



the Railway Budget (25-2-1925). Eventually, Pandit Motilalji's resolution for rejecting the Railway Budget was defeated by 66 votes against 41. Thus the Budget and its items were dealt with on their intrinsic merits. There was no question of "constant, continuous, uniform obstruction," as was originally foreshadowed. Pandit Motilal's motion to reject the travelling allowance of Executive Councillors was passed by 65 votes against 48, each Party voting for its own reasons. The Kohat outrages, (non) Indianization of the Army, Muddiman Report, Round Table Conference, repression—were all to the fore. A very queer situation arose in connection with a Bill in the Assembly to provide for appeals to the High Court in cases that came under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act. But the Bill had three other provisions relating to the suspension of the Habeas Corpus and the detention of accused persons in custody outside Bengal. The Swarajists and Independents wanted to support the first clause and reject the last three. This would mutilate the Bill so far as Government were concerned, and Lord Reading had to certify it after it was passed by the Council of State.

It is clear that by this time Das carved out a high position for himself in the Halls of the Congress. Moreover, just on the eve of the Belgaum Congress, a statement had been published that Das had divested himself of almost all his property—which he left as a legacy to the Nation for some charitable purpose. And this fact had raised Das miles high in the estimation of the public. In the meantime, the National Convention of Dr. Besant published the draft of a Commonwealth of India Bill. The Committee appointed at the Unity Conference was racking its brains to find a solution of the communal tangle and Lalaji published a questionnaire in February, 1925 on behalf of the Hindu Mahasabha. The Sub-Committee of the All-Parties' Conference held in Bombay the previous November, which was charged with the duty of preparing a Swaraj scheme did not succeed in producing anything presentable and adjourned its sittings *sine die* in March. Gandhi visited South India and Kerala in March and April, 1925. The Vaikom Satyagraha was at its height and Gandhi's presence helped to bring about a settlement. The campaign was undertaken to effect the removal of the prohibition against certain untouchables or unapproachables passing along certain streets in Vaikom. The Travancore Government had put up certain barricades and posted certain pickets to prevent the entry of Satyagrahis. Government were made to realise that this act of theirs was lending itself to the view that they were supporting the conservatism of the Hindus of Travancore with their own physical force. And when Government removed both barricades and pickets, the only enemy remaining was public opinion and the *point d'appui* for the Satyagraha disappeared for the time being. From the South, Gandhi was to visit Bengal. Das was then beginning to feel ill. Evening temperature was already causing anxiety. It was arranged that he should visit Europe for treatment.

At the same time, he was full of hope that he could effect a settlement with the British Government. Only a year previous to the time, when he was touring in South India, he had declared on the sands of the Madras Beach that Gandhi had 'bungled and mismanaged', referring to

the Gandhi-Reading negotiations on the eve of the Ahmedabad Congress. He further declared that the terms came to him in the Alipore Jail then. This psychology of 'success' is commonly met with in public workers who have organised big movements. Mrs. Besant was over-powered by it when Montagu visited the country in 1917—after she had convulsed the British Empire in India. Here was Das who had organised in Bengal the Chittagong strike of 1921, whose province organised an unprecedented boycott of the Prince, who captured the Legislative Councils of Bengal and made the formation of Ministries impossible and wrecked dyarchy. Why should not a settlement be effected?

That was the position at the time of the Faridpur (Bengal Provincial) Conference. His offer of co-operation on certain conditions was made at Faridpur under this psychology. While Gandhi believed that there was not 'the change of heart' that was necessary for a composure of prevailing unrest, Das believed there was. "I see signs of a real change of heart everywhere," said Das to a representative of the *Statesman*. "I see signs of reconciliation everywhere. The world is tired of conflicts and I think I see a real desire for construction and consolidation." The statement was made in Faridpur in the first week of May, 1925—and about the same time did Gandhi say to the same representative, "What, therefore, remains to me of non-co-operation is, as Mr. Das would put it, a matter of mental attitude. But it is an attitude that I personally prize because, claiming, as I do, to be a friend of the British, I want to tell them that I see no real trace yet, of any change of heart." Das said further, addressing the British statesmen, "You can have peace to-day on terms honourable both to you and to us." Gandhi had at this time declared Das to be his 'attorney' and always referred to the Swaraj Party as representing the Congress in the Councils. His self-obliteration was wonderful and at times went to the point of trying the patience, though not the loyalty, of his old-world orthodox adherents. At Faridpur, Das pronounced his terms of settlement. He declared violence was both immoral and inexpedient, and referring to Government's urge of co-operation by the Congress, Das said:—

"Provided some real responsibility is transferred to the people, there is no reason why we should not co-operate with the Government. But two things are necessary—first, there should be a real change of heart, secondly, Swaraj in the fullest sense, must be guaranteed to us at once, to come automatically in the near future. I have always maintained that we should make a large sacrifice in order to have the opportunity to begin our constructive work at once and I think you will realise that a few years are nothing in the history of a Nation provided the foundation of Swaraj is laid at once and there is real change of heart both in the rulers and in the subjects. You will tell me that 'change of heart' is a fine phrase and that some practical demonstration should be given of that change. I agree. But that demonstration must necessarily depend on the atmosphere created by any proposed settlement. An atmosphere of trust or distrust may be easily felt and in any matter of peaceful settlement a great deal more



depends upon the spirit behind the terms than the actual terms themselves.

"A few suggestions may be made having regard to what is nearest to the hearts of the people of Bengal—(1) General amnesty of all political prisoners, (2) a guarantee of the fullest recognition of our right to the establishment of Swaraj within the Commonwealth in the near future, and in the meantime till Swaraj comes, a sure and sufficient foundation of such Swaraj should be laid at once, (3) we on our part should give some sort of understanding that we shall not, by word, deed or gesture, encourage revolutionary propaganda and that we shall make every effort to put an end to such a movement."

It will be seen that the proposed settlement was linked with a National effort to wipe out anarchy; not that the Faridpur Provincial Conference had ever identified itself with revolutionary propaganda, but that a change of heart would transform the revolutionary into an apostle of real service to the people.

At this time Lord Reading was in England on a short leave, and this fact, coupled with Lord Birkenhead's exhortation to the Swarajists to co-operate and not to wreck, was largely responsible for Das's expectations. Moreover, Colonel Wedgwood and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald were taking interest at the time in bringing about some settlement in India. Gandhi in one of his brief but significant revelations happened to say, after Das's death, that Das had great faith in Lord Birkenhead and that Das believed that he would do great things for India. Das was a great lawyer and so was 'F. E.' as Birkenhead was known before he was raised to Peerage. As Mr. F. E. Smith, he was along with Lord Carson,—really Sir Edward Carson of those days, the great enemy of the Irish Free State before the settlement was effected. Das would, therefore, have naturally thought that a formidable character like 'F. E.' who was helpful to Ireland would be equally reasonable with India. Das was supposed to have within him some such ideas.

In his last letter to Pandit Motilal, which the latter referred to as "Das's last political will and testament," he wrote: "The most critical time in our history is coming. There must be solid work done at the end of the year and the beginning of the next; all our resources will be taxed, and here we are both of us ill. God knows what will happen." Shortly after, it pleased the gods in heaven to take away Das from our midst and from his residence 'Step Aside,' Darjeeling, on the 16th June 1925. Das's life constitutes by itself a chapter of Indian history. Speaking of the death of Das, Gandhi spoke at Khulna with feeling and asked: "What shall we do to perpetuate his memory! It is easy to shed tears, but no tears can help us or his nearest and dearest. Only if every one of us, Hindus, Muslims, Parsees and Christians, all who call themselves Indians, pledge ourselves to do the work in which he lived, moved and had his being, shall we have done something. We are all believers in God. We should know that the body is ever perishing. The soul is imperishable. The body that held Mr. Das has perished, but his soul will never perish. Not only the soul; even the name of him who had served and sacrificed so much will

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remain immortal and every one, young and old, who follows his example to ever so little an extent will help to perpetuate his memory. We have none of his intellect, but we can imitate the spirit in which he loved the Motherland." Let us quote Government's opinion at the other end: "Mr. Das had an unerring instinct for the weak points in an adversary's position, and a tenacious resolution in the execution of his own plans which raised him far above the level of the ablest of his lieutenants." Like Gandhi he was honoured by his opponents even while they fought him, and amongst the numberless tributes paid to his memory are many sincerely felt and frankly worded, by Europeans, including high officers of Government. The Secretary of State and the Viceroy were among those who sent messages of regret, and one of the first acts of the Legislative Assembly, when it met in August, was to give fitting expression to the loss which the Nation had suffered in the deaths of Mr. Das and another veteran, Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea who died on 6th of August, 1925.

Gandhi was ever generous, forgiving, appreciative and affectionate towards Das. He stayed out in Bengal and built a great memorial in his honour. He collected ten lacs of rupees and Das's house—148, Russa Road—was saved for the Nation and was converted into a hospital for women and children in accordance with his wishes expressed in his Trust Scheme announced before the Belgaum Congress. Gandhi further put forth all his efforts in order to place the Swarajists in positions of power, and plant the Swaraj Party firmly in Bengal. Thus did he strive to make Mr. J. M. Sen-Gupta, the leader of the Swaraj Party in the Council, Mayor of the Corporation of Calcutta and President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. The 'triple crown' that Das himself had been wearing was placed on Sen-Gupta's head.

While Gandhi was doing everything in his power to put the Swarajists at ease and even asked the 'waverers' to join and join at once the Swaraj Party, the response of the Swaraj Party to all these gestures was nothing commensurate with the spirit of self-abnegation shown by Gandhi. The general council of the Swaraj Party showed itself more and more hostile to the spinning franchise which had been conceded at Belgaum, and left it to the All-India Congress Committee, where the Swarajists had a majority, to scrap it if they chose. At the conclusion of the meeting of the Working Committee of the A.I.C.C. on the 15th July in Calcutta, it was understood that Gandhi sent a note to Pandit Motilal Nehru to the effect that since the Swarajists had a majority in the Congress, and since the Pandit was the President of the Swaraj Party, he should also assume the Presidentship of the Congress Working Committee. Gandhi made it clear that he did not like any longer to remain as the President of this body. The note created a sensation in the Swarajist circles. It was however finally decided that, for at least the rest of that year, Gandhi would continue to be the President of the A.I.C.C., but if the spinning franchise was dropped at the next meeting, he would resign and set up a separate spinning organisation. The Working Committee itself considered at some length the question of revision of the spinning franchise and ultimately decided to convene a meeting of the A.I.C.C. on the 1st of October to consider this question. In the meantime Gandhi did everything to sup-

port the Swaraj Party to the extent of giving his joint signature with Panditji to the resolutions of that Party, associating himself with the Party in threatening to obstruct in the Councils, in case certain conditions that were put forward were not agreed to. Those who were indignant with Gandhi over these happenings understood their meaning when they knew that he had offered his resignation. Things were developing rapidly. Soon after, the very resolution of the Congress of Belgaum and the pact between the two main wings of the Congress were to stand virtually annulled by one word of the mouth uttered by Gandhi. The spinning franchise must be cancelled and the Congress was to become a political body in answer to Lord Birkenhead's recent pronouncement. Slowly, then, Gandhi by a series of *obiter dicta* adopted Swarajists as his attorneys and political representatives, shortly after Das's demise and Lord Birkenhead's callous observations. Gandhi yielded more and more and, ultimately, so much more that he effaced himself and made a complete surrender. Gandhi wrote in August: "I must no longer stand in the way of the Congress being developed and guided by educated Indians rather than by one like myself who has thrown in his lot entirely with the masses, and who has fundamental differences with the mind of educated India as a body. I still want to act upon them but not leading the Congress. The best way in which I can help that activity is by removing myself out of the way, and by concentrating myself solely upon constructive work with the help of the Congress and in its name, and that too, only so far as educated Indians will permit me to do so." The fact is the Swarajists on the one hand denounced the principles of Gandhi and on the other demanded his leadership. They wanted his co-operation on their terms. His message is only one and that was growing stale, as Shrimati Sarojini put it at the time to many. About this time, Pandit Motilal had accepted a seat on the Sken Committee. Panditji's acceptance of the seat, being himself a Swarajist, greatly irritated some of his own followers. He should really have accepted this place only on the vote of a three-fourths majority of the members of the Assembly belonging to the Party. This was seriously objected to. The objection was not merely technical; it went deeper, it attacked the change of policy involved in such an acceptance, which was tantamount to positive co-operation. At the time it was said in reply that membership would afford rare opportunities of studying the Military problems of the country from inside, but the argument remained unconvincing to the critics.

It was shortly before the beginning of the Simla session of the Assembly (1925-1926) that Pandit Motilal Nehru had accepted this seat on the Indian Sandhurst Committee, popularly known as the Sken Committee. The history of the Sken Committee may shortly be told. For some years prior to 1925, a section of Indian opinion had been demanding the establishment of a Military College in India comparable with that at Sandhurst. The Military Budget of 1925 comprised nine lacs for Military education, and that account related chiefly to the Prince of Wales College at Dehra Dun and the King George's Military Schools, which were recently established at Jullunder and Jhelum in the Punjab. A resolution which was passed in the Delhi session of the Legislative Assembly in 1925 called upon the authorities to establish such an institution forthwith. The Gov-

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ernment of India, accordingly, appointed a Committee consisting mainly of Indian members, including Pandit Motilal Nehru, Mr. Jinnah and Mr. M. Ramachandra Rao, under the Presidency of Lieut. General Sir Andrew Skeen, Chief of the General Staff, to consider the problem of how suitable Indian candidates for the King's Commission can be obtained in larger numbers and how, when they are forthcoming, they can be trained most efficiently. That is to say, the Committee was asked to consider whether it is desirable and practicable to start a Military College in India then or at some later date, and if so, whether such a college should be self-contained or should be supplemented by further training in England. The Committee held a number of sittings in India, and in the Spring of 1926 a Sub-Committee of its members went to Europe to investigate the systems of education by which officers are at present produced in England, France, Canada and America.

Attention must now be drawn to a debate of real importance. The Muddiman Committee was a committee appointed in 1924 to examine the working of the Montford Reforms. There was a majority and a minority report. The former was of course the official report. Government were not prepared to accept even its recommendations. A motion was tabled in September, 1925, that it should accept the principle of the Report. What was the principle broadly? It was this,—that the machinery, wherever it was creaking, must be oiled, that the bearings must be greased, that the gear must be smoothened. Thus would it be possible to appoint Ministers without their salaries being voted at the Budgets, to carry on Government in spite of obstruction. Such things had been visualized in the Montford Reforms, only as events distantly possible, but now they were actualities of a near past. The Swaraj Party had fully realized these reactionary potentialities lying embedded in the Montford Scheme soon after entering the Assembly, and had tabled a resolution in February, 1924, as follows:—

“This Assembly recommends to the Governor-General-in-Council to take steps to have the Government of India Act revised with a view to establish full Responsible Government in India, and for the said purpose, (a) to summon at an early date a representative Round Table Conference to recommend, with due regard to the protection of the rights and interests of important minorities, a scheme of a Constitution for India; and (b) after dissolving the Central Legislature, to place the said scheme for approval before a newly elected Indian Legislature for its approval and submit the same to the British Parliament to be embodied in a Statute.”

It was as the result of this resolution that the Muddiman Committee was appointed and it sent up a majority and minority Report, which were considered on the 7th of September, 1925, by the Assembly in the form of a proposition moved by Sir Alexander Muddiman to which a long amendment was tabled by Pandit Motilal Nehru, the gist of which was that immediate steps be taken by His Majesty's Government (1) to make a declaration in Parliament embodying such fundamental changes in constitutional machinery and administration of India as would make the Govern-



ment of the country fully responsible; further, (2) a Round Table Conference or other suitable agency adequately representative of all Indian, European and Anglo-Indian interests was to be summoned to frame, with due regard to the interests of the minorities, a detailed scheme based on the above principle and to place the said scheme for approval before the Assembly, after which it would be submitted to the British Parliament to be embodied in a Statute. This amendment was, after two days' discussion, carried against the Government by 72 votes to 45. It will be thus seen that the 'painfully tense atmosphere' of February, 1924, gave place to the far friendlier spirit of September, 1925, and the exclusive demand of an R.T.C. in February, 1924, was relaxed in the demand of September, 1925, for an R.T.C. or other suitable agency.

Birkenhead had spoken of the Swaraj Party as the "most highly organized political party in India." This was gratifying to a degree. But Lord Birkenhead only recognized the party that had recognized his Constitution and its organ. The Swaraj Party had not only entered the Councils and taken seats but passed budgets and sat on select committees. It had declined a seat on the Muddiman Committee but accepted one on the Skeen Committee. Lord Birkenhead himself was not without hope, nor were Das and, later, Nehru without hope that some kind of settlement could be effected. Sir Basil Blackett spoke explicitly in the Assembly of Pandit Motilal's co-operation. "What else is Panditji doing," he asked, "in passing the Steel Protection Bill, in passing last year's budget, in separating the Railway Finance?" "What else is Mr. Patel doing," he added, "in presiding over this House?" And then Sir Basil profusely complimented Mr. A. Rangaswami Iyengar for the valuable services rendered by him on the Public Accounts Committee. The fact was that Government were sparing no efforts to cajole the Swaraj Party into some kind of co-operation.

Before we proceed to narrate the events of September, 1925, at Patna, we must note some of the under-currents amongst the thoughts and programmes of the Swarajists themselves. Gandhi's willingness to place the whole machinery of the Congress at the disposal of Motilalji was deeply appreciated by the Swarajist leader who wrote to him:—"Lord Birkenhead seems to have spurned the honourable co-operation offered by Deshbandhu and to have made it clear that, in our struggle for freedom, we have still to face many unnecessary obstacles and many ill-informed opponents. Our plain duty at this stage is, therefore, to go ahead along lines chalked out for us and prepare the ground for an effective challenge to irresponsible and insolent authority." On July 25th, Lalaji wrote to the Press: "What is needed now is the chalking out of a middle course. We are not ready to co-operate, we must do what is best, practical and possible under the circumstances. For that, we require vigorous thinking, thorough discussion and honest consultation amongst all parties and determination to do what is decided upon." In Bengal, the hold of the Swarajists, who had made the acceptance of Ministries impossible, was fast weakening, an Independent having defeated a Swarajist candidate for the Presidency of the Bengal Council by 6 votes. Things were doubtful

enough even at the last test of strength when Das was carried on a stretcher to the Council Chamber. Dr. A. Suhrawardy resigned from the Swaraj Party. He had seen the Governor of Bengal and Gandhi took strong objection to this saying, first, that it was a most improper act on his part, and secondly that he had thereby "sold his country." On hearing this, the Doctor resigned, saying, "I deem political *harakiri* more honourable than living under the new tyranny." The day after the report of Dr. Suhrawardy's interview appeared in the Press, Gandhi gave a full statement of his attitude to a representative of an Anglo-Indian newspaper in Calcutta and said: "I cannot, therefore, help saying that it is a healthy rule to prohibit members of the Swaraj Party from meeting or seeing officials without the permission of the Party." On the 22nd August, Vitthalbhai was elected as the first non-official President of the Assembly.

It was at this juncture that the A.I.C.C. met at Patna on the 21st September, 1925. When we remember that it was at Patna in 1934 (May) that Civil Disobedience was withdrawn, this meeting of 1925 does not fail to strike us as particularly interesting, because at this meeting three outstanding changes were effected in the position of the Congress. Khaddar was divested of all political significance. Yarn franchise only became an alternative to four-anna membership of the Congress which was once again restored, and finally, political work was made over to the Swaraj Party. The Party was no longer a wing of the Congress,—a protestant wing,—a minority receiving concessions or a bare majority anxious to take the rest with it. It was the Congress itself. Thereafter elections would be run not by the Swaraj Party but by the Congress. The members of the Assembly of this persuasion would be not the 'Swarajists', any longer, but the Congress members in the Councils. The Yarn franchise was to be no longer the sole franchise, not because the response was inadequate,—for there were 10,000 members on the rolls,—but because the Swaraj Party did not like it. Gandhi made up his mind to meet the Swarajists more than half way, as a reply to Lords Birkenhead and Reading. When the Seraj-ganj resolution on Gopinath Saha in 1924 jeopardised the position of Das and his liberty, and was followed up by the Bengal Ordinance Act, Gandhi decided to stand by Das. This year Das passed away and Birkenhead's bluster was in the air. Gandhi made up his mind to wind up the remnants of N.C.O. and render all assistance to the Council front. He had no answer to give to the Secretary of State and, therefore, clothed the Council Party with the full authority of the Congress to deal with the political situation. Thus was the country taken through a series of sudden and startling changes; the latter half (clause B) of the Patna resolution, making over the political work to the Swaraj Party, was not before the informal sitting of the A.I.C.C. on the 21st September, but was sprung upon the Working Committee itself on the morning of the 22nd September, and considered by it for a bare five minutes. Here is clause B of the resolution passed at Patna:—

"Whereas the Congress in the 39th session held at Belgaum endorsed an agreement entered into between Mahatma Gandhi on the one hand and Deshbandhu C. R. Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru acting on behalf of the Swaraj Party on the other, whereby the Congress



activity was restricted to the constructive programme mentioned therein and it was provided *inter alia* that the work in connection with the Central and Provincial Legislatures should be carried on by the Swaraj Party on behalf of the Congress organisation, and that for such work the Swaraj Party should make its own rules and administer its own funds; and whereas subsequent events have shown that this restriction should not continue under the altered circumstances that face the country and that the Congress should henceforth be a predominantly political body;

"It is resolved that the Congress do now take up and carry on all such political work as may be necessary in the interests of the country, and for this purpose do employ the whole of the machinery and funds of the Congress, save and except such funds and assets as are specially earmarked and belong to the All-India Khaddar Board and Provincial Khaddar Boards, which shall be handed over with all existing financial obligations to the All-India Spinners' Association started by Mahatma Gandhi as an integral part of the Congress organisation, but with independent existence and full powers to administer these and other funds for the fulfilment of its object.

"Provided that the work in connection with the Indian and Provincial Legislatures shall be carried on in accordance with the Policy and Programme laid down by the Swaraj Party under the constitution framed by the Party and the rules made thereunder, subject to such modifications made by the Congress as may be found necessary from time to time for the purpose of carrying out the said Policy."

When an amendment was tabled to the main resolution handing over the Congress to the Council Party, to the effect that clause B be replaced by a clause saying "Provided that the work in the Indian and Provincial Legislatures shall be carried on in accordance with such policy and programme laid down by the Congress as may be found necessary from time to time for the purpose," instead of allowing the Council work to be done with the Swaraj Party as an intermediary, the very thought of an amendment to a resolution agreed upon, and a remark made in moving it that the Swaraj Party had 'betrayed its trust,' set Panditji ablaze and there was a general conflagration in the House. Gandhi assuaged the feelings by asking the mover of the amendment not to proceed with his diatribe against the Swaraj Party at such a juncture.

In the mood in which we found Gandhi at the time, all that Pandit Motilal had to do was to ask and it was given forthwith, and given wholesale. Gandhi as President of the A.I.C.C. would not allow the House even to examine the record of the Swaraj Party in the Assembly,—that would disturb the harmony of the situation and deprive the gift of its grace as well as its value. When Rajendra Babu asked Gandhi whether there was a pact between him, and Nehru and Das, Gandhi replied in the negative and added that with him, personally, *it was a point of honour to concede what the other side demanded.* It was a point of honour too with his following to concede to Gandhi what he demanded of them, for they trusted his judgment as the instinctive judgment of a pure-hearted person in all times of doubt or difficulty.

The question at and after Patna was whether it was a partition or partnership that the Patna decisions had brought about. The Congress changes had been kaleidoscopic in character. Each shift of the panes and pieces in the tube had brought about during the previous two years new dispositions, a new play of colours, new scenes and sights. At Juhu, affairs were amorphous. When we met at Ahmedabad in June, 1924, Gandhi was still trying to hold on to the fundamentals of his position. He was in a mood to assert himself. He had tightened the rigour of khaddar and compelled the Executive to spin everywhere. The threats of the bureaucracy against Das, following the Serajganj resolutions, impelled him to close up the ranks of the Congress. When an inch was given, usually an ell would be taken. So was it here. The equities of Belgaum were set at nought at Patna, for at Patna, the Council wing took the whole prestige of the Congress and took away the spinning franchise as well. It was, therefore, a partition of the Congress between the apostles of the Councils and those of khaddar. Whatever show of unity there was externally, people could not fail to perceive the discontent of the latter wing. For one thing, the demand of the Swaraj Party "for a Round Table Conference or *other suitable agency*" was considered inadequate. People began to feel that the Attorney went beyond or below the instructions of the Principal, but Gandhi would not countenance such arithmetical calculations. When he gives, he gives unreservedly, wholly, and without regret in himself; or generating regret in his recipient. That is what Bhishma of old prescribed in respect of all gifts. Accordingly, at Cawnpore, we had only to register what at Patna he had decreed.

The Cawnpore Congress (1925) was ahead. We are in the month of October. Shrimati Sarojini Devi was elected President according to the Constitution. Gandhi had said at Belgaum that he was stepping in where really Shrimati Sarojini should have been. Early in October the President-elect published her message for the new year:—

"Mine, as becomes a woman, is a most modest, domestic programme merely to restore to India her true position as the supreme mistress in her own home, the sole guardian of her own vast resources, and the sole dispenser of her own hospitality. As a loyal daughter of Bharata Mata, therefore, it will be my lovely though difficult task, through the coming year, to set my mother's house in order, to reconcile the tragic quarrels that threaten the integrity of her old joint-family life of diverse communities and creeds, and to find an adequate place and purpose and recognition alike for the lowest and the mightiest of her children, and foster-children, the guests and the strangers within her gates."

That was a fine ideal, especially for a lady to lay down. What should the no-changers do to bring about such a harmony? Gandhi exhorted them to fall in with the Patna resolution or to resign from the Congress. They had to hibernate or extinguish themselves. Gandhi's position was that he recanted his programme for the time being, while reiterating his principles.



The people are there, the mass that may develop momentum at any time as once they did, but they can develop that momentum only on the impact of a dynamic force, a living idea, a convulsing programme which must be carried to them by a body of 'educated' people. But these have failed. While, therefore, the material remained, the momentum has disappeared. The sparks from the centre would not explode the air in the chamber.

The passage for the jet of petrol is occluded somewhere, and in the absence of petrol, more air and electricity cannot cause the first explosion that starts the motor. When a motor does not start by the ordinary process, an ingenious method resorted to is to push it from behind. Within a few yards, the engine begins to work until the next halt necessitates a repetition of the process. Even so, when the dynamic force of Civil Disobedience was for the time being held in suspense, all sorts of devices began to push themselves to the fore. The capture of Local Bodies became more and more attractive. Though the elders of the Congress might have enough legitimate preoccupations and public activities, it was a problem how to divert the energies and the enthusiasm of the younger folks. With the wine of elections before them, with the consciousness and confidence of success in their own minds and hearts, they could not be easily restrained. And too, the Mayoralty of Calcutta held with such lustre by Das and later by Sen-Gupta was captivating to a degree. Already four big corporations were captured by Congressmen. Vallabhbhai J. Patel had for sometime been President of the Ahmedabad Municipality and was the only person who would occupy that position till 1928. Vitthalbhai was adorning the Mayoralty of Bombay, and when interviewed on the subject as to how he would discharge his duties if he became the President of the Assembly, said in reply, with his wonted wink in the eye and mischievous smile on the lips, "just as I have done the duties of the President of the Bombay Corporation." Jawaharlal had become the President of the Allahabad Municipality but did not take long to discover that he was a round man in a square hole, and that Local Bodies were not for Congressmen. Babu Rajendra Prasad became Chairman of the Patna Municipality and was not over pleased with his experiences and cleared out after about 15 months. But the alphabet of life, like that of letters, should be learnt by every one and will not be taken on trust. Most people would learn by their own experience, not by others.' And the lessons of Local Bodies must be learnt by Madras too. It was at this time, i.e., about May, 1925, that the Madras Congress Committee began to take interest in the capture of seats in the Madras Corporation, and after an arduous campaign in which neither energy nor expense was spared, it succeeded in capturing 7 seats out of 10. The object of one and all in thus capturing Local Bodies, was to get power with which to push the constructive programme through those bodies. It was a laudable idea and, throughout the campaign, we had the advantage of conceiving our ideas and planning their execution much in advance of Governmental preparations to resist our plans or rebut our ideas. The wheels of Government grind slow, but grind steady. Within a short time Government made it impossible for the Local Bodies to engage the services, as teachers or otherwise, of those who had gone to jail, to buy khaddar, to teach Hindi, to introduce the charkha into schools, to give

addresses of welcome to national leaders or to raise the national flag over the corporation schools or offices. Anyway, there was reason for interest in Local Bodies, and the same reason brought out Mr. Srinivasa Iyengar in Madras from his comparative quiet into the *maelstrom* of politics. He assumed command in the city, spent lavishly out of his purse, being never a niggard in public or private life, and in a moment installed himself as the head of the Congress Party. New programmes bring new leaders, and must bring them, when old leaders cannot trim their sails to the new winds or disappear altogether from the winds and the boat alike.

Altogether, the year 1925 was a stormy year. When from this distance of time we survey the incidents and summarise the history, we cannot fail to be impressed by the conflicts that arose between party and party in the Congress, and between section and section in a party. If even the no-changers with their residual legacy of khaddar, removal of untouchability and communal unity, could present schisms and fissions, it is no wonder that the pro-changers with a positively new programme, a dynamic programme as it was also believed to be, exhibited differences, too, among themselves. The revolt against the tenets of the Swaraj Party took origin in C. P. and Maharashtra, which were the worthy colleagues of Bengal, and which had kept pace with Bengal only so long as the great Deshbandhu was alive. Deshbandhu's was not the temper to 'stand any non-sense'; he would put it down with a heavy hand. He who had wrung concessions from Gandhi would not readily yield to rebels or renegades in his party. But the moment he passed away, unexpected happenings took place in Maharashtra. Mr. Tambe, the Swarajist President of the C. P. Council, accepted an Executive Councillorship under the C. P. Government. This was the subject of fierce warfare between the leaders in C. P. and Berar, in Maharashtra and Bombay. Pandit Motilal resented Tambe's conduct and the extenuation of it by men like Kelkar and Jayakar, and threatened to take disciplinary action against these two offenders apparently for being "accessories after the event." They in turn wanted the whole Swaraj Party of Bombay to repeat their sentiments. Kelkar's slogan was "Back to Amritsar: Back to the Lokamanya." Pandit Motilal Nehru was equally unbending. Speaking at Nagpur in November, 1925, he declared that Mr. Tambe's acceptance of office was not an isolated act but the culmination of a series of attempts to take office, commencing with the intrigue to form a Ministry. The retort came at once that Panditji himself showed the way by accepting membership of the Skeen Committee. Of course, the two were quite different things. When the Swarajists held a conference in C.P., animated and heated discussions took place between Abhyankar and Khare on one side and Dr. Moonje on the other. The latter was suspected to be encouraging the acceptance of Ministries. Mr. E. Raghavendra Rao and Mr. B. G. Khaparde were for acceptance. Dr. Moonje vehemently denied the charge and was confronted with a certain letter, after which he admitted that, personally, he was for acceptance but he was loyal to the Party to which he belonged and to Pandit Motilalji, its leader.

Mr. N. C. Kelkar wrote to the Press, criticising the rigid discipline of the Swaraj Party which gave no play to the aspirations of the different

sections of its members. He traced the steady deviation of the Swaraj Party away from its original programme of 'consistent and uniform obstruction' in the Central Legislature, and asked whether it would not be logical at the present stage to allow the acceptance of office. "There was a time," he said, "when in the Assembly we could make no constructive proposal, say, a motion even to refer a Bill to a select committee. Then came a time when we were allowed to make such motions, but not to take a seat on any of the committees. Then came a time when we could accept only elective seats on committees. And then came a time when we could accept nominated seats on committees under a special dispensation of executive authority. Now I grant that all these developments were natural and were symptoms of a definite new policy, that is to say, a policy of revolt from hidebound obstruction." On the 1st November, the Executive of the All-India Swaraj Party met at Nagpur and strongly condemned the action of Mr. Sreepad Balwant Tambe as being a flagrant breach of discipline and treachery to the Party. Now we come to Bombay where Motilalji hastened from Nagpur to crush the revolt of Jayakar and Kelkar. They had raised the cry of Responsive Co-operation already. Both these scholar-politicians, so well-known in India for their erudition and keen political sense, resigned their seats on the Executive of the All-India Swaraj Party and issued, in that connection, the following statement:—

"We find that Pandit Motilal is violating the understanding arrived at at Nagpur, by openly preaching a crusade against Responsive Co-operation while insisting on our remaining silent. We wish to exercise our right to reply to his criticisms which are causing great misunderstanding and prejudice in the public mind. We recognize the desirability of our ceasing to be members of the Swaraj Party Executive Council while we reply to the Pandit's criticism. We are, therefore, tendering our resignation of our membership of the Council so as not to embarrass our colleagues thereon, and in order to be able to exercise our right of reply to the Pandit with freedom and frankness."

That was not all. Moonje, Jayakar and Kelkar subsequently resigned their membership of the Legislature, to which they had been elected on the Swarajist ticket.

Thus they disinfected themselves of Swarajist taint,—body, soul and clothing. Panditji, replying on the 9th November, said that 'the Swaraj Party stood for its own programme which included co-operation, Non-co-operation, construction, destruction, as occasion and national interests demanded.' Jayakar resented the Pandit's 'hectoring tone.' In the end, on the 4th of December, it was agreed that "all public controversy on the question of the Swarajist Party's policy should cease until the Congress meets."

One other event of 1925 must be referred to here. It is not directly connected with the Congress. But Government themselves attributed the rebellion in the Gudem Agency,—Godavari and Vizagapatam Districts of Andhra,—under the leadership of Citarama Raju, to the subversive influ-

ence of the Civil Disobedience movement. They had made a similar mistake in regard to the Moplah rebellion. The Gudern rebellion also started some time in 1922,—but later than the Moplah revolt,—but had nothing of the communal tension which characterised its predecessor. Here too, semi-military operations were necessitated and not much progress had been made by the end of the year 1923. In 1924, the Assam Rifles were sent for, consisting of about 250 officers and other ranks. The rebellion was ultimately put down after nearly three years of Guerilla warfare between the mighty and puissant forces of the British Government and Sitarama Raju with a following of two hundred. But the saddest event was the shooting of Raju, on his alleged attempt to flee from arrest. The Government were challenged on many occasions to publish details and to produce the inquest report, but they would not accept the challenge.

Now we pass on to the Cawnpore Congress. There were difficulties ahead. The Cawnpore Session was to confirm what Patna had decreed. It was a moot point even at Patna whether such cataclysmal changes as Patna had affected in franchise,—contrary to Belgaum's decree,—in partition of properties, and in division of functions could be done by an All-India Congress Committee. Then there was the larger question whether the Congress should endorse the demand of the Swaraj Party in the Assembly which was embodied in their amendment to the resolution on the Muddiman Report. All these complex questions were before the session at Cawnpore presided over by the Poetess of India. A novel feature of the Congress was the handing over of the charge by Gandhi, the outgoing President, to Sarojini Devi, the incoming one. Gandhi spoke for but five minutes and declared that on reviewing his five years' work, he had not one item to retrace or one statement to take back. The more he saw life, he said, the more he was convinced that he was right in every step he had taken. "To-day I would commence Civil Disobedience," he added, "if I thought that the fire and fervour are there in the people. But alas! they are not. The South African question is considered by many to be a suitable question, but I shall be overpowered by numbers that I may not care for." Sarojini Devi took charge with a few choice words. Her Presidential Address was perhaps the shortest address delivered from the Congress rostrum, while of course it was the sweetest ever delivered. She emphasised unity,—unity between the parties and unity between India and the Indians abroad. She referred to the National Demand as put forth from the Assembly, and pleaded for the obliteration of fear. "In the battle for liberty fear is the one unforgivable treachery, and despair the one unforgivable sin." Her Address, therefore, was an expression of courage and hope. With this gentle hand to exercise discipline as well as forbearance, the Cawnpore Congress had an easy time, except for certain labour demonstrations and small troubles from certain delegates which were brought under control by sturdier men like Jawaharlal.

The Cawnpore Congress naturally began with the expression of deep sorrow over the deaths of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea, Dr. Sir Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar and other leaders. There was a South African Deputation in India at the time to which the Congress extended its welcome, and the Congress declared the Arca-Reser-

ation and Immigration Registration (Further Provision) Bill to be a breach of the Smuts-Gandhi Agreement of 1914, and urged an arbitration to settle the interpretation of the latter. The Congress endorsed the idea of the R.T.C. to settle the question and urged that the Imperial Government should withhold its assent to the Bill if passed. The Bengal Ordinance Act and the Gurudwara prisoners were the subjects of suitable resolutions, and the Expulsion of Non-Burman Offenders Bill, and Tax on Sea-Passengers Bill of Burma were regarded as new attacks on the liberty of the citizen. Then came the resolution of the Congress dealing with franchise, which confirmed Part B. of the resolution of Patna dated 22-9-'25 calling upon the Congress to take up such political work as was necessary in the interests of the country, and for this purpose employ the whole of the machinery and funds of the Congress except those made over to the A.I.S.A. The Congress of course reiterated its faith in C.D. and urged that self-reliance should be the guiding principle in carrying on all political work. Then the Congress adopted a detailed programme:

(i) The work in the country shall be directed to the education of the people in their political rights and training them to acquire the necessary strength and power of resistance to win those rights by carrying out the constructive programme of the Congress, with special reference to popularising the spinning wheel and khaddar, promoting inter-communal unity, the removal of untouchability, ameliorating the conditions of the suppressed classes and the removal of the drink and drug evil, and shall include the capture of Local Bodies, the organisation of villages, the promotion of education on National lines, the organisation of Labour, both industrial and agricultural, the adjustment of relations between employers and workmen and between landlords and tenants, and the general advancement of the national, economical, industrial and commercial interests of the country.

(ii) The work outside the country shall be directed to the dissemination of accurate information in foreign countries.

(iii) The Congress adopts on behalf of the country the terms of the settlement offered to the Government by the Independent and Swaraj Parties of the Assembly by the resolution passed on the 18th February, 1924, and having regard to the fact that the Government have so far not made any response to the said offer, resolves that the following action shall be taken:

1. The Swaraj Party in the Assembly shall, at the earliest opportunity, invite the Government to give their final decision on the said terms, and in case no decision is announced before the end of February, or the decision announced is held not to be satisfactory by a Special Committee consisting of the Working Committee of the Congress and such other members as may be appointed by the All-India Congress Committee, the Party shall, by adopting the proper procedure, intimate to the Government on the floor of the House that the Party will no longer continue to remain and work in the present Legislatures as heretofore. The Swarajist members of the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State, shall vote for the rejection of the Finance Bill and, immediately after, leave their seats. The Swarajist

members of such Provincial Councils as may be in session at the time shall also leave their seats and all members of such Councils as are not in session at the time shall not attend further meetings of the said Councils and shall likewise report themselves to the Special Committee.

2. No member of the Swaraj Party in the Council of State, in the Legislative Assembly, or in any of the Provincial Councils shall thereafter attend any meeting of any of the said Legislatures, or any of their Committees, except for the purpose of preventing his seat from being declared vacant and of throwing out the Provincial Budget or other measure involving fresh taxation.

Provided that, prior to their being called upon to leave their seats, it shall be open to Swarajist members of the various Legislatures to engage themselves in such activities in their Legislatures as are permissible to them under the existing rules of the Party.

Provided also that it shall be open to the Special Committee to allow the Swarajist members of any Legislature to attend the said Legislature when such attendance is in its opinion essential for some special or unforeseen purpose.

3. The Special Committee shall, immediately on receipt of the reports mentioned in sub-clause (i), call a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee to frame a programme of work which shall be carried out by the Congress and Swaraj Party organisation in co-operation with each other throughout the country.

4. The said programme of work shall include selected heads of the general work mentioned in clauses I and II above, as also the education of the electorates in the policy herein laid down, and shall indicate the lines on which the next general election is to be run by and in the name of the Congress and state clearly the issues on which Congressmen shall seek election.

Provided that the policy of non-acceptance of offices in the gift of the Government shall continue to be followed until, in the opinion of the Congress, a satisfactory response to the terms of settlement aforesaid is made by the Government.

5. This Congress hereby authorises the Executive of the several Provincial Congress Committees to select candidates for the Provincial Legislative Councils and the Indian Legislative Assembly in their provincial areas for the general elections next year as early as possible.

6. In the event of the final decision of the Government on the terms of settlement offered in the resolution of the Assembly aforesaid being found satisfactory and acceptable by the aforesaid Special Committee, a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee shall forthwith be held to confirm or reject the decision of the Special Committee and to determine the future course of action.

7. Until the Swarajists leave the Legislatures as herein provided, the Constitution of the Swaraj Party and the rules made thereunder shall be followed in the Legislatures, subject to such changes as may be made by the Congress or the All-India Congress Committee from time to time.



8. For the purposes of starting the work referred to in Sub-clauses (3) and (4), the All-India Congress Committee shall allot such funds as it may consider sufficient for the initial expenses of the necessary propaganda in this behalf, but any further funds required for the said purpose shall be raised by the Working Committee or under its directions by contributions from the public."

It was not without some bickering that the main resolution of Cawnpore was passed. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, whose very fight against Non-co-operation from inside the Congress endeared him to friends and opponents alike, moved an amendment which was seconded by Mr. Jayakar to the effect:

"That the work in the Legislatures shall be so carried on as to utilize them to the best possible advantage for the early establishment of full Responsible Government, co-operation being resorted to when it may be necessary to advance the National cause, and obstruction when that may be necessary for the advancement of the same cause."

It was while seconding that Jayakar announced his own and Kelkar's and Moonje's resignations from the Legislatures. In the course of the discussion, Motilalji was fiercely attacked for accepting a membership of the Indian Sandhurst or Skeen Committee. "The Assembly," he said, "had asked for an Indian Sandhurst and the Government had said, 'show the way.' What they wanted was negotiation to show the Government the way to meet their demands, and if in the same way, the Government asked them to show the way to reforms, they would certainly co-operate."

Finally, Hindustani was prescribed as the language in which the proceedings of the Congress and the A.I.C.C. should ordinarily be conducted, and the A.I.C.C. was authorised to open a Foreign Department under it to look after the interests of the Indians abroad. The next Congress was to meet in Assam. Dr. M. A. Ansari and Syts. A. Rangaswami Iyengar and K. Santanam were appointed Secretaries. Shortly after the Cawnpore Congress, Mr. B. G. Horniman returned to India in the 2nd week of January, 1926.

One pleasant feature of the Cawnpore Congress was the presence of the Rev. J. H. Holmes of America, dressed in American clothes, but wearing a Gandhi cap. He rose in the midst of cheers and said:

"Yesterday, I heard Dr. Abdur Rahman claiming Gandhiji as a South African. May I not claim him today for the whole world? May I not say that the Society of Friends which I represent regard him with the same reverence and believe in his work as you do? I ought to say that we have gone very far wrong in our Western Civilization. We have gone too far in the pursuit of wealth and power. It is a deep evil in our whole Western Civilization. Our love of wealth has resulted in its concentration, our longing for power has brought on war after war and will likely plunge us in further wars until civilization is destroyed. So we gladly turn to you who are indicating another and better way, and we hope that while keeping the good things

in nature and inventions, we should follow the brotherly spirit which is represented by the great prophet among you."

Before closing the year, we must make reference to the unfortunate Hindu-Muslim riots which occurred from time to time throughout 1925, and, as we shall see later, 1926 also. Speaking of Hindu-Muslim unity Gandhi said, addressing a meeting at Mirzapore Park in Calcutta on May 1st:

"I have admitted my incompetence. I have admitted that I have been found wanting as a physician prescribing a cure for this malady. I do not find that either Hindus or Muslims are ready to accept my cure, and therefore I simply nowadays confine myself to a passing mention of this problem and content myself by saying that some day or other we Hindus and Muslims will have to come together, if we want the deliverance of our country. And if it is to be our lot that, before we can come together, we must shed one another's blood, then I say, the sooner we do so, the better it is for us. If we propose to break one another's head, let us do so in a manly way. Let us not then shed crocodile tears, let us not ask for sympathy from any quarter, if you do not propose to give any quarter."

There was tension throughout July, 1925, the principal places affected being Delhi, Calcutta and Allahabad. Another riot took place during the Bakr Id celebrations at Humnabad in the Nizam's Dominions, about 40 miles from Gulbarga where like riots had occurred the previous year. Before closing the year 1925, we have also to refer to the Sikh question which received a sort of quietus in the year 1925. A Gurudwara Bill was introduced and passed, and it was stated by Sir Malcolm Hailey that the Gurudwara prisoners would be released if they signed a condition accepting the Act and undertaking not to engage themselves in campaigns similar to previous ones. This was deeply resented by many. But in course of time feelings were assuaged. Many prisoners gave the undertaking to abide by the Act. Even the G.S.P.C. was split on the question. While most prisoners were released, a few remained in jails to serve out their terms.



CHAPTER VII

THE COUNCIL FRONT (1926)

The year opened somewhat inauspiciously for the Council programme. The charm of novelty of the year 1923 had worn off.

A perpetual fight for the sake of fight was somewhat tiresome and signs of fatigue as well as reaction were visible early in the year.

The cult of Responsive Co-operation was indeed definitely in the air by the end of 1925. Before the opening of the Assembly on January 20th 1926, the Bombay Council of the Swaraj Party definitely decided to extend its full support to Responsive Co-operation in their propaganda.

Let us turn once again to the activities of the Swaraj Party. Pandit Motilal Nehru had crossed the threshold of the Viceregal Lodge in the 2nd week of January (1926) with, of course, the permission of the Executive of the Party. With him were five other leaders including Lalaji, and the purpose of the visit was to discuss the South African question. Though this news raised hopes for a time, it was soon discovered that there was no ray of light brightening the clouds that began to lower on the skies. What really had kindled hope in the public breast for a time was the exceedingly conciliatory speech made by Lord Reading in opening the Assembly on the 20th January, 1926, and an extract he gave from Birkenhead's speech of July 7th, 1925: "We desire and request good will; nor shall we be niggardly bargainers if we met with that generous friendship which is near and dear to our hearts." In the month of March, the A.I.C.C. met on the 6th and 7th at Raisina, Delhi, and confirmed the Cawnpore decision. Delhi declared once again in favour of "determined resistance and obstruction to every activity, Governmental or other, that may impede the Nation's progress towards Swaraj. In particular, Congressmen in the Legislatures shall refuse to accept offices in the gift of the Government, until, in the opinion of the Congress, a satisfactory response is made by the Government." It is necessary, while we are on the subject of the A.I.C.C., to state that the Working Committee which met on March 5, voted Rs. 2,000 to the Hindustani Seva Dal and Rs. 5,000 for foreign propaganda. The Dal was the body of volunteers organised under the resolution of the Co-canada Congress. It had held two annual sessions—one under Maulana Shaukat Ali's Presidentship at Belgaum, and the second under Mr. T. C. Goswami's at Cawnpore. Foreign propaganda, hitherto only talked of, became a subject of practical importance, and we shall have occasion to trace the development of both these as years roll by. The departure of Jawaharlal Nehru for Switzerland about the time for the treatment of his wife, Kamala Nehru, as well as the expected departure of Pandit Motilal to England for the sittings of the Skeen Committee, must doubtless have given a fillip to this question of foreign propaganda which had hitherto been only in a moribund stage. In the Assembly, when the Budget was

taken up, Pandit Motilal announced that he and his supporters would abstain from a division. The public galleries were crowded with visitors eager to witness the Swarajists' withdrawal which was widely known beforehand. Pandit Motilal showed how Government had spurned Deshbandhu Das's terms for honourable co-operation. He warned the Government that, unless it took great care, it would find the whole country honey-combed with secret societies. With these words, he walked out of the Chamber accompanied by all the members of his party.

The walk-out created a little incident which may be briefly described. President Patel referred to the walk-out and declared that, as the strongest Party had vacated the Chamber, the Assembly ceased to retain the representative character required by the Government of India Act. It was, therefore, for Government to consider whether the Assembly should continue to function. He asked Government not to introduce any controversial legislation as, otherwise, he might be forced to use the extraordinary powers accorded under the Act of adjourning the House *sine die*. The next day, he gracefully took back these words and, in particular, he said: "I might add further that I felt on reflection that the Chair should not have made reference to its own powers or have used language which might perhaps be construed as a threat to the Government, but should have awaited further developments before deciding any course of action." This relieved the feelings of the Government.

The stone that began to glide down the hill of Non-co-operation from the heights of Gaya, nearly reached the bottom at Sabarmati early in 1926. We have seen how the Responsivists came near being absorbed into the fold of the Independents and Nationalists. Accordingly, they had a conference with the leaders of other parties on the 3rd April in Bombay, and the result was the formation of an 'Indian National Party' to prepare for and accelerate the establishment of Swaraj of the Dominion type, by all peaceful and legitimate means (excluding Mass Disobedience and non-payment of taxes) with liberty to resort inside the Legislature to Responsive Co-operation. Pandit Motilal regarded the formation of the new Nationalist Party as a challenge to the Swarajists and described it as a "conglomerate in the first stage of geological formation." After some negotiations, it was decided to hold a meeting of the two wings of the Swaraj Party at Sabarmati on April 21st, to see if reunion were possible. Amongst others present at the meeting were Sarojini Devi, Lala Lajpat Rai, Syts. Kelkar, Jayakar and Aney, and Dr. Moonje. Subject to the confirmation of the A.I.C.C., it was agreed amongst the signatories to the agreement arrived at at Sabarmati, that "the response made by Government to the Swarajist Demand of February, 1924 in the Assembly should be considered satisfactory if, in the Provinces, the power, responsibility and initiative necessary for the effective discharge of their duties are secured to Ministers." The Congress members in the Legislative Councils of the Provinces were to decide the question of sufficiency of such power, but their decision was to be "subject to confirmation by a Committee consisting of Pandit Motilal Nehru and Mr. M. R. Jayakar." "The ink on the Pact was, however, barely dry," says 'India, 1925-26,' "when Mr. Prakasam, President of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee ex-



pressed dissent and said that the position of the Congress had been compromised even more at Sabarmati than at Cawnpore." Numerous other prominent Congressmen expressed dissatisfaction likewise. It was generally thought, though for a while, that Swarajists would soon 'walk in' and form Ministries, but Panditji cleared the atmosphere by declaring that three conditions had to be satisfied before Office could be accepted, namely,

1. that the Ministers should be made fully responsible to the Legislature, free from all control of Government;
2. that an adequate proportion of the revenues be allotted for the development of 'nation-building' departments;
3. and that Ministers be given full control of the Services in the transferred departments.

Things were once more thrown into the melting pot. Jayakar characterised the draft placed before the Committee as a travesty of the Pact and a complete repudiation of the terms of the same, under the guise and in the name of clearing doubts and differences about the interpretation of the Pact. From this moment, the relations between the Swarajists and the Responsivists became more and more strained. The Sabarmati Pact, however, was yet to be disposed of by the A.I.C.C. which met on the 5th May at Ahmedabad. At this meeting, Pandit Motilal announced that, owing to irreconcilable differences between the signatories of the Pact regarding the interpretation of its terms, the negotiations that he had, for the past few days, been carrying on with the Responsivists had broken down and the Pact, therefore, had fallen through and was non-existent. A letter from the Responsivists was read which confirmed, in the main, Motilalji's statement. That Mr. S. Srinivasa Iyengar should have moved a vote of thanks to Panditji at this meeting was significant. The fact was that South India was against the Sabarmati Pact. Motilalji was not perhaps quite wise in not having consulted them from the outset. Very often in such matters, the confidence that you can command from others is in proportion to the confidence you give to them, and when the latter is not forthcoming, the former is withheld. At this meeting, Pandit Motilal proposed a Committee to go into and report on Dr. Besant's Commonwealth of India Bill but this was turned down. When Sir Moropant Joshi, who attended the meeting on behalf of the Responsivists, thanked the President for the invitation and urged that the Sabarmati Pact be considered, Pandit Motilal explained the different view-points of the two wings. Whereas the Responsivists held that the Reforms should be worked for all they were worth, his own section thought that the Faridpur conditions of the late Deshbandhu Das should be fulfilled before any response by Government could be considered satisfactory. At the end of this controversy, it cannot be said that Pandit Motilal came out altogether unscathed. He wanted to go to England and took two months' leave. Mr. S. Srinivasa Iyengar took his place. For the time being, and all too suddenly, Mr. Iyengar's star shot up into the high heavens.

While this was so in respect of leadership, the following everywhere began to show fissiparous tendencies. In Bengal, there was a revolt at

Krishnagar in the middle of 1926, and although J. M. Sen-Gupta had a sort of victory, still, rumblings of revolt were not altogether subdued. There were really four sections of Swarajists at the time in Bengal: Hindu Swarajists and Swarajist Hindus, Muslim Swarajists and Swarajist Muslims, the difference being the emphasis based on the adjective or the substantive. There were secessions from the ranks of the B.P.C.C. of men like Babu Amarendra Nath Chatterjee and Nirmal Chander Chander. The issue centred around the pact that was being observed in Bengal for some-time between the Hindus and the Muslims. Sen-Gupta's triple demand was (1) observe the pact, (2) ignore the Krishnagar Conference, and (3) do not accept office. The split between the two wings soon became a wide chasm. Sen-Gupta was charged with being given to cavalier methods, with neglecting village reconstruction and indifference to the fund collected for the purpose, with his rupture with the very men who had raised him aloft, and with taking powers to nominate 30 members to the Executive in addition to 30 elected ones. The Karmis took up the revolt under the leadership of Babu Nirmal Chander Chander and Sarat Chandra Bose. We have dwelt upon this at length because this rift in the lute continues to this day in Bengal.

In the middle of the year 1926, we can pause for a while to take a retrospect and prospect of the political picture. Lord Irwin stepped into India on April 6th, 1926. Almost simultaneously, there were communal riots in the streets of Calcutta of the fiercest kind ever known, only equalled if not excelled by those of Bombay in a later year. For six weeks the streets of Calcutta were the scenes of carnage and confusion. It was in May, 1925 that Gandhi, speaking at Mirzapore Park had said in solemn tones that if bloodshed was inevitable, let blood be shed in a manly spirit without any mockery of sympathy or sentiment. As if to make this statement prophetic, disturbances started in an affray between Muslims and Arya Samajists outside a mosque, and on the 5th April fire had to be opened. Sporadic street-fighting, incendiaryism to the extent of 110 fires, attacks on temples and mosques,—all these destroyed the fair name of Calcutta. 44 deaths and 584 persons injured in the first bout, and 66 deaths and 391 injured in the second, represent the official figures. After 6 weeks of vandalism and massacre, the riots died down. Lord Irwin was greatly upset by these unfortunate happenings. He put all his faith and fervour, all his religious devotion and humanitarian instinct into his speeches, meant to exhort people "in the name of Indian national life and of Religion, to rescue the good name of India from the hurt which the present discords inflict upon it."

In the month of August, the Hilton Young Commission published its report on currency and exchange, and following it Government hurriedly introduced legislation in favour of the 18d. ratio. Government's hurry was adversely commented upon and they agreed to wait till February, 1927 in order to enable people and publicists to judge whether prices were stabilizing themselves at the 1s. 6d. ratio.

In September, differences again arose between Lala Lajpat Rai and Pandit Motilal Nehru about the work in the Assembly. Lalaji considered



the Swarajist policy of walk-out as distinctly harmful to the interests of the Hindus. He was also in favour of confirming the Sabarmati Pact on the question of the acceptance of office. The controversy that ensued between him and Motilalji was vehement and very often personal. Lalaji resigned from the Congress party in the Assembly. The Assembly term was to be shortly over. New elections were ahead. President Patel was profusely complimented by Dewan Bahadur T. Rangachariar, Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyer, Baptista, Neogy, Muhammad Yakub, Malaviya and Muddiman. It was all praise, admiration, well-wishing—all prophecy of a sure return in the coming elections—all expressing an ardent wish that the Speaker's seat should not be contested by any one else. In the new elections, Government were not a little intrigued to know whether the Swarajists would come in in large numbers. Col. Wedgwood was in communication with Lalaji, and his influence was visible in Lalaji's plumping for Responsive Co-operation.

At this very time, Sir Abdul Rahim was employing his good offices to secure the appointment of a Muslim on the Government of India Executive. Lord Irwin gave a smart reply: "The Governor-General must hold himself free to make whatever appointment seems to him most in accordance with public interests." Lord Irwin was fast infecting everybody with the virtues of communal unity, and even the Raja of Panagal in Madras echoed the sentiment of communal concord. It was at this time that the Imperial Conference was sitting in London, at which the now-famous definition of Dominion was evolved, and by the third week of October, a South African Deputation which was invited by the Government of India toured from Madras to Peshawar under the leadership of Mr. Bayers in order to study Indian conditions and culture first-hand within the space of three weeks.

General elections took place in November, 1926. In Madras the Congress candidates, no longer 'Swarajists', came out with flying colours. Lord Birkenhead was waiting to see if, at Gauhati, the Congress would show any inclination to co-operate. Mr. S. Srinivasa Iyengar had been elected President of the Gauhati Congress. And he had an individuality all his own. That individuality brought him later into sharp conflict with Pandit Motilal Nehru. In fact, the germs of such a conflict had shown themselves earlier even at the Delhi meeting of the A.I.C.C. Two eminent lawyers—when, in addition, they are also two eminent politicians—are bound to come into conflict with each other. Panditji and Jayakar, Panditji and Lalaji, Panditji and Iyengar,—it was all a series of conflicts for the learned Pandit with Bombay, Punjab and Madras. A masterful personality like the Pandit could not be all things to all men, nor could he be the same himself all along. Lesser men surely could feel quite at ease over other quarrels.

GAUHATI CONGRESS

The Gauhati Session then naturally met under a certain tension of feeling. The tension was caused by the warfare between Co-operation and Non-co-operation. It will be remembered that Non-co-operation stood for continuous, constant and uniform obstruction. Later, it became a state-

ment of policy to be pursued only if the Swarajists came in a majority. Gradually, it came perilously near co-operation, what with acceptance of elected seats on Legislative Committees and of nominated seats on Government of India Committees. Finally, it hovered on the borderland of co-operation at Sabarmati where it was just fighting shy of it. The Council Party was willing to negotiate but afraid to accept. Then there was the spirit of co-operation in the Swaraj Party itself which would not straightway take up the position, say of the Nationalists, the Independents, or the Liberals, but coquet with the idea, speaking of Responsive Co-operation, honourable co-operation, co-operation if possible and obstruction if necessary, and co-operation for all that the Reforms were worth. It was these subtle but thoroughly practical questions that created the tension of feeling at *Pragjyotishapura* (Gauhati). Added to this, there was Government throwing out baits in the form of open praises and veiled invitations, and indulging in all those blandishments and arts by which wavering minds and timid hearts are won over.

This tension, sufficiently trying in itself but by no means tragic, was aggravated at Gauhati by the sudden news that Swami Shraddhananda had been shot in his sick bed by a certain Muslim who had sought and obtained an interview with him. The news was received at Gauhati on the day of the elephant procession of the President. Assam, the land of elephants, was anxious to give a remarkable and unprecedented ovation to the President of the Congress, but the procession had necessarily to be abandoned. Gloom overhung the session. Hindus and Muslims felt the deepest grief over the tragedy. The usual formalities initiated the sittings of the Congress session. The unsophisticated music of the tribal men of Assam added a romantic note to the natural romance of the country known to our *Ithihasas* as Kamarupa. Gandhi was given quarters in a small hut on the banks of the Brahmaputra, the camp and Mandap being a bit removed from his lodging.

When Mr. Srinivasa Iyengar delivered his Address, there was none of the unexpected element in his pronouncement, his views having been well-known before-hand. After paying a well-merited tribute to the memory of Swami Shraddhananda and referring in suitable terms to the melancholy death of Omar Sobani, some time Congress treasurer, he dealt with the Elections, and stated how the results had justified the policy of the Swaraj Party in the Legislatures. The Provinces of Madras, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in a striking degree, and the other Provinces including the Punjab to a lesser extent, he said, had responded to the Congress mandate and come under the Congress discipline. Dyarchy was then dissected and anatomized, the dry bones of the Central Government were exposed in the valley of the shadow of despotism. Deshbandhu's offer was recalled, India's status was examined, Army and Navy were dealt with, the Council programme was discussed. "Resistance to every activity, governmental or other, that may impede the Nation's progress towards Swaraj" was the basic principle laid down at Cawnpore on which the particular duties of Congressmen in Councils were to be framed. He condemned acceptance of office in unequivocal terms and with a logic that was unassailable. But at the same time he valued the position of the



Swaraj Party as forming the "opposition whose power, though indirect, is very real and much more effective than the power of Ministers and if we are disciplined and energetic and in sufficient numbers in any Council, we can carry out our policy and programme more easily than the Ministers." There is a veiled sarcasm in the statement which implied that the Ministers have no power whatever. Then he dealt with the burning topics of the day, namely, currency and communalism, and the cold topics of the hour such as khaddar, untouchability and prohibition, and put in a strong plea for tolerance and unity and closed with the following peroration:—

"Swaraj is not an intellectual but an emotional proposition. We must cherish it in our hearts with unquenchable faith. Neither genial humour nor mordant sarcasm, neither the persuasion of friends nor the wrath of foes, neither appreciation nor calumny, should make our patriotism tepid or the singleness of our purpose qualified."

The resolutions of Ganhati are of the usual type. The resolution on the late Swami Shraddhananda was moved, as was to be expected, by Gandhi and seconded by Mahomed Ali. Gandhi expounded what true religion was and explained the causes that led to the murder. "Now you will perhaps understand why I have called Abdul Rashid a brother and I repeat it. I do not even regard him as guilty of Swami's murder. Guilty indeed are those who excited feelings of hatred against one another." Kenya figured next on the list of resolutions. There, restrictive legislation against the Indian settlers became more and more progressive, the original poll-tax of 20s. which by currency manipulation was raised to 30s. had been raised to 50s. by legislation, thus conserving European interests against Indian interests, liberty and aspirations. On the question of work in Councils, it was definitely laid down that Congressmen shall:—

(a) refuse to accept Ministerships or other offices in the gift of the Government and oppose the formation of a Ministry by other parties until, in the opinion of the Congress or the All-India Congress Committee, a satisfactory response is made by the Government to the National Demand;

(b) subject to clause (d), refuse supplies and throw out budgets until such response is made by the Government or unless otherwise directed by the All-India Congress Committee;

(c) throw out all proposals for legislative enactments by which the bureaucracy proposes to consolidate its powers;

(d) move resolutions and introduce and support measures and Bills which are necessary for the healthy growth of National life and the advancement of the economic, agricultural, industrial and commercial interests of the country, and for the protection of the freedom of person, speech, association and of the Press, and the consequent displacement of the bureaucracy;

(e) take steps to improve the condition of agricultural tenants by introducing and supporting measures to secure fixity of tenure and other advantages with a view to ensure a speedy amelioration of the condition of the tenants; and

(f) generally, protect the rights of Labour, agricultural and industrial, and adjust on an equitable basis the relations between landlords and tenants, capitalists and workmen.

The policy of invoking emergency legislation for dealing with the Bengal detenus was condemned; work in and outside the country, Hindu-Muslim unity, Gurudwara prisoners, and currency were the subjects of suitable resolutions. The venue of the next session of the Congress was left to be decided by the A.I.C.C.

A few interesting points relating to the Congress have to be noted here. Two professors of Zurich were there, deeply interested in an old Coat of Arms that formed one of the exhibits in the Exhibition. They had a smattering of English, and when asked how they happened to pick it up, said, "Oh, we learn it: we have to learn much as you." Mr. and Mrs. Pethick Lawrence were there. The former was a bit hard of hearing: the latter was perhaps the more intelligent of the two. To them, it was a discovery to be told that India's slavery was not merely political, but economic and commercial as well. Gandhi was there too; he was not a passive spectator. He took an active part in the deliberations, so much so that two resolutions actually passed by the Subjects Committee had to be reversed the next day. One of them related to Nabha and the other to currency. Gandhi has never sympathised with Nabha's lot to the extent of committing the Congress to a particular position on it. A third resolution—on Independence—was simply smothered and scorched under the fire of Gandhi's eloquence.

Motilal made a statement on the subject of Nabha. He said at that particular moment he had been briefed by the Maharaja and could not, therefore, commit himself to a speech at a public meeting on a matter in which he was briefed. Narottam Morarji and certain economists were there at Gauhati, for the obvious reason that the question of currency and exchange was to be dealt with. Neither Mr. Jayakar nor Mr. Kelkar was present. For one thing, both were ill at the time. For another, the Responsivists by this time definitely cut themselves off from the Congress. Gauhati laid emphasis on work in the villages and made the habitual wear of khaddar compulsory, to enable Congressmen "to vote at the election of representatives or delegates or any Committee or Sub-Committee of any Congress organization whatsoever, or to be elected as such, or to take part in any meeting of the Congress or Congress organization or any Committee or Sub-Committee thereof." We take leave of the Gauhati Congress and the charming country of Kamarupa, which, despite the Mongoloid features of the people that inhabit it, worships the same gods and goddesses as the Hindus in the rest of India, and observes the same manners and customs and cherishes the same culture. We were shown the Kamakhya temple, the Unananda that is enthroned on the height of a rock in the midst of the Brahmaputra, and the Vasishta Ashram about 13 miles from Gauhati.

From the meditation of these gods and goddesses, let us descend to matters of the earth, earthy. The President of the Gauhati Congress had made a casual reference to the election of the Swarajists at the elections of 1926. Their election programme had been carefully drawn up. Madras gave a glorious account of itself and Government acknowledged it. U. P. fared badly and, to use Pandit Motilalji's language,

"There has been a veritable rout of the Swarajists. 'Defeat' is no word for it. But this was not because they were Swarajists, but



because they were Nationalists. The political programmes of the various parties had nothing to do with the elections. It was a fight between the forces of Nationalism and those of a low order of Communalism reinforced by wealth, wholesale corruption, terrorism and falsehood. 'Religion in danger', was the cry of the opponents of the Congress, both Hindu and Muslim. I have been freely denounced as a beef-eater and destroyer of cows, the supporter of the prohibition of music before mosques, and the one man responsible for the stoppage of Ramlila processions in Allahabad. I could only contradict these lies in public meetings, but they penetrated hamlets and villages which I could not reach. Staying in Dak and Inspection bungalows, and eating food cooked in European style, was taken to confirm the lying propaganda."

The history of the Congress has by this time become a monotonous tale of pious resolutions at the annual sessions and perpetual strifes in the Councils. There was, however, one redeeming feature brought into greater prominence than ever before. Since the formation of the A.I.S.A. khaddar had a pure atmosphere of village uplift and economics. Men and women wedded to it were strenuously labouring in its cause without the excitement of votes and the sensations of lobbies. The annual exhibitions showed how splendid was the development of the craft. At Gauhati, the comparative progress of six or seven years which Bihar had been able to effect in the production of khaddar was an object lesson to the whole of India. 'Kokti' of Bihar and Chicacole muslin of Andhra were glorious, but the glory is not of modern revival. The ancient craft has been there in all its splendour. Even so were the 'endi' and 'muga' silks of Assam which were being greatly helped by the Assam Government. The points of progress did not merely concern the fineness of the counts, but the tension of the yarn and its twist on which the durability of cloth depends. But the most remarkable feature was that, in each Province, the hidden talents of the artisans and craftsmen of the collateral crafts came to be revived once again, and the skilled workmen who were driven out of their homes and hearths and became common, mechanical labourers, were restored to their traditional professions. They have brought art and beauty to khaddar. Old blocks have been recovered, new designs are being invented. The printing and dyeing industry is really the right hand of the textile industry, and when the spinner and the weaver have been resuscitated, they have brought to life, with them, the printer and the dyer, the dhobie, the bleacher, the engraver and the petty trader. The exhibitions which have become adjuncts of the Congress and which, except in one or two years, are exclusively of khaddar,—so far as the textile industry is concerned,—have helped to concentrate interest upon the economic rehabilitation of the country, side by side with the political, social and cultural, and have convinced the people that Swaraj means food and raiment to the poor.



CHAPTER VIII

THE COUNCIL FRONT (1927) A STALEMATE

We now pass on to a study of the position and work of the Congress Party in the various Legislatures. It will be remembered that Dyarchy was destroyed in Bengal and C. P. during the three previous years. In both Provinces, it was restored in the year 1927. In Bengal, the demand for the Ministers' salaries was carried by 94 to 88 votes, and in C.P. by 55 to 16. Let us recall a few facts of the year 1926 relating to the Assembly. In March, 1926, the Swaraj Party walked out of the Council Chamber with no intention of re-entering it before the general election. But Government's strategy in introducing legislation on the question of equating the rupee to 18d. instead of 16d. drew the Swaraj Party barely for a minute, so to put it, to the Assembly just to secure the adjournment of its consideration till the next session (*i.e.* till the elections were over). Therefore when the new Assembly met, every one was agitated by the thought of the 18d. ratio. Other sensational questions arose in the opening session which set the tune for the main song of the drama. Panditji opened his first attack on the policy of Government with a motion for adjournment of the House to discuss the non-attendance of Satyendra Chandra Mitra who had been in prison and who was elected to the Assembly while in prison. The importance of the debate lay in the development of parliamentary practice in the country. To anticipate events, let us point out that a similar motion was made and passed in the Assembly in 1935 on the question of the non-attendance of Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose who was a State prisoner at the time and had been elected whilst in prison. Panditji's position was that Mitra's detention was an encroachment on the privileges of the Legislative Assembly and on the rights of the constituency which had elected him. Sir Alexander Muddiman showed that the Indian Legislatures had no such complete code of powers, privileges and immunities as Legislatures as other parts of the British Empire enjoyed, by virtue, generally, of a provision in their Acts of Constitution, whereby they were enabled to define their own privileges, subject only to the restriction that they should not exceed those for the time being enjoyed by the British House of Commons. In the end, the division went against the Government by 18. But all the same, Mr. Mitra was not released to attend the Assembly meeting. The question of Bengal detenus was taken up. Panditji's demand, stated in the form of an amendment to the original resolution, was that they should be released or brought to trial.

Lalaji, then a member of the Nationalist Party, said that he would prefer the Government to try to justify its imprisonment of these men without trial, on grounds of necessity rather than of Law. Panditji's amendment was passed by a majority of 13 votes. A number of motions for the adjournment of the House followed that relating to S. C. Mitra. Despatch of troops to China, non-publication of the Report of the Indian



Delegation to Fiji (disallowed), the adjournment of the discussion of the currency legislation till after the disposal of the Railway Budget and the presentation of the General Budget. This last one was passed by a majority of 7 votes. The last of the series was the strike situation at Kharagpur and other places on the Bengal-Nagpur Railway. Then a series of clashes took place between Government and non-officials. The first was on the Steel Protection Bill. A few words would not be out of place on the subject. About the year 1923, the question of protection to the Indian Steel and Iron Industry was raised. The Tariff Board had recommended certain bounties and a revision of the question in three years. The interval passed. The question was taken up by the Board and the recommendation this time was in favour of an increase of import duties,—with a basic duty on British goods and differential rates on other goods. This raised the question of Imperial Preference and the popular view was against it, but after a keen discussion Government proposals were upheld by the House. Mr. Jayakar, Deputy Leader of the Nationalist Party, moved for the refusal of the entire grant of the Budget. And the discussion resulted in a victory for the popular opposition by 8 or 9 votes. Then came the question of questions,—the question of the 18d. ratio. This affected not merely the millowners and the merchants but the people of India,—notably the exporters of raw produce and food material. The pound which was in the pre-war and the war days worth Rs. 15/- is now made equivalent to Rs. 13-5-4. In other words, the importer is encouraged to import more foreign goods, because they have become cheaper by 2d. a rupee or 2d. out of 16d., i.e., by an eighth or 12½ per cent. Applying the reverse reasoning to exports of the ryots' produce, if a pound worth of cloth which is imported into India and which formerly cost, at the 16d. ratio, Rs. 15/- now cost only Rs. 13-5-4, a pound worth of produce which formerly fetched the cultivator Rs. 15/- would now yield him only Rs. 13-5-4. Thus computing the total exports, say for 1925, at 316 crores, one-eighth of 316 crores or nearly 40 crores would be lost to the ryot year after year. If the imports of the year were 249 crores, the statement that the importer gained 31 crores thereby would not be a solace to the cultivator, and granting that it were so, the country would still be losing 40—31, or 9 crores annually, and a recurring loss is inevitable with a country like India having a favourable trade balance, i.e., whose exports are greater than her imports. This is the reason why a battle royal raged over the question, but the popular view was defeated and Government won by 68 to 65 votes. With the Steel Protection, Finance and Currency problems disposed of, the most important work of the Congress at the Delhi Session of 1927 came to an end.

We pause for a moment to record a few happenings of abiding interest. We have referred to the valedictory scenes of the Assembly and the warm *au revoir* extended to President Patel. It need hardly be said that he was once again elected President, but what is of particular interest is that he promised to make over to Gandhi Rs. 1,656 a month from out of his pay, keeping to himself Rs. 2,000 for his personal expenses and so as to be able to comport himself with befitting dignity. Gandhi himself did not want to take the entire responsibility for administering the trust and invited suggestions and had other trustees associated with him. On the

31st May, 1935, Gandhi stated in opening a girls' High School at Ras in Gujarat, that this fund amounting to Rs. 40,000 was still with him, only Rs. 1,000 out of the interest on it having been spent.

After a year's vow of voluntary silence and immobility taken at Cawnpore, Gandhi released himself from both. To those of us who are only acquainted with his recent retirement from politics, this vow at Cawnpore in December, 1925, comes as 'a key that explains what otherwise might appear quaint or cranky. Whenever the Congress has ignored his advice, he has cleared the way for it to march along its chosen path. He began his work by a tour in Bihar making collections for the Desh-bandhu Memorial, only the proceeds so collected were to go in aid of khaddar. Council programme had no charm for him,—had no charm even for men like Lala Lajpat Rai who condemned work in the Assembly as infructuous and as a weary waste of National effort and energy. Lalaji's pronouncement was followed by S. Srinivasa Iyengar's that "the Assembly is not the place, much less the Councils, to which you can look for a policy of obstruction by the Nation."

We have already referred to Sarojini Devi's visit to South Africa. It was in 1924, when things in S. Africa were at their worst and General Smuts was on the point of carrying through a Segregation Bill, that Mrs. Sarojini Naidu went on from East Africa to South Africa at the request of the Indian National Congress and had a very remarkable reception. The Bill, which was very nearly passed, had to be abandoned owing to the fall of General Smuts's Government on other issues. General Hertzog came into power, and in 1925, an even more drastic Segregation Bill, called the Class Areas Bill was drawn up, which would have immediately gained the consent of Government and Opposition alike, if it had been brought before the Union Parliament. Mr. Andrews was asked by Gandhi and the Congress leaders to go out, and he raised at once the issue of a breach of the Gandhi-Smuts Agreement, if such a Bill was passed. Later on, the Government of India sent out the Paddison Deputation which had a very cold reception from the Union Government. But gradually the proposal took shape that the Bill should be held over until a Deputation from the Government of India, with powers of entering into a formal agreement with the Union Government, should have been sent and the whole Indian position in South Africa should have been discussed. This led to the first Cape Town Conference. Mr. Andrews was asked again to go out in order to act as adviser to the South African Indian Congress delegates. Though this Conference brought little immediate gains, it had the effect of bringing a pause to any legislation of a segregating character. It also led to the establishment of an Agent-General in South Africa whose duty it was to protect Indian interests.

Now a word regarding the South African agreement. It will be remembered that a South African Congress Delegation had toured India in 1925-1926, and on the 16th October, 1926, an Indian Delegation to South Africa was announced with Sir Muhammad Habibullah as the Leader. A Conference was summoned which was opened by the Premier of South Africa, General Hertzog, on December 17th, 1926. The session lasted



till January 13th, 1927, and a provisional agreement was arrived at between the two Delegations on the following lines:—

Both Governments reaffirm the recognition of the right of South Africa to use all just and legitimate means for the maintenance of Western standards of life.

The Union Government recognises that Indians domiciled in the Union who are prepared to conform to Western standards of life should be enabled to do so.

For those Indians in the Union who may desire to avail themselves of it, the Union Government will organise a scheme of assisted emigration to India or other countries where Western standards are not required. Union domicile will be lost after three years' continuous absence from the Union, in consonance with the proposed revision of the law relating to domicile which will be of general application. Emigrants under the assisted emigration scheme, who desire to return to the Union within three years, will only be allowed to do so on refund to the Union Government of the cost of assistance received by them. The Government of India recognise their obligation to look after such emigrants on their arrival in India. Admission into the Union of wives and minor children of Indians permanently domiciled in the Union will be regulated by paragraph 3 of Resolution XXI of the Imperial Conference of 1918, which lays down that Indians already permanently domiciled in the other British countries should be allowed to bring in their wives and minor children on condition, (a) that not more than one wife and her children shall be admitted for each Indian, and (b) that each individual so admitted shall be certified by the Government of India as being the lawful wife or child of such Indian.

In the expectation that the difficulties with which the Union has been confronted will be materially lessened by the agreement now happily reached between the two Governments, and in order that the agreement may come into operation under most favourable auspices and have a fair trial, the Union Government of South Africa have decided not to proceed further with the Arch Reservation and Immigration and Registration (further Provision) Bill.

The two Governments have agreed to watch the working of the agreement now reached and to exchange views from time to time concerning any changes that experience may suggest.

The Union Government of South Africa have requested the Government of India to appoint an Agent in order to secure continuous and effective co-operation between the two Governments.

At the end of the first Cape Town Round Table Conference, Gandhi, who had been in favour of an Agent being sent to South Africa, put forward in the public Press of India the name of the Rt. Hon. V. S. S. Sastri. This immediately gained approval from the Government and the people of India and his appointment proved a very great success, as we shall have occasion to see later on.

THE HISTORY OF THE CONGRESS

The results of the Conference were acclaimed with joy on every side. Gandhi himself had characterized the settlement as an honourable compromise. He, however, saw some danger to assisted immigration to other parts of the Empire than India. The details of the settlement may be obtained from 'India, 1926-27.'

The formal omission of all reference to Civil Disobedience in the Gauhati resolution created a new atmosphere in the year 1927. Government, it is true, were disappointed to find that Gauhati did not plump for co-operation, but in actual fact, the Provinces were all forming Ministries and working Dyarchy. When Gandhi began his tour, the Maharajas were no longer afraid of him. He began to be invited by some of them. They no longer looked upon khaddar as a National uniform for a semi-military band of volunteers of the Congress, but as an innocent factor in the economic regeneration of the country. They also saw in Gandhi a truthful and honest man, somewhat misguided in his political methods and cranky in his political beliefs. After a short tour, Gandhi fell ill. The A.I.C.C. that met on the 15th and 16th May, wished him a speedy recovery. At this time, Lalaji also sailed for Europe and his departure was adversely commented upon. The previous year also, he had left India and occasioned adverse criticism. To his credit, however, it must be noted that when Shradddhananda was murdered, he was in Calcutta on his way to Gauhati but returned to the Punjab without attending the Congress. We mention these things in order to show that the political atmosphere was full of bickerings. When the A.I.C.C. met in Bombay on the 15th and 16th May, there was a formula evolved by the Working Committee placed before it and approved of by it, which dealt with the Hindu-Muslim problem. Read at this distance of time and with a knowledge of the numerous transformations the question has since undergone, the formula of Bombay cannot fail to strike us as academic. Mr. S. Srinivasa Iyengar was anxious to settle this problem, but he had not a grip of issues in all their seriousness. It is not the evolution of a formula that was required, but the approximation of the hearts, a clearing of the minds, of the two great communities. So we shall not pause to give the details of this formula at length but content ourselves with saying that it contemplated joint electorates, with reservation of seats on the basis of population in the Provinces, and, in the Central Legislature, provided reciprocal concessions in favour of minorities, including Sikhs in the Punjab, by mutual agreement so as to give them weighted representation and maintain the same proportion in the Central Legislature as well.

Other subjects dealt with at the meeting of the A.I.C.C. in Bombay were the International Congress, against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression, and National Independence. Jawaharlal at this time was in Europe and he represented India at the Congress and sent up a report from Brussels where it was held, and the A.I.C.C. expressed its high appreciation of his services. It appreciated the efforts that were being made by the League against Imperialism and for National Independence, and resolved to recommend to the Congress, (I.N.C.) to give support to the League as an Associate organisation.



This is a rather important move, for we shall hear later something of foreign propaganda started a year previously, and continued for a couple of years. Another resolution assured the Chinese people of India's fullest sympathy in their struggle for freedom, condemned the action of the Government of India in despatching troops to China and demanded their immediate withdrawal. The A.I.C.C. appreciated the resolve of the Hindustani Seva Dal to send an ambulance corps to China. Then the British Trade Union Bill, Bengal Congress disputes, organization of Labour, Nagpur Satyagraha, and the Boycott of British goods were the subjects of suitable resolutions. The last was to be seriously taken up. The Congress Party in the Madras Council came up for severe comments and even a motion of censure was threatened. The fact was that when the Congress Party was returned in good strength,—45 out of 104 elected members, or according to Government's admission, 38 out of 104,—the Leader was sent for by the Governor and asked to form a Ministry, but he declined. He himself became the President of the Council, and it was an open secret at the time that, with the private offer of support from the Congress Party, the Independents formed a Ministry. This was naturally objected to on strict principle. The A.I.C.C., though there was no programme of Civil Disobedience was animated by a non-co-operative spirit and outlook. Vigorous canvassing went on in favour of a censure motion against the Madras Council members of the Congress Party moved by Mr. Gopala Menon. It was expected that Kelkar would oppose the motion. Only, he took the opportunity to describe in choice language,—previously prepared and committed to writing,—the infatuation, as he said, of Pandit Motilal Nehru for power and position, authority and wealth. He contented himself with this piece of verbal vengeance. The South Indians, therefore, made the best of a bad position by accepting an amendment to refer the matter, as to why the Congress Party did not vote down the salaries of Ministers and refuse supplies, to the Working Committee for enquiry and report. Mr. Srinivasa Iyengar was not against the Independent Ministry in Madras; so, he had to oppose the orthodox Congress members of the Council Party by whose co-operation he had risen to be the head of the political movement. The fact was that the members of the Working Committee were tired. Statutory enquiry, Royal Commission, Deputation to England, were all in the air and they were hard realities which could not be ignored. Even Motilalji, whose repugnance to Ministry formation was pronounced and uncompromising, did not expose or attack the South Indian procedure. Bombay marked once again a notable change in the outlook of the Congress,—a realignment from the highways of N.C.O. to the much trodden rut of a Royal Commission.

One piece of good news at the time in the fourth week of May was the release of Subash Chandra Bose after four years of imprisonment. Lord Lytton had all along been nervous and it was left to Sir Stanley Jackson to give relief to the Bengal Detenus. Subash completely broke down in health in his internment and this became a source of general anxiety.

The summer of 1927, like other summers, was barren of Legislative labours; but the country was ablaze with Hindu-Muslim riots. The most serious riot took place in Lahore between the 3rd and 7th May, 1927, the toll being 27 killed and 272 injured. In Bihar, in Multan (Punjab), Bareilly



(U.P.) and in Nagpur (C.P.) similar riots occurred. The Nagpur riots were easily the worst of these, coming only next to those of Lahore, with 19 persons killed and 123 injured. A few details may be given here of the circumstances which led to some at any rate of these outbreaks. Three years previously, a pamphlet had been published, named *Rangila Rasul*, the title itself showing how objectionable the contents would be. This was the subject of a criminal prosecution which had dragged on for over two years, and which after resulting in conviction, upheld in the court of appeal, finally ended in acquittal in the High Court. There was another case called, the *Risala Vartaman* case which, however, ended in conviction. The law being considered on the whole uncertain, a Bill was introduced into the Assembly, in August, 1927, the operative clause of which was as follows:—

“Whoever with deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings of any class of His Majesty’s subjects, by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representations, insults or attempts to insult religion or religious beliefs of that class, shall be punished with 2 years’ imprisonment, or with fine, or with both.”

The Bill was passed after 2 days’ discussion. Altogether 25 riots had broken out. Of them, 10 were in U.P., 6 in Bombay, 2 each in Punjab, C.P., Bengal, Bihar, and Delhi. In less than 18 months, the toll taken was stated by Lord Irwin in his Address to the Indian Legislature on August 29th, 1927, to be between 250 killed and over 2,500 injured. The Viceroy’s exhortation to unity was followed by a Unity Conference which, however, did not achieve much. A similar Unity Conference was organized by the A.I.C.C. on the 27th October, 1927, and it was opened by Mr. Srinivasa Iyengar, whose one ambition in life, as he repeatedly said,—an ambition which rested in a fund of self-confidence,—was to evolve a formula for Hindu-Muslim unity. After a long discussion the Conference accepted the following resolution:—

“Whereas no community in India should impose or seek to impose its religious obligations or religious views upon any other community, but free profession and practice of religion should, subject to public order and morality, be guaranteed to every community and person, Hindus are at liberty to take processions and play music before mosques at any time for religious or social purposes, but there should be no stoppage nor special demonstration in front of the mosque, nor shall songs or music, played in front of such mosques, be such as is calculated to cause annoyance, special disturbance, or offence to worshippers in the mosques. Muslims shall be at liberty to sacrifice or slaughter cows in exercise of their rights in any town or village in any place, not being a thoroughfare, nor one in the vicinity of a temple, nor one exposed to the gaze of Hindus. Cows should not be led in procession or in demonstration for sacrifice or slaughter. Having regard to the deep-rooted sentiment of the Hindu community in the matter of cow-killing, the Muslim community is earnestly appealed to to so conduct cow-sacrifice as not to cause any annoyance to Hindus of the town or village concerned.”



The Conference also condemned certain recent murderous assaults and appealed to Hindu and Muslim leaders to create an atmosphere of non-violence in the country, and it empowered the All-India Congress Committee to appoint a Committee in each Province for propaganda work in connection with Hindu-Muslim unity.

The All-India Congress Committee met immediately after the Unity Conference, i.e., on the 28th, 29th, and 30th October, 1927, in Calcutta. The resolutions of the Unity Conference on the communal relations were passed bodily. The Bengal Detenus, naturally, were the next to attract attention. Some of them had been in prison for over four years. Accordingly, a Committee was appointed to devise means of effecting their early release. As soon as these two subjects were done with, there was a thinning of attendance, the President himself being absent on account of breakdown of health. A resolution, moved by Mr. T. Viswanatham (Andhra), saying that according to the Gauhati resolution it was mandatory on Congressmen to refuse offices within the gift of Government and to prevent the formation of Ministries, was disallowed and this caused a measure of discontent. The Secretary, on behalf of the President, informed that the Resolution was out of place, since the Committee had at the outset resolved to postpone the consideration of the position till the Madras Session. As a protest against this, some Bengal members moved an adjournment *sine die* and it was carried.

Other subjects dealt with and disposed of by suitable resolutions at the Calcutta meeting were 'Indians in America' and expression of gratitude to Senator Copeland for his support of the Indian cause, refusal of passports to Saklatwalla, and Nabha 'abdication' which was dropped at Gauhati but revived in Calcutta. The last subject was taken up by Mr. B. G. Horniman and the Committee passed a resolution demanding justice to the Maharaja.

The first week of November was rather a sensational week. The Viceroy had cancelled his tour programme and gone back to Delhi. Invitations were issued to the leading politicians in India to see the Viceroy on the 5th November and succeeding days at their convenience. It was evident that there was something important, though not urgent, to be communicated to them. Gandhi was at this time in Mangalore, a thousand miles away from Delhi. He too got an invitation and had to cancel his tour programme and proceed to Delhi. When he saw the Viceroy, the interview was a cold affair. Lord Irwin placed in his hands the Secretary of State's announcement regarding the Simon Commission, and when asked whether that was all the business, Lord Irwin said 'Yes.' Gandhi felt that a one-anna envelope would have reached it to him. Lord Irwin was, however, helpless and was only doing a duty somewhat timidly and, therefore, canvassing the sympathies of politicians beforehand. The announcement itself was made in the country on the 8th November, 1927. The Viceroy was trying to secure friendly co-operation. "But what was behind this sudden rush into hurried action?" asked Dr. Besant. It was the fear of the General Election in 1929 in Great Britain. The Simon Commission was not 'wanted' by any party—be the reasons as they might. The omission of any Indian

from its personnel supplied the common basis of resentment for all the political parties in India, except the Congress. The Congress naturally felt that the idea came nowhere near its Demand, which itself was a kind of patchwork. Dr. Besant felt it added insult to injury. She quoted the Maharaja of Burdwan's warning to Lord Birkenhead and the latter's sneer on lines such as this:—"You dare not reject anything that we offer you, and if you dare do it, we shall see." "Quite so," said Dr. Besant, "all the world will see, and the world will remember that Lord Birkenhead was one of those who entered into a treasonable conspiracy, drilling an army and filling a treasury to fight His Majesty's troops in Northern Ireland. And now that a Commission is appointed in which India's immediate destiny is to be fixed, and from which Indians are boycotted, he loses his temper over a suggestion that Indians may copy his own policy of boycott. Surely, imitation would be the sincerest flattery."

Pandit Motilal Nehru who was just then in England looked upon the Commission as an eyewash. "The only honest course is to declare what Government wants to do and then to appoint a Commission to draft a scheme giving effect to that declaration." A manifesto was published against the Commission over the signatures of all-India leaders like D. E. Wacha and others. The signatories were of all political parties outside the Congress. Miss Wilkinson stated that since the Amritsar tragedy, there was not such a universal condemnation of any act of the British as attended the appointment of the Simon Commission. The Labour Party appointed Lansbury, MacDonald and Snowden to see Lord Birkenhead on the matter. There was a suspicion of the Labour Party in India, for it was Lord Olivier, who, as Secretary of State in the last Labour Government, had put his signature to the Bengal Ordinances under which thousands had been interned. The President of the Congress condemned the Commission and quoted Colonel Wedgwood's view that the cause of India would not be prejudiced by the Boycott of the Commission.

What was this Commission to do which was being condemned from every quarter? The Commission was charged with the duty of "inquiring into the working of the system of Government, the growth of education and the development of representative institutions in British India and matters connected therewith, and reporting whether and to what extent it is desirable to establish the principle of Responsible Government or to extend, modify or restrict the degree of Responsible Government then existing therein, including the question whether the establishment of Second Chambers of the Local Legislatures is or is not desirable."

"When the Commission has reported and its Report has been examined by the Government of India and His Majesty's Government, it will be the duty of the latter to present proposals to Parliament. But it is not the intention of His Majesty's Government to ask Parliament to adopt these proposals without first giving a full opportunity for Indian opinion of different schools to contribute its view upon them. And to this end, it is intended to invite Parliament to refer these proposals for consideration by a Joint Committee of both Houses, and to facilitate the presentation to that Committee both of the views of the



Indian Central Legislature by delegations who will be invited to attend and confer with the Joint Committee, and also of any other bodies whom the J.P.C. may desire to consult.

"The method chosen by His Majesty's Government will also assure to Indians a better opportunity, than they would have enjoyed in any other way, of influencing the passage of these great events. For not only will they, through representatives of the Indian Legislatures, be enabled to express themselves freely to the Commission itself, but it will also be within their power to challenge in detail or principle any of the proposals made by His Majesty's Government before the Joint Select Committee of Parliament and to advocate their own solutions."

The plan outlined is a single comprehensive one and should be so regarded.

"Above all, friends will strive to correct differences by appeal to the many things on which they are agreed, rather than lightly imperil friendship by insistence on points in regard to which they take conflicting views."

We now pass on to the Congress of the year 1927. It was to be held in the city of Madras. Even at Gauhati, people did not like the idea of the annual session being held in some district town, as the Royal Commission would be coming in 1927. What exactly the Congress would be called upon to do in relation to the Commission, no one knew. The choice of the venue was left at Gauhati to the A.I.C.C. It is now clear that in the year 1927 Hindu-Muslim unity was in the air, while Hindu-Muslim riots were on the *terra-firma*. Two Unity Conferences had been held and the A.I.C.C. endorsed the resolutions of one of them. Who was better fitted to preside over the Congress of such a year than a Muslim, and among the Muslims, than Dr. Ansari? Ansari was a student of the Madras Medical College in 1896 or '99. He had gone to the Balkans in 1912 along with the Red Cross Mission. In his profession, he had a highly distinguished career. Outside it, his culture and catholicity were well-known. Dr. Ansari accordingly presided over the Madras Session and naturally devoted the bulk of his Address to the question of communal concord. He summarised the Congress policy as one of co-operation for 35 years, Non-co-operation for a year and a half, and obstruction within the Councils and constitutional dead-locks for four years. "Non-co-operation did not fail us," he remarked, "we failed Non-co-operation." Then came the subject of the Statutory Commission, the Detenus, India and Asia, and National Health. Amongst those present at the Congress were Mr. Mardy Jones, Labour M.P., Mr. Purcell and Mr. Spratt. There was nothing very striking about the resolutions of the year on subjects other than the Statutory Commission. Condolences, League against Imperialism, China, refusal of passports, were all familiar or usual subjects. The note of 'war danger' was sounded in one of the resolutions and the Congress declared, it would be the duty of the people of India to refuse to take any part in such a war or to co-operate with them (Government) in any way whatsoever. General Avari's hunger-strike had reached the 75th day. He had carried on an Arms Act Satyagraha which

consisted in leading processions carrying prohibited weapons. The General received, *in absentia*, a vote of congratulations and of sympathy. The proposed separation of Burma from India was condemned. It will be remembered that its annexation with India was condemned at the very first Congress (1885), and that Congress held that if Burma should be annexed, it must be made a Crown Colony. And the State prisoners received their due attention from the Congress which demanded their immediate release. Indians in South Africa and East Africa had two resolutions for themselves. Their exact position was dealt with earlier in this chapter. Hindu-Muslim unity, both in respect of religious and political rights, was the subject of a resolution on the lines already adopted at the A.I.C.C. Boycott of British goods had come to be a new feature in recent years. A Swaraj Constitution having been asked to be drawn up, several drafts were before the House and the Working Committee was given power to co-opt and to confer with other bodies and draft a constitution and place it before a Special Convention for approval. A change was introduced in the Congress Constitution. But the resolution of the year was the one dealing with the Statutory Commission which we give in full:—

BOYCOTT OF THE STATUTORY COMMISSION

“Whereas the British Government have appointed the Statutory Commission in utter disregard of India’s right of self-determination;

“This Congress resolves that the only self-respecting course for India to adopt is to boycott the Commission at every stage and in every form. In particular,

- (a) this Congress calls upon the people of India and all Congress organisations in the country:
 - (i) to organise mass demonstrations on the day of the arrival of the Commission in India, cities of India which the Commission may visit;
 - (ii) to organise public opinion by vigorous and similar demonstrations in the various propaganda so as to persuade Indians of all shades of political opinion effectively to boycott the Commission.
- (b) This Congress calls upon non-official members of the Indian Legislatures and leaders of political parties and communities of India and all others not to give evidence before the Commission nor co-operate with it in any manner, public or private, nor attend or participate in any social functions given to them.
- (c) This Congress calls upon the non-official members of the Indian Legislatures;
 - (i) neither to vote for nor serve on Select Committees that may be set up in connection with this Commission;
 - (ii) to throw out every other proposal, motion or demand for grant that may be moved in connection with the work of the Commission.



- (d) This Congress also calls upon the non-official members of the Legislatures not to attend meetings of the Legislatures except for the purpose of preventing their seats being declared vacant, or for the purpose of making the boycott effective and successful, or for the purpose of throwing out a Ministry, or opposing any important measure which, in the opinion of the Working Committee of the Congress, is detrimental to the interests of India.
- (e) This Congress authorises the Working Committee to confer with and secure the co-operation, wherever possible, of other organisations and parties with a view to make the boycott effective and complete."

This resolution speaks for itself and needs no commentary. A special resolution was passed deploring the callousness of Government in not commuting the brutal sentences passed in the Kakori case, in spite of the powerful public indignation aroused by the vindictive sentences, and offering the heartfelt sympathy of the Congress to the families of the victims.

Finally, the creed of the Congress was defined in a separate resolution to the effect that "This Congress declares the goal of the Indian people to be complete National Independence." This resolution had for some time become a hardly annual. It received an added impetus by the arrival of Jawaharlal Nehru from Europe and the espousal of the cause by him. Even Mrs. Besant did not see much to object to in it. She said in the Subjects Committee that it was a dignified and clear statement of India's goal. Gandhi was absent from the Committee at the time and heard of it after it had been passed.



CHAPTER IX

THE RENDITION OF THE CONGRESS (1928)

In the beginning of the year 1928 the political atmosphere of India was charged with feelings of resentment against Government over the appointment of the Simon Commission. The boycott of that Commission was the one pre-occupation of the country. In making the announcement of the Commission, Lord Irwin had said: "His Majesty's Government whilst not dictating to the Commission what procedure it should follow, were of opinion that its task in taking evidence will be greatly facilitated if it were to invite a Joint Select Committee of the Central Legislature chosen from amongst its non-official members, to convey its views to the Commission in any manner decided upon by the latter." This arrangement made the Indian Committee assessors or appraisers and not Jurors,—a position which was regarded as an affront to India. But Lord Irwin took pains to show that it was not true that any deliberate affront to Indian honour and to Indian pride was meant by His Majesty's Government. At the same time, he declared that whether Indian assistance was forthcoming or not the inquiry would proceed and a report would be presented to Parliament, on which the latter would take whatever action it deemed appropriate. It was on the 2nd of February that the Viceroy made this speech and threw out his challenge. On February 3rd, the Statutory Commission landed in Bombay. The boycott began by an All-India *hartal* observed on the day of their arrival. The day was otherwise uneventful. In Madras, however, the attitude of the crowds was considered threatening at the High Court and in the end, unfortunately and perhaps avoidably, the Police opened fire injuring a number of people of whom one fell dead on the spot and two died later. In Calcutta also there was a conflict between the students and the Police. In Delhi, which was the first place to be visited, the landing of the Commission was marked by hostile demonstrations with placards and banners bearing the words, "Go back, Simon." Except for the South Indian Liberal Federation in South India (popularly known as the Justice Party) and some Muslim organisations, it may be said that the boycott was complete.

The great success of the boycott of the Simon Commission induced the Government to try methods of coercion and terrorism. In Lahore a vast gathering of people headed by Lala Lajpat Rai, to demonstrate against the Commission, was assaulted by policemen and many respected leaders were treated to baton and *lathi* blows. Lalaji was one of the sufferers, and it is believed that his death was hastened by this cowardly assault. But in spite of this charge being made openly, an impartial enquiry was denied by Government.

Lucknow experienced several wanton and unprovoked Police charges on unarmed and peaceful gatherings on the occasion of the visit of the Commission. Even Jawaharlal was not spared by the U.P. Police. Mount-



ed and foot Police displayed their skill with the baton and the *lathi* on the heads and backs of well-known public workers of all parties and injured scores of people.

Lucknow was converted into an armed camp with thousands of mounted and foot Police and for four days there were brutal attacks by the Police. Private houses were invaded by the Police and respected national workers were beaten and arrested for daring to call out, "Simon, go back." The citizens of Lucknow, however, refused to be cowed down by these brutalities and increased their demonstrations. They even added a touch of humour to them and set the whole city laughing at the discomfiture of the authorities. During a party given by some Talukdars to the Simon Commission, the Kaiserbagh was surrounded by thousands of Police and none who was suspected of being a boycotter was allowed to approach even the public roads near the Bagh. In spite of these precautions the harmony of the party was marred by the arrival from the skies of numerous black kites and balloons bearing the legends "Simon, go back," "India for Indians," etc.

In Patna a mammoth gathering of 50,000 people gathered to make a hostile demonstration against the Commission on its arrival to the city, while there were but a few hundred people who waited to give a welcome, composed mostly of *Chaprasis* and Government servants. Lorries of tenants whom Government had imported from the neighbourhood walked into the boycott camp, and not the welcome camp. The spectacle presented at the Railway Station, of monster crowds without a trace of violence, and the study in contrast presented by the two wings was an eye-opener to Government.

The Madras Congress, in pursuance of the boycott of the Simon Commission, had restricted the work inside the Legislative Councils to a minimum. Difficulties, however, were experienced in carrying out this direction and it was regretted that it was more honoured in the breach than in the observance. Ultimately, the Working Committee recommended to the A.I.C.C. to give greater freedom to members of the Assembly and the Provincial Councils. The A.I.C.C. accepted the recommendation of the Working Committee.

The Commission left Bombay on the 31st March after establishing, as Sir John Simon said, "personal contact with all communities and classes in various parts of India." Of course, this was a piece of what people call 'terminological inexactitude', for, the official report itself admits that the leaders of the Assembly were "pledged to the boycott of the Commission not only officially but also to the length of boycotting it socially," and, therefore, Sir John and his colleagues were unable to come in contact with them.

Soon after the arrival of the Commission in India, Sir John addressed a letter to the Viceroy dated 6th February, and published on the 7th, proposing that the Commission would take the form of a Joint Free Conference between the English seven and an Indian seven,—to be chosen

by the Central Legislature. All materials would be available to the whole Conference, the Indians sitting on it on free and equal terms.

The Provincial Councils were also to be asked to constitute a similar body. The Indian part of the Conference would consist, when the central subjects were being discussed, of the Joint Committee of the Central Legislature and when provincial subjects were discussed, of the Committee of Provincial Council concerned. The British Commissioners were, however, to send up their report separately to His Majesty's Government, and the Joint Committee to the Central Legislature. This announcement evoked no response. Within two or three hours of its issue, the political leaders met at Delhi and declared that their objection to the Commission remained unaffected and that they could not have anything to do with the Commission, at any stage or in any form. The Assembly did not care to elect their representatives to the Central Committee. Lala Lajpat Rai moved a resolution on February 16th in the Assembly, "that the constitution and scheme of the Commission were wholly unacceptable to the Assembly which should have nothing to do with it, at any stage or in any form." Pandit Motilal Nehru declared that "the resolution was not negative but was a positive assertion that an equal number of Indians must be appointed to the Commission by His Majesty the King before Indians would co-operate." The resolution was carried by 68 to 62 votes. The Government had, therefore, to nominate members from the Assembly to the Central Committee. It may be mentioned here that when the Commission visited Bombay, not one of the 22 belted knights of the City cared to meet the Commission.

This was a fact which was more eloquent of the spirit of boycott in the country than either the votes of councils or the co-operation of communities. Incidentally, let us note that, while the Simon Commission was engaged in its own legitimate labours, the shrewder members of it who were more interested in trade than in politics were busy with a study of the Indian market. Punjab, thought Lord Burnham, offered the best possibilities of Indo-British trade. Then Lord Burnham emphasized the scope for export into India of British cars, tractors and lorries. "The Indian market must be studied in India not only by the agent," said he, "but by the principals who should examine the problem in the broad light of national predilections and prejudices."

The running events of the year 1928 are the marches of the Simon Commission, the sittings of the All-Parties' Conference and the movement in Bardoli. In accordance with the resolution of the Congress, an All-Parties' Conference was summoned at Delhi in February and March, 1928, and it was agreed between the Congress and other organizations present that the question of a Constitution for India should be discussed on the basis of "Full Responsible Government." The second question was the question of communal relations and proportions. Altogether 25 sittings had been held in those two months and three-fourths of the issues were settled amicably. The third Conference of the year met on the 19th of May, Dr. Ansari presiding, and a resolution was passed appointing a Committee with Pandit Motilal Nehru as President, to draft the principles