

assumed ignorance and kept quiet in respect of the above publication in *Samadarsi*".¹⁸ This provided a significant instance of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer's *modus operandi*. Newspapers outside the State lent full support to the movement. *The Hindu*¹⁹ in a spirited article expressed the hope that no time would be lost in negotiating a satisfactory settlement of the problem involved in the Abstention Movement. Similarly *The Indian Express*, in a sub-leader vigorously attacked the barbarian attitude of the government to the Joint Political Congress and the Abstention Movement. A portion of it is quoted below:

"Continued neglect on the part of the government concerned to recognise and assuage the discontent of the people may so accentuate the situation that in the end may necessitate the employment of the armoured car and the bombing aeroplane. But it is also possible for a government to go to the other extreme and deal with the popular discontent by the method of the mailed fist that may drive a healthy political movement underground and pave the way for periodic outbursts of popular indignation. We are afraid that the government of the Maharaja of Travancore is running the risk of the latter danger by their uncompromising attitude towards the demands of the minority communities."²⁰

As the Abstentionists persisted in their demands the government tried all means in its power to misrepresent and discredit the abstentionists. So as to ensure the sympathy of the British government the Abstention Movement was dubbed non-co-operation under a different label.²¹ Systematic repression was resorted to and as a follow-up the government even went to the extent of manipulating to their advantage the first elections under the Reforms of 1932. The sordid role played by the government was well reflected in the statement of the Joint Political Congress issued after election.²² Soon the Joint Political Congress submitted

18. *Malayala Manorama*, May 24, 1933.

19. *The Hindu*, March 3, 1933.

20. *The Indian Express*, April 21, 1933.

21. For details vide, 'Lord Willington's Visit' published in the *Malabar Mail*, November 25, 1962.

22. Statement of the Joint Political Conference, August 25, 1933.

a memorial to the Dewan.²³ It stated that owing to the suppressive measures and unlawful interference of the government there was no free election and that the new Houses of the legislature were not at all representative of the different communities and various interests of the State, that the reformed legislature only tended to strengthen the predominance of the Nair, that their grievances were genuine and that the remedy lay in reconstituting the legislature so as to give representation to all major communities in proportion to their population. The government stood firm and the aggrieved, as a mark of protest, decided to abstain from the new legislature. This was mainly the result of the unhelpful attitude of the government created by the enmity of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer.²⁴

This became all the more clear with the appointment of Sir Mohamed Habibulla as the Dewan of Travancore. There was a general gust of enthusiasm all over the State and it was hoped that he would fain have resolved the longstanding grievance of the abstentionists. *The Malabar Herald* subscribed to the same view and expressed the hope that Sir Mohamed Habibulla would immortalise his regime in Travancore by removing the disabilities of the Christian, Ezhava and Muslim communities before he would lay down the reins of his office and thus come in for their everlasting gratitude.²⁵ To a very great extent this became a reality when he took steps to remove a few disabilities which had denied them admittance into the higher government appointments. Nevertheless the composition of the legislature remained unaltered and the general discriminatory treatment continued.

The Abstention Movement soon became rejuvenated with the entry of a new fighter. It was C. Kesavan who shouldered the burdens of the S.N.D.P. Yogam during this time. It must be admitted that he had the benediction of the Yogam for his political work. Shortly he became the moving spirit in the Abstention Movement and the government which found in him enemy No. one had no alternative but to order his arrest and detention. Immediately after the famous meeting of the All Travancore Joint

23. File No. 1315/1933, Dated October 11, 1933, Kerala Government Secretariat, Trivandrum.

24. File No. 148.CS Dated October 26, 1933, Kerala Govt. Secretariat.

25. *The Malabar Herald*, October 30, 1934.

Political Congress on June 7, 1935 at Kozhencheri²⁶ he was arrested. The statement which he issued to the Press on the eve of his arrest, bristled with the longing of the large mass of the people of the State for freedom and equality. He contended that his arrest was a resounding victory or a presage of the coming of the day when true equality would prevail among all the subjects of the Maharaja.²⁷ With the arrest of C. Kesavan an unprecedented spirit of unity pervaded the entire rank and file of the All Travancore Joint Political Congress.

On the appointment of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer as the Dewan of Travancore, the Working Committee of the All Travancore Joint Political Congress issued a statement expressing fear and suspicion at the move.²⁸ Following this a deputation of the All Travancore Joint Political Congress waited on the Dewan on October 28, 1936 and presented him with a memorandum²⁹ of grievances relating to freedom of the Press, worship, temple entry and persecution of the leaders of the Political Congress.³⁰

Great developments took place subsequent to the release of C. Kesavan from prison, which tended to intensify the political fervour and courage of the people fighting for Responsible Government.³¹ In the warm reception given to C. Kesavan at Alleppey, T. M. Varghese the Deputy President of the Sri Mulam Assembly, accorded to him a warm welcome on behalf of the fifty-one lakhs of people of the State. This speech was made a subject of great controversy in the State and critics had the unreserved blessings of the government.³² The consequence was the resignation of T. M. Varghese.

It will not be redundant to take stock of the achievements made by the Joint Political Congress through persistent agitation.

26. *S.N.D.P. Yogam Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, p. 228.

27. Letter from the S.N.D.P. Yogam Office, Quilon, addressed to the General Secretary, S.N.D.P. Yogam, dated June 7, 1935.

28. Statement of the Working Committee of the All Travancore Joint Political Congress, September 20, 1936.

29. Memorandum submitted to the Dewan by the deputation of the Joint Political Congress, October 28, 1936.

30. File No. D. Dis 662—45, CS. English Records, Kerala Government Secretariat.

31. *Malayala Manorama*, October 5, 1937.

32. *The Sri Mulam Assembly Proceedings*, XI, 203.

In kindling political consciousness leading to the realisation of responsible government, the Joint Political Congress made much headway. Ever since the Malayali Memorial the people of the State were getting alive to a new sense of political life which would ensure them a due share in their government. As a first step in this direction, recruitment rules for the public services were reorientated and revised.³³ As per the new rules forty per cent of the intermediate section of the public services was set apart for the backward communities, and all jobs in the lower divisions of the services were required to be given in proportion to population, though communal representation was not accepted as the principle. The Ezhavas got admittance into the State army as well. Thus the monopoly enjoyed by certain communities (Brahmins and later Nairs) in the public services was broken.

As a result of the agitation the government adopted measures to rectify the inequalities in the legislative bodies. Accordingly the government issued a Press Communique in 1937 by which it was provided that the Ezhavas would get reservation of eight seats in the Legislative Assembly and two in the Council by election.³⁴ In the same way the Muslims and the Latin Christians also were to get three seats each in the Assembly by means of reservation. A franchise commissioner was appointed and representations were submitted to him by the Joint Political Congress. In consequence constituencies were rearranged and the non-transferable single vote system was introduced. Subsequent elections bore ample testimony to the good effects of the changes made.

Mention had already been made of the arrest of C. Kesavan. An unprecedented spirit of unity pervaded the entire Ezhava community. The Ezhavas in sore straits took a grim determination to face all consequences for the attainment of their legitimate rights and claims. They were so much disgusted by the total neglect of their rights that they decided to get converted to other religions. Provoked by the agitation for conversion to other faiths, the government issued the famous Temple Entry Proclamation.³⁵ What is significant is that this was only the culmination of a plot hatched

33. File R. Dis. 893|Genl. dated June 25, 1935—English Records, Kerala Government Secretariat.

34. S.N.D.P. Yogam Golden Jubilee Souvenir, p. 230.

35. Souvenir of the Temple Entry Proclamation Memorial, p. 1.



by Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer against the possible recurrence of coalition of communities against the government trying to deny the claims of the people for responsible government, which was gradually gaining ground in the imagination of people of the State. The credit for having created an atmosphere for these reforms, no doubt, goes to the Joint Political Congress.

Again it was under the instrumentality of the Joint Political Congress that the demand for Responsible Government was given due publicity. It was again through the Herculean efforts of the Joint Political Congress that this proposition began to engage the serious attention of the government.³⁶ This is a conclusive proof which establishes the fact that the Joint Political Congress had something nobler to achieve than the trifle of an appointment or a seat in the legislative bodies as it would be supposed. At the same time it must be admitted that as the Joint Political Congress was tactically and organisationally defective for it precuded the Nairs, it was felt that a new party embracing all sections of the communities should be created for launching an active struggle for Responsible Government. "The State Congress was the outcome of it."³⁷ Thus was born in Travancore the first political party which through its selfless devotion had brought about wonderful changes in the political life of the people. It would therefore be only fair to conclude, as Mr. K. Sukumaran, the editor of *Kerala Kaumudi* had observed that the Travancore State Congress was fundamentally the All Travancore Joint Political Congress under a new name.³⁸

While yet the leaders of the State were entirely absorbed in the formation of the State Congress the feasibility of the establishment in Travancore of Responsible Government had prominently become a subject of acrimonious controversy in the Press. The question had for some time been before the public but never before had it attracted greater public attention than it did during the closing months of 1937. Almost every day opinions had been expressed in the Press in respect of the constitutional possibility of Responsible Government, under the conditions that had been

36. Sri Mulam Assembly Proceedings, XI, 806—7.

37. Matthew. C. P., *I have borne much*, p. 54.

38. For details vide his article under the caption 'V. K. Velayudhan' published in the *S.N.D.P. Yogam Golden Jubilee Souvenir*.

taken for granted. Attempts had been made to canvass public opinion both for and against the idea. It was then that the statement of Lord Lothian regarding Princes and Paramountcy appeared. In it he said:

"Paramountcy certainly cannot be interpreted to mean that Great Britain has the duty of supporting a ruler in denying to his own subjects the very rights which have been established by the authority of Parliament throughout British India".³⁹

This statement was at once inspiring and encouraging as far as the Indian States' people were concerned, although Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer condemned it as filth for which no legislature would be responsible.⁴⁰ Yet the statement was a significant announcement because one great apprehension entertained by the people of the State that the British Government would abrogate the advances proposed in respect of Responsible Government, had been removed.

In consequence the Sri Mulam Assembly which had been an important forum for focusing popular demand, resounded with the cry for Responsible Government. On February 2, 1938 T. M. Varghese tabled an adjournment motion to discuss the urgent need for immediate steps being taken by the Government for the establishment of Responsible Government in the State.⁴¹ It is significant to note that the Responsible Government asked for was one under the aegis of the Maharaja. The Dewan-President who made a long statement on the occasion suggested only one difficulty; he seemed to fancy that unlimited autocracy for the State was implicit in the treaty relations between the Paramount Power and the State. He conveyed the idea that the grant of Responsible Government was incompatible with the existing treaty relations. Commenting on this *The Hindu* said:

"It is unthinkable that, if any State should put forward proposals conceived in a liberal spirit for conferring substantial power on the people, the Paramount Power will oppose it; it

39. *The Madras Mail*, January 24, 1938.

40. *Sri Mulam Assembly Proceedings*, XI, 807.

41. *Ibid*, XI, 804.

ought on the contrary to applaud and actively assist such a move, and the repeated exhortations to the Princes by the Viceroy and others in authority to move with the times, go to confirm the belief that they will not fail in this elementary duty. It will therefore not do for the Governments of the States to put forward their obligations to the Paramount Power as an excuse for not satisfying the legitimate demand of the people for a full and effective voice in the administration."⁴²

All leading newspapers of the time strongly pleaded for the introduction of Responsible Government since there was strong popular demand for it. And further, the contentions of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer were irreparably damaged when Earl Winterton made a policy statement, by way of answer to the query put by Captain Heilgers, in the House of Commons. It runs as follows:

"The consent of the Paramount Power has not been required before such advances have been approved by the various Princes, nor so far as I am aware, has it been sought in such matters. The Paramount Power would, in ordinary circumstances, confine itself to tendering advice when consulted."⁴³

This unambiguous statement of Earl Winterton was universally welcomed in all the Indian States. It was hailed as "the States Peoples' Magna Carta."⁴⁴ Thus the supposed impediment to constitutional progress proved to be a fiction and that the fact was that, it solely rested within the discretion of the ruler. The Travancore State Congress therefore, emphatically appealed to the Government to take immediate steps for the grant of Responsible Government in the State.⁴⁵ The *Hindu* whole-heartedly welcomed the Winterton declaration and advised the Indian rulers that they should in the light of this statement have no further hesitation in pushing through with constitutional reforms, calculated to satisfy

42. *The Hindu*, February 4, 1938.

43. *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 1937-38, Vol. 332, February 21, 1938, p. 6.

44. *The Madras Mail* February 23, 1938.

45. *Travancore Today—Her struggle for freedom* (The Working Committee of the Travancore State Congress) Appendices, Part I, No. 12, p. 44.

the legitimate ambition of their people.⁴⁶ *The Indian Express* also exhorted the Dewan to avail himself of the opportunity presented by the statement of Winterton.⁴⁷ Neither the learned exposition of Paramountcy relation of Indian States by Butler Committee, nor the unambiguous elucidation of it by Lord Lothian, nor the categorical statement of Earl Winterton produced any noticeable effect on the adamant attitude of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer towards the question of Responsible Government. He was implacable and continued to be so till his ignominious retreat from the State in 1947.

It became now clear that the Government themselves would be the greatest obstacle in the way, and that it would not so much as even tolerate a movement, however peaceful and constitutional it might be, for the establishment of Responsible Government in the State. Their open hostility expressed itself in several ways. No sooner had the State Congress come into being than its meetings were banned and its members persecuted. The honour of being the first victim of the fury of the Dewan went to A. Narayana Pillai, who had played the key role in the formation of the Travancore State Congress.

An article published by him under the caption 'The Problem of representation in the Public Service and Nairs', furnished the ostensible ground for launching a prosecution against him for sedition and creation of communal hatred.⁴⁸ A show-cause notice was served on him on January 28, 1938.⁴⁹ Finding that A. Narayana Pillai was disposed neither to apologise nor was he in a mood to withdraw the article he had written, the Government gave orders for his prosecution.⁵⁰ He was arrested on February 22 and denying all chances of a fair trial, he was in the end convicted. What is surprising is that the court did not even permit⁵¹ K. F. Nariman to appear for the accused on the flimsy ground that he had been convicted in Bombay for activities directed against the State, and

46. *The Hindu*, February 23, 1938.

47. *The Indian Express*, February 28, 1938.

48. *Malayala Rajyam*, January 8, 1938.

49. File No. 28/38/CS dated January 28, 1938, Kerala Government Secretariat, Trivandrum.

50. Order No. 29/38/CS dated February 21, 1938, Ibid;

51. Proceedings of the Sessions Court of Trivandrum, File S.C. No. 33 of April 1, 1938.

that the real aim in inviting K. F. Nariman to appear for the accused was to create sensation and unrest in the State. The force of public opinion in respect of this trial was fully manifested in the comments that appeared in the nationalist newspapers outside the State⁵² which joined in condemning the attitude of the Government.

As the declared object of the State Congress was the attainment of Responsible Government on the basis of adult franchise (surely under the aegis of the Maharaja) Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer who wanted to cling to power, initiated a policy of unprecedented repression. To prevent all propaganda meetings of the State Congress the promulgation of prohibitory orders⁵³ or the forcible dispersal of meetings was the strategy resorted to by the Government. Manhandling of active Congress leaders one by one with the help of police agents and vagrants was also tried.⁵⁴ The honour, person and property of Congress sympathisers were rudely threatened by those who were duty-bound to protect them. This policy of repression however, did not send the workers of the Congress underground. With undaunted spirit they tried to expose the villainy of the Government through the forum of the Sri Mulam Assembly.⁵⁵ The growth of the Government found good expression in the later policy of revenge and personal vendetta. It was in this connection that M. R. Madhava Varier, the editor of *Malayali* and Thomas Mathew Muthalali, the editor of *Malabar Advocate* were assaulted under the very nose of the authorities, and that too in open day-light.⁵⁶ Miss Annie Mascarene a member of the Working Committee of the Travancore State Congress, was the next target of attack. She was robbed, and assaulted.⁵⁷ K. P. Nilakanta Pillai the Joint Secretary of the State Congress, was mercilessly beaten.⁵⁸ These incidents evoked widespread public indignation not only in the State, but also outside. The Government's

52. *The Free Press Journal*, April 3, 1938, and *The Bombay Chronicle*, April 4, 1938.

53. *Travancore Today*, pp. 133-143.

54. *Ibid*, pp. 170-86, 195.

55. *Sri Mulam Assembly Proceedings*, XII, 70; 78-9; 163-4; and 284.

56. *Ibid*, XI, 519.

57. Vide relevant papers (*Travancore Today*, pp. 170-86).

58. *Ibid*, p. 195.

lukewarm policy was a sure indication of their complicity in the above incidents. Thus the problem really confronted by the State Congress then was whether citizens were free to exercise their fundamental civic rights in the teeth of organized tyranny of hirelings of the Government.

With grim determination and unflinching courage the State Congress carried on its propaganda in and outside the State. To educate public opinion in Madras many meetings were arranged to be held there also.⁵⁹ And these produced very lasting effect so far as they helped to create an all India opinion about the true condition of affairs in the State. The fear entertained by many including Dr. Pattabhi Sitharamayya that the State Congress still had something like a communal axe to grind, proved to be quite unwarranted.⁶⁰ After having thus prepared the background, the Working Committee of the Travancore State Congress submitted the historic Memorial to the Maharaja on May 30, 1938. It will bear out fully the force behind the demand for Responsible Government. The spirit of moderation that vibrates through every word in which it was couched will surely justify the cause of the people of Travancore, particularly in the context of the great strides that had been made already in British India.

The very first proposition, with which the memorial is prefaced, was a specimen of moderation. It runs thus:

"The powers now exercised by the Dewan may be vested in a cabinet of ministers responsible to the Legislature and subject to the powers and prerogatives of His Highness the Maharaja."⁶¹

There is indeed no trace of any villainy or sabotage either implied or expressed. What the people asked for was only a legitimate share in the government of their State. To substitute an irresponsible Dewan with a Cabinet responsible to the legislature, was the most modest of all modest aspirations. Denial of the same in the modern context would end in a *coup d'etat*. Further

59. *Travancore Today, Her struggle for freedom Appendices*, pp. 63-88.

60. *Ibid*, Statement of A. K. Pillai, on May 6, 1938, pp. 84-86.

61. *Ibid*, The Memorial, Demand 1.

the demand was far from being rash as it adumbrated a scheme of Responsible Government within the frame-work of the powers and prerogatives of the Maharaja.

Again the reform of the legislature proposed through the Memorial was admittedly so modest and fitting to a T, to democratic ethics, that it hardly merited criticism and condemnation even at the hands of the Dewan. The position will become clear from a perusal of the proviso which runs as follows:

"The Legislature may be reformed and franchise extended to all adults with adequate safeguards for the protection of minority interests and the system of nominating members to the Legislature may be abolished and the Presidents of the Legislative Chambers be allowed to be elected by the members thereof."⁶²

Adult franchise was nothing new, for it had been already introduced in British India. The system of nomination which had come to stay in Travancore was indeed opposed to all canons of true representation. Apart from the reform of franchise, the Congress demanded that the Presidents of the Legislatures should be persons responsible to the House over which they preside and, therefore, headship of the Dewan was incompatible with democratic traditions.

The declaration of fundamental rights, which formed the third demand,⁶³ was only a reflection of the blessings of Responsible Government. Without freedom of speech and association human personality will tend to get stunted. It is through the acid test of free criticism that public opinion has to get itself crystallised.

The most revolutionary of all was the economic right which it sought to realize. "A living wage and reasonable conditions of work" are the *sine qua non* of any healthy society. That the State Congress recognised the value of economic freedom and gave equal stress to it as a political right indicates par excellence the maturity of political wisdom it had imbibed.

The judiciary had been subservient to the executive in Travancore, ever since the assumption of the Dewanship by Sir C. P.

62. *Ibid.*, The Memorial, Demand 2.

63. *Loc. cit.*

Ramaswami Iyer, and this was certainly detrimental to individual liberty. The papers⁶⁴ connected with the sedition case of A. Narayana Pillai will amply bear out this truth. This was the main count which induced the State Congress to incorporate the provision "to restore and ensure" the independence of the judiciary, in the Memorial.

The crystallisation of public opinion in favour of Responsible Government was witnessed through the above Memorial. The Congress therefore prayed that the present system must be scrapped so as to provide for Responsible Government to the people lest there should be open agitation.

The Government of Travancore decided to suppress the threatened agitation with a strong hand. The State Congress and the Youth League another powerful political weapon of the youth, were declared unlawful organisations. Under these circumstances the State Congress decided to launch a Civil Disobedience Movement with effect from August 26, 1938. The immediate reaction of the Government was far from being helpful and therefore it took rigorous action against the leaders of the State Congress, by promulgating the Criminal Law Amendment Act drawn upon the lines of the parallel British Indian Act of 1932.⁶⁵ Most of the popular leaders were informed of this new Regulation.⁶⁶ Undeterred by the threat of the Government the State Congress organised protest meetings far and wide.⁶⁷ In a great frenzy of despair the Government liquidated the National Quilon Bank,⁶⁸ closed down the University College,⁶⁹ and fired at peaceful processions in Neyyatinkara,⁷⁰ Puthupally and Quilon. Having provided with the first martyr, the victim of the Neyyatinkara firing,

64. *Ibid*; Appendices Part II, pp. 92-132.

65. Sreedhara Menon. A. *Kerala District Gazetteers, Trivandrum*, p. 236.

66. *Kerala Dwani*, July 13, 1933 (Article by E. M. Koor).

67. *Weekly Secret Bulletin*, Vol. V, No. 35, August 25, 1938; p. 3.

68. *Ibid*; Vol. V, No. 38, September 17, 1938, p. 5. (The Government suspected that the Bank was directly involved in the scheme of agitation).

69. *Ibid*; Vol. V, No. 35, August 25, 1938, p. 4. (The Students of the College hooted at the Maharaja).

70. *Ibid*; Vol. V, No. 35, August 27, 1938, p. 5.

the cause flourished.⁷¹ And the Dewan only hardened his heart while the Congress made headway in its programme of Civil Disobedience. To intensify the agitation, the Action Council decided to organise a mass demonstration under Accamma Cherian, the twelfth President of the State Congress in November 1938, during the birthday celebrations of the Maharaja. Actually every thing was set, when, as a tactical move the Government removed the ban on the Congress and released all political prisoners. Nevertheless the procession came and it was barricaded near the palace. Then it moved to Thampanur where it demonstrated a show of victory. Intoxicated with the initial triumph the people sang the chorus of independence. This was indeed a real victory for the popular cause.

The Dewan at his wits' end indulged in diatribes against the State Congress describing it as a communal organ having little popular support for it. He also did not hesitate to say that the State Congress was an illegitimate offspring, blood not of the same blood and bone, not of the same bone, of the Indian National Congress. In order to confound the people, a counter organisation with the label of 'Travancore National Congress' was brought into being by opportunists, loyalists and caste Hindus. No doubt it had originated from the fertile brain of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer. But with all blessings of men in authority, it died a natural death all too soon.

The political atmosphere was becoming tense day by day. The unconditional withdrawal of the Memorial was insisted upon by the Dewan before any talk for reconciliation. To enlighten Gandhiji about the real political situation in Travancore a deputation consisting of A. Thanu Pillai and T. M. Varghese waited upon him.⁷² Gandhiji pleaded for the withdrawal of the Memorial.⁷³ In the State Congress itself there was strong difference of opinion regarding the withdrawal of the Memorial. Under some pretext or other, the leaders of the Congress were shut up in jail. Taking into account the peculiar situation prevailing, the Working Committee decided to withdraw the Memorial. The extremists who

71. George Woodcock, *Kerala (A portrait of the Malabar Coast)*, p. 239.

72. *Weekly Secret Bulletin*, Vol. V, No. 43, October 22, 1938, p. 2.

73. *Ibid*; Vol. V. No. 51, p. 2.

hardly subscribed to the decision of the Working Committee, left the Congress and joined the Youth League.⁷⁴ "Of its ranks were later to emerge the leaders of the Communist Party and the various Socialist Parties in Southern Kerala."⁷⁵

With the commencement of the Second World War the arms of the Government were further strengthened. Under camouflage of emergency even the very common civic rights were denied.⁷⁶ The Press was gagged.⁷⁷ The attitude of the All-India Congress Organisation was far from being encouraging because of its passive approach to the States' problem. However, with the 'Quit India Agitation' of August 1942, the State Congress also threw in their lot with the movement. But the extremists who left the camp of the Congress declared themselves to be communists.⁷⁸ They condemned the agitation of the Congress⁷⁹ and for this reason the Quit India Agitation did not gather much momentum in Travancore. Students, however organised strikes and demonstrations as compensation for this. The general elections of 1944 were conducted peacefully. But the Government kept the leaders at arms' distance by disqualifying their nominations for political conviction.⁸⁰ In spite of its being a minority, the State Congress put up a brave fight against the Dictator whose intelligent manoeuvring of the political situation was more than counter-balanced by its selfless devotion to the cause of Responsible Government.

The achievement of Responsible Government in Travancore came as the dramatic climax of a series of sensational developments that took place within and without Travancore in the year 1946-47. The British Government declared their intention of quitting India. Commenting on the above, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer stated that with the lapse of paramountcy, supreme power would revert to the rulers of States.⁸¹ Technically this sounded plausible. But judged

74. *loc cit.*

75. George Woodcock, *Op. cit.* p. 239.

76. Gandhi, M. K. *The Indian States Problem*, pp. 382-85.

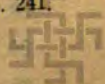
77. *Ibid*; p. 660.

78. George Woodcock, *op. cit.* p. 246.

79. Sreedhara Menon. A., *Kerala District Gazetteers* (Trivandrum), p. 241.

80. Gandhi, M. K. *The Indian States' Problem*. p. 453.

81. *Travancore Information and Listener*, January 1947, p. 9.



from the agitation of the Joint Political Congress and the State Congress the Dewan should have read between the lines of Travancore history and understood the pressure of the popular demand for Responsible Government. The Punnapra-Vayalar struggle, a move against the Dewan for the achievement of Responsible Government, though crushed mercilessly, formed an affair not wholly unconnected with the general tone of political life.⁸² Thus much water had flowed under the bridge and the people of the State were determined to put an end to the rule of the Dewan, which he was trying with frantic tenacity to perpetuate under camouflage of subtle legal quibbles.

In the history of the struggle for Responsible Government, the subsequent developments left a deep mark. In March 1947, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer made the vital disclosure that Travancore chose to remain a free State with the lapse of paramountcy. The Dewan unequivocally asserted that nothing short of an open war would deter Travancore from becoming so. And the whole propaganda machine of the State was geared to this end. The people on their part were bent upon winning their independence. Travancore was again in the vortex of a political struggle and the Government employed all in their power to meet the situation. One of the highlights of the struggle was the firing at Pettah, Trivandrum, in which three persons were killed.⁸³ This in fact proved to be the last straw. The infuriated public were ready for any act of terrorism. A few days after the above firing, on July 25, 1947, an unsuccessful attempt was made on Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer's life. The last scene closed with the laying down of the Dewanship by him on August, 19, 1948.⁸⁴ This paved the way for Responsible Government in Travancore, the reward of the past sufferings of the people.

82. See the biased version of the affair given by Sri E. M. Kovoov in a biographical sketch of T. M. Varghese p. 146. (The conclusion drawn above is on the basis of the sympathetic treatment extended to prisoners and convicts connected with the affair, immediately after the establishment of Responsible Government).

83. *Travancore Information and Listener*, April 1947, p. 40.

84. Sreedhara Menon, A., *A Survey of Kerala History*, p. 361.

85. *Travancore Gazette Extraordinary*, August 19, 1949.

Bristol and the Death of Rammohun Roy

BY

B. M. SANKHDHER

"He became worse every few minutes; his breathing more rattling and impeded; his pulse imperceptible. He moved about his right arm constantly and his left arm a little, a few hours before his death. It was a beautiful moonlight night; on one side of the window, as Mr. Hare, Miss Kiddell and I looked out of it, was the calm rural midnight scene; on the other, this extraordinary man dying. I shall never forget the moment. Miss Hare, now hopeless and overcome, could not summon courage to hang over the dying Rajah, as she did while soothing or feeding him ere hope had left her, and remained sobbing in the chair near; the young Rajah (Rammohun Roy's son, Raja Ram) was generally holding his hand ... At half-past two, Mr. Hare came into room and told me it was all over."¹

This is how Dr. Estlin, the attending physician described the passing away of Rammohun Roy at Bristol on September 27, 1833. The news of his death spread like wild fire. He was described as one of the most extraordinary men of his age and his death was mourned as a "public calamity".² The whole Bristol was in tears. The *Bristol Mercury*, one of the leading newspapers of Bristol, founded by William Henry Somerton, wrote under the caption: "Death of Rammohun Roy" on September, 28, 1833: "It is with infinite regret that we are compelled to announce the death of this highly intelligent and gifted individual, who expired yesterday morning at Stapleton Grove near this city, at which place he was on a visit ... Future generations in India will rank his name among those of the greatest benefactors to that country; and it speaks much in his praise that while his religion, though somewhat a matter of doubt, was supposed to assimilate the doctrine of Unitarianism, yet Rammohun Roy had gained the

1. Mary Carpenter, *The Last Days in England of Rajah Rammohun Roy*, 1866. The work provides information about the persons present at the time of Rammohun Roy's death.

2. *The Times*, London, September 30, 1833;
The Englishman, Calcutta, February, 1834.



respect and goodwill of the most inveterate antagonists of those doctrines. Rammohun Roy was a reformer in a land where the spirit of conservatism holds a diabolic sway—yet more than that, he was a reformer in religion . . . A great man and a good man has died with him.”³

The *Bristol Mercury* was not alone in lamenting the death of this Indian saint and reformer, but every newspaper and periodical, whether liberal or conservative, both in Bristol and outside, echoed the same sentiments and paid their highest tributes to the memory of Rammohun Roy. Felix Farley’s *Bristol Journal*, published the news of Rammohun Roy’s death on September 28, 1833 and wrote: “This learned Indian, who some years ago abjured the Brahminical for the Christian religion, died yesterday at Stapleton, near this city, where he was on a visit. We understand, he professed the Unitarian creed.”⁴ On October 5, 1833, this conservative journal, owned and conducted by James Martin, published a long biographical sketch of Rammohun Roy, and made the following announcement regarding a condolence meeting at Lewin’s Mead Chapel in Bristol: “We are requested to state that a discourse will be delivered in Lewin’s Mead Chapel, tomorrow evening, in relation to the death of Raja Rammohun Roy. The service begins at six o’clock.”⁵

On October 26, 1833, the *Bristol Mercury*, published a long poem: “On the Interment of the Rajah Rammohun Roy at Stapleton Grove on Friday, the 18th October, 1833”. It described the great accomplishments of Rammohun Roy, who tried throughout his life to awaken his ‘nation sat in darkness’⁶ of prejudice, ignorance and superstition. The *Bristol Mercury*, however, did not mourn the death of this enlightened individual without a ray of optimism. It remarked:

The Angel of the Lord hath called away
His faithful servant, at the evening hour,
While glowing tints still gild the western sky.
Yet though around our hearts dark sorrow lour,
And tears of sad regret must dim the eye,
We mourn not without hope. Thy race is run

3. *The Bristol Mercury*, Bristol, September 28, 1833.

4. Felix Farley’s *Bristol Journal*, Bristol, September 28, 1833.

5. *Ibid*, October 5, 1833.

6. *The Bristol Mercury*, Bristol, October 26, 1833.



Enter thy rest! Servant of God—"Well done."⁷
 William Henry Somerton's liberal journal further wrote:
 Thou art gone from us but thy memory dear
 To all that knew thee yet as with us-ne'er are riven
 The bands of Christian love!—Thy mortal frame
 With us is laid in holy silent rest:
 Thy spirit is immortal, and thy name
 Shall by thy countrymen be ever blest
 E'en from the tomb thy words with power shall rize,
 Shall touch their breasts, and bear them to the skies.⁸

At the Bristol Institution a portrait of Rammohun Roy⁹ was displayed so that people could pay their homage to the departed Indian leader. In the articles which were published in the Bristol press on this occasion, Rammohun Roy was portayed as a most handsome man, six feet high, with well proportioned limbs, lofty forehead, dark and animate eyes, finely curved nose, and large and manly features.¹⁰ On November 14, 1833, the *Bristol Gazette* published a short poem written by Jacques entitled: "Lines suggested on beholding the portrait of the late Raja Rammohun Roy". The poet said:

"I stand before thy painted shade
 And yield thee reverence—'tis thy due,
 Nor may the humblest gift degrade
 The giver, if the motive's true;
 A tear is not all—vainly shed
 Dropt to the memory of the dead.
 Star of the East! whose radiant beam
 Shone even to the utmost West,
 Thy worth demands a loftier theme
 Than this, to thy lov'd name address—
 But hearts that boast one spark divine
 Will yield thee homage—this is mine."¹¹

The *Bristol Mirror*, a conservative journal conducted by John Taylor, under the title "Rammohun Roy" described in October 1833 the degeneration of India during the early nineteenth century and the role played by Rammohun Roy to uplift his coun-

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

9. Made by J. Briggs.

10. *The Bristol Gazette*, Bristol, October 3, 1833.

11. *Ibid.*, November 14, 1833. ..

trymen. According to this newspaper, during this stage of time, people in India had sunk below the level of human beings. They had no shame or realisation of this degradation. On October 19, 1833, the *Bristol Mirror* remarked:

The brightest sun, the darkest shade
And India rich is India poor,
Alas, what her boundless trade,
And what the crowns she wears or wore?
There is a degradation there,
The mind doth chains of bondage wear.
"Twas thine to see—to feel the shame—
Alas, what millions are blind,
Insensible they bear the name,
But man is not their grade or kind.
Dark, vicious, cruel, mean and base,
A groveling, vile and abject race."¹²

Thus the death of Rammohun Roy at Bristol drew the attention of the people not only towards the splendid accomplishments of this "Bright, serene, and unequalled Star"¹³ as the Bristol press described Rammohun Roy, but also towards the miserable degradation of the Indian people. And much before the death of Rammohun Roy cast a shadow of gloom in his motherland, for the news of his death reached India in the beginning of 1834, the people of Bristol had shed countless tears in the memory of this extraordinary individual. Rammohun Roy had risen above the barriers of caste, creed, country and clime, and a realisation of this fact made the people of Bristol feel a sense of personal bereavement. On October 19, 1833, the *Bristol Mirror*, gave expression to the mental agony of the people and their highest regards for Rammohun Roy, when it remarked:

And thou art set-set in the West—
So do the Stars of Heaven decline,
And hallowed be the peaceful rest,
Of one who did so brightly shine,
If worth and talent claim a tear
Rammohun Roy! thou hast it here."¹⁴

12. *The Bristol Mirror*, Bristol, October 19, 1833.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*

The Babbar Akali Movement

BY

R. K. PERTI

"Swaraj is the remedy to all grievances" said Mahatma Gandhi and the attainment of this goal was the object of the Babbar Akalis—a group of Sikh revolutionaries who called themselves lion and had imitated the Akali organisation to enlist the sympathy of the people and had adopted the dress of the Akalis partly with the same object and partly as an effective guise. The Babbar Akalis had little genuine interest in the religious side of the Akali movement and had more in common with the Akali conspiracy of 1921, which worked for the murder of officials and prominent loyalists. Having come into existence in 1920, the Akali Dal and the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee rallied round them a great following in the *Doab*, i.e., the land between the Sutlej and the Beas rivers and launched a campaign of reforming the *Gurdwaras* and purifying the Sikh rituals. The mahants and the priests, who then controlled the *Gurdwaras*, had fallen from the path of righteousness and were utilising the funds of the *Gurdwaras* for promoting licentiousness and freeing of these places of worship was their first object. Peaceful and constitutional agitation was consequently launched and Sikhs from the *Doab* were recruited in large numbers.

But official apathy to this cause and the negative attitude of the bureaucracy was least desired. The government, taking it to be largely a question of law and order, tried to meet the situation through wholesale repression and systematic persecution. Prosecutions for wearing *kirpans* or swords beyond a certain length and taking over of the keys of the *Toshakhana* of the Golden Temple, Amritsar were the measures initially taken to check the enthusiasm of the Sikhs. Later the Seditious Meetings Act was used vigorously for scuttling any remonstrance. 'The police were the masters of the day and they had a jolly time', wrote a leader. But the last straw that broke the camel's back was the police and mili-

tary excesses on the peaceful and non-violent *jatha* or procession at the 'Guru Ka Bagh'.

Non-violence and cowardice displayed at the 'Guru Ka Bagh', however, created great dissatisfaction amongst the Sikhs of the *Doab*, who still cherished the memories of their courage and bravery. They looked at constitutional agitation with contempt and ridicule and believed that deliverance from this situation could not be achieved through peaceful and legal means. Two *jathas* of strongmen, with an appeal to the sword and a promise for chivalry were, consequently, organised by Master Mota Singh and Karam Singh in the *Doab* in the summer of 1922. Ground for such revolutionary activity had already been prepared in this area by the immigrants, who had returned from Canada in the hope of staging a revolt against the British Government. Though their move made in 1915 had failed, yet their enthusiasm had not languished. They had been receiving large sums of money from their compatriots in the United States and Canada for revolutionary propaganda and purchase of arms.

Master Mota Singh of Patara in the Jullundhur district and Karam Singh of Daulatpur in the Hoshiarpur district were the prominent members of the Akali Conspiracy of 1921. Both of them believed in violence and wanted to make the government immovable by a campaign of murder and terrorism. The organisation of the *jatha* in the Jullundhur district had hardly made any headway when Mota Singh was arrested in June 1922 and the work had fallen on Kishan Singh, a trusted lieutenant of the 'Master'. Kishan Singh was a pensioned Havildar of 2/35th Sikhs from Baring in the Jullundhur district. The two *jathas* worked independently of each other until August 1922 when Kishan Singh and Karam Singh met each other and decided on the merger of the two *jathas*. The leader of this *jatha* was named as *Gargaj* or one who roars and thunders and the minor luminaries were honoured as *Chakravartis*, while its object was set at stirring up the peasantry and spreading disaffection and hatred against the British Raj. Once the people had been worked up and enough weapons had been procured, it was planned that the people would be asked to revolt.

Appeal to the religious feelings of the Sikhs was made at *Diwans*—meetings ostensibly religious in character, where poems

were recited and speeches calling the government of the day as tyrannical and oppressive were delivered. At these meetings people were encouraged to wear *khaddar*—coarse and hand-spun cloth and not to co-operate with the government generally. They were also asked not to pay land revenue. Memories of past historical events and prowess of the Sikh leaders were recalled and endeavours were made to develop and create a strong antipathy for the British Raj. In reminding the Sikhs of their former sovereignty over the Punjab efforts were made to tamper with the loyalty of which they had given ample proof for over 50 years. Steady propaganda of this nature was sure to influence the Sikhs into a belief that their loyalty had been misplaced and that the time had come to draw the sword against the enemies of the Khalsa and reestablish Sikh rule in the Punjab.

The 'Babbar Akali Doaba', a leaflet in the Gurumkhi script, and an organ of the Babbar Akalis was no less instrumental in spreading their creed. 15 issues of this leaflet appeared between 20 August 1922 and 21 May 1923 and was printed on 'Elam's' duplicator, at first called the *Safri* or 'travelling' press and later the '*Odarn*' or the flying press, which was purchased in Lahore. It was distributed free of charge but its readers were urged to pass on these issues amongst as large a number of people as possible. All issues, except one, had at the beginning a couplet, which when translated meant that only he who fights and dies for his faith would be considered a hero. First two issues of this leaflet were brought out by Karam Singh of Daulatpur and Ude Singh but as they were not to the liking of Kishan Singh, the responsibility for bringing out the later issues devolved on the latter, though Karam Singh of Daulatpur continued to be the editor in name. After the arrest of Kishan Singh, the leaflet was brought out by other members of the *jatha*. The language of the leaflet was coarse and such as would appeal to the masses. It used curious phrases. The word '*Kiba*' was written as '*Bika*' and '*Pindari*' as '*Dopri*'. If 'Great hospital' stood for a special place at Krishnanpura in Hoshiarpur, *Baja* denoted the cyclostyling machine. Each issue was highly seditious, and inflammatory in tone, tending to bring both the Government and the Europeans into contempt by referring to them in terms of foul abuse and vituperations. Hindus, Sikhs and Moham-medans were advised to unite and organise insurrection, wield the dagger, behead the tyrants, "bury the police stations; plunder the

treasuries, place gun powder below the railway lines, commit raids on the magazines, steal arms and sing songs of liberty".¹ Soldiers from the armed forces were also invited to join and plunder the magazines. Loyalists were referred to as *Jholichucks* or toadies, who were running about seeking rewards and Babbar was invited to throw these in their faces. Non-violence, the creed of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, was condemned as being contrary to the Sikh temperament, while resort to arms was advocated. 'The Babbar is called to concoct a hot drink, which will counteract the cooling mixture of non-violence' and which might assist the establishment of free government.²

These efforts were quite successful to influence the minds of the Sikhs of the *Doab* generally. Recruits from amongst these people, armed forces and refugees from justice were sought and arms and ammunition were purchased or collected from diverse sources within India and across the border. People from far off countries as China, Malaya, and America were urged to join the ranks of the Babbar 'for he is embarking on a struggle beyond his capacity and difficult to win'. The strategy of the Babbars was to paralyse the official machinery by persuading the *zaildars*, *Lambardars*, *Thanadars* to stand aloof, failing which they would be socially boycotted. Finally they were to be intimidated and disgraced and for this purpose razors for chopping off the nose and ears of the *jholichucks* were purchased in Jullundhur Cantonment. There was no plan to murder the *jholichucks* until November 1922, when the government started giving a serious thought to this problem and offered heavy rewards for the arrest of Kishan Singh and other leading Babbar Akalis.

It was then the question of open confrontation and the Babbar Akalis decided on reforming or murdering the loyalists. The Babbars were asked to take a vow that (1) "Every member shall have to murder a *jholichuck*, even if he were his father; (2) every member shall have to fight against enemy, though he may be alone; (3) a member betraying or deserting the *jatha*, turning an

1. Babbar Akali Doaba, 23 August 1922, quoted in *The Tribune*, 3 October 1923.

2. Home—Political, 1926, No. 245 K.W.

approver after arrest or working as a C.I.D. agent will be shot dead and his house will be burnt with petrol.”³

The campaign to intimidate and murder the officials and supporters of the government launched on 22 December 1922 terrified the people of the Doab to an extent that the former threatened to resign from their jobs. None would come forward to rescue the victims, lest the rage of the Babbars might fall on him. They spoke in guarded whispers and many carried pistols and revolvers and some even engaged body-guards. The government labouring under the threat of a serious menace to public safety resorted to indiscriminate arrests of people on very flimsy grounds. Systematic and simultaneous raids in the Jullundhur and Hoshiarpur districts and the Kapurthala state, where Khan Bahadur Abdul Hamid placed the entire resources of the state at the disposal of the government and gave every possible assistance, resulted in the arrest of 71 persons in 39 villages on 22 April 1923, followed by 21 other members of the *jatha*. Arrest of Kishan Singh and a few other die-hards along with a host of sympathisers gave a first serious blow to this organisation and drove its members to the broken country of the Shiwalik Hills, which run through the centre of the Hoshiarpur district. If it made concealment easy, movement of disciplined troops was difficult in this terrain. Recruitment to the ranks of the Babbars came to a standstill and so were the murders and dacoities committed by them. But their sudden descent from the hills and dastardly murder of the headman and his brother in the village of Kaulgarh in the Hoshiarpur district on 20 May 1923 was sufficient to revive the feeling of panic and insecurity in the countryside.

The Government of Punjab had so far attached no political importance to this movement and had regarded it as a conflict between the criminal elements and the forces of law and order. But now it was essential to give this question a fresh thought. The government felt satisfied when it had persuaded the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee to publicly repudiate the campaign of violence preached by the Babbars. To the *Civil and Military Gazette*, a pro-government English daily, it was an act of ‘amazing

3. Home—Political, 1923, No. 134/11.

audacity', for it had always felt that the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee was secretly connected with the activities of the Babbars. But the government was quite nervous of its position when it was given out that the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee had taken this stand at the instance of the government. This feeling of satisfaction soon led to utter dismay when the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee proceeded to suggest that the sufferings of the people had led certain 'sincere but misguided souls' to take to those methods⁴ and this expression of sympathy could perhaps be attributed to the fear of the Babbar Akalis from which the Sikh leaders suffered.

The Government of Punjab, on its own part, adopted special measures for containing and suppressing this movement. A large number of police constables was recruited and to secure public support against those who harboured or concealed the Babbars, the Babbar Akali Jatha was declared as an unlawful organisation. Further, a considerable body of troops was stationed in the Doab to track down the Babbars from the adjoining hills and assistance of aeroplanes was sought to make bi-weekly flights for scattering propaganda leaflets. Punitive Police Post Tax was levied and disciplinary action was taken against civil and military pensioners for harbouring or sympathising the Babbars. These measures of collective punishment, though justified on grounds of expediency, could hardly be vindicated as the people of the Doab were not engaged in rioting or seditious propaganda and, they could hardly be appreciated as the government had not declared a general state of disorder or widespread lawlessness as prevailing amongst the people. Nevertheless, they were capable of containing the movement. Arrest of Santa Singh in June 1923 and of Waryam Singh in the Lyallpur district in next January, however, brought this movement to a close, which had at one time been planned to engulf the whole of the Punjab and establish contacts with the Bolsheviks across the border and procure arms and ammunition for spreading it throughout India.

The action of the local officials, as also the method of police investigation, was adversely commented upon in the Sikh and the

nationalist press,⁵ which was stifled by the rigorous enforcement of the Press Laws. Allegations of widespread police oppression and of indiscriminate arrests were made. Dr. Satya Pal, writing to the *Bande Matram*, an Urdu daily, observed that 'a powerful wave of rigour and repression that is now passing over the Jullundhur and Hoshiarpur Districts to crush the Babbar Akalis has thrown into shade even the memories of the days of martial law... The authorities should put a speedy end to the doings of the Imperial police.'⁶ Similar criticism of handling the situation appeared in the *Loyal Gazette* and the *Gurdwara*, Urdu bi-weeklies, of 27 and 30 May, 1923, while the *Desh Sewak*, a Gurmukhi weekly, of 1 June warned the government against its repressive policy, for it could still further prejudice the people against the government. It also advised the bureaucracy 'to act with patience and courage: its purpose will not be served by the narrow-mindedness it is displaying.' It was further asserted that under the cloak of restoring law and order the bureaucracy was intentionally trying to destroy the Akalis and break the Sikh community, but in doing so it was only undermining its own foundations.⁷ The *Akhbar-i-Am* representing a different viewpoint, however, supported the government and expressed surprise at those who characterised the measures adopted by the government as repressive, for the police was committing no illegal acts and absolutely no repression had been practised on innocent people. To it "If they were not to arrest suspicious persons, they could never proceed with their investigations".⁸

Many an association like the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee and the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee appointed separate committees of enquiry and T.A.K. Sherwani of Aligarh planned a visit to Jullundhur to discuss the question of Police atrocities with the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. But the local officials looked at such committees of enquiry with much suspicion and believed that instead of these being a source

5. Home—Political, 1924, No. 15/11; *The Gurdwara*, *Muslim Outlook*, *Bande Matram*, *The Tribune* of 2, 5, 7 May and 9 June 1923.

6. *Bande Matram*, 24 May 1923.

7. *Desh Sewak*, 1 June, 1923.

8. *Akhbar-i-Am*, 7 July 1923.



of help in restoring law and order, they would inflame the passions of the people. They wished to check the attempts of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee—the most formidable body—by resorting to the Seditious Meetings Act. The Government of Punjab, however, favoured its application only as a last resort, as it could have given political complexion to this issue. The Government of India supporting it commented that it should not be used “unless the state of affairs materially deteriorates.... The use of Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code has the advantage of enabling the issue to be restricted to pure considerations of law and order and is in this respect preferable so long as it continues to be effective for the purpose immediately in view.”⁹

Despite improvement in the political situation in the Doab, the arrest of the members of the committees of enquiry into the sufferings of peaceful and non-violent Sikhs on 12 September, 1923 invited condemnation from the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee as it was a breach of faith and absolute disregard of the most ordinary canons of honesty and fairplay.¹⁰ Doubts were also expressed as to the sincerity of the government in achieving its objects squarely. *The Bande Matram* of 7 June enquired: “Why does the government fear an enquiry and what harm does it suffer thereby? It is not only unjust but also inexpedient to stop such an enquiry.” But what was even still more grave was the procedure of conducting the trial. Holding it outside the District and the Division was taken as an attempt by the government to discourage the defence counsel to produce its witnesses freely, which was now feasible only at exorbitant cost. Further conducting it in jail and that too in camera, where representatives of the Press were excluded from reporting these proceedings freely was critically commented upon. Such an attempt to muzzle the Press was reminiscent of the Middle Ages and it could never inspire public confidence. “It seems that the procedure in these cases is going to be peculiarly novel and unprecedented”, observed *The Nation*. “The cases are ... not going to be tried under any particular emergency law, but will be conducted according to the

9. Government of India to Government of Punjab dated 7 June 1923. Home—Political, 1923, No. 134/11.

10. *The Tribune*, 3 October 1923.

ordinary Criminal Code. If that is the case we fail to understand why the privileges under the law should not be fully extended to the accused. Justice must precede, nay supersede, all considerations of political necessity, if any. In this case particularly the need of justice is greater when it is remembered that the procedure under which arrests were made and evidence was collected was anything but satisfactory."¹¹ The *Khalsa* of 25 August and *Protap* and *Milap* of 20 August were also unanimous in condemning the procedure of this trial. The *Tribune* commented, "Securing the conviction of the accused persons is not the only thing. The Government must also see that the trial is properly and fairly conducted and the public is convinced of the guilt of the persons found guilty."¹² The *Civil and Military Gazette* was also not happy with the official stand, as it would yield ground to the enemies of the government to spread rumours which could be scotched by full publicity alone.¹³ This criticism no doubt led the government to permit bona-fide representatives to witness these trial proceedings but they were debarred from publishing reports without scrutiny by the court. Imposition of this restriction amounted to clamping of censorship of the Press and was objectionable both in principle and in practice. But as far as the course of the trial was concerned, it remained unaffected. It continued until 28 February, 1925 when J. K. Tapp, Additional Sessions Judge, Lahore, delivered his judgement. Even the petitions for mercy to the Government of India were rejected as this movement was taken to be "one of the most serious menace[s] to public safety and only a very strong case was required for interference."¹⁴

The Babbar Akali movement, which started in a big way was thus by now a completely blown out force and its members had been charged and convicted of criminal conspiracy. It had no faith in terrorism as a means of independence but had been resorted to only as an effective method of retaliation and of securing safety for the Babbar Akalis. It had failed because it had little to appeal to the masses. Its approach was only negative in nature, i.e. to

11. *The Nation*, 16 August 1923.

12. *The Tribune*, 18 August 1923.

13. *The Tribune*, 19 August 1923.

14. *Home—Political*, 1926, No. 245.



throw away the British hegemony and had little constructive programme to inspire confidence in the people at large. But any attempt at calling it as a movement confined to dacoits and criminals alone is unjustified. Dacoits like Dhanna Singh, Waryam Singh of Dujja and Banta Singh of Dhamian were no doubt quite active but there were ex-soldiers and others also, who had absolutely clean record to their credit and were not sorry to see the authority of the government flouted and undermined. The Babbar Akalis were mostly Jat Sikhs and got into its fold from districts like Hoshiarpur, Jullundhur, Gurdaspur, Sialkot and Amritsar and the Indian State of Kapurthala, though majority of them were from the *Doab* only—the major reason being that the returned immigrants from Canada had settled there. The flame of freedom was still burning in them and they did not wish to let it extinguish. Its plan of establishing contacts with the Bolsheviks and of collecting arms for staging simultaneous risings fizzled out because of complete dependence on Bachittar Singh. Once he was arrested for wearing a long sword and subsequently sentenced for 2 years, there was none to execute the plan. Then, it had little support from political parties like the Indian National Congress or the Akali Dal, let alone the Muslim League. This movement yielded little positive results yet it succeeded in manifesting dissatisfaction against the British rule and in stirring up the members of the British House of Commons to criticise the Government of Punjab for attaching too little importance to this movement.¹⁵ It, at the same, strengthened the hands of those, who were fighting the government with the weapons of non-cooperation and non-violence. It also warned the government that its repressive measures would not be condoned, though it was a different thing that the government learnt little from their experience.

15. Hansard's *India Debates*, 1922-23, pp. 248-50.

Gandhi and the Asiatic Registration Act

BY

DR. PAUL HOCKINGS

The text published for the first time here is a digest of an interview given to the Rev. D. A. Rees by Mahatma Gandhi in 1908. It was apparently written in Johannesburg by Mr. Rees on the basis of notes he took while talking with Gandhi, and was then submitted to him for corrections, which appear on the manuscript in Gandhi's own hand. The fourteen pages of Mr. Rees' text were then returned to him by Gandhi, accompanied by his letter of transmittal.

In this text the items headed "Q" are Mr. Rees' questions, and those headed "A" Gandhi's responses. I have omitted certain words that Mr. Rees himself deleted as he wrote, have enclosed the words deleted by Gandhi in square brackets, and have italicized Gandhi's additions to the manuscript. The work of each writer is clearly distinguished by his handwriting and ink.

The text is chiefly important for its presentation of factors leading up to Gandhi's jail sentence on January 10, 1908, and for his description of the first assassination attempt on him. The authenticity of the text is assured by the covering letter, signed by M. K. Gandhi. This is dated March 26; and as the text refers to the assault by Mir Alam Khan and other Pathans on February 10, 1908, it must have been written between these two dates.

Much of the discussion concerns the Transvaal's new Asiatic Registration Act (1907), which required that all Asians in the Colony register themselves and supply fingerprints to the government, which would thus know which Asians were lawful residents of the colony. Gandhi refused to comply, and consequently was sentenced (on December 28, 1907) to leave the Colony within 48 hours. This too he refused. Jan Christiaan Smuts, who was Colonial Secretary, was at this time busily arming his government with additional legislation that could be used against Indians in the Transvaal.

On January 10, 1908, Gandhi (along with several other Indian leaders) was sentenced to two months in prison for having ignored the earlier court order. He began the sentence that day; but was escorted to Pretoria on January 30 to confer with General Smuts, and was at the same time formally released from jail. During this conference it was agreed that if Indians were not coerced into registration, and if Indian women were exempted from fingerprinting, Gandhi would see to it that the Indian community would voluntarily present themselves at the registration offices and thereby collaborate with the colonial government. By the time Gandhi corrected Mr. Rees' text in March, over 5,000 Indians had voluntarily registered in Johannesburg (out of a total population of just over 10,000 Transvaal Indians). Despite this strong show of support for Gandhi's position his moral effort was in the long run doomed to failure, for General Smuts did not live up to his word and by the end of 1909 some 8,000 Indians had been compelled to leave the Transvaal and another 2,500 had been imprisoned for failing to comply with the Asiatic Registration Act. The legal position of Indians changed somewhat in 1910, when the Transvaal was absorbed into the Union of South Africa.

The Rev. Rees was a Methodist missionary whose widow retained possession of this manuscript until the nineteen-fifties. More recently it passed briefly through my hands before being auctioned (by Charles Hamilton, Inc.,) in New York in 1965. The text is not included in Vol. VIII of the Government of India's monumental *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, nor is it published elsewhere so far as I can discover.

THE REES TEXT

Q: What number of Indians are there in the Transvaal and from what parts of India do they chiefly come?

A: There are about 13,000. At present the number resident here is only about 8,000; the remaining 5,000 have left in consequence of the Registration Act. Some are in Natal and some in Cape Town but the majority have returned to India. Probably most of them will now return. Those who are resident here have come chiefly from Bombay and Madras, and are mostly general traders or hawkers.

Q: What is the history of the settlement of Indians in the Transvaal?

A: In 1843,¹ indentured labour was first introduced into Natal. Afterwards it was suspended. Then the prosperity of the Colony declined and in 1853 indentured labour was again resorted to. There was a large Indian settlement in Mauritius, and one of the Bombay Indians there, hearing that Indians did well in Natal came there, bringing with him a large number of his relatives and fellow caste-men. He prospered, and other Indians hearing of this, came on the scene, and so, Indian traders multiplied. When the Transvaal Mines were opened up,² these traders came over from Natal and soon became prosperous. They found that they could trade not only with their own countrymen, but also with the Kaffirs and the Dutch. They found the Dutch trade specially remunerative, and so the number of Indian traders [multiplied]. *increased.*

Q: I have heard it said that you have made special efforts to increase the Indian trading community, and to bring in Indian artisans. Is this true?

A: There is not a vestige of truth in it. I first came into the country in 1893, when things were much as they are now. There were then fully eight or nine thousand Indians in the country. The increase which has since taken place is small, and I have done absolutely nothing to increase the community.

Q: Before the recent Registration law was brought into force, what was the system of registration adopted?

A: There was no registration of the present kind in existence. In 1885, the Dutch Govt. passed a law dealing with immigration, but that law was not intended to restrict the immigration of Indians [or] but it was meant to place a bar upon their trading. At one time President Kruger passed a law imposing a prohibitive fee of £ 25 on every Indian who wished to trade in the country. The technical wording of the [ordinance] law was that any Indian desiring to trade should be registered and take out a receipt for

1. This is incorrect: the first Indian labourer reached Natal in 1860, and immigration was suspended in 1866; cf. Natal Blue Book, Report of the Indian Immigration Commission, 1909.

2. In 1884.

£ 25. In consequence of representations made by the British Govt. the amount of the fee was subsequently reduced to £ 3. It will be seen that this law simply imposed a *trade* tax on Indian traders, and was not a registration act applicable to Indians as a class.

Q: But is not the present act stated to be an amendment of the old Dutch law to which you refer?

A: Yes, but my conviction is that this [is] *was* done with a view to hoodwink the British public. As a matter of fact the present Act differs in toto from the old Dutch law. That applied only to traders and did not touch the community as a class, this act embraces all, without distinction and aims not simply at registration but also at identification. The old Dutch law did not aim at preventing Indian emigration, neither did it concern itself with identification. It merely required that all traders should register and contribute to the revenue by paying a specified fee.

Q: What is the system of permits and how long has it been in force?

A: After the [last British occupation of the Transvaal] *conclusion of peace* an ordinance was passed to take the place of the procedure adopted under martial law, when every resident was more or less under supervision. To replace martial law an ordinance called "the Peace Preservation ordinance" was passed. The preamble states that it was passed to check the entry of people of a dangerous character, who would be a menace to peace and good government, that is to say it was aimed at disloyalists. But [recently] *later* when a cry was raised against the immigration of Indians this ordinance was effectively applied to that end.

When the ordinance was passed it was designed to guard against the influx of undesirable people, but permits were granted freely to any British Subject of whose good character they were satisfied, and to foreigners who could produce certificates from their Consuls. But since this agitation against Indians has arisen they have been singled out for exceptional treatment, and required to give elaborate proof that they were in the country before the war, before a permit is granted.

Q: It has been stated that there had arisen a widespread traffic in the permits issued to Indians, and that there was an

illicit influx of Asiatics, on an organised scale which alarmed the authorities and necessitated the introduction of this severe measure. Is this true?

A: This charge was made against our community and we approached the authorities and asked them for proofs. This they could not or would not give. I admit that there was a [a considerable] *some* traffic in permits going on, [and with the knowledge of the community], but behind the traffic, and regulating and profiting by it were the officials of the Government. The real facts are these—after the conclusion of peace a considerable number of Europeans from the Volunteers were taken on by the Government and placed in positions of trust and responsibility. It is not surprising that many proved themselves utterly unfitted for positions for which they had no previous training, and that [many] *some* proved utterly untrustworthy. Several men of this class were appointed as supervisors of Asiatics. They were given tremendous powers and they held the physical destiny of Indians in their hands. They did not scruple to take full advantage of their positions for their own enrichment. They inaugurated a regular system of traffic in permits, and either granted or transferred them at rates varying from £ 10 to £ 30. Where the carcase is, there the crows will gather, and when it became known that permits could be obtained, for a consideration, Indians [flocked] came to the Transvaal from Durban, Port Elisabeth, Cape Town and elsewhere. *Many of these had a perfect right to re-enter but had to buy their permits.*

Q: But why did not the respectable leaders of your Community endeavour to stop the traffic?

A: They did. When I returned from India in 1902 I found the traffic in full swing. I then warned my fellow country-men of what would be the results if the traffic was not stopped. I came from India at that time specially to meet Mr. Joseph Chamberlain,³ [and this was one of the questions I discussed with him]. I brought the matter to the notice of Sir Arthur Lawley but he would not listen or he trusted his officers. Three times I approached him with a view to stopping this abuse, and on the third occasion I

3. Then on a visit to South Africa.

produced such proof that enquiry was made and two officials were discharged on a technicality, but the evidence before Government was so clear, that both officers were dismissed the service. This illicit traffic had to be stopped, but it could have been done effectively without the legislation recently introduced. The authors of the malpractice, the active agents in carrying it out, and those who profited by it were these corrupt officials, but instead of using the power which existing laws placed at their disposal for dealing with [them] *the evil*, [they] *the Govt.* introduced an act directed against the whole Indian community.

Q: I gather then that you regard this registration act as unnecessary and based on assumptions which are untrue.

A: Certainly. It proceeds on the assumption that every Indian has entered the country fraudulently and [therefore that] treats his permit as invalid, until he rehabilitates himself by producing before the registrar, evidence of his bona fides, which he can accept. It invalidates totally the Dutch registration Certificates, for which a fee of £ 3 was paid, although it professes to be in harmony with the law under which those certificates are granted. It assumes that Turkish Mahomedans are less trustworthy than Turkish Christians & Jews for it exempts the two latter classes from the provisions of the Act. Thus for these, and other reasons, it has deeply offended [not only] both Hindus but Mahomedans.

Q: What other objections have you to urge against the Act?

A: First, it curtails our liberty in such a manner that no self-respecting man, who has faith in God, could submit to it. A man may, voluntarily, and for the benefit of his community, submit to many restrictions, but in this case, the community gains nothing. If any man submitted it would be solely for the sake of gaining money. Secondly, the distinction made between Turkish Mahomedans and Turkish Christians and Jews is most invidious. They all come from the same social class and in many cases the Christians and Jews from Turkey are far lower in the social scale, yet they are exempted from the provisions of the act. Is it to be wondered at that the Mahomedans feel aggrieved? Throughout the history of Colonial Government legislation, the Government have set their face firmly against class legislation except under very [exceptional]

extraordinary circumstances. The Australian Emigration Act was vetoed by Mr. Chamberlain⁴ because it was class legislation. He would not allow the late Mr. Escombe the Premier of Natal to pass an act against Asiatics and he advised the Natal Ministry to introduce a general act, dealing with the evils they sought to remove not on the basis of colour, or religion, but on general grounds. Yet the Imperial Government agreed to this Act which I regard as class legislation of a most virulent type.

Other objectionable features of the Act are the following. Children under eight years have to be registered by their parents under a heavy penalty. Those over eight years have to be taken before the Registrar and give all identification particulars required of them. On attaining the age of 16, they have to appear again before the Registrar and take out Certificates. I can only describe this as scientific torture.

Again, the method of identification adopted is the one pursued for the identification of criminals, in this country. Not absolutely free men have ever been required to submit to such a process hitherto. I may mention that *probably* in order to remove the objection which we Indians feel, [it has recently been ruled that all emigrants shall henceforth give the prints of their ten digits.] *digit impressions have been made of general application under the Immigration Act.* This it is said will apply to Europeans as well as others, but this is manifestly an afterthought and I doubt if it will be largely enforced.

You will not therefore be surprised that when the Act was passed, the Indians met and took a solemn oath that they would not submit to such a law.

Q: What steps were taken to make the authorities acquainted with your objections to the Act?

A: The measure was published only a few days before it was to come on for discussion. Immediately representatives of the Indian community sought an interview with Mr. Patrick Duncan the Colonial Secretary and I personally saw Sir Richard Solomon.⁵

4. Joseph Chamberlain, the British Colonial Secretary (1895-1900).

5. Formerly (1905) acting Lieutenant-Governor of the Transvaal.

Mr. Duncan informed the deputation that they could discuss with him the details of the measure but not the principles, as the Government were committed to them. The Indians then presented a petition to the Legislative Assembly. That was pigeon holed and the law was passed, as it stood, with one important alteration. The draft measure applied to Indian women as well as men. This will show you how far they were prepared to go and how little those who drafted the Act understood Indian sentiment.

The measure was passed, then came the meeting in the Empire Theatre, when the Community took an oath of passive resistance. A deputation was appointed to go to London to interview Lord Elgin. When they reached London they met with much sympathy from Anglo-Indians and the Press, including the Times, supported their cause. Lord Elgin was alarmed, and said that after hearing all the facts, he could not agree to the act as it then stood, and accordingly it was then vetoed. Then [representative] responsible government was granted, and their first act was to re-introduce this measure word for word. The passing of the measure through both the houses of the legislature occupied about 48 hours. We Indians again petitioned, appealed by telegraph to the Home authorities interviewed General Smuts but all was of no avail. The measure received the Royal Assent. The Indian Community again met and re-affirmed their vow of non-compliance, and since then passive resistance has been going on. The registration offices were opened but only 500 Indians submitted.

Q: What was the next step taken by Government?

A: The Government then passed the *Im[E]migrants Restriction Act*. This act was of general application, but two clauses were incorporated in order to meet passive resisters. Under the Registration Act Indians who did not submit to its requirements could be sent to jail for two years with hard labour, but under the *Im[E]migration Act*, all Indians who did not submit to registration could be physically deported at their own cost, their chattels, if any, being sold to defray expenses. The second clause provided that those Indians who were resident here, but did not submit to the law, no matter of what standing they were, became "*prohibited Im[E]migrants*" and therefore subject to deportation.

This measure instead of unmanning the Indians nerved them for further struggle and they informed the Government that they would suffer deportation, and confiscation of property, but would not violate their conscience and break their oath. Those Indians who could not stand the stress of the struggle went out of the country, Many sold out their businesses, others who remained here countermanded their orders for further supplies of goods, while yet others sold out and remained, living on their capital, in order to carry on the struggle. The Government resorted to all kinds of methods to influence the Indians into compliance. They dismissed their Indian employees in the post offices, railways, and other departments, and these in nearly every case accepted their dismissal rather than comply with the Act. Then followed imprisonment and nearly 200 Indians, including myself and most of the leaders were put in jail, and the licences of traders were stopped. The utmost firmness was manifested by all classes of the Community and even women came forward and held meetings and informed Government that they were fully prepared to follow their husbands.

Q: What kind of treatment did you receive in prison?

A: The jail authorities did their best for us, but the treatment can only be described as inhuman. We were treated as common felons and were put on a diet to which Indians are altogether unaccustomed, with the result that we were practically starved. For breakfast we were given [mealy] mealie meal, which is a porridge, all right for the natives of this country who have always been used to it, but to us it was most distasteful. Many refused it altogether, others who took it rather than starve suffered from dysentery &c. In response to a petition, we were allowed four ounces of bread in lieu of the meal. This we had to eat without tea or coffee, only water was allowed. For dinner we had four ounces of rice and one ounce of ghee. For supper we were given eight ounces of bread three times a week, and three times we had haricot beans, without any accompaniment. On Sundays we could have had meat if we desired, but as Hindus do not eat meat and Mahomedans cannot eat it unless the animals have been slain according to their own formula, the meat was not accepted. In place of this we were allowed a double quantity of vegetables. Asiatic prisoners are

classed with natives. I do not object to this, but I claim that they should be supplied with food according to their customs.

The accommodation also was very bad. The jail where were housed has provision for only 51 [Asiatic] prisoners, but when I was there, 151 had to be dealt with.⁶ Tents were erected on an open space which provided sleeping accommodation for one hundred, but during the day time the whole 151 were crowded into a small yard, with the result that almost every day some fainted away at the time of inspection.⁷

Q: What is the nature of the compromise ultimately effected?

A: The Government accepted our offer of voluntary registration according to [the] a form ultimately agreed to. This offer had been made before the act was brought into [force] operation and if it had been accepted then, all subsequent evil might have been avoided.

By mutual agreement, the form of registration has been altered. If any man has scruples against giving his ten digits, he may give only his thumb mark. The Pathans have done this and most of the Chinese. Personally, I have registered and given the prints of my ten digits. I did this for the sake of example and to show that while I would *voluntarily* do anything [they liked voluntarily] [anyth] *not intrinsically bad* I would do nothing by coercion. *The whole objection was against the spirit of the act.*

We have received the distinct assurance of Government that if the bulk of the Indian Community voluntarily register the act will be repealed. There are sections of the Act which apply to Indians subsequent to their registration, these will become a dead letter.

Registration on these terms is now going on rapidly and I anticipate that nearly all our community will comply.

6. Actually 161; cf. *Indian Opinion*, March 14, 1908.

7. Fuller details of prison conditions were published in *Indian Opinion*, March 7, 14, 21 and 28, 1908.

Q: How was the settlement brought about?

A: The settlement was brought about largely through the intervention of Mr. Cartwright⁸ the Editor of the Transvaal Leader. He knew me personally in London and was in touch with General Smuts. Having reason to believe that Government would be open to accept the original offer of voluntary registration, he came to me in the jail, and asked if we were still prepared to abide by our original proposal. We said we were. He then produced a draft letter which he had written to General Smuts embodying the proposal, and this letter with a few corrections I signed. After consultation with the leaders of the progressive party, and obtaining their consent, General Smuts sent for me. I left the jail, under police escort, for Pretoria and there discussed the whole matter with General Smuts. I returned the same day at 10-45 p.m. and at a meeting of our Community held at midnight, I informed them of the settlement offered and strongly urged them to accept it. *The finger prints was an open question & all authorised me to accept the finger prints in the modified form.* All accepted it except the Pathans, about one hundred and fifty in number. The next day all the prisoners were released.⁹

Q: What led to the murderous assault upon you?

I have already stated that at the meeting held after my return from Pretoria the Pathans refused to agree to the [compromise.] *finger prints.* At a meeting held subsequently,¹⁰ they still protested and used threats. I endeavoured to show them that the compromise was an honourable one. We did not object to registration but to coercion and I expressed my determination to be the first to present myself at the registration office. The Pathans threatened that the first Indian who attended for registration & *to give finger prints* would be killed. Disregarding this threat [I & other] *many others* & I set out¹¹ for the registration office and on the way, I was set upon by some Pathans, who aimed a blow at me, which was intend-

8. Albert Cartwright; for his role in the affair, cf. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 8, p. 541.

9. January 31, 1908.

10. Johannesburg, February 2, 1908.

11. February 10, 1908.



ed to be fatal. It missed its mark but I received a severe gash on my face, and was rendered unconscious. When I recovered I refused to bring a charge against my assailants, but the Government took the case up, and two Pathans received three months imprisonment with hard labour. Since then the Pathans themselves have registered, giving their *single* thumb prints, and I believe that everything will now work harmoniously. I do not blame the Pathans. To them *finger prints* was the law. They could as they did [do] register without *finger prints*. Suspicious by nature they could not understand why I should give *ten digit prints*.

A Report of the First Session of the Indian National Congress*

BY

SACHHIDANANDA BHATTACHARYYA

Much has been written on the persons and circumstances connected with the origin and foundation of the Indian National Congress. What, however, matters most is the fact that the Indian National Congress met for the first time in Bombay and held its first session there for three days from the 28th December, 1885. The delegates, who were called representatives, came at their own expense from different parts of India, arrived on the 27th December at the Congress site and held amongst themselves informal discussions in the course of which a decision was probably made as to who should be the President and the order of proceedings for the next three days was settled. The Bombay Presidency Association acted as hosts and "gratuitously" provided the representatives, who came from outside, during their stay in Bombay for the Congress session, with "everything they needed, carriage, accommodation, food, etc."

"The Indian National Congress held its first session in the hall of Gokuldas Tejpal College on the 28th December, 1885. About one hundred persons attended the meeting. Of them a considerable number were Government servants, such as, D. S. White, President of the Eurasian Association, Dewan Bahadur R. Raghunath Rao, Deputy Collector of Madras, Hon'ble M. G. Ranade, Judge, Small Causes Court, Poona, Lala Baijnath of Agra, Prof. A. V. Kathawatha of Ahmedabad, Prof. K. Sundararaman of Arcot, Mr. T. Narasimha Iyer of Tiruvellur and Prof. R. G. Bhandarkar of the Deccan College who, with the exception of the Hon'ble M. G. Ranade, did not take any part in the discussions, but attended only as *Amici Curiae*, to listen and advice."

*The above account is based on the very rare Report of the First National Congress, a copy of which is preserved in the Library of the All India Congress Committee, New Delhi.

The actual representatives numbered 71 and were as follows:

Karachi (2)—Messrs. Dayaram Jethmal and Ooderan Moolchand, Merchants.

Viramgaum (1)—Mr. Harilal Mayaram, Vakil, Municipal Commissioner and representative of *Loka Samgraha Sabha*.

Surat (6)—Messrs. H. H. Dhruva, Pleader and Municipal Commissioner; Pallanji Kaikabad, Hony. Secr. *Praja Hitwardhak Sabha*; Goculdas Bhaidas Vakil, Municipal Commissioner and Pleader; M. Jiwanram, B.A., LL.B., Pleader; Hosangji Burjorji, B.A., LL.B., Pleader; and Parshotamdas, Merchant and Vice-President of *Praja Hitwardhak Sabha*.

Poona (8)—Rao Bahadur Krishnaji Laksman Nulkar, Chairman, *Poona Sarbojanik Sabha*; Messrs. G. B. Mashke, Pleader, Sitaram Hari Chiplonkar, Hony. Secy., *Poona Sarbojanik Sabha* and Editor of the Sabha's *Quarterly Journal* Ramachandra; Moreswar Same, Marathi Editor of the *Dhyan Prakash*; Sivaram Hari Sathe, Secy. *Poona Sarbojanik Sabha*; Dr. Pandurang Gopal, c.c., m.c.; Mr. W. Shivaram Apte, M.A., Principal, Fergusson College; R. K. Limayi, Pleader; G. C. Agarkar, Professor, Fergusson College and Editor, the *Maratha* and the *Kesari*.

Calcutta (3)—Mr. W. C. Bonnerji, Bar-at-Law and Standing Counsel; Messrs. Girijabhusan Mukherjee, Vakil and Editor, *Nababivakar* and Norendranath Sen, Editor, *Indian Mirror*.

Agra (2)—Babu Jamnadas, Pleader and Municipal Commissioner and Babu Prabhu D. Chowdhury, Pleader.

Benares (1)—Babu Ramkali Chowdhury, Retd. Sub-Judge.

Simla (1)—Mr. A. O. Hume.

Lucknow (3)—Munshi Gangaprasad Varma, Proprietor of the *Hindusthani*; Pranwath Pandit, Teacher, Canning College; Munshi Jwala Prashad, Pleader, Umballa; Babu Murlidhar, Pleader, representative of the *Tribune*.

Lahore (1)—Satyananda Agnihotri, Brahmo Missionary.

Allahabad (1)—J. Ghosal, Editor, *Indian Union*.

Ahmedabad (2)—K. Matilal, Vakil and Municipal Commissioner and M. P. Mody, Vakil, Secy. *Gujarat Sabha*.

Bombay (18)—Hon'ble Dadabhai Naoroji, Member, Legislative Council; Hon'ble K. T. Telang, C.I.E.; Pheroazshah Mehta, Bar-at-Law, Chairman, Bombay Municipal Corporation; Dinshaw Edulji Wacha, Secy., Bombay Presidency Association; D. P. Kanga, Solicitor; G. N. Nadkarni, Vakil; N. B. Barbhoya, Solicitor; T. M. Nathubhoy; J. B. Wacha, Merchant; Rahimtulla M. Sayani, Solicitor; B. M. Wagh, Bar-at-Law; A. K. Sethna, Bar-at-Law; B. M. Malabari, Editor, *Indian Spectator*; G. R. Kirloskar, Vakil; S. Vithal, Vakil; Abdalla Mehrali Dharamsi, Solicitor; J. W. Yajnik, Merchant and N. G. Chandravarkar, Editor, *Indu Prakash* and Bombay Delegate to England.

Madras (8)—P. R. Naidu, Vakil, President, Madras Mahajan Sabha and Municipal Commissioner; Hon'ble S. Subramaniya Aiyar, Vakil and Member, Legislative Council; P. Ananda Charlu, Vakil; G. Subramaniya Aiyar, Editor, the *Hindu*, M. Viraraghavachariar, Sub-Editor, the *Hindu* and Secy., Mahajan Sabha; M. S. Mudaliar, Merchant and Municipal Commissioner; M. E. Srirangachariar, Vakil and Dr. S. V. Athalye, Medical Practitioner.

Berhampore (1)—M. Viswanath Aiyar, Pleader and Municipal Commissioner.

Masulipatam (1)—S. Venkata Subba Rayadu, Vakil.

Tanjore (2)—S. A. Swaminath Aiyar, Public Prosecutor and N. Narayanswami Aiyar, Landholder.

Chinglepet (1)—M. Y. Ramanujachariar, Pleader.

Kumbakonam (1)—K. Pattabhiram Aiyar, Landholder.

Madura (1)—P. S. Aiyar.

Tinnevely (1)—Peter Paul Pillay, Landholder and School Master.

Coimbatore (1)—S. P. Narasimha Naidu, Journalist.

Salem (1)—K. Pant.

Cuddapah (1)—M. Nageswara Row, Pleader.

Anantapore (1)—P. K. Pillay, Pleader and Member, Local Board.

Bellary (1)—A. Sabapathy Mudaliyoor, Merchant and Chairman, Bellary Municipality.

The first formal open session of the Indian National Congress began at 12 noon on 28th December, 1885. There was no inaugural address by the Chairman of the Reception Committee, as no such dignitary appears to have existed. The first person to open the proceedings was Mr. A. O. Hume who proposed the election of Mr. W. C. Bonnerji to be the President. The proposal having been seconded by Hon'ble Mr. Subramania Aiyar of Madras and supported by Mr. K. T. Telang of Bombay, Mr. W. C. Bonnerji took the chair. None of these speeches is on record.

The President then delivered his address. He called the Congress Session the first National Assembly ever yet convened in India." He claimed that the Congress had a 'representative character' as not only were all the important centres of India represented and the delegates assembled there, though not formally elected by the people, could readily "claim to be the representatives of the people on account of their community of sentiments, community of feelings and community of wants".

The President then proceeded to define the objects of the Congress as, *first*, the promotion of personal intimacy and friendship amongst all the more earnest workers in our country's cause in different parts of the Empire; *secondly*, the eradication by direct friendly intercourse of all possible race, creed or provincial prejudices and the fuller development and consolidation of those sentiments of national unit that had their origin in the reign of Lord Ripon; *thirdly*, the authoritative record of the opinions of the educated classes in India on some of the important and pressing social questions of the day; and *fourthly*, the determination of the lines upon, and the methods by which, during the next twelve months, it is desirable for native politicians to labour in the public interest.

Regarding the allegation that the Congress was a nest of conspirators and disloyalists, the President not only denied it but declared that, as a matter of fact "there were no more thoroughly loyal and consistent well-wishers of the British Government than were himself and the friends around him." He claimed that the

procedure of the Congress was "strictly consistent with the British Constitution". He agreed that Britain had done much for India by giving her order, railways and "the inestimable blessing of Western education", but he observed "a great deal still remained to be done". In conclusion the President declared that the desire of the Congress that India "is to be governed according to the ideas of government prevalent in Europe was in no way incompatible with their thorough loyalty to the British Government. All that they desired was that the basis of the Government should be widened and that the people should have their proper and legitimate share in it".

At the conclusion of the address which, though short, was so business-like and precise that it was received with loud applause. Telegrams of sympathy were then read.

Mr. G. Subramaniya Aiyar, Editor of *The Hindu* of Madras then moved the first resolution:

That this Congress earnestly recommends that the promised enquiry into the working of the Indian Administration, here and in England, should be entrusted to a Royal Commission, the people of India being adequately represented thereon, and evidence taken both in India and in England.

In moving the Resolution Mr. Aiyar pointed out that in the days of the Company's administration there were at twenty years' intervals enquiries by Parliamentary Commissions into the condition of India which brought out various defects in the Company's Government and often led to their removal by subsequent Parliamentary action, but since the assumption of the Government of India by the Crown of England in 1858 such enquiries had ceased and the Parliament could hardly know anything of the progressive deterioration of the condition of the people in India. The Parliament had taken control in theory, but had in fact abandoned it to the Secretary of the State and his Council. He appealed to "justice and fairness of the English people" and asked for an enquiry into facts by a Royal Commission including some Indians. In seconding the Resolution Mr. Phirozshah Metha emphasized the importance of the enquiry being conducted by Royal Commission with adequate representation of Indians, because it

must not be an enquiry by "Anglo-Indians sitting in judgment on themselves". Mr. Norendranath Sen supported the Resolution and observed that the enquiry recommended would be a sort of stock-taking, after twenty-seven years, of direct Government by the Crown. After a lively debate the Resolution was declared carried.

Thus ended the proceedings of the first day's sitting of the first Indian National Congress.

The proceedings of the second day of the Congress commenced with the moving by Mr. S. H. Chiplonkar of Poona the Second Resolution which ran as follows:

That this Congress considers the abolition of the Council of the Secretary of State for India, as at present constituted, the necessary preliminary to all other reforms.

In moving the Resolution Mr. Chiplonkar said that the India Council, as it was then constituted of retired Anglo-Indians, was unnecessary, because it 'interferes too much in all matters of details', 'has no substantial power' and has not helped in the progress and development of India as even in Ceylon, which is administered by the Ministry for Colonies without any such Council. "Abolish the India Council and let the Secretary of State for India direct the Government of this country on the same principles on which the Secretary of State for the Colonies governs Ceylon; and you will soon observe a change for the better coming over India."

Mr. Ananda Charlu, in seconding the Resolution, described the India Council as "an oligarchy of fossilised Indian administrators" who were 'powerless' because the Secretary of State was not bound to follow their advice. The Council, he said, had failed as an experiment and its abolition was a primary condition of all other reforms.

In supporting the Resolution Mr. J. Ghosal declared "we want to take the work of administration more and more into our hands as far as it is compatible with the Imperial policy of the British Government. We cannot, however, expect this reform and a change to the fiscal policy of the country, until the India Council is abolished."

At this stage Mr. Rahimtullah Sayani enquired if the abolition of the India Council would not turn the Secretary of State into a "perfect autocrat". In reply Mr. Subba Rao observed that the Secretary of State was an autocrat, inspite of the India Council, because the latter was not a representative body and Mr. Saba-pathi Mudaliyar added that the abolition of the India Council was necessary as a measure of economy as its abolition will lead to a 'large saving to the public revenue'. The Resolution was then put to the vote and declared carried.

The Hon'ble Mr. K. T. Telang then moved the third resolution which ran as follows:

That this Congress considers the reform and expansion of the Supreme and existing Local Legislative Councils by the admission of a considerable proportion of elected members (and the creation of similar Councils for the N.W. Provinces and Oudh, and also for Punjab) essential; and holds that all Budgets should be referred to these Councils for consideration, their members being moreover empowered to interpellate the Executive in regard to all branches of the administration; and that a Standing Committee of the House of Commons should be constituted to receive and consider any formal protests that may be recorded by majorities of such Councils against the exercise by the Executive of the power, which would be vested in it, of over-ruling the decision of such majorities.

It was the most closely debated Resolution and as many as eight speeches were delivered on it. The debate was long enough to be carried over to the next (the third) day.

In moving the third Resolution Hon'ble Mr. K. T. Telang stressed the importance of having elected members in the existing legislative bodies and the necessity for Legislative Councils in the N.W. Provinces and in the Punjab, suggested indirect election to the various legislative councils and emphasized the importance of securing for the legislative bodies the right of considering the budget and the power of interpellations. He declared that as a result of the adoption of these principles "the whole administration will be popularised and friction between the rulers and the ruled minimised."

Hon'ble Mr. S. Subramaniya Aiyar seconded the Resolution and observed that the existing Legislative Councils "at no time possessed a representative character" and their members might occasionally succeed in getting some detail of a legislative measure altered with the good-will of the Executive, but they "could not modify in any way the *principles* of Government or legislative measures which were previously determined by the Government behind the back of the Legislative Councils".

Supporting the Resolution Hon'ble Dadabhai Naoroji, who had recently been nominated to the Bombay Legislative Council by Lord Reary, the Governor of Bombay, observed that Indians being British subjects, representation in the Legislative Councils was "what we can demand and what we are entitled to and expect at British hands as their greatest and most noble institution and heritage. It is our inheritance also and we should not be kept out of it." He pointed out that even after the introduction of this reform granting popular representation and the rights of interpellation and receiving the Budget for discussion, 'there will be one essential difference between the British Parliament and the Indian Legislative Councils. In Britain if the Government is defeated in Parliament, it resigns and the Opposition comes into power. That cannot be done in India. Whether defeated or not, the Government will remain in power. Moreover, the Secretary of State for India will have the power to veto, and no harm can happen. If the Government, either Provincial or Supreme, disregard the vote against it, and if the Secretary of State supports the disregarding Government, there will be as the last remedy the Standing Committee of the Parliament as the ultimate appellate body to decide on the point of disagreement; and thus the Parliament will truly, and not merely nominally become the final controlling authority". Having thus tried to disarm all British objection Mr. Naoroji proceeded to appeal to British law and British generosity. "We are", he observed, "British subjects and subjects of the Gracious Sovereign who has pledged her royal word that we are to her as all her other subjects, and we have a right to all British institutions. If we are true to ourselves and perseveringly what we desire the British people are the very people on earth who will give us what is right and just. For what has already been done in the past we have ample reasons to indulge in this belief. Let us for the

future equally rely on that character and instinct of the British. They have taught us our wants and they will supply them."

A discussion followed in the course of which Mr. K. L. Kulkar (Poona) suggested that the Resolution should go further and ask for the right of election to the India Council. The Hon'ble Mr. M. G. Ranade who, in spite of his position as an official, took part in the discussions suggested that in order to strengthen the hands of the Secretary of State the Resolution should ask that his Council should consist partly of elected and partly of nominated members. Mr. Narendranath Sen held that a Standing Committee of the House of Commons would be good, if we had representatives of our own in the House.

In the second speech Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji met all the above objections by pointing out the small part that the Council of the Secretary of State could play in influencing him, who was really a despot subject only to the control of the Parliament and that a Standing Committee would be more effective, as it would be independent of all parties and its decision would be no defeat of the Government, but only a final award on a point of difference between the representatives of the people on the one hand and the Government on the other. India would then have one effective Parliamentary control. Mr. Naoroji then concluded with the very significant declaration that "the chief work of this the first National Congress of India is to enumerate clearly and boldly our highest and ultimate wishes. Whether we get them or not immediately, let our rulers know what our highest aspirations are. If we lay down clearly that we desire to have the actual Government of India transferred from England to India under the simple controlling power of the Secretary of State and Parliament, through its Standing Committee, and that we further desire that all taxation and legislation shall be imposed here by representative Councils, we say what we are aiming at."

Before putting the Resolution to the vote the President observed that "it was not at all unreasonable to look forward to a time when in the Government of India there should be Ministries and change of Ministries as in the Colonies," though it is not provided in the Resolution with which it is not, however, inconsistent.

The Resolution was then carried unanimously.

The Fourth Resolution ran as follows:

That in the opinion of this Congress the competitive examination now held in England, for first appointments in various civil departments of the public service, should henceforth, in accordance with the views of the India Office Committee of 1860, be held simultaneously one in England and one in India, both being as far as practicable identical in their nature, and those who compete in both countries being finally classified in one list according to merit, and that the successful candidates in India should be sent to England for further study, and subjected there to such further examinations as may seem needful. Further, that all other first appointments (excluding peonships, and the like) should be filled by competitive examinations held in India, under conditions calculated to secure such intellectual, moral and physical qualifications as may be decided by Government to be necessary. Lastly, that the maximum age of candidates for entrance into the Covenanted Civil Service be raised to no less than 23 years.

In moving the above Resolution Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji justified it, first, by a reference to the Charter Act of 1833 and the Queen's Proclamation of 1858, in both of which the equality of rights for Indians in the services had been proclaimed and promised; and secondly, by ascribing the extreme poverty of India to the inordinate employment of British personnel in the Government of the country and the consequential material loss and drain from the country.

Mr. Girijabhusan Chakraborty, Vakil, Calcutta, seconded the Resolution and quoted with telling effect the following extract from a confidential Minute of Lord Lytton, Viceroy of India (1876-1880): "The Act of Parliament is so undefined and indefinite obligation imposed on the part of the Government of India towards its native subjects are so obviously dangerous that no sooner was the Act passed than the Government began to devise means for practically evading the fulfilment of it. Under the terms of the Act, which are studied and laid to heart by that increasing class of educated Natives whose development the Gov-

ernment encourages without being able to satisfy the aspirations of its existing member, every such Native, if once admitted to Government employment in a post previously reserved to the Covenanted Service, is entitled to expect and claim appointment in the fair course of promotion to the highest posts in that Service. We all know that these desires and expectations never can, or will, be fulfilled. We have had to choose between prohibiting them or cheating them; and we have chosen the least straightforward course. The application to Natives of the competitive examination system as conducted in England, and the recent reduction in the age at which candidates can compete, are all so many deliberate and transparent subterfuges for stultifying the Act and reducing it to a dead letter. Since I am writing confidentially, I do not hesitate to say that both the Governments of England and India appear to me, up to the present moment, unable to answer satisfactorily the charge of having taken away means in their power of breaking to the heart the words of promise they had uttered to the ear".

The fourth Resolution was then put and carried.

The fifth Resolution ran as follows:

That in the opinion of this Congress the proposed increase in the military expenditure of the Empire is unnecessary; regard being had to the revenues of the Empire and the existing circumstances of the country, excessive.

In moving the above Resolution Mr. Rangiah Naidu showed that the military expenditure which was £11,463,000 in 1857 had risen to £16,975,750, that is to say, by five million pounds in 1884 and a further increase of two million pounds was proposed for 1885. Hence a halt in its increase was urgently and immediately essential. Mr. D. E. Wacha seconded the Resolution in a very informative speech showing that the increase in the military expenditure was mainly due to the higher and exorbitant charges imposed by the War Office in England for the British recruits to the Indian Army, a large part of which was kept in Great Britain for 'home defence'. Further exorbitant transport and other similar charges which were not paid by any of the Colonies were imposed upon India. The result was that the military

charges amounted to 39.25 per cent of the net revenue of India and was too high for a poor country like India and deserved to be reduced immediately.

Mr. Dayaram Jethmal seconded the Resolution with the observation that the prevailing peaceful condition all over India and the existing friendly relation with Afghanistan which was sure to be a definite obstacle to the apprehended Russian aggression, there was no need for increasing the strength of the army necessitating increased expenditure on it. Mr. Jethmal declared that instead of trusting on the army the Government should trust in the policy of spreading education among the people, for "educated Indians are the true and real supporters of the British Government in India".

The Resolution was put and carried.

The Sixth Resolution affirmed:

That in the opinion of this Congress, if the increased demands for military expenditure are not to be, as they ought to be, met by retrenchment, they ought to be met, firstly, by the re-imposition of the Customs duties, and secondly, by the extension of the licence-tax to those classes of the community, official and non-official, at present exempted from it, care being taken that in the case of all classes a sufficiently high taxable minimum be maintained. And further, that this Congress is of opinion that Great Britain should extend an imperial guarantee to the Indian debt.

The Resolution was moved by Mr. J. Y. Yajnik, Merchant, Bombay, who urged that if military expenditure could not be diminished it should be met by the re-imposition of the import duties, especially on cotton textiles which had been abolished in the interest of Lancashire during the administration of Lord Lytton to the great harm of the nascent Indian textile industry. The Resolution which was seconded by Mr. S. A. Swaminatha Aiyar, Public Prosecutor of Tanjore, was put and carried.

The Seventh Resolution stated:

That this Congress deprecates the annexation of Burma and considers that if the Government unfortunately decide on annexation, the entire country of Burma should be separated from

the Indian Viceroyalty and constituted as Crown Colony, as distinct in all matters from the Government of this country, as is Ceylon."

The Resolution which was duly proposed, seconded, put and carried, showed the prescience of the early Congressmen. Had it been accepted and acted upon by the British Government, the Indian taxpayer would have been spared the burden of meeting the heavy deficit that the administration of Burma incurred for more than half a century and the Indians who were encouraged to go and settle there in order to develop that province would have been spared the serious physical and material losses to which they were subjected. Burma was separated from India in 1935 in the interest of Great Britain.

The eighth Resolution ran as follows:

That the Resolution passed by this Congress be communicated to the Political Associations in each province, and that these Associations be requested with the help of similar bodies and other agencies within their respective provinces to adopt such measures as they may consider calculated to advance the settlement of the various questions dealt with in these resolutions.

This Resolution, which was duly carried, aimed at carrying the message of the Congress all through the country. It ushered in that campaign for organisation which eventually led the establishment of Congress Committees all over the country, making the Indian National Congress the mouthpiece of Indian nationalism.

The ninth Resolution which stated

That the Indian National Congress re-assemble next year in Calcutta, and sit on Tuesday, the 28th December, 1886, and the next succeeding days, was moved by Mr. A. O. Hume and was carried with loud acclamations.

Votes of thanks to the Organisers and to the President were proposed and carried with acclamations. The President then called for three *cheers* for Mr. A. O. Hume. After acknowledging the honour thus shown to him Mr. Hume proposed, on the principle of better late than never, "the giving of cheers, and that not only three, but three times three and if possible, thrice that for one the latchet of whose shoes he was unworthy to loose,

one to whom they were all dear, to whom they were all children her Most Gracious Majesty, the Queen Empress. The House burst out in a storm of applause and the cheers were given with vehemence and enthusiasm".

The first Indian National Congress then dissolved, "leaving a happy and inspiring memory of fine work done, and unity demonstrated. India had found her voice. India was realising herself as a Nation". Later developments justified the hopes expressed by the sponsors that "it will form the germ of a Native Parliament", which actually came into existence in 1947.

The way that lay before her proved to be long rough and thorny and the march to nationhood and freedom required sixty-two years' of steady devotion and much sacrifice gladly made by her millions of children, acting under the inspiration and leadership of the Indian National Congress.

Gandhiji and the Partition of India

BY

K. K. SHARMA

Great men do not make mistakes, they commit blunders. Their followers explain away such blunders on grounds of expediency. Gandhiji is given all credit for bringing freedom to India; there is a major section of Indian public opinion which is not prepared to listen to anything against Gandhiji. Is it the force of habit or sheer habitual reluctance to call a spade a spade?

Indian independence and vivisection of India are correlated terms. On 15th August, 1947, Indo-British struggle came to an end with the self-liquidation of British Rule and consequent transfer of power to two dominions—India and Pakistan. Partition and independence arrived together. It is generally believed that Gandhiji has brought freedom to the nation. If Gandhiji has brought freedom to the Nation, who brought partition? The question has to be judged in the light of historical decisions and indecisions of the Indian National Congress under his leadership. Gandhiji was the Director of Indo-British human drama which culminated in partition. True, there were actors like Pt. Nehru, Sardar Patel, Acharya Kripalani, Maulana Azad and others who played their part in the drama. Could not have Gandhi, the Director of the Stage, dropped the scene and gone back to the court of the people which had made him what he was? Did the people want partition? Why did he succumb to the plan of partition agreed to by his political lieutenants?

Many Indian writers and contemporaries of Gandhiji like Pyare Lal Kripalani and Durga Das have tried to put the responsibility of partition on Sardar Patel, and Pt. Nehru instead of Gandhiji.

Who was virtually responsible for partition is a matter of controversy. Correct answer can be traced from the facts on record. One thing is certain: partition was first accepted in principle by all concerned and only then independence was announced. So, first

came partition and not independence! It was partition that brought freedom and not freedom that brought partition. If Gandhiji was not responsible for the partition of the country, how could he be given whole of the credit for bringing freedom to India?

There are two parts of the story: first, the historical part which has to do with the policies and decisions of Gandhiji, and their impact on Indian nationalist movement; second part has to do with the circumstances which eventually turned out to be the causative factors of partition.

I

The way Gandhiji dealt with varying situations arising from Indo-British confrontation vis-a-vis the strategy of Indian National Congress brings forth three things: ring of opportunism on the part of Gandhiji, extraordinary ability to grasp the genesis of each situation and its natural tendencies and Gandhiji's all out efforts to make the genesis of the situation commensurate with his philosophy of Satyagraha. He showed consummate skill in sponsoring and directing a movement but when prospects of failure stirred him in the face, he developed cold feet. Naturally, therefore, when a movement failed who was to blame for it? Gandhiji's lieutenants—probably not. The masses not at all. One might say that Gandhiji alone was responsible for those failures—1919, 1922, 1931, 1942 and 1947. He will be remembered more as a paradox than a prophet in history. How long the nation will pay reverence and glorify this man of flesh and blood who like a banyan tree did not allow anyone to grow under him and dogmatically kept imposing his decisions on the Indian National Congress and at the most profound psychological moment of partition succumbed to the June proposals.

Gandhiji wanted leadership of the Congress first for his policy of non-co-operation and secondly for the implementation of his doctrines of Satyagraha and 'non-violence'. Subbhas Bose has correctly remarked, "He only wanted more allies in order to be able to capture the leadership of the Congress... He had therefore, strengthened himself by an alliance with the Muslim leaders and the All-India Khilafat Committee".¹ The death of Lokmanya Tilak

1. S. C. Bose, *The Indian Struggle*, p. 64.

in August 1920 on the eve of the Calcutta Congress removed from the field the only possible rival of Gandhiji. So, from 1920, Gandhiji's influence in the Congress began to increase until it became supreme. He became the judge and the jury in his own cause. In fact he was the Congress. He alone was to be the final judge of what was right or wrong. If the country wanted his leadership, it had to accept his infallibility; if it did not, he would stand aloof from the Congress and carry on in his own way. Many people thought that his policies were irrational but they had either to withdraw from the Congress or place themselves at his feet to do as he liked. Therefore, in such an unrivalled position Gandhiji committed blunder after blunder and brought untold sufferings to the masses and the country till the partition took place.

The first political blunder he committed was when he injected 'Khilafat question' in Indian politics. By this he exposed the politically-minded Muslim community to intense religious consciousness and other dangers; that their religion and politics must go together; that their original home was some-where else; that their religious loyalty lay outside India; that they are a separate nation and that their culture and traditions were different from Hindus. V. P. Menon has correctly observed, "The Hindu-Muslim unity which Gandhiji sought to build up on the Khilafat issue did not last long—while few among the Muslims understood what 'Khilafat' stood for, all understand the cry of 'Islam in Danger'. On this ephemeral issue, the true basis of which was not clearly perceived, Gandhiji endeavoured to cement an alliance between Muslims and Hindus. The first shock was Mopalah outbreak in Malabar in 1921; the second the repudiation by Turkey of the Khilafat itself and her rejection of all extraneous mediation in the matter. The temporary alliance thus came to an abrupt end, resulting in the reversion of the two communities to their mutual animosities.²

It will be quite pertinent to note the views of Pt. Nehru on the Khilafat Question. He said 'Owing to the prominence given to the Khilafat Movement in 1921 a large number of Moulavies

2. V. P. Menon, *Transfer of Power*, p. 31.

and Muslim religious leaders took a prominent part in the political struggle. They gave a definite religious tinge to the movement and Muslims generally were greatly influenced by it. Many a Westernized Muslim, who was not of a particular religious turn of mind, began to grow a beard and otherwise conform to the tenets of Orthodoxy. The influence and prestige of the Moulavies which had been gradually declining owing to new ideas and a progressive Westernisation began to grow again and dominate the Muslim community. The Ali brothers, themselves of religious turn of mind, helped in the process, and so did Gandhiji, who paid the greatest regard to the Moulavies and Maulanas'.³

Gandhiji brought religion in politics and by doing that he committed a second blunder which later on paved the way for Pakistan. Gandhiji declared, "I can say without the slightest hesitation and yet in all humility that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.... thus it will be seen that for me there are no politics devoid of religion—they subserve religion. Politics bereft of religion are a death—adder because they kill the soul."⁴

Bazaz also observes: "By arousing religious passions to activize freedom struggle.... Gandhiji hyptonised the intellectuals as well as the masses by preaching and practising his scarcely disguised theories of Hindu revivalism in the garb of moral precepts.... The introduction of the religious ceremonies no doubt gave an impetus to the freedom movement among the religion-ridden Hindu masses because it stirred their deep-seated emotions. But to the same extent the Congress leaders succeeded in alienating the sympathies of the Muslims for the great cause; the minority moved farther away from the Congress. Under-Gandhiji's vigilant mentorship rational thinking was at a discount."⁵

Ronald Segal in his 'The Crisis of India' acknowledges this fact, "The Calcutta Congress in 1920 had initiated the era of Gandhi's leadership with its appeal to the Hindu masses, its stress on the wearing of Khadi, its increasing use of Hindi at Congress meetings, its employment of Satyagraha as sanctioned by Hindu

3. J. L. Nehru, *An Autobiography*, pp. 71-72.

4. Quoted in Prem Nath Bazaz, *Whither India after Independence*, p. 129.

5. *Ibid.*



doctrine and tradition. For the truth is, ironically and tragically, that it was Gandhi, the passionate apostle of Indian unity, who did most, by the very character of his leadership, to divide the Indians, who, by giving the Congress struggle a peculiarly Hindu caste, antagonized the Muslims at the same time as he attracted the Hindus.⁶ By this he for his personal ends introduced a powerful foreign and religious element in purely political freedom struggle and unconsciously injected a cancerous element in the body politic of India.

The third and the greatest blunder was Jinnah's outser from the Congress by Gandhiji which brought the greatest harm to the Congress and the country. After 1920, he became Gandhiji's vigorous political opponent. Pt. Nehru has written in his autobiography, about this incident. He said, "A few old leaders, however, dropped out of the Congress after Calcutta, and among those a popular and well-known figure was that of Mr. M. A. Jinnah. Sarojini Naidu had called him the 'Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity', and he had been largely responsible in the past for bringing the Muslim League nearer to the Congress."⁷ According to K. M. Munshi, ".... When Gandhiji forced Jinnah and his followers out of the Home Rule League and later the Congress, we all felt, with Jinnah, that a movement of an unconstitutional nature, sponsored by Gandhiji with the tremendous influence he had acquired over the masses, would inevitably result in widespread violence, barring the progressive development of self-growing institutions—based on a partnership between educated Hindus and Muslims. To generate coercive power in the masses would only provoke mass conflict between the two Communities, as in fact, it did".⁸

Gandhiji did one thing more when he unconsciously made the Muslims conscious that they are a separate nation and in India their tradition was one of conquest and empire. The result was that Muslims came out openly with the charge that the removal of the British would mean restoration of Hindu rule. That was the beginning of Hindu-Muslim conflict and communal politics which

6. Ronald Segal, *The Crisis of India*, p. 107.

7. J. L. Nehru, *An Autobiography*, pp. 67-68.

8. K. M. Munshi, *Pilgrimage to freedom*, pp. 17-18.



later on Jinnah adroitly turned into the demand for a separate home for Indian Muslims.

It is wrong to suppose that Jinnah was the originator of two-nation theory. In fact the theory was already being built up as a historical reality. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was the first Muslim to propogate this idea through Aligarh movement after the foundation of Indian National Congress. He believed that the Hindus and the Muslims were two nations who could never unite. The first of the four aims of the Aligarh Movement was 'the Hindus and the Muslims form two separate political entities with separate outlook and conflicting interests'.

In a public speech in 1888, Sir Syed Ahmad made the point, "Now suppose that all the English were to leave India, then who would be the rulers of India? Is it possible that under the circumstances, two nations, the Mohammedan and the Hindu, could sit on the same throne and remain equal in power? Most certainly not. It is necessary that one of them should conquer the other and thrust it down. The hope that both could remain equal is to desire the impossible and the inconceivable".⁸

Again it is also wrong to suppose that Hindu-Muslim disunity was the creation of the British. The fact is otherwise. Animosity between the two communities was there, the Britishers only exploited the situation to suit their political ends through their ingenious device of 'divide and rule'. Dr. R. C. Majumdar pointedly observes: "The contribution of the British rule to the cleavage between the Hindus and the Muslims should be considered in its proper perspective. It must be frankly admitted that the roots of the cleavage lay deep in the soil; and it was already manifest even early in the 19th century. The British did not create it but merely exploited the patent fact to serve their own interests".⁹

The common sufferings under the British rule should have forced the two communities to come closer and develop a national outlook but the deeprooted mutual antagonism did not disappear because for a century before independence the Muslims entertained

9. *The Political and Cultural History of the Indian People*, Vol. 10, Part II, p. 315.

grave fears about the establishment of democracy (Hindu majority rule) in India on the termination of the British Rule.

The White Hall for its political advantage conceded the separate electorate and communal representation to, in Minto's words 'The Muslim nation'. This was done because the Muslims wanted special privileges and rights for their community. It was an integral part of the Constitution. It is generally believed that by giving separate electorate to the Muslims the dye was cast for a separate Muslim State. This is quite wrong and not understandable. All nationalists did not regard them as hostile to the movement of Swaraj and through Lucknow Pact they put a seal on it.

Jinnah who was later to become the father of Pakistan was himself a nationalist and congressman. He took an active part in the Congress Sessions in 1908, 1910, 1913 and 1917. In 1910 Jinnah declared his opposition to the scheme of communal representation in local bodies and strongly denounced it. As a member of the Congress delegation he went to England with Gokhale and Lajpat Rai in 1913 and 1914 respectively. He, as Congressman had an impressive record of achievements and service to India in the Imperial Legislative Council. He did not join the Muslim League for long because its purpose was too sectarian, when he formally joined it in 1913, he required his two sponsors "to make a solemn preliminary covenant that loyalty to the Muslim League and Muslim interest would in no way and in no time imply even the shadow of disloyalty to the larger national cause, to which his life was dedicated."¹⁰ In a speech at Ahmedabad in October, 1916 he said: "As far as I understand the demand for separate electorates is not a matter of policy but a matter of necessity to the Muslims".¹¹

It was mainly on his initiative that the Congress and the Muslim League held their session in Bombay in 1915 and paved the way for Hindu-Muslim entente. He was nationalist to the core. While giving evidence before the Select Committee in 1919 he was asked whether he spoke really as an Indian Nationalist. He emphatically replied, 'I do'.

10. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, *Mohd. Ali Jinnah—An Ambassador of Unity*, pp. 41-42.

11. *Ibid*, 42.

The next question (put to him by Major Ormsby-Gore) was: "That is to say that at the earliest possible moment you wish to do away in political life with any distinction between Moham-madan and Hindu". Jinnah replied, "Yes, Nothing will please me more than when that day comes".¹²

He left the Congress in 1921 when he became convinced that the Congress was going the wrong way under Gandhiji. Why Jinnah's Muslim nationalism had got the better of his Indian Nationalism? "His pride had been wounded by the disdain with which the Congress and liberal leaders of the late 1920' had treated him....Jinnah never submitted to a slight..Neglect was a slight, rebuff an insult. The grievance of his rejection by the Congress leaders would not be assuaged until he had finally frustrated their purpose. Twenty years later, Mohd. Ali Jinnah was always a man of principle, but he was supremely a man of pride."¹³

It is true that in 1919 when anti-British feelings ran high the Hindus and the Muslims seemed to bury the hatchet, forget the past and foster brotherhood; but, it could not last long and even before the achievement of Independence, communal carnage and bloodshed were witnessed on an unprecedented scale. The Muslim fanatics exploited the Muslim minds and encouraged the Muslim distrust in the sense of fairness of the Hindus which was expressed by the Muslims in 1940 by advancing a demand for establishment of a separate homeland. The Hindu leaders opposed Gandhiji's policy of appeasement of Muslims and warned him of the consequences. But he cared little and expressed his faith in Hindu-Muslim unity and united India even though he was convinced that Hindu-Muslim unity was a myth and not possible. But being an adept in concealing his feelings, he did not admit it.

Jinnah was convinced that he could not deal with Gandhiji without learning his tactics and policies. He had learnt from Gandhiji the fact that without arousing religious sentiments of the Muslims he could not become a leader of that community. Obviously Hindu-Muslim disunity was essential. Again he had

12. Quoted in an Article (*Indian Express*) 'Gandhi and his contemporaries,' 31 Aug., 69 by P. C. Ray Chaudhry.

13. Hodson, *The Great Divide*, p. 42.

learnt from Gandhiji that through obstinacy in attitude he could become a true leader of the masses. Secondly, he realised that he should put his claim stubbornly and stick to it; and thirdly, violence was the only true weapon. Thus Jinnah closely followed upon Gandhiji's tactics and then challenged Gandhiji's slogan of Hindu-Muslim Unity and Non-violence, and asked him to accept himself as the leader of Hindu community. First, he challenged the right of Congress and Gandhiji to represent Muslims, secondly, he brought forward the right of self-determination for the Muslims in the Indian Union, and in the last, he demanded Pakistan as the National Home for the Muslims. In a letter to Gandhiji on January 1, 1940, he wrote:

"I have no illusions in the matter and let me say again that India is not a nation, nor a country. It is a sub-continent composed of nationalities: Hindus and Muslims being the two major nations."

"Events are moving fast: a campaign of polemics, or your weekly discourse in the 'Harijan' on metaphysics, philosophy and ethics, and your peculiar doctrines regarding Khaddar, Ahimsa; and spinning are not going to win India's freedom. Action and statesmanship alone will help us in our forward march".

"I believe that you might still rise to your stature in the service of our land and make your proper contribution towards leading India to contentment and happiness."

In his Presidential speech at Madras session of Muslim League in 1942 he spelt out the goal of the Muslim League: "We want the establishment of completely independent states in the north-west and eastern zones of India with full control finally of defence, foreign affairs communications, customs, currency, exchange, etc. We do not want in any circumstances a constitution of an All-India character with one Government at the Centre. We will never agree to it. We are determined and let there be no mistakes about it to establish the status of an independent nation and an independent state in this sub-continent." Therefore he gave the slogan 'Divide and Quit', when the Congress started 'Quit India' Movement. Inspite of all this Jinnah did not have a clear conception of Pakistan till the arrival of Cabinet Mission. By then he had in mind a confederation of India comprising the three units of Pakistan (Muslims), Hindustan (Hindus) and the Rajasthan

(Princes). The Pakistan which resulted from partition in 1947 was a 'moth-eaten Pakistan' which he never wanted but was forced by Churchill and circumstances on him.

To Mahatma Gandhi freedom was meaningless if it did not preserve Hindu-Muslim unity. He was implacably opposed to Pakistan. In the long record of history it is evident that Gandhiji gravely under-rated the political influence of Jinnah over the Muslim masses though he did not declare this. Had Gandhiji assessed Jinnah's political potential correctly, he would not have spurned his suggestion for Congress-Muslim League coalition governments in the provinces after the elections of 1937.

Frustrated in his efforts to get a coalition government Jinnah in 1939 at Lucknow Session of the Muslim League spoke significantly of the Muslim 'nation', that would emerge from the struggle with the majority community, who had clearly shown their hand that Hindustan was for the Hindus. Mahatma Gandhi dubbed this utterance as declaration of war.

Still through his policy of appeasement and nature to surrender Gandhi once again committed a blunder. He was first to concede to the Muslims at the Ramgarh Congress session in 1940 'the right of separation as in the Hindu Joint family'. He suggested the setting up of a constituent assembly based on adult franchise and proposed that the Muslim members be allowed to decide whether they wished to live separately or as members of a 'joint family'.

The British sensed this utterance of Gandhiji and to outbid him, placed in Jinnah's hands a veto in advance to self-government. This was done both to tide over the period of war, and to checkmate the Congress.

In 1942, Congress rejected the Cripps Plan on Gandhiji's initiative because it provided that after the war, an Indian Union would be formed and given Dominion Status, but any province which chose to stay out of the Union would also be given a similar status—this virtually meant Pakistan. Gandhiji was prepared to give separate status but within the Indian Union and after the quitting of the British. While rejecting the Cripps offer, the Congress Working Committee adopted a resolution drafted by Nehru, which formally conceded for the first time the principle that it did not

believe in keeping within the Union any area against its confessed wish. As he said in 1944:

"They should give India independence, and then let the Hindus and Muslims fight out the constitutional problems by themselves". "The British," he said, "were engaged in a diabolical conspiracy to stifle India's aspirations".¹⁴

In April 1944, Mr. Rajagopalachari with the consent of Gandhiji communicated a formula to Jinnah and had discussion and correspondence with him. The formula was: 'The Muslim League should endorse the demand for independence and co-operate with the Congress in the formation of a provisional interim government for the transitional period; after the termination of the war, a commission should be appointed to demarcate those contiguous districts in north-west and north-east India wherein the Muslims were in an absolute majority, and in those areas there should be a plebiscite of all the inhabitants to decide the issue of separation from Hindustan; if the majority decided in favour of forming a separate sovereign state such decisions should be given effect to Jinnah agreed to place this formula before the League, but refused to take personal responsibility for accepting or rejecting it'.¹⁵

By the autumn of 1944, when Gandhiji realised that the time had come for a rapprochement with Muslims, Jinnah was committed to Pakistan and had no interest in a rapprochement. On the other hand, Gandhiji rebelled against the thought of partition, for him it was 'an untruth', 'a denial of God', a vivisection on the living flesh of India' and therefore, a sin. India divided against itself would be a denial of his whole life's work, and his task therefore was to wean Jinnah from his dream of Pakistan. On July 17, 1944 Gandhiji wrote to Jinnah for a meeting. 'Do not regard me as enemy of Islam or of Indian Muslims. I have always been a servant and friend to you and to mankind. Do not disappoint me'. Jinnah accepted it and visited Gandhiji at his residence in Bombay after mid-August.

14. Quoted by Robert Payne, *The Life and Death of Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 510.

15. V. P. Menon, *Transfer of Power*, pp. 162-63.

In his speech at the Working Committee of the Muslim League, on 30th July, 1944, he dismissed the Rajagopalachari formula as offering, "a shadow and a husk, a maimed, mutilated and moth-eaten Pakistan".

"Gandhiji's willingness to discuss position of the country with Jinnah", wrote V. P. Menon,¹⁶ "provided bitter criticism.... The Sikhs were nervous about a settlement being reached over their heads. ... The Hindu Mahasabha was very bitter, Savarkar asserted that 'Indian provinces were not the private property of Gandhiji and Rajaji so that they could make a gift of them to anyone they liked'".

This was wrong on the part of Gandhiji because it enhanced Jinnah's prestige on the one hand and strengthened the cause of the Muslim League on the other.

On 24th September, 1944, Gandhiji made a concrete offer to Jinnah, stating that he was willing to recommend to Congress and the country the acceptance of the claim for separation contained in the League's Lahore resolution of 1940, under certain terms and conditions. Gandhiji's proposal was that of Rajagopalachari. Gandhiji, further proposed that, if the vote were in favour of separation, Muslims should be allowed to form a separate state as soon as possible after India was free. The talks failed because Jinnah wanted complete settlement before forming a united front.

In these talks Jinnah lost nothing. He knew to capitalise on every situation, however, unpromising. He always left his opponents to make mistakes. A point once gained was never lost, it became the starting ground for the next point. By this time he came at par with Gandhiji and his demand of Pakistan became the solid ground for further talks.

Gandhiji further paved the way for Pakistan when he blessed the agreement between Bhulabhai Desai and Liaquat Ali providing for equal representation to the Congress and the League in the reconstituted cabinet. Lord Wavell transformed it into an equality between Muslims and caste Hindus, which later remained the cardinal principle of British Government in conferences with

16. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

League and Congress. Gandhiji objected to the rule of parity on the ground that Congress had always striven to be political, not communal, and disowned the pact, but with no results, for the damage had been done.

The seal of communalism was set on the trend with the Cabinet Mission's plan, though it rejected the Muslim League's demand for partition. The Congress would thus get an undivided India, though with a weak centre; the Muslim League would get the grouping of provinces it had wanted for the projected Pakistan; the groups would still be within the Indian Union; the princes would have the freedom of choice.

The plan was acceptable to both the Congress and the League; Maulana Azad called the plan's acceptance by the Congress and the League, 'a glorious event in the history of the freedom movement'.

Gandhiji's first reaction to the plan was favourable. He congratulated the Cabinet Mission for having evolved a plan which meant at last the British would get off India's back. But in the end Gandhiji had thrown his weight against its acceptance. The Congress Working Committee accepted the plan with certain reservations against the wishes of Gandhiji.

Gandhiji committed another blunder when he could not stop Nehru from making an unfortunate statement 'that the Congress was free to modify the Cabinet Mission Plan' as it pleased. This gave a pretext to Jinnah to refuse to accept the Cabinet Mission plan and declare, "the only solution for India's problem is Pakistan". Pran Chopra, in his book 'Uncertain India' has correctly observed, "He knew the dice was loaded in his favour; he had only to wait and fragments of India would fall into his lap as Pakistan. By now he had full power to offer or withhold the co-operation of the Muslim majority areas, and the British Government was determined that no constitution would be imposed on an unwilling area."¹⁷

This tempted the Muslim League to think of no compromise. On 27th July, 1946 the Muslim League announced rejection of the

17. Pran Chopra, *Uncertain India*, pp. 7-8.

Cabinet Mission Plan and also announced that it would observe August 16 as 'Direct Action Day'. It was indeed to prove the need for Pakistan. In the next few months the League fought the Congress and Gandhiji on three fronts and won on each; across negotiating table, in the interim government, in the streets. Jinnah brought parity with caste Hindus; he made them understand that Hindu Muslim unity was a myth and that violence, not non-violence was the surest weapon. In that he gave an ensuing defeat to Gandhiji's ideals of United India and non-violence.

II

Jinnah made the working of interim Coalition Government impossible. The Congress leaders had now realized that there was no escape from Partition. Pt. Nehru and Patel acknowledged and endorsed Jinnah's two nation theory in March 1947, by advocating in a resolution adopted by the Congress Working Committee the division of the Punjab into Muslim majority and Hindu majority areas. This was done without consulting Gandhiji who reacted sharply and considered this to be an hour of great humiliation. Gandhiji on his arrival on 31st March, 1947, said to Azad, 'Partition has now become a threat. It seems Vallabhai and even Jawahar Lal have surrendered. What will you do now? Will you stand by me or have you also charged?' Gandhiji continued, 'What a question to ask? If the Congress wishes to accept partition, it will be over my dead body. So long as I am alive, I will never agree to the partition of India. Nor will I, if I can help it, allow Congress to accept it'¹⁸

But after his meeting with Lord Mountbatten, Gandhiji was a changed man. Azad had written in his book, "What happened during this meeting I do not know. But when I met Gandhiji again, I received the greatest shock of my life for I found that he had changed. He was still not openly in favour of partition but he no longer spoke so vehemently against it."¹⁹

How and why did Gandhiji accept the scheme for Pakistan. It was a hidden story which has been recently brought to light after the publication of these books: Hodson's 'The Great Divide';

18. Maulana Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, p. 186.

19. *Ibid*, p. 187.

John Terraine's 'Life and times of Lord Mountbatten', Campbell Johnson's 'My Mission with Mountbatten' and Sudhair Ghosh's 'Gandhi's Emmissary'.

Before his arrival in India, Lord Mountbatten was advised by Cripps to win over Gandhiji if he was to get success for his mission and for this he suggested the name of Sudhir Ghosh. The Viceroy asked for a letter from Sudhir Ghosh for Gandhiji, "But I must see Mr. Gandhi. So will you please write a letter to him tonight and have it delivered tomorrow morning at 8 at my house at 16, Belgrave Square, just behind Buckingham Palace. Soon after 8 I will fly off to India. Give Mr. Gandhi an account of what I have told you and do everything in your power to persuade him to come to New Delhi to see me."²⁰

Sudhir Ghosh gave a letter and duly delivered it next morning. In due course a reply came from Gandhiji which said:

Patna,
21-9-47

Chiranjiv Sudhir and Shanti,

....I have little to say to you. I have to listen to what you may have to say. You must have seen all I had to do with the Viceroy. We have come to like one another. Events will show of what he is made. He is certainly working hard as behoves a naval man.

"Bapu"²¹

Lord Mountbatten's first act was to win Nehru, because Nehru was Gandhiji's heir, spokesman, his weakness and moreover Gandhiji suffered from a superiority complex in his relations with Nehru. So after winning over Jawahar Lal, it was not difficult to win over Gandhiji and moreover Gandhiji wanted 'recognition' as Romain Rolland had said.

About his meeting with Gandhiji the Viceroy said, "At my first meeting with Gandhi we did not talk any business. We just chatted. I told him how the Prince of Wales and I had tried to meet him when we were here in 1921, and

20. Sudhir Ghosh, *Gandhi's Emmissary*, p. 206.

21. *Ibid* p. 207.



how we were not allowed to—he was readily interested in that. Then I got him to tell me about his early life, his political beginnings in South Africa and how he built up the non-violent Independence movement. We spent two hours talking in this way and the Press could hardly believe that we had not been deciding the fate of India. Well, perhaps we had indirectly”.

He further said “His personal popularity and influence were enormous. We might not be able always to take Gandhiji along with us—but we would get no-where if he came out against us”.²² So Lord Mountbatten made him a friend. He was in constant touch with Gandhiji than was generally believed. He made the best use of Gandhi’s tremendous influence—both spiritual and political—in accomplishing his mission in India.

The gist of these talks has been given by Hodson. He writes, “In his talk with the party spokesman and with Mahatma Gandhi Lord Mountbatten made it clear that his mind was clear, that Cabinet Mission Plan was a potential starting point for a new settlement; which he was bound to consider until it had been proved useless; and that partition, if it were to come must be applied to the disputed provinces as well as All India and must allow for the joint conduct of the essential affairs of the successor states”.²³

Soon after Mountbatten realised that if power was not transferred quickly there would be nothing left to transfer, because the Cabinet Mission Plan was dead and neither Congress nor the League would accept it. He made partition plan and informally consulted Nehru, who gave his consent to it. As Mountbatten himself stated in his Nehru Memorial Lectures, “Nehru realised that this would mean a much earlier transfer of power even though it were two governments and left a good chance for the essential unity of India to be maintained.” To Gandhi he made it clear, as he himself has said, “For Gandhi the transfer of power was the culmination of his life-work”.

On June 2, 1947, the Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten had a historic conference with the leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League and a representative of the Sikhs at which the partition

22. John Terraine, *The Life and Times of Lord Mountbatten*, p. 140.

23. Hodson, *The Great Divide*, p. 290.

of the country was accepted, though reluctantly. On the evening of the 2nd June, a long letter arrived from Mr. Kripalani (the Congress President) reporting acceptance of the plan²⁴ by the Congress Working Committee in order to achieve final settlement.

The same day, the Viceroy saw Gandhiji and after considerable pains could persuade him that the plan was the best under the circumstances. It was Gandhiji's day of silence but he wrote a friendly note on the back of an envelope and the Viceroy heaved a sigh of relief. Gandhiji alone could have nullified the acceptance of the plan.

About this meeting Acharya Kripalani, says, "The details of the talk are not known. It was Gandhiji's silence day."²⁵

V. P. Menon in his 'Transfer of Power' has narrated the facts like this: "Soon after his interview with the leaders, the Viceroy saw Gandhiji; the latter, as we have seen, had been preaching at his prayer meetings against the very idea of partition. The Viceroy recounted to him the various steps which had led to the present position. He pointed out those features in the plan which conformed to Gandhiji's ideas, and explained the reasons for such features as were not in harmony with his views. In the end he was able to persuade Gandhiji that the plan was the best in the circumstances. It was Gandhiji's day of silence, but he wrote a friendly note, which reassured the Viceroy."²⁶

Campbell Johnson also refers to it, while Hodsoon in 'The Great Divide' gives a detailed account of the meeting. He records: "Meanwhile, however, Lord Mountbatten had been faced with another daunting task of diplomacy, and persuasion. Mr. Gandhi had been ardently preaching at his prayer meetings against the Plan for partition and in favour of imposing the Cabinet Mission's Scheme which himself had scotched a year earlier. A rift in the Congress Working Committee seemed the certain consequence. The Viceroy apprehensively invited the Mahatma for a talk on the

24. The Plan provided that there would be two independent dominions, remaining within the Commonwealth-India, predominantly Hindu, and there would be a divided Pakistan, West and East. Jinnah wanted a corridor between the two parts, but this was refused.

25. J. B. Kripalani, *Gandhi His Life and Thought*, p. 287.

26. V. P. Menon, *Transfer of Power in India*, p. 375.

Monday afternoon. 'Judge' he wrote, 'of my astonished delight on finding him enter the room with his fingers on his lips to indicate that it was his day of silence'. Lord Mountbatten used his fullest art to persuade Mr. Gandhi that to enforce such a plan as that of the Cabinet Mission against the will of any community was not in accordance with non-violence, and that the way of deciding for or against partition was trusting to the will of the people. Mr. Gandhi barred for arguing, seemed mollified, and scribbled notes in friendly terms on the back of used envelopes. Later he made no attempt to alter or frustrate this decision of the Working Committee."²⁷

After this fateful meeting Gandhiji did not oppose the partition as Maulana Azad had written in his book, 'India wins freedom'. "Gandhiji's conversion to the Mountbatten Plan has been a cause of surprise and regret to me. He now spoke in the Working Committee in favour of partition."²⁸

On June 4, after the H. M. Government's announcement Gandhiji said that, he "had already told them over and over again that to yield an inch to force was wholly wrong. The Working Committee held that they had to yield to the force of circumstances. The vast majority of Congress men did not want unwilling partners. Their motto was non-violence and, therefore, no coercion. Hence after careful weighing of the pros and cons of the vital issues at stake, they had reluctantly agreed to the secession from the Indian Union that was being framed of those parts which had boycotted the Constituent Assembly. He then expressed sorrow at what he considered was a mistaken policy of Muslim League... He could not blame Lord Mountbatten for what had happened. It was the act of the Congress and the Muslim League. The Viceroy had openly declared that he wanted a united India but he was powerless in face of the Congress acceptance, however, reluctantly, of the Muslim position."²⁹

In reply to a question asked by some people whether he would undertake a fast unto death in view of the decision of the Congress Working Committee accepting division of India—had

27. Hodson, *The Great Divide*, pp. 313-314.

28. Maulana Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, p. 193.

29. D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. VIII, p. 4.

not he called Pakistan a sin in which he could never participate? —Gandhi said on June 5, 'that he could not fast at the dictation of any one ... the fasts could not be undertaken out of anger ... He must, therefore, undertake the fast only when the still small voice within him called for it. He was a servant of the country and therefore, of the Congress. Was he to fast because the Congress differed from his views?'³⁰

Gandhiji received a number of protests from all over the country. People blamed Congress and Gandhiji. 'A woman correspondent wrote to Gandhi that he should retire to jungle. It was he who had spoilt Jinnah and turned his head. He was responsible for the evil that the country was facing.'³¹ Although Gandhi was defending himself and the Congress in his heart he was feeling bitterly.

Hodson has beautifully related the story; he said: 'A few days after the announcement, the Viceroy was told that Mr. Gandhi was in a very wretched emotional mood and might denounce the Plan at his next prayer meeting. Lord Mountbatten asked him to come round for a talk. The Mahatma was indeed obviously very upset, and began by saying how unhappy he was at Lord Mountbatten's spoiling his life's work. The Viceroy replied that while he shared Mr. Gandhi's distress at seeing a united India apparently destroyed, he hoped to convince him that the new plan was the only possible way to achieve an early and peaceful transfer of power. Indeed it might well have been called the Gandhi Plan, since all its salient points had been suggested by him.'

"In the first place Gandhiji had pressed the Viceroy to try to get the Cabinet Mission Plan or any other, retaining the unity of India accepted by all the leaders, providing that it did not involve coercion or violence. Unable, despite every effort, to follow first part of this advice, Lord Mountbatten had followed the second part and had not insisted on encouraging a scheme with grave risk of violent resistance. Secondly, Mr. Gandhi's advice had been to leave the choice of their future to the Indian people. It was, therefore, he who had given Lord Mountbatten the idea of letting

30. *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, p. 5.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 5.



the provinces choose as the simplest and fairest way of carrying out that advice. Thirdly, Mr. Gandhi had urged that the British should quit India and transfer power as soon as possible. The Viceroy was very proud to have found a solution to this most difficult problem. He understood, he said, that in the past Mr. Gandhi had not been averse to dominion status. The Mahatma agreed and later sent an extract from '*Harijan*' of the 16th December, 1939 in which he had written: 'I have said to a friend that if dominion status was offered, I should take it and expect to carry India with me.'

"Mr. Gandhi was obviously impressed and mollified...., and when the Working Committee's acceptance of the plan was brought before the All India Congress Committee on 14th June he supported the resolution."³²

Guru Dutt, in his book: '*India in the shadow of Gandhi and Nehru*' observes, "when Dr. Choithram was speaking, Nehru and Patel had felt the earth was giving way from under their feet. That day Gandhi was observing his 'silence' day at the Harijan colony. The Congress leaders felt that if voting on the resolution was taken after Mr. Choithram Gidwani's speech, the Mountbatten Plan would be rejected; so they sent a special messenger to the Harijan colony for Gandhi to hurry up to the meeting and save Jawaharlal and his supporters. And Gandhi broke his vow of silence that day, hurried to the Constitution Club, and pleaded at the A.I.C.C. meeting as persuasively as he could."³³

Gandhiji addressed the A.I.C.C. for forty minutes, commended the Working Committee Resolution and pleaded that the Working Committee as their representatives had accepted the plan and it was the duty of A.I.C.C. to stand by them. He said, 'those who talked in terms of an immediate revolution of an upheaval in the country would achieve it by throwing out this resolution. But then he asked 'if they had the strength to take over the reins of the Congress and the Government.' "Well, I have not that strength today, or else I would declare rebellion to day," he added.

32. H. V. Hodson, *The Great Divide*, pp. 317-18.

33. Guru Dutt, *India in the Shadow of Gandhi and Nehru*, p. 228.

"Gandhi emphasised that his views on the Plan were well-known. The acceptance of the Plan did not involve only the Working Committee. There were two other parties to it, namely, the British Government, and the Muslim League. If at this stage the A.I.C.C. rejected the Working Committee's decision, what would the world think of it? All parties had accepted it and surely it would not be proper for the Congress to go back on its word. If the A.I.C.C. felt so strongly on this point that this plan would do a lot of injury to the country, then it could reject the plan. The consequence of such a rejection would be the finding of a new set of leaders who could constitute not only the Congress Working Committee, but also take charge of the government. If the opponents of the resolution could find such set of leaders, the A.I.C.C. could then reject the resolution, if it so felt. They should not forget, at the same time, that peace in the country was very essential at this juncture."

"The Congress was opposed to Pakistan and Gandhiji also steadily opposed the division of India. Yet he had come before the A.I.C.C. to urge the acceptance of resolution of India's division. Sometimes, certain decisions, however unpalatable they might be, had to be taken ... The A.I.C.C. could reject the resolution if they could be certain that such a rejection would not lead to turmoil and strike in the country. The Members of the C.W.C. were old and tried leaders who were responsible for all the achievements of the Congress hitherto and, in fact, they formed the backbone of the Congress and it would be most unwise, if not impossible, to replace them at the present juncture ... Out of mistakes sometimes good emerged. Ram was exiled because of his father's mistake, but ultimately his exile resulted in the defeat of Ravana, the evil."

"I admit that whatever has been accepted is not good," he then added. "But I am confident good will certainly emerge out of it." The A.I.C.C., he hoped, was capable of extracting good out of this defective plan, even as gold was extracted from dirt."³⁴

With these facts in hand, supporters of Gandhiji had come out with the argument that he was not responsible for the partition of

34. D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. VIII, pp. 17-18.

the country. Durga Das pin-points the view. "Had the audience roared back that they would follow him to resist partition, he might have reflected on his duty to the nation."³⁵ Had Gandhiji asked the members of the audience he would have got support of the A.I.C.C. He was pleading to support it, not to oppose it and moreover, Gandhiji never cared for the masses. This time he stood completely shorn of so-called inner voice. What was most astounding was the fact that the man of intuition was taking the shelter of reason?

Acharya Kripalani in defence of Gandhiji says, "It may be that he instinctively felt that the sands of time were running out and he could not leave the country without a leadership."³⁶ What a flimsy and untenable defence. indeed!

Horace Alexander endorsing Gandhiji's view remarks in, 'India wins Freedom' the impression is given that Gandhi did in fact change his mind on the subject of partition, and at the end thought it unnecessary. 'I believe this is not correct ... But whether the Maulana was right or wrong, postponement was the very last thing Gandhi wanted. He wanted the British to quit at once, whether the result was to jeopardise the Cabinet Mission Plan or not.'³⁷

The most forceful defence of the Gandhi line comes from Pyarelal, his faithful Secretary. In his own words: ... "On June 1, Gandhiji woke up earlier than the morning prayer time and lay in bed and was heard musing audibly, (the fact was never mentioned by Gandhiji himself) ... "Today I find myself alone. Even the Sardar and Jawaharlal think that my reading of the situation is wrong and peace is sure to return if partition is agreed upon ... they do not like my telling the Viceroy that even if there was to be a partition, it should not be through British intervention or under the British Rule..they wonder if I have not deteriorated with age. Nevertheless, I must speak as I feel, if I am to prove a true and loyal friend to the Congress and to the British people, as I claim to be..I see clearly that we are setting about this business, the wrong way. We may not feel the full effect immediately,

35. Durga Das, *India from Curzon to Nehru and After*, p. 248.

36. J. B. Kripalani, *Gandhi, His Life and Thought*, p. 288.

37. Horace Alexander, *Gandhi Through Western Eyes* pp. 149-150.

but I can see clearly that the future of independence gained at this price is going to be dark." After a while he continued, "But may be all them are right and I alone am floundering in darkness. I shall perhaps not be alive to witness it but should the evil I apprehend overtake India and her independence be imperilled, let posterity know what agony this old man went through thinking of it. Let it not be said that Gandhiji was a party to India's vivisection. But everybody is today impatient for India's independence. .therefore there is no other help" ³⁸

If this statement of Pyarelal is to be accepted as correct, then Gandhiji was not his real self—a true Satyagrahi. He was concealing his feelings and doing everything against his will. He had strayed away from his principles of non-violence and truth, and with this volitional act of his, he had given in to the most irrational logic of circumstances. Instead of giving a lead in this hour of low lights and growing darkness the apostle of non-violence and vigorous exponent of Satyagraha was staging a retreat, wholly unworthy of him. A parallel to his agony and retreat can be traced in the History of England when Chamberlain on the failure of his policy of appeasement said on 3rd September, 1939 before the House of Commons with profound sorrow "This is a sad day for all of us and none is it sadder than to me. Everything that I have hoped for, everything that I have believed in during my political life, has crashed to pieces".

Despite such powerful defence of Gandhiji nothing can stop some historians from coming to the conclusion that Gandhiji was responsible for the partition of India because he was the Director of Indo-British Human Drama; others were actors only, meant to play their assigned roles. His plea that he was the servant of the country and therefore of the Congress is not worth its candle. On many an occasion he acted against the wish of the A. I. C. C. When resolution was passed regarding independence in 1927 at Madras, Gandhiji declared, 'it had been hastily conceived and thoughtlessly passed.' When Subhash was elected a second time the President of the Congress, against the wishes of Gandhiji, the A.I.C.C. authorised Subhash to form his Working Committee in

38. Pyarelal, *The Last Phase*, Vol. II, p. 211.

consultation with Gandhiji, but Gandhiji refused to shoulder this burden.

If Gandhi was opposed to partition, he should have made it public, as he did at the time of Cabinet Mission Plan. If despite his opposition, the Working Committee had accepted the partition plan, Gandhiji would not have been held responsible for the partition barring the fact that his policies were slowly and imperceptibly leading to partition. Those who endorse Gandhiji line on the subject might say in his own idiom that he acted like a Head of the Joint family, when one son wanted separation, the father in the interest of the family divided it.

Raja Arjun Singh—the Hero of the Mutiny in Singhbhum

BY

R. DEVI

When the movement of 1857-58 broke out in Chhotanagpur, the discontented elements of that area began to look upon Arjun Singh as their natural leader. He was a resident of Porahat in Singhbhum district and commanded great influence over the Kols and was regarded by them with the "reverence due to the deity".¹ He was a very learned man and was also endowed with strong sense of justice. On 13th August, 1857, the people issued a proclamation to the effect that "the people belonged to God, the country to the king, and Urjoon Singh is Ruler thereof."² On hearing this, Chakradhar Singh, the Raja of Sarikela fled away from Chaibasa leaving it into the hands of the sepoys, who however, did not immediately revolt as they had been waiting to hear something definite from Arjun Singh. But he seemed to be lukewarm in his attitude. Though he was hesitant, his brother Baij Nath Singh along with a number of courtiers named Jaggu, Raghu Deo and others were pressing him to join the revolt.³

In the meantime the leaders of the movement at Ranchi and some others including Thakur Bishwanath Singh and Madho Singh Jamadar were inducing the local sepoys to revolt. Hence at last on 3 September, they raised the standard of revolt and after capturing the treasury and releasing convicts from the jail, proceeded towards Ranchi. But on September 5, they were stopped on the bank of the swollen river, Sangai (to the west of Chaibasa) by a band of 500 to 600 kols, who would not let them go until a messenger from Raja Arjun Singh took the sepoys (100 men) with trea-

1. Letter from Dalton, Commissioner of Chhotanagpur to the Government of Bengal, dated 26 June, 1861, State Records Office, Patna.

2. Cited in-Datta, K. K., *Unrest Against British Rule in Bihar, 1831-1859*, pp. 63-67.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

tures to Chakradharpur, the head quarters of the Raja, where they were detained by the latter.⁴

The senior Assistant Commissioner, Lieutenant Birch learnt that the Kols had also decided to join Arjun Singh and that a large number of them equipped with arms, were on their way to Porahat to join him. Birch therefore first of all reoccupied Chaibasa (which had been deserted earlier by his predecessor, Capt. Sissmore) on 16 September and decided to deal firmly with Arjun Singh who was yet in a vacillating state of mind. The Raja sent messages of loyalty to Birch and expressed his willingness to make a personal call on him at Chaibasa. When however, the Raja failed to call on Birch, the latter proclaimed him a rebel on 23 September and a reward of rupees one thousand was offered for his apprehension. In addition to this, his estate was confiscated.⁵

Thereupon Arjun Singh decided to go to Ranchi to meet the Commissioner and informed Birch accordingly on 25 September.⁶ On 11 October, he reached Ranchi with treasure and sepoy, all guarded by the *kol* archers, and surrendered to Capt. Davies (who had been sent with a strong force to receive him) 100 mutineers as prisoners, 100 stand of arms, a considerable quantity of ammunition and a sum of rupees nineteen thousand five hundred and seventy eight annas eight and pies nine.⁷ This sum he had recovered from the mutineers. He also promised to hand over to the Government the gold and silver ornaments, secured from their persons and to make a further payment of Rupees five thousand nine hundred and fiftysix annas eight and eight and a half pies to the government.⁸ Thereupon he was asked to return immediately to Chaibasa and to surrender himself to Lieutenant Birch for trial. The Raja went back but did not surrender. It is said that his *Diwan*, Jaggu pressed him not to take such a humiliating step. The reason was that Jaggu had been secretly inciting the Kols to

4. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

6. Arzi from Arjun Singh dated 21 Asin, 1265 F.S., State Central Records Office, Patna.

7. Commissioner's Report dated 30 September, 1859, State Central Records Office, Patna.

8. *Home Public Consultation* dated 89 January, 1858, No. 145, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

rise once again. Probably this was the reason why Arjun Singh did not surrender and instead he conveyed to Birch his profession of loyalty and a promise to keep his pledge given to them (British).⁹

Dalton, the Commissioner of Chhotanagpur, was feeling that the Raja continued to be loyal.¹⁰ But the British government considered his non-submission as an affront to British officialdom and directed him to go 'to Chaibasah as a suppliant'.¹¹ Up to this time, Raja Arjun Singh was loyal to the British government. The men and messages sent by Bishwanath Sahi requesting him to join the rebellion had produced no effect upon him so far.

Soon afterwards an unhappy incident took place which proved decisive in changing the mind of Arjun Singh. His only child to whom he was much attached died. This, together with the ill treatment that was meted out to him by the British Government in lieu of his loyal services, added with a sense of sin for betraying the patriots into their enemy's hands made him realise his follies and he now decided to join the rebels openly. On his return to Porahat he removed his ladies from Chakradharpur to Porahat, and refused to receive messengers from British officials directing one of them to "tell the 'Sahibs' that they were prepared to fight."¹² He now began to make preparations for the ensuing conflict. Blacksmiths were employed to prepare cannon balls for the Raja's ordnance.¹³ Jaggu in the meantime expelled the police *chowki* which had been established at Chakradharpur by the Senior Assistant Commissioner during the Raja's absence. But three days after this incident, i.e., on 20 October, Birch attacked Chakradharpur, re-occupied the town, captured Jaggu Diwan and hanged him. Jaggu Diwan together with the Raja's father, Achet Singh, had been accused of complicity with the *Kol* insurgents in 1831-1832. The next day they attacked the Raja at Porahat, but after some resistance, the

9. District Gazetteer, Singhbhum, Saraikela and Kharsawan, p. 39.

10. Commissioner's Report dated 30 September, 1859, State Central Records Office, Patna.

11. Ibid.

12. Letter from the Commissioner of Chhotanagpur, to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, dated 30 September, 1859, State Central Records Office, Patna.

13. Deposition of Gangadhar before the Senior Assistant Commissioner, Singhbhum, dated 21 March, 1859. State Central Records Office, Patna.

latter escaped with his men. But his palace and the adjoining villages were plundered and burnt by the British troops.¹⁴

In revenge the rebels murdered a man who was acting as a spy and guiding Birch in this expedition. They also ravaged and burnt the house and the nearby bazar of the Thakur of Kera who had also helped Birch. They then marched towards a village named Ayodhya. The number of the insurgents under the leadership of Baijnath Singh was about 2,000.¹⁵

A party including the forces of Saraikele Raja and Sikhs under Capt. Hale and Lushington* was sent against them. On seeing this party the rebels retired.¹⁶ The party next attacked and destroyed the Jayantgarh police-station, "which was a signal for an outbreak in the Southern Colehan."¹⁷ The British forces that had attacked Ayodhya were unable to follow them up. Consequently South Kolhan was now in open revolt and Chaibasa was itself threatened. Wide-spread excitement prevailed among the various tribes of Singhbhum towards the end of December, 1857.¹⁸

Therefore on 14 January 1858 the Commissioner, Dalton and the Senior Assistant Commissioner Birch together with Sikh forces under Capt. Hale effected an attack on the rebels at a place called Barbir. On way back they fell upon a party of hostile Kols on the bank of Mogra river and dispersed them. They also destroyed the village and returned. On their way back while crossing the deep bed of a dry nullah they found it swarming with rebels who made a surprise attack upon them with arrows which injured every one of them. Capt. Hale, commanding the Sikhs got four injuries, Lieutenant Birch's arm was pinned to his side by an arrow. Lushington and Dr. Hayes also received minor injuries. Thereupon the Kols pursued the party for about 7 miles, but could do no more harm to them and the party reached Chaibasa without any further casualty.¹⁹

14. Datta, *Op. Cit.*, p. 70.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 70-71.

16. Minute of F. E. J. Halliday, dated 30 September, 1858, States Central Records Office, Patna

*The Officiating Commissioner of Bardwan, who had been appointed Special Commissioner for the suppression of Mutiny in Singhbhum and Manbhum.

17. Letter from Commissioner of Chhotanagpur, to the Govt. of Bengal, dated 23 July, 1859, State Central Records Office, Patna.

18. *District Gazetteer*, Singhbhum, Saraikele and Kharsawan, p. 39.

19. Cited in Datta, *Op. cit.*, pp. 71-72.

Next the insurgents attacked the Raja of Saraikela who had been left with 300 matchlockmen in Chakradharpur by the British. The British force that was later directed against the Kols was attacked by Arjun Singh's party and it suffered heavily.²⁰ The whole of Singhbhum was in open arms against the British government for the second time. The British government was completely uprooted for a time.

Soon afterwards on January 17, 1858 a Shekawati battalion and a body of 100 Europeans, arrived at Chaibasa under Colonel Forster. The Porahat insurgents were dispersed, the *rainats* submitted and the insurgent Chiefs took refuge in the hills. The Kols also submitted. This force destroyed Chakradharpur, the stronghold of Arjun Singh and defeated his close followers, the Kols. Arjun Singh and the Kols still persisted in their hostility to the government. Between March and June, 1858, several engagements took place between them and the British forces after which the rebels were compelled to take refuge in the mountain passes of Singhbhum. The Europeans were stationed at Chakradharpur and everything remained quiet until 26 March, 1858, when the place was attacked by a force of about 2 000 men under Baijnath Singh. But the rebels were repulsed.²¹ Nevertheless disturbances continued. Thereupon the rebel forces collected at Jumru (four miles west of Chakradharpur) and from there marched back to Chakradharpur on 10 June under Raja Arjun Singh's orders.²² A large number of armed Kols under the leadership of Raghu Deo surrounded Chakradharpur. During this attack six Europeans were killed. The rebels were however beaten off.²³

After this affair the insurgents retired to Porahat. From there they continued to exert their influence over the whole of Kolhan area till July next when a force operating under the Commissioner of Chotanagpur compelled them after incessant fighting to retire into the hills. The British troops however could not follow them. with the result that the insurgents remained undisturbed till

20. Bengal Judicial Department proceedings, dated 27 October, 1859, No. 167, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

21. *Ibid.*

22. The deposition of witness Greedhar Mahto before the Senior Assistant Commissioner on the 28 August, 1958.

23. Datta, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

November, 1858. During this period they continued to make occasional incursions and to harass the British troops by making nocturnal attacks upon them and by using other guerilla tactics. In the month of November a force under Baijnath Singh and Raghu Deo attacked Anandpur and drove out the Zamindar of that place who was a supporter of the British government in Singhbhum. Baijnath Singh and Raghu Deo remained detached from Arjun Singh all these days until January.²⁴ By this time the British government came to be in a better position in Singhbhum. On 29 January British forces under Lieutenant Birch attacked Kordiham (the abode of Raja Arjun Singh during this period) and occupied it. Here they captured a large quantity of arms, ammunitions, cash and correspondence belonging to the insurgents. But the Raja and his men escaped undetected. They showed no inclination to surrender, although the time-limit had expired. The Commissioner now adopted another device to capture Arjun Singh and his party. He put pressure up on Arjun Singh's father-in-law, the Raja of Mayurbhanj to persuade him to surrender.²⁵ This device proved very successful. On 10 February, some of the insurgents surrendered. This was followed by the capture of Baijnath Singh, the Raja's brother. On 15 February, 1859, Raja came to his father-in-law who surrendered him to the Commissioner. The revolt in Singhbhum was thus suppressed.²⁶ Raghu and Sham Karan, however remained at large. They continued to plunder with a party of rebels from Sambalpur.²⁷

After their surrender Raja Arjun Singh and his brother Baijnath Singh were tried for waging war against the British Government. But their lives were spared because the Raja had earlier delivered arms and prisoners to the government. They were banished from Singhbhum and their entire estate was confiscated. In December, 1859 Arjun Singh was sent to Banaras as a state prisoner with a pension of four hundred rupees a month.²⁸ He spent the rest of his life at Banaras as a political exile.²⁹

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

26. *District Gazetteer*, Singhbhum, pp. 40-42.

27. Bengal Judiciary Deptt. proceedings of August, 1861 (Ns. 224-30). National Archives of India, New Delhi.

28. Cited in Datta, *Freedom Movement in Bihar*, Vol. I, p. 64.

29. Datta, *Unrest Against British Rule in Bihar*, p. 76.

Simon Commission — a Case Study of its Appointment

BY

S. R. BAKSHI

In accordance with law, the Parliament of England was vested with the power and responsibility of shaping India's political future. It, therefore, felt to demand clear guidance on the action, it should take, after the ten-year period of trial, laid down in the Act of 1919, had expired. Section 84-A of this Act provided that at the expiration of ten years from the institution of reforms, a Royal Commission should be sent out to India in order to report to Parliament as to their progress and effects.¹ In 1927, the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms had been in operation for the last eight years and the statutory period as laid down in the Act, had not yet expired. But considerable pressure, agitation and criticism mounting from numerous patriotic Indian elements decided to anticipate the date of the Statutory Commission's appointment.²

It was indeed the fear of the probable adverse results of the general elections in 1929 in Great Britain which prompted the Conservative Party, headed by Stanley Baldwin, to think of accelerating the appointment of the Statutory Commission before the scheduled time. Lord Birkenhead, wrote to Lord Irwin 'We must not run the slightest risk of the delay in selection so much that an election might either interrupt our plans or even come soon enough to make it not wholly unreasonable to attempt some monkeying tricks with our selection. It is, of course, obvious that the mere ante-dating of the Commission, while it would

1. Home—Public, File 603, Dec. 8, 1927.

2. Cadogan, Edward; *The India We Saw*, p. 1.



probably give satisfaction in India, would deprive us of nothing valuable. We can play with the time as we want.³ Obviously, it was the common belief in the high echelons of British politicians that the coming elections would return the Labour Party to power. The Conservatives, therefore, wanted to gain a tactical advantage and could not afford to 'run the slightest risk that the nomination of the Commission should be in the hands of our successors.' Therefore, 'the Secretary of State felt that the acceleration of the Commission was our one card left and that it was a pity to play it until we were certain it would take a trick.'⁴ Besides, it was the general belief amongst the Conservatives that a Labour Government would be more helpful, sympathetic and considerate in acceding to the political demands of Indian leaders, and it might also go a step further in granting them such concessions as would be compatible with the vested interests of Britain in India. They, therefore, thought that it would be a safe and prudent measure to appoint the Commission forthwith and thus forestall the Labour Government.⁵

There was another reason which also hastened the appointment of the Statutory Commission. The Swaraj Party, under the leadership of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru,⁶ considered to be the most balanced politician in our country and a broad-minded nationalist, was unhappy at the working of the reforms of 1919⁷ and expressed much dissatisfaction in this regard. This party had been pressing very hard, time and again, for more and more autonomy in the provinces and responsibility at the centre. The objective, therefore, of the Conservative Government was to utilize the appointment of the Commission as a bargain counter and to disintegrate the Swaraj Party.⁸

3. Secretary of State to Viceroy, Sept. 23, 1926, *Halifax Papers*.

4. Viceroy to Governor of Bombay, Jan. 26 1927, *Halifax Papers*.

5. Majumdar, R. C., *History of the Freedom Movement in India* Vol. III, p. 3089.

6. Law Member of Viceroy's Council 1920-23; President, National Liberal Federation of India, 1923 and 1927.

7. Besides Sapru, other leaders of India also criticised the working of the reforms.

8. Setalvad, C. H., *Recollections and Reflections*, p. 341, 'It was thought, however, that if the Statutory Commission was, as everybody seems to ex-

Besides, Lord Birkenhead was seriously concerned over the changing political trends both in England and India. According to Lord Halifax, "the legal minds of Birkenhead and Reading were outraged that any one should speak about Dominion Status."⁹ In his private letter,¹⁰ which he wrote to Lord Reading, on December 10, 1925, he mentioned that in suggesting the acceleration of the Commission, "I always had it plainly in mind that we could not afford to run the slightest risk that the nomination of 1928 Commission should be in the hands of our successors. You can readily imagine what kind of a Commission in its personnel would have been appointed by Colonel Wedgewood,¹¹ and his friends. I have, therefore throughout been of the clear opinion that it would be necessary for us as a matter of elementary prudence to appoint a Commission not later than the summer of 1927. I should, therefore, like to receive your advice if at any moment you discern an opportunity for making this a useful bargain counter or for further disintegrating the Swarajist Party I am sure that having regard to political contingencies in this country, we must keep the nomination of the personnel of the Commission in our own hands. In this matter, we cannot run the slightest risk. My present view, therefore, is and I believe that the Prime Minister shares it — that we shall in any event, be playing for safety if we are driven to nominate the Commission in the middle of 1927. If such an acceleration affords you any bargaining value, use it to the full and with the knowledge that you will be supported by the Government."¹²

The personnel of the Statutory Commission was selected solely from the British Community without any Indian representative, although it was the future constitution of India which was to be

pect, appointed earlier than 1929, the Swarajists would claim, this as a concession by Government to their demands and would make it the excuse for abandoning pure obstruction? (See letter from Viceroy to Governor of Bombay, Jan. 3, 1927, *Halifax Papers*).

9. Halifax, Lord, *Fullness of Days*, p. 121.

10. Quoted in Birkenhead, *The Earl of Birkenhead, Last Phase*, pp. 252-53.

11. Colonel Josiah Wedgewood was a friend and sympathiser of Indian nationalists.

12. *Last Phase*, pp. 252-53.

the subject of inquiry, discussion and decision. This was obviously a wrong precedent which was bound to give offence to the patriotic sentiments of the people of India. In the past, in every Commission, dealing with Indian affairs, Indians were given proportional representation. In the Lee Commission¹³ and the Skeen Commission,¹⁴ Indians were duly represented and all this led to satisfactory results without any feelings of opposition.

The exclusion of Indians from the Statutory Commission was anticipated some time before the actual announcement was made.¹⁵ Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, who had returned from England shortly before the announcement of the Commission, declared that he was not at all surprised at the action of the British Government.¹⁶ When the names of the Commissioners were made public, he said in the course of an interview:—‘During my recent visit to England, short as my stay was, there it became abundantly plain to me that the mind of Government had already been made up, that India could not hope for any support for its view-point from the Conservatives or Liberals, and that, at any rate, so far as some of the Labour leaders were concerned, they had placed serious limitations upon their liberty of action.’¹⁷ He further said: ‘I cannot understand why this scheme could not have fitted in with adequate representation of Indians on the personnel of the Commission. The fear of minority reports is as naive as it is disingenuous. Nor can I believe that Government could not find in the whole of the country even three or four Indians who could inspire confidence generally.’¹⁸

‘It can only mean a complete want of confidence in the judgement and capacity of Indians to serve on a Commission which is to determine the future Government of their country. The utmost that can be said in favour of this scheme is that they want to associate us with them at some stages only to the extent of

13. For complete list of members see Mitra, H. N., *Annual Register*, Vol. II, 1923, p. 21.

14. See Mitra, H. N.

15. Liberal, A., *The Commission and After*, p. 4.

16. *Ibid.*

17. See *The Tribune*, Lahore, Dec. 28, 1927.

18. *Ibid.*

representing our views, but they deny to us the right of participation in the responsibility of framing our constitution. I have no doubt that this Commission, even though it be presided over by Simon, will inspire no confidence and will command no public support.¹⁹

The excuse given for not appointing any Indian on the Commission was that the framers of the Act of 1919 intended to confine the Commission to only Members of Parliament. But it was a mere pretext.²⁰ The Act, it is obvious, did not specify any such restriction. But even if the British Government wanted to restrict the membership of the Statutory Commission to only the members of Parliament, the availability of two prominent Indians in the British Parliament was the relevant answer to this sudden and hasty decision of the Conservative Government. There were two well-known Indian members at the time in the British Parliament. One was Sir Satyendra Prasad Sinha, later Lord S. P. Sinha.²¹ and the other was Shapurji Saklatwala. In fact, S. P. Sinha had been closely connected with the various stages of the constitutional reforms in India and his inclusion as a member of the Commission would have been of great consequence.²²

These two Indian members were excluded from the Statutory Commission and ignored simply because of their race, and their exclusion thus saved the British Government from any future controversy and criticism which might have emanated from their prejudicial findings in the final recommendations of the Commission.²³ According to C. Y. Chintamani, the stamp of inferiority was fixed on the brow of Indians merely because they were not God's own Englishmen.²⁴ Their exclusion from the Commission left no doubt in their minds, that there was not to be found in India a statesman of sufficient calibre to sit in conference with men of the Commission. Thus the intense desire of Indians to convince themselves that they were the equals of the British, and

19. *Ibid.*

20. Chintamani, C. Y., *Indian Problems Since the Mutiny*, p. 171.

21. S. P. Sinha was a Member in the House of Lords.

22. Setalvad, C. H., *op.cit.*, p. 342.

23. Gopal, S., *Viceroyalty of Lord Irwin*, p. 19.

24. Chintamani, C. Y., *op.cit.*, p. 171.

their almost pathetic *amour-propre* were deeply affronted by this further implication of their unworthiness.

C. F. Andrews²⁵ who was instrumental in sponsoring the patriotic sentiments of Indians in their struggle for Swaraj, opined that Lord Birkenhead's statements and decision in regard to this vital matter was akin to that of 'a conqueror imposing his sway, upon a conquered and subject people.' He condemned it as an undemocratic action as it was like 'a racial superior acting with arrogance towards a racial inferior.'

There was another significant instance which focused the anger, resentment and criticism of the people of India still magnified. The fact that the Labour Party of England had agreed^{26,27} to serve on the Commission of this character gave to enlightened public opinion in India a very grave shock indeed. Lord Birkenhead's attitude and line of thinking were considered as unfavourable towards India, and it could hardly be appreciated that the British Labour Party of England would accord its open sanction; and support his policy and measures.²⁸

The selection of a Chairman for the Statutory Commission was anxiously discussed in Lord Birkenhead's private correspondence with the Viceroy.²⁹ By July 1927, he had agreed with the Prime Minister that Sir John Simon was by far the ablest man available. Birkenhead called John Simon a very adroit, patient, tactful, and a successful person imbued with great subtlety, acuteness, quickness, industry and tact.³⁰ In this regard, Ramsay

25. B. 1870; started his career as a lecturer in St. Stephen's College, Delhi; disciple of Gandhi, helped India in many ways, author of numerous books, d. 1940.

26, 27. Birkenhead wrote to Viceroy, 'My greatest anxiety at this end was relieved when Ramsay Macdonald consented to appoint two members of the Labour Party. If, under the influence of the extremists, he had refused to make an appointment, the situation would indeed have been serious, (Secretary of State to the Viceroy, Nov. 3, 1927, *Halifax Papers*).

28. *Ibid.*

29. At one time Lord Hewart's name was proposed for Chairmanship of Statutory Commission. (Secretary of State to Viceroy Jan. 27, 1927, *Halifax Papers*).

30. Secretary of State to Viceroy, June 16, June 23, 1927 and Jan. 1928, *Halifax Papers*. Lord Birkenhead and John Simon had been friends from their College days.

MacDonald readily helped the Secretary of State in the choice of two more members from the Labour party in the persons of Stephen Walsh³¹ and Clement Richard Attlee, and on July 21, Lord Birkenhead was in a position to assure the Viceroy that the British cabinet had ratified his selection.

On receipt of information of the Secretary of State, the Viceroy, of course, began to guess in his mind about the probable outcome of the appointment of the Statutory Commission. He was confirmed in his opinion that such a Commission, if likely to produce a unanimous report, would have advantages that would outweigh the opposition it would create. He was quite sure that it would be badly received in India,³² that its appointment would unite all Hindu opinion in opposition, and that its failure to produce an agreed report would have the most damaging results. If such unanimity could not be achieved, he opined that a mixed Commission, although it would produce more than a report, would be far more favourably received; that it would diminish the probability of uniting all Indian opinion against the Commission, and that its minority report would be 'less injurious than one proceeding from a Parliamentary Commission.'³³

With all information in hand, the Viceroy was prepared to announce the appointment of the Statutory Commission. In preparation for the announcement, Lord Irwin invited a number of leaders of Indian political life to explain the decision of the British Government and the reasons for it.³⁴ The Viceroy had been spen-

31. A Labour Member of Parliament from Lancashire who soon resigned for reasons of ill-health and was replaced by Vernon Hartshorn (Home-Public, File 603, Jan. 5, 1928).

32. "The only alternative would, I think, be a mixed Commission, and this type of body would no doubt be more likely to receive a favourable reception from certain classes in India whose views cannot be considered negligible The Muslims almost certainly would not boycott and this will be bound to affect the decision of the Hindus. At the same time, the effects of the boycott would be serious and might gravely exacerbate the issues between British and Indian Opinion. (Irwin to Governor of Burma, June 15, 1927, *Halifax Papers*).

The Viceroy further informed Viscount Halifax: There will accordingly be a great row, when the Government's procedure for the Commission is announced, but I hope this may gradually yield to more reasonable courses. (Viceroy to Viscount Halifax, Nov. 6, 1927, *Halifax Papers*.)

ding four or five days. rather unpleasant days, in trying to induce leaders of Indian opinion to be reasonable about the scheme of procedure suggested for the Statutory Commission.³⁵

In this regard, he informed V. J. Patel, President of the Legislative Assembly of India, and Dr. M. A. Ansari, of his willingness to meeting Gandhi. 'I cannot agree to any statement regarding subject matter of interview, as this would inevitably impair confidential character of meeting.'³⁶ Soon after he sent a telegram to Gandhi and Ansari in which he explained: "I am anxious to have a talk with you on certain important rather urgent matters, and if it is convenient to you, I should be very glad if you could come and see me in Delhi. The most convenient date for me would be Wednesday, November 2nd, at 11-30. I realize that I am giving you very short notice and that this must inevitably cause you inconvenience, but I hope it will not make it impossible for you to come. Please wire whether you can come on that date."³⁷

Gandhi had made the long journey from Mangalore in the South of India. Probably he came with the impression that his presence was needed to discuss the present unhappy communal situation in the country and he was, of course, ever anxious to impress on the authorities the economic value of his *Charkha* scheme.³⁸ It was at this meeting that Irwin met Gandhi for the first time, and found him 'an interesting personality.'³⁹ It is stated by one of Gandhi's biographers, Louis Fischer, that Irwin merely handed Gandhi the document announcing the impending arrival of an official British Commission led by John Simon to report on Indian conditions and make recommendations for political reforms.⁴⁰ The real point at issue was the nature of enquiry to

33. Birkenhead, Earl of; *Halifax Papers*, pp. 238-39.

34. The Earl of Halifax; *Fullness of Days*, p. 119.

35. Irwin to Viscount Halifax, November 6, 1927, *Halifax Papers*.

36. Telegram of Irwin to Gandhi, Oct. 24, 1927, *Halifax Papers*.

37. *Ibid.*

38. Irwin wrote to Viscount Halifax: 'It was rather like talking to some one who had stepped off one planet on to this for a short visit of a fortnight, and whose whole mental outlook was quite other to that which was regulating most of affairs on the planet to which he had descended', (Irwin to Viscount Halifax, November 6, 1927, *Halifax Papers*).

39. See *Times of India*, Nov. 5, 1927.

40. Fischer, Louis, *Mahatma Gandhi*, pp. 273-74

be undertaken by the Simon Commission and the best from in which the Indian opinion as expressed by the Central Legislature could be associated with it during the formative and final legislative stages. Soon thereafter, the Viceroy 'dismissed him with a few curt words', thus missing an opportunity of discussing the issues that lay between them.⁴¹ Gandhi was most disappointed, because he never imagined that the Simon Commission would form the dominant topic of discussion. If he had known this, probably he would have excused himself as his other engagements were very pressing.

The other Indian leaders were called only to be informed by the Viceroy that the nature of the Commission had already been finally decided upon by the British Government. Irwin's biographer, Alan Campbell Johnson, describes this episode as 'a deplorable lack of tact in the handling of the Indian leaders', who did not disguise from the Viceroy the fact that the Commission as constituted would be boycotted.⁴²

In fact, in undertaking such a step, the Viceroy was actuated by the desire to ensure that these leaders should be in possession of all and accurate facts and figures in regard to the momentous political decision taken by the Home Government in order that there might be no risk of their being taken by surprise and having to form their judgment on possibly misleading information. On official level, the Viceroy had confidential discussions, in this regard, with a Committee of the Government of India, consisting of S. R. Das, Sir Alexander Muddiman, Sir Basil Blackett and Sir John Thompson.⁴³ The Viceroy wrote to Governor of Punjab on October 20, 1927.

..... 'We must be careful to avoid giving the impression that we feel our case is weak one. If we appear to apologise for the Home Government's decision, we shall probably encourage Indian opinion to make a grievance of it, I see that there is a danger that extremists may be encouraged to take up an intransigent attitude if we give them ground for believing that we have a bad conscience in the matter and are callous about the consequences.'⁴⁴

41. *Ibid.*

42. See *Times of India*, Nov. 6, 1927.

43. Debates, Legislative Assembly, Vol. IV, Aug. 16, 1927.

44. Viceroy to Governor of Punjab, October 20, 1927, *Halifax Papers*.

On November 7, 1927, the Secretary of State sent a 'private and personal' telegram to the Viceroy; 'Statutory Commission announcement 5 P.M. Indian time, Tuesday, November 8th. will be suitable time of release in India.'⁴⁵

The Viceroy gave an important announcement on November 8, 1927 in connection with the appointment of the Statutory Commission. He stated that the previous Statute enacted by the British Parliament eight years ago had regulated the conditions under which India might learn by actual experience, whether or not the western system of representative Government was the appropriate means through which she might attain responsible self-government and report upon the progress made in the past, the appointment of a Statutory Commission was thought to be essential at the end of ten years. The Commission was to be presided over by one whose public position was due to his outstanding ability, intelligence and character, and it was hoped that the Commission would bring fresh, unbiased, unaffected and impartial judgment to bear upon an immensely complex constitutional issue.

While appointing the Statutory Commission, it was not feasible, of course, to dictate to the Commission what procedure it should follow during its duration of investigations in India; but it was opined that its task in taking evidence would be greatly facilitated if it were to invite the Central Legislature to appoint a Joint Select Committee, chosen from its elected and nominated non-official members which would draw up its views and proposals in writing and lay them before the Commission for examination in such manner as the latter may decide. The Committee might remain for any consultation which the Commission might desire at subsequent stages of the enquiry. It was also suggested that a similar procedure should be adopted with the Provincial Legislatures.⁴⁷

This procedure of consulting Indian opinion was thought to be easy and effective and it was to assure to Indians a better opportunity than they could have enjoyed in any other way of influencing

45. Secretary of State to the Viceroy, November 7, 1927, *Halifax Papers*.

46. Reforms Office, F. 15-17/Misc. 1929. See *Halifax Papers*; and *Times of India*, Nov. 10, 1927.

47. *Ibid.*

the passage of these great events. Moreover, this procedure would enable them to express themselves freely to the Commission, and it would also be within their power to challenge in detail any of the proposals made by His Majesty's Government before the Joint Select Committee of Parliament, and thus to advocate their own solutions.⁴⁸

It was also made clear that when the Commission had reported and its report had been examined by the Government of India, it would be the duty of the latter to present proposals to Parliament to adopt those proposals without first giving a full opportunity for Indian opinion of different schools to contribute its view upon them.⁴⁹

It was decided that the Statutory Commission should proceed to India early in the next year. The purpose of this preliminary tour was not so much the intention of taking evidence as for the members to gain some experience of the working of legislatures, local-Government institutions, educational centres and any other public department which mainly concerned the problem they had been set to unravel and also to 'form in the mind's eye' a clear picture of Indian conditions with which they were asked to deal.⁵⁰

The following persons were appointed as members of the Statutory Commission.⁵¹

1. Sir John Allsebrook Simon⁵² (Chairman)
2. Viscount Burnham⁵³
3. Baron Strathcona⁵⁴
4. George Richard Land—Fox⁵⁵

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*

50. Home—Public, F. 603, 1927 and Debates, House of Commons, Vol. 219, pp. 19 ff. Nov. 1927.

52. He was a celebrated constitutional lawyer in England.

53. A Member of the House of Lords.

54. A Member of the House of Lords. On his appointment as a member of the Statutory Commission for India, he relinquished his office as Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party Organization. (*Times of India*, Nov. 9, 1927).

55. A Member of the House of Commons

5. Edward Cecil George Cadogn⁵⁶

6. Vernon Hartshorn⁵⁷

7. Clement Richard Attlee⁵⁸

J. W. Bhore and S. F. Steward were appointed as Secretaries of the Commission.⁵⁹

The Composition of the Statutory Commission was one for the decision of Parliament and His Majesty's Government,⁶⁰ and its procedure was settled by the Commission itself and did not form the subject of correspondence with the Governor-General-in-Council.⁶¹

On the 24th November, the resolution was moved in the House of Commons by Earl Winterton that the cost of the Commission would be borne by the Indian revenues, but His Majesty's Government would contribute a sum of £ 20,000 towards it.⁶² The Secretary of State also made it clear to the Viceroy that the Commission's hands should not only be free, but should be known to be free.⁶³

It was an affront to India to appoint a Parliamentary Commission and to exclude Indians. Indians were not prepared to accord welcome to such a Commission. A lot of agitation, criticism and anger were shown by the people of India soon after the announcement of the appointment of the Statutory Commission. Indeed, India was in the midst of a great political upheaval brought about by the announcement of an all-British Commission to work at the future constitution of India. Not only was the whole procedure proposed by the Government condemned by Indian leaders from the extreme left to the extreme right, but there was a clear indication that if the proposals were persisted in, the Government would have to reckon with a vigorous and widespread boycott.

56. A Member of the House of Commons and was the Secretary of the Speaker.

57. He replaced Stephen Walsh, (Home Pub. F. 603, 1927) and *Debates, House of Commons* Vol. 211, p. 1129, Nov.—Dec. 1927.

58. A Labour Member in the House of Commons.

59. Home, Public, F. 603, 1927.

60. Home Public, F. 1/15, 1928.

61. Home, Public, F. 1/70, 1928.

62. Home—Public, F. 603-1927.

63. Secretary of State to the Viceroy, Dec. 23, 1927, *Halifax Papers*.

British Colonial Attitudes Towards Indians in East Africa*

BY

HARVEY G. SOFF

Today in East Africa, Indians frequently face governmental actions that appear to be discriminatory, but those policies are an inheritance from Africa's former colonial masters. Throughout the period of British rule in East Africa, although the Indian was a dominant force in the economic and political life of the region,¹ he was also the object of racial discrimination by many colonial officials and European settlers acting under the guise of "Christianity and Civilization." The British accepted the Darwinian proposal of survival of the fittest, and moulded it with Spencerian Darwinism to justify their actions. It was a racist theory, and many Asians in East Africa believe that part of that ideology has been adapted by present East African regimes to meet the needs of their people. The governments of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, however, justify their actions towards Indians with an economic and nationalistic motive. Fascist tendencies have occasionally crept in, possibly due to thorough indoctrination during the era of political subservience to Europe, but the leaders of the East African nations have publicly denounced racism as subversive to the goals of modern Africa.

Indians have been associated with East Africa since earliest times, and it has been suggested that the consulate of Great Britain

*The term Indian refers to all people of the subcontinent. Although modern scholars often refer to them as Asians, Indian was the title during the colonial era, and it is used here for ease of clarification. When the word Asian or Asiatic is noted, it is intended as synonymous with the original "Indian".

1. For a brief description of Indian involvement in the economic development of East Africa see: Harvey G. Soff, "Indian Influence on Kenya's Nyanza Province, 1900-1925," *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. XLVI, Part III, No. 138, December 1968, pp. 369-386.

was established there primarily to protect her Indian subjects.² Once European domination was established, relations between the government and Indian immigrants were often cordial, although there were many instances of European intolerance toward them. As early as 1893, Sir Harry Johnston visualised Africa divided into sectors with both North and South Africa settled by "white and whiteish races," but tropical Africa "must be ruled by whites, developed by Indians, and worked by blacks."³ Sir Harry did not foresee the eventual difficulties such a program would create, but he anticipated the need for Indian involvement in East Africa. All administrators did not feel, as Sir Harry did, that Indians were a welcome addition to the population of eastern Africa. Francis Hall's attitude indicated the trend for many other officials and settlers. Hall believed that the Indians in Africa were the refuse of India, the criminal element of society, and prone to stealing and raiding.⁴

Sir Frederick Jackson paternised Indians on rare occasions, but generally condemned their culture, appearance, and insubordination. The Indian community, Sir Frederick believed, "apart from the squalor ... were crowded with prostitutes, small boys, and other accessories to the bestial vices so commonly practised by Orientals ... there were rumors of the Lumbwa becoming restive on account of so many of their young women being inveigled away from their homes, and harboured in those sinks of iniquity."⁵ One day while riding a mule along the road between the Molo River and Nakuru, Jackson met an Indian. When he did not step out of the path and acknowledge Jackson as a superior white man, Jackson's porter frightened him so that he ran off. Sir Frederick later wrote that the victim was an "insolent ex-coolie," although he never spoke to the man to determine his occupation or ancestry. Jackson also questioned the argument advanced by many Indians

2. M. R. Dilley, *British Policy in Kenya Colony* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1937), p. 11.

3. Philip Mason, *The Birth of a Dilemma* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1958), p. 214.

4. Francis (Frank) Hall to his Father, 15 Aug. 1899. Letters, in *Hall Papers*, Rhodes House, Oxford.

5. Sir Frederick Jackson, *Early Days in East Africa* (London: Arnold, 1930), p. 325.

that they had been responsible for opening the interior to civilization. Prior to the advent of the Imperial British East Africa Company, Jackson doubted if Indians had any share in the development of the country and denied that before 1900 Indian *dukas* had been built inland. At the same time, however, Jackson did not also admit that Europeans had refused to venture into the interior to establish trading posts. Although most Indians were categorized as inferior and insolent, Jackson wondered where a person could meet "in India, or out of it, a more charming little old gentleman than Alidina Visram."⁶

Until 1902 when the Uganda Railway reached Kisumu, on Lake Victoria, Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs, the Marquess of Salisbury and Lord Lansdowne, had continually advised the Commissioners in East Africa to approve and promote immigration of Indians. Several schemes for the settlement of Indians in the Kenya highlands and other areas were submitted by George Mackenzie, a former director of the IBEA Co., and George Whitehouse, Chief Engineer of the Uganda Railway.⁷ Their proposals were not implemented, and it was not until the Railway was completed that the local government took intensive measures to increase non-African habitation in East Africa. European homesteads were allotted primarily to provide sufficient freights for the railways in order to recover the enormous funds spent in its construction. In the earliest stages, the Home government had no preference concerning the national origin of colonists; in 1903 it recommended that a grant of 5,000 square miles be made to East European Zionists.⁸

By 1902 restriction of Indian settlement on the Kenya highlands became the official unwritten policy. Commissioner Charles Eliot of the East Africa Protectorate became the leading proponent of a white colony that he hoped would eventually be granted self-government. Eliot acted in accord with several white settlers

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 326-7.

7. Robert G. Gregory, *India and East Africa, A History of Race Relations within the British Empire, 1890-1939* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 67-68.

8. Lord Hailey, *An African Survey* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1938), p. 820.

in the Protectorate, and although there were less than three dozen, they were able to form a strong bond that negated the Zionist proposal and thwarted ideas Indians had about farming in the highlands. During January 1902, a group of Europeans formed an association to dissuade Indian immigration, and requested government assistance in influencing Africans to become servants on European plantations.⁹ This Society to Promote European Immigration had Eliot's support, and he recommended that the Foreign Office limit Indian areas to the lowlands where the climate was unhealthy for Europeans. Eliot believed that "the East Africa Highlands are for the most part a white man's country and [hoped] that they will be taken up by white colonists in the near future."¹⁰ He further stipulated that it was not in the best interests of the colony to permit large number of Indians into the highlands.

In 1901 Jackson became Deputy Commissioner of the East Africa Protectorate, and eventually developed a land policy in opposition to Eliot's. Jackson issued a circular in August 1902 that permitted Indian occupation of small plots along the railway, with the exception of land lying between Kiu and Fort Ternan. Ironically, this attempt to allow limited Indian occupation of the highlands, was also the first official restriction against their holding prime rural areas. As late as 1910, although several Indians and Goans had been granted plots of 10 acres each in the vicinity of Nairobi, within the township itself only 238 acres had been allocated them.¹¹ This insignificant figure, when compared to estates of over 100,000 acres for Lord Delamere and Major E. Grogan, indicate the discriminatory reaction the local government exhibited toward Indian attempts to own land in the highlands. Jackson opposed Eliot's scheme during 1903 and 1904, and found the idea of a white man's country inconceivable. Jackson did not want Indian settlement to replace or equal European, but if Europeans were to make the highlands their private domain, thousands of Kikuyu would be forcibly moved, and Jackson opposed this action.

9. Eliot to Lansdowne, 21 Jan. 1902. F.O. 2/566.

10. Eliot to Landowne, 5 Jan. 1902. F.O. 2/566.

11. M. P. K. Sorrenson, *Origins of European Settlement in Kenya* (Nairobi: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), p. 162.

Eliot's land policy was never sufficiently disputed, and in August 1902 he issued an official Notice that advertised homesteads for sale or lease. Due to the liberal terms of Eliot's land policy, European immigration into the Protectorate increased considerably in 1903, and by April of that year, over 130 Europeans had obtained land grants.¹² Eliot also recruited settlers from South Africa, and until the commencement of World War I, South Africans formed a majority of the non-African population in the highlands. Eliot succumbed to the segregation wishes of the settlers, and after 1902 the Land Office refused to consider Asian applications for land within the highlands outside the limits of Nairobi.

After he left East Africa, Eliot described his attitudes towards non-European colonization in East Africa. "Now that there is a steady influx of European English-speaking settlers," he said, "I deprecate the . . . grant of land to Indians in the highlands." Eliot justified his attitude because the highlands were not "really congenial to Indians." They did not appreciate the climate, and since most Indians were not farmers, fertile land would be wasted.¹³ The Europeans, however, valued the temperate climate of the highlands, and were willing to carve out an agricultural empire.

During his tenure in East Africa, Eliot had not issued legislation or rules under the Crown Lands Ordinance that ordained racial qualifications for land grants. In September 1903, A. M. Jeevanjee, an outstanding Indian contractor, applied for land but the land officer felt that Jeevanjee might attempt to secure, through devious means, a large freehold grant, and he asked Eliot for a ruling. Eliot responded that Indians and Europeans should be segregated, and "it was better not to grant any large holdings to Indians between, say, Machakos Road and Fort Ternan."¹⁴ Until July 1906 this memorandum provided the basis for land distribution in the central highlands.

12. Gregory, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

13. Sir Charles Eliot, *The East Africa Protectorate* (London: Arnold, 1905), pp. 179, 309.

14. Quoted in Sorrenson, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

Eliot accepted a common misconception that Indians sent all their money out of Africa to support their families in India and although the Indian was willing to trade in foreign lands, they never became full citizens or developers. This idea pervades East Africa today, and has been adopted by many scholars. In his recent volume, however, Robert G. Gregory has differentiated between Muslim and Hindu Indians, and suggests that the trader, usually a Muslim, did not come to Africa on a temporary basis.¹⁵ Instead, he arrived with his family and presently many Indian merchants in East Africa are second and third generation.

In 1904 Eliot was succeeded by Sir Donald Stewart who followed the basic structure left by Eliot. During October 1904, Stewart appointed a Land Committee of five Europeans to investigate segregation in the highlands. The Committee was dominated by Delamere. Hearings were held and only eight Indians were allowed to present evidence. They criticized Eliot and Stewart for disregarding earlier promises that no segregation would be tolerated by the Government. European witnesses, however, strongly applauded the policy of Eliot and Stewart and were unanimous in recommending the continued prohibition on Indian estates in the non-urban areas of the highlands. The "Delamere" Committee refused to acknowledge Indian requests and approved European proposals. The Committee Report stated that there was "no objection to the general proposition that Indians should hold land in the Protectorate, but considering that only a comparatively small area of the Protectorate is suitable for European settlement and colonization it is desirable that the land within the area should be reserved for the support and maintenance of a white population."¹⁶ Stewart seconded the Committee's finding and recommended their acceptance to the Colonial Office.

When Stewart died suddenly on October 1, 1905, he was temporarily succeeded by Jackson, until the arrival of Sir James Hayes Sadler in December. Sadler had a distinguished career in India, and early in 1906 he addressed a meeting of 70 Indian merchants in Mombasa, and spoke to them in Gujarati. Although Sadler had a fondness for Indians, he was unable to reverse the

15. Gregory, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34.

16. *Report of the Land Committee, 1905*, p. 15.

policy of his predecessors since Delamere and the settlers exerted great pressure on him. European resentment against Sadler was so intense, that Delamere demanded his resignation, and the Commissioner was nicknamed "flannelfoot."

Indian agitation began to develop under the Sadler administration. Although he had recommended to Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Elgin, that a Legislative Council be formed with Indian representation, it was not until June 1909 that A. M. Jeevanjee was appointed the first Indian member of that body. Jeevanjee's English was poor and his efforts to represent Indians justly was denied when he was not allowed to bring an interpreter with him to Legislative sessions. The selection of Jeevanjee was not the first effort that Indians had made to achieve political and economic equality. In 1900 an Indian Association had been formed in Mombasa, and by 1906 a similar group was organised in Nairobi under the leadership of Alidina Visram. In April 1906, President Jeevanjee of the Mombasa Association, raised over Rs. 20,000 within two hours to finance the presentation of Indian grievances to the government.¹⁷ The Indians, however, in spite of their protestations, were continually denied ownership of land in the highlands, and were forced to seek farmland either on the seacoast or Kibos—a small agricultural settlement near Lake Victoria.

The Colonists Association, under the leadership of Delamere voiced discontent at government inaction, demanded the acceptance of the findings of the Land Committee, and submitted a resolution that insisted on the exclusion of Indians from the highlands. Sadler submitted their request to Elgin, and at the same time supported them with previous statements by Jackson and Eliot. Elgin approved Sadler's recommendations and issued what became known as the Elgin pledge:

I have to request that you will cause the Colonists Association to be informed that it would not be in accordance with the policy of His Majesty's Government to exclude any class of His subjects from holding land in any part of a

17. W. McGregor Ross, *Kenya From Within: A Short Political History* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1927), p. 303.

British Protectorate; but that, in view of the comparatively limited area in the Protectorate suitable for European colonisation, a reasonable discretion will be exercised in dealing with applications for land on the part of natives of India and other non-Europeans.... land outside municipal limits, roughly lying between Kiu and Fort Ternan, should be granted to European settlers.¹⁸

The Elgin pledge did not place legal restrictions against the Indian securing property, but it became a matter of administrative practice to refuse allocation of rural farmland to Indians. The Crown Lands Ordinance of 1915 did not prevent Indians from purchasing land, but as late as 1938 Lord Hailey noted that in practice only Europeans were granted the acreage in question. Furthermore, the transfer of land from persons of one race to those of another required government sanction, and it became impossible for a European to sell to an Indian.¹⁹ In addition to his proposal for a white man's country in central Kenya, Lord Delamere visualised a great European colony stretching from the highlands to the Cape "and governed for His Majesty by a true Afrikaner bond."²⁰

All British officials did not support the view of white settlers. Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Winston Churchill, made a safari to East Africa and became a leading proponent of Indian contributions, although his proposals never gained sufficient momentum in the Colonial Office. Churchill emphasized that the Indian was a British subject, and was entitled to all rights such status included. He knew that the Indian had been responsible for the military pacification of the colony, had labored to build the Railway, and pioneered in virgin areas.²¹ European settlement was a result of the Uganda Railway, and the Railway was created by Indian labor. The advance of both races into central Kenya, therefore, depended on each other. Churchill also foresaw inequities when he wrote that, "There are already in

18. Elgin to Sadler, Confidential, 17 July 1906. C.O. 533/14.

19. Hailey, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

20. Elspeth Huxley, *White Man's Country: Lord Delamere and the Making of Kenya* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1935), p. 206.

21. Winston Churchill, *My African Journey* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1908), pp. 49-50.

miniature all the elements of keen political discord, all, the materials for hot and acrimonious debate. The white man versus the black; the Indian versus both."²² He did not, however, visualise the most significant racial discontent: the relationship of Indian and African after European withdrawal.

Churchill's defense of Indians in East Africa was inadequate, and they remained subject to vindictive charges by many Europeans. Delamere criticised the Indian police force in Kenya by relating that Africans had told him that they had been able to escape punishment by bribing dishonest Indians.²³ Such accusations by Delamere might have seemed insignificant, but similar charges were voiced by Jackson in official dispatches to Lewis Harcourt, Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1910-1915. Jackson condemned Indians for being immoral, dishonest, insanitary, and the causal agent for disease in Nairobi.²⁴ Jackson refused to admit that he was biased. It was simply a matter of class structure, and Indians were of a lower stratum. Jackson was not precise in his remarks to Harcourt. Most traders in Nairobi were representatives of established Indian families at Mombasa, not lower class itinerants. Although many did not practice the type of personal hygiene the British would have preferred, the fact that the administration forced Indians to locate in the flat plains of Nairobi, without proper drainage, caused a severe health hazard. Indians lived in swampy lowlands, while Europeans thrived in healthy hills surrounding the city.²⁵

Although Lord Lugard was not a proponent of Indian settlement in the highlands, he understood why many Indians believed that they were entitled to equal rights. Europeans claimed that the government had solicited them to set along the railway, but Indians were also invited, as labourers and traders. Lugard condemned those Asiatics who resided in East Africa on a temporary basis. In 1908 he wanted Indian colonists, not transients.²⁶

22. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

23. Huxley, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

24. Jackson to Harcourt, 25 Nov. 1910, C.O. 533/78.

25. Sorrenson, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

26. Lord Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (London: Wm. Blackwood, 1922), p. 320.

Polarised views on Indians were voiced by Grogan, a leading rancher, and Jeevanjee. By 1910 Grogan had amassed an estate of approximately 100,000 acres and was opposed to Indian residence. He acknowledged that a few were "decent" and "intelligent", but the remainder were corrupt and immoral. Those who were honest had a right to do business in Kenya, but "they had no right to control it; the Empire owed it to South Africa to keep them out."²⁷ Jeevanee, on the other hand, stated that, "I have made the country. All the best property in Nairobi belongs to me. I built all the Government buildings and leased them to the Administration. I built all the hospitals and post offices between Mombasa and Port Florence. I was the sole contractor on the Uganda Railway."²⁸ The European community and the local and Home governments refused to listen to him. Sir Percy Girouard, Governor of Kenya from 1909-1912, placed the strength of his office behind the European colonists and opposed Indian agriculture in the highlands as well as at Kibos. Girouard was willing to concede land to Indians only along the coast, and had tried to postpone the appointment of Jeevanjee to the Legislative Council.²⁹ In 1910 Jeevanjee did secure his seat, but resigned the following year and Indians were without representation on the Legislative Council until 1919. During that interim period, the government claimed that there were no Indians qualified for the position. By 1912 pressure against Indians had been successful, because the Governor reported that Indian expansion had been halted, and a constant flow of European immigrants were entering East Africa.³⁰

The firm establishment of European control in East Africa was partly the result of the policies of Harcourt and his predecessor, the Earl of Crewe. Administrators who appeared sympathetic to Indians were transferred to posts outside East Africa. Sadler was sent to the Windward Islands in 1909, and Governor Hesketh Bell of Uganda, who vehemently opposed European settlement in his colony, was sent to Nigeria to permit Girouard to come to Kenya. Girouard's successor, Sir Henry Belfield, also supported European

27. Dilley, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

28. Quoted in Gregory, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-2.

29. Girouard to Crewe, Telegram, 23 Sept. 1909. C.O. 533/62.

30. *Report on British East Africa, 1912*. Enclosure in Girouard to Harcourt, Confidential, 19 Feb. 1912. C.O. 533/102.

paramountcy in the Kenya Highlands, and after a decade, European control of Kenya was solidly entrenched.³¹

During the years immediately preceding World War I, the topic of Indian contributions to East Africa was again commonly discussed. The Royal African Society printed that Indian "petty traders introduced, and are still maintaining, a great civilising influence amongst the primitive savages; the weight of their presence in the development of the country is shown."³² The government and the majority of the British population were unwilling to accept the theories of the Society, and instead avowed the work of Lord Cranworth who detested Indians. Cranworth wrote that the Indians in Africa were riff-raff, immoral and detrimental to everyone. Indians were able to survive without food, were insanitary, and made no use of soap or clean clothes. Cranworth also claimed that Indians sold goods at below cost, but made up for this loss by selling other merchandise on the black market or by other illicit activities. The Indian was also accused of running countless houses of prostitution, gambling, and accepting stolen goods. "There is hardly a crime among natives that is not traceable to the Indian."³³ Such slanderous remarks, made without foundation, became the hallmark of European attitudes towards Indians, and in the present era, many Africans refer to *all* Indians as dishonest leeches who are robbing East Africa of her wealth.

The Indian has often been accused by Britons for being part of a society that prefers to segregate itself, is anti-social and not willing to accept European advice. Beginning in 1912, not only were most of the highlands reserved solely for Europeans, but certain residential areas were demarcated as strictly European. Occupation of residences was limited to Europeans, and sales of property were allotted only to European bidders. This allowed the development of a residential segregation and was opposed by the Indian community. Indians remained isolated, not only because

31. Gregory, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.

32. E. H. Sadler, "Notes on the Geography of British East Africa," *Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. II, 1911-1912, p. 186.

33. Lord Cranworth, *A Colony in the Making, or Sport and Profit in East Africa* (London: Macmillan, 1912), pp. 62-64.

they wished to remain a cohesive unit, but because they had no choice.

On March 7, 1914, the East Africa Indian National Congress was formed to protest the unfair treatment that Indians were receiving in public services, as well as economic and political discrimination. Belfield was not sympathetic with their grievances, and the ensuing War allowed him to dismiss their demands in favor of the war effort. During the next several years, the position of Indians in East Africa reached its nadir.³⁴ Most interested parties had partly acknowledged the contribution of the Asiatic trader to the economy, but during the War even that aspect of Indians in East Africa was condemned. The South Kavirondo Annual Report stated that, "It is regrettable and disheartening to find how unenterprising the two Indian shopkeepers in Kisii are—they as a rule have only small stocks and their shops though being shockingly examples of evil-smelling tin shanties cannot at present be done anything with, owing to the Land Office having extended the time in which permanent shops have to be erected."³⁵ The War caused a high increase in the cost of import, and it is not difficult to understand how a petty trader, working on a profit margin of pennies, was not able to fully stock a store. In addition, since government permits were temporary, it is unreasonable to assume that a small merchant would risk the large investment necessary to construct a permanent shop, only to have his license and permit revoked the following year.

In 1917 a local economic commission was appointed by Belfield. The commission included Delamere and Grogan, as well as six other Europeans. No Indians were represented, and Indians were not summoned to testify. The Commission accused Asians of stifling the economic growth of the country by prohibiting African participation in business. The Report of the commission did not include, however, information on the European exploitation of Africans, but showed the Indians as uncivilized and below the level of Africans. Indians were, in fact, a detriment to the development of Africans, and the Commission re-

34. Gregory, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-4.

35. *South Kavirondo Annual Report, 1914-1915*, p. 20.

commended halting further Indian immigration.³⁶ This prejudicial report was presented to Viscount Milner, Secretary of State for the Colonies, and although he and Parliament rejected it, bitterness increased among the Indian community. Milner, however, did not adopt a policy of racial segregation in the townships, but insisted that no ban be placed on Indian immigration or their obtaining land outside the highlands.³⁷

When World War I ended, many Asiatics in East Africa and India demanded that the former German colony of Tanganyika be entrusted to them, and only then would the racial situation in East Africa ease. Speaking at the Legislative Council meeting in November 1918, Delamere stipulated that he did not wish to see Colonial Office interference in East Africa, and he defended Indian participation on the Council. His motives indicated expediency, not humanity. It was designed to permit the Indian community to remain abreast of affairs of state, but not intended to allow Indians "to entrench one iota on the rights of the Britons to govern a British colony."³⁸ When Tanganyika became a British mandate, Delamere, Grogan, and over a dozen other settlers, issued a petition that denounced Indian aspirations in Tanganyika. The Europeans stated that it would be better for the Africans to return to German control than be governed by Indians. Such an opinion was then adopted unanimously in the Legislative Council. The hopes and demands of the Indians were again ignored primarily because of settler agitation. The Colonial Government spoke of equal rights for all British subjects, but continued to allow Kenya to discriminate because of race and colour. In Tanganyika, however, over the protests of Kenyans such as Delamere and Grogan, Indians did improve their position. The British government sold a large proportion of the land to them and several also gained control of former German import and export firms. Soon the retail trade of the country was controlled by Indians, and several became large-scale farmers and ginnery operators employing many Africans. Indians may have supplied

36. *Economic Commission, Final Report, Part I, 1919, p. 21.*

37. *Government Notice 281, 18 Aug. 1920.*

38. *Legislative Council Minutes, Novemer, 1918, pp.40.*

approximately 30 per cent. of the total capital invested in agriculture. This figure is significant when considering the charges levied by Kenya that Indians would not appreciate the climate and soil of the fertile highlands because they were not farmers, but petty traders. Also, the largest sugar estates and reinneries in Uganda were owned and managed by Indians. The terms of the Tanganyika mandate aided Indian advancement since discrimination was absent in the laws of the Mandate Commission.

Major-General Sir Edward Northey, who had served in East Africa during the War, was Governor of Kenya from 1919 until he was recalled three years later. Indians were demanding equal representation in the Legislative Council, but Northey, in the tradition of his predecessors, denied their request. He insisted that European jurisdiction over the government was imperative and most Indians were not qualified to vote.³⁹ When Churchill became Secretary of State for the Colonies, he recalled Northey and replaced him with Sir Robert Coryndon, the former Governor of Uganda. The settlers believed that Northey had been relieved because he opposed Churchill's position on the Indian question. In 1920 Coryndon had proposed the appointment of one Indian to the Legislative Council of Uganda. Indians in that colony far outnumbered Europeans, and the Indian community rejected a Council on which they would have only half the European vote. Equal representation was demanded, and it was six years before the first Indian took his seat in Council. Gradually more members were added to the Council, but the first African was not appointed until after World War II.

During the early 1920s, suffrage rights for Indians in Kenya became a controversial topic, particularly to white settlers led by Delamere. In 1921 Indians numbered 22,822, and they demanded equal representation with Europeans. They were offered communal voting, and the government of India issued a harsh objection. The Colonial and India Offices compromised in the Wood-Winterton proposals giving common electoral roll to Indians based on property and educational qualifications. This denied the fran-

39. Hailey, *op. cit.*, p. 341.

40. *Legislative Council Minutes*, 24 Feb. 1919, p. 3.

chise to over 90% of the potential voters. As an attempt to compensate, open immigration for Indians was recommended. Delamere and his followers viewed the Wood-Winterton Agreement as impairing their privileged position, and they threatened armed rebellion while Delamere led a committee to London to air grievances.⁴¹

The Indians reacted to the Wood-Winterton Agreement by contesting the land laws of the highlands, and managed to purchase several acres from white settlers leaving East Africa. Other homesteaders became enraged at this incursion in "their country," and armed Europeans were often seen leading patrols through Indian districts of Nairobi. Out of fear, many *dukas* closed, and Coryndon became the target for a possible kidnapping by unhappy Europeans. Delamere became leader of the insurgents, and it appeared that the Home Government was unable to enforce its laws.⁴² A truce was finally arranged between the local government and settlers, and the new Colonial Secretary, the Duke of Devonshire, arranged for a discussion in London. Coryndon went with a European and Indian delegation. The Duke issued a White Paper in July 1923 that proclaimed "native paramountcy" as the primary goal of British rule in East Africa.

In 1922 Lugard published *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, and he proposed a solution to the "Indian Question." Lugard stated that Indians, as British subjects, should have equality with other settlers without segregation and discrimination in either land, politics, or education. The European settlers tenaciously opposed any concessions to Indians and defended separation primarily because of sanitation conditions. Lugard viewed the situation in East Africa as similar to Nyasaland and South Africa, and foresaw racial and economic rivalries unless adequate preventive measures were taken. Lugard's answer was to define "the area to be appropriated to British settlement, and granting to the settlers within that area representative government leading up eventually to that complete self-government

41. Hailey, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-5.

42. Sir Geoffrey Archer, *Personal and Historical Memoirs of an East African Administrator* (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1963), p. 152.

which a virile and progressive British colony may rightly claim.⁴³ His recommendations favored the Europeanization of Kenya, and were unacceptable to the Asians who did not desire a restricted area, but preferred an intermingling of the races. Lugard assumed that Indians disagreed with his solution because they were not settlers and colonists.

Another publication of the 1920s written by a colonial officer and widely read, was C. W. Hobley's *Kenya, From Chartered Company to Crown Colony*. Hobley had spent many years in East Africa, and in 1929 released his recollections which severely criticised Indians. According to Hobley, Indians were responsible for the creation of towns in Africa, and towns were "sanctuaries for youths who wish to avoid tribal obligations." Instead of running to the urban areas, Hobley preferred that Africans work under contract on European farms. On the coast, Indian financiers often assumed control of plantations when the indebted owner failed to meet his monetary obligations. As a result, except for Mombasa, the coast had decreased in importance. Hobley believed that Indians lived "in an atmosphere of intrigue.... It was curious to discover that old European residents on the coast occasionally became infested with the virus, through close contact with the Asiatic mind." In spite of the unfortunate influence of Indians on the coast, Hobley felt that since Europeans and Asians lived peacefully at Mombasa, it should be a model for upcountry relations. It was the militancy of the Indian segment, Hobley stipulated, that created the "Indian Question" for political purposes. Hobley did not desire to see an Indian representative in the Legislative Council unless there were at least 500 registered Indians based on property and educational standards, and educational qualifications included a working knowledge of both written and oral English.⁴⁴ Although Hobley did not elaborate on adequate property or income requirements, it is apparent that a majority of Indians in East Africa would not have met the minimum standards for the franchise since the average Indian trader paid annual rental fees of Rs. 150 for each *duka* and his income often was only Rs. 180 per annum.

43. Lugard, *op. cit.*, p. 321.

44. C. W. Hobley, *Kenya, From Chartered Company to Crown Colony* (London: Witherby, Ltd., 1929), pp. 148, 168, 230, 241.

The disposition of settlers, Lugard, Hobley, and other colonial officers who vilified Indians was enanced by Julian Huxley when he compiled *Africa View* in 1931 after his visit to East Africa. Huxley did not consider himself a racist, but wanted all Indians removed from Africa "because their presence at once trebles the number of racial problems." The British had an obligation to the African, and that was to educate him to secure adequate governmental positions that were then held by Asiatics. Huxley did not, however, envision Africans securing administrative posts controlled by Europeans. Huxley also blamed them for most of the illness and depredation in Mombasa: "The Negroes are willing to learn and have a natural barbaric cleanliness; the Indians do not want to change any of their ways, and combine an ancient civilization with squalor." Wherever Huxley travelled, he claimed people reinforced his facts about the uncleanness of Indians.⁴⁵

When Sir Edward Grigg was Governor of Kenya during the late 1920s, his main objective was the formation of a closer union with Uganda and Tanganyika. In his farewell address, however, he showed the patronizing attitude common to many British administrators. Grigg confessed his fondness for various Indians in Kenya; the Lorry Driver, the *duka-walla*, the hardworking peasant. He hoped that Indians would soon change their feelings of not being "friends." He assured them that "friendliness on their part will always meet with friendliness on the part of the other communities." Years later Grigg propounded that international communism was the force behind the Mau Mau uprising and that outside forces were responsible for unrest among Kenya's Indians during his tenure.⁴⁶

Perhaps the most significant African volume of the 1930's was Lord Hailey's, *An African Survey*. By 1938 the Asian population of Kenya numbered almost 40,000. They had a powerful Indian Association with numerous local branches, comprised three of ten unofficial members on the Legislative Council, and were the principal agents of trade in the country. Hailey found that although the

45. Julian Huxley, *Africa View* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1933), pp. 26, 162, 419-20.

46. Lord Altrincham, *Kenya's Opportunity* (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1955), p. 296.

question of land rights in the highlands was still a troublesome issue, Indians desired homesteads only for status, not for potential agricultural use. The Indians had made contributions to East Africa, but Hailey foresaw serious problems in the future. He saw that it was impossible for Kenya to survive without Indian artisans and traders but realised that if Africans became skilled, the Indian population would suffer. "It is possible," he said, "that in the near future Indians will have to face more substantial difficulties. The gradual increase in the number of educated Africans is bound to result in increasing competition with Indians." Once the African was educated, Hailey rationalised that he would replace the Indian in government and in business.⁴⁷

Hailey disagreed with the practice of barring Indians, regardless of economic and educational attainment, from European clubs and hotels. The situation in Kenya is much the same today, except that Asians control many clubs and Africans do not have access to them. A case in point: At the meeting of the Mombasa Rotary Club in March 1970, approximately 100 persons attended a dinner and party. Of that total number, one African man and one African woman were present. It seems as difficult for Africans to cross the colour barrier today in their own independent country, as it was for Indians two decades ago.⁴⁸

During the entire colonial period prior to World War II, administrators and Africans, regardless of their feelings towards Indians as a race, understood the basic value of trade conducted by Indians. After the War, however, attitudes began to change, and the Indian was viewed, particularly in Uganda, as a potential political rival who might permanently exclude the African from power. The administration began an intensive program of training Africans to enter retail businesses prior to independence.⁴⁹ By 1949 the unofficial part of the Legislative Council was composed of three Europeans and three Asians, plus four Africans, and the

47. Hailey, *op. cit.*, pp. 336-341.

48. The author and his wife were the guests of the Rotary Club of Mombasa at a dinner party during March 1970, and during the 4 hours of festivities, they were the only persons to socialise with the blacks.

49. H. S. Morris, *The Indians in Uganda* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 144.

following year African representation doubled, while European and Asian membership increased by one person each, and in 1953 African representation reached twenty with eleven Europeans and eight Asians.⁵⁰ Asians still did not experience equal representation with Europeans by the dawn of Independence.

In 1959 the conflict between Indians and Africans in Uganda reached a climax resulting in a boycott movement. The Uganda National Movement was organized and became a combination of prominent Ganda politicians, traditionalists, and residents of the infamous Katwe suburb of Kampala. A general boycott of Asian businesses was established, and anyone who did not observe it was punished. Considerable damage to property and person occurred. Although the colonial government exiled many rebels to Northern Province, and parts of Buganda were placed under martial law, the boycott continued into 1960.⁵¹ When the disturbances were finally squelched, bitterness between Africans and Indians remained, and they were left to settle their differences because the colonial government shortly withdrew from Uganda. When independence for Uganda appeared imminent, many Asians were pessimistic about their future. They knew that it would be more difficult for them to influence an independent black government than the colonial administration.

In Kenya, Indian agitation since the first years of the twentieth century had questioned the validity of a white man's country. As late as the mid 1950's a European movement was organised. The Federal Independence Party, to establish a system of racial segregation in Kenya similar to South Africa's apartheid. The FIP was not successful, and its failure may partially be credited to Indian refusal to surrender their rights, particularly political rights: the essence of FIP platforms.⁵²

Following independence in the early 1960s, East African governments generally followed the racial pattern initiated by the British. Open and direct discrimination was not propagated, but

50. H. F. Morris and James S. Read, *Uganda: The Development of its Laws and Constitution* (London: Stevens & Sons, 1966), pp. 27, 51.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

52. John S. Roberts, *A Land Full of People: Life in Kenya Today* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), pp. 110-111.

subtle manoeuvres were initiated to drive Asians out of Africa. The Constitution of Uganda gave protection against deprivation of property without compensation, but non-citizens are not given equal protection under the law. Asians who did not take advantage of government edicts to apply for African citizenship in the first years of independence are now realising that their residence in East Africa is in jeopardy. The governments are posting notice that all non-citizens must vacate permanent businesses within a certain period of time. Frequently, the Asiatic is not able to dispose of his property satisfactorily, and he virtually gives it away to the government. The business is then taken over by indigenous Africans with little training, and within a few months the *duka* is forced to close due to bankruptcy. The country has not only lost an Asiatic, but a former business is permanently closed. In Uganda, black Kenyans were generally permitted to sell souvenirs on the sidewalks in front of larger hotels, but in 1970 the Ugandan government expelled them in order to benefit Ugandans. The process of Africanization has reached the stage of Ugandization, Kenyaization, Tanzaniaization. The exodus of Asians as generally supported by the "common man" in Africa who still views the Indian as unsympathetic to his needs. Asians do not often give Africans jobs in their small shops, and are then accused of robbing the ignorant African peasant. In *dukas* where Asians have hired local Africans to work, the Asian generally treats his employee as an inferior, not an equal. In most Asian shops, regardless of the number of Africans waiting for service, if a non-African enters he will receive immediate attention. Such treatment creates unrest and distrust on the part of Africans. The Asians can ease the problem themselves, by securing African help, treating them with fairness, and eventually incorporating the African as a partner. This may seem an impossibility for the small trader, but if his economic monopoly is not voluntarily ended, he will have nothing.

Modern leaders of East Africa have discussed the Asians in their countries and their published opinions are commendable, but do not seem to form the basis for real situations. President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania has worked for the development of his nation by Tanzanians, "though they will not all be black Tanzanians." His nation is a socialist country, "But the man or woman who hates 'Jews,' or 'Asiatics,' or 'Europeans,' or even 'West Europeans'

and Americans,' is not a socialist . . . he is denying the equality and brotherhood of man." If anyone divides the people of his country into good and bad groups based on race or place of origin, Nyerere charges sabotage. "We should decide whether a person is efficient in a particular job," he said, "whether he is honest, and whether he is carrying out his task loyally."⁵³ Nyerere's ideals are not always carried out. Many Asiatics are leaving Tanzania today because their applications for citizenship are not being honestly processed and because of undue pressure from the central government. For example, Tanzania is attempting to socialise the legal profession, and Asian attorneys who do not wish to work under government wages have no alternative but to leave, whether they are citizens or not.

Throughout East Africa, strikes are called by Africans demanding a larger share in their economic future. On February 17, 1970, about 150 workers in the workshop of General Motors in Kampala began a sit-down strike and demanded a revision of their work grade, dismissal of Ken Elvy the workshop manager, and K. D. Patel, an accountant, and the Africanization of important posts. The workers believed that since Africans were adequately trained, Elvy should be fired; he had served his purpose to Uganda.⁵⁴

The late Tom Mboya was sympathetic to the struggle of his fellow Kenyans, but he was possibly the most far-sighted of modern legislators in Africa. In 1962 he told the Kenya Indian Congress that, "There is no intention to replace present privilege with African privilege," but that Africanization was imperative. He also criticised the Indian community for not allowing African participation in social events, and went so far as to suggest interracial marriage. Mboya viewed such marriages as a blending of Kenyans, rather than separate peoples. The Asian community, however, has not accepted Mboya's solution. Sympathetically, Mboya realised that unlike Europeans, Asians had no other home to return to and he strongly recommended rapid and total integration in business. Asians viewed that proposal as an attempt at

53. Julius K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism* (Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 258-260.

54. *Uganda Argus*, February 18, 1970.

Africanization and elimination of Asian merchants. Mboya's scheme did not include all Asians in Kenya. Those who had applied for citizenship would be permitted to remain. When few Asians applied for citizenship during the first year of independence, Mboya and the rest of black Africa questioned Asian sincerity, particularly those who talked about being Kenyans, but did little to prove it. The test of sincerity, he said, was "has he given up everything else to become a Kenya citizen? Is he with us in the same melting pot?"⁵⁵ Asians who did not agree to participate in new Kenya have found themselves subject to the same treatment that many received before independence—discrimination.

Another legislator who has cried for Africanization and who has been condemned as racist, is Member of Parliament Mr. Clement Lubembe. Lubembe has stated that many Asians must leave Kenya, but he would be willing to allow 20 per cent of the trade to be controlled by them, providing that they became Kenya citizens. In order to prevent Asians from selling out their businesses at unfair prices, he has proposed that the Government of India lend sufficient funds to Kenya to allow Africans to enter their own economy.⁵⁶ Asians who desire to remain, and prove it by becoming citizens, are welcome to stay, but they will not be able to continue their dominance over the retail economy of the country.

On October 24, 1964, President Jomo Kenyatta issued a statement that clarified the position of his government on discrimination. "Our Government," he said, "will not discriminate against any citizens on matters of employment opportunity, recruitment and promotion. All citizens of Kenya, regardless of their race or colour or country of origin, have equal opportunities and duties in the building of our Public Service."⁵⁷ It is important to realise that Kenyatta spoke only of equal rights for citizens. Those Asians who did not apply for citizenship, who did not wish to become citizens, or who have applied and been denied citizenship, have

55. Tom Mboya, *Freedom and After* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1963), pp. 107-110.

56. Roberts, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-60.

57. Jomo Kenyatta, *Harambee* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 2-4, 8, 14-15, 18, 78; and Kenyatta, *Suffering Without Bitterness* (Nairobi: E.A.P.H., 1968), pp. 237-8.

lost their rights in Kenya. Although Kenyatta spoke of equality for everyone in Kenya, he visualised Africanization of the government and industry. Citizenship should not be based on race, and according to Kenyatta, it is not. He has proclaimed the need for an end to racial hatred, but persons who have been denied citizenship or for other reasons been forced to leave East Africa, feel that race is the motivation.

Conclusion

From earliest times Indians have been an important element in the economic and political development of East Africa although their role has frequently been undermined by colonial officials, settlers, and Africans. Under British colonial rule, the Indians were discriminated against and socially segregated. They were not allowed to enter European clubs, hotels, restaurants and other facilities. Unlike Africans and Europeans, Indians were not accorded trial by jury and were not given fair representation in the legislative bodies of the colonies. Asians were blamed for going to Africa to monetarily drain the continent and then return to India, yet no European criticised the European officer and worker who went to India and returned home as quickly as possible to be with his family. Asians were forbidden land in choice farming areas of East Africa, yet they were welcomed as indentured servants on European farms or as laborers in the town. Indians employed by the Civil Service received only 25 per cent of European salaries and could not advance to senior posts. Throughout the first seven decades of the twentieth century, the Asian in East Africa has been forced into a subservient role, first by the colonial administration, and then by the independent black governments who want their people to prosper from newly-found freedom. The Asian in Africa may continue to play a vital role in the development of the area, but he must be trusted and accepted, not treated as an enemy alien. Normal international rules indicate that a person is a citizen of the land in which he is born. Asians born in East Africa under colonial rule now find themselves without a country. The new regimes do not recognize them as citizens because they were born before the present state came into existence, and many Asians preferred to keep British passports instead of accepting African citizenship when offered that opportunity. Some Africans claimed

that it is their nation's prerogative to deny citizenship to anyone that it chooses. Their opinion is that of the minority, but unless the black African and Asian African are able to discuss their differences, the Asian in East Africa will only be part of history, not of the future. Those Asians who desire to remain in Africa must reconcile their way of life to conform with the new movements, and must allow African participation in their businesses, schools, and culture. Citizenship is mandatory, but the black governments must also ensure that fair and impartial treatment is given to all Asian applicants. When this is done, East Africa will truly be the land that Nyerere desires, a land of "Uhuru na Umoja"—Freedom and Unity.

Evolution of the Economic Policy of the Indian National Congress (1885-1947)*

BY

N. BENJAMIN

Throughout its life, the Indian National Congress has been the premier political party of our country which has overshadowed all other parties that preceded it or have existed with it. As such, it is worthwhile for us to try to find out the thinking of the Congress on economic affairs. This becomes all the more necessary when it is commonly heard that till the thirties of the present century when the National Planning Committee was formed, the Congress had few or no economic programmes and policies of its own. However, this popular belief is wrong. From the point of view of the resolutions passed at its annual sessions, the Congress was more prolific till 1920 than subsequent to that year. In fact, whenever an important incident in the economic life of the country happened, the Congress adopted an appropriate resolution on it. In this sense, the economic resolutions of the Congress in general, and those passed before 1920 in particular, are a reflection of the economic phenomena in our country. Secondly, it is true that the National Planning Committee kept an eye on the Indian economy as a whole. But it is wrong to identify the Planning Committee with the Congress. The members of the Congress had, of course, taken the initiative in forming the Planning Committee. But the Congress did not officially recognise its plan.

It is also commonly held that after 1920, the Congress came under the spell of Gandhiji. Politically whatever be the truth in this statement, economically, at its best, it is only partially correct. There is no doubt that under the influence of Gandhiji, from desiring reduction in the rate of the salt tax, the Congress came

* This paper is a summary of the author's unpublished doctorate thesis on the problem of "Economic programmes and policies of the Indian National Congress (1885-1947)" approved by the University of Jodhpur in 1968.

to demand its abolition and from laying more or less an equal stress on both traditional and modern industries in the pre-1920 period, the Congress shifted emphasis to traditional industries. But it never denounced the modern large-scale production by machines as Gandhiji himself did. In the other fields of economic life also, the Congress kept its individuality. The thinking of the Congress and its leaders has been summarised below under different heads:

1. *The Congress: Its Economic Programmes and Policies*

The original idea of Hume when he organized this Congress in 1885 was to make the Congress a social organisation. But Lord Dufferin, who was then the Viceroy, suggested that it should be a political body so that through it the masses could ventilate their grievances. Hume liked this suggestion. To implement it, he wrote a circular letter to the Graduates of the University of Calcutta, imploring them to leave aside personal aspirations and to work for the regeneration of their motherland. The result was the formation of the Indian National Union which decided to hold its first session in Poona. In view of the national importance of the organisation, its name was changed to the 'Indian National Congress'. As plague broke out in Poona, the venue of the meeting was shifted to Bombay. Here in 1885 the first session of the Congress was held at Goculdas Tejpal Sanskrit College.

Though primarily a political organisation, the Congress did not ignore the economic questions. Except in 1921, 1939 and 1940, in no year was an annual session of the Congress held when no resolution pertaining to the economic life of the country was passed. The interest of the Congress in economic affairs is not surprising. There were two reasons for this, viz., firstly, the Congress leaders themselves mixed politics with economics; and, secondly, they wanted to make the Congress a truly national organisation and moved resolutions pertaining to political, economic, social, educational and even religious issues.

Constitutionally also the Congress did not debar itself from touching the economic problems. Its objects successively were the 'well-being' of the masses and the attainment of 'Swarāj'. But both of them are intimately related to material betterment. There can be no 'well-being' of a person and 'Swarāj' is meaningless to him unless he becomes economically well-off.

The Swarāj Party, the Congress Socialist Party and the Forward Bloc were parties within the Congress Party. Their economic programmes and policies were fairly similar to those of the Congress itself like the economic regeneration of our country, boycott of British goods, organisation of labour etc.

2. *The Congress and the Poverty of India*

Historically, India was always regarded a land of plenty and prosperity. It was for the Congress and its leaders to proclaim to the world the poverty of their country. To give greater authority to their pronouncements, they quoted from the statements of British Officers themselves like Sir W. W. Hunter and Sir Charles Elliott. But the Government and its officials were obviously not inclined to openly concede that India was economically either stagnant or getting worse off. On the other hand, they insisted that India was heading towards material improvement. In support of their contention they pointed out certain changing trends in the Indian economy like (i) the accumulation of precious metals; (ii) increase in both volume and value of foreign trade; (iii) increase in tax receipts; (iv) expansion in the area under cultivation; and, (v) a general rise in prices. The Congress leaders believed that these changes were not indicators of prosperity. They believed that the increase in the accumulation of precious metals, foreign trade and the area under cultivation was not commensurate with the increase in population. They felt that the increase in tax receipts was because of the heavy taxation imposed by the Government. As regards a general rise in prices, they contended that it caused hardship to the masses. Not merely this, the Congress leaders singled out the factors which they thought were responsible for the country's poverty viz., (i) decline of indigenous industries, (ii) excessive tax burden, (iii) costly system of administration—both civil and military, (iv) exclusion of Indians from the administration of their country and (v) the drain of wealth from India to other countries.

After analysing the causes of poverty, the Congress suggested a set of remedial measures. The latter consisted of (i) Indianisation of the country's legislature, (ii) raising of the exemption limit of income tax from Rs. 500 *per annum* to Rs. 1000 *per annum*

- (iii) reduction in public expenditure—both civil and military
- (iv) improvement in agricultural practices and establishment of agricultural banks, (v) the system of permanent settlement, and
- (vi) establishment of industrial units technical schools and colleges.

3. *The Congress and Famines*

Whenever severe famines occurred, the Congress adopted appropriate resolutions on them in which it sought to analyse the causes of famines, relief work undertaken to mitigate the hardships caused by them, and the necessary remedial measures to prevent their recurrence in the future. The Congress believed that an important factor causing famines was the increasing poverty of the masses which, in its turn, was caused firstly by the drain of wealth from India to England and secondly by the high level of taxation prevailing in the country. The Congress thought that as a result of their poverty, at the very first touch of scarcity, the people became helpless and looked upon the State to maintain them. The second factor causing famines, according to the Congress, was the heavy burden of land revenue which impoverished the cultivators. The third factor for famines was the export of foodgrains from India to other countries. The idea behind this argument was that the domestic supply of foodgrains in the country was reduced to a corresponding extent.

The Congress and its leaders also discussed the famine relief work undertaken to mitigate the distress brought about by famines. They were grateful to the Government of India for their beneficial policy in this field during the great famines of 1897-98 and 1899-1900. But they condemned the half-hearted way in which the Government of Bengal tried to solve the problem of food shortage in 1943.

Finally, the Congress touched the problem of famine prevention. The measures which it suggested to this end were; (i) economy in administration—both civil and military; (ii) stopping the exports of foodgrains from India to other countries; (iii) encouragement and development of industries—both traditional and modern; and, (iv) an enquiry into the economic condition of the masses.

4. *The Congress and Agricultural Problems and Policies*

Recurrences of famines are intimately related to the agricultural situation of a country. As such, the Congress made observations on it. The Congress stood for reforms in the system of land tenure. In this connection it talked of the 'permanent settlement of land revenue' which it wanted between the Government and the cultivators. An important ground for demanding 'permanent settlement' was the belief that land assessment in India was heavy and that at every periodical settlement, it was further raised. For removing these evils, in addition to the 'Permanent Settlement System', the Congress suggested two remedies viz., settlement of land revenue for at least sixty years and reduction in land assessments. When the Congress formed Governments in the provinces under the Government of India Act, 1935, it attempted to lighten the burden of land revenue and made remissions in it.

The Congress also touched the issue of intermediaries. In the beginning it was reconciled to their existence. As late as 1926, it urged "the adjustment of the relations between the land-lords and tenants". In 1936 the Congress attributed the poverty, indebtedness and unemployment in the rural areas principally to the "antiquated and repressive" systems of land tenure and revenue and opined that their solution "inevitably" involved a thorough change in them. However, in its election manifesto dated December 11, 1945, the Congress was more explicit: "The reform of the land system, which is so urgently needed in India, involves the removal of intermediaries between the peasant and the state."

Another problem with which the Congress was deeply concerned was that of agricultural financing. The Congress pleaded for the establishment of agricultural banks and welcomed the Co-operative Credit Societies Bill, 1903. In the following year the Congress as an organisation did not touch this issue. But the National Planning Committee showed keen interest in it and advocated the establishment of suitable institutions for agricultural financing.

Further, the Congress opposed the proposition of making agricultural land inalienable to check the transfer of cultivated

land from the agricultural to non-agricultural classes. The Congress held that such a course of action was likely to unduly hinder agricultural financing and that the real remedy lay in moderating the land assessments. As such, the Congress opposed the Punjab Land Alienation Bill, 1899.

Besides these, the Congress made other miscellaneous recommendations also like (i) the implementation of Dr. Voelcker's *Report on the Improvement of Indian Agriculture* (1893) (ii) establishment of experimental farms and, (iii) the adoption of all those measures both by the Government and the landlords which would put Indian agriculture on a scientific footing.

5. *The Congress and Industrial Policy*

The attitude of the Congress towards industries can be said to have passed through two broad stages till 1947. In the first stage (1885-1919) the Congress was a staunch supporter of the industrialisation of the country which, according to its thinking then, consisted of the regeneration of the traditional indigenous industries and the establishment of modern large-scale production units. In the second stage (1920-47) also the Congress stood for the development of both traditional (consisting primarily of khadi and village industries) and modern industries. But it added emphasis on the former in relation to the latter. We can account for two stages in the industrial policy of the Congress. In the first stage the Congress laid more or less an equal stress on both the classes of industries probably because it desired the utilisation of Indian capital in the establishment of industries rather than in internal commerce. Secondly and perhaps more importantly, the great strides made by the western countries towards industrialisation and the decay of indigenous industries might also have motivated the Congress leaders to make their organisation favour both the types of industries. In the second stage the Congress laid emphasis on khadi and village industries probably owing to the great post-war depression and Gandhiji's influence.

Allusion should also be made here to the Swadeshi and the Boycott movements. They came into force as a result of the partition of Bengal effected in 1905. The Swadeshi movement sought to encourage indigenous industries by popularising their products and the Boycott movement aimed to achieve the same end by discouraging the utilisation of non-Indian goods. Both

the movements were thus complementary to each other. The Congress supported them and denounced the measures by which the Government tried to suppress them. These movements secured only limited success. The reasons for this were: (i) they were not based on economic foundations (ii) the Government was hostile to them; (iii) the Muslims were indifferent; and (iv) the traders *etc.* did not co-operate.

6. *The Congress and Labour Problems*

The Congress showed great interest in the labour problems facing India. It dealt with the various classes of labourers. The foremost among them were the factory labourers. The Congress conceded their right to organize themselves into trade unions for improving their social, economic and political conditions. When the All-India Trade Union Congress was formed in 1920, the Congress leaders actively associated themselves with it. Lala Lajpat Rai, a prominent member of the Congress from the Punjab, was the first President of Trade Union Congress. But when this Congress came under the influence of the Leftists, the Congress leaders, together with some labour leaders, formed the Indian National Trade Union Congress in 1947. When the Congress Governments were formed in the provinces, they sought to improve the lot of the factory workers. They attempted to achieve this by: (i) instituting inquiries into the condition of industrial workers, (ii) making budgetary provisions for the welfare of workers like the provision of canteens, reading rooms, lantern lectures, *etc.*, (iii) helping the formation and strengthening of trade unions, *etc.*

The Congress also referred to the indentured labourers both in and outside India. It was unhappy over the penal legislation of Assam which authorized the tea planters to arrest their employees if they tried to leave tea gardens during the period of their indenture. It also felt distress at the conditions of semi-slavery in which indentured labourers of Indian origin lived in foreign countries. The Congress, therefore, advocated the abolition of the institution of indentured labourers for work both in India and elsewhere.

Thirdly, the Congress made observations on the Indian Mining Bill, 1900 which sought to regulate the working of Indian mines by the appointment of Inspectors. Unfortunately, the Congress opposed it under the pressure of mining interests.

Fourthly and lastly, the Congress referred to agricultural labourers in 1938 and conceded their right to organise themselves into unions.

7. The Congress and Commercial Policy

The Congress and its leaders favoured the policy of protection as against that of free trade which the Government of India were pursuing till the twenties of the present century. The Congress supported the 5 per cent *ad valorem* duty on cotton fabrics and yarns which was levied by the Government of India in 1894. At the same time, the Congress opposed the 5 per cent excise duty on yarns produced by the Indian mills. At the instance of the Scotch and Lancashire manufacturers, the Government of India passed the Cotton Duties Act in 1896. Under it, all cotton yarns were freed from duty; a 3½ per cent duty was imposed on cotton goods of all varieties which were imported into India and an excise duty of 3½ per cent was levied on all cotton goods manufactured by the Indian mills. The Congress was opposed to these changes and declared that the excise duty was bound to arrest the free growth of the indigenous weaving industry. There are, however, other indications also which suggest that the Congress was inclined towards a policy of protection. In 1885, for example, the Congress favoured the 'reimposition' of customs duties to finance military expenditure. In 1889 it suggested the imposition of *ad valorem* import duties instead of raising the rate of the salt tax. In 1915 the Congress went even further and suggested that 'fiscal freedom' with special reference to import, export and excise duties should be granted to the Government of India.

In these early years also, many Congress leaders were reconciled to imperial preference. But when the Indian Fiscal Commission, 1921-22, instituted inquiries, it found that the Indian masses genuinely wanted a protective policy for the development of indigenous industries. On this Commission's recommendations, when the Government of India adopted a policy of discriminating protection, the Congress leaders desired it to be used for the benefit of Indian industries. The first industry to get protection under the new policy was that of iron and steel. In the Legislative Assembly in 1924, the Congress leaders strongly supported the Government's move to impose duties on imported steel. But the effectiveness of protection thus granted was soon nullified by a fall in the prices

of imported steel. So in 1925 the Government introduced the Steel Industry (Protection) Bill in the Legislative Assembly. In terms of it while bounties were to be given to Indian iron and steel, the duties on imported steel were to be lowered. But the fall was to be more for British steel and less for the continental steel. The Congress leaders hailed the principle of protection for our steel industry. But they denounced the inclusion of imperial preference in it. The Congress leaders also favoured the grant of protection to the indigenous match industry. But they were unhappy at the Government's indifference to counteract the threat of Swedish manufacturers to the indigenous manufacturers. Similarly in 1925, the Congress leaders welcomed the Government's move to protect the Indian paper industry. But they made their own suggestions in the matter of details. In 1939 the question of giving protection to our sugar industry was debated in the Legislative Assembly. Then again, the Congress leaders favoured the grant of protection to that industry. But they opposed the imposition of the excise duty on factory sugar in 1937.

Finally, the Congress and its leaders made observations on the Ottawa Agreement, the Mody-Less Pact and the Indo-British Trade Agreement. They contended that these agreements constituted a receding back on the part of the Government of India from their earlier position of discriminating protection. The reason for this, they thought, was that these agreements were based on the principle of imperial preference and that the preferences were more favourable to Great Britain than to India.

8. *The Congress and the Development of Railways*

From the point of view of resolutions passed at the annual sessions of Congress, the railways was a neglected subject. Only two resolutions pertaining to them were passed. One resolution was passed on the difficulties of third class passengers (in 1895) and the other touched this issue as well as these of inter-class passengers and the railway rates (in 1919). But in their personal capacities, the Congress leaders sought to fill up the vacuum. In their speeches and writings, they alluded to the different aspects of the development of railways in India.

Till the early years of the present century the Congress leaders referred to railway finance. They deplored the construction of

railways by guaranteeing interest thereon. They believed that this caused extravagance in railway construction and neglect of passenger convenience. They were also dissatisfied with the construction of railways by the State by public borrowings in England. They thought that the payment of interest thereon (as also the guarantee system) resulted in the drain of wealth from India to England.

It was also in these years that there emerged a controversy between the Government spokesmen and the Congress leaders regarding the relative importance of railways and irrigation works in India. The Government officials laid stress on the development of railways pointing towards their role in the distribution of foodgrains in times of famines. The Congress leaders, on the contrary, argued that irrigation works were much more important as they alone added to the available supply of foodgrains. So far as famine prevention is concerned, the Congress leaders appear nearer the truth than the Government officials.

The Congress leaders also talked of the difficulties faced by third class passengers and to some extent, by inter class passengers. They listed them thus: (i) over-crowding in compartments; (ii) unsatisfactory arrangements for lighting, cleanliness, lavatories, etc. in the compartments and for food and drinking water at the railway stations; (iii) harassment of passengers by the railway servants, and the like. The Congress leaders sought to get these difficulties remedied by increasing the number of lower class carriages in trains. Some of them even suggested a classless railway. The Congress leaders thought that the other difficulties of passengers could be solved by: making arrangements for proper lighting and cleanliness in compartments; making provision for food and drinking water in railway stations; instructing railway servants to behave properly with passengers, etc.

The problem of railway rates also attracted the attention of the Congress and its leaders. They held that the rates then followed by different railway administrations discriminated against Indian commerce and industry. The Government and railway officials did not concede this charge. But historically this argument of the Congress leaders is correct.

With regard to railway management also, there emerged a controversy between the Congress leaders and the Government.

spokesmen. The former favoured the management of railways by the States to secure (i) abolition of discriminating rates; (ii) an addition in its resources; (iii) convenience for the travelling public; (iv) greater employment of Indians in the railway services; and, (v) reduction in the recurrences of strikes. It was also urged that the State should manage the railways simply because it owned them. The Government officials, on the other hand, advanced counter-arguments to defend the management of railways by the railway companies. They argued that railway rates were adequately controlled by the Government of India. The State takeover of railways, they said, was likely to reduce their efficiency and profitability and that the condition of passengers was not likely to improve. They also believed that the Government-management of railways would be in conflict with the decentralisation of railway administration.

9. *The Congress and Monetary Policy*

The Congress took a continuous interest in the monetary problems of our country. When the Indian Currency Committee was appointed in 1892 to enquire and report on Indian Currency, the Congress advised the Government of India to refrain from making any changes in the currency system of the country until the results of the Brussels Conference were known and to lay before the public for discussion the recommendations which the Committee might make before taking any action on them. In the following year when the mints were closed to the free coinage of silver, the Congress regretted it. The Congress believed that the closure of the mints resulted in (i) the imposition of additional indirect taxation on the masses; (ii) the scarcity of finance for industries; and, (iii) reduction in the value of silver and other possessions of cultivators thereby reducing their resistance to famines. Besides the main currency issue, the Congress and its leaders showed great indignation at the side issue of the grant of exchange compensation allowance to non-domiciled European and Eurasian Government officers and demanded its abolition.

When the Indian Currency Committee, 1898-99 was investigating into Indian currency, the Congress again passed a resolution regarding our country's currency. In it the Congress opined that the fundamental cause of the loss by exchange was the

growth of expenditure of the Government of India in England and that real remedy lay in England sharing an equitable portion of that expenditure. When the Currency Committee submitted its report in 1899, then it recommended a gold standard for India. The Congress was, however, dissatisfied with this currency plan. It saw three defects in it *viz.*, (i) it would raise gold obligations of India; (ii) it would increase the indebtedness of the poor; and, (iii) it would adversely affect indigenous manufactures.

Next, the Congress leaders took up the question of the location of the Gold Standard Reserve. As against the Government of India's policy of keeping it partly in England, the Congress leaders wanted the whole of it to be kept in India.

After maintaining silence for several years, the Congress then passed a resolution on Indian currency in 1920. In it the Congress criticized the Government for accepting the recommendations of the Indian Exchange and Currency Committee, 1920. It expressed its belief that the rise in exchange and the sale of Reverse Councils was likely to be detrimental to Indian industries. The controversy regarding currency between the Government of India and the Congress was, however, rekindled when the Royal Commission on Indian Currency and Finance, 1926 recommended that the rate of exchange for the rupee be fixed at 1s. 6d. (gold). The Congress leaders and particularly Madan Mohan Malaviya were unhappy at this recommendation as they considered the rate high and, therefore, detrimental to Indian industries and exports.

In 1931 the Government of India linked the rupee to the sterling at the above-quoted exchange rate as in that year the British Government had abandoned the Gold Standard. The Congress and its Working Committee were opposed to this linkage. In 1931 the Congress suggested that the rupee should be left free to find its own level in terms of gold. In 1938 the Working Committee suggested that the rupee was over-valued at 1s. 6d. and that the exchange rate should be fixed at 1s. 4d.

In 1939 the World War II broke out which continued till 1945. During these years and even subsequent to this till 1947, even though the Congress concentrated on political agitation, the All-India Congress Committee made observations on the vital issue of Indian currency. The Committee insisted that India's sterling balances accrued during the World War II should not be scaled down.

10. The Congress and Public Finance

In the sphere of public finance, the Congress referred only to some of its aspects. In the field of public revenue the Congress referred to more important of its sources. From the very beginning, the Congress made observations on the salt tax. The Congress then stood for a reduction in the rate of this tax. But subsequently under the influence of Gandhiji, the Congress pledged itself to its abolition. When Liaquat Ali Khan abolished it in 1947, the Congress leaders hailed this step. The Congress also made allusions to the income tax. It entreated the Government of India to raise the exemption limit of this tax from Rs. 500 *per annum* to Rs. 1000 *per annum*. When the Government of India conceded this request in 1903, the Congress thanked the Government for this. The Congress and its leaders also criticized the excise revenue including the opium revenue. Lastly, the Congress promised that on the attainment of Swaraj the burden of land revenue would be substantially reduced and that an of protection to that industry. But they opposed the imposition

Coming to the items of public expenditure, the Congress concentrated on the military expenditure, civil expenditure and expenditure on education. The Congress desired a substantial reduction in military expenditure. It believed that the Government of India was then required to maintain a high level of military expenditure owing to (i) an aggressive frontier policy; (ii) army amalgamation and reorganisation schemes; and (iii) excessive employment of non-Indians. Similarly, the Congress stood for an appreciable reduction in civil expenditure. It held that this could be effected by giving greater employment to Indians and by fixing the maximum salaries at Rs. 500 *per mensem* in ordinary cases. Lastly, the Congress passed resolutions regarding public expenditure on education. It suggested an increase in it. It is important to note that this was the main developmental expenditure which the Congress as a body advocated. But when the Non-Co-operation movement was launched in the twenties and subsequently the Congress did not simultaneously suggest greater expenditure on education. The reason for this was that the Non-Co-operation movement, *inter alia*, consisted of the boycotting of educational institutions run by the Government.

Having thus reviewed the thinking of the Congress and its leaders on the economic questions facing the country, let us now attempt to explain the ideas underlying this thinking. The foremost of such ideas is the theory of economic drain. The Congress held this drain partly responsible for the poverty of the country and for the recurrences of famines in it. The Congress leaders opposed the investment of British capital in Indian railways because they considered it, among other things, as a means by which the economic drain from India to England took place. Lastly, the Congress had obviously an eye on this drain when it demanded Indianisation of services—both civil and military.

The second idea underlying the thinking of the Congress and its leaders was their opposition to the colonial exploitation of India. It was because of this that the Congress and its members opposed the existence of intermediaries between the cultivators and the Government and suppression of the Swadeshi and the Boycott movements by the Government. The hostility of the Congress and its leaders towards indentured labourers both in and outside India and the Government's acts of giving imperial preference to 'empire' goods when it had officially adopted a policy of discriminating protection, also point in this direction. They also denounced the discriminating railway rates, neglect of third and inter-class passengers, company management of railways, grant of exchange compensation allowance, over-valuation of the rupee and excessive civil and military expenditure in the same spirit.

Lastly, an important foundation of the economic programmes and policies of the Congress was its desire to regenerate India's economy. To this end the Congress listed measures to reduce poverty in the country and to reduce the frequency of famines in it. The industrial and agricultural policies of the Congress were also aimed at this. The observations of the Congress and its leaders with regard to the organisation of agricultural labourers, protection from foreign industries, improvements in the travelling condition of third and inter-class passengers, adoption of a suitable monetary policy and an increase in the volume of public expenditure on education were motivated by their anxiety to develop India economically.

We thus see that the Congress, although primarily a political party, kept a keen eye on the economic problems facing the country.

American Reaction to Gandhi's Arrest in 1942

—The Conflict of Ideology and Necessity

BY

YUVARAJ DEVA PRASAD

"When I think of Gandhi I think of Christ"—thus spoke Dr. John Haynes Holmes¹ in early twenties when Gandhi had just begun his task of bringing freedom to India.² Ever since that time Americans have taken the most lively interest in him. Many became his champions and thus the champions of the cause of freedom for India. They believed situations were ripe for George V to lose the Dependency of India as George III had lost America.³

In its response to Mohandas K. Gandhi's arrest in 1942, America found itself confronted with a difficult ideological question at a most critical time. This paper concerns itself with the relationship of war exigencies to moral issues.

When World War II broke out, and particularly after Pearl Harbor when America found herself in the vortex of the war, Indo-American relations entered a complex phase. Winning the war was the first and foremost American concern because an Axis victory would deny forever all hopes of freedom throughout the world.⁴ But to Gandhi the Allied declaration that they were fighting to make the world safe for freedom of the individual and for democracy sounded hollow as long as Indians, and for that

1. Dr. John Haynes Holmes was a long-time pastor of the Community Church in New York and one the keenest American students of Gandhi's life for over thirty years.

2. Pasupuleti Gopal Krishnayya, ed., *Mahatma Gandhi and the U.S.A.* (New York: An Orient and World Publication, 1949), p. 1.

3. Haridas T. Mazumdar, *Gandhi Versus the Empire*. (New York: Universal Publishing Company, 1932), p. IX.

4. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1942, Vol. I, p. 703. Franklin D Roosevelt to Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, August 1, 1942.

matter, others also, remained under foreign rule.⁵ Gandhi had also urged the United States to intercede for Indian independence in a "letter to American friends" which he had handed to U.S. correspondents in the Indian National Congress party session at Bombay on August 7, 1942. "You have made common cause with Great Britain," he had said, "you cannot therefore disown responsibility for anything that her representatives do in India."⁶

But, while India expected the United States to help her obtain freedom first, the United States wished India to cooperate in the war efforts. Gandhi also considered nazism and fascism as great a horror as the Americans did. But while Americans would match violence with violence, Gandhi would oppose violence through non-violence. It was contended "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for tooth." But Gandhi told his people, "if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other; and if a man will contend with thee in judgment and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him"⁷ America believed that he who takes up arms in a just war fulfils, purely and simply, his duty as a man.⁸ Gandhi considered those people who struggle without using violence as unconquerable. Nevertheless, the spirit, the hopes which led Gandhi to his decision were adverse to American cause, yet those hopes and that spirit represented what was at stake in that battle and the purest and highest of aims for which they were fighting.⁹

On August 8, 1942, came the fateful decision of the Indian National Congress asking the British to "Quit India" Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy of India, who had described Gandhi as "the greatest thing in India" in a conversation with Louis Fischer only a few days before, now ordered his immediate arrest and the arrest of all other important leaders of the Indian National

5. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942*, Vol. I, p. 678. M. K. Gandhi to Roosevelt, July 1, 1942

6. "Frogs in a Well," *Time*, August 17, 1942 p. 26. See "Gandhi to America," *Time*, November 16, 1942, p. 42.

7. M. A. Couturier, "Gandhi and Ourselves," *The Commonwealth*, June 19, 1942, p. 202.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 204.

9. *Ibid.*

Congress party. By the early hours of the next day, i.e., August 9, 1942, Gandhi and other Indian leaders were taken into custody.

The Indian people had been expecting the United States to come out and take a stand on their side and put pressure on the British government to free them. But the U.S. government considered it wiser to refrain from taking action for the time being.¹⁰ She only regretted the stalemate between the British government and the Indian leaders, but did not try to resolve the issue.

It was a momentous question and the U.S. government was greatly concerned. It deplored the development in India but stuck to the earlier decision that America could exert her influence more effectively in this matter by refraining from offering active mediation to either side. Brushing aside the morality of the case, the U.S. considered any action that slowed the war effort in India not merely as theoretical assistance, but as actual assistance to the armed forces of Japan. It wished Gandhi to see more clearly the need for India's immediate help and understanding that an Axis victory would be the worst thing to happen for the people of India.¹¹ Thus the government made no open nor public appeal, nor any pronouncement on the Indian situation. Only the Department of State issued a press release on August 12, 1942, which stated the government's policy to the American military forces in India. American military forces in India were ordered to "exercise scrupulous care to avoid the slightest participation in India's internal political problems." The instructions, making clear the United States' hands-off policy, explained that "the sole purpose of the American forces in India was to prosecute the war of the United Nations against the Axis powers."¹²

President Roosevelt's primary aim in Asia was to aid China, but American troops would aid in defending India in the event she should be attacked. According to the orders, however, they

10. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1942, Vol. I, p. 715. Roosevelt to Chiang Kai-Shek, undated. (By the direction of the President, the Assistant Secretary of State, Sumner Wells, handed this message to Dr. T. V. Soong in Washington on the afternoon of August 8, 1942).

11. *Ibid.*

12. *The New York Times*, August 13, 1942, p. 8:4

were not to take any part in internal disturbances unless it became necessary to defend themselves, American citizens, or American military supplies and equipment.¹³

Though the government remained virtually silent about Gandhi's arrest, the attention of the people and press of the United States were greatly attracted by the happenings in India. There was considerable concern since the troubles in India endangered American troops stationed there and intensified the difficulties of getting supplies to China. Americans were themselves doubtful if any official action would be taken by their government.

In spite of Gandhi's proclamation that "I want India to oppose Japan to a man," charges were made that Gandhi refused to resist the Japanese.¹⁴ It was alleged that he was ready to risk a civil war as well as the danger of invasion in a reckless gamble to cash at once the "post-dated check" he spurned when it was offered by the Cripps mission.¹⁵ He was even suspected to be pro-Japanese because the Indian developments fitted hand-somely into Japanese over-all strategy. "Even if the northern forces, taking advantage of Russia's distress in the Caucasus, were to launch a blitzkrieg in Siberia, task forces were still available to wage a simultaneus campaign against India by land, sea, and air. Control of India would isolate China and facilitate attacks on American supplies being sent to Russia by way of the Persian Gulf and Iran." Such was *Newsweek's* comment in the issue of August 17, 1942, to which was added the observation that "It was understandable that the Tokyo broadcast took on an ecstatic note. The Japanese were the chief beneficiaries of Gandhi's manoeuver."¹⁶ The magazine also printed a picture of Gandhi upside down, with his feet in the clouds of confusion, chaos and contradiction. Gandhi was ridiculed and made an

13. *Ibid.*

14. Krishnalal Shridharani, *The Mahatma and the World*. (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946), p. 184.

15. Anne O' Hare McCormick, "The Tragic Test of Congress Leadership in India," *The New York Times*, August 15, 1942, p. 18:5.

16. "Gandhi Risks India in a Gamble while Japanese Stand at the Gates," *Newsweek*, August 17, 1942, p. 45.

object of attack by the American newspaper cartoonists to whom he was just a funny little crackpot, bald as a beanpole, who didn't know enough to come in out of the rain. They treated Gandhi as if he didn't know that the Japanese were at India's door. In the cartoons Gandhi was either a fool or a traitor.¹⁷ The *New York Herald Tribune* came out with a cartoon depicting "The Strong Man of India" as an ugly dwarf pulling down "a hundred years of building for India." *Newark Evening News* printed a cartoon captioned "Slight Fallacy in the Gandhi Plan" in which Gandhi was sarcastically painted as not only having severed all ties with the British but also severed his head from body with the same weapon for "special delivery to Japan." The *Kansas City Star* portrayed Gandhi as having entered a Japanese demon's bedroom with the offer of "any cooperation with the Japs." The *Detroit News* showed Gandhi being welcomed by armed Axis leaders. The *Pittsburgh Press* painted Gandhi as being charmed by the false freedom propaganda of the Nazi being done by poisonous snakes.

The extremely biased outlook of the American cartoonists and newspapers in regard to India's fight for freedom emerged partly because the cartoonists tried to make India's complex problems just as simple as "American apple pie" and partly because, like most Americans, the cartoonists mistook the Indians for a low, uncivilized people who did not know what was good for them. In all the cartoons there was nothing to suggest that the U.S. itself might have some moral responsibility for India's present state and might have some clear duty to try sympathetically to repair the serious breach in the democratic front. Even though India's attitude hindered the Allied war effort, Americans should have remembered that it was foreign imperialism that Indians were fighting against.¹⁸ Before he was jailed, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had said: "It is curious that people who talk in terms of their own freedom (the Americans) should level the charge of blackmail against those who are fighting for their freedom."¹⁹

17. "American Cartoonists Attack India's Greatest Man," *Life*, August 24, 1942, p. 32.

18. *Life*, September 14, 1942 (Gandhi Cartoons Letters to editors), p. 2.

19. "Frogs in a Well," *Time*, August 17, 1942, p. 27.

It was only a year before that F. D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill had asked the world's approval for their Atlantic Charter. It was a pledge of sorts, even if Churchill subsequently announced that it did not apply to India, Burma and the British Colonies. The American government, despite a generally pro-British and occasionally miserably misinformed interpretation of the Indian question in press and radio, were aware that in India the Atlantic Charter, and all that went with it, had come up against the first big test.

Such charges were widely believed in America, not because of any malice, but because of an inadequate understanding of the Gandhian way of fighting.²⁰ The Allied concept of war against fascism was geographic, while the Indian concept was ideological. The Allied strategy against fascists was horizontal, based upon national boundaries. The Gandhian strategy against fascists vertical; the latter idea was to fight against fascism wherever it was found in the minds of men. Gandhi had advised his people, "Of course the people must not, on any account, lean on the Japanese to get rid of the British power. That were a remedy worse than the disease."²¹ Also on record was Gandhi's passionate manifesto to the Japanese only the week before his arrest: "Our offer to let the Allies retain troops in India is to prevent you from being misled into feeling that you have but to step into this country. If you cherish any such idea, we will not fail to resist you with all the might we can muster."²² The final draft of the "Quit India" resolution was also pro-Allies. But as writing to the India League of America. Gandhi had observed, "... interested propaganda has filled your ears and eyes with distorted visions of the Congress position. I have been painted as a hypocrite and enemy of Britain under disguise. My demonstrable spirit of accommodation has been described as my inconsistency, proving me to be an utterly unreliable man."²³

It would, however, be wrong to assume that Gandhi was friendless in America or that every American disbelieved him.

20. Krishnalal Shridharani, *The Mahatma and the World*, pp. 184-185.

21. *Ibid.* p. 185.

22. "Frogs in a Well," *Time*, August 17, 1942, p. 27.

23. Gandhi to America, *Time*, November 16, 1942, p. 42.



President Roosevelt and the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, both supported Indian independence strongly and consistently. They were saying privately everything that the most enthusiastic supporter of India's freedom could have expected. They were also convinced that people were with them.²⁴ But they could not tell this to their country for the sake of good relations with Britain.²⁵ Roosevelt had attempted to discuss the Indian situation with the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, in December 1941, "along the usual American lines," but Churchill had reacted so strongly and at such length that Roosevelt had never again raised the matter verbally. Churchill's susceptibility in the Indian question was so strong that three months later he made a thinly veiled threat to resign if Roosevelt pressed officially to continue the Cripps mission efforts to conciliate the Indian Nationalists.²⁶ Thus, though Roosevelt was "trying to keep in very close touch with the situation" and was getting "the latest news from several sources every day,"²⁷ he was reluctant to imperil Allied cohesion by public criticism of Great Britain.

It was only the practicableness of Gandhi's attitude that haunted most Americans' minds. Gandhi wanted the Americans to look upon the immediate recognition of India's independence as a war measure of first-class magnitude as only then there could be irresistible opposition to Japanese aggression.²⁸ But the American view was whether the Mahatma was not bringing on a civil war just at the moment when all ranks should be closed to face the common enemy whose victory would spell common doom. If India became a battlefield it would be a serious matter for American as she had her armed forces in India. The famous author, Pearl S. Buck, urged mediation on India. She wanted the U.S., China and Russia to intervene in the dispute. In a

24. Cordell Hull, *Memoirs*, (New York: Macmillan Co., 1968), Vol. II, p. 1483.

25. *Ibid.*

26. Winston Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), pp. 209, 220-221.

27. Roosevelt to Fischer, August 11, 1942. Cited in Mary Walton Livingston, "Yours Sincerely, Mohandas K. Gandhi," *Prologue* (Fall 1969), p. 6.

28. "Gandhi to America," *Time*, November 10, 1942, p. 42.

statement issued on August 10, 1942, on the arrest of Gandhi and rioting in India, Buck said, ".... Those who know the truth about India are certain that force affords no safeguard for India and no solution for the allied United Nations. If we are to continue to deliver supplies to China, which is our best base against Japan, and if we are to avoid the loss of thousands of American lives through needless prolongation of the war, our government should propose at once that the U.N. mediate."²⁹

However, the U.S. government found itself in a predicament. On the one hand it was believed that failure to take action in the crisis would have unfavorable repercussion on the war effort in the Far East, while on the other, any attempt by the United States government to bring pressure to bear on the British was considered likely to give rise to controversy which could endanger Allied unity.³⁰ Again, India was an acid test of the sincerity of America's purpose in fighting that costly war.³¹ No doubt the absence of a clear-cut policy statement on the Indian independence issue was awkward for the U.S. government, but silence was preferred while the war was still going on and continued British-American cooperation essential. As usual, necessity had to prevail over ideology.

29. *The New York Times*, August 11, 1942, p. 6:16.

30. A. Guy Hope, *America and Swaraj* (Washington, D. C., Public Affairs Press, 1968), p. 36.

31. Louis Fischer, "What Gandhi Wants," *The Nation*, August 15, 1942, p. 122.

Jawaharlal Nehru and the Hindu-Muslim Question

BY

K. RAMAN PILLAI

The historical difference between Hindus and Muslims in India existed for some centuries prior to the arrival of the Britishers. It arose from a basic difference of tradition. The communal division between the Hindus and Muslims was a problem left over unsolved by history and was rapidly exploited by the British rulers.

When the British first became territorial sovereigns in India, though the Mughal Empire was in decay, here were Muslim monarchies and satrapies all over the country. In their folk-memory the Muslims of India had been rulers, not subjects. "For Muslims to roll back history by removing the European invader could not mean a restoration of Hindu rule but rather a revival of their own."¹

Under the British rule, "the Muslims fell swiftly from proud overlordship to a muttering minority. Both Hindus and Muslims faced the consequences of conquest by an alien power, but rather than join together in opposition, they contended with each other for influence."²

The politico-economic conflict between the two communities widened quickly at the start of the twentieth century. The partition of Bengal in 1905 by Curzon 'for administrative reasons' set the ball rolling. This was followed by the establishment of the Muslim League in 1906 and Minto-Morley Reforms in 1909 which provided for separate electorate for Muslims. The purpose of the separate electorate was to solve communal rivalry but the result was to exacerbate it.

1. H. V. Hodson, *The Great Divide: Britain - India - Pakistan* (London, 1969), p. 11.

2. Russel Brines, *The Indo-Pakistan Conflict* (London, 1968), p.22.

The concept of communal representation meant the recognition of the political separateness of Hindus and Muslims, a precedent of immense consequence. The principle of separate electorates was accepted by the Congress in the Lucknow Pact (1916) in the interest of nationalist unity. Then came the Khilafat and Gandhi made it a national issue in the hope of winning over the Muslims to the nationalist cause. The unity forged at the time of the Khilafat was temporary. The Moplah riots of 1921 showed that an appeal in the name of Islam, even if directed against the British, could release anti-Hindu feelings and nullify the efforts of well-meaning leaders to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity. The abolition of the Caliphate in 1924 by Turkey cut the ground under their feet. After a short spell of unity Hindu-Muslim relations deteriorated once again.

The refusal of the Khilafat leaders to condemn the atrocities committed against the Hindus, paved the way for the consolidation of the Hindus under the leadership of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Swami Shraddhanand Saraswathi. The formation of the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh in 1927 was the logical culmination of this reaction.

At the same time Khilafat agitation politicized the Muslim masses under the leadership of the Ulema and reduced the Muslim League to impotence in Indian politics. The gap between the Hindus and Muslims increased considerably. The two communities grew apart and the break became total in 1928 at the time of the Nehru Report. The Report created suspicion in the minds of the Muslims, because it proposed a strong federal government and the elimination of separate electoral rolls and other mechanisms on which the Muslims depended to maintain a political foothold. This, observed V. P. Menon was "the Congress principle of secularism but admirable though it might be in theory, it drove the Muslims away from the Congress."³

Against this background, let us examine Nehru's attitude towards the Hindu-Muslim question. Nehru's attitude was moulded by a variety of factors such as the influences of his

3. V. P. Menon, *An Outline of Indian Constitutional History* (Bombay, 1965), p. 34.

early life and education, contacts with leaders of various countries, international developments, and his socialist and secular outlook.

From the pre-school age until he left for England at the age of fifteen he was trained at home by private tutors mostly British. This must have had a tremendous influence in shaping his attitude to Muslims and the communal problem in general. Six years at Harrow, Cambridge and London deepened his attachment to the British way of life, with the result that he turned to his native land as 'more an Englishman than an Indian'.

At the Nagpur Session of the Indian National Congress (1920) Nehru was an observer. When Gandhi gave a new turn to Congress politics and sought to involve the people in the struggle for freedom, Nehru felt the atmosphere electrified. This was his 'moment of inspiration' and he plunged into the movement never to look back. One has to understand this basic trait of his character to realise his aversion to communal politics. Indeed he was so absorbed that he ignored certain unattractive features, such as the strange admixture of politics and religion, the artificial unity with the Muslims, and the lack of a clear-cut ideology.

The Hindu-Muslim alliance forged at the time of the Khilafat was short-lived. The barbarities practised by the Moplahs in 1921 had immediate reaction on Hindu-Muslim relations throughout India. The first of a series of Hindu-Muslim riots occurred at Multan (Punjab) in September 1922 and was followed by riots in Saharanpur (U.P.) in 1923, Kohat (1924) and Calcutta (1926). These riots took a heavy toll of human life.

Nehru was very much disturbed at the sharp deterioration in Hindu-Muslim relations. As he surveyed the tension of the mid-twenties, his hostility to orthodox religion crystallized. "The communal frenzy is awful to contemplate," he wrote to a friend. "We seem to have been caught in a whirlpool of mutual hatred and we go round and round and down and down the abyss."⁴ About religion itself he was even more critical: "No

4. Nehru-Mahmud Correspondence, 24 May 1926. *Jawaharlal Nehru Papers*, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Except otherwise mentioned, all the correspondence referred to, are from Jawaharlal Nehru Papers.

country or people who are slaves to dogma.... can progress, and unhappily our country and people have become extraordinarily dogmatic and little-minded.... I have no patience left with the legitimate and illegitimate offspring of religion."⁵

Nehru's travels abroad and his contact with eminent personalities did influence his views on the Hindu-Muslim question. In February 1927, he attended the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities at Brussels. His attraction to communism was perhaps the most striking feature of his role at Brussels. In his speech at the plenary session of the Congress he accused British imperialism of encouraging India's communal divisions. He said, "It is frequently stated and made much of in the English press, that the Indians are fighting against each other, the Hindu against the Muslim etc.... apart from the fact that these troubles are greatly exaggerated it is the policy of the British to create these troubles or where they already exist to increase them and take every step to keep them going.... This has been the policy of the British."⁶ Nehru's initial exposure to communist views at Brussels was widened by a brief visit to Moscow early in 1927. Through reading and discussion he had acquired a wider perspective, especially the conviction that political freedom had to be linked to socialism.

Encouraged by his victory at the Madras Session (1927) of the Indian National Congress where he moved the resolution on 'complete national independence' Nehru pressed forward with his 'mission' of educating colleagues and the rank and file. Everywhere he spoke on nationalist independence and socialism. As for communalism it was a 'giant with feet of clay' which would soon disappear. At the Lahore Congress (1929) Nehru confessed that he was a 'Socialist and a Republican'. 'Real communal differences have already gone' he argued naively.

Being a socialist and republican, brought up in a secular atmosphere, Nehru's outlook was neither 'saintly' like that of his master Gandhi nor 'communal' like that of the leaders of the

5. *Ibid*; 12 June 1926 and 12 January 1927.

6. Nehru's Speech at the Brussels Congress, *AICC Papers*, File G. 29, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha. He condemned both the League and the Mahasabha with equal vehemence. According to him, common national outlook implied, subordination of group interests to the interests of the larger national struggle. The development of such a national outlook, he thought could take place in the lower strata of society because those above are too much interested in British domination and hope to preserve their special privileges and vested interests through it. Communalism, Nehru held, was another name for political and social reaction and the British Government being the citadel of this reaction in India threw its sheltering wings over the useful ally (Muslim League). Therefore it must be 'fought on all fronts and - given no quarter'.

Nehru looked upon the present era as the era of economics, and rightly so. He did not attach much importance to the Hindu-Muslim question. He held the view that once the economic problem was solved, other problems, political, social and communal would subside. His views were made explicit in a number of articles to the press and letters to his friends, which he wrote in the thirties.

In an article written in 1930, Nehru observed that the "true solution of our difficulties can come only when we have won over and given satisfaction to our minorities... some of them fear the majority and for fear of it keep apart from the struggle for freedom." Obviously he was referring to the Muslims. Proceeding further he added:

The new Russia has gone a long way in solving its minorities problem by giving each one of them the fullest, cultural, educational and linguistic freedom. Therefore, we in India must make it clear to all that our policy is based on granting this freedom to the minorities and that under no circumstances will any coercion or repression of them be tolerated.... with religious and cultural and linguistic freedom granted, the principal question that will arise in our legislature will be economic ones and divisions on them cannot be on communal lines.... The Congress has endeavoured to give effect to the principles that should govern the treatment of minorities.... in communal matters it (Congress) will not deviate to the right or the left, will hold the centre impartially. It will, I hope, prove to the minority communities that in inde-

pendent India for which we strive, there will be an honoured and favoured place.⁷

The struggle against British imperialism was of utmost importance to Nehru, the nationalist. Everything else must be subordinate to this main objective. "I think the communal problem does stand by itself but is part of the larger social problem of India and the world," he wrote to Sheikh Mohammad Alam. "Looked at from the national point of view I think that the most important thing for us is to carry on our civil disobedience struggle. Only through that can we divert attention from the wretched communal wrangle of to-day,"⁸ he added.

Nehru denounced Hindu communalism in forcible language. Addressing a meeting of the Benaras Hindu University students in the winter of 1933, Nehru remarked that "under the cover of seeming nationalism the Mahasabha not only hides the rankest and narrowest communalism but also the desire to preserve the vested interests of the group of big Hindu landlords and princes." He characterised the policy of the Hindu Mahasabha as the most "degrading, reactionary, anti-national, anti-progressive and harmful."⁹

After the Benaras speech which created an uproar, Nehru wrote a reasoned article on Hindu and Muslim communalism, showing how in neither case was it even bonafide communalism, but was political and social reaction hiding behind the communal mask. Though wide publicity was given to this article there was no serious response from either Hindus or Muslims. This might have led him to believe that his views were reasonable and acceptable to the people.

Nehru's objective in writing these articles was, as he himself admits in his autobiography, to point out that "the communal leaders were allied to the most reactionary elements in India and England and were in reality opposed to political and even more so to social advance." The demands of the communal leaders according to him "had no relation whatever to the masses. They

7. Jawaharlal Nehru, "The problem of Minorities (article) 14 March 1930.

8. Jawaharlal Nehru to Sheikh Mohammad Alam, 29 October 1933.

9. *The Tribune*, 16 November 1933.

were meant only to bring some advancement to the small groups at the top. The oft-repeated appeal for Hindu-Muslim unity, useful as it no doubt is, seemed to me singularly insane, unless some effort was made to understand the causes of disunity."¹⁰

Myth not Reality

Nehru has elaborated his views on communalism in another article entitled 'Reality and Myth' written on 4 January 1934. It must be remembered that this article was written after the period of the Round Table Conference, the Communal Award, Gandhi's epic fast in protest against the Communal Award and the controversies following Nehru's speech at Benaras Hindu University. Two letters which Nehru received towards the end of 1933 are revealing in this context. In a letter to Nehru, Asaf Ali observed:

Unity I saw this after full and mature consideration and experience of the last unity conference on an economic basis alone will be possible, which neither pacts nor appeals can bring about The Muslims, as I know them, will not give up an inch of what the Communal Award has secured them and others will not concede to them an inch beyond it The socialist ideology has great potentialities and if properly set out must catch the peoples' imagination.¹¹

C. F. Andrews, a friend of India, wrote to Nehru:

If we want to take the line of least resistance and avoid brute force would it not be for the best and most effective method to concentrate in India the National movement on certain definite economic objectives and seek to find a united front on these? If it could be proved to the vested interests themselves that economic dependence is as deadly for them as it is for the workers and peasants, then it might be possible to set up two or three immediate aims and carry them through.¹²

These friendly suggestions might also have influenced Nehru's views around this time as could be seen from the article mentioned above.

Nehru maintains in this article that the political and communal problems in India should be solved by means of a

10. Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (Calcutta, 1962), p. 460.

11. M. Asaf Ali to Jawaharlal Nehru, 30 September 1933.

12. C. F. Andrews to Jawaharlal Nehru, 13 November 1933.

Constituent Assembly. He is not opposed to the idea of giving Muslims separate electorates for the Constituent Assembly provided it helps to dispel their doubts. Communalism is essentially a hunt for favours from a third party—the ruling power. The real remedy, according to him, lies in a diversion of interests from the myths that have been fostered and have grown up round the communal question to the realities of the day. Communal organisations function politically and their demands are political. In Nehru's views, the communal leaders are 'experts only in percentages' and 'their battleground is the conference room', not the field or factory. The Communal Problem will cease to exist when it is put to the hard test of real mass opinion.

Emphasising the predominance of economic issues he remarks, "we live in an age when economics dominate national and international issues. What have the communal organisation to say in regard to these economic matters?..... The Muslim masses are probably even poorer than the Hindu masses but the 'Fourteen Points' say nothing about these poverty stricken masses. The Hindu Communalists also.... ignore their own masses." After this scathing criticism of Hindu and Muslim Communalists, Nehru comes to the core of the problem: "so long as the fullest economic freedom does not come to us there can be no freedom whatever the political structure may be. Economic freedom must of course include political freedom. That is the reality of today; all else is myth and delusion, and *there is no greater myth than the communal myth.*"¹³ Nehru's remedy to the evils of communalism was rooted in the belief that once the common man had a hand in the formulation of policy, communalism would wither away. Nehru reiterated these views in his subsequent writings. In 1936, he wrote from Lausanne, "If the masses are fully represented inevitably economic issues affecting them will come to the forefront and superficial problem like the communal one will lose importance."¹⁴

13. Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Reality and Myth' (article) 4 January 1934. emphasis added.

14. Jawaharlal Nehru, 'A Constituent Assembly for India' (article) 25 February 1936.

Obviously there was consistency in his views during this period when he branded communalism as a 'myth'. Economic issues alone were considered real and relevant in the Indian context. This was strictly in conformity with his socialistic and republican outlook and admiration for the achievements of the Soviet Union.

Even after the 1937 elections Nehru thought that communalism was a myth and that the Hindu and Muslim masses had nothing much to do with it. Writing to Sir Stafford Cripps he observed:

Even the Muslim masses are getting out of the rut of communalism and are thinking along economic lines On the whole I think that the communal position is definitely brighter. The Hindu Communalists have been largely swept away by the Congress and they count for little The Congress is supreme today so far as the masses and the lower middle classes are concerned. Even the Muslim masses look up to it for relief.¹⁵

No doubt this was an optimistic picture coloured by the intoxicating victory which the Congress won at the polls in early 1937.

Flushed with success in the 1937 elections the Congress adopted an 'imperious attitude' to all other political parties. Nehru set the tone with his remark, "There are only two forces in India today, British imperialism and Indian nationalism as represented by the Congress." Jinnah was quick to retort: 'No, there is a third party, the Mussalmans'.¹⁶

Muslim mass contact movement

The sharp deterioration in the relations between the Congress and Muslim League following the 1937 elections brought home to the Congress leaders particularly Jawaharlal Nehru the need for a reappraisal of the Congress policy towards the masses. The pacts and the alliances entered into by the Congress were only

15. Jawaharlal Nehru to Sir Stafford Cripps, 22 February 1937.

16. Quoted in Michael Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography* (London, 1959), p. 46.

with the leaders of the Muslim League and the masses were neglected always. This had resulted in the masses being misled by communal leaders. This feeling found expression in a resolution on mass contacts at the Lucknow Congress. The Muslim mass contact move was an inevitable extension of the policy enunciated in the resolution.

At Lucknow Nehru urged Congress to go ahead and welcome Muslim masses and intelligentsia into the Congress organisation and rid the country of communalism in every shape and form. In accordance with the resolution on mass contacts a Muslim Contacts Department was established under the AICC with Dr. K. M. Ashraf as Secretary in early 1937. Through the Muslim mass contact sub-committees at various places an attempt was made to educate the Muslim masses to a correct appreciation of their real interests and to carry on an unremitting struggle against all reactionary elements. Thousands of Muslims were enrolled as primary members of the Congress under this scheme. The programme envisaged with the day to day economic struggle of the Muslim masses and enlisting them in the Kisan and Mazdoor Sabhas and the students organisations.

The leaders of the Muslim League were perturbed by these developments. They professed to discover a conspiracy behind the Congress move and an attempt to divide the Muslims and detach them from their 'accredited leaders'. They made all efforts to dissuade their co-religionists from joining the Congress ranks. Jinnah characterised the mass contact movement as "massacre contact".¹⁷ "The Muslim mass contact movement launched by the Indian National Congress was nothing but a deadly poison to the Muslims whose duty it was to thwart it by all means" observed Mohammed Asique, President of the Gaya District Muslim League at its annual meeting.¹⁸

"Aggressiveness of the Congress Moslem mass contact movement has resulted in more active moslem bitterness towards the

17. See K. M. Ashraf, 'Problem of Muslim Mass Contact' in *Tribune* 2 April 1938.

18. *Tribune*, 26 April 1938.

Congress than any gain we might have secured by the accession of numerical strength" wrote Sardul Caveeshar to Gandhi.¹⁹

Jinnah and other leaders of the Muslim League advised the Congress leaders to negotiate for a communal settlement with 'people who count' instead of making a direct approach to the Muslim masses and expressed their willingness to negotiate with the Congress.

Meanwhile perturbed by the results of the election and the Congress arrogation of total power, Jinnah embarked on a country-wide tour with the cry 'Islam in danger'. Muslims began to respond to his call, favourably. The 'opening shots had been fired' in the calamitous Congress-League war which later engulfed vast portions of the country in communal frenzy and led to partition.

Nehru-Jinnah correspondence

In an effort to reduce the growing friction between the Congress and the Muslim League Nehru came forward to meet the League half-way. This was evident from an exchange of letters with Jinnah during 1938 and 1939.

The exchanges between Nehru and Jinnah laid bare their basic differences in approach to the Indian problem. Nehru thought and acted in terms of Indian Unity. Jinnah was concerned only with the position of Indian Muslims. Nehru claimed that the Congress was a national organisation representing all the communities in India and that it was not communal organisation like the Muslim League—which according to him was an organisation representing a large body of Muslim opinion. At the same time Jinnah contended that the Muslim League was the authoritative and representative organisation of the Mussalmans of India. The Congress, in Jinnah's views, was trying to establish a Hindu Raj. Thus both of them approached the question from differing view points. Both adhered to their position firmly till the end.

19. Sardul Sing Caveeshar to M. K. Gandhi, 21 April 1938.

However they met more than once in an attempt to solve the Hindu-Muslim question. But these meetings proved abortive. Nehru's despondency is revealed in a letter which he wrote to Jinnah in October 1938. Nehru wrote:

I entirely agree with you that it is a tragedy that the Hindu-Muslim problem has not so far been settled in a friendly way. I feel terribly distressed about it and ashamed of myself, in so far as I have not been able to contribute anything substantial towards its solution. I must confess to you that in this matter I have lost confidence in myself, though I am not usually given that way At the present moment, as you will no doubt appreciate my mind is full of the rapid developments that are taking place.²⁰

Obviously Nehru was referring to the international situation which always claimed his attention. This was characteristic of Nehru's outlook.

Meanwhile Jinnah fixed up December 22nd as a 'day of deliverance and thanksgiving' as a mark of relief from the 'tyranny' of the Congress Governments. In protest against Britain's declaration of War and dragging India into it, it was decided that the Congress Ministries should resign on 22nd December. Nehru wrote to Jinnah:

What has oppressed me terribly since yesterday is the realisation that our sense of values and objectives in life as well as in politics differs so very greatly. I had hoped after our conversations, that this was not so great, but now the gulf appears to be wider than ever. Under the circumstances, I wonder what purpose will be served by our discussing with each other the problems that confronts us. There must be some common ground for discussion, some common objective aimed at, for that discussion to yield fruit.²¹

Indeed there was no common ground for discussion and no common objective to be aimed at. Hence the negotiations broke down. Jinnah wrote back to Nehru:

So long as the Congress is not prepared to treat the Muslim League as *the authoritative* and representative organisation of the Musalmans of India it was not possible to carry on talks regarding the Hindu-Muslim settlement as that was

20. Jawaharlal Nehru to Jinnah, 18 October 1938.

21. Jawaharlal Nehru to Jinnah, 9 December 1939.

the basis laid down by the working committee of All-India Muslim League in reply to your letter of 1st December expressing your wish to see me in Bombay, I inform you that I shall be in Bombay till the 3rd week of December and I shall be glad to see you and I can only say that if you desire to discuss the matter further I am at your disposal."

Jinnah's disinclination to discuss the question further and his determination to confront the Congress is explicit from the above letter. In his reply to Jinnah, Nehru drew the former's attention to the Congress stand regarding the representative character of the Muslim League. The Congress had considered the Muslim League as a very important and influential organisation of the Muslims. Beside the League there were other Muslim organisations like the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, the All India Shia Conference, the Majlis-e-Ahrer, the All India Momin Conference. There were also a large number of Muslims in the Congress. The Congress could not dissociate itself from them or disown them in any way. While the Congress by its constitution had its membership open to all who subscribed to its objective and methods, the Muslim League was only open to Muslims. The Congress thus had a *national* basis and it could not give that up without putting an end to its existence. After highlighting the broad basis and national importance of the Congress and the narrow religious basis of the Muslim League Nehru drew his attention to the Congress stand:

... I am afraid therefore that if your desire is that we should consider the League as the sole organisation representing the Muslims to the exclusion of all others, *we are wholly unable to accede to it* It seems that politically we have no common ground and that our objectives are different. That in itself makes discussions difficult and fruitless I feel therefore that it will serve little purpose for us to meet at this stage and under these conditions with this background.²³

Nehru had at last come to the realisation that the Congress and the Muslim League differ fundamentally in so far as political objectives were concerned and that any discussion would be useless unless both discarded their very basic principles to which both

22. Jinnah to Jawaharlal Nehru, 13 December 1939. Emphasis added.

23. Jawaharlal to Jinnah, 14 December 1939.

of them had held steadfast for over many years. Communalism had become a hard reality to Nehru. This transformation could be attributed to Nehru's personal experience for a few years when he sincerely tried to settle the differences through negotiations particularly with Jinnah who by then became the undisputed leader of Muslims. This marks another stage in the development of Nehru's attitude towards the Hindu-Muslim question. Nehru's letter to Jinnah on 16 December 1939 reflects his disillusionment:

May I say again that no one on our behalf so far as I know, challenges or minimises the authority, influence and importance of the Muslim League I am compelled to think that the real difficulty is the difference in political outlook and objectives I do wish to assure you that for my part I do not want to leave any stone unturned which can lead to mutual understanding and settlement. But you will not have me, as I do not want to have you, leave integrity of mind and purpose in pursuit of anything. Nothing worthwhile can be gained that way. I have deep political convictions, and I have laboured in accordance with them these many years. I cannot leave them at any time, much less now when the world is in the throes of a terrible crisis.²⁴

Just as this correspondence drew to a close the League established a Committee of enquiry into alleged Congress persecution of Muslims. The overall conclusion of the 'Pirpur Report' was that the Muslim Community was much better off under the British than under Congress rule. How much truth there was in its charges was never verified. The Congress offered to submit them to the (British) Chief Justice of India, but the League refused and wanted that it should be enquired into by a Royal Commission. In any event, the Viceroy felt that it would be most difficult for Jinnah to prove any general anti-Muslim action on the part of the Congress Government and, the (Provincial) Governors were satisfied that there was no basis for the allegations.²⁵ The point of no return was reached in Congress-League relations. From then onwards, Muslim League scored points one after another at the expense of the mistakes of the Congress and with the indirect help of the Britishers.

24. Jawaharlal Nehru to Jinnah, 16 December 1939. Emphasis added.

25. V. P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India* (London, 1957), p. 71.

Having realised that bilateral talks and negotiations could not bring about Hindu Muslim unity, Nehru reconciles himself to the position that the problem can be solved amicably through the good will of Hindus and Muslims. Nehru wrote to Ahmed Bashir:

It seems clear to me that the unity of a free India can only continue with the goodwill of the Hindus and Muslims. If that goodwill is lacking, that unity will be endangered. I do not see why the fullest cultural freedom should not be allowed to every group, nor do I understand why you should object to a Constituent Assembly where Muslims have a right to elect their own representatives and further, where it is definitely stated and laid down that all minority rights must be settled by agreement and not by a majority vote.²⁶

Here Nehru was reiterating his earlier stand adopted in 1930 regarding the convening of a Constituent Assembly. Being a true democrat he thought that communal differences would slowly disappear once the minorities were guaranteed cultural freedom and Muslims were allowed to elect their representatives to a Constituent Assembly.

Third party, the real bottleneck

Ever since Nehru started thinking about the Hindu-Muslim question in India he had maintained that the presence of the Britishers had tended to aggravate the tension between the two communities and made any settlement between them difficult, if not impossible. "Fundamentally and inevitably the British policy has been one of preventing the Hindus and Muslims from acting together and of playing off one community against another" wrote Nehru²⁷ in his autobiography. Nehru believed that once the Hindus and the Muslims were faced with the prospect of managing the affairs of the country in the absence of a third party, they would hammer out an agreement satisfactory to both. For the British Government always exploited the differences between the Hindus and Muslims to suit their selfish interests.

26. Jawaharlal Nehru to Ahmed Bashir, 26 December 1939.

27. Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (Calcutta, 1962), p. 460.

Writing to M. K. Gandhi in February 1940, Nehru observed, : "The British Government is also reacting in a way unfavourable to us It is carrying on and will carry on its old intrigues on the communal issue, though occasionally it uses a few critical words against the Muslim League in order to soothe the Congress."²⁸ Expressing his disenchantment at the strange mixture of religion and politics he wrote to Maulana Azad:

You will have noticed the rebirth of the idea of pan-Islamism. This is not merely due to Muslim League here or to their organisations. This is fundamentally due to the desire of the British Government to encourage it the main difficulties of the communal problem are due to the attitude of the British Government today.²⁹

'The parting of the ways', an article written on 10 August 1940 i.e. after the Pakistan Resolution was passed by the Muslim League, clearly reflects Nehru's mind at the time. If Hindus and Muslims cannot agree as organised groups it will be unfortunate for India and no one can say what the consequences will be. The communal question is essentially one of protection of vested interests and religion has always been a useful stalking horse for this purpose. Those who have feudal privileges and vested interests fear change and become the camp-followers of British imperialism. The British Government on the other hand delights in using the communal argument to deny freedom, democracy or any major change and to hold on to power and privilege in India. That is the *raison d'être* and justification of communalism in India. The article reveals the extreme frustration of Nehru. He wrote:

... It (communalism) lived on invectives, violence and general offensiveness It discovered that what it had valued most in the past — separate electorates — brought little good. In fact they weakened a minority group. Then by the very force of the logic of hatred and separation that it pursued it had to go to the extreme step of demanding a partition of India. The medieval theory of religious groups constituting a political community which collapsed before an advancing nationalism in Europe was revised When nationalism is giving place to internationalism, an ever nar-

28. Jawaharlal Nehru to M. K. Gandhi, 4 February 1940.

29. Jawaharlal Nehru to Maulana Azad, 22 February 1940.

rower creed than nationalism is advanced, and this finds favour and protection with our British rulers. When the world is groping blindly towards a real federation of nations, it is suggested that India should be split up into various parts.³⁰

Nehru probably did not attach much importance to the Pakistan Resolution. He still believed that once the Britishers quit India both the Congress and the Muslim League would come to terms. If they do not come to terms the alternative would be civil war a possibility which Nehru underrated. In a letter written to Syed Mohmud he gave expression to his views. He wrote:

... Personally I see no solution of this problem, however hard one may try, so long as the third party (the British) is not eliminated. We shall inevitably come near a solution when we are forced to agree by circumstances, the alternative being conflict on a big scale. That can only happen when it is clear that neither party can seek the help of the British or any other alien authority. Once this alien authority is excluded we fall back upon ourselves and either agree or fight. In all likelihood we then agree for the prospect of a real struggle that will not be a pleasant one for anybody.³¹

In his reply to the above letter Syed Mahmud branded Nehru's approach to the problem as an 'negative attitude' and added that his argument was that of the stronger party which 'can defeat the weaker one if a conflict comes between the two after the departure of the third party'.³²

Nehru was opposed to the idea of a separate state for Muslims in the sub-continent. At the same time he did not like to keep any unwilling part of the country under pressure. In other words he was against a make-believe unity. He also realised that it would be unwise to make a solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem a precondition for the withdrawal of the British from India. "The Congress has stated that while it stands by the unity of the India and considers any division fatal for all concerned, still it cannot think in terms of compelling any territorial unit to remain in an Indian Union against its declared emphatic will" he wrote.³³

30. Jawaharlal Nehru, 'The Parting of the ways' (article) 10 August 1942.

31. Jawaharlal Nehru to Syed Mahmud, 1 February 1942.

32. Syed Mahmud to Jawaharlal Nehru, 5 February 1942.

33. Jawaharlal Nehru to Inayatullah Khan, 8 July 1942. Emphasis added.

"The Muslim League can have Pakistan if they wanted it," Nehru said later, "but on condition that they do not take away other parts of India which do not wish to join Pakistan."³⁴

Thereafter events unfolded themselves in quick succession leaving no room for negotiations. The 1945 Simla Conference was really a contest between the Congress and the Muslim League. The League insisted on the right to appoint all Muslims to the Executive Council and the Congress refused to abdicate its status as a national organisation. Jinnah threatened to boycott the Executive Council unless his demands were met and Lord Wavell acquiesced. The veto given to Jinnah was a dangerous precedent that strengthened his hand in the crucial battles to follow.

In the 1946 election the Congress called for a federal constitution with autonomy for the constituent parts and a minimum list of common subjects. The Muslim League stressed the issue of Hindu domination in a united India and the consequent need of separate Muslim homeland i.e. Pakistan. The League won all 30 Muslim seats in the Central Assembly and 427 of the 482 Muslim seats in the provincial legislatures. The authority of the Muslim League was thus established beyond doubt. The stage was now set for the reconstitution of the Viceroy's Executive Council and the convening of a Constituent Assembly. To achieve this the Cabinet Delegation was despatched from London. The fundamental principle of the cabinet Mission scheme was deceptively simple. The Muslim League was offered a *de facto* Pakistan. The Congress could find a united India, though somewhat emasculated, and an assurance of provincial autonomy.

In the crucial year 1946, Nehru was elected President of the Congress. In a speech to the AICC on 10 July 1946, Nehru said that Congress was committed to participate in the Constituent Assembly but nothing else. About the grouping scheme he was 'brutally candid'. It would probably never come to fruition, he declared.

This infuriated the Muslim League and its leader Jinnah who was given an incomparable wedge to press more openly for Pakistan on grounds of Congress 'tyranny'. At the end of July

34. E.W.R. Lumby, *The Transfer of Power India* (London, 1964), p. 155.

the Muslim League withdrew its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's long-term plan and called for 'Direct Action' on 16th August, 1946. At the instance of the Viceroy, Nehru met Jinnah at his Bombay residence, on the eve of the 'Direct Action Day'. This meeting lasted for eighty minutes but it did not produce any result. Asked by reporters Jinnah stated "Nothing has happened beyond by facts that we had a general talk. I have nothing more to say. There will be no more meeting between me and Nehru".³⁵

The 'Direct Action Day' was observed as scheduled. The 'Great Calcutta Killing' alone took a heavy toll of eighty human lives with 825 injured in incidents. In a press conference on 16 August 1946, Nehru observed that national and international emergencies called for the formation of the provisional national government at the centre. "We cannot stand still because of the League. We have to move fast. Either we act swiftly and do justice to our responsibilities or face greater disaster and perils." The Congress did act swiftly and in the fateful year of 1947 India was partitioned.

In retrospect, Nehru's attitude towards the Hindu-Muslim question appears to be an error of judgement partly due to his underestimation of the great hold Islam has on Muslims of the sub-continent and partly due to his politico-economic approach to the problem.

Nehru thought that once cultural and linguistic freedom are granted and assured to the minorities, communal problem would fade into insignificance. He felt that a Constituent Assembly to which Muslims could send their representatives on the basis of separate electoral rolls would solve the Hindu-Muslim problem in India. According to him the real problem was economic; all other problems were subsidiary to it. Time and again he exhorted the religious groups particularly the Muslims to completely line up with Indian nationalism in the cause of Indian freedom. He maintained that essentially the conflict between the Congress and the League was a conflict between the lower middle classes with a large mass following and the Muslim feudal and middle classes. This approach was certainly scientific but not very pragmatic. Nehru's assumption that given the fullest cultural and

linguistic freedoms the minority community will have no room for complaint was proved wrong by the events in the sub-continent. He advocated what might be called 'advanced politics' in a highly traditional society ignoring perhaps the root causes of tension between Hindus and Muslims.

Perhaps Nehru did not take into account the hold that religion with its dogma, tradition, custom, ritual and historical memories has on the minds of men in a premodern, traditional and plural society. He was also obsessed with international developments that he ignored the communal problem in India. It could be that he assumed that Muslims in India would subscribe to the idea of territorial nationalism and would be willing to subordinate to it the sense of separate identity based on religion. This explains his repeated requests to the Muslims to join the nationalist movement and fight for the freedom of the country. It also explains his much publicised but unsuccessful attempts at Muslim mass contact in the late thirties. Of course there were certain nationalist Muslims who lent credibility to the above assumption but they were in a minority. The majority of the Muslims always kept aloof from the Indian National Congress.

As a matter of fact Islam had given to the world a new socio-political order and that it would be impossible for its followers to merge in any other social or political group however important that might be. Islam is extremely uncompromising in this regard. As W. C. Smith observes, "The question of political power and social organisation, so central to Islam, has in the past always been considered in yes or-no terms. Muslims have either had political power or they have not. Never before have they shared it with others."³⁶ What actually happened in India was that an appeal to the Muslims for loyalty to a society other than its own religious one failed.

Like his political 'guru' Gandhi, Nehru also did not succeed in his attempt to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity. The course of Indian history and tradition stood against him. Nevertheless he tried earnestly to lay the foundation of a secular state in India. No one can doubt his commitment of non-communal secular nationalism.

36. W. C. Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton, N. J., 1957), p. 286.

The Easter Rising in Bengal, Chittagong

18 April—7 May 1930

BY

AMIT KUMAR GUPTA

Broadly the Irish and the Indian people were subjected to the same alien rule, similar exploiting system¹—irrespective of the sprinkled imperial justice—and both aspired to attain an identical object. Yet surprisingly the Irish struggle for freedom, till its hour of victory, had only a faint mark on Indian nationalism. The reason certainly was the wide difference between the two countries as regards size, population, resources, ways of life and the structure of society. Besides, the Irish Parliamentary Party had little to offer to its counter-part in India by way of a model. Moreover, the Indian acquaintance with the insurgent Ireland was severely restricted partly by the strict British censorship and partly by the secretive nature of 'Clan-na-Gael' and 'Sinn Fein'. However, the revolutionary developments in Ireland could no longer be suppressed when Irish freedom was recognised in 1921-22 coinciding with the Non-Co-operation movement in India which began with a bang and ended in a whimper. In the frustrating aftermath of a relinquished agitation Indian nationalists tended to revive old formulas in the name of new lines of political action. With Gandhi languishing in jail the orthodox non-co-operators took refuge in the philanthropic reformism of *charkha* (spinning wheel), *swadeshi* (indigenous products) and the campaign against untouchability. (No-changers.) Others found comfort in the labyrinth of parliamentary processes, imagining that they could compel the British to accept a settlement through legislative wrangling. (Pro-changers.) Both, in consequence, evaded the means of mass movement leaving the reactionary forces of communalism enough grounds to flourish. The

1. *Indu Prakash*, 7 March 1881, compared the lot of Irish peasants with those of the Indian *rayats*. *Bombay Native Newspaper Report*, 1881.

disillusioned youth returned to the ways of individual terrorism and the vicious circle of expensive search for arms, political robberies for funds and absconding to avoid arrest. Yet, at this hour of bewilderment, the militant nationalists' faith in armed struggle must have been strengthened at the instance of Sinn Fein success in Ireland. Eamon De Valera also wanted to convey to the Indians that it was "only through the influence of fear and the pressure of force" that Britain had ever been brought to consider the claims of others.² Indistinct links renewed at this point between stray Indian extremists and Irish Americans. Even the would-be Marxists, before planting Bolshevism in India, toyed sometimes with the Sinn Fein style.³ But none in India was really interested in the civil war sweeping Ireland from 1922 or in the controversy raging there between Michael Collins and De Valera. The militant nationalists of India in fact could look profitably for emulative Sinn Fein examples only in the preceding years of Irish history. A group of such militants under Suriva Kumar Sen in Bengal discovered in the Easter Rising of Dublin, April 1916,⁴ a suitable exciting pattern. Sinn Feinism was thus

2. *India and Ireland*, address by Eamon De Valera, delivered at the India Freedom Dinner of the Friends of Freedom for India, on 28 February 1920, Central Opera House, New York.

3. 'Comrade Ghaté—Our First Secretary' S. A. Dange, in 'S. V. Ghaté—Our First General Secretary', A memorial Volume, Communist Party Publication, no. 10, pp. 5-6, Aug. 1971, New Delhi.

4. The Easter Rising of 1916 took place during a war-time turmoil in which the Irish militant nationalists, the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Citizens' Army, wanted to take up arms against the British rule with the aid of Germany. The plot thickened when the revolutionaries arranged for German arms to be secretly brought to Ireland and planned a rising in Dublin on the Easter Parade Day (Sunday, 23 April) of the illegally-armed Irish Volunteers. However, the German ship "Aud", carrying arms, failed in its mission as Roger Casement—the go-between the rebels and the Kaiser's Government—was caught following his landing on the Irish shore. The news led to an order countermanding the Volunteers' Parade issued by their Chief, Mac Neil, whom the rebel leaders did not take into confidence. The British authorities also sensed danger and prepared for arrests of the politically suspicious characters. The original plan thus miscarried as there was no point in proceeding with the rising which, in any case, was foredoomed to failure. But the Revolutionary Military Council, who suspended the rising on 23rd, unanimously decided at the height of the "the delirium of the brave" to commence the rising at 12 noon on Easter Monday (24 April). It all began at the appointed hour when the General

inspirational in the daring stormy outbreak in Chittagong during during the Easter of 1930.

Over and above the difference of magnitude (as was natural in semi-armed Ireland and totally disarmed India) there was no objective resemblance between the circumstances of the Irish and Chittagong risings. The theme of the Irish rising was based on a World War situation in which Germany—the enemy of Britain—became an ally of the insurgents who hoped to thrive on German military aid. Besides, Ireland speedily developed a Volunteer organisation which supplied the material as well as the forum for insurgency. Again, the Gaelic revivalist movement and the legacy of Wolfe Tone, John Mitchel, Thom Davies and O'Donovan Rossa developed the mood and offered an emotional justification of the Irish rising. Moreover, the Irish labour militants and a section of Irish socialists played crucial roles in the organisation of the revolt.⁵ All these were typical Irish developments of 1916 and they had no parallels in India in 1930 or in Bengal where Suriya Sen's men rose. In the broader national context the Bengali regionalism, though remarkably alive throughout the

Post Office, occupied by the main body, was turned into the rebel headquarters and an Irish Republic was solemnly proclaimed. Splinter groups took position in various other parts of the city like the Four Courts, St. Stephens Green, Mt. St. Bridge, Westland Row Station etc. Martial law was introduced in Dublin but the British troops were unequal to their task of suppressing the rising till the arrival of reinforcement and Sir John Maxwell. On 29 April the rebels surrendered after week-long resistance and only when the British threatened with large-scale destruction of the city. Then followed the execution of rebel leaders in batches, the deportation of their ranks and the oppression of British forces on the population. The rising failed but the shock therapy worked as Pearse, the rebel Commander-in-Chief, was reported to have remarked: "When we are wiped out, people will blame us for everything, condemn us . . . After few years out, they will see the meaning of what we tried to do." This prophecy was vindicated when the released prisoners, in the following year, were accorded a heroes' welcome in Dublin. Thereafter the vast majority of Irish people unquestioningly followed the Easter Rising tradition and supported the Sinn Féin (the political heir of the Easter rebels) till the hour of its final victory.

5. Irish trade-unions, especially Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, were strongly embedded to national politics since 1914. Socialist James Connolly and his Citizens' Army were among the leaders and participants of the rising of 1916.

1920s and 1930s.⁶ was a retarding force rather than a resurgent one. The existence of a volunteer force (*Seva Dal*), created in the country as early as in 1923 to aid Indian National Congress, was too innocuous and committed to peaceful functions to be of any use for insurgency purposes. It is, however, true that a show of militarism on Irish or "Black Shirt" model by Bengal Congress Volunteers under Subhas Chandra Bose, during the Congress Session in Calcutta in 1928, did fascinate the imagination of young Bengal. But socialism was yet a much misconstrued far-cry raised by novices and desperados in a gold-rush, copying trade-unionist economism in a predominantly agriculturist society but hardly visualising to fit it into any anti-colonial armed struggle.⁷

Subjectively, however, the two risings resembled as regards the rebel reactions to the prevailing political panorama. Both the groups were impatient of the supposed national inaction, angry at—what they considered—the imbecility of public figures—and intensely hateful of the colonial rule. Both were essentially middleclass romantic revolutionists who hoped to set heroic examples of organised armed struggle and wanted to act as "a prophetic shock minority", arousing an apathetic nation. The martyrs of the Easter rising resented a stable period of Irish nationalism dominated by the Irish Parliamentary party, ruled by the triumvirate of Redmond, Dillon and Devlin—away from the people and relying on constitutional intrigues. Irish constitu-

6. *Banglar Katha*—a weekly brought out by C. R. Dass in its first edition of 30 September 1921 displayed characteristic Bengali regionalism by writing about a Bengali's "special place in the world," his "mission to perform" and his duty "to become a true Bengali." Broomfield, J. H., *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth Century Bengal*, p. 220, Los Angeles, 1968.

Then, the concern for a Greater Bengal "Bengali in race, language and culture" was apparent in the resolution that J. M. Sengupta sent to the Congress Committee on the re-drawing of provincial boundaries for consideration. *Advance*, 28 July 1931, cited in Chatterji, Bhola. *Some Aspects of Bengal Politics in the Early Nineteen Thirties*, p. 20, Cal. 1969.

7. It must, however, be conceded that the working class participation in the Indian national movement was visible during the anti-Simon Commission agitation of 1928-29 and in the Congress session in Calcutta in 1928 when the jute mill workers occupied the venue to register their demand for India's attainment of complete independence.

tionalism reached its peak when the tottering Liberal Government of 1905 was forced to pass the Third Home Rule Act in exchange of the support of Irish Parliamentary Party. Thus apparently Redmond and his followers made a good show in British Parliament preparing for a transfer of power to Irish middleclass and landed gentry. Feinism in this context appeared to be a moribund force, armed struggle a Quixotic exercise and the horizon of nationalism as mere skylight of Home Rule. Virile and romantic Ireland looked "dead and gone... with O'Leary in grave,"⁸ even before the coming of the Great War bringing an artificial boom of prosperity to Irish farmers and traders. But in reality the Irish—Anglicised, illusioned and fettered in chains of gold—were living in doles of concessions and not on the rights of a distinct people. The certainty of the North remaining in the Union, the shelving of the Home Rule during the war as "a promissory note payable after death"⁹ and the exploitation of Irish valour for imperial security—betrayed irreparable holes in Redmond's constitutional facade. Was it not an opportune moment for the daring to remonstrate and act for a new vision?

A different situation in Bengal produced almost similar mental urge. The Pro-changer C. R. Das—whose Swaraj Party outclassed a grumbling group of No-changers—was unable to give Bengal any new direction. The difficulty of maintaining a motley Swarajist rank, the distribution of privileges in Calcutta Corporation, the attempted communal adjustment between Hindu and Muslim elites and the digressions of a futile *satyagraha* (a non-violent civil resistance) against the *Mohunt* (priest) of Tarakeswar temple sapped all Das's energies. The extremists¹⁰ in the province—busy reviving old methods of individual killing (like Day's murder by Govinath Saha in January 1924) and political robberies (like Sankharitola Post Office dacoity in August 1923)—were also unable to break the colourless political

8. This was W. B. Yeats's version in his poem, *September*, 1913.

9. It was a comment of Roger Casement, one of the organisers of the rising of 1916.

10. The secret revolutionary societies of *Jugantar* and *Anushilan* commenced functioning since the days of the *Swadeshi* movement. These rival organisations were of a federal character with various affiliated groups in different localities acting almost independently.

monotony. Das's death in 1925 was followed by a long-drawn succession struggle. J. M. Sengupta inherited Das's "triple crown" (Presidentship of Bengal Provincial Congress, leadership of Swaraj Party in Bengal and Legislative Assembly and Mayorship of Calcutta Municipal Corporation) with the support of Gandhi (who came to Calcutta following the death of Das) and when other contenders were in disarray, Byomkesh Chakravarti becoming a "responsivist co-operator" and Subhas Chandra Bose suffering in Burma jail. Another contender, B. N. Sasmal, led the opposition and continued a fight for leadership. The schism resulted in a virtual split when two sets of Congress candidates contested for Calcutta Corporation in March 1927 in which Sasmals' party lost.¹¹ But the casualty was merely Sasmal, who never fully recovered, and factionalism continued unabated. The so-called—C. R. Das-bred—Big Five¹² also resented "the intruder from Chittagong," J. M. Sengupta, and patronised the newly released Bose, Sarat Chandra Bose's most beloved youngest brother. Bose—promising militancy and vague radicalism—was a favourite among the revolutionary elements who invariably took refuge in the organisational set up of Bengal Provincial Congress. His hobnobbing with the *Jugantar* people in the Congress led to the rancorous *Anushilan* members rallying behind Sengupta. There thus developed two formidable line-ups, a *Jugantar* and Big-Five—supported Bose confronting *Anushilan* and Gandhiite (No-changers originally) supported Sengupta with the Swarajists and Congressmen evenly divided. Thereafter it was all mud-slinging for sometime showing the bourgeois political opportunism at its worst with the two groups publicly accusing each other of nepotism, insincerity to national cause and the use of questionable sources for raising resources.¹³ There was hardly any ideology involved in the squabbles—though Bose himself wanted posterity to imagine that Sengupta's "unquestionable obedience to the Mahatma (Gandhi)" was the root of all

11. Bose, Subhas Chandra, *The Indian Struggle*, p. 123, 1964, Cal.

12. Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, Shri Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, Shri Tulsi Chandra Goswami, Shri Nirmal Chandra Chunder and Shri Sarat Chandra Bose.

13. Chatterji Bhola, *Some Aspects of Bengal Politics in the Early Nineteen Thirties*, p. 4.

troubles.¹⁴ The guns at Chittagong roared at this point drowning the vulgarity and the helplessness of the hour.

It would, however, be wrong to presume that the sentimental revolutionists of Chittagong clearly measured up the political situation. They could not have probably done so as (participants of middleclass dominated national politics. The facts that Surjya Sen's group in 1929 noisily fought for the control of Chittagong District Congress Committee, invited Bose to preside over their District Conference ignoring the local hero-Sengupta, entangled themselves in factional feuds leading to litigations, injuries and death (of Sukhendu Bikash Dutt) prove that they were compromising with the existing political situation. But such compromises were but only natural. Did the Irish Republican Brotherhood not compromise with Redmond's pressure in June 1914 for admitting his nominees to their governing body of Irish Volunteers? Did Pearse not speak from a Home Rule platform immediately before his joining I.R.B. in 1912? There is no doubt that the Chittagong group of revolutionaries had a soft corner for an aggressive Bose¹⁵ and that, too, on account of their understanding with the *Jugantar*.

A glimpse about the growth of a revolutionary organisation in Chittagong will further clarify its position vis-a-vis the extremist politics in Bengal as well as its object in preparing for an adventurist solo rising. A secret society sprang up in Chittagong round about 1918¹⁶ when the tension of the planned insurrection of 1915-16 was still alive.¹⁷ The group was small, obviously local and yet uncertain as to its affiliation to federal bodies like *Jugantar* and *Anushilan*. The group even then was dominated by Surjya Sen, a teacher of mathematics in National High

14. Bose, S.C., *The Indian Struggle*, p. 112.

15. An interview in Calcutta with Ganesh Ghosh, a renowned revolutionary of the past and a well-known Communist (C.P.M.) leader at present, dated 18 June 1971.

16. In 1918 Surjya Sen returned to Chittagong after obtaining his B.A. degree from Berhampore College.

17. In the wake of the *Swadeshi* movement and through Aravinda Ghose's efforts—revolutionary politics was said to have been introduced in Chittagong. However, the picture of this initial phase is rather obscure.

School of the locality (and hence popularly called "Master da"), and a few others like Anurup Sen, Nagen Sen and Charubikash Dutta. It also included the important names of Ambika Chakravarti, Nirmal Sen and Anantalal Sinha. The organisation was not formed on typical Hindu revivalist line and thus attracted Muslim youngmen like Afsaruddin and Dalilur Rahaman. Genesh Gosh also joined the group soon thereafter. These militants—though firmly committed to ideals of armed struggle—participated in the political agitation of the time in Chittagong centering round the coolie strike in Sylhet tea gardens in May 1921, the Gurkha outrage in Chandour and Assam—Bengal Railway and steamer strikes. This chain of incidents threw Chittagong into the ferment of Non-Co-operation movement. By 1920 Surjya Sen, in fact, founded in Gandhian style a Sanyashram which was apparently designed to assist the Congress politics but in reality a shelter for secretive get-together. The first crisis developed in the group on the question of its affiliation and a split resulted in September 1921 when Charubikash Dutta and some others joined *Anushilan* against a majority decision to collaborate with *Jugantar*.¹⁸ Thus two parallel organisations grew up in Chittagong, led by Charubikash Dutta and Surjya Sen respectively, ostensibly for the same purpose but at logger heads with each other as usual in such cases. Surjya Sen's group, like their rivals in Chittagong, kept up the promise given by the revolutionists in Bengal to the *Mahatma* about restraining their adventurism during the Non-Co-operation movement.¹⁹ They, however, carefully avoided arrests, trained cadres militarily, searched for smuggled arms and desperately looked for money. They did not take Gandhiji's promise of *Swaraj* (self-rule) within one year seriously and tried to be in readiness for an armed struggle. But how to launch an armed

18. According to Ganesh (during an interview in Calcutta on 17 June 1971) the group remained independent maintaining "cordial relations" with some *Jugantar* leaders. Anantalal Sinha in his book, *Agnigarva Chattagram*, Cal., 1969, also gives a similar impression. But in his confessional statement in Burdwan jail on 3 January 1925 (Home pol. file No. 253 of 1925)—an enlightening document as regards the details of the newly formed Chittagong group—Ananta Sinha specifically mentioned that they joined *Jugantar*. Police records also often referred to Surjya Sen as the leader of a *Jugantar* group.

19. Bose, S.C., *The Indian Struggle*, p. 60.

struggle, in what propensity and with what plan? On these there was no light—no ray of hope. They were impressed with the Non-Co-operation movement but could not uphold non-violence. They upheld violence but did not know what to do with it. In this uncertain circumstance, methods were mistaken for objects and the revolutionary energies were squandered in political dacoities and in the subsequent legal defence. The looting of the house of a money-lender in Paroikora village in 1922 and the snatching of Assam Bengal Railway's handsome money in 1923 amply illustrate the point. The money, of course, acquired smuggled guns—but guns themselves could never produce revolutionary programme. The flight of Surjya Sen and his followers on 24 December 1923 from "Suluk bahar" (their hide-out in the outskirts of Chittagong town) to the neighbouring hills, the hot pursuit of armed British police, their heroic fight back in Nagarkhana hill and their subsequent arrest²⁰—were all very impressive but intrinsically futile. Fortunately all of them were released due to the brilliant handling of the case by their defence counsel, J. M. Sengupta himself, and the ridiculous muddling of evidence by the police. The Chittagong heroes came out of the confinement but only to grope in the wilderness.

The *Jugantar* revolutionaries—a leadership on whom the Chittagong group always looked up—were not forth-coming with any concrete line of action. In fact the hard core of *Jugantar* was swinging between the pretence of violence and the credence of non-violence. The *Dadas* (elder brothers) of *Jugantar* and *Anushilan* were more interested in somehow maintaining their groups than running into risks. In their urge to devise a practicable future programme (and as no programme was practicable in the existing disunity) some in the rival camps started a move for

20. Surjya Sen, Ambika Charavati and Rajen Das, in utter exhaustion and for fear of arrest and torture, swallowed potassium cyanide. Being oxidised the poison could not kill them and the police found them unconscious. The rest of the party—Ananta Sinha, Upen or Abani Bhattacharya and Deben De managed to escape, though Ananta was eventually arrested in Calcutta. Nirmal Sen, whose unpunctuality led to his missing the whole "action," and other participants could not be involved by the police. It should also be stated here that the group soon murdered the police Sub-Inspector, Prafulla Roy, who was responsible for Ananta's capture.

an understanding among revolutionists in Chittagong. But before it could make any real progress the Government struck with ordinances and the cream of Chittagong revolutionaries entered into prisons in batches in October 1924. However, Surjya Sen managed to escape from the police not only in Chittagong but also in the Shovabazar hideout in Calcutta when a good number of extremists were arrested in connection with Dakshineswar Bomb case in November 1925. A year later Surjya Sen was finally arrested in Calcutta in October 1926. The two years of his absconding life, between 1924 and 1926, were surrounded by mystery as little could be known beyond the fact that he visited places in Bengal, Assam and the U.P. with a view to organise revolutionary activities.²¹ The real nature of Surjya Sen's exploits is now any body's guess. But in all likelihood Sen was probably trying to assess if the various secret societies were thinking about a concerted armed rising in the fashion of what had previously been attempted by Rashbehari Bose in 1912 or Jatin Mukherji in 1915. The authorities were aware of the formation of a New Violence Party in which Surjya Sen's name featured along with Sachin Sanyal of the U.P. and Charubikash Dutta of Chittagong *Anushilan*. The party was formed as a measure of attempted unity between the youngsters of *Anushilan* and *Jugantar* following the arrests of 1924. The younger men of both sides wanted to continue violent activities in defiance of their senior leaders—who favoured a cessation of all acts for some time. In fact some literature in this connection was also uncovered by the police from Shovabazar hide-out.²² But the prospect of any concerted action must have appeared very dim in 1925 with arrests in Dakshineswar Bomb Case in Calcutta and Kakori train robbery in the U.P. But Surjya Sen continued his plea for unity

21. This is what Ganesh Ghosh mentioned in his article "Surjya Sen (Masterda)" in a memorial volume, *Surjya Sen Smriti*, ed. by Biplabirtha Chattagram Smriti Samstha, p. 17, Cal. 1971. It is confirmed by the U.P. revolutionaries like J. C. Chatterji in his book, *In Search of Freedom*, p. 337, Cal. 1967 and Prof. N. K. Nigam of the Third Delhi Conspiracy case fame during his conversation with the author in May 1971 in New Delhi.

22. Abstract of Intelligence, Bengal Police, vol. XXXX, 1926. Cited in Sinha, Ananta, *Agnigarva Chattagram*, p. 219, Cal. 1969. In his book, *Chattagram Astragar Lunthan*, Charubikash Dutta also referred to this move.

and unified programme throughout.²³ It remained, however, a very fond hope, a wishful thinking—unlikely to be fulfilled in the partisan environment of Bengal militants.

By the end of 1928 Surjya Sen and his followers returned from prisons one after the other.²⁴ In December 1928 they attended the Congress session in Calcutta and supported Bose's move for India's claim of complete Independence as against the Nehru Report advocating India's Dominion Status. They were moved by the performance of Bose's Volunteers, Calcutta, and accepted the *Jugantar* idea of dominating the local Congress organisation—though they never really believed that this could be an end in itself. They also attended a secret meeting of *Jugantar* and *Anushilan* to forge a compromise formula, which, however, would not materialise in the background of a growing *Anushilan*—Sengupta and *Jugantar*—Bose rift. In February 1929 the Chittagong group began controlling the District Congress Committee when Surjya Sen was elected as Secretary. In May 1929 they organised the District Congress Conference with a dazzling march past of volunteers under Ganesh Ghosh. In September 1929 they elected delegates to the Bengal Provincial Congress Conference and in the Conference itself in November 1929 voted on *Jugantar* line in favour of Bose against Sengupta. But beneath the surface the group had already become impatient of tall talks of the old guard, tired of inaction in the name of organising the Congress and disgusted at disunity and stereotyped dacoities and treacheries, assassinations and arrests. Their plan for a rising in April 1930 was thus as much an attempt to strike a stirring blow on the British authority as to resent and rise above the terroristic traditionalism.

The actual plan of the rising was preceded by some general preparation. For the newly released Chittagong leaders it was

23. Satish Pakrashi in his book, *Agnijuger Kahini*, and Nirajan Sen in his article "Bir biplabi Surjya Sen" in a memorial volume, *Surjya Sen Smriti*, mentioned about Surjya Sen's concern for unity in most unequivocal terms.

24. The days of release of Chittagong detainees: (a) Ganesh Ghosh on 19.9.28. (b) Ananta Sinha on 8.9.28 (c) Lokenath Bal on 18.9.28. (d) Ambika Chakravarti on 28.9.28. (e) Surjya Sen on 13.9.28. (f) Nirmal Sen on 27.11.28.

From the Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, 1 March 1932, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.



like setting their house in order and make up for their absence. Old contacts were renewed, arms left in a hurry were traced back and recruitment commenced. The occupation of the District Congress Office in the town provided them with an excellent venue and a suitable disguise. Physical culture clubs (like those of Sadarghat, Rahmatganj, Chandanpura, Asadganj etc.), youth organisation (like *Juba Samay* led by Ganesh Ghosh) and a Students' Association (led by Lokenath Bal) were brought into existence simultaneously. Demonstrations of physical exercises were continually arranged (in which Lokenath Bal used to stop running automobiles and Ananta Sinha used to twist iron bars) to emulate the youth.²⁵ Emotionalism was also in full play to sway the young through rhetorical extravagance. Occasions of the conferences, in May 1929 (of the District Congress, the youth, the students and the women) were utilised for this purpose. Bose in his presidential speech at the Congress Conference was reluctant to believe that Gandhi's non-violence could achieve Indian independence. Jyotish Ghosh and Nripen Banerji in their presidential addresses to the youth and students appealed fervently their audiences to come forward to the service of the motherland. Posters depicting ideas like "the agony under foreign rule", placards bearing mottos like "the country first and thereafter justice and religion", call to youngmen like "Yonder is the altar to the goddess of shackles—Will it remain upright forever?" and debates on issues like "the sword is mightier than the pen" indicate the careful nursing of a rebellious mood. It was again apparent in a leaflet inviting the youth to be awakened, for the unhappy motherland "eagerly awaits the employment of energies slumbering in the young."²⁶ The climax of emotionalism was reached on 15 September 1929 when the group mourned the death of Jatindra Nath Das²⁷ by taking out a delirious procession of nearly 2000 people through the streets of Chittagong town with banners like

25. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, 1 March 1932, Home Pol. file No. 7/4, 1932.

26. *Ibid.* Also Sinha, Ananta, *Agnigarva Chattagram*, pp. 256-262.

27. Jatindra Nath Das, arrested for complicity in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, was detained in Lahore Central Jail. He went on hunger strike against the brutal treatment of political prisoners and died in jail on 13 September 1929 after fasting for 63 days.

"He went away trampling with his feet the fear of death
And called upon everyone to clang the shackles".

Jatindra Nath's photographs (in the volunteer uniform of 1928) adorned the District Congress Office with the message:

"A soldier's life is the life for me

A soldier's death so India is free"

The occasion was reminiscent of O'Donovan Rossa's funeral in Ireland in September 1915 when electrifying speeches were delivered by Pearse and Connolly with tremendous impact. In the memory of Jatindra Nath the Chittagong group (most of whom personally knew him, especially, Ganesh Ghosh, and thus deeply upset at his loss) attempted to attain similar effect on the (audience when Lokenath Bal spoke of "fire in hearts for the destruction of British Government," Ananta Sinha talked about "blood boiling at fever pitch" and Ganesh Ghosh called for the strength of thousand Jatindra Nath's "to strike terror in the heart of tyrannical Government."²⁸ The difference between incidents relating to O'Donovan Rossa and Jatindra Nath was one of degree and stature and not of the content or the desired effect. An environment propitious for what Surjya Sen later described as "terroristic romance"²⁹ was fast developing. It was a prelude to the "death programme" of Surjya Sen and his men.

The theme of the "death programme" was a sudden rising by a determined lot occupying the vantage points of Chittagong town, declaring a free Chittagong and then trying to defend the freedom—however short-lived—with their lives. It was in tune with the "heroic, tragic lunacy of Sinn Fein"³⁰ or the "poetic license" of the Easter rebels.³¹ Following some elaboration the plan aimed at attacking the police and Auxiliary Force

28. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, 1 March 1932, Home Pol File No. 7/4, 1932.

29. Statement of Charbikash Dutta (Ex-detenu) in Chittagong prison, recorded on 15.5.30. Home Pol. File No. 335, 1930.

30. Yeats's comment in his letter to Lady Gregory, 8 May 1916. Martin, F.X., *Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising*: Dublin 1916, p. IX, London, 1967.

31. Pearse, Plunkett and Mac Donagh were poets and Connolly was the visionary with a forceful pen.

of India (an irregular British army wing, heavily armed to deal with military emergency) establishments, ransacking their armouries, disrupting the railway and telegraphic communications, brutally massacring the town's European population to avenge the age-long British oppression as symbolised in the butchery of Jalianwala Bagh (13 April 1919) and proclaiming a Republic. Then the rebels would take possession of the town, distribute arms among the people and dig out defensive rings centering round a headquarter. When the British army would attempt to regain control over the town in full strength the rebels should withstand the pressure and finally collect themselves at the headquarter for the last resistance to the last man. The site for the finale was decided to be the centrally Located Collector's *Cutcherry* at Fairy hill.³² The relatively high altitude of the place and the existence of a water reservoir were the considerations for its choice to serve the purpose of General Post Office Building in Dublin of April 1916. For this military adventure it was decided to form the branch of an imaginery Indian liberation army—not yet born but expected to be born someday. Its name, Hindustan Republican Army (Chittagong Branch), was reminiscent of Irish Republican Army of the post-Easter rising days. A revolutionary council of five, similar to what the Irish Easter rebels had in 1916, was created with Surjya Sen as President and Ambika Chakravarti, Nirmal Sen, Ananta Sinha and Ganesh Ghosh as members. But how did the plan come about and who did originate it?

Ananta Sinha, who in his books always over-narrated his own role in the rising, has no hesitation in ascribing the plan to Ganesh Ghosh.³³ Ghosh in his turn is inclined to share the credit of planning collectively by saying that all the leading figures were thinking, more or less, in the same direction and Ananta Sinha and he himself might have taken some initiative. Ghosh's version was generally true and all the leaders, following their return to public life, were impatient for undertaking a daring "action". But the cue certainly came from Ghosh who spent his stay in Midnapore jail in intellectual company and in reading

32. An interview in Calcutta with Ganesh Ghosh, 17 June 1971.

33. Sinha, Ananta, *Agnigarva Chattagram*, p. 282, Cal. 1969.

the history of national military exploits in general and about rebellious Ireland in particular. Books on Irish revolutionists in prisons in Bengal must have been scanty³⁴ but still enough to excite his imagination. A study of the Irish rising and the volunteer organisation revealed that a sudden organised attack by a disciplined band of revolutionists could achieve limited objectives and demoralise the ruling forces.³⁵ All the Chittagong leaders, in some form or the other, passed through in jail a phase of intense introspection. They were finding it increasingly difficult to comprehend and organise violent armed struggles, simultaneously planned and worked out, in various parts of vast country. They became realists enough to realise that any grand project was beyond their capabilities and thus decided to select for themselves a moderate but exemplary role with a limited object in view. Their object was to remind the Indian people of the glorious tradition of anti-colonial armed struggle, to create a symbol for the brave to strive and to appeal to the virility of a nation. Ganesh Ghosh, therefore, had no difficulty in devising a blue-print. He soon exchanged ideas with Ananta Sinha and together they sold to Surjya Sen on 15 October 1929³⁶ the scheme of a collective rise and fall. If the death in Dublin came through inflaming impulse the death in Chittagong was to come through cool calculations.

Once the plan was agreed upon the group sprang into "sudden" and "unusual life" in the beginning of 1930, meeting

34. In the interview Ganesh Ghosh could recall reading Daniel Breen's *My Struggle for Irish Freedom* and "few other books". The biography of another Irish leader—*Michael Collins and the Making of Modern Ireland* was quite popular at that time. Besides, old issues of journals like "Contemporary History" and "19 Century and After" were also available. Moreover, the police searches following the rising in Chittagong resulted in the discovery of *Life of Eamon De Valera* from Ganesh Ghosh's house and the copy of a speech of M. Henry Barbousse entitled "Against Imperialism" from the District Congress Office in Surjya Sen's exercise book. (Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, 1 March 1932. Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

35. An interview in Calcutta with Ganesh Ghosh, 17 June 1971.

36. Sinha, Ananta, *Agnigarva Chattagram*, p. 283, Cal. 1969.

constantly in some places including the District Congress Office.³⁷ A target date was fixed which, in fact, turned out to be the Easter of 1930—not Easter Monday as it was in 1916 but Good Friday.³⁸ A fresh search for smuggled arms was followed by an elaborate curriculum for the recruits. Secret societies invariably adhere to some ritualistic patterns of initiation. The practice in Irish Republican Brotherhood was the administering of a solemn oath “in the presence of Almighty God” swearing allegiance to Irish Republic and subservience to the “commands of superior officers.”³⁹ The custom followed in the secret societies of Bengal also had a melodramatic religious touch like swearing before the image of goddess Kali (who symbolises strength) and offering her blood from a small self-inflicted wound. The Chittagong group in 1928–29 recovered from this religiosity and emphasized only on the recruits’ oath about secrecy and loyalty to the party.⁴⁰ Surjya Sen—who always shunned ritualistic exhibitionism—was an idealist and not a materialist.⁴¹ However, he certainly rose above the terroristic conventionalism when he was stealthily recruiting women to his group much to the annoyance of others, who still clung to “one Helen causing ruination of the whole Troy” like notion.⁴² Naturally no Countess Markievicz of

37. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, 1 March 1932. Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

38. The Chittagong leaders maintain that this was not deliberate. Anantha Sinha in his book, *Agnigarva Chattagram*, and Ganesh Ghosh in his interview on 17 June 1971, agreed that the date of the rising was kept shifting as preparations were found to be incomplete till it was finally settled on 18 April. However, one should remember that a vital part of the whole plan, namely, the killing of the Europeans, was drawn on the assumption that the white people would assemble in their club premises at the night of Good Friday. How could the entire rising be fortuitously taking place on Good Friday if a part of it was thus pre-determined?

39. Martin, F. X., “Mc Cullough, Hobson and republican Ulster”, *Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising*: Dublin 1916, p. 97.

40. Confession of Fakir Sen, 7, 8 & 9 May 1930, Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, 1 March 1932, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

41. Surjya Sen’s last few letters to his sister-in-law immediately before his execution on 12 January 1934 clearly bear this out. These letters were recently found and published in *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 12 January 1971.

42. When Surjya Sen’s young wife Pushpakuntala Devi, who suffered the ignominy that her charms could not hold Sen to the household, died in 1928 Sen’s followers literally congratulated him at his “relief” and “free-

Dublin was associated with the rising in Chittagong of 1930.⁴³ But there were young heroes as reckless as the Irish rebels of 1916. They were screened for the "death programme" with an eye to their militancy, reliability and young age. Youth was obviously the most cherished quality as only the young could be indifferent to worldly attractions, romantic to spill their blood for a cause and irresponsible to defy death. The average age of the insurrectionists in Chittagong was 22 years and some were below 16. They were trained to ride horses, use guns, drive automobiles and respond to military discipline. They were indoctrinated through available emotional patriotic stuff⁴⁴ and hardened to kill and die.⁴⁵

A mobilisation chart was made, plans of attack on the military targets were accurately drawn and timings were exactly synchronised to derive the maximum effect of abruptness. The idea of political robbery was scrupulously avoided and it was resolved to raise funds by collection among members themselves, and if necessary by stealing their family properties.⁴⁶ Leather ammunition bags, khaki uniforms and sparkling badges to suit the military occasion were prepared. Numerous implements as well as auto-

dom". Theirs was a queer but spontaneous reaction. After all, the ideal as a patriot in India was predominantly ascetic.

43. Leading ladies like Pritilata Waddadar and Kalpana Dutta appeared only in the latter stage of Surjya Sen's activities in Chittagong, 1931-33, and thus they are beyond the scope of this study.

44. These include very digestible Bengali books like *Aandaman Kahini*, *Desh Bhasa*, *Dwipantarer Katha* and *Nirbasiter Atma Katha*, biographies like *Deshabandhu Smriti*, *Parindrer Atma Kahini*, *Kanailal* and *Garibaldi* and serious books like *Anandamath*, *Swaraj Gita* and *Banglar Biplabbad*. Statements of Sahairam Das, Fakir Sen, and Lalmohan Sen, Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, File No. 7/4, 1932.

45. In groups they often discussed elaborately as to their own death (confession of Fakir Sen, Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case) and the manner in which they should annihilate the enemy (an interview with Ganesh Ghosh). To get adjusted to the sight of blood they watched surgical operations and visited places where animals were sacrificed or butchered. (Sinha, Ananta, *Agnigarva Chattagram*, p. 303).

46. In this connection the guardians in Chittagong lodged several complaints to the police against their wards. A typical example was Madhav Sen's complaint on 8 April 1930 against his son—Fakir Sen. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Case, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

mobiles for use were arranged. But the incredible feature during this phase was the success of the rebels in building an armour of secrecy which the British intelligence could not pierce. The police was always anxious to take care of the Chittagong detenues since their release and meticulously arranged a watch system for 24 hours by 22 men.⁴⁷ The authorities in Calcutta were reported to have secured a clue as to the apprehension of a rising on Irish example either in Chittagong or in Barisal.⁴⁸ It is not clear how seriously they treated the information but the police vigilance did certainly increase in Chittagong and the Superintendent of Police himself took over the supervision of watchers under the special instruction of D.I.G. Calcutta.⁴⁹ Yet no useful intelligence about the plan of Surjya Sen and his followers was forthcoming to the police although the group was visibly all bustle. The Chittagong police then decided to relax the watch between 13 and 18 April to lure the Chittagong rebels. It was thought that they "in a state of fancied security might, by their movements, convey some inklings as to their intention."⁵⁰ The stroke of duplicity eventually proved to be fatal as the rising was scheduled precisely on 18 April. Throughout the Chittagong police did not know that their watchers were being watched by a counter—espionage group of the rebels. This system in fact enabled them to hide Ramkrishna Biswas and Tarakeswar Dasgupta, who were injured while manufacturing bombs during the preparatory phase. The group was also following a method of closely watching each other or "mutual vigilance" as an insurance against internal treachery. Surjya Sen practically saved the situation when he decisively opposed a move by the majority of his council for taking into confidence an old and well-known comrade who deliberately chose to visit Chittagong—following a long absence—just before the rising.⁵¹ But the police was most

47. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

48. D.G.I. Police, Bengal to Bengal Gov. No. 13750, 28 Nov. 1929. Home Pol. File No. 4/9, 1931.

49. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

50. *Ibid.*

51. Sinha. Apanta, *Agnigarva Chattagram*, pp. 448-49.

misled when Surjya Sen and his group carried out an ingenious plan. A leaflet signed by Surjya Sen, Ambika Chakravarti and Ganesh Ghosh invited the people of Chittagong to enrol themselves as *Satyagrahas* (non-violent civil resisters) for disobeying sedition laws in the town in view of the commencement of a nation-wide Civil Disobedience movement.⁵² The leaflet was issued on 17 April—a day in advance of the planned rising—and supplied the police with a satisfying *raison d'être* for the crisp movements of the group. Thus all governmental precautions failed not due to any negligence but—as discovered later on—to “the abnormal cunning and craft of the conspirators.”⁵³ When a question was raised in British Parliament about the failure of Indian intelligence concerning the outrage, Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India spoke, as the men in Dublin Castle did in 1916, that the authorities in Chittagong were poised for large-scale arrests on 20 April and thus could not precede the rising.⁵⁴ The “*Satyagrahi* Leaflet” reminds one of the Castle Document widely publicised in the Republican circles at the nick of the rising on 19 April. The “Document”, appearing like a decoded British message, conveyed an intolerable suggestion that the Dublin authorities were ready to round up all Irish leaders, moderates and radicals. However, the “Castle Document” was forged to impress upon those who would rise the necessity of a rising and the “*Satyagrahi* Leaflet” was fabricated to convince the authorities that the rebels did not mean to rise. It should be accepted that both the tricks worked.

On 18 April the Hindustan Republican Army (Chittagong Branch) struck exactly at ten in the night.⁵⁵ The action commenced with distribution of three kinds of leaflets. The first was an appeal to the youth to join the ranks of the army at its hour of victory. The second was a call to the people to produce “dead

52. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

53. *Ibid.*

54. Reply of Sir S. Hoare, Secy. of State for India to Mr. Molson, M.P. 21 March 1932. Home Pol. file No. 4/9, 1931. Also, Hansard 263, H.C. Debate, 5 Ser. Col. 675.

55. The rising was scheduled at eight in the night but deferred to accommodate last minute preparations.

or alive" to army headquarters "all Englishmen or white-skinned Anglo-Indians hostile to national aspirations." But the third and the main leaflet was a gorgeous declaration of the rebel cause and a passionate justification of their action. The H.R.A. (Chittagong Branch), "who claimed the allegiance of every Indian people," pledged their lives for "the freedom, welfare and exaltation" of the Motherland. They wanted to affirm ".... The right of ownership of India and the control of her destiny belong to the Indian people only and the long usurpation of that right by a foreign power and Government has not extinguished that right nor it ever can." To establish this the rebels were in readiness "to prove themselves worthy of the august destiny to which they are called."⁵⁶ Apart from few details the declaration ran on identical lines of the proclamation of Irish Republic, issued by the Easter rebels in 1916.⁵⁷ There is no doubt whatsoever that this leaflet reveals to the full the profound influence of Irish Easter Rising on the Chittagong outbreak. But did the watchwords of American Declaration of Independence not echo in France in 1789?

By midnight on 18 April, the administration in Chittagong was paralysed by systematic blows. The first attack, led by Ambika Chakravarti, was launched on the Central Telegraph and Telephone Office and resulted in its complete destruction. Assam Bengal Railway main line was uprooted in Nangalkot (76 miles from Chittagong) and in Dhoom (41 miles from Chittagong) leaving the town disconnected with the outside world except by wireless links from ships in the jetty. Soon attack on the police line followed under the leadership of Ganesh Ghosh and Ananta Sinha, first and second in command of the operations, respectively. With the presence of 71 policemen⁵⁸ on the spot the group anti-

56. Leaflets issued by H.R.A. (Chittagong Branch) on 18 April 1930. Home Pole. File No. 4/9, 1931.

57. A comparison between this leaflet and the *Poblacht Nalle Eireann*, signed by Clarke, Macdiarmada, Pearse, Connolly, Macdonah, Cenant and read out by Pearse on 24 April 1916 before an indifferent small crowd in front of the G.P.O. Dublin, will adequately prove the point. The striking similarity in places is often verbatim.

58. This is the figure on Government record. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932. But Ananta Sinha in his book, *Agnigarva Chattagram*, p. 345 calculated the number of policemen to be 200.

cipated stiffest resistance there. But in practice the place was occupied with comparative ease along with its armoury full of revolvers, musketry and ammunitions. The attack on the European Club, led by Naresh Roy, was abortive as the club members—contrary to expectations—did not keep late hours on Good Friday night. Nirmal Sen and Lokenath Bal led the attack on A.F.I. Headquarters, ransacked the armoury and burnt it down. Here also the British sentries could offer no resistance. All parties thereafter collected at the Police line where Surjya Sen formally proclaimed a Republic at about 12 a.m. and inaugurated a Provisional Government in the midst of volley fires and the shouting of revolutionary slogans. The military achievement so far was impressive considering that only 71 men were employed with only 15 revolvers and breech loader guns, 17 grenades (not used) and some swords, daggers and iron bars. They killed altogether 7 men (including Sergeant Major Farrell, one sentry and one armed police constable) and inflicted injuries on some others. But behind the first flush of victory was lurking an ominous danger. The rebels counted far too much on the acquisition of Lewis guns or light machineguns from the A.F.I. armoury which was ingeniously broken open with the help of automobiles. They also anticipated ammunitions to be stacked in the armoury itself without knowing the fact that the magazine room, according to army arrangements, was invariably away from the armoury. When frantic searches could not produce ammunitions they—in despair—destroyed the Lewis guns and magazine rifles which seemed too burdensome and useless to carry. Thereafter the armoury was set on fire and—as it was found later—the magazine room “had providentially been completely overlooked by the raiders.”⁵⁹ When the group raiding A.F.I. armoury informed the main body at the Police line as to their failure to trace ammunitions the leaders naturally felt disheartened. They could no more hope to use Lewis guns to their advantage. They thereafter neglected to take care of two other Lewis guns in Pahartali and Double Mooring jetty about which they were aware all through.⁶⁰ Their monetary consola-

59. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

60. Interview with Ganesh Ghosh in Calcutta, dated 19 June 1971.

tion that the broken guns in A.F.I. headquarters would render the British helpless in the town was hardly justifiable till guns in other places remained intact. While the rebels wasted their chances of raiding Pahartali and Double Mooring jetty, the authorities—following an initial setback—remarkably recovered to wrest the initiative. The District Magistrate, Wilkinson, and Captain Taitt, Adjutant of Auxilliary Forces—who escaped death near A.F.I. armoury by inches—went to the railway station, commandeered an engine, reached Double Mooring jetty, despatched messages from a ship and brought the Lewis guns and men to A.F.I. armoury to make use of the spared magazine room. A party under the Superintendent of Police, Johnson, soon made a short excursion to the Police line—where the rebels were still in close command.⁶¹ Their Lewis gun attack was repulsed by the rebels with the newly acquired police musketry. In fact Johnson's party retreated following brisk firing and apprehending the danger of being overpowered. But unknowingly they did the damage as Surjya Sen's men were taken aback by this abrupt machine gun fire. The leaders felt most demoralised at the dim prospect of an unequal fight between musketry and machine guns. At this point they decided to destroy the Police armoury, guard-room and magazine room after acquiring for themselves as many arms as possible to carry. The contemporary criticisms that the rebels should have hidden such great quantity of arms—a dream of generations of Indian revolutionaries—was hardly justified. It was neither possible physically for 71 persons to carry 400 magazine rifles to any distant area nor practicable to search out a suitable hiding place. It is true that the original plan envisaged a distribution of arms to the people following the occupation of the town. But that part of the plan was rendered difficult when the rebels were unable to discover .303 bore cartridges (to be used for both magazine rifles and Lewis guns). Arms, in such circumstance, were more a liability than an asset. The .303 bore cartridges thus proved to be tragically crucial for the whole rising. But did the rebel leaders think that every thing would go in their way, according to their plan? Did they not make allowances for mistakes and exigencies?

61. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

While setting fire to the Police lines one of the insurgents (Mimangshu Sen) received severe burns. He was taken into a car in which Ananta Sinha and Ganesh Ghosh took their seats joined by two others (Ananda Gupta and Jiban Ghosal). The car left for the heart of the town, presumably to arrange for the injured person's treatment and transporting the ailing Ganesh Ghosh⁶² to Fairy hill. There was nothing wrong if an advanced party moved towards the point where the whole army planned to rally. But the unusual feature was the inclusion of two field-commanders in the advance party "without informing even Master da (Surjya Sen)" as one of their comrades put it later on.⁶³ However, Ganesh Ghosh distinctly remembers that Surjya Sen and others requested him to travel by car towards the town in view of his indisposition.⁶⁴ But Ananta Sinha was acting independently as he himself mentioned that he had no previous consultation with other leaders.⁶⁵ While in the town they expected the main body to arrive within a reasonable time. When it really did not do so the advanced party tried to meet them down half the way and even by returning to the Police line without any success.⁶⁶ This is certainly the correct description. But why did the main party wait for some time in the Police line for the return of the advanced group?⁶⁷ Was the advanced group under instruction to come back after dropping the injured to a secured place? There evidently was some confusion somewhere. However, the absence of two field-commanders, undoubtedly weakened the collective thinking of the leadership. When the whole party was waiting at the Police line under cover an automobile flashed its

62. On 18 April Ganesh Ghosh had symptoms of chicken pox and was running a fairly high temperature.

63. The version of Benode Choudhury, tape-recorded in Calcutta and acquired for Oral History Project, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library on 21 January 1971.

64. Interview with Ganesh Ghosh in Calcutta, dated 19 June 1971. The march towards Fairy hill and the gathering there were so unequivocal that Ganesh could never imagine at that time of any departure.

65. Sinha, Ananta, *Chattagram Juba Bidroha*, part-I, p. 151, Calcutta, 1968.

66. Interview with Ganesh Ghosh in Calcutta, dated 19 June 1971.

67. It was gathered, in fact, that the main body of rebels waited in the police line for approximately 20 minutes. Sinha, Ananta, *Chattagram Juba Bidroha*, part-i, p. 189, Calcutta.

light on them from a distance. The leaders already startled by Lewis gun fire—presumed it to be the signal for yet another machine gun onslaught. Ambika Chakravarti took an instinctive decision and promptly led a general retreat towards the neighbouring hills and jungles. Thus arose an incredible situation in which the victorious army left an unprotected town (the authorities meanwhile retired—following their abortive Lewis gun attack—to Pahartali European quarters, preparing for a limited defence and awaiting re-inforcement to arrive from Dacca) for hills without attempting to deploy men at strategic points. Their march to the hills was not a melee, no general *suave qui pent* as the rank and file remained “a compact and disciplined body”⁶⁸ without knowing, of course, what was happening. The over-all plan at this point was known only to Surjya Sen, Nirmal Sen and Ambika Chakravarti—who must have become thoroughly confused. Otherwise they had no business to tamper with an agreed plan and decide against rallying in the town. The H.R.A. (Chittagong Branch) had no preparation for roaming around the hills, no provision, water and compass (whereas food for 71 men was reserved in a restaurant in the town). Why did the three leaders particularly Surjya Sen, who was “head and shoulder above others in intelligence”⁶⁹ not realise that they were throwing the initiative which they so laboriously snatched? Surjya Sen and his men planned the aggression meticulously but not the consolidation. Tactically the whole rising almost ended at this juncture though the stage of heroism merely began.

Between 19 and 22 April the group moved about the hilly Chittagong tracts—roughly to 15 miles away from the town for nearly 85 hours. These were hours of extreme hardship when food and drinks were scarcely available and constant marching proved most exhausting. The run-away army hopelessly failed to establish contact with the town or with their lost comrades. Besides, the leaders must have, by this time, felt tormented by see-

68. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

69. Ganesh Ghosh always emphasized this point in his interview in Calcutta, dated 17 June 1971.

ing the indomitable spirit of their rank. In fact a resentment among the followers was brewing up who insisted on attacking the town instead of moving around aimlessly.⁷⁰ They were obviously right, for the initiative—though lost—was not lost forever. On 21 April when the group was on a hill near Fatehabad a local news paper (*Daily Panchajanya*), secured by chance, conveyed the information about the arrival of British troops in Chittagong and the imposition of curfew in the town. It thus became an uphill task for the rebels to enter into an army-occupied town. Yet there was hardly any choice and they had to decide upon the attack of the town in four small batches. They actually marched for their destination from Fatehabad hill. But seeing the impossibility of reaching the town before dawn they preferred to take shelter for the day in Jalalabad hill and wait for the darkness of 22 April.⁷¹ Before it was dusk on 22 April they themselves were attacked by the British army and fought the battle of Jalalabad hill.

The battle of Jalalabad hill was a confrontation of unequals where the revolutionaries were particularly at a disadvantage. The hill was smaller in height than other surrounding hills, especially the one in front of it on the eastern side. The bushes and trees at the top offered only inadequate covers and the hill was dangerously close to a railway line. There was no supply of water and the rebels had no food for the whole day. Their number was 51 and the weapons consisted of police musketry and revolvers. They faced the regulars of British army carrying magazine rifles, Lewis guns and Vickers machine gun. The total number on the British side was overwhelmingly superior to insurrectionists' strength.⁷² Besides, the advantage of abrupt action lay,

70. Sinha, Ananta, *Chattagram Juba Bidroha*, part-1, pp. 199, and the version of Benode Choudhury (tape-recorded).

71. The version of Benode Choudhury, (tape-recorded).

72. No definitive British statement as to the number of Government troops is available. The British accounts (e.g. Report of Lt. Col. Dallas Smith, 24 April 1930, and Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case) are often contradictory and full of discrepancies. From these one could only deduce a very rough estimate. The British troops arrived near Jal-

unlike the night of 18 April, this time with the Government forces. However, the vigilant rebels were not as surprised as they should have been and thwarted all attempts of the British army to occupy the hill even when incessant machine gun fire was directed towards their position from the higher hill top on the eastern side. Soon thereafter the rebels faced Lewis gun attacks from their left and right flanks. But they maintained their persistent efforts to silence the enemy guns.⁷³ The engagement, commanded by Lokenath Bal, lasted from 5.30 p.m. to 8 p.m. bringing three hour full of glory to the insurrectionists. Their "united and determined attempt to annihilate" the British army forces⁷⁴ alarmed the authorities in Bengal. The British army hurriedly left the battlefield soon after the fall of darkness. officially on account of scant visibility and under orders to return to ensure the safety of the town at night⁷⁵ but practically

alabad hill in various phases. First D.I.G. Mr. Farmer arrived in automobiles with one L.G. Section (roughly 10 men), 3 officers and 5 other men from Eastern Frontier Rifles. Then came Capt. Taitt in automobiles with a detachment of Surma Valley Light Horse Brigade (approximately 35 persons) and 31 men from Eastern Frontier Rifles. Receiving a message for reinforcement another group in automobile came under Lt. Francis with two sections (roughly 20 men) of Eastern Frontier Rifles. Finally came Lt. Col. Dallas Smith and A. S. P. Mr. Lewis with troops in an armoured train. There is no indication as to the number of train-load of troops, but it can not be less than one company (about 150 persons). This modest calculation makes a total of nearly 250 soldiers. Some more confusion is there as to the time of arrival of the armoured train near Jalalabad hill. Dallas Smith said in his report (Lt. Col. E. D. Dallas Smith, O.C. Special Duty, to Inspector General of Police, Bengal, No. 2, 24 April 1930, Home Pol. File No. 335, 1930) that it came at 7 p.m. when the battle was almost over. But the rebels categorically stated that the train came before the battle started. In fact its stoppage near the hill attracted their attention and enabled them to prepare for a fight. (The version of Benode Choudhury, (tape-recorded) and Sinha, Ananta Chattogram Juba Bidroha, part-1, p. 286).

73. Lokenath Bal's account, cited by Swami, Satyananda (pen name), *He Atit Katha Kao*, p. 239, Cal. 1969, and the version of Benode Choudhury, tape-recorded in Calcutta.

74. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

75. Lt. Col. E. D. Dallas Smith, O.C. Special Duty Detachment to Inspector General of Police, Bengal, No. 2, dated 23 April 1930, Home Pol. File No. 335, 1930.

under a gloom of defeat. The authorities searched for the main body of rebels for more than 48 hours. Why should the British force retire, after discovering them and engaging them, in a body instead of picketing the hill and wait for the next morning? The British army did return to Jalalabad hill in the morning of 23 April. But certainly they never expected the revolutionaries, squatting patiently at the hill top, to court arrest. The fact is that the British army failed in its objective and the rebels maintained unusual fire power. Fifty one persons hurled bullets, slogans and abuses in such fury that they appeared to be an army of at least hundred strong.⁷⁶ Often there were moments of glory on the death bed of Jalalabad hill, the dying men wishing comrades to fight to the last, passing over blood stained musket-ries and bidding bantering farewell to each other. The casualties on the rebel side were eleven dead and one mortally wounded (who eventually died).⁷⁷ As regards casualties on the British side the exact number can not be ascertained. According to the Government records the army suffered no casualty.⁷⁸ This is difficult to believe in view of the fact that the British officers employed their men several times to scale the hill and were forced to call them back when fired upon from a close range. It was a common sight for the rebels on Jalalabad hill to find British soldiers—who were hit—fall rolling down the slope.⁷⁹ The renowned historian Dr. R. C. Majumdar mentioned the casualty figure on the British side as 65 dead.⁸⁰ But this figure is based, however, on questionable evidence. Archival material is totally devoid of any direct mention of the number of casualties among the Government forces. This is not unusual as the

76. *Ibid.*

77. Harigopal Bal, Tripura Sen, Nirmal Lala, Pulin Ghosh, Sasanka Dutta, Madhusudan Dutta, Pravas Bal, Naresh Roy, Bindhu Bhattacharya, Jiten Dasgupta, Moti Kanugo Roy and Ardhendu Dastidar.

78. Lt. Col. E. D. Dallas Smith, O.C. Special Duty Detachment to Inspector General of Police, Bengal, No. 2, dated, 23 April 1930. Home Pol. File No. 335, 1930.

79. The version of Benode Choudhury, tape-recorded in Calcutta.

80. While assaulting imprisoned prisoners Sir Charles Tegart was reported to have mentioned this figure. Majumdar, Dr. R. C., *History of Freedom Movement*, Vol. III, p. 499, Cal. 1963. Also, Dutt, Kalpana, *Reminiscences*, p. 7, Bombay, 1945.

knowledge of British loss would have been impairing to their reputation and inspiring to the population. The only remote evidence that the official documents offer is the reaction of the Director of Intelligence, Government of India in May 1932 when he learnt that none of the accused in the 1st Chittagong trial was to be executed. He was very upset at this leniency to those who were responsible for "12 murdered and unavenged policemen and soldiers."⁸¹ Throughout the Easter rising in Chittagong only two policemen (of which one died later on 7 May 1930) and two soldiers were known to have been killed in the hands of the rebels, apart from some civilians. The other eight could, therefore, be taken—at least tentatively—as soldiers who died in the action of Jalalabad hill.⁸² About the injured soldiers again no information is available. But one can not summarily dismiss Ananta Sinha's suggestion that Capt. Taitt's sudden departure from the scene of action with a part of his men at 7 p.m. and the unusual delay for the retreating British army finally to reach by train Chittagong town (covering 14 miles in nearly three hours) only point to the hurried arrangements for the injured and the dead in the Railway hospital.⁸³

The battle of Jalalabad hill was the climax of the Chittagong uprising. Surjya Sen, the leader, very truthfully and dispassionately, summed up the insurrectionary phase of his struggle in a few modest yet incisive sentences: "After six months of extensive preparation the Chittagong Revolution manifested itself on the night of 18 April 1930. On 22 April there was a fight for about 2½ hours with the British soldiers at Jalalabad hill and the British army was vanquished at last. . . . We sustained 12 casualties. After Jalalabad fight we came down and concealed ourselves."⁸⁴ The "concealment" of Surjya Sen and his men

81. H. Williamson, D.I.B. Government of India, note dated 4 May 1932. Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

82. Military records, not yet transferred to the National Archives of India, may in future throw further light on the subject.

83. Sinha, Ananta, *Chattagram Juba Bidroha*, part-1, p. 328. Capt. Taitt's withdrawal and the delayed train journey from Jalalabad hill are mentioned in Lt. Col. Dallas Smith's report and in the Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case.

84. Exhibit no. 189 (by Surjya Sen), Judgment of Special Tribunal in Chittagong on Surjya Sen and others, Home Pol. File No. 42/7, 1933.

and their subsequent activities till 1934 flowed towards a different direction and with entirely new promises. These naturally had no tactical resemblance to the Easter rising and thus should not be covered in this paper. However, we cannot but take into account the trail of Chittagong whirlwind till at least May 1930.

Soon after the battle of Jalalabad hill the detached group of rebels, including Ganesh Ghosh and Ananta Sinha, confronted the police at Feni. Unable to establish contact with the main body they were proceeding towards Calcutta in utter confusion. Intercepted by the police at Feni railway station they managed to escape following a daring violent clash with the police. Though Ananta Sinha gave himself up soon to the police in Calcutta for abstruse emotional reasons,⁸⁵ others—joined lately by Lokenath Bal—remained free till they were overwhelmed in French Chandernagore on 1 September 1930 by a strong armed contingent under Calcutta Police Commissioner—Charles Tegart. When the group made an abortive attempt to break through the cordon Jiban Ghosal was shot dead. In Chittagong, meanwhile, on 24 April the police and the army spotted Amarendra Nandi—who was deputed by Surjya Sen, prior to the battle of Jalalabad hill, to get in touch with the detached group. Finding himself hopelessly surrounded Amarendra chose to kill himself rather than to surrender. But the suicidal freedom was most sensational in a poignant drama enacted at Kalarpole on 7 May 1930. While leaving Jalalabad hill Surjya Sen's army broke up into several small groups and took refuge in various shelters in the rural areas. One such group of six youngmen (Rajat Sen, Manoranjan Sen, Deva Prasad Gupta, Swadesh Roy, Fanindra Nandi and Subodh Choudhury) decided to leave their hide-out and proceed towards the town with the object of suddenly attacking the European club there⁸⁶. It may be recalled that the original plan of massacring Europeans on 18 April did not materialise. The group thus set before itself a task which remained unfulfilled during the rising. But the task was attempted rather irresponsibly, without much preparation and precaution as were necessary

85. Sinha, *Ananta Chattagram Juba Bidroha*, part-II, pp. 151-59, Cal. 1968.

86. *Ibid*, p. 105.

in a military infested town. Surjya Sen, who was informed of this reckless adventure, was reported to have cautioned the group against dangers.⁸⁷ The only merit of this half-baked plot lay in the possibility of demoralising the administration through a snap guerilla action and its accompanying propaganda value. The authorities got the intelligence soon after the group arrived at the town on 6 May and there began a hunt for the rebels by the police under D.I.C.—Mr. Farmer, Eastern Frontier Rifles under Lt. Col. Dallas Smith and villagers under the instigation of police agents. There were clashes during the night-long chase in which the rebels killed a villager and a police constable and the police managed to hold two prisoners (Subodh and Fanindra). In the morning of 7 May the other four exhausted and injured youngmen were finally encircled by the military and the police in a jute crop field at Kalarpole, near Jhulda village. As the British soldiers crawled in close there was a brief but furious exchange of fire following which came a lull when the rebels were asked to surrender. This they refused to do and Manoranjan shouted back that he knew no surrender.⁸⁸ Then they excitedly pleaded with one another for the shooting of each by the other. It was done when consecutive revolver shots pierced the silence.⁸⁹ The soldiers coming near the dead bodies found Deva Prasad yet gasping for breath. Asked if he wanted to convey his last wish to the *Burra Sahab* he flickered before his death to express his regret at his inability "to kill Mr. Lowman."⁹⁰ Obviously he mistook Farmer for the Inspector General—Lowman.

The Chittagong rising, like the Irish Easter rising, was meant to be a heroic failure. The Irish Easter rebels, true to their own knowledge, suffered a military defeat but won—beyond their

87. Ghosh, Ganesh, "Surjya Sen (Masterda)" in *Surjya Sen Smriti*, p. 31.

88. Sinha, Ananta, *Chattagram Juba Bidroha*, part-II, p. 139.

89. According to the Civil Surgeon's report the four young-men injured by bullets of the British forces, "obviously" killed each other. J. C. Farmer, D.I.G. Bakharaganj Range, Chittagong to I.G. Calcutta, 10 May 1930. Home Pol. File No. 335, 1930.

90. S. R. Johnson, S.P., Chittagong, to Lowman, I.G. Calcutta, No. 1001/44-30, 8 May 1930. Home Pol. File No. 335, 1930.

expectation—a complete political victory. The Irish nation, awakened by the gun fire, never looked back to Parliamentary irrelevance. The executions and imprisonments made all the difference in the political climate in favour of revolutionary Republicanism. The common men suddenly became aware of the dreams dreamed by Mac Donagh Macbride, Connolly and Pearse and their death.

“All changed, changed utterly

A terrible beauty is born.”

(“Easter, 1916”, Yeats)

The Chittagong rebels, on the contrary, fought favourably at Jalalabad hill and managed to retain their freedom. They averted a military defeat but arrested the political success. Their performance was more impressive than decisive. Their legacies were pricking memories and not “utter changes”.

“.... we have n't forgotten Dharmatala

I have no rest,

Chittagong always goads at my mind.”

(“Charam Partra,” Sukanta Bhattacharya)

They were proved to be heroes but not prophets.

“They are heroes

They used to raise storms in the heavens

Their stories still sound thrilling

Haloed by the blood of executed alien rulers

Guns, bullets and burst of bombs.”

(“Janatar Mukhe,” Sukanta Bhattacharya)⁹¹

But why was it so?

The Chittagong rebellion broke out at a time when the country was passing through a Civil Disobedience movement. The rising of the popular temper in stages, the Gandhian image of a Messiah

91. Sukanta, unlike Yeats, was not a contemporary of the rebels and he became a poet of the 1940's rather than the 1930's. But his esteem for the Chittagong heroes is clear from the letter he wrote to Bhupen Bhattacharya, 12 September 1946, *Sukanta Samagra*, pp. 356-57, Calcutta, 1969.

delivering goods to his people, his much-advertised prolonged Dandi march, the emergence of women as civil resisters, the epic struggle at Dharsana, the indomitable "Red Shirts" of Abdul Ghaffar Khan—created an electrifying situation throughout India. The Civil Disobedience was the more matured of the Gandhian movements drawing more people to its fold than was possible during the Non-Co-operation movement. Gandhi, who most unqualifiedly condemned the Chittagong Rising⁹² as Redmond did in the House of Commons (on 27 April 1916) in respect of the Irish rebels, was a political leader of his own kind with a distinct programme of mass movement—however controversial its characterisation might be. Surjya Sen and his men were challenging with their lives the form and content of Gandhian agitation condemning, as they revealed later, the politics of "emasculated non-violence"⁹³. It resembled in spirit the Irish revolutionists' challenge to Redmondian constitutionalism. But Redmond in Ireland could hardly match Gandhi in India as the rising in Chittagong was not comparable in extent to the rising in Ireland.⁹⁴ Besides, the Irish rebels struck when Redmond's position was dwindling but Surjya Sen's men attacked when Gandhi's fame was soaring. The timing of the Chittagong rising coinciding with a massive Gandhian movement was certainly disadvantageous. History takes note more of what had taken place than what would have taken place. But would the outcome have been the same if the Chittagong rising occurred a year later, between February and December 1931, the period when Gandhi was negotiating for entering into a pact with the Viceroy and then returning from England without any promise? Surjya Sen and his band, unfortunately, had no choice. They decided upon a plan, prepared for it and were all set for the action. Postponement would have revealed the plan leading to their wholesale arrest. They could not go back just as the Easter rebels refused to do on the swinging night of 23 April 1916. Consequently the impact of the Chittagong rising on

92. *Young India*, 24 April 1930.

93. Leaflet no. 1. issued by H.R.A. (Chittagong Branch) 26 September 1932. Home Pol. File No. 4/54, 1932.

94. More than a thousand people took part in the Easter Rising in Dublin. In Chittagong the number of participants was not even one hundred.

the people, in India and in Bengal, substantially diminished. In Bengal the Civil Disobedience movement and the Chittagong rising neutralised each other to a certain extent, keeping the temperature down in both violent and non-violent fronts. It is not altogether true that Bengal Congress' "poor response to the Civil Disobedience movement was drowned in the roar of the terrorist's gun" starting from Chittagong.⁹⁵ According to the Bengal Congress the number of arrested persons, between April and December 1930, was 13,000 and daily approximately 200 persons were arrested during the movement.⁹⁶ Even if one makes an allowance for partisan exaggeration it must be said that the number was considerable and only comparable to the U.P., where 10,000 people were arrested. It was, of course, not what could be expected of the most politically agitated and socially fluid province in India. The intensity of feeling—as seen perhaps in Gujarat—was definitely lacking in Bengal. The enthusiasm was not as intoxicating as of the Non-Co-operation (1920-22) days and the Government of Bengal, at least in 1930, were not altogether disturbed with the situation. In August 1930, they, in fact, discovered "a tendency to return to normalcy" and considered picketing as "sporadic and ill-organised."⁹⁷ This state of restrained or arrested political agitation in Bengal during the Civil Disobedience movement could only be explained by the recurring schism (between Bose and Sengupta) in the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and the revolutionary example set forth by the Chittagong rebels. In reality the disunity in the B.P.C.C. was probably of lesser consequence than the Chittagong rising as both Bose and Sengupta must have been keen to go to jail and they had more to gain than to lose in so doing—at least in the public eye. On the other hand Gandhi's revised opinion in December 1946 that the Chittagong

95. Chatterji, Bhola, *Some Aspects of Bengal Politics in the Early Nineteen Thirties*, p. 8.

96. Congress Review of Civil Disobedience Movement, a bulletin issued by the All India Congress Committee, January 1931. Mitra, N. N. (ed.), *The Indian Annual Register*, Vol. 2, 1930.

97. The Government Review of Civil Disobedience Movement. Mitra, N.N. (ed.), *The Indian Annual Register*, Vol. 2, 1930.

rebels were heroes whose bravery could not "infect others"⁹⁸ was merely a distinguished understatement. Otherwise, how could one explain the series of terroristic activities between 1930-35 in Bengal, the crowd of untried Bengali detenus in distant British prison camps—the political "untouchables" who could not be brought under Gandhi—Irwin Pact for release like the Congressmen, the virtual British military rule in Chittagong and the semi-military Government in the whole of Bengal? That the rising in Chittagong emulated the public, particularly the youth in Bengal, there is little doubt as the tales of Chittagong passed from one generation to another. The Bengali press which could have reflected this was already gagged by the Ordinance and the panicky English press circulated only censored news. The only newspaper, *Swadhinata*, which had the temerity to hail the rising on 22 April 1930, was promptly banned and prosecuted⁹⁹ on the same day—but not before three editions were exhausted by the over-enthusiastic buyers. The hardened revolutionaries in Bengal also felt proud and elated.¹⁰⁰ But the rising was—on the whole—not as inspiring as its authors envisaged and the message was not clear in the noise of Civil Disobedience movement. There is another point to ponder too,—the proceedings did not go according to the plan. Who can say what would have been the effect if Surjya Sen's army fought in Chittagong town before a populace than at Jalalabad hill before nobody? What would further have happened if Hindustan Republican Army (Chittagong Branch) suicide squad operated, away from the obscure Chittagong, in the nerve centre of India—Calcutta? After all—the Irish rebels rose in Dublin and not in Kilkee or Kinsole.

But if the voice of Chittagong was not echoed throughout the nation it certainly had a deafening effect on the British authorities.

98. *Harijan*, 1 December 1946.

99. Bhupendra Kumar Dutta, who originally wrote the article—"Dhanya Chattagram", very kindly supplied the author with a copy.

100. A sample is the opinion of Bhupendra Kumar Dutta. He expressed this feeling of pride to the author during his stay in New Delhi in November 1971.

The Hindustan Republican Army (Chittagong Branch) aimed at demoralising the British by a swift and dazzling aggression and in this they remarkably succeeded. The Government of Bengal grimly informed the Central authorities about the "considerable success" of the rising of 18 April¹⁰¹ and its impact on the young people of Chittagong, who were marvelled by Surjya Sen and "too glad to place themselves under such a hero."¹⁰² The Home Secretary of the Central Government, H. W. Emerson, was alarmed to find "a serious demoralisation of the official and non-official residents in Chittagong."¹⁰³ The Government of India reported to the Secretary of State for India that "Chittagong was in a bad shape . . . morale is very low and initiative has been lost . . . Government authority very weak. Vigorous action is necessary to bring the district in order."¹⁰⁴ The demoralisation could not have been more when the Commissioner, Chittagong Division and the District Magistrate reported to the Provincial Government "... the local civil authorities consider that the situation (in Chittagong) has passed beyond their control and that they cannot hold themselves responsible for the security of life and property in the district without the immediate introduction of martial law."¹⁰⁵ Thus Surjya Sen's men achieved, as far as the ruling authority was concerned, more than what they ever conceived.

If one searches for any softening of the Government attitude, any compromising trend in their policy as a result of the Chittagong rising he will be sorely disappointed. The armed struggle is not

101. R. N. Reid, Ch. Secy. Govt. of Bengal to Secy. Home Dept. Govt. of India, No. 1490, P.S.-D., 10 October 1931, Darjeeling. Home Pol. File No. 291, 1931.

102. Note on the situation in Chittagong, *Ibid.*

103. Note by H. W. Emerson, Secy. Home Dept. Govt. of India dated 23 April 1931 on Bengal Government's letter no. 215-P.S.D. of 20 April 1931. Home Pol. File No. 291, 1931.

104. Govt. of India to Secy. of State, Telegram No. 2712-S, 6 November 1931. Home Pol. File No. 291, 1931.

105. Govt. of Bengal to Govt. of India, no. 215-PSD, 20 April 1931. Home Pol. File No. 291, 1931.

like a *Satyagraha* or parliamentary pressure to reach the conference table and effect suitable adjustments. It is a challenge of force for the state power, a fight to finish and in its process the conference table is at the end and not in the half-way. The existing authority who is challenged and who enjoys all the advantages of loyalties and organisation, also fights back, hits hard, crushes and oppresses the rebels and the people—from whom they emerge. So it finally involves the common men, who—when cowed down—retreats from an insurrection and—when defiant—spreads it. The Chittagong rebels also counted on the involvement of the people. Soon after their rise they apprehended retaliatory measures on the part of the Government and “a severe oppression of the people” which would commit the common men to sympathise and actively support the revolutionaries. This would turn the occasionally bomb-making secret societies into open revolutionary parties. They even visualised that in such a state of affairs the Government might be forced to think about a settlement as was the case in Ireland.¹⁰⁶ Their anticipations were not wholly wrong and at least an articulate middleclass section of the people were caught up in the whirlpool and suffered in Bengal. More than 1,000 youngmen from this section were languishing in jail by March 1931 and 3,374 persons were interned by May 1932.¹⁰⁷ Punitive exercises were resorted to against this section and collective fine was imposed on the community as a deterrent to the rebellious mood. Serious restrictions were put on the movements of the middle-class youth in Chittagong such as curfews and the carrying of identity cards.¹⁰⁸ The parents were warned and victimised and the population was always terrorised by the police and the army. Interrogations and tortures were practised beyond all limits. And in 1932 arrived in Bengal as Governor Sir John

106. Confession of Sahairam Das, 25 April, Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

107. Bose, S.C., *The Indian Struggle*, p. 216, and Mitra, N.N. (ed.), *The Indian Annual Register*, 1932, Vol. 2, p. 6.

108. “A Report on terrorist activities and Government action in Chittagong, 9 March 1932 to 31 March 1933” by S. Handoo Dist. Magistrate, Chittagong, 13 April 1933. Home Pol. File No. 45/7, 1933.

Anderson, experienced in counter-insurgency in Ireland, with contingents of British infantry to tackle a rebel Bengal. But the educated middle class section—away from the vast majority of the society—was always susceptible to be terrorised by the authorities. And there came the test of the insurrectionists, not of their valour but of their ideology. Unfortunately the Chittagong rebels were yet to discover a scientific ideology which would appeal to all classes of people and draw them close. The rebels had not much to offer, except patriotism, to sustain the morale of "Heroic Chittagram" "untrammelled" by attacks.¹⁰⁹ A simple sentimental nationalist revolt—without the advantage of a revolutionary ideology—has always an element of gamble in it. In 1916 in Ireland it paid rich dividends and in 1930 in Chittagong it did not.

Now, what position will history ascribe to the Chittagong rebellion? The Easter rising in Chittagong was organised by a group of romantic revolutionists whose faith in armed struggle was not understood by the vast majority of their countrymen and whose ardent patriotism could not make amends for the lack of revolutionary ideology. But on the whole the buoyant Chittagong heroes achieved what generations of Indian militants always aspired for. They, for the first time, broke the monotony of abortive conspiracies, stereotyped robberies and ineffectual assassination of individuals. In the context of nationalist India their's was the unique example of an organised military campaign against the mighty British Government. Objectively, the Chittagong rebels—the extremists among the Indian petty bourgeois—showed the way for the highest form of anti-colonial struggle, namely, an armed confrontation, irrespective of their prejudices and fantasies, weaknesses and errors. They left behind a model which could have been suitably adopted by those who were concerned about an anti-imperialist social revolution in India throughout the 1930's. The doctrinaire Indian socialists and communists, shocked at the sight of high adventurism in Chittagong, forgot that the talk of perfect social revolution was invariably utopian and that the armed struggle against

109. "Chattagram: 1943" by Sukanta Bhattacharya, *Sukanta Samagra*, p. 60, Cal. 1969.

an established authority is always perilous. They, who theoretically opposed all sorts of national oppressions, thus ignored "the heroic revolt of the most mobile and enlightened section of certain classes in an oppressed nation against their oppressors."¹¹⁰

110. "The Irish Rebellion of 1916", Lenin, V.I., *Collected Works*, Vol. XIX (1916-17), pp. 303-4, London, 1942.

The Continuity of Constitutionalism in The Indian Nationalist Movement

M. P. SREEKUMARAN NAIR

It is a truism that historical writing tends to reflect the age in which it is produced. A historian attempting to analyse an event or movement oftentimes cannot avoid making personal evaluations or clothing his thoughts in the distinctive modes of expression of his own age. This is very largely true of a major part of the writing on the history of the nationalist movement. Thus although the history of India's struggle for freedom is, in a very real sense, one of continuity and change, our post-Independence perspective tends to overweigh the element of change while underestimating the influence of continuity. By over-emphasising the role of particular changes, it is often forgotten that no man or group of men can either completely alter an existing system or, conversely, prevent change indefinitely. Much of the distorted view of history of our struggle for freedom has emanated from ultra-nationalist writers who fail to comprehend this truth. This would explain the considerable under-rating or devaluation of the role of constitutionalism in the Indian struggle for freedom. The history of the freedom movement, in terms of techniques of action, stands in need of revision.

The fabric of the Indian nationalist movement, despite infinite gradations of shade and colour, was on the whole made up of two dominant, dissimilar patterns: constitutionalism and militant nationalism (including both violent and non-violent varieties). The ideology and techniques of both the constitutionalist and the revolutionary schools were reflected in the struggle for freedom which, in the main, was directed by the Indian National Congress during 1885-1947. This paper is concerned with the influence of the constitutionalist school on the nature of the Indian freedom struggle. While recognising the important part played by revolutionary techniques, it seeks to show that constitutionalism had the predominant influence and provided the basic element of continuity in India's struggle for freedom.

The goal of the constitutionalists was the establishment in India of a liberalistic parliamentary state, modelled closely on the system of government prevailing in Great Britain, but adapted to Indian circumstances.¹ The constitutionalist school stood for the acceptance of what was best in the civilisation of the west. They were therefore opposed to the militant nationalist school which wanted to sever India's connection with Britain and create a government based on traditional lines.² They did not aim at the 'narrower ideal' of complete independence, but stood for the 'more desirable' goal of realising parliamentary self-government within the British Commonwealth.³ This is clearly borne out from the political work and numerous statements of leading constitutionalists like Dadabhai Naoroji, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Surendranath Banerjea, Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das and others. It would not be very wide of the mark if it is said that they placed Democracy before Independence; in other words they believed in the evolution of democracy resulting in the evolution of freedom.

More importantly, the constitutionalist school hoped that by *constitutional agitation* it would be possible to put pressure on the British government to concede responsible government to India. Constitutionalism was a technique of struggle which fully utilised the machinery created or recognised by the state for the ventilation of grievances. As defined by Gokhale, the leading advocate of this school of thought, it was agitation by methods which the Indians were 'entitled to adopt to bring about the changes they desired through the action of constituted authorities'.⁴ It was therefore opposed to mass direct action involving open and violent or even non-violent defiance of the legally-constituted government. The revolutionary nationalists sought to achieve Indian independence by overthrowing the government, while the constitution-

1. This was the first article of the Congress Constitution adopted in 1908 and continued until 1920.

2. Bipin Chandra Pal, *Swadeshi and Swaraj* (selected writings) (Calcutta, 1954), pp. 166 and 200. Aurobindo Ghose, *Introductory Appreciation to Bal Gangadhar Tilak. His Writings and Speeches* (Madras, 1922), p. 15. Mahatma Gandhi, *Harijan* 24 May 1942.

3. Presidential Address of C. R. Das at the Bengal Provincial Conference, 1925, as given in H. Das Gupta, *Desabandhu Chittaranjan Das* (Delhi, 1960), pp. 209 and 211.

4. *Speeches of Gopal Krishna Gokhale* (Madras, 1920), p. 950.

nalists aimed at the reform of the existing system which, they felt, would also produce the same result, namely, the independence of the Indian people.

The task of defining the role of constitutionalism in the Indian struggle is not an easy one. The constitutionalists were no less sincere than the revolutionary nationalists in their desire for Indian independence. Both schools of nationalism were led by practical men who had a clear idea of what was possible and what was not possible. It was chiefly in the techniques of action and in the nature of the system of the government that was projected as the ideal that they differed. In general, the constitutionalists were wedded to a programme of peaceful agitation ranging from petitions and appeals to passive resistance including non-payment of taxes. The appropriate constitutional method in a given conflict-situation was to be selected on grounds of practicability and expediency. Thus, while boycotts, strikes, etc., were sometimes considered expedient for the redress of specific grievances, their employment as normal weapons in the struggle for freedom and responsible government was always opposed by the constitutionalists. The normal methods adopted by the constitutionalists were putting up candidates for elections to the legislatures and carrying on the struggle through the legislatures. All available agencies which were in a position to exert influence or pressure on the government were to be used to further the cause of Indian independence. Thus the constitutionalists wanted to enter the local bodies, legislatures, and even the higher position in the bureaucracy and the judiciary. This method of struggle certainly involved a measure of cooperation with the British authorities. But it is important to remember that cooperation was urged as a technique of struggle and not as a blind or servile policy. In its essence, it was responsive cooperation which aimed at consolidating the available political power and using that power to fight for more. The idea was to effect a gradual transfer of power from British to Indian hands. The constitutionalists were not opposed to the institutions created by the British, such as legislatures, a more or less independent judiciary, local self-governing bodies and a neutral civil service. They wanted to reform these institutions in such a way that they would be responsible to an Indian parliament, rather

than to British Parliament. In short, the constitutionalists wanted to acquire political power through the normal constitutional machinery with a view to evolving the governmental structure more or less on British lines.

Constitutionalism remained the declared method of the political struggle of the Congress until 1920. Its achievements during this period are too well-known to need enumeration here.⁵ To be sure, they were not spectacular in the ordinary sense, because the constitutionalists were engaged in the fundamental task of providing the bases of a political life and protecting the infant Congress from the wrath of the government and the bureaucracy. It is also true that the early Congress was elitist in outlook and had no grounding in the masses. This was but natural and inevitable in the circumstances under which that organisation was started and had to function. To say, as has been done even in professional writings, that they were liberals, not nationalists, that their liberalism was derived from a 'superficial study of British history and an intense admiration for British institutions', and that to them India's past was 'blank' and 'bleak' is certainly unhistorical and un-academic.⁶ To condemn them would be like blaming 'the brick mortar that is buried six feet deep in the foundation and plinth of a modern edifice'.⁷ The orthodox view that regards constitutionalism as 'political mendicancy' will be seen uncharitable when it is remembered that inside the context of their long-term aims and the new social and economic forces they released, the constitutionalists were statesman-like and revolutionary.⁸

The apparent failure of constitutionalism to prevent government from unpopular measures like the partition of Bengal (1905) led to the emergence of militant nationalism. The political extre-

5. For this see C. Y. Chintamani, *Indian Politics Since the Mutiny*, (Allahabad, 1947); A. C. Mazumdar, *Indian National Evolution* (Madras, 1917); R. G. Pradhan, *India's Struggle for Swaraj* (Madras, 1930); and G. N. Singh, *Landmarks in Indian Constitutional and National Development* (Vol. I, Delhi, 1969, 4th edn).

6. See, for instance, Saggi, ed., *Life and Work of Lal, Bal and Pal* (New Delhi, 1962), p. 18.

7. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress* (Bombay, 1946) I, p. 61.

8. See K. M. Panikkar, *The Foundations of New India* (London, 1963), Chapter VI.

mism of the Lal-Pal-Bal School certainly gave an unprecedented impetus to Indian nationalism especially on its psychological side and carried the message of the struggle to the masses. The pattern of agitation against the partition of Bengal anticipated what was to come later on a national scale under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. On this issue the Congress split at Surat (1907) and the extremists for a time remained outside the organisation. However, it is important to note that when they returned to the Congress in 1916, they were prepared to follow a constitutionalist programme. The foremost extremist, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, in the post-Mandalay period of his career, was a convert to constitutionalism.⁹ His very popular Home Rule movement was constitutionalist in objectives and methods. When the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms became law, Tilak offered the Crown 'responsive cooperation' which meant only a re-statement of the familiar method of his political adversary, Gokhale. After the Amritsar Congress (Dec. 1919) and until his death seven months later, Tilak was busy organising the Democratic Party within the Congress with the aim of working the reforms for what they were worth.¹⁰ Thus despite the penetration of extremism and even after the exit of many constitutionalists who formed the National Liberal Federation of India, the Congress as a political organisation remained largely wedded to the technique of constitutionalism.

When Mahatma Gandhi came to dominate the Congress in the 1920's the Congress officially abandoned constitutionalism. In accordance with this, the Nagpur session (Dec., 1920) changed the constitution of the Congress and declared the 'creed' of the Congress to be 'the attainment of Swaraj by peaceful and legitimate means' (as distinct from constitutional means).¹¹ Gandhi's political ideas were in many respects opposed to those of the constitutionalists. His concept of Swaraj was idealistic and traditional, and his technique of satyagraha was non-violent mass struggle. Gandhian concepts were rooted in deep spiritual and moral idealism and rested upon the complete identification of private and public virtues; on the operational front his political methods were non-constitu-

9. See my paper "Tilak: Revolutionary or Constitutionalist?", in *Kesari-Mahratta Annual* (Tilak Special, Aug. 1970).

10. Sitaramayya, op. cit. p. 178 and p. 195.

11. *Report of the 35th Indian National Congress*, 1920, p. 46.

tional, at times even anarchical. Gandhi preached the boycott of the legislatures, courts of law and government-aided educational institutions; non-payment of taxes; and civil disobedience with the declared object of ending the British rule.¹² He did not want a reform of the existing system but a thorough revolution, albeit on non-violent lines. Nevertheless, what is significant is that, despite the declared commitment to the Gandhian programme, the Congress switched back to constitutionalism several times in the course of the struggle since 1920. The fact has generally been ignored that though the counsels of the Congress were dominated by Gandhi, there was always a strong element attached to the principles of constitutionalism. At all crucial stages of the struggle this element so asserted itself as to give the policy of the Congress constructive and practical turn, thus avoiding absolute recourse to the techniques of mass struggle and the dangers attendant upon it.

In the nature of things, the Gandhian technique of the struggle could neither remain within its strict confines nor produce tangible success except that of producing an atmosphere of tension and excitement. One after another the various items in the Gandhian programme failed to attain the measure of success vouchsafed by Gandhi. The *annus mirabilis* (1920-1) passed without the promise of immediate Swaraj redeemed. Disillusionment with the Gandhian political methods was acknowledged by the Congress Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee which, in a moment of despair, stated: 'Theories and dogmas are all very well in their own way, but they will not carry you far if you ride them to death'.¹³ Congressmen like C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru accepted the self-reliance part of the Gandhian techniques and were prepared to work his Constructive Programme in its entirety. But their practical approach to politics was opposed to accepting everything that had been advocated in the name of non-cooperation. They stated:

.... if non-cooperation is more a matter of mental attitude than the application of a living principle to the existing facts of national life with special reference to the varying attitudes of the bureaucratic government which rules that life, we conceive it to be our duty to sacrifice even non-cooperation to serve the real interests of the country.¹⁴

12. *Ibid.* p. 202-3, 226.

13. Quoted in Chintamani, *op. cit.* p. 144.

14. Motilal Nehru, *Voice of Freedom* (Selected speeches ed. by K. M. Panikkar and A. Pershad) (Bombay, 1961), p. 519.

This attitude lay behind the formation of the Swarajist party which functioned as the legislative wing of the Congress during 1924-30. The published programme of the party was 'uniform, continuous and consistent obstruction within the Councils', but in actual practice it was largely cooperation where possible and opposition when necessary.¹⁵ In other words they toed a line akin to that chalked out earlier by Gokhale or latter-day Tilak, though altered circumstances invested their demands with greater definiteness and insistence. Their methods of obstruction like refusal of supplies, throwing out of budgets, non-acceptance of office and walk-out were sanctioned by the practice of democratic countries and were constitutional and parliamentary. The Swarajists were thus a party of opposition, using the legal right granted under the Reforms Act to prove the unworkability of Dyarchy and to bring the maximum constitutional pressure to bear upon the government to grant responsible government and at the same time prepared to cooperate with government without compromising national interests. Swarajist constitutionalism demonstrably proved the capacity of the Indians to adopt and utilise parliamentary methods and institutions, and it constitutes a memorable chapter in the evolution of the Indian Parliament.

Swarajist constitutionalism suffered a set-back in the tense political situation which followed the appointment of the Simon Commission in 1927. The Congress, in the years immediately preceding the Second Round Table Conference and succeeding it, abandoned constitutionism and again strayed into the path of civil disobedience. It was, however, inevitable the civil disobedience movements, though begun amidst excitement and enthusiasm should almost invariably end in anticlimax. Thus, though there was no specific immediate cause for withdrawal as in 1922, the civil disobedience campaign begun in January 1932 was partially suspended in May 1933 and finally called off in May 1934 by the All-India Congress Committee at the instance of Gandhi.¹⁶ Even while the campaign was in progress the wisdom of boycotting the legislatures

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 506 and 520.

16. Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, pp. 558-60, 568-71

was called in question by many leading Congressmen.¹⁷ The situation very much resembled that of 1922; but a Swarajist revolt was averted because in 1934 Gandhi himself advocated council-entry.¹⁸ Accordingly in the beginning of 1935 Congressmen contested the elections and entered the Central Legislature.

When the Government of India Act, 1935, was passed, the initial reaction of the Congress was to reject the new constitution as a whole. Jawaharlal Nehru exhorted the nation to put an end to the Act and have a clean slate to write afresh.¹⁹ The Congress declared that the constitution acceptable to it must be 'based on the independence of India as a nation and it can only be framed by a Constituent Assembly'.²⁰ The repudiation of the Act was thus more complete and categorical than the repudiation of the Act of 1919 by the Congress. But while the inauguration of the Montford constitution found the Congress in the negative attitude of non-cooperation and direct action, that of the new constitution was to see the Congress on the positive path of constitutionalism. For, when the Act of 1935 came up for discussion in the Congress sessions and committees it was found that though there was substantial unanimity of opinion over its rejection, there was sharp cleavage as to the mode of rejection.²¹ While a minority (mostly socialists) favoured a programme of mass struggle and direct action including boycott of legislatures, the majority felt that, after all, the reforms were not going to be abrogated or withdrawn just because the Congress had rejected them, as was clear from the history of the previous constitutional enactments. If the Congress boycotted the elections it meant missing an opportunity afforded by the election campaign to educate the masses on the basic issues of the political problem and, moreover, less desirable elements would capture the councils and speak in the name of the Indian people.²² Vallabhai Patel represented

17. Subhas Bose, *The Indian Struggle* (London, 1935), pp. 193-4; Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography* (Bombay, 1957), p. 378.

18. Sitaramayya, *op. cit.* p. 581.

19. *Indian Annual Register* (hereafter cited I.A.R.) Calcutta, 1936 II, p. 225.

20. Congress election manifesto, 1936, given in Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Unity of India* (London, 1948), Appendix A, p. 402.

21. Rajendra Prasad, *op. cit.*, p. 418.

22. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom* (Calcutta, 1959), p. 13.

majority view when he stated that 'all of us want to destroy the imposed constitution. How to destroy it from within the legislatures is the question'.²³ There was also an influential section which felt that the provincial part of the Act should be accepted and worked. It is important to note that those who strongly urged the contesting of elections in 1936 and entering government in 1937—Sardar Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Rajagopalachari—were the 'no-changers' of 1921. This is a clear evidence of the reassertion of the practical policy of constitutionalism within the Congress. On this ground it is also permissible to hold that if the federal part of the Act of 1935 had been implemented by the Viceroy, the Congress, following up its constitutionalist policy would have worked it with the aim of exposing its shortcomings and transforming it into a true federation.²⁴

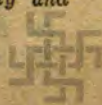
In October–November 1939 the Congress withdrew from the provincial governments on extraneous, rather than constitutional, grounds. It was followed by the rejection of the British government's constitutional proposals during the war. In December 1939 the Working Committee enjoined upon the Congress members of the central legislature to continue the boycott indefinitely.²⁵ In October 1940 Mahatma Gandhi started a programme of 'moral' and 'symbolic' protest against British policy in the form of individual civil disobedience.²⁶ Finally from August 1942 to May 1944 there took place what has been known to history as the Quit India Movement—the last in the series of the Congress satyagraha campaigns for freedom. To the extent that these took place, it must be conceded that the Congress moved away from the path of constitutionalism. But it is too much to hold, as Congress chronicles and accounts have done, that the Indian struggle in its last stages was won by the Gandhian technique of non-violent direct action. Congress policy from 1939 shows that the abandonment of constitutional methods was neither complete nor wholehearted.

23. Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, II, p. 32.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 109, 117–21; K. M. Munshi, *The Changing Shape of Indian Politics* (Poona, 1946) p. VI; C. Rajagopalachari, *Reconciliation, Why and How* (Bombay, 1945), p. 31.

25. Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, II, p. 160.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 219; I.A.R., 1940, II, p. 222



The resignation of the provincial ministries was not followed up by absolute withdrawal from or boycott of the legislative council. In the instructions of the Congress Parliamentary Subcommittee it was specifically stated that 'Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries are the only persons expected to resign', and that 'Speakers and Deputy Speakers and members of the Assemblies, Presidents and members of the Councils are expected to retain their offices and seats'.²⁷ As regards the Central Assembly, though the Congress members were asked to boycott the proceedings, they were allowed to attend for the purpose of retaining their seats.²⁸ Moreover, in November 1940 the prohibition of participation in proceedings was waived in order to enable the members to throwout the Finance Bill relating to the war and thus show that India was not with the government in the war effort.²⁹ The value of a constitutional protest through legislative action was thus vindicated by the Congress policy. In no case was resignation of membership of legislatures insisted and this is specially significant in view of the fact that the term of the central and provincial legislatures was extended year by year until the termination of the war, despite the demand of the Congress for fresh elections. It seems from this that the Congress was hopeful of a settlement with Britain during the war years, and membership of the legislatures was retained in order to facilitate normal legislative activity in case a settlement was effected. Thus unlike in 1921 or 1930 non-cooperation was not pushed to the extent of boycotting legislatures completely.

The influence of constitutionalism on Congress policy during the war years could be seen most clearly in the specific demand for a provisional national government first put forward by the Congress leadership in July 1940. The moving spirit behind this was C. Rajagopalachari who, since the outbreak of the war, had been unceasing in his efforts to bring about an understanding between the Congress and the government. He and other constitutionally-minded Congressmen were not fully reconciled to the Gandhian idea of applying the principle of non-violence to the

27. *I.A.R.*, 1939, II, p. 237.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

29. Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, II, p. 222.



war situation and of withdrawing from government as a programme of political action.³⁰ The resolution passed by the Working Committee meeting at Delhi on 7 July 1940 reflects an attempt on their part to wean the Congress away from the methods of mass struggle with all its attendant uncertainties and dangers.³¹ Closely analysed, the resolution did not contemplate any revolutionary change. In the first place it demanded not immediate independence but only a declaration acknowledging it soon after the war. Secondly, as an earnest of the British promise it asked for the establishment of a provisional national government functioning under the terms of the existing constitution. No fresh legislation by Parliament was envisaged at that stage. Within the legal framework then existing, it was proposed that a national government be formed by the Governor-General.³² The resolution thus aimed at responsible government through a *de facto* transformation of the existing system. The resolution committed the Congress to a programme of conditional or responsive cooperation. The Congress, no doubt, was destined to embark on a programme of mass struggle in the years following. But the basic approach of a provisional national government was never abandoned and it appeared prominently in all the negotiations that passed between the Congress and the government subsequently.

The feebleness of the 'individual' Satyagraha campaigns that followed the Congress rejection of the 'August offer' and the deepening war crisis aroused in the Congress ranks a new note of cooperation. The Working Committee's Bardoli resolution (December 1941) on the war situation and its acceptance of Gandhi's resignation prepared the ground for a revival of the demand for establishing a provisional national government within the existing constitution.³³ In view of the British government's rejection of the earlier demand for a provisional government the Congress, of course, did not state the demand in formal documents. But the tone of the Congress resolutions and the statements of

30. I.A.R., 1940, II, p. 194; V. P. Menon, *Transfer of power in India* (Calcutta, 1957) p. 92.

31. I.A.R., 1940, II, p. 176.

32. J. Nehru, *Discovery of India* (Calcutta, 1946) p. 596.

33. *Ibid.*, 554 and 546; Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, p. 292.



many Congressmen during the anxious days that followed Pearl Harbour did not leave any doubt that the Congress would be agreeable to any workable settlement based on a provisional national government.

This was fully revealed from the Congress approach to the Cripps' Proposals (March 1942). The discussions between the Congress leaders and Cripps centred not on the long-term proposals but on the interim proposals with special emphasis on the position of defence and the powers of the provisional government.³⁴ The negotiations finally broke down on the question of the provisional national government, but even here the difference between the stand-points of Cripps and the Congress was not unbridgeable. Cripps discountenanced constitutional changes during the pendency of war and until the drafting of a new constitution by the Indians themselves. The Congress realised that legal changes would take time and did not press for them. The Congress approach in 1942 was the same as in 1937. It was willing to work within the existing constitution; it did not insist on a *de jure* transfer of power during the war, but aimed transformation of the Executive Council by informal agreement, by convention, into a *de facto* cabinet.³⁵ It was unfortunate that this suggestion was not properly appreciated by Cripps. The situation could have been saved and a settlement arrived at if the Viceroy or Cripps had said something similar to what was said by Lord Linlithgow on behalf of the governors in 1937 before the Congress assumed office. Probably there was no proper understanding between Cripps and the Viceroy, and between Cripps and other members of the British cabinet.³⁶ Cripps' sudden departure, in spite of President Roosevelt's efforts to prolong his stay, brought an abrupt end to the negotiations.³⁷ What is however noteworthy in all this is that the Congress approach to the Cripps' offer was not the approach of non-co-

34. Azad, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

36. Menon, *op. cit.*, p. 136; Colin Cooke, *The Life of Richard Stafford Cripps* (London, 1957), p. 291.

37. Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War Vol. IV The Hinge of Fate* (London, 1951), p. 193; Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins* (New York, 1950) II, pp. 108-9.

operation. It was an attempt to win freedom through the existing constitution and without resort to revolutionary changes. The voting in the Working Committee (2 April 1942) on the resolution on the Cripps's offer showed that a substantial section of the Congress High Command was in favour of accepting the proposals.

In the gloom that prevailed over the political horizon following the failure of the Cripps' Mission, the revolutionary gospel of Gandhi as contained in the so-called Quit India resolution was only too apt to appeal to the Congress leadership. This was a rebuff to Congress constitutionalists like C. Rajagopalachari. For them the dominant concern was the establishment of a provisional government which would resist Japanese aggression and facilitate the *de facto* transfer of power. The Quit India resolution by contemplating a struggle on the lines of non-cooperation, implied that the government could operate in a constitutional vacuum without legal authority. This was totally unacceptable to Rajagopalachari and his school.³⁸ According to them the formation of a provisional government was possible only if the continuity of the state was assured. But Gandhi had already committed himself to a programme of mass struggle, and his personality triumphed over the rationalism of Rajagopalachari and the initial opposition of Nehru and Azad.³⁹

The Quit India movement was by and large a failure. It was ill-timed and the swift action of the government left it ill-organised and leaderless⁴⁰ Mahatma Gandhi might have hoped that the British government would be willing to negotiate, as was the case in 1921 and 1930, and he still clung to the belief that a settlement with Britain possible.⁴¹ But his assumptions proved

38. Letter to Gandhi, signed by C. Rajagopalachari, K. Santhanam, T. S. S. Rajan, Ramanathan, 18 July 1942—See Nicholas Mansergh, ed, *Documents and Speeches on British Commonwealth Affairs 1931-1952* (London, 1953) II, p. 635.

39. Nehru and Azad consented to risk a revolt in the midst of War out of an anxiety to check the sullen passivity of the people.—See *Gandhi's Correspondence with Government*, (Ahmedabad, 1945), p. 252.

40. Nehru, *op. cit.*, p. 575.

41. *Ibid*, p. 576.

wrong. The government moved, but it was in the direction of repression. When the movement subsided and Gandhi was released in May 1944, the attitude of the government had little changed from that in 1939 or 1942.

The Quit India movement was the last attempt made by the Congress to gain freedom through non-constitutional means. Its failure brought Gandhi and the Congress to a perception of the realities and led them to the adoption of constitutional means of struggle. Thus soon after his release Gandhi took up a position which was unacceptable to him at the time of the Cripps' Mission in 1942. He declared that, in view of the altered conditions, mass civil disobedience envisaged by the Congress resolution of August 1942 could not be offered; that the political situation had to be reviewed *de novo* and that at the time he would be satisfied with a national government in full control of the national administration.⁴² If such a national government were formed he would advise the Congress to participate in it. The change revealed by these statements soon found a corresponding change in Congress policy. Thus when the Central Legislature met in November 1944, the Congress party attended it, though it is recorded that the Congress Assembly Party had taken the decision without specific authority from the Congress.⁴³ In March 1945, Dr. Khan Sahib, leader of the Congress party in the legislative assembly of the North West Frontier Province, accepted the premiership of that province with the consent of Gandhi.⁴⁴ This was a landmark in the reversal of policy on the part of the Congress. In November 1939, the Congress had withdrawn from the government on the question of India's participation in the war. Now, in spite of the war, the Congress entered the government, though only in one province, and it was tacitly accepted that the Congress ministry would carry on the prosecution of the war. Six years of war had led Congressmen to accept what was unacceptable in 1939.

42. I.A.R., 1944, II, p. 182; D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma* (Bombay, 1953), VI, p. 318.

43. Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, II, p. 641.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 531.

The influence of constitutionalism on Congress policy is further evidenced at the Simla Conference held in June-July 1945. The Conference was convened on the initiative of Lord Wavell, the Viceroy, not to make far-reaching constitutional changes or a final settlement but to break the political deadlock by securing the consent of principal Indian parties to an interim government. The Wavell Plan suggesting replacement of the existing Executive Council with a Council more representative of Indian political opinion was in effect only a re-statement of the short-term proposals of the Cripps' offer. Yet the Congress accepted it generally.⁴⁵ The Congress approach was more or less on the lines chalked out by Rajagopalachari as early as July 1940. It was, further, precisely the same as was rejected by the Congress since 1942. The Congress acceptance of the Wavell offer meant that for the interim it was willing to work within the framework of the Government of India Act of 1919 and 1935, and to revert to the normal constitutional governments in the provinces, as existed before the resignation of the provincial ministries.

From the nature of the Congress participation in the Simla Conference it may be said that the purely political struggle of the Congress to wrest power from Britain was almost over. The Simla Conference (and, later, the Cabinet Mission proposals) failed not on the basic political issue between India and Britain, but on the communal issue dividing different Indian groups. The Congress struggle was now directed more against internal forces, against Muslim communalism as embodied in the demand for Pakistan; towards British government the policy of the Congress was one of constitutional cooperation.

For purposes of this paper, the political developments in India between April 1946 and August 1947 are relevant only in showing how the Congress policy facilitated the final transfer of power by agreement in a constitutional way rather than by revolution, violent or non-violent. Thus when the Cabinet Mission proposed their plan of constitutional settlement in May-June 1946 the Congress, while critical of its defects, did not reject it. On the contrary the Congress adopted the scheme in its entirety by August

45. Azad, *op. cit.*, p. 112; I.A.R., 1945, I, p.74.

1946.⁴⁶ Following this it participated in the elections to the constituent Assembly; and on the invitation of Lord Wavell, Pandit Nehru formed the interim government on 2 September 1946. Finally the acceptance of the Mountbatten Plan (June, 1947)—which meant acceptance of Dominion Status and the Government of India Act of 1935 both of which the Congress had officially denounced—clearly shows that the transfer of power was carried through without any break in legal and constitutional continuity; and that, moreover, it was effected 'with a measure of goodwill on both sides and not in conflict or bitterness'.⁴⁷ It would have been possible for the Congress to repudiate the steps taken by the British government to effect the final transfer of power and to resort to direct action for wresting power. But faced with the intractability of the Muslim League on the one hand and the conciliatory attitude of the Labour government on the other, the majority of the Congress leadership including Gandhi regarded such a course as ill-advised. The Congress policy on the eve of independence was definitely constitutionalist and characterised by positive programme of cooperation with the government. It was a policy which sought to conserve the unity of the country as had developed under the British rule and transform the existing government into one responsible to an elected legislature.

The foregoing analysis leads to the conclusion that constitutionalism was the technique of political struggle not merely during 1885-1921; it continued to influence the policy and programme of the Congress even in the Gandhian era. The Congress accepted the Gandhian techniques only partly. The role played by militant nationalism including Gandhism in the freedom struggle was mainly in building up the Congress organisation and in preparing the psychological climate which made continuance of foreign rule impossible rather than in effecting the final transfer of power from British to Indian hands. The resort to constitutionalism provided the underlying element of continuity in the freedom struggle and helped the peaceful withdrawal of Britain and the establishment of a parliamentary state in India.

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 157-8.

47. E. W. R. Lumby, *Transfer of Power in India* (London, 1954), p. 261.

Marudu Pandyan

The Hero of the Rebellion of 1800-1801

BY

K. RAJAYYAN

Marudu Pāṇḍyan (also called Chinna Marudu), the hero of the South Indian Rebellion of 1800-1801, was a man of dark complexion, handsome personality and affable manners. Born in obscurity, he started his career as betel bearer in the service of Rajah Udaya Tēvar of Śivagaṅga. In 1772 the ruler was killed and the state was occupied by the combined forces of the English Company and the Carnatic Nawab. The genius of young Marudu first manifested itself in 1780, when he organised a popular movement, expelled the intruders and proclaimed as the ruler of Śivagaṅga Vellāchi, the daughter of the fallen prince. Appointed as minister in the new regime, he grew in popularity in the service of his people. So affectionately adored, he commanded vast influence over the masses. He resided in an open, yet unguarded house at Śiruwayal and whoever wanted to see him had a free access to his presence.¹

Hurt by private grievances, Bahādur Shāh, Nāna Sāhib, Rāni of Jhānsi and Kuṇwār Singh drifted themselves into the Great Revolt of 1857 against the English. Kaṭṭabomman was not so rash a rebel, as he is depicted, for he did pay the tribute to the Company so as to excite no suspicion and proceeded to organise the poligar rebellion. However the alienation of the inhabitants by indiscriminate plunder, letters of procrastination to the English and want of a nationalist goal had dwarfed his stature.² If the Kuṇḍara Proclamation is an indication, Vēlu Tampi of Travancore laboured under communal considerations. Marudu.

1. J. Welsh, *Military Reminiscences*, Vol. 1, p. 130.

2. Madras Council, 2 Oct. 1798, Revenue Consultations, Vol. 88, pp. 3111-8.

on the other hand, was guided not by selfish motive but a determination to regain the freedom of the country and thereby to promote the welfare of all people. The letter of Secretary Buchan to Colonel Agnew dated 12 June 1801 admitted that though the Company gave him no cause of annoyance and treated him with indulgence, he organised the rebellion for the extermination of its authority. The Azirgarh Proclamation of Bahādur Shāh appealed to class distinctions in its bid to enlist the support of the rich to the Revolt of 1857 and threatened punishment of death and confiscation of property to deter others from supporting the enemy. The Śrīraṅgam Proclamation of Marudu, a remarkable document, indeed, called upon all the inhabitants, whether they were Hindus or Moslems, peasants or public servants, to unite and fight for independence. It proceeded to rebuke the disloyal that they were wanting in valour and self-dignity and declared that by fighting for the liberation of the country they would gain immortal renown.

Political Ideals and Warlike Preparations

The greatest political thinker of his age, Marudu analysed the developments, wrought by European machinations, and their impact upon the society. He declared in categorical terms that the English established their political authority over the country and enslaved its people. This calamity overtook the land because of the folly of the princes, indifference of the inhabitants and duplicity of the Europeans. The local rulers unwisely entered into unequal alliance with alien powers and accepted subordinate status. The inhabitants, ignorant of the subtlety of European tactics, not only refused to rise against the common foe but made a collusion with it. The English, on the other hand, violated faith and established their authority. This deprived the states of their freedom, threatened the independence of the rest of the country and reduced the sons of the soil to poverty. The only remedy lay in the destruction of their political power and enforcement of their dependent status. To attain this grand objective there were two requisites: unity and warfare. As the British forces were better equipped than the inhabitants, guerilla tactics were to be adopted. Success in these ventures would liberate

the occupied territory, forestall the fall of the rest of India to alien domination and enable the inhabitants to live in peace and prosperity. Thereupon the rulers should be restored to their former exalted status but their authority must be balanced by the pongari system and established custom.³

Inspired by this exalted nationalist ideal, Marudu proceeded to translate it into action. Rāmraṁ Singh, Asad-ul-Zamān and the Rajahs of Birbhum and Burdwan in Bengal and Rajahs of Vijayanagaram and Pōlavēram in the Circars contented themselves with local resistance. Marudu on the other hand organised a rebellion of formidable proportions. "Foment insurrections throughout the country" and "by the support of the jungle harass the enemy and set it at defiance", he declared.⁴ Upon the fall of his ally Tipu Sultān in 1799, he saw the imperative necessity of promoting a union of patriotic interests of South India in defence of freedom. His alliance with Gōpāla Nāyak of Dindigul served as the nucleus. The rebels of Tamilnāḍu and Mysore frequented the thick woods of Diṇḍigul and Sivagaṅga and held deliberations.⁵ Three missions were sent to the north and the support of the rebel chiefs, particularly Dhoondaji Waug of Shimoga, was won. The sphere of rebel activity extended from Naṅgunēri—Nāgore coast to Kolhāpūr—Shōlapūr region. The English now found themselves confronted with a challenge of a revolutionary organisation founded upon a revolutionary faith.⁶

The strategy of the rebel confederates placed Marudu at the command of their operations in the Madurai Country. Genius in the organisation of revolt, he prepared for a melancholy struggle. Powder, balls, rockets and other fire arms were manufactured, old arms were repaired and fresh supplies were

3. Revenue Sundries, Vol. 26, p. 148.

4. Amildar of Oroor, 18 March 1801, Report, Board of Revenue Proceedings, Vol. 291, p. 8733.

5. Board of Revenue, 28 Dec. 1801, Proceedings, Vol. 305, pp. 15362 and 15365.

6. K. Rajayyan, *South Indian Rebellion* (1971), p. 115.

obtained through the Bay of Tonḍi by employing large doneyes. All were stored in the jungle of Kalayarkōil.⁷ Spies were sent to British camps to collect secrets about hostile movements. On hearing their reports Marudu confidently asserted "though twelve battalions should march against Sivaganga, they could venture to engage the enemy and set it at defiance with the help of the jungles."⁸ With grim determination the inhabitants evacuated the villages and trusted themselves entirely on the mountain recesses. They made the Temple of Kalayarkōil, their rallying centre, obviously because they considered their impending struggle as a crusade.

Diṇḍigul conspiracy

In April 1800 when the preparations for the rebellion were in progress, the confederates held a conspiracy at Virūpākshi in Diṇḍigul. It was attended by the delegates of Marudu Pāṇḍyan, Gōpāla Nāyak, Dhoondaji Waug and other rebel leaders of the South. The date of the conspiracy is not known. It appears that it was held on the 29th, for it is indicated that the deputies of Dhoondaji Waug reached the place on the 28th and returned to the north on the 30th, after the conclusion of the deliberations.⁹ Presided over by Gōpāla Nāyak, the rebel council formulated the strategy of war.¹⁰

It decided to launch a general offensive against the English with the occupation of the strategic fort of Coimbatore on the 3rd of June 1800—the last day of Muharram Feast, when the Mohammadan troops in the service of the Company were expected to be tired because of the celebrations of the previous days. Dhoondaji Waug agreed to send his cavalry to Coimbatore and Marudu consented to rise in rebellion on its appearance.

7. Board of Revenue, 29 May 1800, Proceedings, Vol. 252, pp. 4044-5.

8. Amildar of Oroor, 18 March, 1801, Report, Collectorate Records, Vol. 3579, p. 76.

9. Board of Revenue, 29 May 1800, Proceedings, Vol. 252, pp 4044-5.

10. W. Hurdis, 8 June 1800, Report to Board of Revenue, Individual Papers, No. 34.

Marudu Pandyan sent rebel parties in support of the insurgents of Diṇḍigul and Coimbatore for the capture of the fort. But the attempt failed. However Dhoondaji Waug and Kēraḷa Varma rose in rebellion in the north. Marudu waited for the appearance of Dhoondaji Waug's cavalry, but it did not come. Thereupon he sent his men to the south and engineered schemes to work out the escape of the relatives of Kaṭṭabomman, imprisoned at Pālayamkōṭṭai. This was effected on the 2nd of February 1801.¹¹ Immediately afterwards Marudu Pāṇḍyan sent 30,000 men to Tirunelvēli to join Sevitiaḥ and Oomathurai, the leaders of the rebellion in this region. The insurrection spread and the British garrisons were attacked and subdued. In the meantime Gōpāla Nāyak and his associates led the rebellion in Diṇḍigul.¹²

As the movement assumed formidable proportions, the enemy moved its troops from different parts of India and pressed into service the forces of its allied princes. The Nawab of Arcot and the Rajahs of Travancore and Thanjavur sent their forces in support of the English. The patriots now found their position precarious. They repulsed an attack on their stronghold, Pañjālamkurichi, on the 31st of March, but were defeated in a second attack on the 23rd of May.¹³ An army, commanded by Innes moved to Diṇḍigul. It routed the rebel forces and established its control over Diṇḍigul by May 1801.¹⁴ In consequence of these reverses in Tirunelvēli and Diṇḍigul, the broken ranks of insurgents escaped to Śivagaṅga. The cause of the Rebellion appeared desperate. At this juncture Marudu Pāṇḍyan, who had been directing the rebel operations in other regions, so long assumed the direct command of the struggle.

Marudu Pāṇḍyan's Proclamation

On the 16th of June 1801 the British administration received report of a proclamation, issued by Marudu Pāṇḍyan. A copy of

11. Madras Council, 10 Feb. 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 279,

12. Sevitiaḥ, letter to Rajah of Thanjavur, Military Consultations, 9 June 1801, Vol. 84, p. 4295.

13. J. Welsh, *Military Reminiscences*, Vol. 1. p. 76.

14. Madras Council, 22 May 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 283 pp. 3520-70.



it was found posted upon one of the walls of the large open gateway leading to the Nawab's palace in the fort of Tiruchirapalli. It was addressed to the people of South India, mentioned in it as the peninsula of Jambu Dweepa. Another proclamation with identical contents mostly, was found on the wall of the great Temple of Śrīraṅgam. It was addressed to all the inhabitants of India, referred in it as the Island of Jambu.¹⁵ The selection of Tiruchirapalli and Śrīraṅgam as the venue of the proclamation was of significance. Tiruchirapalli was a centre of political activity, for it was the control of this strategic fort that enabled the English to turn the tide of their long struggle against the French in their favour and to consolidate their power in the South. Śrīraṅgam, being a Hindu spiritual centre, appeared as a suitable place for the issue of an appeal to all the people of the entire subcontinent.

Unique in the annals of India's freedom struggle, Marudu Pāṇḍyan's Proclamation constitutes a remarkable document. It enshrines in itself a combination of ideals and data as presented by a great patriot, hailing from the masses. An all-India concept inspired the proclamation, for it not only made a direct appeal to the entire country but expressed an anxiety that if the political malady was allowed to persist, the whole of India would fall under alien rule. It exhorted all religious and communal sections whether they were peasants, sepoys or civil servants, to rally to the patriotic cause. However the details are more of South Indian interest, as the rebels had no definite knowledge of the political developments in the East and the English had not yet established their sway in the north. It indicated the folly of Nawāb Moham-mad Ali of the Carnatic, the indifference of the inhabitants, tactics of the foreign powers and consequences of British imperialism. The advocacy of the hereditary rights of the princes and national customs, made in the proclamation, would appear ill-conceived in the light of modern concepts of liberalism, but it could not be denied that it seemed a necessity for securing popular support during a period when tradition swayed the imagination of the inhabitants. The English version of the two proclamations which are almost identical in their contents proceeds thus:

15. Revenue Sundries, 10 July 1801, Vol. 26 pp 445-6.





MARUDU PANDYAN
(Statue in the Temple of Kalayarkoil)



"Whoever sees this Paper, Read it with Attension.

"To the Castes/nations/

Brahmins, Kshetriyas, Vysyas, Sudras and Musselmen that are in the Island of Jemboo/in the peninsula of Jembu Dweepa/^{this notice} is given.

"His Highness the Nawab Mohammad Ali having foolishly given the Europeans place amongst you is became like a widow. The Eurpeans violating their Faith have deceitfully made the Kingdom their own and considering the inhabitants as dogs, accordingly exercise authority over them. There existing no unity and friendship amongst you the above castes, who not aware of the duplicity of these Europeans—have not only inconsiderably calumniated each other, but have absolutely surrendered the Kingdom to them. In these countries now governed by these Low Wretches, the inhabitants have become poor and the rice became 'vellum' (water)¹⁶. And although they manifestly suffer, they are still without understanding to discern it. It is, certain that the Man must die although he may live a thousand years! And it is as certain that his fame will survive him as long as the Sun and Moon (shine). Therefore it is devised and determined that in future each shall enjoy his hereditary Rights, namely to His Highness the Nawab Arcot Subah, Vijaya Ramanah Tirumala Nayak the Carnatic, Tanjore the first place and to others their respective Kingdoms¹⁷—all to be given to their rightful sovereigns, without any violation of faith and national customs. (The Europeans must) confine themselves to a dependent service on the Nawab from which they may expect to derive a real and uninterrupted hap-

16. The proclamation indicates the great change that came in consequence of the British exploitation of the resources of the land. In the past the inhabitants could eat rice but after the establishment of British power they had to content with mere rice-water.

17. The confederates had decided to restore the kingdoms to their princes. In the South Arcot Subah, situated between the rivers Gundalakamma in the north and Vellār in the south, was to be returned to the direct rule of the Nawab, Tanjore to prince Serfoji who was deprived of it in 1799 and Madurai to Vijaya Ramnah Tirumala Nayak, a descendant of Queen Minakshi, the last ruler of the kingdom.

piness. As the authority of the Europeans will be destroyed, we shall enjoy as in the service of the Nawab constant happiness without tears.

"It is therefore recommended that every man in his place and palayam fly to arms and unite together in order to make even the name of the Low Wretches cease. Then all the poor and the needy will get subsistence. But should there be any who like dogs, desirous of an easy life obey the commands of these Low Wretches, such should be karoo or cut off. As all know with what subtilty these Low Wretches, always in unity with each other have subdued the country. Therefore you Brahmins, Kshetriyas, Vysyas, Sudras and Musselmen, all who wear whiskers, whether civil or military, serving in the field or else where and your subedars, jamedars, havildars, nayaks and sepoy in the service of the Low Wretches and all capable of bearing arms, let them in the first place display their bravery as follows:

"Wherever you find any of the low wretches destroy them and continue to do so until they are extirpated. Whoever serves the low wretches will never enjoy eternal bliss after death, I know this. Consider and deliberate on it. And he who does not subscribe to this may his whiskers be like the hair of my secret parts and his food be tasteless and without nourishment and may his wife and children belong to another and be considered as the offspring of the low wretches to whom he had prostituted her. Therefore all but whose blood is not contaminated by Europeans will begin to unite. Whoever reads this or hears of its contents let him make it as public as possible by writing it to his Friends who in like manner must publish it to theirs. Every one who shall not write it and circulate it as before mentioned, let him be held as guilty of the enormous crime of having killed a black cow on the banks of the Ganga and suffer all the various punishments of hell. Then Musselmen who do not conform to this, let him be considered as having drunk the blood of a pig.

"Whoever takes this off the wall where it is pasted let him be held as guilty of the five greatest sins.¹⁸ Let everyone read

18. The five greatest sins are the killing of a Brahmin, adultery with the wife of the master, drinking of liquor, theft of gold and finally con-

and take a copy of this address. Thus Marudu Pandyan, the servant of the great rajahs but the implacable Enemy of the European low wretches.

"To all living at Srirangam, the priests and great people, Marudu Pandyan prostrates himself at their feet. The sovereigns made and kept forts, the mud bastions, churches and chapels. The above great Rajahs and people by the injustice of the low wretches are now reduced to poverty. So great a people as you are reduced to this state. Grant me your Blessing."¹⁹

Rebel Offensive

On the fall of Pañjālamkurichi to the British forces, Oomathurai, the leader of the rebellion in Tirunelvēli, escaped to Siva-gaṅga. In a clash with the enemy, he sustained six wounds. On the 28th May 1801, with his wounds still unhealed, he reached Kamudi. Marudu received him affectionately and took him to the rebel headquarters at Siruwayal. Immediately after, in a bid to check the progress of British forces, he launched a fierce counter-offensive. In the course of a bitter struggle, he not only administered a series of reverses upon the enemy but expelled its forces beyond River Kāvēri.

In May 1801 The rebels under the direct command of Marudu encountered the British. They defeated the forces of the Company, stationed at Tirupatore and Natham. Pillaging parties liberated Tiruvelur, Melur and Verapur. Oomathurai who by now regained his health led a column to Madurai, but finding the the British troops strongly entrenched, made his course to Kadarakoil. Rebellion spread to Ramnad. The patriots stormed Palamaneri and Tiruchuzhi and forced the English to flee to the shelter of the Fort of Ramnad. The possession of the coastal region of Ramnad greatly contributed to the strength of the rebels. More of

nivance at doing any of these offences. While expiation can be had during the present life for ordinary sins, it cannot be had for the five greatest sins, for their effect will continue even after rebirth, according to the Hindu belief.

19. Revenue Sundries, 10 July 1801, Vol. 26, pp. 447-455.

the inhabitants rallied to the patriotic cause and supply routes were freed from threat of disruption. In July 1801 a body of rebels under Shevata Tambi, son of Marudu Pandyan, advanced to Thanjavur and on its appearance the inhabitants rose in arms voluntarily.²⁰ The rebels expelled the British troops from Pat-tukottai and occupied Mangudi. Advancing along the sea shore to Nagore,²¹ they moved to Shiali, Kumbakonam and Wodayar-palayam.²² In the liberated areas monigars were posted to look after the administration. As the result of these gains most of Madurai, Ramnad, Kallarnadu and Thanjavur fell under the control of Marudu Pandyan.

Threatened with the destruction of their authority, the English assembled their forces, rushed from different stations and directed Lt. Col. Agnew to take the command of the operations. Advancing from the south, the forces occupied Palamaneri, Tiruppuvanam, Tirupachetti and Manamadurai. Marching along the bank of the river, Palamaneri, the enemy captured Paramagudi on the 11th of June. Throughout the march the rebels hovered around and kept up a galling fire. They separated a body of troops from the main army which was cut to pieces. Harassed throughout the expedition, the enemy by forced marches reached the protection of the batteries of Ramnad.²³ Reinforced by troops sent from other quarters, Agnew now led another expedition to Komeri and from there reached Madurai on the 9th of July. Agnew spent the succeeding weeks at Madurai dispersing the rebel concentrations and consolidating his position. Subsequently, he commanded his army to Tirupatore and took it by storm on the 24th of July. He waited for making a junction with the forces of Innes, advancing from the west, before beginning the more difficult campaign in the jungle of Kalayarkoil.

The patriots strove hard to check the British expedition. The enemy reached Natham on the 13th June and received reinforce-

20. Military Consultations, 4 Aug. 1801 Vol. 286 p. 5332.

21. *Ibid*, 11 Aug. 1801, Vol. 286 p. 5643.

22. Board of Revenue, July 1801 Proceedings, Vol. 291 p. 8269.

23. Military Consultations, 21 June, 1801, Vol. 285, p. 4550.

ments from Pudukkottai²⁴ and on the 4th of July moved towards Manapacherri, situated eight miles away from Piranmalai—a fort, garrisoned by the rebels. Innes decided to attack Piranmalai but Agnew cautioned him against any attempt as the probability of success in his judgment did not strongly overbalance the risk of defeat. The assailants reconnoitered the rebel stronghold but judging their means inadequate, did not venture. On the 6th the insurgents began a heavy fire on the British positions. Two days later the columns led by Vella Marudu and Chinna Marudu attacked the British forces, pressed vigorously on their lines and drove them off.²⁵ As the situation of Innes appeared precarious. Agnew moved towards Tirupatore and took such a position as to assist the operations of the besieged. On the 18th detachment of Innes launched a second attack on Piranmalai but was again defeated with heavy loss. Thwarted in their repeated endeavours, the British forces made another humiliating retreat to Natham.²⁶ On the 22nd upon the arrival of reinforcements, Innes moved to Satturusankarakottai, situated six miles away from Tirupattore. The forces continued their march through a close wood but on the 26th the rebels who had occupied strong positions in the front, perceiving their advantage, attacked the enemy, using rockets for the first time. Losing no time, Agnew advanced to the relief of hard-pressed Innes and forced the besieging crowds to withdraw to the woods.²⁷ The combined forces now took their route from Tirupatore in favour of an assault on Piranmalai and to establish communications with Pudukkottai. Subsequently however they decided to change their direction as the road to Piranmalai was of difficult access, being intersected by hills and jungles and occupied by large groups of picked men, ready to challenge. On the 28th of July the forces encamped at Okkur. As the British found a pitched battle in defence of the town risky, they evacuated.²⁸

24. Madras Council, 18 June 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 285, p. 4559.

25. Revenue Sundries, 9 July 1801, Vol. 26, pp. 623-7.

26. Madras Council, 4 August 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 286, pp. 5348-9.

27. Madras Council, 4 August 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 286, pp. 5348-9 and 5367-70.

28. Revenue Sundries, 28 July 1801, Vol. 26 pp. 646-8.

Assisted by the princes of Thanjavur and Pudukkottai, the Company assembled a large force for an eastern campaign on the banks of the Kaveri. Not only did Rajah Serfaji and the Tondaiman assist the enemy but incited the inhabitants particularly the warlike Kallans to fight against the patriots. This internal dissension greatly weakened the rebel influence in the Kaveri basin.²⁹ On the 17th July the combined forces of the English and their allied princes, commanded by Blackburn, commenced the operations. In the battles of Arandangy and Adiarkudi the rebels were defeated. Mounting pressure and internal discord forced the insurgents to evacuate the northern region of Thanjavur and to withdraw to the jungles, stretching to the south.³⁰

The Coastal Campaign

Though an extensive region of Thanjavur remained under the rebel domination, the English made no immediate attempt to re-occupy it. The insurgents, led by Marudu Pandyan and Oomathurai, encamped in Palaynad and lay in wait to cut off Innes's retreat from Tirumayam. They reconstructed their post at Arriawortawoody, which Innes had destroyed, and garrisoned it with 5000 armed men, while 3000 took their position in the village of Kundadive, situated eight miles away from Shawkottai.³¹ Anxious to draw the rebels from the route of Innes's retreat, Blackburn, who commanded the forces in Thanjavur, marched to Shawkottai and reached Kundanoor in Palanad. He sent a probing expedition to the rebel camp but was driven back. In a bid to intercept Blackburn's advance but without understanding the real intentions of the enemy, a large section of the insurgents, posted at Tirupatore advanced to a distance of twenty miles, which prevented it to act in co-operation with the column, led by Marudu Pandyan and Oomathuri. As this diversion turned favourable, the detachment of Innes moved out from Tirumayam on the 28th of

29. Madras Council, 8, 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 286 pp 5518.

30. Madras Council, 4 August 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 288, p. 5380-4.

31. Madras Council, 20 October 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 288, p. 6932.

August and transmitted a message to Blackburn that it reached a secure distance. Having effected his objective in affording relief to Innes but forbidden by prudence to remain at Palaynad because of the possibility of rebel flanking operations both from Kundadive and Arriawortawoody, the detachment of Blackburn by forced marches retreated to Arandangy.³² From here he sent two expeditions, one to the south and the other to the west. The southern expedition, led by Lieutenant Maclean, went into operation against the rebels of Ramnad in co-operation with the forces of Macaulay, which reached from Tirunelvēli. The western expedition, headed by Jen Kondan, advanced to Terboinad in Sivaganga, the inhabitants of which territory offered their steadfast support to the rebellion in disregard to the Company's offers of pardon and oblivion. In support of this expedition Blackburn himself marched to within twenty miles of Siruwayal. The British forces displaying a vindictive spirit cut down the fleeing population and burnt down the villages.³³

Having the rebel power of resistance in Thanjavur greatly crippled, the British army, reinforced by the troops of Pudukkottai and Ettayapuram, moved in strength against Ramnad. Macaulay from the south and the Maclean from the north. As Agnew threatened Siruwayal, Vella Marudu who was engaged in the siege of Komeri, returned to the west after entrusting the task with Muthu Karuppa Tevar. On the 13th of August a body of troops, led by Miller moved to Komeri at the orders of Macaulay, repulsed the siege and dispersed the insurgents.³⁴ The enemy gained more victories in the actions that followed. The combined forces of Martinz and Miller attacked and expelled the rebels, who had encamped in the vicinity of the Fort of Ramnad, waiting for an opportunity to assault this stronghold of the enemy. On the 27th of August, Macaulay routed the armed parties of Melappan, an associate of Marudu in a fiercely contested battle at Abiramam, but the rebel chief made his escape.³⁵ Maclean in the

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 6925-30.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 6943-51.

34. Revenue Sundries, 7 September 1801, Vol. 26, pp. 673-5.

35. Madras Council, 20 October 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 288, pp. 6850-6.

meantime embarked on a difficult campaign from Arandangy through the rebel-held territories towards Ramnad. On the 29th of August he defeated the rebels and stormed the key post of Waroor, in consequence of which he regained possession of the territory extending from the borders of Thanjavur and Sivaganga to the Fort of Ramnad.³⁶ Anxious to relieve the hard-pressed rebels of the east Marudu Pandyan sent a body of 3000 armed men under the command of Oomathurai, but as the threat to Kalayarkoil assumed serious proportions, he soon called them off. Enabled by these successes, Macaulay left Ramnad by the end of September and advanced to the borders of Sivaganga to assist in the operations of Agnew in the jungles of Kalayarkoil.³⁷

British Humiliation in Kalayarkoil

Siruwayal, the headquarters of Marudu Pandyan, was a clean town with broad and regular streets and well built houses.³⁸ On the 27th of July the combined forces of Agnew and Innes began their march from Okkur to Siruwayal. The enemy experienced no fierce opposition for the first two days, but afterwards they found its task formidable, for it had to manoeuvre for every inch of land. The road passed through a cultivated tract, situated between two jungles but was interrupted by high banks and extensive rows of palmyra trees, which gave excellent cover to the rebels in every direction. Parties of insurgents, who had occupied all the banks and woods on the way, harassed the troops from the commencement to the end of a short but tedious march. When they were pushed from the front, the crowds moved round to the flanks and rear and accompanied the detachment with a constant and teasing fire. Waging a continuous war against the hordes, the forces encamped within two miles of Siruwayal on the 29th. The next day the troops moved to attack the defiant town. The rebels had made entrenchments connected with the strong bunds of the tanks, advantageously situated to support each other. A small battery was regularly formed in their centre. The armed groups

36. *Ibid*, pp. 6943-51.

37. *Ibid*, pp. 6960-1.

38. James Welsh, *Military Reminiscences*, Vol. 1, p. 92.



collected together but when Agnew made a disposition to attack the flanks of their line and advanced forward with a heavy fire, they abandoned their positions. They set fire to the beautiful town and nearby villages and under the cover of a distant fire withdrew to the barriers in the jungles of Kalayarkoil. As all the forage was destroyed and as the country afforded no grazing field for the numerous pack cattle, the enemy experienced considerable difficulty. The assailants entered the destroyed town and had a clear look at the tower of the Pagoda of Kalayarkoil, which was visible beyond over the woods.³⁹

On the 31st of July powerful detachments commenced the operations against the rebel strongholds in the jungles. The insurgents assembled in strength, ready to contest the hostile venture. Large groups of pioneers and wood cutters, who were pressed into service by Agnew, began the work on a road for the advance of the army. On the 11th of August Agnew wrote to Madras: the pioneers and wood cutters have laboured incessantly but the increasing closeness of the jungle had retarded their progress so much that the road was still unfinished. The supply of labour was reduced by sickness and desertion due to the dread of the rebel fire, to which they were frequently exposed. On the night of the 14th August the road had been advanced five miles and the Pagoda of Kalayarkoil was seen over the trees; it appeared less than a mile away on the 11th of morning. When the working party was about to resume the work, a battery of several guns concealed by the rebels in the jungles burst and rendered the continuance of the work impossible.⁴⁰

On the 15th insurgents launched a vigorous attack upon the British lines. Unable to withstand the assault, the enemy retreated from its forward positions.⁴¹ The next day the rebels

39. Revenue Sundries, 31 July 1801, Vol. 26, pp. 649-51.

40. Agnew, letter to Madras, Military Consultations, 20 October 1801, Vol. 288, pp. 6837-9.

41. Madras Council, 20 October 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 288, pp. 6837-9.

resumed the attack and forced the English to discontinue the work on the road. On the 19th they fired several sarabogies, a kind of park guns, used for firing salutes. Immediately armed parties assembled from different directions and began a sharp fire from all sides. Carried away by a combination of rashness and daring, they besieged very closely the hostile positions, well defended by heavy guns. Finding the opportunity the British batteries discharged a few rounds. Screams and groans followed. Intermittent fire continued from the distant posts of the rebels but a few moments later all were hushed. The patriots suffered heavy loss and the blood of the fleeing was traceable in every direction in the jungles. Despite the terrible losses the rebels continued their bitter resistance with indomitable courage. The English forces succeeded in beating the besieging crowds every hour but the moment they felt relieved, they found themselves surrounded and attacked from all sides. The insurgents taking their positions under the cover of banks and entrenchments, against which the troops could seldom move because of the thickness of the jungle, baffled every attempt made by the enemy to establish itself. The heavy losses that they suffered in every action appeared to have had no impact upon their patriotic will to resist. The reverses suffered by the forces of the Company and their constant exposure to the burning sky greatly dispirited them. The pioneers found it no more possible to continue the work on the road.⁴² Driven to desperate straits, Agnew sought to establish communications with the other British posts, to gain reinforcements, to elude the vigilance of the gallant patriots and to escape assault by frequent showers of bullets, yet found himself repeatedly baffled and thwarted. The humiliation, that appeared unsurmountable, reduced him to the alternative of retreat. On the 26th of August the British forces took their route back to Tirupatore and from there to Partimangalam and then to Siruwal. The rebels chased the retreating enemy for a long distance. On the 30th Agnew and Innes decided to abandon their project of advancing to Kalayarkoil from the direction of Siruwayal.⁴³

42. Revenue Sundries, 21 August 1801, Vol. 26, p. 659.

43. Madras Council, 4 August 1801, Military Consultations Vol. 286, p. 5390.

A body of troops, led by Innes, moved to Tirumayam to gather provisions. On its return to Siruwayal, the insurgents attacked it but their attempt to ambush the enemy failed. The armed groups collected in strength in the jungles in preparation for a counter attack. Considering his position quite vulnerable Agnew ordered his forces to retreat to Okkur and from there to Nellikottai. Subsequently, however, the tide of events turned in favour of the Company. The British King's Scotch Brigade, Blackburn's detachments and the Tondaiman's troops rushed for the relief of Agnew's forces. Tempted by the Company's offer of the throne of Sivaganga, Woya Tevar of the royal house of this territory too went to the aid of the enemy.⁴⁴

Destruction of Rebel Sea Power.

The destruction of the vessels, employed by the insurgents for the importation of grain and arms, had engaged the attention of the Company for long. Several doneys, steered by oars, brought large supplies across the seas both from the northern and southern directions. Four hundred men, employed in the service of the rebels, regularly transported the imports to the jungles of Sivaganga. This enabled them to harass the enemy despite the destruction of their fields. Intelligence that the Company obtained, indicated that the doneys brought in large supplies to the harbour of Tondi. As the disruption of communication with the sea was essential for the destruction of the power of resistance, the Company pressed a gun boat into service to patrol the coastal waters.⁴⁵

Before day-break on the 4th of September 1801 Schuler, the gun boat, went into operation in the Bay of Tondi. At 7 A.M. it attacked and seized two large doneys, laden with paddy and bound for Pamban. It learned from the crew that two more doneys, each with twenty armed rebels, were heading towards the port of Tondi. Before long the cutter came across them and chased them till 9 A.M. But a calm sea prevented the gun boat from its pursuit and enabled the rebel vessels to escape by means

44. Revenue Sundries, 1 September 1801, Vol. 26, p. 665.

45. Tinnevely Collectorate Records, 20 August 1801, No. 3579, pp. 88 and 115.

of their oars. When the wind began to blow and became favourable, the Schuler resumed the hunt and steered for Tondi, where it reached at 5 P.M. but only to discover all the doneys lying dry on the shore and the cargo already unloaded. The boat cruized the shore waters for two days. In an action it overpowered six doneys and captured them. The British sailors advancing to the shore, set fire to numerous vessels, which were found deserted. On the 8th the insurgents, about a hundred in number, made a daring attempt to attack the gun boat. Emerging out of their huts on the shore of Pamban, they rushed to the sea water up to four feet deep and shot a few but distant rounds. The cutter moving to a favourable position, opened a well directed fire and repulsed the attack. Many of the rebels were killed and their bodies were found floating on the sea.⁴⁶ The loss of numerous vessels and control of the Bay of Tondi inflicted a severe blow to the sustaining forces of resistance.

The Divided Camp of Rebels

The enemy followed up the blockade of the Bay of Tondi with a successful attempt at the creation of dissensions within the ranks of the insurgents. Having failed in persuading Vella Marudu to join the side of the Company against his brother Chinna Marudu, the English promoted rivalry in the ruling house of Sivaganga. At the instance of the Company, Padmattur Woya Tevar, a member of the royal family, contested the claims of Vengum Peria Wodaya Tevar, the ruler, under whom Marudu served as minister.

As no followers could be obtained, the Tondaiman hired out 250 of his peons for service with Woya Tevar. Escorted by them, Woya Tevar reached the camp of Blackburn at Arandangy on the 12th of August. As it was of importance to project the image of the rival prince, the troops of the Company accorded a pompous welcome and Blackburn reported to Madras: "I caused the line to fall in and salute Woya Tevar as he passed, and received him

46. Board of Revenue, 28 September 1801, Proceedings, Vol. 298, pp. 12080-2.

with those marks of distinction which I thought the best calculated to make a strong impression of the reality of the elevation upon the rebellious provinces.⁴⁷ From Arandangy Woya Tevar, accompanied by more men, proceeded to the camp of Agnew in Sivaganga. On the 12th of September 1801 at a ceremonious function, attended with the display of show and splendour, deliberate though they were, at Cholapuram, the ancient capital of Sivaganga, Agnew proclaimed Woya Tevar as the rajah of the state.⁴⁸

The elevation of Woya Tevar to a show of royal status misguided the simple-minded inhabitants. As a prince of the ruling house joined the Company, it exercised an adverse impact upon their loyalty to the cause of Rebellion. The people of Nellikkottai, Okkur, Errecoor, Pattimangalam and Paghinery deserted the camp of the insurgents and went over to the side of Woya Tevar. The intimate knowledge of the woods of Kalayarkoil, possessed by these deserters, the guidance given by Woya Tevar and the dissensions made in the rebel camp greatly assisted the Company in its subsequent operations.⁴⁹

Fall of Kalayarkoil

The Pagoda of Kalayarkoil, the rallying point of the patriots and the target of British offensive, was a beautiful structure, surrounded by a stone wall, eighteen feet in height. The rebels humbled the enemy in the first thrust, but the subsequent turn of events greatly eroded their power of defence and counter attack. The control of the coastal waters had been lost, vast territories had been reoccupied and the unity of their ranks had been shaken. The Company employed Khaleel, who appeared closely acquainted with the rebel positions, to gather intelligence

47. Blackburne, 12 August 1801, letter to Secretary Webbe, Military Consultations, Vol. 288, pp. 6908.

48. Revenue Sundries for 1801, Vol. 26, p. 48 and—Madras Council, 7 July 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 285, p. 4873.

49. Revenue Sundries for 1801, Vol. 26 p. 48 and Madras Council 7 July 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 285, p. 4873.

for the formulation of a new strategy against Kalayarkoil.⁵⁰ Disguised as hunters, Khaleel and his select men explored the jungles, discovered the secret routes leading to the Pagoda of Kalayarkoil and safely returned to the British camp.⁵¹ Guided by them, Agnew carried out fresh preparations for an expedition from Okkur instead of from Siruvayal. After the proclamation of Woya Tevar as the ruler of Sivaganga, the detachments left Cholapuram and marching through Melur reached Singampunari on the 19th of September. As the occupation of rebel forts in this jungle was of consequence for the success of the expeditions, Agnew detached two forces: one to Piranmalai which withstood the repeated assaults made by Innes and to Nandikottai. The overwhelming military superiority which the enemy brought to bear upon the rebel strongholds enabled it to crush resistance and to reduce the posts to submission.⁵² The triumphant army reached Okkur, where Innes in the mean time employed pioneers to strengthen its defences and stored provisions in preparation of the expedition to Kalayarkoil.⁵³

On the 30th of September 1801 British detachments advanced to Kalayarkoil from all directions. In an attempt to mislead the rebels Agnew announced that he had decided to storm the fort in the evening of the 1st of October and detached a party to the town of Sivaganga, so that they might expect an offensive from that direction. Thereupon he decided to push through Vaniamkudi, Collumbum and Muthoor. The road leading to Collumbum was found blacked up by thorny fences. The detachment was fired on near its entrance from a barrier within the jungle. Agnew detached a party to turn the flank of the rebels, while a gun that was mounted in front, opened a fire to draw away the rebel attention. The troops suffered considerable loss in this action but succeeded in dislodging the armed columns from their

50. Madras Council, 20 October 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 288, pp. 6856-6.

51. Sivaganga Charithira Kummi,

52. Madras Council, 20 October 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 288, pp. 6844 and 6859.

53. Revenue Sundries, 5 September 1801, Vol. 26 p. 667.

post. On approaching Muthoor a rebel party which had taken its stand on a bank in front of the village. opened a distant fire but was forced on to withdraw to the interior of the wood. Another detachment, led by Innes in the meantime moved towards Chola-puram, after which it turned in the direction of Kalayarkoil. He reported to Agnew that the insurgents strongly posted in the barriers, which were raised across an extremely difficult road, received his detachment with a heavy fire but were discharged by a gallant charge. In this battle a hundred of the rebels were killed. The forces reached Keeranoor, situated in the vicinity of Kalayarkoil and proceeded with the reduction of Kallangudi.⁵⁴ The Scotch Brigade led by Lieutenant Colonel Spry advanced through the direct road from Okkur to Kalayarkoil, while another expedition commanded by Major Sheppard moved through another route, ready to assist Spry's Scotch Brigade. The forces of Macaulay and Blackburn after their campaigns in Ramnad attacked the jungles from the south and from the east respectively. The offensives were so co-ordinated as to out-manoeuvre the patriots and to avert a second humiliation to the British flag.⁵⁵

The encircling advance of the hostile forces from different directions threw the rebel columns into panic. The Scotch Brigade advancing through a close wood launched an attack on the Pagoda at the dawn of the 1st of October. The rebel opposition barriers on the Muthoor road and the darkness of the night had so much impeded the march of Agnew that he could not reach the rebel stronghold until 8 A.M. The other detachments however overwhelmed all resistance on the roads and encircled the Pagoda in accordance with the pre-concerted plan. Marudu Pandyan led his column into action against the forces of Agnew. but finding the Pagoda threatened from other directions, rushed to take over the command of the defences. However it too late, for the insurgents were thrown into confusion and all his endeavours to restore order among the ranks failed. He reached Kalayarkoil barely in time to remove his people to safety. Many of the rebels died in bitter contests, while the survivors fled,

54. Revenue Sundries, 21 October 1801, Vol. 26, pp. 697-9

55. Madras Council, 20 October 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 288, p. 6867.

apparently without concert.⁵⁶ The fall of Kalayarkoil broke patriotic resistance. The enemy captured a large quantity of ammunition, deposited in the jungles. In recognition of the meritorious service and the guidance given to Spry in the operations, Agnew awarded one hundred pagodas to Khaleel.

The principal leaders of the rebellion took their route to Mungalam. In a bid to apprehend them Agnew sent his forces in that direction, while he himself continued to occupy a station on the western side of the woods of Kalayarkoil. Captain Munro led a party in search of the fugitives but did not come across any. Expresses were sent to Macaulay and Blackburn, urging them to be on the alert but the rebels already effected their escape.⁵⁷ A body of the insurgents, led by Oomathurai, Sevithiah and Muthu Vella Nayak, moved in a northern direction through Tirupatore, while another party headed by Marudu Pandyan found its way to the jungles of Singampunari.⁵⁸ The Tondaiman sent out numerous parties to comb the rebel resorts in the woods. He captured more than hundred families of the fugitives and handed them over to the custody of the British troops.⁵⁹ Blackburn and Maclean proceeded with the occupation of territories, still retained by the armed groups of Ramnad. Their detachments scattered a column of 2000 rebels in a battle, fought at Shawkottai. On the 5th of October Blackburn advanced to Karaikudi, separated from Shawkottai by an extension of the jungle of Singampunari, seven miles in depth and uncommonly close and strong. A body of troops in the meantime went into operation at his orders in another extension of the same jungle, that separated Karaikudi from Siruwayal. Assisted by the forces of the Tondaiman, Blackburn occupied the rebel posts and consolidated his control.⁶⁰

56. Madras Council, 20 October 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 288, pp. 6864-7.

57. Revenue Sundires, 21 October 1801, Vol. 26, pp. 700-702.

58. Madras Council, 20 October 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 288, pp. 6895-7 and 6936.

59. *Ibid*, p. 6959.

60. *Ibid*, p. 6975.



On the 19th of October 1801 Marudu Pandyan was engaged in an action at Cholapuram, wounded and captured.⁶¹ The troops which were employed in the jungles, seized the other rebels of note too. Many of the patriots escaped to the inhospitable woods of Anamalai, where they died of fever.⁶² On the 24th of October 1801 Marudu Pandyan, together with his brother Vella Marudu and a horde of other patriots, was executed on the ruins of the Fort of Tirupatore in Ramnad district.⁶³ James Welsh, an officer in the British army, has given a brief note on the last days of this hero. He had observed: after Chinna Marudu was defeated in the battle of Kalayarkoil, he was chased like a wild beast, was badly wounded and captured. He was seen lingering with a fractured thigh in prison and was lastly beheld with his gallant brother Vella Marudu and no less gallant son, Shevata Tambi, surrounded by other insurgents, in chains upon a common gibbet.⁶⁴ The followers of Marudu carried his body to Kalayarkoil, buried it near the Tank of the Great Temple and erected a small tomb in his memory.

Marudu Pandyan, like many other patriots before him and after, failed in attaining his objective. He sacrificed his life as the price of his failure. The causes of his failure were not because of factors which were in his control. The Indian powers particularly the Marathas and the Nizam and the princes like those of the Carnatic, Travancore, Thanjavur and Mysore rallied to the cause of the enemy. The enemy had a disciplined and well equipped army and the control of the sea. Added to these, the English divided the rebel ranks and created dissensions among them.

However it cannot be denied that Marudu Pandyan was an enlightened patriot who set the ideal of one India before his people and saw the necessity of the destruction of British power in South India to forestall the fall of the rest of the subcontinent to alien sway. Despite his peasant background, he not only did correctly analyse the causes of the political malady but did evolve right

61. Madras Council, 1 Dec. 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 289, p. 7671.

62. T. B. Hurdies, 22-10-1801, letter to Board of Revenue, Proceedings, Vol. 301, p. 13004.

63. Military Despatches to England, 20 Oct. 1802, Vol. 33, p. 668.

64. J. Welsh, *Military Reminiscences*, Vol. 1, p. 130.

remedy. His military strategy required political unity, confederation of rebel forces, guerilla warfare and simultaneous insurrection throughout the country. The exalted nationalism that he cherished and the daring venture that he made and the martyrdom that he met with in pursuit of his vision make him the greatest of the patriots of India of the British period before the Nationalist Movement.

Our Exchanges

1. *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona.*
2. *Brahma Vidya, The Adyar Library Bulletin, Madras.*
3. *Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India, Delhi.*
4. *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, London.*
5. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London.*
6. *Folklore, Calcutta.*
7. *Indian Archives, Delhi.*
8. *Indian Review, Madras.*
9. *India Quarterly, New Delhi.*
10. *Indo Asian Culture, New Delhi.*
11. *Journal of the Bihar Research Society, Patna.*
12. *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Bombay.*
13. *Journal of the Ganganatha Jha Research Institute, Allahabad.*
14. *Journal of the Oriental Institute, Baroda.*
15. *Journal of United Provinces Historical Society, Lucknow.*
16. *Political Scientist, Ranchi.*
17. *Studies in Islam, New Delhi.*
18. *University of Birmingham Historical Journal, Birmingham.*
19. *University of Ceylon Review.*
20. *Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal, Hoshiarpur.*

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