

CHAPTER - V

Congress and the Congress High Command ---- their mutual Iner-  
action ----- any Deviation from the Declared Policies of the  
Congress High Command -----Reasons Behind such Deviation.

The net-works of the Congress organisation is far more refined in comparison with that of all other political parties in India. There are Pradesh Committees (State Committees) in all the States. Besides there are more committees for ~~xxxxxxx~~ centrally administered territories like Chandigarh and Delhi.

The Working Committee is the highest organ of the Party. The Working Committee is the nerve Centre of the Party as well as the main policy making body, although Kochanek has pointed out, its functions have undergone considerable change in the Post-independence period. (1) The Working Committee is responsible to the AICC (All India Congress Committee), which according to rules meets as often as is required by the Working Committee. (2) The A.I.C.C. has power to lay down guide lines for the Party. So regarding policy-making AICC sometimes possess immense influence over the party.

Besides the Working Committee, the Congress 'High Command' is often mentioned. This is the very powerful and the ultimate decision - making body of the party. One can not give the proper definition and the structure of this ever changing post-independent born body, though it can be described as an informal

authoritative body of the Congress, not completely identical with the Working Committee. Prime Minister operates the Steering-wheel of the body with the advice from other top leaders of the party. (3)

"The long political dominance of the Congress indicates that, although Indian Society is splintered, there are unifying forces at work within it. The Congress functions like a federal organisation where the effective organisational units are the State Parties, each of whom exercises considerable though not strictly definable autonomy. The national leadership-popularly called the "High Command" ----- in Nehru's time did not usually intervene in factional struggles in the states but mostly accepted and thereby legitimised the winner. (4) Only when there was a deadlock or an unsavoury state leader proves particularly vulnerable does the national leadership intervene." (5)

"One reason for the wide power enjoyed by the state units of the party is that the social structure including castes, religious composition of the population varies from state to state, as do language, economic patterns, as well as historical tradition and the predominant personality types. A nation wide party must appeal to a different social mix in each state or in each district. The particular religious and caste composition (which in addition, is liable to change from time to time) can be known and effectively manipulated only by the local leadership. Excessive Control from the party's national head quarters would

obstruct the play of the specific and changing social situation in the state or region. Thus the religious or economic groups as well as castes that dominate or support the congress party vary in the different states and change over time." (6)

"-----the Congress Party in Bengal can express and realise the demands of local nationalism or even those of linguistic autonomy more effectively than the D.M.K. (7) Similarly the Congress party in West Bengal which, like its counterpart in Madras and in some other states, functions almost as an independent organisation, can in many ways express and achieve the demands of Bengali distinctiveness more successfully than could the Communist party. For one thing, the Congress party of a state, howsoever independently it might function, still maintains close ties with the national organisation. It's actions, therefore, do not provoke the same fears of separation as would the actions of any other party which followed a programme which was no more ~~radical~~ radical. In other words, membership in the all India Congress party serves as a kind of guarantee that the limits of what is permissible and practicable in terms of regional or State autonomy would not be transgressed. On the other hand, however, these limits themselves can be reached or realised more easily by the State Congress Parties. Thus we force the Paradoxical situation that the Congress government in Bengal made Bengali the official language in the state and handled with foreign governments on an autonomous basis. ----- The all India leadership of the congress party generally concedes a large measure of autonomy to the more distant states to check the growth of

secessionist or revolutionary movements. A precarious balance is thus reached, which is a major feature of political life in India!"<sup>(8)</sup>

"The expulsion of Bose in 1939, coupled with his flight from India in 1942 and the partition of 1947, virtually destroyed the urban coalition that had dominated the Congress organisation in Bengal from the 1920s. During the war, the coalition remained shakely intact, led by Jugantar group, an old and famous terrorist organisation that had joined the nationalist movement under Gandhi's leadership. Suren Ghosh, the leader of the Jugantar, was the Pradesh Congress Committee President, and Kiron Shankar Roy, a Jugantar supporter, was the leader of the Bengal Assembly Congress Party. The Jugantar group drew its membership, however, primarily from east and north Bengal, areas which were absorbed into East Pakistan, and shortly after independence a number of the Jugantar supporters (including Kiron Shankar Roy himself) opted for East Pakistan.

Independence thus ushered in a serious political crisis in West Bengal. The urban coalition that had dominated the Congress until the expulsion of Bose in 1939 no longer existed; a number of the Congress supporters had followed Bose out of the Congress and joined the leftist parties, a number of congress strongholds had been cut off by partition, and the party faced the prospect of contesting elections in an area where a Muslim Ministry had been in power before independence with no single group in control of either the Assembly or the Bengal PCC, the Congress high

command stepped in and gave its support to Profulla Ghosh, a member of the congress working committee and an ardent supporter of Gandhism. But Ghosh also lacked support within West Bengal<sup>(9)</sup>

So, due to the weakness of the state party organisation immediately after independence the congress high command gave verdict in favour Dr. P.C.Ghosh as the first premier of newly formed state West Bengal.

The Congress organisation during the initial period of independence was suffered from organisational weakness and group politics. This became very much acute a few days before 15th August, 1947 when Dr. P. C. Ghosh refused to include Shree Radhanath Das, an young Scheduled caste Minister of the shadow Ministry in the new State Cabinet after independence. The shadow Ministry was formed with the congress leaders under Dr. P.C. Ghosh's leadership to look after the interests of non-Muslim majority part of the province. According to the Governor Burrows, the shadow Ministry would be consulted by the then Muslim League Ministry in all matters concerning West Bengal and this new Ministry would enjoy right 'to initiate policies in matters solely concerning West Bengal'. Dr. Ghosh's decision created a Political storm in the state congress organisation. Some important congress leaders vehemently opposed Dr. Ghosh's order. Jadabendra Panja, Nikunja Bihari Maity, Madini Barman, Kamal Krishna Roy, Bimal Chandra Sinha, Radhanath Das and few other Ministers of shadow ministry decided to resign from the

Ministry in Protest against Dr. Ghosh's stubborn attitude. The Congress organisation as well as the Ministry faced a stalemate situation. When on the ensuing independence day, 15th August, 1947, the whole nation would observe the day with pleasure, the day would be observed in West Bengal in the midst of despair and despondency due to the deadlock situation of the congress ministry. The Provincial congress committee having failed to compromise the contending groups, requested the then All India Congress President Kripalini ~~xxxx~~ for settlement of this serious crisis on the eve of independence. (10)

Congress President Kripalini came in Calcutta talked with all influential congress leaders and also gave some suggestions for the settlement of the dispute but the situation remained unchanged. The leaders of both the contending groups had agreed to postpone the issue for the time being. Which was more interesting to note that due to faction - politics West Bengal Provincial Congress Committee was failed to organise a public meeting for the congress president in Calcutta on 15th August, the day of our national independence.

Premier Dr. Ghosh was selected as the leader of the new Congress ~~xxxxx~~ Ministry with the active support of Congress high command. In some important policy making issues Dr. Ghosh consulted with the Congress high command. "Explaining the methodology resorted to by him for election of the

personnel of his Cabinet Dr. Ghosh revealed that the decision was taken after consultation with Congress working Committee. (11)

During Dr. Ghosh's premiership "----- within the Congress itself there were differences of opinion. The old group mentality which characterised politics in Bengal in one form or other still continued to disturb the congress party. Dr. P.C. Ghosh could not keep under control the various groups and sections in his party". (12) In spite of blessings from the Central leaders, during introduction of West Bengal Special Power Bill Dr. Ghosh and his ministry was opposed by a section of congress legislative members. Dr. Ghosh "-----was the leader of a Gandhian group centered in the Abhoy Ashram at Comilla (in East Bengal) and without a large following his support dwindled. The Assembly Party did not support him, and Congress member soon began agitating for a new leader, forcing him to resign." (13)

So Dr. Ghosh resigned from the leadership of the Congress Assembly Party on 15th January and Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy was elected as the leader of the Congress legislative party.

"The instigation for the present congress organization in West Bengal therefore came from the State itself and not from the Centre." (14) After being elected leader of the West Bengal Assembly and before taking oath of Chief Ministership Dr. Roy when met with Gandhiji on 18th January, 1948 at

Dalhi Gandhiji "advised him that if the Congress Members in the Assembly needed him it was his duty to accept the position offered. Bidhan then decided to accept the call." (15)

Moreover earlier Prime Minister Nehru with getting advice from Governor-general Mountbatten also requested Dr. Roy for taking over the reins of the Province. (16)

"The first problem for Bidhan was to choose the personnel of the new ministry. Dr. Roy selected a team even including persons who were not members of the Assembly. This upset some members of the Congress Party, particularly those who had been nourishing the ambition to become Ministers. They resented and objected to the idea of including outsiders in the Cabinet. But Dr. Roy insisted on the condition that he would accept the leadership only if there was no party interference.

His great advantage was that he was not anxious to be the Chief Minister, but if he was to be, he insisted, he should be given a free hand not only in the choice of his colleagues, but also in the Control of the administration. Eventually the congress Legislature Party and the Pradesh Congress Committee agreed". (17)

Before formation of the new Cabinet Dr. Roy had already talked this issue with Gandhiji. "Gandhiji even agreed with Bidhan that the personnel of his Ministry might be chosen on the pure consideration of ability and merit rather than of Party

(18)  
membership".

Dr. Roy had good relationship with Mahatma Gandhi, Prime Minister Nehru and Deputy Prime Minister Patel. In all important organisational matters Dr. Roy and Central leaders talked each other. Regarding congress organisation Nehru and other leaders sought Dr. Roy's advice. In response to Prime Minister Nehru's letter Dr. Roy in a letter dated 7th June, 1949 wrote".

"There is no doubt whatsoever that in the Congress a great deal of rivalry and corruption have crept in, but what is worse most of the present congress leaders look spent up. Unless a new drive is given and new set of people are taken in the Congress is bound to become and remain static, as you have suggested. I entirely agree with you that no time should be lost to give such an active drive in this country.

While many of us realise that such a drive is essential so that the Congress Organisation should become dynamic in its outlook and methods, it is difficult for most of us to conceive what should be the plan. -----  
While the present congress ideal of Hindu Moslim unity, removal of untouchability and spinning of khaddar has been of great value in our march forward, something more vigorous and definite in our planning is essential." (19)

During the second half of 1949 Dr. Roy had to pass the most critical period following the defeat of the Congress can-

didate Surash Das by Sarat Bose, who had seceded from the Congress, in Calcutta's first by election in June, 1949. On 20th of June, the newspapers of Calcutta published a report of the Prime Minister Nehru in which he accused 'that the people in that constituency were angry either against the provincial Congress in West Bengal or the Provincial Government'. (20) He also expressed the view that Dr. Roy's Ministry should resign. Thereafter there became a series of letter correspondence between Dr. Roy and Prime Minister Nehru regarding this issue.

On 26th of July, 1949 the Congress working Committee passed a resolution recommending a general election for West Bengal within six months, reconstruction of the Provincial Congress Committee and the formation of a new interim ministry. The resolution also stated that the reshuffle of the ministry were to be postponed till the arrival of the leader of the Congress Assembly Party. (21) At that time Chief Minister Dr. Roy was in Paris for his eye-treatment.

During this time there were two main groups within the Congress, i.e., the ministerialists group led by Dr. Roy, Profulla Chandra Sen and Atulya Ghosh and another group led by WBPC President Surendra Nath Ghosh, Dr. Profulla Chandra Ghosh and other leaders. One group pressed for making Dr. P.C. Ghosh again the Chief Minister of the State while the ministerialist group opposed reconstitution until the return of Dr. Roy from Europe. At last the ministerialist group gained their point.

Meanwhile on 11th of July when Prime Minister came to Calcutta to trace the causes of unpopularity of the present Ministry which were the Principal factors leading to the defeat of the Congress candidate in the South Calcutta by-election, Arun Chandra Guha, then acting President of WBPC, and other leaders, who were then a dominating force in the party organisation, met the Prime Minister and they accused Dr. Roy's Ministry as inefficient as well they accused the Ministry for demoralising the rank and file of the organisation. The representatives requested Nehru to reconstitute the Ministry with genuine Congressmen. During this tour Nehru received a document of 17 allegations which have brought discredit to the present Ministry from J. C. Gupta, a dissident member. The Prime Minister requested the then Acting Chief Minister N.R. Sarker to make necessary enquiries regarding the above allegations. Later N.R. Sarker caused an enquiry and then sent the enquiry reports to the Prime Minister.

"The Congress Working Committee which met in Delhi on October 4 and 5 in its resolution on West Bengal Ministry resiled from its previous stand. Dr. Roy put the case on behalf of his Ministry before the 21 member committee and at the end of an hour's masterly exposition of the prevailing situation in West Bengal was able to convince the members of the dangers of a reshuffle of the Ministry during the transition period when general election was decided upon. The Ministry under Dr. Roy was to continue subject to any changes which be thought fit to make. As

to the reconstruction of the Provincial Congress Committee and its executive would continue to function, until election was held under the Congress constitution. Thus the ministerial side gained their point, while the opposition group in the party organisation under Surendra Mohan Ghosh was allowed to maintain their hold for the time being.

The decision to hold a general election in West Bengal remained unaltered".  
(22)

But the decision of the postponement of the interim - election in West Bengal on the basis of old electoral rolls and under the restricted franchise of Government of India Act, 1935, was later conveyed by Prime Minister Nehru to the State Government on 8th January, 1950. The news became a great win and joy for Dr. Roy and the ministerialist group. The decision of the postponement of the interim election was approved by the Prime Minister "on the basis of a report from Governor K. N. Katzu who had consulted all the sections of public opinion recommending postponement of the interim election and holding of General election along with other states within a period of 8/9 months".  
(23)

The power struggle within the provincial Congress between the Organisation group led by Surendra Mohan Ghosh and Dr. P.C. Ghosh and the ministerialist group was totally stopped when on September 17, 1950 Atulya Ghosh became elected as the President of the West Bengal Provincial Congress Committee.

"The driving force of the organisation at present is Atulya Ghosh, who was originally elected General Secretary of the P.C.C. in 1948 and who was able to cement his hold on the Party organisation during the thirteen years that B. C. Roy was Chief Minister. Largely because of Roy's wish to remain aloof from the day-to-day affairs of Politics, Ghosh was left free to organise the state along his own lines, generally with the backing of the Chief Minister. As a result of his long and intense involvement in Party affairs, Ghosh is now the only man in the entire state who has knowledge of, and access to, virtually all party matters." (24)

"During the life-time of Dr. Roy two major attempts were made to dislodge Atulya Ghosh and his group from Power. One was at the time of the defeat of Asoke Sen in North Calcutta by-election and the other at the time of the South Calcutta by-election when Siddhartha Shankar Roy resigning from the Congress contested the election as an independent candidate with Leftist support. In both the elections congress candidates were defeated by a large margin of votes. But on every such crucial occasion Ghosh had the firm support of his leader, Dr. B.C.Roy, under whose protective wing he found shelter. After the death of Dr. B.C.Roy and Jawaharlal Nehru Atulya Ghosh's ascendancy to power in the All India Congress Committee was fully secured. He held a key position, being one of the big bosses of the party syndicate. His combination with Kamraj Nader, S. K. Patil and Morarji Desai helped in putting Lal Bahadur Shastri as a successor to Nehru as Prime Minister without contest and paved the way for election of Srimati

(25)

Indira Gandhi as the next Prime Minister after Shastri's death."

At the initial period the relationship between Nehru and Atulya Ghosh was not good. But later Nehru realized that Ghosh possessed all the qualities to be a leader and good organiser for the congress party. In a letter dated 18 October, 1963 Nehru wrote to Ghosh:

"-----you appear to think that in my opinion your activities are directed against me or are prejudicial to the interests of the Congress. I can assure you that at no time have I thought that your activities were directed against me. I have considered you always as a dynamic and leading personality of the Congress and one who has played a dominating role in Bengal. I have not the slightest grievance against you -----".

(26)

West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee under the leadership of Atulya Ghosh carried out all the organisational activities free from High Command's intervention, except in certain circumstances. This was possible because Ghosh was an influential member of the Working Committee of the Congress Party.

So when in 1966 Ajoy Mukherjee, the President of the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee, was thrown out from the Presidentship by the 'Caucus' of Atulya Ghosh and Profulla Sen, Congress High Command did not support Mukherjee. "Ajoy Mukherjee was continuing his efforts for central leadership's intervention in the

State Congress affairs. On May 17 he saw the Prime Minister and Congress President in Delhi. Obviously he was baffled in his mission, for, it was difficult for them to go against the wishes of Atulya Ghosh and Profulla Sen to satisfy Ajoy Mukherjee and his group. .... (27) ".

West Bengal Chief Minister Dr. B.C. Roy had a close relationship with Prime Minister Nehru and Deputy Prime Minister Patel. For his immense knowledge and long and varied experience in the sphere of administration, he was being consulted by the Prime Minister and other Central leaders in some of crises the country and the congress party had faced. As a senior leader of the party Dr. Roy gave his co-operation to the Central leaders. There was a popular saying that Dr. Roy was able to manage all the important schemes such as Durgapur Steel Plant etc. for his State from the Central Government. But still for the interest of West Bengal, Dr. Roy did not compromise with the Central leaders as well as with the party High Command and it is interesting to note, sometimes in some serious economic and political matters he burst with his sharp protest which threatened the Central leaders. He was in some cases in against the policy of appeasement. Dr. Roy became recognised as the ardent supporter of State autonomy in the political circle. "No other factor has so profoundly affected the internal power spectrum of the congress as the shift of power from the centre to the states. And no other cause for this shift is more relevant than the inability of the congress to marry its unitary non-federative

organisation with Federal Constitution and its politics." (28)

"This shift began during Nehru's life-time. Nehru increasingly came to rely on the personal loyalty of strong Chief Ministers instead of institutionalizing the relation between the office of the Prime Minister and that of a Chief Minister. These state Satraps, in turn, consolidated their power, by all legal and illegal means, and through virtually taking over the State's administration and congress Party organisations and ignoring the centre's, the High Command's and the A.I.C.C's directives on policies that did not suit them and their supporters." (29)

"Ultimately, this shift of power engulfed the centre also, more decisively after Nehru's death. For example, the development Council became more decisive than the Planning Commission in the making of economic policies and programme of the centre as well as the states. The Chief Ministers' conclave became more important than the Central cabinet, and the Chief Ministers' power was never more decisively deployed than in the elections of Mr. Gandhi, who was no where in the picture and was probably the least important member of the Shastri Cabinet. The abdication of the congress High Command in favour of its State Committees to select candidates not only for the Assemblies but also for Parliament marked the rise to power of states' satraps at the level of party organisation." (30)

"Although till 1967 West Bengal had stable Con-

gress Ministry, the State's relations with the centre were not free from conflict. It is significant that of all the states, West Bengal was selected for a study of the federalising process in India by an American researcher, Marcus F. Franda. He says that the evidence from the case studies indicates that political leaders and groupism West Bengal were not constrained to accept Central Government decisions concerning either State matters or constitutionally central matters even during that period when the Congress party was in power of both Central and state levels." (31)

In 1948, the West Bengal Government banned the Communist party and the justifying the action of banning, Kiron Sanker Roy, the home minister gave a statement in the Assembly. "He said that the communist party wanted to create a state of chaos with the object ultimately of seizing power by violent means, stirring up villagers to defy the forces of law and order, inciting labour to acts of violence against management and to sabotage all production and finally acquiring illicit arms and making West Bengal as the first base of operation". (32)

Regarding the banning of Communist Party, Prime Minister Nehru and the Central cabinet did not support the stand of the West Bengal government, though Nehru criticised 'the highly injurious activities' of the Communist Party of India. Nehru expressed his opinion in a letter to Dr. Roy. "The matter has

been considered by the central cabinet and the Deputy Prime Minister placed the views of Provincial Premiers before the Central Cabinet. The Cabinet was of the opinion that any step in the nature of banning the communist party in India should be avoided at present.

No one was in any doubt the highly injurious activities of the communist party of India. Those activities, as I have stated in Parliament, have bordered on open revolt and have increasingly taken shape of Sabotage or even terrorism. Because of this the Central Government and the Provincial Governments have taken strong action against the members of the communist party of India. That action will continue so long as the situation necessitates it.

Generally speaking, therefore, banning does not give any powers to deal with an organisation which is essentially functioning underground. The slight balance in favour of banning is rather outweighed by communists posing as ideological martyrs instead of Saboteurs and terrorists." (33)

Still, West Bengal government was firm in maintaining their policy inspite of objection of the Prime Minister and the Central Cabinet.

Regarding the selection of National Anthem a controversy was going on between Nehru and Dr. Roy. The bone of contention between two leaders was while Nehru whole hearted-

ly supported as national anthem 'Jana Gana Mano' the famous song of Tagore, Dr. Roy and his cabinet colleague was behind 'Bande Mataram' a song written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. Regarding this issue, the letter of Dr. Roy to Nehru and the P.M.'s reply to that letter was very much interesting in the political circle.

Dr. Roy, on 14th June, 1948, in his letter, wrote to Nehru, "The West Bengal cabinet inspite of our great admiration for Rabindranath is unanimously of opinion that "Bande Mataram" should remain the Nation Anthem. We have no doubt we are expressing the public opinion of Bengal in this matter." (34)

In the reply of the above letter, Nehru gave his opinion "I feel strongly about it, think that in the present context 'Bande Mataram' is completely unsuitable as a national anthem. It is and it will continue to be a national song which is intimately connected with our struggle for freedom and which will be revered accordintly". (35)

In support of 'Jana Gana Mano', Nehru wrote in that letter "When rather automatically Jana Gana Mana began to get popular from military and other playing, I wrote to all governors and Premiers about it and asked them what their were. With one or two exceptions all plumped for Jana Gana Mano and most of them said that this was popular in their provinces." (36)

Later in connection with the Prime Minister's letter, Dr. Roy on 24th June, reiterated that Vanda Mataram should be ideal as a national song. But when Prime Minister had conveyed the decision of the central cabinet that 'Jana gana mano' should be the national anthem, for the time being the controversy ended.

In the first general election (1952) although the Congress returned to power in the state with a comfortable majority of 143 in a house of 238 members but seven ministers --- Profulla Chandra Sen, Bhupati Majumder, Nikunja Maity, Kalipada Mukherjee, Harendra Nath Roy Choudhury and Bimal Chandra Sinha and Niharendu Dutta Majumder were defeated in the election. This was really a great shock to the Congress party in the state. (37)

Before the reconstitution of the new cabinet, the defeated Ministers were doing their official works. But the congress had given a directive that no defeated Minister was to be taken back into the cabinet either through a by-election or by becoming a member of the Legislative Council. At that time West Bengal had a bicameral legislature -----Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council (Upper House). But Dr. Roy wanted to include Profulla Chandra Sen and Kalipada Mukherjee, two defeated Ministers, into his new cabinet. So, in a letter Dr. Roy wrote to Prime Minister Nehru:

"Seven of my Ministers have been defeated in the

election. While I am not bothering about the other five, P.C.Sen of the Food Department and K.P. Mukherjee of the Labour Department have not only been very useful members of my cabinet but they possess extraordinary knowledge of their own departments and in making selections for the next Assembly I had the impression that these two will certainly be returned even if the others fail to be returned. I do not know of any person in the Assembly who can fill up these posts. I would, therefore, considering every thing, suggest that you approve of my action in selecting these two men to seek election of course, criticisms will be levelled at this suggestion, but the peculiar situation in Bengal requires that I should keep these two men, if possible." (38)

But when the newspapers came to know about Dr. Roy's move, the newspapers tremendously criticised the State Congress government. Prime Minister Nehru was also against Dr. Roy's move. In a letter Nehru wrote to Dr. Roy:

"One thing I feel sure that the public reactions will not be good. Would it not be possible for you not to include any of these defeated ministers at least to begin with, in your cabinet? I do not want your cabinet to get a bad start from the public". (39)

Ultimately Dr. Roy was able to obtain approval

from the Congress High Command and Profulla Chandra Sen and Kallipada Mukherjee were returned to the upper House and thereafter included into Dr. Roy's new Cabinet.

In various issues there were conflicts between the Centre and West Bengal during Congress regime in the state administration. The conflicts cropped up on a number of issues.

"When the report of the 'Official language commission' was published in 1955, all parties and groups in the State Legislature reacted sharply to some of the recommendations of the Commission. When the report of the state Re-organisation Commission was published in 1956, this State protested to the Centre against ceding two Bengali-speaking Police stations of the District of Purulia to another state. West Bengal also sharply reacted to the decision of the central government to hand over 'Berubari' a border village in the district of Jalpaiguri (North Bengal) to Pakistan without ascertaining the views of the State Government". (40)

"In or about 1960, at a special session of the State Assembly, an unanimous resolution was passed expressing concern over anti-Bengali riots in Assam. The resolution urged the centre to take necessary steps to restore normal condition in that state." (41)

The West Bengal government also accused the Central Government of not giving the adequate financial assistance for the rehabilitation of the Bengali refugees who had come from the East Pakistan to West Bengal. Dr. Roy in various letters urged the Cen-

tral Government for financial assistance and proper rehabilitation of the Bengali refugees. His successor P. C. Sen also fought with the Central Government regarding the refugee issue.

Again, when the Central government had issued an order of transfer of West Bengal governor Dr. Narendra Kumar Mukhopadhyaya to Bombay, Chief Minister Dr. Roy and West Bengal Congress President ~~xxxx~~ Atulya Ghose<sup>(42)</sup> vehemently opposed Central Government's transfer order to governor Mukhopadhyay.

The Congress Working Committee had taken a decision in the year 1963 that senior Ministers of both the central and State Congress governments and some Chief Ministers should give up their present responsibilities and devote themselves for the organisation. As because the idea came from the Congress President Kamraj, so this policy was known as the 'Kamraj Plan'. Following 'Kamraj Plan' many influential Central and state ministers as well as some Chief Ministers resigned from their post. Prime Minister Nehru also wanted West Bengal Chief Minister P.C.Sen should resign to abide by the 'Kamraj Plan' and devote himself in the state party organisation. But Bengal congress boss Atulya Ghosh's vehement opposition saved P.C.Sen from ~~xxxx~~ resignation.<sup>(43)</sup>

Regarding fiscal matters there were also conflicts between centre and the West Bengal government.

"In the old days also West Bengal felt that its in-

terest were not properly looked into by the Centre. As early as 1952, the then Chief Minister Late Dr. B.C.Roy, in his budget speech, criticised the recommendations of the first Finance Commission in respect of the distribution of the divisible pool of the net proceeds of Centrally levied taxes, between the centre and the states. In the same speech Dr. Roy pointed out that the state of West Bengal had been deprived of the Jute Export duty, but the grants-in-aid given in lieu of this duty did not fully compensate the loss. Dr. Roy also pointed out that West Bengal was contributing much more than what it was getting back in return." (44)

"In 1960 (when Dr. B.C.Roy was still alive) the State Legislature adopted another unanimous resolution on the lines to be followed by the State Government in regard to the preparation of the memorandum to be submitted to the third Finance Commission; Dr. B.C.Roy moved the resolution. In his speech he expressed the view that the whole net proceed of income tax should accrue to the states." (45)

"In 1957 another resolution was passed unanimously by the West Bengal Assembly urging the Centre to delegate necessary power to the state of West Bengal, to have a say in the financial affairs of the Damodar Valley Corporation. The DVC Schemes were implemented through the financial contribution of the centre, the Government of Bihar and the Government of West Bengal. But the D.V.C., being a statutory body, the state Legislature has no authority to take votes on its annual budgets even though the same are

circulated among its members every year. The Assembly resolution was aimed at some sort of legislative control over the financial affairs of the D.V.C. The resolution urged the centre to amend the D.V.C. Act with this objective in view." (46)

"In 1963, the state of West Bengal fought a ~~tax~~ legal battle against the Union of India challenging the competence of the Union Parliament to enact legislation which sought to acquire for the Union Government Coal-bearing lands and rights over them vested in the state." (47)

During P.C. Sen's Chief Ministership period the State was faced a series of food-riots in the year 1960. Many opposition leaders were arrested and the law and order situation became deteriorated. At that time Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Central Home Minister Gulzarilal Nanda and Food Minister C. Subramaniam intervened to check the deadlock situation of the state. With the advice of the Central leaders the State Government released the opposition leaders from Jail. (48)

"The state government did not evidently like what appeared to be Central intervention in the internal affairs of the state. P.C. Sen resigned in a huff." (49) Though he withdrew his resignation letter on the request of Congress leaders.

"There other states which have suffered worse and have more reasons to complain against the Centre; but resentment

in West Bengal is keener and more vocal. This is partly due to the Bengali attitude towards the centre, Geographically a fringe state Bengal has always been on the periphery of Central administration. Throughout the Mughal period Bengal's fealty to the Delhi Durbar was nominal. For a short period in the early years of the British regime its relations with the Centre were close, but the centre was in Calcutta then. The shifting of the capital from Calcutta to New Delhi coincided practically with nationalist movement in Bengal."<sup>(50)</sup>

"The tradition was maintained in the years after independence. Even during the freedom struggle Bengali had not submitted fully to the Central leaderships of the Congress. The three greatest Congressmen of West Bengal, Surendra Nath Banerjee, C.R.Das and Subhas Chandra Bose, were all rebels against the party; the high esteem in which the Bengalis used to hold Dr.B.C. Roy was largely because of his image as a leader who could stand up to the centre and get things done in the xxxxxxxx face of New Delhi's opposition. On the other hand, Dr. P. C. Ghosh, in spite of his acknowledged suffering and sacrifice, could not be leader of the Bengali masses because of his identification with the Gandhian leadership of the Congress."<sup>(51)</sup>

Though West Bengal's third Congress Chief Minister P.C.Sen had tried to persuade the Central leaders for the cause of the state, but he had not that command which Dr. Roy possessed.

## II. Congress and other State Political Parties (Non Congress):- Their Mutual interaction.

The end of second World War in 1945 had enable the party to resume its Pre-war friendliness towards the congress; and it had done so, indeed, in June 1947, the party's central committee pledged its support to the nationalist leadership under Nehru, and called for a united front of political parties to begin the 'Proud task of building the Indian Republic on democratic foundations.'

But this policy came under attack towards the end of 1947, when radicals in the party took their cue from the report submitted to ~~cominfrom~~ (i.e. communist information) in September 1947, by its chief organiser, A. Zhandov, a Russian communist leader, in which he divided the world into two hostile camps of socialism and imperialism, and warned against the 'Chief danger to the Working class') - "The radicals in the CPI's central committee argued that India was a capitalist country, where the bourgeoisie had gone over to the imperialist camp, and that it was time to discard the policy of co-operation with the Nehru administration and, instead, launch an all out offensive against it. Their viewpoint prevailed at the second congress of the party held in early 1948; and suitable action followed soon after. The Nehru government responded to this by banning the party under the Defence of India Act a legacy of the colonial rule, and arresting many of its 89,263

(32)  
members".

Apart from this "the party managed to lead sporadic strikes by blue and white collar workers, and initiate or sustain militant peasant movements in Telengana and Malabar (i.e. present-day north Kerala) in the south, and parts of West Bengal and Assam") (53)

In the second party congress held in Calcutta (1948) the CPI accepted Stalin's view of two camps, capitalist and communist and attacked imperialism, feudalism as well as the bourgeoisie. (54) B.T. Ranadive, the general secretary of the party, 'restlessly pursued a programme of violence a chain of strikes was organised all over India;-----  
However, the uprising of the proletariat did not take place as expected". (55)

It may be recalled that the first organised opposition against the Congress "had arisen in 1940 when Subhash Bose formed the Forward Bloc in an attempt to combine the leftist forces against the Congress. But with the death of Bose (?) the party lacked effective leadership and dwindled in prominence. After independence the Communist Party emerged as the main opposing factor against the Congress in West Bengal. Guided by the Political Thesis of B.T. Ranadive (56) adopted at the second party congress in Calcutta on the Zhdanovist line of urban insurrection, the communists embarked upon a strategy of 'left adventurism' in

West Bengal. Not only did they engage in urban violence but also directed their activities in the rural areas of Bankura, Burdwan, Midnapore, Howrah and the 24 Parganas. But the communists were unsuccessful in creating a mass revolutionary spurge against the congress through insurrectionist activities, hence they concentrated their efforts towards adopting an effective electoral strategy to contest the strength of the congress at the polls. Aware of the organizational strength of the congress, the CPI decided to unite all the left forces and set up a joint electoral front against the ruling party in the state." (57) In 1951, the party passed on resolution at a public meeting in Calcutta, pledging that it "would learn from its mistakes, re-establish links with the people, and do everything in its power to unite all leftist parties to form a democratic front to fight the present Government." (58)

Thereafter, the Communists adopted the system of party coalitions as main warfare technique against the Congress Party which began from the elections of 1952.

Previously, following the party's policy and the view point adopted the party - congress in Calcutta (1948) towards Congress Government CPI followed the policy of violence in the state.

At the advent of independence, "the CPI, which had always been revolutionary, was faced with the necessity of formulating a program that would allow it to survived in a parliamentary system. The first reaction among most communists in West Bengal was

to continue with a policy of violence in an attempt to create a revolution. (59) Numerous instances of bank robberies, train robberies, bomb and acid bulb attacks at public meetings, looting, destruction of factory equipment, and murders of police, rival labour organisers and the other enemies were attributed to the activities of the CPI in Bengal immediately after independence. (60) As ~~xxxxxx~~ a result of these activities, the government of West Bengal banned the party in March in 1948, suppressed the party the newspaper in West Bengal, and arrested a number of Bengali Communist leaders." (61) The communist party was fast gathering strength and their violent activities were become a threat to the law and order situation in the province following Chief Minister Dr. Ray's advice, home minister Kiron Shankar Roy took the initiative in banning the communist party in West Bengal. Prime Minister Nehru did not support this decision and the Central Government was of the opinion that banning should be avoided at that time.

"Since their release in 1951, one section of the CPI has been attempting to move further and further away from revolutionary violence (at last so far as the public image is concerned). The Central Executive Committee of the party was in fact pleasingly, surprised with its showing in West Bengal in the 1962 elections, and since that time the Pro-central CPI faction in West Bengal has offered itself as an "alternative government" in both the 1957 and 1962 elections." (62)

In the Legislative Assembly, the Communist members too along with other opposition members always marked their positive existence. The first Budget session of the Provincial Assembly commenced on the 10th of February 1948. The premier and his cabinet colleagues occupied their seat on the Treasury Branch while on the opposition sat Jyoti Basu, Khuda Bux and some other muslim members. "The opposition though small in number, had some good speakers but the debate, though at times animated, was often tame because of the over whelming majority that the Government side would command." (63)

Next in the autumn session of the <sup>Assembly</sup>~~Assembly~~ the draft constitution of India was introduced by Premier Roy and after several days sittings it was passed. All that time there were two communist members in the Assembly Jyoti Basu and Ratanlal Brahmin, a trade union workder of Darjeeling. "Jyoti Basu opposed the draft constitution on the ground that it was undemocratic and authoritarian and favoured vested interests". (64) In this connection the house unanimously passed a resolution sponsored by the Finance minister recommending certain changes in the financial provisions of the draft constitution. So, though the communist party had microscopic membership in the Assembly with only 2 members, but they had tried much to give some opposition to the congress government.

Numerically though communist party was not so much powerful, but through various activities the party became a permanent headache especially for the law and order situation to the West

Bengal Government as well as the Congress Party. In the late February 1949, a terrible incident happened. According to the then S.D.O. of Barackpore Mr. Raghu Banerjee.

".....within a radius of one mile of the DumDum airport on the morning of that day an armed gang split up into small parties and ~~xxxxxxx~~ simultaneously raided the airport, the work shop of Jessop & Co., and the Government amunitions factory on Jessore Road. In the Jessop factory the raiders had thrown three foreign nationals in the blazing furnace, killed three men at the airport, stole seven revolvers and set an aeroplane on fire. During their flight after the attacks they fired at Gouripore Police out post on Jessore Road and a Police Station in Basirhat. There was a battle between the police and the raiders at Basirhat. The miscreants looted and fired on the thana and attacked the treasury and the jail. The gang tried to escape across the border to East Pakistan but two were apprehended after a chase with the help of the local people. (In the afternoon police has battled at Basirhat with a gang of 40 armed men some of whom had taken part in the DumDum raid earlier). The raiders had with them a ~~xxxx~~ stengun, revolvers and rifles. In the entire operation 25 raiders were arrested and 15 revolvers & rifles and a stengun recovered from them .

(85)

A high level conference of Home Department officials and police were held for to combat of this new and unprecedented type of lawlessness. The whole country became swayed for this in-

cident. Referring the episode Prime Minister Nehru gave an important statement on communist activities in February in the Parliament and declared that during the past years (1948) the communists had adopted not only an open hostility towards the Government but as also which could be described as bordering upon revolt. Referring to the Revolutionary communist party of India. 'The arrested men' Nehru stated, "belong to what is known as the revolutionary communist party of India which ~~xxxxxxx~~ brokeaway from the CPI but collaborates with it on occasions." (66)

Premier Dr. Roy, on 4th March in the West Bengal Assembly described the raid as "a well laid plot, smoothly planned for the purpose of creating an unusually striking situation and for collection of arms and ammunitions". (67) to bring off a coup.

The most critical period which Dr. Roy faced was the second half of 1949 following the defeat of the congress candidate by Sarat Bose, who left from the congress and contested as a candidate of the Republican Socialist Party, in Calcutta's first by-election in June 1949. Sarat Bose by winning the election, of strengthened the united left front against the congress. During this by election the communist party and other anti-government and anti-congress forces gathered together to the defeat the congress candidate. This defeat shook the very foundation of the ministry and the congress organisation in this province almost went underground for months thereafter.

The Premier was very much antagonistic to Communists

because the communists and its ally frequently disturbed the state government. In a letter written to Ballebhai Patel, Dr. Roy was expressed his wrath against Prime Minister Nehru of his wrong policy towards Communist Party: "My only regret is that Pandit Nehru wants to explain away the fact that he himself has no resistance against communists, although he considers the communists in India to be undesirable fellows". (68)

Meanwhile, the important leaders of the banned Communist Party such including Jyoti Basu, Renu Chakraborty had already gone underground. The Premier's Secretariat through secret agents collected news of activities of the communist party as well as its future programme. The report revealed. "-----the party had a two fold programme, to mobilise students, youth, working class and intelligentsia and put them in two categories. One related to open violation of law by defying section 144 Cr.P.C. organise processions and meetings in contravention of the same and in doing so come into clash with police. The underground movement related to<sup>the</sup> establishment of cells which were them in police terminology described as 'U.G. Den'. They had a more onerous job, collection of arms and ammunition, attack on police party and indulging in all sorts of subversion. The police had succeeded in implanting their agents and received regular information on the activities of the party, through this channel". (69)

On 12th January Sardar Patel addressed at the Calcutta Maidan exhorting them to face the challenge of anarchy and violence

boldly.

The biggest of the exodus of Hindus from East Pakistan began from 1st week of February followed by widespread violence which later turned into communal riot in both East Pakistan and West Bengal. At that critical juncture both of Prime Minister Mr. Nehru and Premier Dr. Roy seriously and sympathetically looked after the policy of rehabilitation of incoming refugees and tackle the communal riot. "The left forces for a while rose to the occasion and refrained from harassing the Government at that critical moment." (70)

The vast masses of unrehabilitated refugees created a serious law and order problem in the year 1951. The political parties were competing with each other to entice the refugees into their folds. In the northern and southern suburbs of Calcutta, the refugees led by political parties began unauthorised occupation of lands. The time was favourable for leading a movement for forceful occupation of lands and in this both the communist party and the new party the K.M.P.P. under Dr. Ghosh and Dr. Banerjee, though ideologically apart, joined hands. The K.M.P.P. in alliance with other left parties like R.C.P.I. (Soumen Tagore) and Forward Bloc took the agitation outside the forum of the legislature. On 18th March Dr. Suresh Banerjee, leader of the opposition, led a big procession of East Bengal refugees to the Assembly House as a protest against Government's unauthorised persons Eviction Bill. Dr. Banerjee, Soumen Tagore, Mrs. Leela Roy and others were arrested near the Assembly area for defying the prohibitory

order under section 144, but all of them were released within a few hours. (71)

The Central Government already had been taken a decision to hold general election based on a universal suffrage in the country in early 1952. The ban on the party had been successfully challenged in the High Courts of a few states as being in violation of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the new constitution. Simultaneously the party's special conference in October 1951 reversed the militant policy of the past few years and the communist party decided to enter electoral politics.

On new year's day 1952, for the election campaign of the first general election, Jawaharlal Nehru spoke against communists and communalists in Calcutta Maidan in front of half a million people.

The Congress returned to power with a comfortable majority of 143 in a house of 238 but seven ministers including Profulla Chandra Sen, Bhupati Majumder fell in the battle of ballot box.

The left parties gave a jolt to the Premier as well as to the Congress Party in the election. In the Bowbazar constituency, Calcutta. Dr. Roy had to contest in a straight fight against Satyapriya Banerjee, a Forward Bloc (Marxist) nominee, who was being backed by all the left parties including communists. On January 22nd after the completion of the days polling a violent

demonstration was showed in front of Dr. Roy's house. In those days the Pradesh Congress Office was situated in an adjacent building of Dr. Roy's house and some of the Congress volunteers also staged a counter demonstration at the gate of the Congress House. Bombs falling in quick succession in front of the Premier's house. The demonstration were then chased away by the police. A sense of ~~near~~ uncertainty pervaded in the Congress and opposition camps regarding the winning of Dr. Roy. In this election Dr. Roy won by a majority of 4,111 votes.

The Chief Minister formed his new cabinet on 11th of June 1952. In spite of stiff opposition from various circles as well as string objection by the Prime Minister, Dr. Roy inducted Profulla Chandra Sen and Kalipada Mukherjee; two defeated ministers in the election in his cabinet. The communists opposed the inclusion of the defeated ministers in the new cabinet. It also walled up posters and placards criticising the widely size of the council of Ministers in a poor state like West Bengal. They were also, in Public meeting and in the assembly, tremendously criticised the Congress government in that particular issue. The opposition and particularly the communist bloc which gained more strength in the assembly after the election became animated the debate and discussion within the House. But sometimes debates and discussions became worse for personal invectives against the ministers and their doings. In the beginning the ministry and Dr. Roy personally could not resist the furious personal attacks on the state ministers and the central government, by the mighty opposi-

tion bloc. Only that some communist members even forecasted that the Congress Government would be dethroned from both the centre and the State Government and ultimately the communist party would reign the whole country.

Regarding the role of the communist party in the House Soroj Chakraborty described - "Not that there were total lack of constructive criticisms on the policies of the Government, but such criticisms, the opposition at that time thought, would not projected the dimensions of the party and fail to draw applause from the public. From the very beginning after the first general election in the state of West Bengal the trend of the debate of the communist opposition tended to emphasise. On destructive criticisms and omissions and commissions of the Government, rather than constructive approach to problems envisaged under Parliamentary system of opposition."<sup>(72)</sup>

But whatever might be the debate, whether it is constructive or destructive the communist lobby managed to get wide publicity through the press. Though Soroj Chakraborty acknowledged the positive role of some of the leaders of the communist party. But Jyoti Basu, their leader, and Bankim Mukherjee, Deputy leader were participants in debates which focussed the problems of the day, offering constructive suggestions at the same time criticised the cabinet.

But still there was good personal rapport between Dr.

Roy and Jyoti Basu, both of them had mutual love and respect and this friendship had lasted for many years upto the former's death.

The opposition groups in the summer 1952 had launched their first movement in the Assembly demanding increase in ration quota of rice and wheat particularly for manual workers. In support of their movement opposition parties including communist party arranged almost daily processions. Later Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, Union Food Minister met Chief Minister Dr. Roy and opposition leaders including Jyoti Basu in Calcutta to work out a formula.

The West Bengal Government had to pass a difficult period in the month of July, 1953. The Calcutta Tramway Company had declared the enhancement of one piece fare for the second class. But soon this declaration made a serious crisis and the opposition parties including communist party began to revolt against this decision. Under the chairmanship of Dr. Suresh Banerjee a tram fare Resistance Committee was formed, but as the communist party had the predominant position in the committee, they denied to pay the enhanced fare and resorted to picketing. Jyoti Basu and other three M.L.A.'s were arrested. Soon the agitation took a violent turn when the picketers threw crackers and fired the trams. (73)

Meanwhile the Chief Minister had to leave for Europe and before leaving he had issued a statement defending the enhancement of one-piece fare of the second class by Tramway Company on the ground that the fares in Calcutta were the lowest in the country.

The Resistance Committee took full advantage of Dr. Roy's absence and they declared Hartal (strike) on the 9th July. "The city witnessed one of the worst disturbance in recent times. Not only trams and buses were off the streets, holding up ~~xxxxx~~ suburban trains and setting fire to coaches were also resorted to. The city police strengthened by contingents from the West Bengal force experienced great difficulty in maintaining order." (74)

At that time acting Chief Minister Profulla Sen and the police minister Kalipada Mukherjee instead of creating favorable public opinion for the Government depended more on police force. And so the law and order situation began to deteriorate gradually. "The army afforded limited help to the civil authorities at the request of the State Government on the 16th of July. After a cabinet meeting on the day the police minister told press correspondents that 'Government were determined to meet force with force.'" (75)

This created the situation more dangerous and on 17th July the mob took possession of a large area of South Calcutta and police had to fire six rounds. Realising the danger, acting Chief P.C.Sen quickly summoned a meeting of leading citizens for the way out of the intense situation. After that meeting the State Government in a special cabinet meeting advised the tramway authorities to refer the question relating to enhancement of second class fare to a tribunal and to suspend enforcement of new fare for the time being. The tramway company agreed to Governments' proposal. But

simultaneously State Government decided not to withdraw the prohibitory order under section 144 Cr. P.C. in Calcutta and not to release those persons arrested during demonstration until peaceful condition returned in city. Later, the opposition parties being victorious in their mood, withdrew their agitation and Government also unconditionally released all those arrested.

Later, Dr. Roy after arrival in Calcutta announced a commission to examine the tramway fare structure and declared the State Governments lenient policy to grant bail to all persons detained on charges of violent acts. As a result the law and order situation began to improve. "Congress organisation had from the beginning of the movement gone under 'Purdah' and was virtually non-existent."<sup>(76)</sup>

In the budget session of the Assembly, 1954, the opposition parties persistently interrupted Governor H.C. Mukherjee's inaugural address. The opposition demanded of the Governor before making the address to come out and meet the secondary school teachers who were squatting near the Government House to realise some of their economic demands. This was one of the biggest teacher's movement led by All Bengal Teachers Association dominated by the communists. "The opposition -----prevented the Governor from going ahead with his speech for 15 minutes after which they walked out of the Assembly-----".<sup>(77)</sup>

On the next day, i.e., 16th of February, Calcutta witnessed one of the worst disturbances due to the teachers strike.

There was a battle between policemen and processionists who attempted to march towards the Assembly House to compel the Government to concede the demands of secondary school teachers. The battle took a toll of four lives and the number of injured was 65. Fortyfour persons were arrested. Dr. Suresh Banerjee and other M.L.A.'s were among them. (78)

The State Government having realised that the existing police force was inadequate to deal with the situation, it called the military to the aid of civil authority and towards midnight the situation was being controlled.

For the first time the opposition parties were able for admission of all adjournment motion in the Assembly on the striking teacher's issue. (79) "The communist party (Marxist) -----came down at the popular level to educate, to raise the level of consciousness, to increase the arena of political participation of the 'amenable' masses who had been neglected by the Congress Party organisers. This task was to be performed by the party through its peasant organisation at different levels. The communists therefore embarked upon a policy of expediency, ~~xxxx~~ that undertook to 'activate' the unexplored masses of human consciousness and it was this new surge of activation of the political masses that the Congress failed to wrestle in the coming elections. It was deprivation combined with an awareness of being deprived - an awareness inserted through communist indoctrination - that pushed for the Congress unpopularity in West Bengal." (80)

"In the urban areas, the CPI(M) played upon the lapses of the Government in the labour front. Its strategy in the trade union front, similar to that in the peasant front, evolves out of the "united front from below" tactics which "appeals to all sections of workers" with "joint actions at the base, in factories" under the party's "initiative".<sup>(81)</sup> CIM aims at "organising a disciplined working class with revolutionary socialist consciousness, drawing it nearer the party, with its best elements joining the party in hundreds, enabling the class as a whole to play its historic political role in the revolutionary struggle."<sup>(82)</sup>

The communists also had some influence on the student front of the state. The students also launched various movements in the states for a number of times with the active support of the communists.

In the 1924, the communists also helped the group of police force indirectly to their strike against the State Government.

During the time of Dr. Ghosh's ministry a group of policemen had already given a threat of call for a strike for fulfilment of sense of their economic demands but the strike did not ultimately materialise. But on 10th December, 1954, armed and other branches of Calcutta police numbering 5,000 went on hunger strike. The strike lasted for 24 hours and was called off on the assurance of the West Bengal Government that their grievances would be looked sympathetically within four months. In an interesting press note government

declared that "Government had information that some of the members of the police force are in touch with communist groups who are trying to disrupt law and order." (83) From this press note it reveals that at that time Congress Government always suspected the communist party and in all types of agitations in the state and the relation between the Congress and communist party was at dagger drawn. Though the strike could not continue but Dr. Roy became worried much because a part of the police force had come under the influence of the extremist group of politicians, i.e., mainly of the communist lobby.

Regarding the Bengal Bihar merger issue the communist led leftist opposition tremendously criticised the merger proposal. The opposition parties formed the Anti-merger committee and during budget session (1956-57 Budget), the committee declared bandh on 24th February. To forestall this move and ensuring quorum and sitting of the Assembly, over 100 Congress M.L.A.s stayed at the Assembly Buildings and at Raj Bhavan on the previous night.

For to mobilise public opinion in favour of merger proposal. Dr. Roy attended two public meetings one worth Calcutta and the other in South - Calcutta. In both these two meetings despite continuously heckled by leftist supporters he explained the audience regarding its aims and objectives. He had also faced the turbulent demonstrators in the entrance of both the meetings and fortunately he escaped from being mobbed by

leftist militants. But it was interesting to note that many stalwart Congressmen presently kept out of the scene. Even BPCO president Atulya Ghosh was absent, he was fighting a lone battle. (84)

In a letter to Nehru, the Prime Minister, dated 1st March 1956, Dr. Roy wrote, "The people in Bengal appear to be belonging to the following groups"

(a) The communists, PSP., etc., whose job is to create confusion and chaos. The C.P.I. wants the reorganisation on the basis of language. They want a separate area for the Gurkhas in Darjeeling. They do not want Bengal to have a part of Purnia because the people there do not desire it. They want the scheme of linguistic reorganisation to be taken even to villages so that there might be chaos everywhere. I do not worry about their antics." (85)

The Congressmen were bewildered at that time for the criticism against Bengal Bihar merger issue. Dr. Roy also expressed their condition in that letter and stated "I and my friends have been working hard to counter this sense of ennui. The hartal on the 21st was called by the leftist groups to try and provoke issues. I refused to take the bait. They were only sparring for a fight. If there had been police action, they would benefit. There are some people who feel otherwise and think that we should have resisted the Hartal. I allowed this incident to pass because I wanted to gain time to explain the proposals to the people". (86)

The opposition leaders tried "to turn the popular discontent to their advantage. They assumed the leadership of the spontaneous outbursts of the people and were helped in this by the Government propaganda that the communists were behind these expressions of anger. The success of some of the bands encouraged the left leaders. Bands were not new to West Bengal; but Roy always used to avoid their being converted into confrontations between the Government and the opposition parties. His usual response to such calls was to declare a holiday." (87)

Dr. Roy, who was continuously under heavy pressure from opposition block to the 'merger' proposal later prepared a new formula of 'union' instead of merger, of West Bengal with Bihar. The WBPC also approved wholeheartedly the new formula of their party Chief Minister. Meanwhile two parliamentary elections were due to take place. One in North Calcutta and the other in Midnapore. Dr. Roy and Congress put the merger proposal before the voters and the anti merger lobby accepted the challenge. Ashok Sen was the congress nominee against Mohit Maitra, the Secretary of anti-merger group in the North-Calcutta by election. In this fight opposition had some advantages with some sentimental slogans "Bengali as a community is going to die", "Bengal is being sold to Bihar", "save Bengal, defeat Congress". It was really hard task for Congress leaders to combat against the anti-merger blocs in influencing the people for the 'union' proposal. When the election result was declared, it was announ-

ced that the leftist candidate Mohit Maitra had defeated the Congress rival Ashok Sen by a margin of more than 33 thousands votes. Immediately after the declaration of results Chief Minister Dr. Roy withdrew this proposal of Union of Bengal and Bihar unilaterally.

After the declaration of withdrawal of 'merger' and 'union' proposal, the left parties also announced their withdrawal of Satya Graha (Civil disobedience) movement which was carrying since 24th February against the proposed merger of West Bengal and Bihar.

Thereafter in a letter Dr. Roy wrote to G.B. Pant, Home Minister of India, "There is no doubt whatsoever that the leftist group have been apparently excited over their apparent success. This is quite natural but I am not worried about it". (88)

"Aside from the Congress Party and the communist and leftist opposition, other political parties are of fairly recent origin in Bengal ----- . The Praja Socialist Party had its origin in West Bengal when in 1948 Profulla Ghosh resigned from the Congress Party shortly after he had resigned as Chief Minister. Taking 100 Congressmen with him, Ghosh formed the Krishak Praja Mazdoor Party (peasants, people's and worker's party), which eventually combined with the KMPP and the socialists to form the Praja Socialist Party (PSP) at the national level." (89) The KMPP & the socialist had joined various mass movements along with the leftist opposition parties in West Bengal.

"Prior to the second general election in West Bengal in 1957, the Central Committee of the communist party of India, had issued a statement in which it appealed for the "Unity of the parties of the democratic opposition" against the Congress. (90) At an electioneering meeting held at the foot of the Ochterlony Monument (now Sahir Minar) early in 1957, the five leftist parties - the CPI, RSP, PSP, Forward Bloc and the Forward Bloc (Marxist) announced their decision to fight elections on the basis of a common programme. (91) This "Pragmatic alliance" led by the communists, was known as the United Left Election Committee (ULEC). According to the then General Secretary of the CPI, Ajoy Ghosh, the ULEC was not any "Make-shift arrangement to win at the polls but a permanent alliance established on a common set of programmes with the objective of setting up an alternative government in the state. Besides the communist - dominated ULEC, there was the non-communist United Left Front (ULF) consisting of SUC, Bolshevik Party, Democratic vanguard and the Republican Party. A third electoral front, the United Democratic People's Front (UDPP) was also formed by members of the ROPI, Jan Sangh, Hindu Mahasabha and few independent Congressmen, but it failed to secure a single vote in the elections". (92)

But the Congress was not setting idle, the leader of the Congress Legislature Party Dr. B.C. Roy had invited a session of AICC in Calcutta in the second week of November, mainly to create a favourable atmosphere for the party for the ensuing general election of 1957. The State Congress President Atulya

Ghosh declared the names of 234 candidates out of 238 Assembly member.

The Congress Government had already bagged peoples support for its some constructive approach like establishment of big industries in private and public sectors which the First and Second Five Year Plans had aimed to create jobs for educated unemployed and also in the sphere of social service. "Congress Governments in the states and Particularly in West Bengal had a credible account to give the people while the opposition parties, divorced from constructive criticism both within and outside the legislature seemed to represent to many a picture of anarchy".<sup>(93)</sup>

"Though the communists have been able to make inroads into certain well defined pockets of the state, its escutcheon had never been comparable to that of the Congress. The Congress has always retained its position as a party of dominance while the leftists have operated on the margin - not as parties of substitute - but as parties of pressure".<sup>(94)</sup>

"Compared to the Congress, the Communists and the leftist forces are at a distinct disadvantage. Being small groups of revolutionaries in origin they have had no widespread organisational apparatus comparable to that of the Congress. Since the Congress has commanded the adherence of the business community in Calcutta, its elections have always involved large amount of party funds, while the leftist organisations have always been ~~plagued~~ plagued by inadequate finance."<sup>(95)</sup>

"As the party in power, the Congress has often made use of "extra Parliamentary devices" to curb the dominance of the opposition in the State. It has led to the "repression of censorship" of party newspapers, "limitations on the right of assembly", intimidation by the police or party activities of the Congress on the moves of the ~~xxxxx~~ opposition parties and finally it has involved the imprisonment of opposition (mainly CPI) leaders. In extreme cases it has led to the "governmental dissolution" or "out lawry" of opposition parties (the official ban on the state unit of the Communist Party of India on March 1948, under the public safety Act)". (96)

Before the 1957 election, the State Congress Party loss Atulya Ghosh had made a well-knit and disciplined party. And as because he had a lacking of big industries and businessmen, the Congress would not had to suffer, for the impending general election, as many is concerned. But during the AICC session in Calcutta (Beliaqhata) "The opposition kept out of scene and organised no marches or demonstrations before the pandal". (97)

So the objective of Dr. Roy and the Congress leaders was more than realised. Dr. Roy along with Atulya Ghosh jointly addressed election campaigning in North Bengal and some other places. "On such occasions he would carry a small suitcase loaded with currency notes for spot distribution to Congress nominees after seeing things for himself over and above what a candidate

would receive direct from the Congress office in the shape of propaganda literature, Jeeps, Cars and money.-----

-----The Chief Minister's public meetings in their constituency and his direct payment to the candidates left them in deep obligation to the leader and this was one of the principal reasons why there was no wavering in their loyalty to him in times of stress and strain". (98)

In every election meetings Dr. Roy and Atulya Ghosh had the scope of getting a large crowd and the main focus of Dr. Roy's speech was the achievements of First Five Year Plan under Dr. Roy's ministry and the promise of implenting the task under the Second Five Year Plan, if the Congress Party would return into power.

Meanwhile Dr. Profulla Chandra Ghosh, state Chairman of the Proja Socialist Party, had released a Hindu letter written to him by Mahatma Gandhi on the eve of his election as Chief Minister by the Congress Legislative Party, which created tremendous sensation in the political circle. In that letter Mahatma Gandhi wrote, "Sardar has sent a message that there should be a Marwari in your cabinet, Badridas Goenka or Debi Prasad Kheitan. It ~~xxxxxx~~ appears to me that it is proper to do it, and improper not to do it". (99)

The motive of Dr. Ghosh in releasing this letter was to demonstrate the people that he was being forced to quit Chief

Ministerhip because of hostility of the big business men. The State Congress Chief Atulya Ghosh sharply criticised the role of Dr. Ghosh in releasing the letter of Mahatma Gandhi which Mahatma Gandhi had withdrawn subsequently.

The Congress, started its first election campaign by Prime Minister Nehru and later in other meetings followed by all India leaders like Congress President U. N. Dhebar, Morarji Desai, Govind Ballabh Pant, Jagjivan Ram, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed and Mrs. Gandhi.

On the other hand communists also launched various election meetings and their main slogan was the formation of an 'alternative Government'.

After the first days polling the communist party demanded repolling in the state alleging that without breaking the seals ballot boxes could be opened. The Election Commission rejected their demand.

But the most interesting event was that Dr. Roy won in his constituency only by 540 votes in against Communist Party candidate Md. Ismail in a very tough fight.

In 1957 general election Congress was voted to power in West Bengal. But what was really remarkable was that the opposition increased its representation from 57 to 80. During the Assembly session on July, Jyoti Basu and Dr. Profulla Ghosh of

PSP had joined hands with the Congress Government for the first time in the newly constituted House to make a common cause to remove certain anomalies of the Damodar Valley Corporation Act seeking to vest power to the centre instead of the corporation. Of course sometimes the House became united to get its just share in the distribution of divisible pool of the income-tax, excise duty and other forms of grants - in- aid due to the state of West Bengal.

"The opposition parties in the West Bengal State Legislature did not see eye to eye with Dr. B.C.Roy on many issues. But all the parties in the Legislature were united at least on one issue, namely, the need for a united move to pressurise the centre to allocate more financial resources for revitalising the shattered economy of the states. On many occasions, the State Legislature adopted unanimous resolutions urging the centre to take into consideration the special problems of West Bengal arising out of war, Famine, Partition, heavy influx of refugees and growing unemployment. In 1960 (when B.C. Roy was still alive) the State Legislature adopted another ~~xxxx~~ unanimous resolution on the lines to be followed by the State Government in regard to the preparation of the memorandum to be submitted to the third finance commission; Dr. B.C.Roy moved the resolution. In his speech he expressed the view that the whole net proceed of income - tax should accrue to the states." (100)

Again in 1957 and in 1960, unanimous resolution

was passed respectively on the financial affairs of the Damodar Valley Corporation and against the anti-Bangali riots in Assam.

The State Government was facing a hard crisis due to the deteriorating food situation. "The left parties were not slow in seizing this opportunity to launch a campaign against the Government for their failure to tackle the food situation. On the 16th of September 725 persons mostly farmers, from neighbouring districts of Calcutta were arrested for violation of section 144 c.p.c. at the call of the Famine Resistance and Anti-price increase committee comprising 11 left parties. On this direct action day against high prices of food and other essential commodities Dr. Suresh Banerjee, Devan Sen, Jyoti Basu and Hemanta Bose M.L.As and others were arrested for leading this procession". (101) But Dr. Roy later tackle the problem by his attack against boarders (rice millers) and introducing modified rationing system with the help of supplies of food grains by the Central Government.

Like a storm, the year 1959 kept its footstep in the political field of West Bengal and the situation became very much challenging for Dr. Roy's Congress Government.

On 25th February, Jatin Chakraborty a B.S.P. member of the Assembly had accused against on the floor of the House against Dr. Roy, Chief Minister of West Bengal for a charge of corruption for purchasing an acre of land in south Calcutta

from the Maharajadhiraja of Burdwan. "The charges were that the palace of the Maharaja at Burdwan was purchased by the State Governor at a higher price through the intervention of the Chief Minister in consideration of the low price paid by him for the land ~~xxxx~~ where he intended to build a dwelling house for himself." (102) All that time this news became create sensation throughout West Bengal. But later, in the House, Dr. Roy "asserted that he had not paid a low price to the Maharaja for the land, nor had the Government shown any consideration for the purchass of his palace at Burdwan. As a matter of fact, the Government had paid Rs. 2 lacs less than what it had been valued at while he himself had paid Rs. 1,42,000/- by cheques for the plot of land. This amount he had raised by mortgaging his own house (30 Wellington Street). (103)

On the same day, a Congress member of the House "raised a serious charge of misappropriation of a large sum of money by an ex-communist member of the House Ambika Chakraborty of Chittagong Armoury Raid Case Fame, which had been advanced by the Refugee Rehabilitation Department for the purchase of land for building houses for the refugees in North 24 Parganas near Calcutta." (104) But the Communist members challenged the Government to prove the charge in court.

In the meantime in launching the movement of the refugees (East Bengal), the two powerful opposition bloc, one dominated by the Proje Socialist Party of Dr. P. C. Ghosh and Suresh Banerjee and the other UCRC leaded by the communists, were compe-

ting each with each other.

On 8th April, 1956, Chief Minister Dr. B.C. Roy had clearly given his opinion to the Refugee Rehabilitation Advisory Board, on which there were representatives of opposition parties, that the Government would not reconsider the case of those refugees who had already given their consent to go outside Bengal and for that had taken benefits. But, at the same time, he agreed to consider the case of the camp-refugees whose doles had already been stopped and the Government would not apply any force to send the refugees outside the state for rehabilitation.

The leaders of the movement demanded that approximately 25,000 refugees had been arrested, though most of them had been released except leaders. Dr. Roy, in a letter, wrote to Nirmal Bhattacharyya, M.L.C. and other refugee leaders, "camps xxxx could not continue for ever."

Consequently the 10th April was declared as "Refugee Repression Protest Day". The agitation was confined to 50,000 camp refugees on whom the central government was spending Rs. 10 crores a year. Mahatma Chand Khanna, Central Rehabilitation Minister expressed his view in Parliament, that Rehabilitation benefits could not be given for an indefinite period.

Later on 19th of April, the leaders of the movement withdrew the movement with the assurance that to unwilling refugee would be sent to other rehabilitation camp outside Ben-

gal, cash dolas would start again and the arrested persons would be released when the movement would be withdrawn.

After a couple of days the political sky of West Bengal became gloomy due to the 'direct action' movement called by the price increase and Famine Resistance Committee leading by leaders like Hasmanta Bose, Suresh Banerjee and the Communist leaders. Suresh Banerjee, along with other four leaders of the movement that Chief Minister and submit a memorandum. They threatened the government with 'Direct-Action' from 13th June of the government failed to fulfill their demands like supply of 'good' quality of rice at Rs. 17.50 per maund supply of 'atts' or wheat at Rs. 15 per maund through modified rationing shops which will cover all families irrespective of their income.

But on the 10th June meeting Or. Roy was able successfully to influence the leaders of the movement by appreciating their proposals and by promising to fulfill their demands. The leaders also postponed their 'Direct action' movement.

In August-September, 1958 Calcutta witnessed a united strike (Congress, Communist and Hind Mazdoor Sabha Union) for the demands of upward revision of pay, gratuity and leave facilities against the Calcutta Tram Company. The strike was lasted for 41 days. With the request of the Directors of Tram Company and the three unions, Chief Minister intervened and mediate the dispute. "In the event, the strike was called off on the basis of his formula, namely, 5 percent increase in pay,

64 percent rise in provident fund, payment of gratuity of 15 days basic pay per year of service. Government also agreed to institute a court of enquiry into the resources of the company. In this case also Dr. Roy proved his quality to solve the problem peacefully and the people of Calcutta got the relief from their acute communication trouble. (103)

In another important event, relating to transfer of Berbari in Jalpaiguri district a part of West Bengal territories to Pakistan. Congress Government and the opposition parties raised their voice jointly against the decision of the Central Government.

During the food crisis in West Bengal in 1959 the Bengal Communist leaders launched a massive movement against the State Congress ministry. "The CPI succeeded in forming the price increase and Famine Resistance Committee (PIFRC) and launched a widespread food demonstration in the state. The demands of the PIFRC were rigorous price control, redistribution of land, confiscation of land without compensation and state trading in food grains. (106) The PIFRC threatened to engage in a "mass defiance of law" and create an administrative deadlock that would paralyse the city and the state with a continuing general strike until demands are met. After a violent mass agitation involving the arrest 250 Bengali leftist leaders, the movement was called off in September with some taken concessions from the state government. (107)

The 1959 agitation was a test of the organisational

capability of the state CPI, and a mark of success for the militant strategy is being able to wrest concessions from the Congress Government." (108)

"By 1962, the pattern of electoral coalition in the state and become quite predictable. The withering away of the non-Communist led alliance in the electoral politics of the state. In 1962 general elections, the United left front (ULF) - the only opposition electoral alliance of that Year was forged between the Forward Bloc, Forward Bloc (Marxist), Bolshevik Party, R.S.P. and the PCPI with CPI as its 'god head'. The PSP desisted from the CPI electoral front mainly over the Communist ideological stand in the event of the Sino-Indian issues prior to the third elections". (109)

The Congress again get an absolute majority with a total of 157 seats in a 252 members State Assembly. Though the ULF set up contestants for all the 252 seats in the Assembly it managed to secure only 72 seats.

"The heterogeneity of the opposition parties had also added to the strength of the single-party dominance in the state. The organisation of the opposition parties were 'loosely' built and they lacked that tradition of popular consensus that shapped the Congress with dominating effect. Operating on the fringes they resembled parties of "pressure" while the ruling party ranged as the party of "consensus". The impor-

tance of the opposition parties lay only in the development of "protest" strategies through institutional channels- question hours, adjournment motions and budget debates - and through processions, hartals, street demonstrations and violence and other anomie actions - both of which have acted only as "checks and balances" upon the Governmental system which, in turn, caused the strengthening of the inner ~~xxxxxxx~~ clearance of the Congress party". (110)

After Chief Minister Dr. Roy's demise on 1st July, 1962 Profulla Chandra Sen became the Chief Minister of West Bengal.

In the month of September, 1962, the political environment became very much gloomy due to the repeated Chinese attack in various border post of India. With the suddenness of the Indo-China rift the Communist party of India and the other left parties were yet to give their opinion. But Sourmendra Nath Tagore, leader of R.C.P.I., a leftist, formed for the first time in Calcutta a non-official organisation called the 'Chinese Aggression Resistance Organisation'. From this above statement of Tagore, it was being cleared that C.P.I. became a centre of ~~xxx~~ criticism. For some of its leaders political linked with China.

But according to Central Government the members of the Pro-Chinese wing of the C.P.I. were engaged in 'activities Prajudicial to the Defence of India and Public Order'. And at the same time, there were some persons who were engaged ~~xxx~~ in the

same activities. "In a massive country wide<sup>to</sup> operation/the police on November 21 took into custody. 350 members of the Communist Party of India including some of the leading workers of the party in various states. Amongst those arrested were members of parliament 30 members of the Legislative Assemblies and councils, 5 ministers of the first communist Government of Kerala and a Nepali woman of Darjeeling. Madras headed the list with 100 arrests followed by West Bengal's 80. The leader of the opposition in West Bengal Assembly, Ganesh Ghosh, the state C.P.I. Secretary, Promode Dasgupta, and Narekrishna Konar, Mr. Muzaffar Ahmed and the Editor of the Communist organ, 'Swadhinata', were amongst those arrested. Secret police reports suggested that most of the arrested persons belonged to the pro-chinese wing of the C.P.I. in West Bengal-----  
-----At the same time 60 Chinese residents (111) of five border districts of West Bengal were interned".

Siddhartha Sankar Roy, an independent member of the House, supported the Chief Minister for arresting China's friends. But "Somnath Lahiri who was then acting as the spokesman of the C.P.I. in the Assembly regretted that the arrests were made at a time his party was trying its best to help defence efforts." (112)

Meanwhile there became a political rift between the two factions of the communist party in the issue of Sino-Indian border dispute. The West Bengal C.P.I. Secretariat urged the Central Secretariat to take immediate disciplinary actions against Muzaffar Ahmed and Promode Dasgupta who were at that time in jails and expel them from the party. "The charges against them were that

the liquidated the party organ in Calcutta, 'Swadhinata', and took such measures that the West Bengal Communist Party could not implement the National Council resolution/Indo-China conflict" (113) Earlier the National Council had condemned the Chinese aggression against India.

"The revolt of the majority of the party in West Bengal against the decision of the National Council of the CPI to support India in the face of Chinese aggression was in fact one of the most significant and large scale violations of discipline in the party's history. The Chinese aggression in 1962, created serious disunity within the CPI in West Bengal. The majority of the West Bengal unit voted against the National Council Resolution, but two powerful district committees (Calcutta, led by Jolly Kaul, and Midnapur, led by Biswanath Mukherjee) endorsed it. The State Council of the party was thus disbanded; over one hundred communists from West Bengal were imprisoned" (114)

"The draught and the result that short fall in agricultural production together with the inflationary measures brought about by the Central Government's economic policy towards the closing period of the Third plan, deteriorated in quick succession the economic situation in the state, and the West Bengal Government's inertness to tackle the scarcity in the food front brought about a further deterioration in the political scene." (115)

Between 1964 - 66 the production of food grains decreased steadily due to the unfavourable weather conditions. The retail price index of rice which was 138 in 1961 (1950= 100) jumped to 189 in 1966 in Calcutta. (116)

To meet the scarcity of food crisis Chief Minister P.C.Sen announced a new policy in November, 1965. Chief Minister Sen in announcing the new food policy said:

"The West Bengal Government consider that it is their elementary duty to try and prevent a grossly inequitable incidence of under consumption in 1966 as between different areas and different sections of community. The only means to prevent such inequalities is for government to procure the maximum possible quantity of rice and paddy internally and to distribute the same together with such central supplies as can be obtained at reasonable price under the direct control of Government from statutory rationing in areas of high purchasing power and through modified rationing in other urban and rural areas." (117)

For equitable distribution the State Food Ministry also planned to procure stocks. So the policy also stated:

"The main measure for ensuring maximum procurement will be the mass purchase of all distress sales of cultivators throughout the state by co-operatives and Government agents. Government agents and co-operatives will also purchase all surpluses to be offered by surplus cultivators whether in the surplus

Congress leaders became habituated in luxurious living and vested-interest instead of following the path of sacrifice. Moreover some of the State Congress leaders ~~wxxx~~ were being criticised by the people as corrupt.

"The Congress Government of P. C. Sen felt itself increasingly isolated from the people. Ministers were unable to address meetings and move freely without large police escorts. Corruption and nepotism were rampant. Widespread disorder prevailed. The Communists had already shown that they could, at will, call out the mobs and bring all productive activity to a standstill, culminating in a highly successful one day strike by the Government's own employees by the novel method of mass casual leave."  
(119)

Calcutta had again witnessed a communal riot in the January, 1964, following serious communal disturbances in Dacca, Khulna and Jessore of East Pakistan. The situation was ~~xxxxxxx~~ fast deteriorating. Ultimately normal conditions returned to the city and the affected districts. But the heavy influx of refugees of the Hindu Community come over to West Bengal from East Pakistan. During a discussion in the West Bengal Legislature "The Chief Minister had many points of agreement with the opposition leader, Jyoti Basu, on his assessment of the disturbances and the task ahead. Both Congress and opposition members of the House apprehended that one day or the other the entire minority community may be forced to come over to India."  
(120)

"The period between the third and fourth elections was marked by a consolidation of the leftist forces in the state. The split in the undivided CPI (Following Sino-Indian Border war of 1962) in 1964 was marked by the strengthening of the militant left wing factions under the new party, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) - CPI (M). The militancy of the latter thrived on economic crisis which convulsed the state through three years. The third 5 year plan had not produced the desired results; there was a depression in industry and the state was passing through acute food shortages. The leftists, the CPI (M), in particular, organised various demonstrations and hartals against high prices and scarcity of food to harness popular support to their advantage in the coming elections. The Government failed to realise the spontaneity of these demonstrations and sought to curb the situation through a display of force. This created disaffection among the people and alienated the electorate from the congress party in the Fourth General Election in the State." (121)

In 1966 when Ajoy Mukherjee was ousted from the Congress Party he formed Bangala Congress with dissident Congressmen. Bangla Congress also joined with the opposition parties in various political movements against the Congress Government.

"Ajoy Mukherjee made use of the dissatisfaction in the rural areas against P.C.Sen's food policy and lent his support to the Bengal bandh of February - March, 1966. The new

party observed a "day of struggle" on August 13, 1966 against the Congress food policy, and the major issues in the Bangla Congress election campaign in 1967 emphasized 'increased food production with a view to bringing down prices'. The party drew support from a large section of mill owners and food grain growers who had been alienated from the Congress because of the latter's imposition of the policy of levy." (122) (123)

Meanwhile Negotiations for an alliance of all left and like minded parties in the opposition to defeat the Congress in the fourth general election started in June 1966. But the negotiations failed as the parties could not agree on any scheme of division of seats.

There were two election fronts among the opposition parties. The United Left Front consisted of CPI (M), SSP, RSP, SUC, RCPI, Workers' Party and Forward Bloc (Marxist) and the peoples United Left Front consisted of Bangla Congress, CPI, Forward Bloc, Bolshevik Party, Gorkha League and Lok Sevak Sangha.

So the failure of the left parties to come together made the Congress jubilant. The Congress had no doubt about their victory at the polls.

But the Congress failed to secure an absolute majority in the Assembly securing 127 seats in a House of 260. The two opposition groups, i.e., the ULF and the PULF jointly formed

United Front under the leadership of Bengala Congress leader Ajoy Mukherjee and for the first time the non-congress United Front took the reigns of State administration.

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