

## War, Empire, and Ideology: Linlithgow's Policies and the Leftist Response in Colonial India

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### Abstract:

This paper presents a historical assessment of the role of leftist parties during the Second World War, seeking to critically analyze their influence on the country's social, economic, and political development.

**Key Findings and Contributions:** Lord Linlithgow's approach towards the left-wing parties during the Second World War engaged directly with leftist ideology. However, these parties failed to exhibit unity in mounting a strong resistance due to a combination of internal and external factors, most notably the Soviet Union's entry into the war against the Axis powers.

**Limitations and Evaluation:** The analysis further indicates that Leftist politics in India during the Second World War experienced a significant ideological shift, moving from firm anti-imperialist opposition to active support for the British war effort under the influence of international developments in the Soviet-led communist camp. During this time, the Communist Party of India ("CPI") adopted a position that diverged from the broader stance of the Indian National Congress, creating notable tensions within the anti-colonial movement.<sup>1</sup>

**Keywords:** Linlithgow, Left politics, World War II, Congress, Muslim League

### Introduction

The aim of this paper is to examine British wartime policies—particularly the decision of Lord Linlithgow to declare India's participation in the war against the Axis powers—and to analyze the responses of various political parties, with special emphasis on left-wing groups during the Second World War. Leftist politics in India between 1939 and 1945 underwent a significant ideological transformation, shifting from firm anti-imperialist opposition to active support for the British war effort, largely under the influence of international communist developments. During this period, the Communist Party of India diverged sharply from the broader position of the Indian National Congress, creating considerable tension within the anti-colonial movement. In contrast, the Congress Socialist Party remained aligned with the Congress and supported the Quit India Movement in 1942. While the communists prioritized support for the Soviet Union and the maintenance of wartime production, other leftist and radical groups attempted to take advantage of Britain's wartime vulnerability to intensify the struggle for independence.<sup>2</sup>

### Historical Context

On September 3, 1939, Viceroy Linlithgow joined Britain in formally declaring war on India's behalf against Nazi Germany. As part of the Allied effort, it contributed two and a half million troops who served under British command in the fight against Axis powers. The Indian response to the declaration of war was mixed.

Deeming it undemocratic and unilateral, both the Congress and the Muslim League opposed Lord Linlithgow's decision, with each party advancing its own conditions for supporting the war.

However, Linlithgow proceeded swiftly without consulting Indians as His Majesty's Government urgently required extensive support from its colonies in terms of manpower and resources.<sup>3</sup>

Initially, the leftists opposed both the war and British colonial rule. However, after Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, and in accordance with the re-characterization of the conflict as a "People's War" against fascism, the party shifted to supporting the British war effort against the Axis powers. As a result of this "People's War" stance, the CPI had been banned in 1934 but the ban was lifted in 1942, did not participate in the 1942 Quit India Movement and came to be widely perceived as collaborating with the British rule leading to its temporary estrangement from the mainstream nationalist movement.

In Bengal, the left-leaning Krishak Praja Party operated within a complex political environment alongside various regional forces. In Punjab, however, it experienced fragmentation, partly due to the wartime imprisonment of its leadership and the need to manage internal tensions with groups such as the Kirti Party, as evidenced in documents from 1943. The period of legalization (1942–1945) allowed the CPI to build a disciplined, nationwide organizational network that later proved significant in shaping post-war politics. (Tewari, (2022). )

While a substantial body of scholarship has examined the responses of the Congress and the League to British wartime policies, the role of leftist politics in India has not been sufficiently explored. This study seeks to address this gap by examining how Linlithgow perceived left-wing politics and how leftist parties responded to the British war effort in India.

The Left in British Indian politics had appeared on the scene around the beginning of the twentieth century. The Japanese defeat of Russia in 1905 and Russia's unsuccessful first attempt at revolution in 1905 both had tremendous impact on a lot of people with international mindset in British India. However, there was one main difference between India and China, for example. In India the emphasis was on freedom from the British as the main aim. While the westernized education had spread a few really important ideas in the society which resulted in tremendous changes later on such as the propagation of education for women and unacceptability of the caste system<sup>4</sup> but over the long-term it destroyed the native mindset ensconced in its long history. In China, on the other hand, the Communist Party decided to totally overhaul the society following colonial powers' departure.

The British experiment of western education forced on the edge of the bayonet upon Indians, broke the link between those who westernized and in doing so lost their identity and instead developed what is known as the 'coconut mentality', brown from outside, white from inside.<sup>5</sup> Thus a gap was created between them and millions whom they were to supervise and direct on behalf of the foreign rulers. While they British rewarded them with benefits they refused to own them and kept them at a 'safe' distance. On their part the westernized group had left its original culture behind and copying the British, had begun to detest it and were unwilling to mix up with those who were not educated on western lines. The British did not own them while they themselves tried to

distance themselves from those not educated on western lines. In brief, they had lost their identity.

In China the Left aimed for a complete overhaul of society from A to Z. Theirs was a goal of not only physical elimination of the foreigner's rule from China accompanied by the foreign working institutions through which it was imposed but also a total socio-economic overhaul of their own society once the foreigner and its proxies had been defeated and eliminate the negative outgrowth of the western mindset deeply imprinted on many sections of society. Along with this the uniqueness of Chinese history with its long periods of successes followed by downturns but nearly always successful in maintaining its independence, was never forgotten.

The uniqueness of Chinese history was considered as the bastion of Chinese revolutionary movements and, in addition, Chinese uprising and rebellion was considered as a part and parcel of an international movement for freedom from imperialism which had begun to rage worldwide against imperialist rule. The Chinese Left worked out the outlines of its own system of governance while the nation was fighting for its independence. In simple words the Chinese sought to regain their historical identity they had lost under western imperial slavery.

Political movements for freedom in British India led by Congress and Muslim League were patronized by the British because they were primarily led by groups of individuals who were educated on western lines and had imbibed the Western form of reasoning. No objective analysis was offered by them of the real foundations of an independent nation as these individuals were also extreme admirers of the Westminster-style of democracy, and of the system of 'law and order' sternly imposed upon India by the British, directly or indirectly. These were the two 'virtues' the western educated of India always struggled to match which they felt the rest of their countrymen would gradually and successfully attain by 'upgrading' themselves under the British rule only if they stayed loyal to the rulers long enough and followed their norms to the tee. However, the intellectual distortion created by the western education over a hundred and fifty years was too far gone to be able to retain any love for or enough pride in one's own history and culture to stand up and sacrifice for it.

These two parties, while struggling for freedom from the British assumed that socio-economic progress of the people would automatically follow in the wake of British departure realizing little that the replacement of 'white' ruler by a local ruler was just the first phase of national struggle for freedom.<sup>6</sup> It had to be followed by the freedom from socio-economic problems without which no society could really be free from colonial legacy. The Left in India, as elsewhere realized the importance of socio-economic changes and its numbers grew following the successful Russian revolution in 1917.

Two important examples of national armed uprising could be cited from Bengal and Punjab which targeted British individuals and sometimes a train or armory<sup>7</sup> for sources of money and armaments. Armed militancy in both these provinces led the independence struggle in a form different from that preferred by the two main parties. The Punjab militancy had strong connections with Sikhs in the US as well where their actions were portrayed as the 'Hindu Conspiracy' in the trial in California that followed capture of some of the movement's members.

## Literature Review

The history of leftist politics in the subcontinent has attracted a degree of scholarly attention, particularly in relation to Bengal and certain other regions. Some studies have also focused on Punjab, examining its revolutionary, leftist, and communist movements. Notable contributions include Bhagwan Josh's work on communist movements in Punjab, Satya M. Rai on the Punjab heroic tradition, Kamlesh Mohan on militant nationalism in Punjab, Master Hari Singh on the role of Punjab's peasantry in the freedom struggle, and the more recent study by Ali Raza, *Revolutionary Past: Communist Internationalism in Colonial India*.<sup>8</sup> Scholars such as Sugata Bose, M. G. Agarwal, Maia Ramnath, and Malini Sood offer valuable yet somewhat fragmentary perspectives on India's nationalist movements. Sugata Bose provides a sophisticated analysis of Subhas Chandra Bose, highlighting the intricacies of his personality alongside the broader contradictions of early twentieth-century global politics. However, he pays limited attention to Punjab's role in his activities during the Second World War.<sup>9</sup> M. G. Agarwal concentrates on pivotal phases of the nationalist struggle that nurtured patriotic sentiment, while also underscoring the sacrifices made by freedom fighters. Meanwhile, Maia Ramnath investigates the origins and transnational scope of the Ghaddar Movement, particularly its operations in California and its engagement with the Bolshevik Revolution. She further explores its connections with Pan-Islamism, the Khilafat Movement, and the Hijrat Movement.<sup>10</sup>

The existing literature clearly reveals that Lord Linlithgow's approach toward the left-wing parties has not been adequately examined. This paper, therefore, seeks to address and fill this gap in the historical scholarship.

## Research Methodology

The study adopts the historical method to examine, interpret, and analyze the origins, evolution, and impact of leftist politics in India. It draws on both primary and secondary sources to reconstruct this phenomenon.

## Discussion

Linlithgow's viceroyalty began at a time in 1936 when the Congress had faced a hard-fisted approach of the British under his predecessor Willingdon (1931-1936). The government felt that Congress would be unable from the severe hiding as per possible British policy to weaken it before implementation of the 1935 Act ("GOI"). It was felt especially by the British Indian establishment that the party would take time to recover from Willingdon's whipping but less than a year after enforcement of the GOI Act 1935, simultaneously with the beginning of Linlithgow's tenure in April 1936, during the provincial elections held under the First Phase of the Act in February 1937, Congress, contrary to government estimates and expectations, scored impressive wins in eight provinces. It won outright in five provinces and was to become a major partner in three others, which meant that in eight out of eleven provinces Congress was an influential player.<sup>11</sup>

Congress' wins were a moment of reflection for the Viceroy as the party had many friends in the Parliament but concomitantly with the strengthening of Congress in British India the top-most British establishment both at home and in India began to grow wary of the party and began to perceive it as a threat to the British rule in India. Congress' candidates for Muslim seats failed to score

wins by winning on only 26 out of 58 seats. So as far as Muslim backing for the Congress was concerned it fared badly indeed and its popularity amongst the Muslims never recovered.

The hastily put up electoral team by the Muslim League won only 104 out of 482 seats but that still made it the largest Muslim party of India. Diverse small Muslim parties or independent candidates were main winners with Bengal scoring the largest number of wins. League's low tally of wins deceived nearly all, especially the Congress, who felt that the party lacked a future. However, Jinnah saw the picture differently and within three years gave the call for an independent Muslim nation which stunned everybody and all Congress could do was to try and somehow catch the leftovers and remains of what it had missed.

The Left did not score wins in the elections but the Congress manifesto for the 1937 elections was strongly based on Leftist ideas more particularly because of Jai Prakash Narayan and Dev, who headed the Leftists within Congress known as the Congress Socialist Party ("CSP") (Karatnycky, (2004)). They had Nehru's support for the propagation of leftist ideas within the party and attempted to give it a leftist temper. However the effort failed in the long run before the power of the large businessmen and industrialists who funded Congress.

The far-Left group, the Communists, carried out impressive organizational and propaganda work after the elections. Membership of the All India Trade Union Congress in 1939 stood at 390,000, an increase of more than a hundred thousand in the past three years. Similarly, membership of the peasants' leftist group, Kisan Sabha, rose from 600,000 in May 1938 to 800,000 in 1939. Membership of the leftist, All India Students Federation, rose from 40,000 in 1938 to 100,000 in 1939.<sup>12</sup> However, after forming many provincial governments Congress leadership tried repressive tactics against the Leftist groups because Gandhi himself was a conservative religious right-winger and his party received large amounts of contributions from cotton barons in Ahmedabad in particular so he was bound to support their interests over those of Trade Unions and Kisan Sabhas.

Gandhi had proclaimed many times that India's civilization and therefore its history was based in its village life so the welfare of peasants should be the top priority. In practice, however, he was unable to match his word as his leadership of the Congress without the financial contributions from wealthy businessmen and industrialists would have been threatened and being an individual with a strong ego he was not one to let it go easily. It is highly unlikely that he was ever associated with the work of any Kisan Sabha but it is well-known that he was opposed to their popularity and always knew that the government would handle them strongly to keep his party and position safe.<sup>13</sup>

Linlithgow, being a representative of an exploitative, capitalist class which had through the EIC successfully conquered South Asia, was an extension of the British Crown.<sup>14</sup> The EIC had acted somewhat independently in its earlier years but always under the gaze of the Crown which increased with the passage of time. Gradually the Crown began to take over its functioning as well and the formal full transfer to the Crown took place in 1858 due to the serious threat posed by the Company's mode of operations.<sup>15</sup>

It is a general belief that the two main parties Congress and Muslim League were both founded with the approval of the government.<sup>16</sup> Both of them

were expected to function as per the general guidelines specified by the rulers which expected display of goodwill towards their policies and all opposition to be expressed within the chambers of the Legislative Councils or through vernacular newspapers. In other words, popular (or 'populist') and street politics was to be eschewed especially in urban areas which formed the main control centers for the British.<sup>17</sup>

Having been brought up on western-style education most of the top leaders of both the parties like Jinnah<sup>18</sup>, Gandhi, Nehru<sup>19</sup>, Liaquat Ali Khan, Patel and many others whether inside the Legislative Councils or outside in public did follow these rules.<sup>20</sup> However, western literature about individual liberties and free expression did affect some, in addition to struggles for rights and liberties by the citizenry in some countries and societies. Most of the radical leaders, however, were either locally educated or ones who had studied in western-style educational institutions in India but received their education during the first two decades of the twentieth century when calls and actions of societal change were spreading out in the form of attempts at radical societal transformations from Russia, Ireland, Mexico, China, West Asia including Egypt in particular and its neighbors in the region. Japan was different from the above-listed nations who were struggling for their economic and/or political freedom, as it was already industrializing at a tremendous pace, had defeated Russia in 1905, and therefore formed a different kind of beacon for Indians to follow in terms of advances in administration and industrial progress while preserving the basics of its historical culture intact.<sup>21</sup>

Linlithgow's dealings with these three main political groups varied according to the situation he faced in India or as dictated by London. He had a tremendous leeway like other viceroys in domestic affairs while some issues concerned with long-term British interests in India especially economic, financial, trade and geopolitical where consultation with the SoS's office or approval of the British Cabinet was required. The ups and downs in his dealings with Congress and the League show his versatility and flexibility as the situation demanded always keeping in view the fact that he was a representative of the Crown whose interests were paramount and needed to be kept in mind while pursuing his policies.<sup>22</sup> In spite of an accusation by Nehru that he was slow in comprehension of political complexities, Linlithgow's actions belie that. He was always alert, hardworking and diligent in his pursuit of goals he wanted to achieve. Nehru had his own political axe to grind and as an intelligent and impulsive person he would sometimes draw conclusions quite subjectively without weighing the matter at hand.

Historically speaking London was the place where Karl Marx, the originator of contemporary anti-capitalist theories of capital accumulation and the resultant socio-economic inequalities, while escaping from Continental police departments, sought shelter and where he was allowed to live the rest of his life. He wrote his *magnum opus* Das Capital, the three-volume spread of his Marxist thought from which originate both the forms of leftist ideologies, the extreme form known as communism and the milder one referred to as socialism.

The last decades of nineteenth century and ninety years of the twentieth, witnessed an endless series of political struggles based on both forms of Marxian economic and political theory, against capitalist/imperialist regimes all over the globe. Lo and behold it was, and still is, the top British establishment

in general which is most vitriolic and ruthless opponent of any political action classified as 'leftist',<sup>23</sup> generally referring to any party or economically/politically motivated belief system having direct or indirect connection with Marxist thought of any kind.

The Bengal agitation of 1905, mostly a *bhadralok* phenomenon guided by professional caste-Hindu interests, showed a new way of expressing their demands. This was followed by the Ghaddar movement in Punjab till the Russian revolution which formed the beginnings of a true era of leftist politics in India. Since the top British establishment was a born-enemy of the communist ideology it tried to subvert the November revolution in Russia but failed. But it never let down its guard against followers of Marxism in whatever garb they tried to function so how come its most-prized colony would not experience an endless series of the same anti-Red persecution as a mass organized force of workers and peasants would pose the biggest threat to its exploitative rule.<sup>24</sup>

There was British and American insertion of military forces in Russia soon after the beginning of the November 1917 Russian Revolution for two reasons. First, as a threat to the Bolshevik forces threatening the imperial power of the Romanovs in the country. Second, as a help to the White Russians which were supported as a counter to the Reds who had initiated the revolution. Britain is basically a kingship with all the top-most establishment, the big landowners, the richest and most powerful businesses, investor and industrial classes generally referred to as the capitalist classes being die-hard supporters of the system. Any opposition to kingship is crushed through the use of one surreptitious means or another. Its wars against Napoleon were, primarily, for upholding the same principle in continental Europe. The same spirit of 'kingship', now incorporated in the slogan 'capitalism is god', permeates the most powerful groups in the US, which English migrants followed by other Europeans in later centuries, had settled. Socio-economic equality is shunned in both countries although with some distinct differences in public display and behavior, now more often a formality especially in the corridors of power.

The same British spirit was transferred to Indian society and with the passage of time after the western education had spread widely into the urban middle classes, two political parties were allowed to function both of whom promised to work within the bounds of the highly circumscribed political arena which would not impinge on the ruler's field of action in any way. However, the effect of the first Russian attempt at communist revolution in 1905 and the Russian defeat of Tsushima Straits the same year, along with freedom struggles underway in Ireland and many other countries in Europe, newspapers and foreign-based Indians were the primary carriers of such news back to India, the western-educated caste-Hindu middle class rose up in Bengal.

The first Indian Communist Party was formed in Tashkent in 1920 but it was formalized in India at Kanpur in 1925. Thereafter, it became very active in arousing workers and peasants for their rights. Their condition was, to say the least, extremely pitiful in mostly British-owned factories and tea estates but the exploitation was also rampant in Indian-owned enterprises. The peasants were meanwhile kept in place by local 'agents' of the rulers. Famines were a frequent occurrence in British India carrying away millions at a time and wreaking economic and social devastation in vast areas, never permitting the

peasant/tiller or urban laborers to rise up in life as they often received just enough to barely survive but not save enough for future.

### ***1937 Elections, Communist Party and Kisan Sabhas (Leftist Peasant Organizations)***

British in India were not the only ones to fear the power of organized workers and peasants. Both Gandhi and Jinnah were opposed to leftist trends in politics in spite of the fact that the 1944 Muslim League manifesto was drafted by a leftist Muslim lawyer Danial Latifi.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, the Congress manifesto for the 1937 elections, a well-thought of document which was addressed mainly to the needs of the common man, especially peasants and workers, widely followed Nehru's views along with input from the Congress Socialist Party, a left-leaning group of Congressmen headed by Jai Prakash Narayan and Dev. One of the main reasons for the Irwin-Gandhi Pact of 1931 was Irwin's fear of the expanding popularity of Kisan Sabhas in parts of UP and Bihar and the threat of withholding of funding by big donors to Gandhi who were concerned about growth of anti-capitalist leftist groups with whom he had expressed his sympathies earlier.<sup>26</sup>

The Communist Party of India ("CPI") had been banned in 1934 so could not participate in the 1937 elections but Kisan Sabhas did indirectly participate in the elections by forming a pressure group within the Congress. Their participation affected election results in UP and Bihar. The left-wing politics grew ever stronger with the likes of Subhas Chandra Bose, M. N. Roy and others such as Nehru providing support although the latter always ended up siding with Gandhi in the end.<sup>27</sup> Nehru professed socialism as his creed and was president of Congress in 1936 and 1937 followed by Bose in 1938 and 1939 and both, along with their supporters, helped to shape the Congress' tilt towards socialist ideas and strengthening the leftist hold on the party's program.

The 1920s and 1930s witnessed the rise of leftism in Indian politics especially in deprived and greater inequality-hit provinces and centers of large industries like Bombay, etc. Strikes and protests became common and the leftist movement spread fast. In order to halt its spread, the British Indian government initiated a string of 'conspiracy cases' because the actions of these movements were deemed to be attacks on the King's rule in India. The best-known 'conspiracy cases' included such as the Peshawar Conspiracy Cases (1922-1927) which involved returnees from Moscow of the 'Tashkent School' where they were introduced to Marxist philosophy considered as potentially harmful to British control over the NWFP if allowed to spread, Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case (1924), Meerut Conspiracy Case (1929), Lahore Conspiracy Case involving Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (1929-1931), and regular cases against Ghaffar Khan's 'Red Shirts' in Peshawar for its suppression (1930s) by declaring it illegal and incarcerating thousands of its members.

The earlier cases were meant to crush the rising leftist leadership and its ideology while the latter cases targeted well-organized groups but were often prosecuted with not so credible evidence or prosecuted with ill-will in line with British establishment's visceral dislike of leftist groups. Tactics like holding trials far away from where the 'crimes against the King' were supposedly committed were resorted to in order to avoid a jury favorable to the accused as the Meerut Case clearly illustrated. In spite of continuous hunting down of leftists their organizations flourished with rapidly expanding membership and following. The number of cases listed above is an indication of this expansion

of leftist followers. To curb that trend all means were considered justifiable. Some cases as the Meerut case attracted international protests.

There were many other leftist groups like the All-India Trade Union Congress, the Progressive Writers Association, All-India Students Federation, Kisan Kirti, Communist Ghaddar Party of India, besides a few smaller ones which ebbed or flowed with the tides of time. Such organizations were in the lead in times of natural disasters as the governments were usually slow in rendering any help at such times. Bengal famine is a case in point as Linlithgow, like Churchill, was least concerned about the disaster. Wavell, who succeeded him, handled it better.

Russian Revolution was the main inspiration for many leftist organizations which struggled against landlordism, end to imperial control leading to full independence, workers' rights and a secular society, many of these goals directly clashed with top British establishment's goals in India. Therefore, British reaction to reports of spread of leftist ideas and organizations especially of the extreme form, i.e., communism, was swift and brutal. All means were used to curb their spread. The local parties' chiefs especially Gandhi were in synchronicity with the government both because of their personal positions as the heads of parties but in case of Jinnah one reason he was suspicious of these mostly Hindu-supported ideologies was that he wanted Muslims everywhere to support the League and not be digressed by such slogans although he was willing to accept them as members of the party for constructive reasons, as was Latifi's help mentioned above.<sup>28</sup>

At the outbreak of war in 1939, most leftist groups, including the CPI and the CSP, regarded it as an "imperialist war," since Britain had drawn India into the conflict without consulting its political leadership. The Left actively organized strikes and protests against the British Raj and supported the resignation of the Congress ministries in 1939. Following the start of Operation Barbarossa in June 1941, the CPI position experienced a sharp shift in position. The conflict was now redefined from an "imperialist war" to a "People's War" against fascism.

Under the leadership of P. C. Joshi, CPI chose to back the British war effort, maintaining that the defeat of fascism was a priority despite India's continued colonial subjugation. This stance distanced the CPI from the broader nationalist struggle, particularly the Quit India Movement led by Mahatma Gandhi, which the party opposed on grounds that it would undermine the anti-fascist war effort. As noted earlier, the Communist Party of India opposed the Quit India Movement, a stance that significantly undermined its credibility among Congress nationalist activists. In recognition of the changed circumstances of war, the British government lifted the ban on the CPI in 1942, allowing it to operate legally at a time when Congress leaders were imprisoned. Rather than aligning with the Congress's immediate and confrontational nationalist strategy, the communists concentrated on grassroots mobilization—strengthening trade unions, organizing Kisan Sabhas, and undertaking relief work during the 1943 Bengal Famine. The CSP rejected the CPI's "People's War" line and maintained a firm anti-imperialist, pro-independence stance, actively participating in the 1942 QIM.

Meanwhile Subhas Chandra Bose, after parting ways with the Congress, pursued a distinct left-wing strategy, arguing that Britain's enemies could serve as India's allies in its struggle for freedom. He sought support from Germany

and Japan and helped expand the Indian National Army (INA) in 1942 to fight for independence. M. N. Roy, having broken from the communists, founded a separate political group that supported the British war effort from the outset, viewing fascism as the greater threat.<sup>29</sup>

Linlithgow, like earlier viceroys, used forceful methods of all kinds to curb leftist activities like that of the Bose-led Forward Bloc. He also targeted radical elements within Congress especially those who demanded immediate freedom. Radical anti-British student organizations were also targeted along with enacting strict laws against labor-driven strikes to prevent slowing down of production during wartime. Defence of India Rules (“DIR”) were strictly enforced against peasants and workers whenever necessary. The Quit India Movement, a Gandhi-led uprising limited to a few provinces but destructive in its effects, was forcefully crushed in 1942 and Congress banned with Gandhi and other top leadership jailed along with thousands of others.<sup>30</sup>

### **Conclusion**

While moving against the leftists, Linlithgow continued his dealings with both Congress and Muslim League as probably he felt that both parties owed their origins to British consent. Following the widespread use of western education in India in the nineteenth century it was obvious to the British that request for forming new political parties would be the next step for those Indians who had acquired school, college and university education based upon the syllabi laid down by them. British administrative plan to date consisted of a combination of occasional administrative steps termed as ‘reforms’ or ‘acts’ for Indians but always combined with the threat of using unfettered force of the security services in the background against any misuse or violation of limits laid down by government for preservation of their form of ‘law and order’.

All the above was accompanied by continuous propaganda in support of the righteousness of British rule which described a fairytale picture of Britain and British political life. Such propaganda had helped to brainwash urban millions in particular into thinking that British rule, even while its economic and political exploitation was kept up relentlessly in various guises, was inherently good. Having achieved this milestone they could move forcefully with ease against those extreme elements which dared to challenge the British rule through incitement to insurrection or direct and violent confrontation.

Such was the case with Congress and Muslim League as they had been generally permitted to carry on their respective political activity except for administrative or police action against certain disruptive elements which were parts thereof. Having established certain norms for political activity to be carried out within a circumscribed arena, constantly monitored from the top, all the viceroys before and including Linlithgow had no qualms in thorough and comprehensive use of illegal means of framing the Leftists anytime they wanted. These actions by the rulers could also be justified before the two larger parties as it prevented a new local challenger to them from gaining strength.

Despite political isolation, the CPI witnessed significant growth in both its membership and organizational network during the wartime period. The left-wing current—comprising the CSP and, before 1941, communists within Congress—played a vital role in introducing and mainstreaming socialist ideas in the Congress agenda, especially in relation to agrarian reforms, labor rights, and economic planning. Ongoing ideological divisions among leftist groups

(the CPI, CSP, and Forward Bloc) prevented the formation of a cohesive front, thereby reducing their overall influence on the freedom struggle. By the end of the war in 1945, the CPI's support for the British war effort placed it in a paradoxical position: although it had grown organizationally stronger, its opposition to the Quit India Movement had generated widespread distrust within the broader Congress-led nationalist movement.

In short, Leftist politics in India during the Second World War (1939–1945) underwent a striking ideological transformation, shifting from staunch anti-imperialist resistance to active support for the British war effort under the influence of international communist developments. During this period, the Communist Party of India diverged from the broader stance of the Indian National Congress, generating considerable tension within the anti-colonial movement. In contrast to the communists the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) remained within the Congress and supported the Quit India Movement. While the Communist Party prioritized backing the Soviet Union and sustaining wartime production, other leftist and radical groups sought to exploit Britain's vulnerability during the war to advance the struggle for independence.<sup>31</sup>

### Recommendations

In the end the fruits of long and dedicated Leftist struggle were secured mainly by Congress as their prolonged and dedicated struggle was never given its due and all the anti-British feeling and propaganda it created was easily appropriated by the Congress without giving it much credit even after independence. League also gained as after the war the communists started supporting a new homeland for Muslims in line with Moscow's support for rights of nationalities. Reaction on British lines, however, was not long in coming. The 1951 Rawalpindi Conspiracy case, instituted on British lines, included two such dedicated communists Sajjad Zaheer and his wife sent over from India to spread the Leftist ideology in Pakistan. In spite of Communist party's support for creation of Pakistan the new state could not prove to be an easy arena for their activities. It is of immense importance to explore the left politics after partition of British India particularly in Pakistan.

### References

- 61
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  - (3) The 1935 Act included a provision whereby upon declaration of war by Britain, India would automatically become a combatant too on Britain's behalf. All Linlithgow had to do was to simply relay this fact to the Indian public which he did by a short radio announcement on the evening of September 3, 1939. However, not consulting Indian representatives led to the breakdown of cooperation between the British and Congress. For various reasons Congress considered itself as the true representative of the Indian people and thereby claimed that it should have been consulted. In other words, it felt itself to be equal in power to the Viceroy. The 1914-1918 conflict had extracted huge sacrifices from India so there certainly was a serious concern by all that the toll on Indian society this time could be much higher, which proved correct.

- (4) There may be individuals moving up the social ladder in economic terms in UK, however, the class system there is strongly rooted in the society. It proclaims individual rights to other but itself remains a kingship, whose wealth is kept 'secret' and all the country's top establishment acts like as if they are totally beholden to the royal family and its various branches as in the Persian Gulf's Arab emirates.
- (5) Frantz Fanon *et al* have succinctly described this effect upon the minds of the colonized people.
- (6) Generally speaking a revolution from imperial power involves a huge change at all levels of society reversing the total or near-total change in the mindset of millions of local proxies of the imperial. Throwing out the foreign ruler is only the first step. The second step, without which the immense sacrifice put in to throw out the foreign ruler goes waste unless it involves carrying out a total sweep of the sources of slavish mental mindset imposed on many sections of society.
- (7) These refer to two incidents carried out by armed groups and involved looting of a train carrying government dash and valuables and is known as the Kakori train robbery near Lucknow in 1927 (after which all three involved Bismil, Khan and Singh were caught and hanged. It can also be referred to much more accurately as the 'Freedom Struggle'). The armory raid involved attacking the Chittagong armory in 1930 to capture the arms from a government arms depot. The conspiracy (it can also be referred to much more accurately as the 'Freedom Struggle') involved dozens of people and more than one armed raid and subsequent clashes. Many were killed, many others sentenced to Andaman while others were incarcerated in Indian jails. Nearly, two dozen were acquitted.
- (8) Raza, Ali. *Revolutionary pasts: Communist internationalism in colonial India*. Cambridge University Press, 2020.
- (9) Bose, Sugata. *His Majesty's Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India's struggle against empire*. Harvard University Press, 2011.
- (10) Jain, Dhruv. "Maia Ramnath and the Search for a Decolonised Antiauthoritarian Marxism: A Review of Haj to Utopia and Decolonizing Anarchism by Maia Ramnath." *Historical Materialism* 25, no. 2 (2017): 196-213.
- (11) Wasti, Moazzam, Muhammad Iqbal Chawla, and Farzana Arshad. "Lord Linlithgow and Muslim Politics in India: An Overview." *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* 55, no. 1 (2018).
- (12) Downloaded from [peoplesdemocracy.in](http://peoplesdemocracy.in) of February 16, 2020 on 14.3.26.
- (13) Gandhi-Irwin Pact of 1931 was based around the threat of Kisan Sabhas acquiring too much strength in UP and Bihar. Similarly, while Gandhi struggled for freedom from foreigners he never specifically advocated an overall socio-economic post-freedom program for overall societal change as the SPC and CPI did. He also stuck with the caste system and viewed it from the perspective of classical Hinduism centuries or even thousands of years ago where he felt it was practiced in an acceptable form.
- (14) Rizvi, Gowher. "Before and after the transfer of power: Two review articles: II-Lord Linlithgow and the reviewers." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 1, no. 1 (1978): 114-119.
- (15) British Army, in particular, along with the Royal Navy as well, were always at the service of the Company since its founding and beginning of its foreign enterprise. The Company's worldwide reach could be gauged by its simultaneous administration and later war against the colonials' uprising in the thirteen colonies on the East Coast of the current USA which it lost following Cornwallis' surrender at Yorktown in 1781, and its involvement in India and

- conquest of Bengal in 1757 where Cornwallis was posted as the Company's GG later on.
- (16) Verhagen, Felix. "Three Perspectives on Partition. A Hindu, Muslim and Western View on the Decolonization of India and Founding of Pakistan." (2017).
  - (17) India's rural landscape has always been so vast and diverse in size along with the variety of its terrain that all nearly all biggest rulers of the past few centuries have focused on control of the cities and urban areas while mostly leaving the administration of rural areas to be carried out through some form of improvised local control.
  - (18) Wolpert, Stanley. *Jinnah of Pakistan*. Vol. 144. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.
  - (19) Rathore, L. S. "Political Ideas of Jawaharlal Nehru Some Reflections." *The Indian Journal of Political Science* 46, no. 4 (1985): 451-473.
  - (20) Veerathappa, K. "British Conservatives and the Constitutional Experiment in British India, 1935-1939." *The Indian Journal of Political Science* 27, no. 2 (1966): 55-66.
  - (21) Japan began its journey towards industrialization on Western lines following the Meiji Restoration in 1868. An important point needs to be noted that the basics of the pre-Restoration type of education system which had developed in Japan in the previous centuries formed the basis for the post-Restoration drive towards development and the new system of education was an amalgamation of local mores of logic and work on which the Western forms of knowledge and work were implanted. Even now Japanese children in early classes are deeply involved in styles of learning from the pre-Restoration period. China's case is similar in nature. This belies the logic underlying *Macaulay's Note on Education* which many contemporary S. Indians justify was necessary but it ended up completely upturning the existing system in Bengal and other places and producing the world's largest number of 'hybrid' locals resembling coconuts, 'brown from outside white from inside', although western education did produce beneficial changes like female education and questioning of the caste system but its long-term effects have been disastrous. There were many ground realities of history and division of most of the country into small kingdoms following Mughal decline which made India different from both Japan and China. Both suffered from national humiliation and shame following respective defeats. In Japan's case it was the destruction of Japanese fleet by American Commodore Perry in 1853 but it was never colonized so it has retained many of its older customs to date. In China's case the defeats in the two Opium Wars between 1839 and 1860 handed over control of most of its administrative and economic/financial functions to the West and produced a century of national shame. On the contrary, in India, a defeat by foreigners in one part of the region or the subcontinent as calling India a 'country' after the breakup of the Mughal empire does not make much sense, did not affect other rulers in other parts of the country and serious fault-lines and differences of all kinds remained between different regions which prevented a collective or 'national' action.
  - (22) Veerathappa, K. "British Conservatives and the Constitutional Experiment in British India, 1935-1939." *The Indian Journal of Political Science* 27, no. 2 (1966): 55-66.
  - (23) The British (and the French as well) have a way of finding fault with everybody else in the world whom they want to exploit, suppress and want to rob of their natural resources. Samah Hourani's video titled "Colonizing Education via Classrooms of Empire—In the Name of Empire" attempts to illustrate it fully.

- (24) It is true that force was wielded against Congress from time to time, more particularly by Willingdon (1931-1936). However, he was acting on the basis of two points. First, there had been a reaction amongst the die-hard Conservatives in Parliament, Churchill, as always in matters concerning India, being one of the leading critics of Irwin, who had invited Gandhi to sort out some issues to his official residence and then announced the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Secondly, a new act of Parliament was about to be announced and both Gandhi and Congress were pummeled by Willingdon to weaken it before the new Act's announcement. The main goal of this hiding was to prolong the British rule and since Europe was going through a period of turmoil, a second European war was a distinct possibility. After 1929 the devastating effects of the Great Depression combined with the insolvable issue of first war's reparations, had the potential of a volatile and explosive socio-economic and political unrest in India which could justifiably be exploited by Congress. It was banned in 1932 and it was a curb not only on Gandhi who was incarcerated as well but a warning to Nehru *et al* who were demanding immediate independence. Politics in India had indeed come a long way. From being midwived by Britain at its birth Congress had made important strides in nearly half a century and had come to be considered a threat to Britain's intended prolonged stay in India. Contrasted with the extreme leftist parties whose action was inspired by events in Soviet Union primarily and who were staunchly anti-capitalist, Congress had been groomed to maturity under British care and shadow and on its own political lines which was the main difference between the Communist/Leftist parties and Congress. Bose is a good example of the leftist party leadership, how they were continuously tracked and often hunted down through a combination of all kinds of misuse of legal and forceful methods.
- (25) He was the lawyer for the famous 'Shah Bano' case in India.
- (26) Singh, Lata. "The Bihar Kisan Sabha Movement: 1933-1939." *Social Scientist* (1992): 21-33.
- (27) Rizvi, Gowher. "Before and after the transfer of power: Two review articles: II-Lord Linlithgow and the reviewers." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 1, no. 1 (1978): 114-119.
- (28) Ahmed, Akbar. *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic identity: the search for Saladin*. Routledge, 2005.
- (29) Edgerton, David. "The nationalisation of British history: historians, nationalism and the myths of 1940." *The English Historical Review* 136, no. 581 (2021): 950-985.
- (30) Ban on Communist Party of India ("CPI"), imposed in 1934 was lifted in 1942 as it started supporting Britain's war against Germany because Britain had become aligned with the Soviet Union, source of CPI's ideological inspiration.
- (31) Bhattacharya, Sanjoy. "The Colonial State and the Communist Party of India, 1942-45: a Reappraisal." *South Asia Research* 15, no. 1 (1995): 48-77.

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