CHAPTER V

THE TRANSITION - ORIGINS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST PARTY

(A) THE ANUSHILAN MARXISTS &THE CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY, 1938-40:

What we could find from preceding chapters is that by the end of 1930s most of the detained national revolutionaries were released and many of these revolutionaries who were attracted towards Marxism were not satisfied either with the Communist Party of India or the Comintern. They were rather trying to develop party on Marxist Leninist line either separately or joining some other like-minded groups except the CI affiliated CPI. (Chaudhuri, 1985: 6-7; Das, N, 1983: 106-107; Mukherjee, N, personal interview, 1996; Roychowdhury, 1395 BS: 45-47) David M Laushey makes a conservative estimate regarding the number of national revolutionaries working in Bengal at any particular point of time and concludes that it would not be more than '3000 active members' at any one time. (Laushey, 1975: 135) Out of these numbers, only fifty percent of them were converted to political leftism and they then divided their strength by joining any one of the existing left parties or forming a new party. It appears that the breaking of revolutionary parties into a number of Marxist groups acted as an impediment in the process of growth of united left movements in Bengal to a great extent. However on points of principle, the revolutionaries developed their own yardstick of judgment and so the proliferation of leftist/Marxist political parties just before the independence.

Since 1930s a large number of the national revolutionaries were in various jails and detention camps and started studying Marxism rigorously. Some of these revolutionaries, particularly from Anushilan Samiti, felt the necessity of preparing a document defining their future courses of action from a Marxist line. They thought of 'introducing a new Marxist trend in Indian politics as an alternative to the current official communist line.' An attempt was made to prepare a draft document of the Anushilanites along the Marxist line in 1936. The document was framed in the Deoli Detention Camp in Rajputana by the close of 1936 and this was discussed and debated subsequently in different jails & detention camps. (Bhattacharyya, 1982: 30) Buddhadeva Bhattacharyya arrived at this decision on the basis of his interview with Naren Das, one of the framers of the first Anushilan document favouring Marxism.

However, a *Note on the Policy and Activities of the Terrorist Parties in Bengal from 1937 to August 1939* prepared in 1940 by the IB, CID, Bengal termed this programme as *The Anushilan Programme of 1937*. (Samanta, 1995: Vol I, 768) The said CID Report of 1940 on Anushilan stated:

> By the middle of 1937, the leaders of the Anushilan Samiti, in detention, had decided on their future policy and a programme was drafted in the Deoli Detention Jail. A detenue carried a copy of this programme when he was brought to Calcutta for hospital treatment and after it had been approved by the State prisoner Ramesh Acharji, then in the Presidency Jail, it was passed to the important members who had been released. The members at large were ordered to follow the programme…… (Samanta, 1995: Vol I, 766-767)

Makhan Paul, elected as Bengal provincial secretary in 1946 of the RSP, writes that a draft thesis was first prepared in 1936 by a large section of the Anushilan revolutionaries who were then detained in the Buxa Fort Jail expressing their consent to accept 'Marxism-Leninism'. (Paul, M, 2009: 6; Roychowdhury, 1395 BS: 145) This draft thesis was then sent to the revolutionaries detained in Deoli Camp and the national revolutionaries belonging to Anushilan finalized the draft and circulated outside with the help of the jail staff.

> Thus it has been observed that according to IB, CID & Naren Das, the preparation of the draft thesis was initiated in Deoli whereas for Makhan Paul, the draft was first written in Buxa and then it was sent to Deoli for finalization.

In our course of study, we come across yet another date: here it has been mentioned as 1934. (De, A, 2013: 237) However, it appears that the joint writers of the concerned essay arrived at this year as 1934 on the basis of Naren Das's work.

Naren Das in his memoirs writes that Atin Roy, Gyan Majumdar, Amulya Adhikari, Mani Lahiri and Naren Das were mainly responsible in preparing the draft in Deoli. Later on, Tridib Chaudhuri also took part in this process. (Das, N, 1983: 104) In addition to the above revolutionaries, Dhiren Mukherjee also helped in writing the draft. However, Makhan Paul was of the opinion that first ranking leaders of Anushilan interned in Deoli Camp like Gyan Majumdar and Ashu Kahali were not ready to accept dialectical materialist philosophy even then. The first ranking leaders detained in Deoli and who accepted Marxism-Leninism by that time were Atin Roy, Amulya Adhikari, Naren Das, Dhiren Mukherjee and Jamini Paul etc. The second ranking Anushilan leaders of the Camp like Biren Bhattarcharyya, Sushil Bhattacharyya, Tridib Chaudhuri, Keshav Prasad Sharma etc. had also taken part in the process of finalizing draft as reportedly received from Buxa Fort Jail. (Paul, M, 2009: 6-7; Paul, M, personal interview: 1996) It was decided that from now on Anushilan Samiti should no more exist as a revolutionary nationalist party. It already exhausted its historical role. At that time five senior revolutionaries were accepted by the

activists as the high command of the Anushilan Samity: Trailokyanath Chakraborty, Pratul Ganguly, Ramesh Acharyya, Rabi Sen and Kedareswar Sen. (Mukherjee, N, personal interview: 1996) So, the Anushilan revolutionaries of Deoli who were rather middle-ranked in the party hierarchy felt it a necessity to garner concurrence from the top level leaders of the party. Naren Das on getting parole for seven days met Ramesh Acharyya in the Presidency Jail in the month of May 1937 and received his concurrence on behalf of the leaders. Ramesh Acharyya gave his consent for going ahead with the proposal of turning Anushilan into a Marxist outfit by writing a letter of consent to Naren Das. The copy of the said letter was sent to all the jails and this helped the Deoli detunes in strengthening their efforts further. (Das, N, 1983: 106) The note prepared by the IB, CID, Bengal in 1940 also corroborated these events. Almost all the convicts and detenues, both of the Jugantar party and Anushilan Samiti, 'studied books on communism and socialism and formulated schemes for an armed revolution of the masses which they intended to organize after their release'. But, Anushilan workers felt more attracted towards Marxism in comparison with the other groups. Finally, the draft was accepted by the Anushilan revolutionaries, both detained and free. The draft was termed as 'The Anushilan Programme of 1937'. It states:

OUR STAND

1. Party name: We retain our party name Anushilan.

2. Ideology: We accept scientific socialism as our ideology.

(a) By scientific socialism we mean socialism as explained by Marx and Engels…….

(b) We accept the full implications of scientific socialism including the full logical conclusion……

(c) We accept Marxism fully and as such declare ourselves as Marxists.

(d)……We have nothing to say against communism, but we do not declare ourselves as communists.

3. Method: To achieve the goal, our method is Armed Mass Revolution.

4. Programme: ……To organize peasants, to organize Labour and make them class consciousness, to organize Militia, to preach through party paper and make propaganda, to organize students and youths…….

5. Immediate Objective: Having the establishment of classless society as our goal, our immediate objective is the seizure of State Power by the party and immediate establishment of a Socialist Republic…….

6. Strategy: …….(c) We decide to take open stand to carry out work to establish party leadership over the masses. Secret work to be carried on secretly.

7. Tactics: Before we are in a position to take open stand with an open name, we decide to work through those platforms which are somewhat similar or the like as our own ideology. It is simply tactics……

8. Party must be thoroughly reorganized to conduct the above tactics and co-ordinate the different branches.

9. Starting of a weekly paper is urgent. It must be at once.

10. We do not believe in a federated party. We must have a centralised Unitory Party, without sacrificing the principles of unitary centralization the party should be democratically broad basis. (Samanta, 1995: Vol I, 768-771) (For details Appendix 2a)

The Jugantar revolutionaries, on the other hand, decided to work for a national democratic revolution which would overthrow imperialism and make India a sovereign state. (Samanta, 1995: Vol I, 776) At the same time, the attitude of the Jugantar party was all along marked by 'uncompromising hostility to the CPI'. With their release in the subsequent years, the revolutionaries who wished to remain in political activities, therefore, gave up the politics of secret & individualistic heroism and embraced mass-based politics.

For their aversion towards the CPI, the Anushilan Marxists decided to work within the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) because of its 'pronounced Marxist orientation in those days and also because of the political roots of the CSP in the anti-imperialist mass movement in the country through the Congress'. (Chaudhuri, 1985: 10) But in order to politically guide themselves to ensure adherence to Marxist philosophy in then political context of the country, the Anushilan Marxists and a few members of North India based Hindustan Socialist Republic Association (HSRA) adopted in September 1938 in a meeting of the Central Committee of the Party (Anushilan-cum-HSRA Marxists) , before started working inside the CSP, a basic political document entitled 'The Thesis and Platform of Action –What Revolutionary Stands for' of the RSPI (ML) in September 1938. Tridib Chaudhuri writes in this context:

> It should be mentioned here that the process of the Anushilan and HSRA Marxists joining the CSP had just been initiated about that time. Some of the leaders of the former had been informally associated as invitees to the meetings of CSP National Executives. But otherwise the Party continued to maintain its separate existence and continued to be guided by its own understanding of Marxism Leninism. In that sense, the 1938 'Thesis and Platform of Action' can be recognized as the originating basic political document of the RSP. (Chaudhuri, 1985: 10-11)

The history of the RSP as a distinct 'Marxist-Leninist trend' in the left movement in India, it is claimed by the RSP theoreticians, actually begins with the adoption of this Political Thesis and Platform of Action in 1938. 'This document served to provide the basic political guidelines for the RSP for the entire period of anti-imperialist mass struggle from the late '30s, 1938-40 up to 1946-47 i.e. throughout the national democratic phase of the struggle of the Indian people till British imperialism was forced to withdraw from India.'

Jogesh Chandra Chatterji, an eminent revolutionary of all India repute from HSRA and the first General Secretary of the RSP, recalls in his autobiography the issue of joining the CSP:

> Under the circumstances the clear question before us was whether to stand as a separate revolutionary Socialist Party or to work through some other party that was nearest to our ideology. To start a separate party was not an easy affair for us. (Chatterji, J, 1967: 513)

They lacked the resources essential for forming a new parry. Chatterji continues:

> How were to get money to run a party? For a public party well-known personalities, money and other resources are required. But we had none. So there seemed to be no other alternative before us than to join some existing party. After discarding the Royists and Communists, the Congress Socialists were the only alternative left before us. (Chatterji, J, 1967: 513-514)

In the summer of 1938, Jogesh Chandra Chatterji, Keshav Prasad Sharma and Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri met Jayaprakash Narayan at Sonepur. In Chatterji's account we read:

> We had a four days' talk. J. P. convincingly assured us that the C.S.P. stood clearly and definitely for Marxism. Just like us, the revolutionaries, the C.S.P. had no faith in Gandhism or non-violence and it too like us believed in the attainment of independence through an armed revolution. He also appealed to us not to start a separate party but to join hands with them and thus make the C.S.P. a real All India Revolutionary Socialist Party. He also suggested that I should

> have further talks with Acharyaji and then take the decision. Acharyaji also said the same very thing and urged upon us the necessity of joining the party at the earliest. Then we took the final decision with this understanding that for a certain period we would keep our existence separate and then merge. (Chatterji, J, 1967: 514)

The released revolutionaries so joined the CSP, perhaps through the influence of Acharya Narendra Deva, a founder of the CSP and a longtime sympathiser with the activities of the Anushilan Samiti and started work inside it from 1938 onwards. But they started as a group inside the CSP. According to Tridib Chaudhuri, almost the entire membership of the Anushilan Samiti agreed to the decision to join the CSP even though only about half of the membership had actually accepted Marxism. The non-Marxists went along with the merger perhaps out of loyalty to their old revolutionary comrades. (Laushey, 1975: 125) In addition about one quarter of the membership of the HSRA, including of course Jogesh Chandra Chatterji and his followers, also joined this group within the CSP. However, the process of joining the CSP or working with them was not very smooth for the Bengal revolutionaries. Naren Das provides his experience on the matter. He writes in his memoirs that the Deoli detnues informed the others about their intention to join the CSP on their release. CSP was very popular during the time. Narendra Deva, JP and Achyut Patwabardhan were the CWC members under the president ship of Nehru. The Marxists analysis of JP became very popular among the youths of India. In such a situation, the joining of Jogesh Chaterji and Jogendra Sukul, both very well-known revolutionaries, made it easier for the ordinary activists to join the CSP. As a result of this, the Anushilan Marxists got a kind of impetus to join the CSP. (Das, N, 1983: 107-108) However, in Bengal those who were in charge of the provincial CSP did not express much interest in revolutionaries' joining the CSP. As a result, most of the Anushilan Marxists were not given the membership of the CSP, they remained just applicant members. Even, leader like Trailokya Maharaj was not given the due recognition. Therefore, they once again regrouped themselves under the umbrella of Anushilan and the aggrieved revolutionaries started publishing a weekly journal named as 'Socialist' under the editorship of Satish Sarkar. For resolving the conflict within the Bengal CSP, central leadership of the CSP intervened and the issue of according membership to the Anushilan revolutionaries was resolved satisfactorily. But, at the same time, 'it evoked anger in the Bengal CSP'. (Das, N, 1983: 111-112)

However, in his interview with the present researcher, Makhan Paul said that the Anushilan Marxists who were released from Buxa, Deoli, Hijli Camps & other jails accepted 'Marxism-Leninism' and not 'showed any inclination' towards 'Stalinism'. On the other hand, most of the Anushilan members

detained in the Andaman and the Jugantar revolutionaries arrested in connection with the Chittagong Armoury Raid joined the ‘pro-Stalinist line’. (Paul, M, personal interview: 1996; Paul, M, 2009: 6-7) He further states, contrary to what has been written by Naren Das, that the released state-prisoners, shortly after their release by the middle of 1938, decided to publish one monthly journal as they believed in the Leninist teaching that party organ is the greatest propagandist and greatest organisers. So, under the editorship of Satish Sarkar a journal named as ‘The Socialist’ was published. The journal was circulated in all the places and helped in developing homogeneity in ideas among the workers of the group. (Paul, M, 2009: 7)

The CSP was formed in 1934 at the end of the Civil Disobedience movement of 1932-34 by a number of young Congress workers who had come under the influence of, and had accepted, Marxian socialism. The immediate task before the CSP was ‘to develop the national movement into a real anti-imperialist movement—a movement aiming at freedom from the foreign power and the native system of exploitation'. For that it was felt 'necessary to wean the anti-imperialist elements in the Congress away from its present bourgeois leadership and to bring them under the leadership of revolutionary socialism.'' (Rai Chaudhuri, 1976: 175-176; Bhattacharyya, 1982: 38) The CSP's programme was defined as a 'Marxist one' since 'Marxism alone can guide the anti-imperialist forces to their ultimate destiny. The Faizpur Thesis (adopted by the CSP in its Third annual Conference on December 23 & 24, 1936) further elucidated the Meerut thesis and defined its task in terms of transforming the Indian National Congress into a powerful anti-imperialist front. M. R. Masani in his General Secretary's Report (1936) declared that 'at Meerut in January, 1936, the Party took shape as a Marxist Socialist Party.' At Faizpur the precise role of the Party in the broader anti-imperialist movement was spelt out. From the policy-declarations of the CSP it was evident that here was a party committed to Marxian socialism and leading anti-imperialist people's movement to its logical conclusion, i.e., the establishment of a workers' and peasants' republic and here was a party which had grown out of the experiences of the anti-imperialist national movement. JP also said that the policy of the CSP was ‘truly Marxist’. (Rai Chaudhuri, 1976: 176) The above Marxist leanings of the party since its formation were the main reason behind the Anushilan Marxists’ joining the CSP. (Bhattacharyya, 1982: 38-39)

(B) FORMATION OF THE RSP, 1940 -1946:

But the expectations of the Anushilan Marxists were soon proved to be belied. Anushilan Marxists soon found to their dismay that the CSP leadership though formally subscribed to Marxian revolutionary socialism and criticised the Gandhian ideology, in actual practice they supported the Gandhian

leadership. Differences between the CSP and Anushilan members reached a point of no return at Tripuri Congress of INC when the CSP remained neutral on the Pant resolution which effectively tried to curb the rights of Subhash Chandra Bose as the president of the INC. But, going against the CSP decision, the Anushilanites strongly sided with Subhash Chandra. The CSP though professed itself to be believer in Marxism, actually, there were three distinct ideological strands current inside the party--Marxian socialism, Fabian socialism and Gandhian socialism. Jayaprakash Narayan and Acharya Narendra Deva were exponents of Marxian point of view, Minoo Masani and Asoka Mehta represented the social democratic strand and Achyut Patwardhan and Rammanohar Lohia were the votaries of Gandhian method of non-violent direct action. Madhu Limaye, a CSP leader, writes: 'At its inception, the CSP was far from being a homogeneous party, even diametrically opposed elements having entered it.' Referring to the early thirties, he says that this was--

> a period of ferment of ideas... A profound change was taking place in the outlook and mentality of the young generation. Socialism was in the air, not as a distinct creed, programme and organization-much less a way of life, but as sort of a fashion...the C.S.P... initially had no clearly defined ideology. (Limaye. 1952: 1)

Naren Das also opines that there were many internal problems within the CSP. Not all of them shared the same ideological approach. Masani, Ashoke Mehta, Patabardhan and Dr Lohia maintained almost same ideological preferences. On the other hand, Jayprakash & Acharya Narendra Deva was of different belief. (Das, N, 1983: 150) As their belief with the CSP proved to be false, the Anushilan Marxists severed their relationship with the CSP. Their comrades from UP and Bihar also followed the suit. The policies of the CSP found to be inadequate and the Anushilan Marxists became thoroughly disappointed and disgusted.

Jogesh Chandra Chatterji felt that the CSP could never develop itself as Left Revolutionary Party. Further, there was no democracy within the party. The opinion of the workers was of no value for the CSP leadership. So, there was no merit in their continuing work within the CSP. It was better to isolate them from the CSP. (Chattopadhyay, J, 1977: 431)

> Hence, new idea started developing in favour of forming a separate independent Marxist Leninist party. The only 'alternative before us' writes Jogesh Chandra, 'was to form a new party of our own based on the ideas of Karl Marx and Lenin'. (Chattopadhyay, J, 1977: 430)

In 1940, annual session of the INC was held at Ramgarh in Bihar. Subhash Chandra also convened a parallel all India session of the Anti-compromise Conference at the same time at Ramgarh, which was held side by side with the session of the Congress. The anti-compromise Conference was an all India mass convention of the revolutionary nationalists and anti-war supporters of Subhash Chandra in order to voice their opposition to any negotiations that might be taken by Congress leadership with the British government or to any political settlement with it short of freedom. The Anushilan Marxists after their failure to work within the CSP also planned to assemble at Ramgarh on that occasion. The Anushilan Marxists, side by side attending the anti-compromise conference, also sat together in a separate meeting arranged in the camp of Bir Raghabacharyya on March 19. Revolutionaries from many provinces assembled. After a prolonged discussion, it was decided that a Marxist party comprising only the Indian Marxists will be formed and the party be named as Revolutionary Socialist Party. A committee was formed to prepare rules, regulations and programme of the new party. (Chattopadhyay, J, 1977: 430) Jogesh Chandra Chatterji was elected as the first convener of the party. Thus, the RSP was born on March 19 1940. However, as they were still in jail then, Trailokya Chakraborty and many of their friends could not remain present in that conference. (Chakraborty, T, 1981: 217)

That was the war-time. The British Government was very much frightened over the activities of the revolutionaries and so, tried to create every obstacle in the process of running the party. So, most of the leaders of the RSP were arrested without trial. The central executive body could not even hold its first meeting. As a result, the progress of the party throughout the country was badly affected. Chattopadhyay, J, 1977: 430-431) Makhan Paul told in an interview that the Ramgarh meeting was a 'meeting for party formation', rather than a party convention or congress on the Marxist lines. Actually, the decision to convene a meeting in Ramgarh was taken suddenly in view of some new developments, particularly, the expulsion of Subhash Chandra from the Congress and the war in Europe. (Paul, M, personal interview: 1996; Bhattacharyya, personal interview: 1996) However, one striking point is that the meeting for foundation of the party did not adopt any new policy document. The party would still be guided by the *1938 Thesis*. Only in 1946 Delhi Convention, the party adopted new policy documents.

As has been stated, in the opinion of Tridib Chaudhuri, the 1938 'Thesis and Platform of Action' guided the party during the period of anti-imperialist movement prior to India's independence though the thesis was framed even before joining the CSP. Though the party was formed in 1940 severing all the ties with the CSP, the party could hold its first formal convention in Delhi in May 1946. Jogesh Chandra convened the First All India Conference of the Revolutionaries in Delhi from May 11-13, 1946 [1] and after

that, the organisational activities of the RSP increased manifold. The Conference was a great success as the revolutionaries upon their release could assemble here in great numbers and decided to fight for the establishment of 'revolutionary socialism' under the banner of the RSP. (Chattopadhyay, J, 1977: 464-467) The Thesis accepted in 1938 guiding so long the party was revised in the light of the changed political scenario of the country, particularly the part dealing with the political tasks of the party. 'The 1938 formulation no longer holds good, it stands superseded by an entirely new formulation in terms of Delhi Convention Resolution.' (Saha, 2001: 160)

We may now look at some of the statements of the 1938 Thesis & Platform of Action. The aim of the platform was stated as:

> 1. Ultimate Aim: Communism and Classless Society- Basing itself upon the revolutionary theory of Marxism-Leninism, the Revolutionary Socialist Party of India as the vanguard of the Indian proletariat defines its ultimate aim as the realisation of a classless society and the replacement of the world capitalist economy by a world system of Communism where all inequalities based on economic, political and social exploitation should cease to exist. (Adopted by the Central Committee [2] of the Party in September 1938) (Saha, 2001: 57-71)

The Platform also outlined the fundamental strategy of the proletariat to complete the democratic revolution as an initial task:

> 13. The Fundamental Strategic line of the Party:
>
> ……..**The proletariat must carry out to the end the national democratic revolution, and in this unite to itself the mass of peasantry and petty bourgeoisie in order to crush by force the resistance of imperialists and to paralyse the instability of the bourgeoisie.**
>
> Once the national democratic revolution is accomplished and the Social revolution begins the role of the peasants and petty bourgeoisie changes. There occurs the possibility of going over to the counter-revolution which must be prevented at any cost…….. (Adopted by the Central Committee [2] of the Party in September 1938) **(Emphasis added)** (Saha, 2001: 57-71)

The Platform further stated that the task of socialist revolution would be taken up after the completion of the democratic revolution:

The Proletariat must accomplish the socialist revolution and in this unite to itself the mass of the semi-proletarian elements of the population in order to crush by force the resistance of the bourgeoisie and to paralyse the instability of the peasants and petty bourgeoisie.

14. Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasantry:

The proletariat marching at the head of the peasantry and petty bourgeoisie will lead the anti-imperialist struggle to decisive victory. …….It can only be a democratic dictatorship……. (Adopted by the Central Committee [2] of the Party in September 1938) **(Emphasis added)** (Saha, 2001: 57-71)

Regarding the analysis of the role of bourgeoisie, the Platform is worth mentioning. According to the analysis of the thesis of the Platform, Indian bourgeoisie consisted with radical and conservative elements:

15. III: With regard to the bourgeoisie as a whole and particularly that section of it which is represented in the dominant INC leadership, the tactics of the Party is to utilise as long as possible their opposition to imperialism for furthering the anti-imperialist struggle even though this opposition may not have a consistently revolutionary content. The essence of the political position of the bourgeoisie is that it stands between imperialism and the people……

The Indian bourgeoisie is already split up into two broad sections—the moderates and the liberals, the representatives of the big bourgeoisie-who have identified themselves with imperialism and the so-called extremists, who are still carrying on the opposition through the Indian National Congress, the representatives of the middle and petty-bourgeoisie. The latter is again splitting up into a right wing and left wing-the Gandhi Ballavbhai Bulabhai section and Jawaharlal Subhas Bose section. The left is coming increasingly under the influence of socialist ideology. The Party must take advantage of this splitting up…….. (Adopted by the Central Committee [2] of the Party in September 1938) **(Emphasis added)** (Saha, 2001: 57-71)

The party, it appears, even in its formative stage accepted bourgeoisie democratic revolution (BDR) and proletarian socialist revolution (PSR) as the consecutive stages of revolution on the ground that 'under favourable circumstances, especially in backward colonial countries of belated bourgeois capitalist development where the bourgeoisie are relatively weak, but the proletariat well advanced politically and organizationally, the BDR and PSR may so closely succeed one another, as almost to synchronise in

point of time as also politically'. They were further encouraged by the February and October Revolutions in Russia both of which took place in 1917. Therefore, it is observed, that the Anushilan Marxists while formulating their thesis in 1938 stressed upon the idea of socialist revolution once the national freedom was achieved, as the next stage of revolution for the emancipation of the proletariat, peasants and petty bourgeoisie from the bondage of capitalism. This really provides a new approach in the application of Marxist principles in a national context which was not in conformity with the prevalent ideas of the Marxists who were working as a follower of Comintern. So the epithet: 'Non-conformist Marxism'—as the converted Marxists loved to declare themselves. (Bhattacharyya, 1982: title of the brochure; Basu, N, 1992: 89)

In a pamphlet *RSP: Why and What it is,* Tridib Chaudhuri writing probably in 1949-50, explained the party position further:

> RSP Stand: The RSP unconditionally accepts the philosophy, the social theories and tenets of Communism, Scientific Socialism and Revolutionary Socialism as propounded by Marx, Engels and Lenin, in toto. Hence it calls itself a Marxist-Leninist Party, a party adhering to the revolutionary theories of Marx, Engels and Lenin for building up the forces of socialist revolution in India and for leading the working class to that goal. (Chaudhuri, 2003: 87)

Explaining further the RSP position of 'non-conformist Marxism', Chaudhuri explained:

> It has been asked why can't we put our faith in the World Communist movement……. although the RSP regards itself as an organised national detachment of the international working-class movement, in the context of the present day confusion in the international class movement, the RSP prefers to continue independently, following the basic dictum of Leninist internationalism…….. The RSP prefers to follow the Leninist path and be internationalist in deeds and not in words. (Chaudhuri, 2003: 90-92)

A Draft Constitution of the party was also circulated only among the members but as it contained no date it's difficult to ascertain the exact date of its drafting. Perhaps, this has been written sometime in 1940. The Documents of the RSP included this 'Draft Constitution'. The draft was published by Nani Bhattacharyya. (Saha, 2001: 72) But, the leaders of the party later stated that the party could work properly or 'legitimately' only in 1945/46. (Das, N, 1983: 230; Bhattacharyya, personal interview, 1996) Even, the convener of the policy and rule drafting committee, Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee was arrested just after two months of the formation of the party, in May 1940 along with another member of the

drafting committee Keshab Prasad Sharma. According to Makhal Paul, except Jogesh Chandra and Sharma, the other member of the rule drafting committee was Vir Raghab Acharia. (Paul, M, personal interview: 1996) He was also arrested in 1940 to be released in 1946. (Saha, M, 2001: 246) As stated earlier, because of declared anti-British & anti-war policies, the govt. was not ready to allow the revolutionaries to move freely to organise their party. So, all the leading members of the RSP were arrested without trial not to be released by end 1945 (Chattopadhyay, 1977: 430) There is no hint in any of the RSP literature about the date and framer(s) of this 'Draft Constitution'. Searching of West Bengal Archives could not provide any clue about the document.

However, this draft constitution also reiterated the party's basic ideology as Marxism-Leninism and 'establishment of a classless and communistic social order on a world-scale through a world dictatorship of the proletariat', as the ultimate aim. (Saha, 2001: 72-108) The 'Constitution of the RSP (I)' was formally adopted first in the 'All National Party Conference held at Basti on 11th, 12th & 13th June 1948'. This constitution of 1948 is a very small document in comparison with the voluminous size of the draft constitution reportedly accepted in 1940. (Saha, 2003: 37-44)

Responding to the necessities the RSP, though could not work freely because of continuous police repressions and detention of almost all the leaders and the workers, participated wholeheartedly in all the movements 'throughout the national democratic phase of the struggle of the Indian people till British imperialism was forced to withdraw from India'. The party adopted, prior to its Delhi convention of 1946, several very pertinent political theses during the period: the War Thesis of 1940, the Russo-German War Thesis of 1941, the Thesis on National Struggle of 1942 etc. for the 'proper Marxist-Leninist political guidance' of party members through the entire historical period leading to the withdrawal of British colonial rule in India.

The War Thesis of the party also explained the reasons for its severance of ties with the CSP and its opposition to CPI:

> …….The Party had so long operated mainly through CSP with a view to transforming it into a genuine Revolutionary Socialist Party. But the experience of the last two years have shown that the leadership of the CSP has more and more moved away from the basic line of Marxism-Leninism and taken to a pseudo Socialist line which might be properly termed Social-Gandhism. The other Socialist party in the country the so-called CPI or NF Group has also been following a line more or less similar to that of the CSP. Both these parties believe in the revolutionary role of

> the Indian bourgeoisie and think it possible to retain the letter in the anti-imperialist front till the final overthrow of imperialism and their entire strategy is based upon that view. But…….the role of the bourgeoisie is oppositional and reformist in relation to imperialism, they are fundamentally incapable of leading any revolutionary struggle against imperialism. It is therefore necessary to mobilise the Revolutionary Socialists in the different provinces into a separate all India party, the Revolutionary Socialist Party. (Saha, 2001: 115)

It is observed that through the remaining years of Indian independence, the RSP tried total opposition to colonial rule on the basis of their understanding of Marxism-Leninism. 'It also conducted a vigorous ideological campaign against the Stalinist thesis of People's War so far as India and similarly placed countries were concerned.' The RSP took part in the Quit India movement of 1942 and many of its workers were detained again only to be released by 1945-46. The RSP also supported 'both the armed struggles of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose waged from beyond the frontiers of the country through the INA and the Azad Hind Government during this period'. (Chaudhuri, 1985: 14) The party, thus, tried to play a consistent and active part in the 'anti-imperialist national democratic phase of the country's freedom struggle' maintaining the same ideological preferences till the end of the imperialist rule. Tridib Chaudhuri writes further:

> It goes without saying that the RSP like all other militant anti-imperialist organisations of those days had to carry on its activities against great odds in the face of ferocious war-time repression launched by the imperialist government. The party worked mainly underground. The political documents and theses adopted by the Party during this period had to be printed and circulated clandestinely. Most of the leaders and active cadres came to be arrested and thrown in prisons. Many comrades lost their lives……But in spite of all odds the RSP held the Red Flag aloft and consistently followed the revolutionary line of Marxism-Leninism in the struggle against war and imperialism……(Chaudhuri, 1985: 14-15)

A close scrutiny of the whole process of conversion to Marxism from revolutionary nationalism would reveal that the Anushilan Marxists who formed the RSP accepted the leaders of the previous outfit as the natural leaders of the new party also. So, even before holding open conferences and conventions, the central committee of the party, as stated in the document, was formed and adopted its first Thesis in 1938. Draft Constitution was also framed and circulated among the members without forming any elected committees, either in the district or in the central level. Similarly, the central committee prepared and approved the War thesis or the Thesis on Russo-German War or the Thesis on National

Struggle of August 1942 when its first formal convention was held in 1946. This raised some questions among the minds of some young volunteers of the party. Centering round the process of formation of a Marxist party, this group of workers asked the then party leadership either in the jails or by publishing a pamphlet: 'Can a petty bourgeois party be converted into a Marxist party overnight only through a meeting and passing some resolutions?' (Mukherjee, N, personal interview: 1996: Ghosh, S, 194?: 22) These workers of the RSP later on formed the SUCI which will be taken up for discussion in the next chapter. Another point where they, further, differed fundamentally from the RSP position was about the evaluation on Stalin. Contrary, to the official position, this group of revolutionaries considered Stalin as an authority of Marxism Leninism and believed that by fighting both the 'leftist' adventurism of Trotsky, in the one side, and 'rightist' deviation of Bukharin on the other side, Stalin upheld the proper understanding of Lenin without which no revolutionary work could proceed. For them, disregarding Stalin was nothing but disregarding Lenin also. (Mukherjee, N, personal interview: 1996)

There were some other points of divergence in the party also. A good number of revolutionaries were present in the Delhi convention of 1946 but some of the founder members were still in the jails during the time and could not attend the Delhi convention. [3] The holding of first all India convention made those senior revolutionaries very much aggrieved and they even were not given a position of respect and honour in the RSP. (Chattopadhyay, 1977: 467-468) As a result, the party faced a serious setback when prior to second all India convention, Muzaffarpur in 1947, 148 leading members of the party including Trailokya Chakraborty, Ramesh Acharyya, Pratul Ganguly, Rabi Sen, Kedereswar Sen, Naren Das, Ashu Kahali and Charu Roy left the RSP and joined CSP, again. (Das, N, 1983: 203-206; Roychowdhury, 1395 BS: 157; Paul, M and Bhattacharyya: personal interview: 1996) The desire to establish the party as an effective and strong alternative to INC could not materialise, either. (Das, N, 1983: 206) The party faced another grave setback when the founder general secretary of the party, Jogesh Chandra also left the party to join INC in 1955. (Chattopadhyay, 1977: 486)

EPILOGUE:

The RSP was born in 1940 officially in a 'torn tent' at Ramgarh coinciding with the annual Congress session and Anti-compromise conference. The day (March 19) when the meeting to form the RSPI (ML) party was held natural disaster continued for the all day. In such a situation, only a handful of converted Marxists were present in the tent. (Exact number not known) However, it's obvious that in a small tent and in such a natural calamity not a good number of revolutionaries could attend the meeting. (RSP, 2009: 12-13) So the meeting, it appears, could only formalized the decision of building the party

severing all ties with the CSP and selected a convening committee with Jogesh Chandra as the convener. (Paul, M, personal interview: 1996, Roychowdhury, 1395 BS: 48) As has been noted above, most of leading members of the RSP were arrested by May 1946. Jogesh Chandra writes that no meeting of the party committee could be held by that time. (Chattopadhyay, J, 1977: 431)

The party 'ideologue' Tridib Chowdhury prepared the *War Thesis* of the party in 1940 and it was accepted officially later on.[4] (Das, N, 1983: 170-171) As all the three CEC members (as per Makhan Paul's interview) were in jail by that time, how it could it be accepted by the central committee of the party. As further told by Paul, he has written a number of pamphlets on the origins of the RSP, all in Bengali: 1) RSP- Ki O Keno? (1946) (Why and How the RSP?); 2) Bharatbarshe Biplabi Samajtantrer Bhumika. (1947) 3) Communist Karmira Bhabia Dekhun, Vol 1 & 2 (1948) (Communist Workers Think). Unfortunately, none of the pamphlets are available presently. In spite of enquiry, the researcher too fails to find any copy. However, it is expected that it must be found in the possession of someone someday. If these pamphlets are available, then it could throw some light on the questions unanswered.

Similarly, questions may be asked on *Draft Constitution* (n.d.), *On Russo-German War* (adopted by the CC in 1941) and *On National Struggle of August 1942* (adopted by the CC in 1942). Who were the CC members of the RSP then taking decisions on important issues one by one by holding formal meetings? the RSP workers had been working everywhere in Bengal in connection with the August Movement 1942. Even four the RSP workers died in police firing in Dhaka. Many of the RSP workers were wounded. (Bhattacharyya, 1992: 54) The govt. unleashed a reign of terror. In such a context, holding of CC meeting was most unlikely. It may be so that the said documents were prepared in the jail and it could be smuggled out through the help of the jail staff. But, could it be called a CC meeting of a party? Obviously, there is no such hint in any of the publications, either of the RSP or of any other writer. The silence of the RSP in this matter requires further analysis.

Buddhadeva Bhattacharyya in the note section of an article published in Kranti Special Issue 1992 states that the *Thesis on Russo-German War* was published by Nani Bhattacharjee from the Provincial Office of the RSPI in 1946. (Bhattacharyya, 1992: 48 – note 11) Though adopted in 1941, it was published in 1946. This, perhaps, vindicates our position that the theses though may have been drafted earlier could not be circulated among the masses before 1946.

The lack of historical documents is a strong impediment in understanding the real process of formation of the both the RSP and the SUCI as we have to depend solely on the party pamphlets written after a

number of years of the actual occurrence of the events. Getting proceedings of the meetings is an absolute necessity but the present writer fails to locate any such meeting proceedings. Either no such records are maintained and preserved maintaining the tradition of the earlier secret organisational days or the present party leadership is not interested to provide those documents to a researcher. Whatever may be the cause, this seriously circumscribed the efforts of building the history of these parties.

Another important matter needs also be discussed here. Pratul Chandra Ganguly, one of the 'big fives' of Anushilan Samiti confessed that with the change of ideology and procedure of revolution in the late thirties, the change of leadership is required. They became old; there were no more capable to lead. (Ganguly, 1383-B.S: 363) Anushilan has changed now. He welcomed the new leadership. In the real sense, Anushilan came to an end. So, the old leaders open-heartedly accepted the change of leadership. But, what hurts them much was the behavior of some of the new leaders of the party towards the old leaders. Jogesh Chandra experienced one such thing sometime in 1946-47 in Deoghar. He was very mush dissatisfied with the attitude of Satish Sarkar. (Chattopadhyay, J, 1977: 468) Further, prior to first party conference of Delhi, 1946 the young leaders completed the provincial party conferences rapidly without waiting for the release of the senior leaders. So, they apprehended the party wanted to work without them in the provincial committee. Another event appeared to be insulting to the founding leaders like Trailokya Maharaj, Pratul Ganguly, Rabindra Sen and the others were to ask them to fill in the applicant membership form to retain their connection with the RSP. (Das, N, 1983: 200-201) They were very much wounded by this attitude of the new leadership. They felt that it injured their 'political prestige'. All these events led to their leaving the party in 1947. With a' heavy heart' they left the RSP. Once a strong force having all India organisations, the converted Anushilan cum RSP party became a 'weak' force now. So, during the time of the independence and partition, the party remained merely as a 'mute spectator'. (Das, N, 1983: 231)