4, Winter, 1988-89; To know about Trotskyite movement see *The Times*, March 1924. P.C. Joshi in *National Front*, 19 March 1939, p.96.; Partha Sarathi Gupta, *British Labour and the Indian Left* in B.R. Nanda (ed.), *Socialism in India*, New York, 1972.; Bankey Bihari Misra, *The Indian Political Parties: An Historical Analysis of Political Behavior up to 1947* Delhi, 1976

69. See Gour Pal: "*Indian Trotskyism and the Revolutionary Communist Party*," (typed Memo), 1983, page B/I, ; *Historical Development of Communist Movement in India* , Revolutionary Communist Party of India, Calcutta, December, 1944 pp.449

70. See Soumen Tagore, *Permanent Revolution*, Calcutta, 1944,

71. Gour Pal, *op. cit.*, p.D/25

72. See *Against the Stream, An Anthology of Writings of Soumendranath Tagore*, 'Introduction', Ahmedabad, 1984, p.XIV; GB IB, File No, 1045/1940.

73. 'Revolution and Quit India' in *Against the Stream*, vol III ,pp.108-24

74. 'Onward From 1942', *Ibid*, pp.125-33

75. *Quit India in Retrospect*, *Ibid*, pp.159-69

76. For details see Amitava Chanda, 'Communist League Theke RCPI; Samantaral Communist Sanghathaner Bikasher Bibhinna Parjyay.', Abdul Wahab, *op. cit.*, 1995

77. *Against the Stream*, *op. cit.*, pp.159-67

78. Amitabha Chanda, *op. cit.*, pp.334

79. Home Poll. File No.29/10/1942

80. *Ibid.*

81. For the party's policy see *Indian Politics*, 1941-44, Calcutta 1944, published by the Bolshevik Party of India,

82. The Bolshevik party noted the conflict between the imperialists and the Indian bourgeoisie, the two partners of the bourgeois exploitative system in India, but it was clear to them that the national bourgeoisie were incapable of playing any revolutionary role, being themselves closely tied to feudalists as well as imperialists. They held that the working class in India was strong enough to play an independent role, and win leadership of the revolution by winning the poor peasants and agricultural proletariat to its side *Ibid.*

83.GB, Special Branch, File No,S.R 508/1942; *Indian Politics, op.cit,p.67*; *Imperialism, Indian Fascism, and the people*, Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party of India, Calcutta,1948,pp.28-38;L.P Sinha,*op.cit,pp.525-527*

84.Home Poll confined. File No,S.R 704/1941

85.Gour Pal.*op.cit p.D/25*

86.On 15th December 1941 almost six months after the Soviet Union entry into the war following the German invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, the CPI made a fundamental change in its attitude to the war. The war now ceased to be the Imperial War', and became the People's War 'for CPI.Now CPI offered its support to the 'people's war' in order to ensure the defeat of the Fascist powers. Politburo Resolution; *People's War Against Fascism, December,15,1941, Home Poll, File No,44/32/1942.*

87 See *Communist*,Vol 2.No.8, April 1940, cited in D. N Gupta, *Communism and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1939-45*,New Delhi,2008,p.128

88.See Goutam Chattopadhyay,*op.cit.pp.84-85*

89. Amalendu Sengupta , *Uttal Challish,Asamapta Biplab*, Calcutta, 1989,p.5. For the *adhiar* movement going at this time in North Bengal see, Ranajit Dasgupta, *Economy, Society, and Politics in Bengal; Jalpaiguri,1869-1947*,p.194; Hitesh Ranjan Sanyal,'*The Quit India Movement in Medinipur District*', in Gyanendra Pandey (ed) *Indian Nation in 1942*,Calcutta,1988,p.44

90.Jyoti Basu,*Fire Dekha Swadhinata, Swadhinata Sangrame Communistder Bhumika*,p.15 cited in,Kamal Choudhury (ed) *Banglai Gana Andolanar Chai Dasak*,Vol. I, Calcutta,2009,pp.57-58

103. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 25 March, 1933
104. G B Home Poll, Report of the DIG/ I B ,19 August, File No.222/41/1941
105. For details follow the opinion of veteran CPI leader Ajay Ghosh delivered at a public meeting in Calcutta, on 25 January, 1957 see *Yugantar*, 26.12.57, cited in Amalendu Sengupta, *op.cit*, pp.32-33
106. Manikuntala Sen, *Sediner Katha*, Calcutta, 1982, p.61
107. 'Report on Reformist Deviation' of the Second Congress of the CPP, 1948, pp.129-33, see B T Ranadive, *op.cit*.
108. Amalendu Sengupta, *op.cit*, p.6
109. For a detail analysis see John Zavos, *The emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India*, Delhi, 2000, pp.3-17; Sucheta Mahajan, *Independence and Partition; The Erosion of Colonial Power in India*, New Delhi, 2000. *Introduction*.
110. *Ibid*.
- 111 See the Introduction, Rakesh, Batabyal, *Communalism in Bengal; From Famine to noakhali, 1943-47*, New Delhi, 2005
112. Before the Calcutta corporation election of 1940 both Subhas Bose and Shyama Prasad Mukherjee came closer in working out an electoral understanding. They could not arrive at any agreed decision about the candidates to be set up for two particular constituencies. The pre election days were marked by serious clashes between the *Hindu Mahasabha* and the Forward Block. It was alleged that the first election meeting of the *Hindu Mahasabha* was disturbed by 'organized hooliganism' of the supporters of Subhas Bose., Ashim Kumar Dutta (ed.), *Leaves from a Diary : Shyama Prasad Mukherjee*, New Delhi, 2000, p.33; Subhas Bose Records, File No.PH501/41II, p.27

113. *Ibid.*

114. *Ibid*

115. *Ibid*

116. Out of a total of about 51000 Hindu votes in the general constituency , the Bose supporters and the Hindu *Mahasabha* poled together about 41000 votes and the Bose group alone 21000 votes. The *Mahasabha* got the support of 20000 votes. Pranab Kumar Chatterjee, *Struggle and Stiff in Urban Bengal 1937-47*, Calcutta,1991,pp.88-89

117. Ashim Kumar Dutta, *op.cit*,pp.33-34

118. Official sources referred to a secret pact between the Subhas Chandra Bose and the Muslim League. GI,John Herbert to Linlithgow,21 December, 1940,Kinlithgow collection, GI, 4.; Advance 19 April,1940

119.The Bose League agreement was the most dramatic event of the time in the government cycle. For the details see, Bengal Report for the second half of April 1940,GI Home Poll, confide. File No. 18/4/40.(I)

120. *Hindustan Standard*,19 April,1940; Forward 20 April,1940,

121. See *Forward*, Vol III No.13, 27 April, 1940; *Advance* 19 April,1940, ; *The Modern Review*, May 1940, .*The Tribune* of Lahore even criticize the pact as one of the most amazing things and charged Subhas Bose for a 'gravoious mistake'. *The Tribune*, Lahore 16 April, 1940 (editorial).

122. Ashim Kumar Dutta,*op.cit*,p.34

123. *Ibid*,p.33

124. See Subhas Chandra Bose, *Crossroads*, Calcutta,1981, pp.310-311.

125. See, Prasanta Kumar Chatterjee, *Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and Indian Politics*, New Delhi, 2010,pp.76-78

126. For a detail of the relationship between the Congress and the Birla's see G D Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma, A Personal*

Memoirs, Calcutta, 1953; GB ,SB, Memo dated 3 December, File No.501/39 (iii); GOI Home Poll, File No.4/14-A 40.

127. See Suranjan Das, *Communal Riots in Bengal, 1905-47*, New Delhi, 1991, Ch 5

128. GI, Home Poll, File No.9//44

129. In 1939n Shyama Prasad Mukherjee demanded the recruitment of Hindu youths of Bengal into the Army as an expression of their loyalty. The *Hindu Mahasabha* hoped that if they supported the British in their war efforts , the youth would receive military training and would be able to carry arms. See the Resolution passed by the *All India Hindu Mahasabha* , Calcutta, December 29, 1939. *Akhil Bhrtiya Hindu Mahasabha Papers*, NMML

130. Hindu Mahasabha leader Savarkar believed in a nationalistic economy. According to him all strikes and lockout tend to undermine and cripple industry and production. They weakened the economic strength of the nation. . Thus in the Calcutta Session of the Sabha in 1939 he urged the Hindus to utilize the opportunities afforded by the war to the militarization and industrialization of the community. He suggested o participate in the war efforts as they helped in bringing about industrialization and militarization of the Indians. See Savarakar's Presidential Address, *All India Hindu Mahasabha*, Madras December 28, 1940. *Akhil Bhartiya Hindu Mahasabha Papers*, and NMML.

131. *Ibid*

132. *Ibid*

133. For Savarkar- Rashbihari Basu Correspondence see Savarkar Papers, letter dated May 23, 1938, from the secretary *Hindu Mahasabha* ,Bombay office to Rashbihari Basu, NMML, microfilm, rn23.

134. See Savarkar Papers, no 23,,letter from the Secretary of the *Hindu Mahasabha* Rashbihari Basu, 4 November,1938.
135. John Herbert to Linlithgow,6th January,1940, Linlithgow Collection National Archive of India,,4.
- 136.*Ibid*
137. For a reference see *Report of the commissioner Dacca Division, November, 1945,GB,File No.37/45.. The Congress during the election of 1946 did not make a serious move against the Mahasabha rather appreciated the Mahasabha's call for Hindu unity.*
138. Ashim Kumar Dutta,*op,cit*,p.32
- 139.*Ibid.*
140. For a detail see Shri Prakash, *CPI and the Pakistan Movement* , in Bipan Chandra (ed.), *Studies in history*, Vol III, no.1-2, Delhi, 1981, pp.215-258.
141. G Adhikari, *Pakistan and National Unity*, Bombay,1942, cited in, D. N Gupta, *op.cit*,240-241; P. C Joshi,' *Reject the British Plan,-- Communist Approval to the AICC* ', in *People's Age*, July 7, 1946.; *People's Age*, August 4, 1946
142. Shri Prakash,*op.cit*,pp.215-258
- 143.*Ibid.*
- 144.For a detailed account of the CPI's line on various issues including the 'Quit India' movement or the policies of People's War see, Unity in Action; For National Defense and National government, Resolution passed unanimously by the First Congress of the CPI, 1943, pp22 in T G Jacob (ed), *National Question in India, CPI Documents,; 1942-47*, New Delhi,1988, pp.80-104.; Arun Bose and Khoka Roy, *Inside Bengal,1941-*

44. *Forward Block and its Allies versus Communist Party*, Bombay, 1945, p.65,
145. See, Amalendu De, *Fazlul Huq and His Reaction to the Two Nation Theory, 1940-1947*, in *Bengal Past and Present*, January-April, 1974, pp.26-27.
146. See GI Herbert to Linlithgow, Government Fortnightly Report/P & J/5/146.; Choudhury Khaliquzzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan*, Lahore, 1961, p.248
147. GI, Hertbert to Linlithgow, 8 October 1940, Government Fortnightly Report/p& J/5/147.
148. Latter dt. 10th June, 1941, From Khwaja Nazimuddin to Jinnah, in Harun -or Rashid, *Inside Bengal Politics, 1936-1947*, Dacca, 2003, p.101
149. Ashim Kumar Dutta, *op. cit*, p.34
150. G B Fortnightly Report of the Government of Bengal, 1st Half of December, 1941, Hoe Poll, File No. w/102/42.
151. *ABP*, December 2, 1941
152. *Hindustan Standard*, December 4, 1941
153. Extract from private and personal letter from Linlithgow to Amrey, 27 December 1941, Formation of New Government, p.280, Cited in Harun-Or Rashid, *Foreshadowing of Bangladesh*, *op. cit*, p.131, (n. 279)
154. M .H Ispahani, *Quid-I Azam Jinnah As I Knew Him*, Karachi, 1966, p.52
155. Suhrawardy's Report to the Sirajganj Conference of the Bengal Provincial Muslim League, published in the *Azad*, 14 February, 1942
156. Harun or Rashid, *op. cit*, pp.129-133
157. See letter dated 3rd June, 1941, Raghieb Ahsan to Jinnah, Harun-Or Rashid, *Inside Bengal Politics*, *op. cit*, pp.130-31

158. Government Fortnightly Report, Herbert to Linlithgow, 11 February, 1942, L/P & J/5/149.
159. *Star of India*, 26 January, 1942, p.2
160. See the statement issued by the Muslim League ministers on 5th December, 1941 in *Star of India*, 5 December, 1941.
161. See the translated speech of Suhrawardy at Khulna on 15^v January, 1938, Azad, 20 January, 1938, p.8, cited in Harun-or-Rasid, *The Foreshadowing of Bangladesh*, op.cit, p.105.
162. In Bengal M A H Ispahani, Abdur Rahman Sidiqi and some other non Bengali businessmen acted as the most trusted followers of Jinnah and the All India Muslim League. In 1937 six non Bengali Muslim businessmen were included into the organization committee of the Muslim League in Bengal. These non Bengali Muslim community had little knowledge about Bengal rather they were more interested to make a place for themselves in the city centric polices so that the economic interests of their community could be protected as well. In fostering the non Bengali Muslim sentiments these people had played an important role and the Bengali Muslim interests had to face a stiff opposition from this group in each and every political occasions. Surprisingly Ispahai happened to be the first choice of Jinnah not Suhrawardy in the working committee of the All India Muslim League from Bengal. Ispahani was preferred in view of the need to augment League funds. See *Star of India*, 26 October, 1937, p.5, *Ibid*, p.9; *Jinnah to Ispahani*, 13 December, 1941 in Z H Zaidi, *Jinnah Ispahani Correspondance, 1936-1948, Karachi, 1976, p.255.*

163. See Jamiluddin Ahmed, *Speeches and Writings of Mr. Jinnah*, Lahore, Vol II, 1968,p.597

164. Z H Zaidi,*op. cit*,pp.274-275.

165.For details of M A Jinnah's family background see Stanley Wolpart, *Jinnah of Pakistan*, New York, 1984,pp.4-5.

166.After the passing of the Lahore Resolution the All India Muslim League decided to observe 19th April, 1940 as Muslim Independence Day and in support of the issue they organized several meeting in different parts of the province confirming the proposal as Muslim right to self determination. This type of moves on the part of the Muslim League had a backing from the growing cry of Fazlul Huq's betrayal of Muslim interests in Bengal. Opposition to the new Huq ministry infact helped to publicize the Pakistan proposal in Bengal. *Star of India*, 24 April, 1940,pp.3-7.

167. See Amalendu De, *Fazlul Huq and His Reaction to the Two Nation Theory (1940-47)*, in *Bengal Past and Present*, January-April,1974,p.31

168. Letter of A K Fazlul Huq, 2 February, 1943, *The Statesman*, 3 February, 1943 cited in Amalendu De, *Ibid*, pp.30-31.

169.*Star of India*, 11 June, 1942,p.1.

170.The most famous third paragraph of the first resolution of Lahore stated that, 'it is the considered view of the Session of the All India Muslim League that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principles viz. that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted , with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority, as in the North Western and

Eastern zones of India , should be grouped to constitute Independent States in which the constituent unites shall be autonomous and sovereign.’. However in this scheme no attention had been paid on the percentage of the Muslims in the geographically adjacent areas of Bengal where the Hindus were majority in number. See, Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada (ed.), *Foundations of Pakistan; All India Muslim League Documents*, Vol II, Karachi, 1969, p.341 also see, Shyamali Ghosh, ‘*Fazlul Huq and Muslim Politics in Pre Partition Bengal*’, in *International Studies* July December, 1974, Vol 13, No.3, pp.456-457.

171. For the political ideals of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee see A C Banerjee, *A Phase in the Life of Dr Shyamaprasad Mukherjee* , 1937-1946, Calcuta, 2000, pp.71-72.

172. *ABP*, 11 December, 1941.

173. GI, Home Poll, File No, 94/26/41 and GI Extract from private and personal letter from Lord Linlithgow to Mr. Amrey, File No. P&J/7542/1945, December 30, 1941.

174. Letter dated 27 March, 1942 from Raghbir Ahsan to M A Jinnah, see, Harun-or- Rashid, *Inside Bengal Politics, op.cit*, p.136.

175. Letter dated 28 August 1944 , from Raghbir Ahsan to Liaquat Ali Khan, see, Harun-or-Rashid, *Ibid*, p.141.

176. *ABP*, 12 December, 1941

177. See Gyanendra Pandey, ‘*Congress and the Nation, 1917-1947*’, in Richard Sission and Stanley Wolpart (ed.), *Congress and Indian Nationalism*, Bark;ey, 1988, pp.129-130..

178. *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, 14, 219, New Delhi, 1981, pp.221-222.

179. See Durga Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel Correspondance, 1945-50*, Ahmedabad, 3; 168, cited in Gyanendra Pandey, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

180. Governor's Fortnightly Report, L/P&J/5/152, p. 33; *ibid.*, 1st half, February 1946.

181. In its 21st annual session in Calcutta 1939, the *Hindu Mahasabha* resolved to launch a campaign against the communal policy of the Huq League ministry but did not refer to the measures taken in favour of the agricultural masses. They put an attack on the legislative enactments which deliberately curbed, they thought, the rights of the Bengali Hindus (middle class specially) and crippled their economic strength. See S A I Tirmizi (ed.), *The Paradoxes of Partition 1937-1947*, Vol I (1937-1939), New Delhi, 1998, p. 967.

182. In the name of a non-existent organization called the Revolutionary Subhas Party Forward Block distributed anti-war leaflets. It urged the people to take instructions from the Free Hindustan broadcast. Already in a broadcast Japanese Premier Tajo declared, 'Now is a golden opportunity for the Indian people to exert their utmost efforts for the establishment of their desire 'India for the Indians' ...the British influence in India is going to be exterminated'. The leaflets issued by the Forward Block actually asked the Indian masses to bring nearer the excellent opportunity for India. See Fortnightly Report for Bengal, First half of April, 1941; Home Poll, (Intelligence) File No. 110/42, 1942; Home Poll, (Confidential), File No. 37/6 1942.

183. *Star of India*, 19 August, 1942.

184. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 23 August, 1945.

185. H A Barari, *Kolkata To be Young Was Paradise*, New Delhi, 2006, p. 123.
186. Asoke Ghosh & Rathin Chakrabourty (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 35.
187. GI, Home Poll, File No. 94/26/11, Arrest of Sarat Chandra Bose 1941.
188. GI, Home Poll, (I) Sec, (I.B), File No, 44/1/44Poll(1).
189. See, Amiyanath Bose, *Bose Brothers and the Indian Struggle*, in Dibyajyoti Majumdar (ed.) *Netaji Subhas Chandra Basu; Janmashata Barshiki Smarak Grantha*, Government of West Bengal, 1997, p. 229
190. Rameshwar Banerjee, a college student refused to throw away the national flag that he had been carrying when asked by the police. He was murdered by the police. See letter of Rameswar's father dated 24 November, 1945, *ABP*, 29 November, 1945. and Asoke Ghosh & Rathin Chakraourty (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 40.
191. H. A Barari, *op. cit.*, p. 105.
192. On the supposed collaboration between the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha see GI, Fortnightly Report, 2nd half of January, 1944, Home Poll, File No. 18/1/44 and also see Jaya Chatterjee, *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition 1932-1947*, Cambridge, 1994, p. 144.
193. GB, Fortnightly Report, 1st half of November 1945, Home Poll, (Confidential), File No. 37/45.
194. A numbers of historical writing and research works have dealt with the post war popular upsurges. Special mention may be made of Sumit Sarkar, *Popular Movements, National Leadership and the Coming of Freedom with Partition, 1945-47*, in *Economic and Political Weekly*, April, 1982; Goutam Chattopadhyay, 'The Almost Revolution' in Barun De (ed.), *Essays in Honour of Prof Sushobhan Chandra Sarkar*, New Delhi, 1976, Amalendu Sengupta, *Uttal Challis, op. cit.* Sucheta Mahajan,

Independence and Partition; The Erosion of Colonial Power in India, New Delhi, 2000; Goutam Chattopadhyay, 'Bengal Students in Revolt Against the Raj, 1945-46', in Amit Kumar Gupta (ed.), *Myth and Reality; The Struggle for Freedom in India, 1945-47*, New Delhi, 1987.

195. GI, Home Poll, File No. 21/18/45-Poll(I).

196. G D Birla to Henderson, 6th December, 1945 in N Mansergh (ed.), *Transfer of Power*, Vol VI, London, various dates, p. 438.

197. For details see, Goutam Chattopadhyay, *The Almost Revolution*, *op. cit*, p. 445. in Barun De (ed.), *Essays in Honour of Prof Sushobhan Chandra Sarkar*, New Delhi, 1976

198. See the arguments of the CPI leaders like Bhabani Sen., Moni Singh, Krishna Binod Roy on the limitations of the Tebhaga struggle in Tebhaga Sangram, Rajat Jayanti Smarak Grantha, published by the Communist Party of India, Calcutta, 1973, p. 51.; also see Narahari Kabiraj, *Tebhaga Andolon*, in Narahari Kabiraj (ed.), *Asamapta Biplab O Asampurna Akangkha; Bharater Swadhinata Sangramer Itihas*, Calcutta, 1997, pp. 192-197.

199. At a public meeting held in Calcutta in 1945, Gandhian leader Satis Dasgupta, RSP leader Nani Bhattacharya, CSP leader Gunada Mazumdar, CPI leader Somnath Lahiri, Muslim student leader Moazzem Husain addressed the gathering. It was presided by Muslim League leader Suhrawardy. See Goutam Chattopadhyay, *op. cit*, p. 162.

200. *The Statesman*, 2 April, 1946.

201. See the opinion of trade unionist communist leaders in Pranab Kumar Chatterjee, *Struggle and Strife in Urban Bengal, 1937-47*, Calcutta, 1991, p. 172.

202. For a details of the party programmes and resolutions of the Jabbalpur session, 1946, see, Asoke Ghosh & Rathin Chakrabourty, *op. cit.*, pp.40-41.

203. *Ibid.*

204 *The Statesman*, 2 April, 1946

205. In this regard the opinion of V D Savarkar was- in a Hindu minority province where a League ministry was inevitable, Hindu Sabhas should join, and not boycott the ministry and convert it into a coalition one so that the Hindu ministers could protest any resolution supporting Pakistan or provincial self determination. Chances were high that a League-Mahasabha ministry could have been formed in Bengal including six Muslims, three caste Hindus and three Scheduled Caste ministers. However, it did not materialize because the Hindu Mahasabha was not prepared to enter into a coalition with the League unless the Pakistan Resolution was put on ice. See Savarkar's presidential address, Madras, December 28, 1940 in Subhog Mthur(ed.) *Hindu Revivalism and the Indian National Movement; Documentary Study of the Ideas and Policies of the Hindu Mahasabha, 1939-45*, Jodhpur, 1996, pp16-17;

206. See Sekhar Bandhyapadhyay, *Development, Differentiation and Caste; The Namsudra Movement in Bengal, 1872-1947*, in Sekhar Bandhyopadhyay, Abhijit Dasgupta and Willem Van Schendel (ed.), *Bengal; Communities, Development and State*, New Delhi, 1994, p.108.

207. Throughout the period Paundra Kshatriya leader Patiram Ray in western Bengal served as a link between the Hindu Mahasabha and the local Scheduled Caste people while in eastern Bengal Upendranath Edbar received regular funds from the Mahasabha for organizing the Scheduled caste people of the region. See, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Papers, II-IV,

- Installment, Subject File No. 90, Nehru Memorial Museum Library (NIML hereafter). The efforts of these people and the influence of the *Mahasabha* definitely helped to articulate one Hindu identity among the Scheduled Castes and in most of the communal clashes, these people began to confront the Muslims as Hindus, not simply as lower castes. For a detail of the situation see Sekhar Bandhyopadhyay, *Caste, Culture and Hegemony: Social Dominance in Colonial Bengal*, New Delhi, 2004, 208. See *The Times*, 17th Oct, 1941.
209. See Abdullah Rasul, *op.cit.*, p. 118
210. Overstreet and Windmiller, *op.cit.*, pp. 200-17.
211. See Ramakrishna Mukherjee, *Social Indicators*, Delhi, 1975, p. 62; Srimanjari, *Through War and Famine*, Delhi, 2009, p. 145.
212. See Abul Hasim, *In Retrospect*, Dhaka, 1974, p. 23.
213. Report of Relief Work by Bengal Provincial *Hindu Mahasabha*, 1944, p. 20
214. Home Department, Fortnightly Report, 1st half, June, 1943.
215. Cited in Rakesh Batyabal, *Communaism in Bengal; From Famine to Noakhali 1943-47*, New Delhi, 2005, p. 120
216. Overstreet and Winmiller, *op.cit.*, pp. 200-217.
217. Report of Relief Work by Bengal Provincial *Hindu Mahasabha*, 1944, pp. 18-20
218. Home Department, Fortnightly Report, 1st half March, 1943,
219. GI, Home Poll, File No. 79/46 Vol. III, PIB Morgue and Reference Series.
220. *Bulletin of the Indian Federation of Labour*, March-April, 1945, p. 45, cited in Dipti Kumar Roy, *op.cit.* pp. 103-104

221. See the biography of Gourishore Ghosh.<http://www.rmaf.org.ph/Awardees/Biography/BiographyGhoshGou.htm>,24.12.2010..
- 222.Dipti Kumar Roy,*op.cit*,pp.103-104
- 223.Sankar Ghosh, *Hastantar*, Vol.I,Calcutta, 2001,pp.72-78.
- 224.*Ibid*,p.72; also see the statement of Abul Hashim, the secretary of the Bengal Provincial Muslim League, *In Retrospect*,pp.101-102, cited in Amalendu Sengupta,p.148.
225. See the *Swadhinata*, 23 March, 1946, cited in Amalendu Sengupta, *op.cit*, pp.150-162.
226. *Swadhinatar Sampadakiya Nibandha*, 'Aaj Soloi August' by Somnath Lahiri, see, editorial, *Swadhinata*, 16 August, cited in Amalendu Sengupta,*op.cit*,p.180.
- 227.On July 19,1946 the Council of the All India Muslim league in Bombay adopted a resolution on Direct Action against the British government for the achievement of Pakistan. The working Committee of the League declared August 16 as Direct Action Day. It instructed the Muslims to suspend all business on the day and observe complete *hartal* and directed provincial and district League to hold public meetings throughout the country to explain the resolution. See, *Star of India*,31 July,1946,p.1
- 228.Sayed Abul Maksud, *Gandhi, Nehru and Noakhali*, Dhaka,2008,pp.14-23.
- 229.Sailesh Kumar Bandopadhyay,*Mohammad Ali Jinnah and the Creation of Pakistan*, New Delhi,1991,pp.279-281.
- 230.*Sankar Ghosh,op.cit*,p.109.
- 231.*Ibid*.

232. *Star of India*, 21 September, 1946, pp. 3-4.

233. Foa detailed account sees Rakesh Batabyal, *op. cit.*, pp. 237-365.

234. GB Special Branch, Police File, Memo NO. 286/87/SB on the Bengal Partition League GBSB, PM Series, File No. 822/46II

235. See *The Modern Review*, 'Notes', February, 1947, pp. 86-90; also see Shyama Prasad Mukherjee's address at a public meeting, *Star of India*, 29 January, 1945, p. 2

236. Sarat Chandra Bose, *Commemoration Volume*, Calcutta, 1982, pp. 60-61.; Abul Hashim's Draft Manifesto of the Bengal League, *Star of India*, 1945, p. 3.

237. Though M.A. Jinnah avoided defining Pakistan in concrete terms until 1946, the Muslim League leaders in Bengal had already developed the idea of Eastern Pakistan consisting of Bengal, Assam and a portion of Bihar as a sovereign state. IN 1944 Raghīb Ashan's plan of Confederacy of East Pakistan and Adibasistan (a confederation between Bangassam and the autonomous homeland of Adibasistan to be created for the tribes of certain adjoining districts of Bihar) gained currency among the majority of Bengal Muslim League leaders while the another minor section advocated a more homogeneous Pakistan comprising of whole of Assam, Bengal minus Burdwan Division and a portion of Purnia district in Bihar. Actually in 1944 there different proposals came out of the discussion. 1. Raghīb Ahsan's plan, 2. Formation of East Pakistan and 3. Hamidul Huq Choudhury's proposal for a united Bengal and Assam as a unit of Pakistan. Md. H R Talukdar, *Memoirs of Hyseyan Saheed Suhrawardy*, Dhaka, 1987, p. 28; also Shila Sen, *op. cit.* p. 232.

237. Harun-Or Rashid, *op. cit.* pp., 174-180.

238. For details see, Harun-Or Rashid, *Foreshadowing of Bangladesh*, *op.cit*,pp. 193-207.
239. *Star of India*,9 April,1946.
- 240.For details see, Amalendu De, *Swadhin Bangabhumi Gathaner Parikalpana Prayas O Parinati*,Calcutta,1975,pp.7-33.
241. See Barrows' Partition of Bengal Scheme and Explanatory Notes, The Transfer of Power,X,pp.390-94cited in ,Harun-or Rashid,*op.cit*,p.269.
- 242.Harun-or-Rashid,Ibid., pp.274-275.
243. Viceroy's Personal Report,No.2,cited in Harun-or Rashid,*Ibid*,p.275.
- 244.Durga Das,(ed.),*Sardar Patel's Correspondance,1945-1950,Vol.IV*, Amdabad, 1972,p.159.
- 245.Ibid.p.160.**
- 246.Ibid,p.161.**
247. Only eight of the Executive council members of the party including Leela Roy, Satya RanjanBakshi,Anil Baran Roy, Hem Ghosh and Jotish Joardar supported Sarat Bose's move.Memo dated 5 May,1947,in Government of Bengal, Special Brach of Police, PM Series, File No. 938/47IV.
- 248.Statement by Humayun Kabir in *The Statesman*,13 May,1947,p.4.
249. Bhabani Sen., *Bangabhanga O Pakistan*, Calcutta, pp.45-47 cited in, Amalendu De,*op.cit*.pp.82-89.
- 250.Amalendu Sengupta,*op.cit* pp.230-233
251. Prayer Meeting,8 June,1947,Mahatma Gandhi Collected Works,vol.88,p.103
252. Amalendu De,*op.cit*,pp.

253. Interview to Norman Cliff of the News Chronicle, 25 May, 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru Selected Writings, 2nd Series, vol. 2, p. 179.
254. Nitish Sengupta, *Bengal Divided; The Unmaking of a Nation 1905-1971*, New Delhi, 2007, pp. 154-155.
255. For details see, Jaya Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-265
256. See the *Thesis of the RSP on the Russo German War—Intensify National Struggle: On To Revolutionary Defense of USSR*, Calcutta, 1941, pp. 15-18
257. See Amit Kumar Gupta, *Agrarian Drama; The Leftists and the Rural Poor in India*, New Delhi, 1996, p. 402
258. *Ibid*
259. Forward Block at a meeting in March, 1947 at Calcutta adopted a resolution denouncing the transfer of Power as a 'bogus transfer of power'. The resolution asked the masses and other patriotic forces to carry on relentless struggle for the seizure of power for the Indian people. *Indian Annual Register*, Calcutta, 1947, p. 197
260. Amit Kumar Gupta, *op. cit.* p. 402.