



of a Constitution before the 1st July, 1928, the draft to be circulated amongst the various associations in the country. 29 political organizations voted in favour of the resolution. We shall revert to it later.

In the middle of June, three events occurred which must arrest our attention. The ensuing Congress was to be held in Calcutta and Pandit Motilal Nehru was freely talked of as its President. In order to make that easy, he had also resigned his seat on the Empire Parliamentary Delegation to which he had been elected in the March previous by the Legislative Assembly as one of the four representatives. The Pandit put down his resignation to political developments. Gandhi himself said: "Bengal wants the elder Nehru. He is a man for honourable compromise. The country is in need of it and is in the mood for it. Therefore have him." The second event was the controversy in Calcutta over the character of the exhibition to be held in connection with the Congress. Mr. N. R. Sircar, the Secretary of the Exhibition Committee, stated that the exhibition would be open to all articles manufactured or produced in India, prominence being given to khaddar. As regards Indian mill-made cloth, and cloth made from Indian mill-yarn, the question was for the time being left open. No foreign goods or articles would be exhibited except tools, machinery and appliances, such as were calculated to help the development of our national resources. Swadeshi goods made by the provincial Departments of Industries would be permitted. No pecuniary help would be taken from Government. This raised a hue and cry from orthodox Non-co-operators like Babu Satish Chandra Das-Gupta of 'Khadi Pratishtan,' (Sodepur, Calcutta), and his spirited brother Kshitish Babu. It was fortunate that the protests came forth in good time to save the situation.

The third event was one of abiding interest. Its magnitude was only equalled by its magnificence. The ryots of Bardoli are a splendid lot of citizens. Bardoli was the Tehsil where Gandhi wanted to experiment Mass Civil Disobedience. That was, after two or three postponements, ultimately given up in February, 1922, and the Bardoli resolutions of the Working Committee of February 11th and 12th have associated the name of the place with the withdrawal of the struggle, not always appreciated. But that stigma, if stigma it was, was destined to be wiped out. Bardoli was to have one of the periodical re-settlements of land which occurs once in a stated period of years, say 20 or 30, and the result of which is generally to raise Land Revenue by about 25 per cent. The people of Bardoli felt that they did not deserve any enhancement, as any larger or better produce they had from their land was due to the improvement they had effected at great cost of money and labour. They did not say that the taxes should not be raised, but only prayed that an impartial Committee should be appointed to investigate the conditions of the labour, roads, prices, economic outlook and taxation, to see whether an enhancement was to be effected, and if so, how much. The usual procedure of Government is arbitrary, secret and one-sided. They do not take the public into confidence when they conduct economic enquiries. They do not publish the preliminary reports of the settlement officers to the Board of Revenue, or the latter's recommendations to Government, and if at all anything is



published, the publication is in English and not the provincial languages of the area concerned. In this particular case, the Bardoli ryots were to pay an enhanced revenue of 25 per cent. All the customary and constitutional methods for any inquiry were tried but in vain. Then an ultimatum was issued and a No-tax campaign was organised,—not for Swaraj, nor as part of a Civil Disobedience campaign,—but for the purpose of obtaining redress of an agrarian grievance. Government were adamant, so were the people.

Congress did not interfere in the earlier stages. The people had resolved not to pay taxes at their Taluka Conference and invited Vallabhbhai J. Patel to help them,—virtually to lead them. It was then that he organised the campaign,—not in anger, not with any impetuosity or impulsiveness, but reluctantly, with premeditation, and with grave and solid deliberation. Government embarked upon their attachments of cattle and began with a Vaisya who, they thought, would be timid. The man was unbending. Then they pitched upon a Muslim, but he was equally unrelenting. Neither threats nor efforts to divide the communities succeeded. So there was a promiscuous campaign of attachments helped by imported Pathans. The employment of Pathans was uncalled for. People did not resist attachments, and Government had enough of man-power under them and had no need to import men of a furious temper and habits who, once they are employed, could not be restrained. It was complained that there were 40 of these. Sir Leslie Wilson, the Governor, stated they were only 25. It was not a question of numbers, but it was a question of the Pathans.

*Pathans to the right of them
Pathans to the left of them
Pathans to the front of them
Police at the tail of them
Marched the Buffalo Brigade.*

That was how boys were singing the events of the day at public meetings. Very soon, some of the elected members of the Legislative Council of the Bombay Presidency resigned their seats in protest and took interest in the campaign.

Vitthalbhai J. Patel—the President of the Assembly—wrote a letter to the Viceroy threatening to resign and take up the work if Government did not relent. At last, a formula was evolved by which the excess assessment was deposited by an intermediary. Prisoners were to be released, property was to be restored, and movement was to be called off. A Court was established of which Mr. Broomfield, who had convicted Gandhi in 1922, was the Judicial representative, the other being an Executive Officer, Mr. Maxwell. The Court went into the matter and declared that not more than 6½ per cent should be the measure of enhancement. This was agreed to in August, and the benefit of it was extended to Choriassi Tehsil which had not joined the movement and had paid the enhanced taxes, and whose good example had been commended by Government to Bardoli saying, "If Choriassi can pay, why not Bardoli?" Bardoli did not pay, and its fight benefited as well in the end.



It may be of interest to note that in a speech delivered at Poona in the Legislative Council, the Governor of Bombay declared that all the resources of the Empire would be used to crush the No-tax campaign of Bardoli. Shortly after, the settlement took place. There was really no provision anywhere in the law or in the Land Revenue Code, for the appointment of the kind of Court which was constituted. It must be noted that although they recommended the increment by only $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. yet when the several factors which were urged by the ryots and which the Court expressed itself as not competent to go into at the time, were given due consideration, there was virtually no enhancement of Land Revenue in the Bardoli Tehsil, and at the end of the settlement it stood at its former level. The credit of the settlement lay in the restoration of the sold out lands to their owners, and the Patels and the Talatis to their jobs.

Once again the All-Parties' Conference met at Lucknow on the 28th, 29th and 30th of August, 1928, to consider the Report of the Nehru Committee. Congratulations were offered to the Nehru Committee on its labours, and without restricting the liberty of action of those political parties, whose goal is Complete Independence, the Conference declared in favour of Dominion Self-Government. Those for Complete Independence, and not for Dominion Status, issued a statement which was read out at the Conference and which made it clear that the Constitution of India should only be based on Complete Independence. The signatories wanted to take full advantage of the Preamble which gave freedom to those who would plump for Complete Independence. They had decided accordingly not to support the resolution, but not to obstruct the work of the Conference either. They would accordingly dissociate themselves from the resolution and abstain from taking part in the discussion or moving amendments to it. Other questions dealt with related to Sindh, redistribution of Provinces, and joint electorates. There was some agitation over a remark let fall by Jawaharlal saying that the gentlemen on the platform (referring to the Talukdars like the Maharajah of Mahmudabad and Raja Rampal Singh) were unnecessary men in society. The result of the remark which was deeply resented by those against whom it was directed, was that a resolution was passed the next day that "All titles to private and personal property lawfully acquired and enjoyed at the establishment of the Commonwealth are hereby guaranteed."

Amongst those present at Lucknow were, besides the two amiable Zamindars referred to, Dr. Sapru, Sir Ali Imam, Sir C. Sankaran Nair, Mr. Sachchidananda Sinha, Sir C. P. Ramaswami,—all ex-Members of the Central or Provincial Executive Councils. It must be owned that the Lucknow scheme contemplated Dyarchy in Military matters. The portion of the scheme relating to Defence is embodied in clauses 75 to 78 of Chapter VII and also in the last two paragraphs of Chapter VI. "The Governor-General-in-Council shall appoint a Committee of Defence consisting of the Prime Minister, the Minister for Defence, the Commander-in-Chief, the Commanders of Air Forces and Naval Forces, the Chief of the General Staff and two other experts. This Committee shall advise the Government

and the various departments concerned with questions of Defence and upon general questions of policy. The estimates shall be framed according to the recommendations of the Committee."

Again, "No measure affecting the discipline or maintenance of any part of the Military, Naval and Air Forces of the Commonwealth shall be introduced in Parliament except on the recommendation of the Committee of Defence appointed under the Constitution." The functions of the Committee which has a clear official majority are to control expenditure and estimates as well as measures. What else is this but Dyarchy at the Centre? Now let us complete this story of the All-Parties' Conference. Its Report was taken up by the All-India Congress Committee at its sitting in Delhi in the 1st week of November, (4th and 5th). It reiterated the goal of Complete Independence, endorsed the communal solution of the Nehru Committee, and gave the opinion that the proposals of the Nehru Committee were "a great step towards political advance," and generally approved them, without committing itself to every detail.

Let us now turn to the Council front. We had really a Council front, where the cult of resistance was gradually melting away, and a 'Simon' front where boycott was getting stronger and stronger. In the Assembly, a controversy was raging regarding the organization of the President's Office and its separation from the Legislative Department of the Government. Evidently, some responsible members were talking at random in the lobbies about the President. *The Pioneer* had brought forward a charge that the Home Department of the Government of Simla was openly abetting a plot to disparage the work and decisions of President Patel. Leaders of Parties strengthened those charges by bearing personal testimony to having heard the charges themselves in the lobbies. Disrespect shown to the President is disrespect to Parliament, by tradition, and therefore Lord Irwin, when the matter was brought to his notice, had no hesitation in making the Government of India tender an apology to the people of India. The Home Member tendered the apology and Pandit Motilal Nehru accepted it.

The other big items on the agenda of the Assembly were the Reserve Bank Bill, and the Public Safety Bill. The Gold Standard and Reserve Bank of India Bill battle was one of the biggest but fruitless battles fought by the Congress against Government. It was the Government's contention that that Bill, intended as it was to constitute another step towards autonomy in India's progress, and shifting as it would do the control of the currency policy from the Secretary of State to an indigenous banking institution in the country, would really be a sort of financial and currency counterpart to the Government of India Act, 1919. It was difficult to believe in the purity of motive from this high constitutional standpoint. A Government of India which had done havoc in working the scheme of Dyarchy, such as it was, would not *suo moto* divest themselves of control over currency and Banking. So the people's representatives smelt something adverse to public interests in it. When the combatants came to grips with the problem, the issues came to be centred round several questions,—the chief of which was whether the Bank should be

a shareholders' bank as Government desired, or a State Bank as the people suggested. Then the next issue was what was to be the electorate for the Directorate and how many of the Directors were to be nominated and how many elected and how! Once the structure of the Bank was settled, the rest of the development would naturally follow. If it was a shareholders' bank, these would constitute the electorate, but if it was a State Bank, then semi-public Institutions would elect the Directors such as the Federated Chambers, Associated Chambers, Provincial Co-operative Banks and the Central and Provincial Legislatures. We need not go into figures of representation. But let us only say that Government had offered at first 9 elected Directors out of sixteen. To-day the Reserve Bank Act provides for 8 only out of 16,—the same coming to be elected in four years. Various were the transformations that the Bill had undergone from stage to stage. At last, on the motion of Mr. Srinivasa Iyengar, Government agreed to have a stockholders' bank—the maximum stock that could be held by any one being Rs. 10,000, and each stock-holder having but one vote irrespective of the stock he held. It looked as though everything was well. When almost every one was satisfied, Government felt apprehensive of the result, and in view of the divergence in certain important particulars, decided not to proceed any further but bring forward a new Bill. But the President would not allow its introduction, on a principle laid down by the Speaker of the House of Commons that, when essential alterations were to be made in any Bill which had come before the House, the proper course was to ask leave to withdraw the original Bill and re-submit it as altered. In the circumstances, the Government decided to proceed with the old Bill, but lost an important clause in a snap division, as it was said. So it was decided to adjourn the Bill *sine die*.

The Public Safety Bill was another measure which had occasioned acute controversy and provoked the hostility of the Congress Party. Though ostensibly it was directed against Foreigners, yet, no doubt was left in the minds of the people that it would be used against Indians, as was the case with the D.O.R.A. of India. Speaking in the Assembly on the Bill, Lala Lajpat Rai said:

"I will break no bones by stating to this House that this is not a measure really intended against foreign Communists only. It is only the thin end of the wedge. It is really directed against the Indians themselves, Nationalists as well as Labourites. The foreign Communist will go away, will be turned out at the cost of the Indian tax-payer, and will be taken to the British Isles or anywhere else, being comfortably berthed in the P. and O. steamer, but if this House accepts the principle of this Bill, and accepts Clause 2, that acceptance could at any time be utilized for the purpose of prosecuting Nationalists and others who want Indian economic and political freedom. This is really the motive behind this legislation. The clause is wide. It is not Communist action that is proposed to be punished or dealt with. It is the advocacy, directly or indirectly, of the doctrine stated in the clause. The words are 'directly or indirectly advocates the overthrow by force or violence the Government established by Law in Bri-



tish India.' Messrs. Jawaharlal and Srinivasa Iyengar who advocate Complete Independence come under the Law."

The Bill was voted upon and there was a tie. The President voted against and it was dropped.

The Calcutta Congress was one of the important sessions of the National gathering, in that it was destined to show the way to future progress. It was this importance that led to the election of Pandit Motilal Nehru as the President. There was the additional circumstance of a full Convention of the All-Parties' Conference being tacked on to the Congress. The Simon Commission's second visit to India had taken place and the Commission was actually touring the country while the Congress was sitting. Pandit Motilal Nehru's Address gives some details of the intensity of the boycott of the Commission particularly at Cawnpore, Lahore and Lucknow, and the reaction it had on the Anglo-Indian mind and outlook. English newspapers of Calcutta were suggesting "twenty years of resolute Government," and threatening a resistance of the Indian demand for freedom to the "last ounce of ammunition." Lord Irwin himself declared that it was the plain duty of the Government to take whatever steps it deemed necessary to prevent the recurrence of these discreditable incidents. But what did Government do in their own turn? Motilalji asked how any Englishman would like his house to be broken into, his guests treated to a sound thrashing and then arrested and imprisoned for the night for making a peaceful demonstration from his own terrace. It was a fact that the Maharajah of Mahmudabad and his palace were surrounded with a cordon of Police while the Commission was being entertained in a neighbouring park. When the Commission was touring Lahore, men like Dr. Alam and Dr. Satyapal, under the leadership of Lala Lajpat Rai conducted processions against the Commission. Lajpat Rai was beaten on the chest and hardly recovered from the effects of the injuries. Shortly after, he passed away. Panditji declared in emphatic terms that our destination is freedom, the form and extent of which would depend upon the time when, and the circumstances under which, it came. Then he dwelt upon the All-Parties' Conference and asserted that Government must "begin at the point at which the All-Parties' Conference have now arrived and push forward with them as far as they would go." Panditji continued: "Let us then pause and take stock of our equipment and finally throw the strength of our whole being into one great effort to reach the goal." A special feature of the Calcutta Congress (1928) was the large number of messages of sympathy and congratulations from individuals and institutions abroad, ranging from Mrs. Sarojini Naidu in New York, Mrs. Sun Yat Sen and M. Romain Rolland, to the Persian Socialist Party, the Communist Party of New Zealand, and the League of the Rights of Man.

The resolutions dealt with were of the usual type, except that an ultimatum was given to the Government, in regard to the destiny of India. The greetings of the friends in foreign countries were heartily reciprocated, and the A.I.C.C. was called upon to establish a contact by opening a Foreign Department in this behalf. A pan-Asiatic Federation was con-



templated. Congratulations were sent to China on having attained full freedom and greetings to Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Iraq. The second World Congress of the League against Imperialism was welcomed. The Madras resolution against war-danger was reiterated. British goods were asked to be boycotted.

Congratulations were offered to Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel on the success of the Bardoli struggle. Congressmen were asked to abstain from attending Government parties, Darbars, and all other official and non-official functions held by Government officials, or in their honour. There was a demand put forward for Responsible Government in the Indian States. The Calcutta resolution on the question of Indian States has since become classical, and the volume of agitation that has grown in the country has largely centred round it. Accordingly we quote it in full:

“XVII. The Congress urges (on) the Ruling Princes of the Indian States to introduce Responsible Government based on representative institutions in the States, and to issue immediately Proclamations or enact Laws guaranteeing elementary and fundamental rights of citizenship, such as rights of association, free speech, free Press and security of person and property.”

The Congress once again passed a resolution expressing sympathy with the ex-Maharaja of Nabha and also with the families of five Bengalis who died in incarceration. Certain Police raids and searches in Lahore were condemned. A tribute was paid to the memory of Lala Lajpat Rai, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Andhra Ratna Gopala Krishnayya, Maganlal Gandhi, Gopabandhu Das and Lord Sinha. Regarding the ultimatum referred to already, the Congress passed the following resolution:

“This Congress having considered the Constitution recommended by the All-Parties' Committee Report welcomes it as a great contribution towards the solution of India's political and communal problems and congratulates the Committee on the virtual unanimity of its recommendations, and, whilst adhering to the resolution relating to Complete Independence passed at the Madras Congress, approves of the Constitution drawn up by the Committee as a great step in political advance, specially as it represents the largest measure of agreement attained among the important parties in the country.

“Subject to the exigencies of the political situation, this Congress will adopt the Constitution if it is accepted in its entirety by the British Parliament on or before the 31st December, 1929, but in the event of its non-acceptance by the date or its earlier rejection, the Congress will organise a campaign of non-violent Non-co-operation by advising the country to refuse taxation and in such other manner as may be decided upon.

“Consistently with the above, nothing in this resolution shall interfere with the carrying on in the name of the Congress of the propaganda for Complete Independence.”

This was the form in which the main resolution of the session was passed. But it had a sad and controversial history behind it. The resolution as it was originally introduced by Gandhi in the Subjects Committee stood thus:—

"This Congress having considered the Constitution recommended by the All-Parties' Committee Report welcomes it as a great contribution towards the solution of India's political and communal problems and congratulates the Committee on the virtual unanimity of its recommendations, and, whilst adhering to the resolution relating to Complete Independence passed at the Madras Congress, adopts the Constitution drawn up by the Committee as a great step in political advance, specially as it represents the largest measure of agreement attained among the important parties in the country.

"Provided however, that the Congress shall not be bound by the Constitution if it is not accepted on or before the 31st December, 1930 and provided further that in the event of non-acceptance by the British Parliament of the Constitution by that date, the Congress will revive non-violent Non-co-operation by advising the country to refuse taxation and every aid to Government.

"The President is hereby authorised to send the text of this resolution together with a copy of the said Report to His Excellency the Viceroy for such action as he may be pleased to take.

"Nothing in the resolution shall interfere with the propaganda for familiarising the people with the goal of Independence, in so far as it does not conflict with the prosecution of the campaign for the adoption of the said Report."

To this, amendments were moved by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subash Chandra Bose of an identical nature. Their aim was to put no time-limit, nor, even by implication, to accept for India Dominion Status as contemplated in the Constitution drawn up by the All-Parties' Conference. Pandit Jawaharlal's amendment ran thus:—

"i. This Congress adheres to the decision of the Madras Congress declaring Complete Independence to be the goal of the Indian people and is of opinion that there can be no true freedom till the British connection is severed.

"ii. The Congress accepts the recommendations of the Nehru Committee as agreed to by the Lucknow All-Parties' Conference for the settlement of communal differences.

"iii. The Congress cordially congratulates the Nehru Committee for their labours, patriotism and foresightedness, and, without prejudice to the resolution of the Congress relating to Complete Independence, is of opinion that the recommendations of the Nehru Committee are a great step towards political advance, and without committing itself to every detail, generally approves of them."

Gandhi, who was the sponsor of the resolution, deprecated the omission of the clause, "the President is hereby authorised to send the text

of this resolution together with a copy of the said Report to His Excellency the Viceroy for such action as he may be pleased to take." Gandhi held that the sending of the resolution to the Viceroy was only an act of necessary courtesy, and if we were not suffering from a needless superiority complex and a sense of diffidence, we would not insist upon this clause being dropped. On the rest of the resolution, after a great deal of discussion a compromise was arrived at between the members of the Independence League and others in the Subjects Committee. This compromise was however not respected in the open Congress where an amendment was moved by Subash Chandra Bose and seconded by Jawaharlal,—and both of them parties to the compromise. The repudiation of a solemn promise deeply hurt Gandhi and others. Gandhi gave expression to his feelings in very strong terms, when he moved the compromise resolution in the open session which was carried by a majority.

"You may take the name of Independence on your lips, as the Muslim utter the name of Allah or the pious Hindu utters the name of Krishna or Ram, but all that muttering will be an empty formula if there is no honour behind it. If you are not prepared to stand by your own words, where will Independence be? Independence is a thing, after all, made of sterner stuff. It is not made by the juggling of words."

The Congress also laid down the future programme in the following Resolution:—

"XIV. Meanwhile the Congress shall engage in the following activities:—

(1) In the Legislatures and outside, every attempt will be made to bring about total prohibition of intoxicating drugs and drinks; picketing of liquor and drug shops shall be organised wherever desirable and possible;

(2) Inside and outside the Legislatures, methods suited to respective environments shall be immediately adopted to bring about boycott of foreign cloth by advocating and stimulating production and adoption of hand-spun and head-woven khaddar;

(3) Specific grievances wherever discovered and where people are ready shall be sought to be redressed by non-violent action as was done recently at Bardoli;

(4) Members of Legislatures returned on the Congress ticket shall devote the bulk of their time to the constructive work settled from time to time by the Congress Committee;

(5) The Congress organisation shall be perfected by enlisting members and enforcing stricter discipline;

(6) Measures shall be taken to remove the disabilities of women and they will be invited and encouraged to take their due share in national upbuilding;

(7) Measures shall be taken to rid the country of social abuses;



(8) It will be the duty of all Congressmen, being Hindus, to do all they can to remove untouchability and help the so-called untouchables in every possible way in their attempt to remove their disabilities and better their condition;

(9) Volunteers shall be enlisted to take up work among the city labourers and village reconstruction, in addition to what is being done through the spinning wheel and khaddar;

(10) Such other work as may be deemed advisable in order to advance nation-building in all its departments and in order to enable the Congress to secure the co-operation in the national effort of the people engaged in different pursuits.

In order to finance the activities mentioned in the foregoing programme, the Congress expects every Congressman to contribute to the Congress coffers a certain percentage of his or her income according to his or her ability."

Amongst the more important resolutions of Calcutta was one "condemning the action of Government in arresting and deporting without trial of Mr. W. J. Johnstone, the fraternal delegate to the Congress from the League Against Imperialism, and considers this as a deliberate attempt to prevent Congress from developing international contacts."

The Calcutta Session will be remembered for a demonstration in which the labourers numbering over 50,000 men from neighbouring mill areas marched in an orderly fashion and saluted the National Flag hoisted in the Congress grounds, occupied the Pandal for nearly two hours, and passed their resolution deciding for Independence for India and then walked out.

An outstanding feature of the year was the rise of the Youth movement in the country. Youth Leagues and students' organisations had been formed all over the country and were specially strong in Bombay and Bengal. Delegates were sent by some of these organisations to the World Youth Congress held at Eerde in Holland in the previous August. Young men had also taken a very prominent part in the Simon Boycott demonstrations. In Lucknow they were the chief sufferers from police *lathis* and baton blows.

The Working Committee earlier in the year had decided to appoint research scholars to carry on research work on behalf of the Congress. This was an important decision which should have been of great help in bringing together useful information on public questions and at the same time in training competent young men for national service. But research work could only be done properly in a permanent office with a good library attached to it and in an atmosphere free from political excitement.

The Hindustani Seva Dal had started a physical culture institution at Bagalkot in the Karnatak. They had held several training camps in



various parts of the country and they had added to their reputation for doing rough work.

We must now tell the reader how Gandhi was drawn to Calcutta from his comparative retirement. It may be remembered that he was imprisoned soon after the Ahmedabad Congress in March 1922, and was absent from the Congress at Gaya, 1922, the Special Session at Delhi (September, 1923,) and the Annual Session at Cocanada, 1923. He was released on the 5th of February, 1924 and presided over the Belgaum Congress. He attended the Cawnpore Congress only to ratify the Patna decisions of partition, or partnership,—whatever you may call it,—with the Swaraj Party. Then he took a vow of a year's political silence which he broke at Gauhati. At Gauhati his participation in the Congress deliberations was active. But in Madras he was absolutely unconcerned and did not even attend the sittings of the Subjects Committee. It was doubtful whether he would have taken any interest in the Calcutta Session. For some years previously he had been spending a month at the Wardha Ashram on the eve of the annual sessions of the Congress. This year too when the Calcutta Session was about to meet in December, 1928, he was at Wardha, and Pandit Motilal Nehru, who was given a grand reception in a carriage drawn by 36 horses, found himself in the midst of a somewhat intricate situation. The protestants who had signed a letter at Lucknow (All-Parties' Conference) advocating Independence as against the Dominion Status on which the Conference had framed a Constitution were there, (Jawaharlal being one of them) having formed an Independence League. The Bengal friends had a league of their own. Subash Chandra was at its head.

A word now requires to be said about the All-Parties' Conference itself. It became a sad failure; except the Muslims, the other minorities, one after another, deprecated communal representation. On the other hand, Mr. Jinnah who had just come from England and who had, ever since he arrived, been falling foul of the Nehru Report, began to oppose it. Some Muslims had even earlier evinced hostility to it.

From the supplementary Report of the Committee of the All-Parties' Conference, we learn that the Report published by the Conference had been subject to various kinds of criticisms. Says the supplementary Report:—

“The ranks of our critics have been joined recently, we regret to say, by the Aga Khan. He tells us that the British people could never honourably agree to leave an armed force, or even civil administrators, in a country for the good government of which it was no longer responsible . . . if the British did this in a fit of madness, of which there has been no parallel in history, they would go down not only in the estimation of the whole world, but in history for all time, for supplying armed force to a country wherein their responsibility had come to an end, to be administered at the beck and call of other people.”

The Aga Khan advocated independence for each Indian Province and said, that the position of each Province must be akin to that of Bavaria in the former German Confederation,—rather than that of an American State or a Swiss Canton. The Committee combated both these positions in their supplementary Report. At the Convention itself in Calcutta, Mahomed Ali moved a number of amendments which, however, were rejected.

Jinnah summarily adjourned the Muslim League for want of a quorum. The All-Parties' Convention was really lying in Calcutta on its sick bed, one might say, its death bed. The longer it lived, the more numerous became the demands of the poor relations that gathered round it. Like the calf at Sabarmati, it could not live but would not die. It was therefore necessary to smoothen its way to heaven. Who else could have the courage to do this last act of service to the dying friend than Gandhi? His shoulders are broad enough to bear the obloquy of doing to death the Convention. He moved that the Convention do adjourn *sine die* and the motion was passed. At this time the Congress was definitely coming back to Gandhi; but it came back burdened with its own new loads. Gandhi was yet to see what the Congress Party in the Council would do to shake itself off from the charm of the Councils. Already the A.I.C.C. had passed in Delhi, in October, 1928, the following resolution on Councils:—

“The Committee notes with regret that various Congress Council Parties have not been following the instructions contained in the Madras Congress resolution on Council work. While giving therefore greater latitude to the Congress Parties in view of the difficult situation, the Committee hopes that the spirit of the Congress resolution would be adhered to.”

Four contradictory positions were delineated there. First a condemnation, then a condonation, next the urge for a certain latitude, and finally the demand for not abandoning the longitude.

Gandhi having gone to Calcutta, remained there to take active part in the Congress deliberations, shaped the resolution of the session and sponsored it. The political situation was very dark at the time. The rumour of the impending prosecutions of the advocates of Independence, the provoking speech of the Viceroy in Calcutta, the conviction of the Editor of *Forward*, and the orgy of prosecutions in Madras, made a deep impression upon his mind. Disquieting as all these happenings were, Gandhi was greatly disturbed by all that he had seen in Calcutta,—a compromise deliberately entered into and the breaking of it first by Bengal, then by U.P., and finally by Madras. As against these two sets of conditions, he had an invitation from Europe and, circumstances permitting, he had fully intended to undertake the European tour early in 1929. Strangely, enough, he had Pandit Motilal Nehru's permission for it. But after the most careful consideration, and consultation with friends, he had come to the conclusion that circumstances compelled him to give up the tour, for that year at any rate. “I dare not think of next year,” wrote he. “A Danish friend writes to me saying that I could usefully go to



Europe only as a representative of Free India. I feel the truth of the remark." Gandhi instinctively came to the right decision and wrote:

"I have no voice from within prompting me to go. On the contrary, having put a constructive resolution before the Congress and having received universal support, I feel that I will be guilty of desertion if I now went away to Europe. It may be that those who voted for the resolution never meant to carry it out. It may be that I shall have nothing to do during the year in respect of the programme, but I feel that it is not for me to reason thus. I must not lose faith in the workers. A voice from within tells me that I must not only hold myself in readiness to do what comes my way, but I must even think out and suggest means for working out what, to me, is a great programme. Above all, I must prepare myself for the next year's struggle whatever shape it may take."

This was uttered in the first week of February, 1929. We shall presently see what remained in store for the country in February, 1930.



PART IV

SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I

THE PREPARATION (1929)

Early situation—Public Safety Bill re-introduced—Auxiliary Committees—Legislative Front—President Patel's Statement—Working Committee's resolution—Reports of Sub-Committee of Volunteers—Foreign cloth—Prohibition—Untouchability—Congress organization—Repression—Gandhi's Burma tour—A. I. C. C. meets in Bombay—Working Committee's instructions—Rs. 1,500 voted in aid of the Meerut prisoners on their trial—Working Committee meets in Delhi—Adjourned—Advises Council Party to resign seats till A. I. C. C. meets—Congressmen to pay a quota to Congress—Repression again—Jatindra Nath Das's hunger-strike—Hunger Strikers' Bill—Lahore Congress Presidentship—The National train—Phongy Wazaya and Jatindas succumb—A. I. C. C. meets at Lucknow—African situation—Lord Irwin's Announcement re: Reforms—Leaders' Manifesto—The terms—Gandhi's Reply—Uproar in Parliament—Change of policy—All-Parties' Conference—Pandit Motilal unrelenting—Interview with the Viceroy arranged for Leaders—Bomb under the Viceregal train—The interview—Embassy leaves Viceregal lodge empty-handed—The Lahore Congress—Intense cold—The Congress in a Cauldron—Issues—Presidential Address—Independence and the Congress Creed—The main Resolution—Congress dates altered—Other resolutions—East Africa—The States—Communal question—Financial Burdens—Gandhi fails to carry Decentralization of the three Committees and reduction of delegates—Labour Strikes—Foreign Propaganda—Foreign Department—Pan-Asiatic Federation—Labour Research Department—Volunteers—One year's time passes—Flag of Complete Independence hoisted—General observations—The formation of the new Working Committee—Congress Democratic Party formed—A rough voyage—But a safe haven.

CHAPTER II

A FIGHT TO THE FINISH (1930)

The year of action—The key to the situation—Declaration re: Independence—The Purna Swaraj Day—The celebrations—The object of the London Conference—Viceroy speaks before the Assembly—Gandhi's reply—His eleven points—Textile Industry Bill—Civil Disobedience—The resignations—Working Committee meets at Sabarmati—Its resolution on C. D.—C. D., how begun—Fears re: C. D.—Story of Salt—History of Salt Duties—The Philosophy of the Satyagraha Campaign—Theodore Parker's example—Gandhi sees by instinct—Gandhi's Letter to the Viceroy—Viceroy's reply—Gandhi's rejoinder—Preparation

that no question shall be asked nor any resolution moved in regard to any matter which is under adjudication by a Court of Law having jurisdiction in any part of His Majesty's Dominions. The question therefore arises, whether it is possible for this House to discuss the motion that the Public Safety Bill be taken into consideration without referring to any of the matters which are *sub judice* in the Meerut trial. I think there can be no two opinions that real debate on the Bill is not possible. Besides, acceptance of the Bill would mean practically the acceptance of the fundamental basis of the case for it, and rejection of the Bill would mean the rejection of that basis, and in either case such a course is bound to effect prejudicially the case for the prosecution or for the defence in the Meerut trial as the case may be. I do not see how in these circumstances I can legitimately allow the Government to proceed further with this Bill at this stage. I have decided, instead of giving any Ruling, to advise the Government themselves in the first instance to consider the observations I have made and postpone the Bill pending the Meerut trial, or, if they attach greater importance to the passing of the Bill at this juncture, to withdraw the Meerut Case and then proceed with the Bill."

Government expressed themselves as unable to accept either of the two alternative suggestions put before them and the President finally gave his verdict, ruling out the motion on the ground that it "involved an abuse of the forms and procedure of this House." The next day the Viceroy addressed the two Houses and declared that it was imperative for Government to obtain the powers proposed in the Public Safety Bill without further delay. Accordingly he issued an Ordinance giving to the Executive the arbitrary power they needed. Mr. Patel thereupon wrote a letter to the Viceroy protesting against what he considered to have been the criticisms passed on his Ruling in the Viceroy's Address. But the Viceroy's Private Secretary answered stating that "His Excellency desires me to say that it was no part of his intention either to criticise the Ruling you had given or pass censure upon you for it, and that he fully shares your anxiety to maintain the dignity of the House and the authority of the Chair."

We have referred to the Trades Disputes Bill. It only remains to state that the Bill was passed on the 8th of April and its passage was rendered memorable by the fact that, at the moment when the House was re-assembling after the division and while the President was announcing his intention of proceeding to other business, two bombs flung from the visitors' gallery burst amongst the benches occupied by the official members and some persons were slightly injured.

Immediately after the Congress session in Calcutta, the Working Committee appointed a number of sub-committees to give effect to the Congress programme. Committees were formed for the boycott of foreign cloth, prohibition, removal of untouchability, Congress organisation, volunteers, and the removal of disabilities of women. The last named sub-committee has apparently done no work and has submitted no report.



The Volunteers Sub-Committee made various recommendations, in particular recommending that the Hindustani Seva Dal be strengthened and should be fully utilized for training volunteers for national work.

The Foreign Cloth Boycott Committee under the chairmanship of Gandhi and with Mr. Jairamdas Doulatram as its able and effective Secretary, functioned throughout the year and carried on ceaseless activity in favour of the boycott. Mr. Jairamdas resigned his membership of the Bombay Council in order to devote himself wholly to the work of the boycott and fixed the headquarters of his committee in Bombay. The Committee developed direct contacts with Provincial and District Congress Committees and issued numerous pamphlets and leaflets. Early in the year, numerous bonfires of foreign cloth took place. One of these in Calcutta resulted in the prosecution by Government of Gandhi as already referred to.

The Prohibition Committee had been in the charge of Syt. C. Rajagopalachari, who made the subject of prohibition his very own and had brought his great abilities to bear on the furtherance of this campaign. Work was carried on largely in South India and in Gujarat and the results achieved have been considerable. The campaign had attracted international attention. The Madras Government had been induced to allot four lakhs of rupees for carrying on an official propaganda against the drink and drug evil. The U.P. Government appeared likely to take a similar step. Mr. Rajagopalachari became the Secretary of the Prohibition League of India and was editing their quarterly magazine, *Prohibition*.

The Campaign for the removal of untouchability was in the charge of Syt. Jammalal Bajaj who had worked strenuously in its behalf. Public opinion was everywhere being roused in favour of the removal of the disabilities of the classes which have for long been suppressed. Many well-known temples, which would not admit these classes, were thrown open to them. The Committee has also succeeded in opening numerous wells and schools to these suppressed classes. Many Municipalities are co-operating in this work. The Secretary of the Committee, Syt. Jammalal Bajaj, toured extensively in Madras, Central Provinces, Rajputana, Sindh, Kashmir, Punjab and the N.-W. Frontier Province.

The effect of the propaganda for the removal of untouchability was two-fold. The so-called higher castes have been induced in some measure to give up the exclusiveness which they had for long jealously kept, and the suppressed classes have become self-conscious and assertive of their rights. In some places, where the demand from the latter for a removal of their disabilities has not met with an adequate response, friction has arisen and 'Satyagraha' or some kind of Passive Resistance has been threatened. The tension that prevailed for some time during the year has eased a little now. It is clear that untouchability and other social disabilities which certain classes have suffered from are doomed and cannot last much longer.

The Committee for Congress re-organisation submitted its Report early in the year. In view of the action contemplated next year, great

importance was attached to the question of organisation and the subject was fully considered by the Working Committee and the A.I.C.C.

Before we continue the story of Legislative activity in the September session, we must describe one or two events connected with Gandhi. Gandhi was making a tour in India and passed Calcutta on his way to Burma. There a bonfire of foreign cloth took place and in that connection he was charged in the second week of March, 1929, with committing nuisance, in that he chose to disobey or abetted disobeying an order designed to prohibit the burning in public of straw and such other articles. Sir Charles Tegart, the Police Commissioner of Calcutta, had exhumed Section 66 (2) of the Calcutta Police Act. It is said that a drowning man catches at a straw. But it is not known why this living bureaucracy should have clutched at this 'straw' section of the City Police Act. To make a long story short, the Police tried to shunt the engine off the main line of F.C.B. (Foreign Cloth Boycott) to the side track of the C.D. (Civil Disobedience). But this proved a failure. Gandhi proceeded to Burma and returned shortly after. He was tried and fined Re. 1. Thereafter he made his memorable tour in Andhra Desa in which he collected for khaddar two lacs and seventy thousand rupees in six weeks. Soon after, the All-India Congress Committee met in the month of May, 1929, in Bombay.

The Bombay meeting was rather an important one. Government had announced that the life of the Assembly would be extended. This alone called for action from the Congress. The large number of arrests all over the country including that of Mr. Sambamurti, a member of the Working Committee, the ruthless repression going on in the Punjab lending itself to the suspicion that it was being done with the view *inter alia* of interfering with preparations for the forthcoming session of the Congress in Lahore,—these called for vigorous action from the Congress organisations in every Province. It was decided at Bombay that Provincial Congress Committees should have not less than a quarter per cent of the total population of the Province as original members, and should have not less than 50 per cent of the districts represented on the Province. District and Tehsil organisations should have not less than 3/4 per cent of the population as original members and so on. A village organisation was to have not less than 1 per cent. of its population as original members. It would be open to the Working Committee to disaffiliate any organisation that did not carry out the instructions. Power was given to the Working Committee to adopt such measures as it might consider fit in the interests of the country as regards the action to be taken by the members of the Congress Parties in the Assembly and the Provincial Councils. East Africa was the subject of a resolution that it should receive the full support of the Congress in its struggle for political and economic equality. The Committee further resolved that a *Congress Manual* be prepared, embodying authoritative chapters on the various political, administrative, economic and cultural problems comprised by the Swaraj movement, and that the A.I.C.C. office do incur the necessary expenditure therefor.

The Working Committee confirmed the deputation, by the President, of the Rev. Ottama to represent the Congress at the State funeral of Dr.

Sun Yat Sen, and Mr. Shiva Prasad Gupta was elected to represent India at the Congress of the League Against Imperialism. In regard to the Council Party in the Legislatures, the Working Committee resolved that "all Congress members of the Central Legislature or of any of the Provincial Councils, excepting Bengal and Assam, shall abstain from attending any meeting of the said Legislatures or Councils or any of the Committees appointed by them or by the Government till such time as the A.I.C.C. or the Working Committee decides otherwise, and that the Congress members shall henceforth devote all their available time to the carrying out of the Congress programme, provided that the Congress members of Bengal and Assam Councils shall, after being elected, attend only one meeting for the sole purpose of registering their names." It was in the sitting of the A.I.C.C. held in May that the Committee resolved it to be essential to make revolutionary changes in the present economic and social structure of society and to remove the gross inequalities in order to remove poverty and misery and to ameliorate the condition of the Indian masses. A sum of Rs. 1,500 was voted in aid of the Meerut prisoners.

On March 20th, 1929, in Bombay, Punjab and the United Provinces, under Sec. 121A of the Indian Penal Code, hundreds of houses were searched. Those arrested included eight members of the All-India Congress Committee. All the arrested persons were brought to Meerut where their trial began in what has come to be known as the Meerut Conspiracy Case, the charge being that they were spreading Communistic propaganda. Mr. H. L. Hutchinson, Editor of *New Spark*, was later added to the accused. A Central Defence Committee, chiefly consisting of prominent Congressmen, was formed to help the accused. As already stated, the Working Committee, contrary to its usual practice, made a grant of Rs. 1,500 towards the defence. The preliminary enquiry in the case dragged on for many months and was concluded a few days prior to the close of the year. The trial attracted great attention in India and England. The Director of Government Publicity was present at the trial to supervise personally the publicity and propaganda arrangements in the Case.

The Working Committee met soon after once again, on July 15th, in Delhi and was of opinion that it would be in the interest of the Swaraj movement to advise the members of the various Legislatures to resign their seats. In view, however, of the importance of the question, the Committee considered that the final decision should be taken by the A.I.C.C. It, therefore, resolved that a special meeting of the A.I.C.C. be convened for the purpose at Allahabad on Friday, the 26th July, 1929. It will be remembered that the last clause of the main resolution of Calcutta called upon the people to finance the Congress movement by paying a particular percentage of their income to the national cause. At first 5 per cent. was proposed, later 2½ per cent. but it was considered wise, judging from the timidity and nervousness exhibited at the meeting by some of the richer members of the Congress, to leave the matter to their discretion. A list was published in the July Bulletin showing some of the collections so made. Altogether the response was poor.

The period was one of much repression in the country. At this time Government had banned Dr. Sunderland's book, *India in Bondage*, and



Babu Ramananda Chatterjee, Editor of *The Modern Review*, was arrested for publishing the book.

Bhagat Singh and Dutt who had been arrested in connection with the Delhi (Assembly) Bomb Case were sentenced to transportation for life. They had declared that they had thrown the bomb for demonstrative purposes.

We have already dwelt at length upon the hunger-strike in the Lahore Conspiracy Case.

Another group Case was going on in Calcutta in which Syt. Subash Chandra Bose, a member of the Working Committee, and several other prominent Congressmen were being tried.

Arrests of Indians for political reasons were also reported from Shanghai and the Malay States.

Apart from numerous trials and convictions of political and labour workers, methods of repression were used by the Police which were described by the A.I.C.C. as 'barbarous'. On one occasion seven young men collecting funds for the defence of the Lahore under-trial prisoners were beaten by the Police, in the presence of the District Magistrate, till some of them were senseless and all had received severe injuries. Their offence was their crying "Down with Imperialism!" and "Long Live Revolution!" Even more barbarous treatment was resorted to in Lahore in the case of the under-trial prisoners in the Conspiracy Case. They were beaten in the open court in the presence of the trying Magistrate and, it was stated, they were ill-treated in a variety of ways, outside the court-house.

Apart from them and the later trials and convictions, it should be remembered that there were a large number of long-term political prisoners in various jails in India and the Andaman Islands. These included detenues under Regulation III of 1818, and Martial Law prisoners who were sentenced by special tribunals during the Martial Law regime in the Punjab in 1919. Besides these, there were twenty-seven political prisoners in jails who were sentenced to transportation for life in 1914-15 during war time. They were tried and sentenced by special commissions and not by the ordinary Law Courts. They had been in prison for 15 years by this time.

Labour troubles and strikes continued during the year and came to a head. There was a big general strike in the Bombay textile mills involving 150,000 workers. The strike demonstrated that Indian Labour was developing a new outlook. The strike was a great success to begin with, and showed that there was considerable organising ability behind it. But after six months or more it failed. Another general strike took place in the Jute areas in Bengal, involving about 25,000 workers. The Jute workers were badly organised but they succeeded. Sporadic strikes however continued and partly undid the work of the general strike.

Still another strike which had attracted widespread attention and sympathy was the strike of the tin-plate workers in Golmuri near Jamshedpur. This strike involved 3,000 workers, mostly skilled, and it con-



tinued for eight and a half months. The demands of the strikers were very moderate but the employers and the Bihar Government persistently refused even an enquiry. The Legislative Assembly censured the attitude of Government and passed a resolution for the withdrawal of the protection given to the tin-plate industry. But, as often happens with the resolutions of the Assembly, this resolution also was ignored by Government. No enquiry took place and the strike continued. Sympathetic strikes took place in Budge Budge and elsewhere.

The South Indian Railway strike of 1928 was followed by the arrest and trial for conspiracy of many persons. The Judge of Trichinopoly sentenced fifteen of these to ten years' rigorous imprisonment in April.

Two of the members of our Working Committee were absent in foreign countries for the greater part of the year. Shrimati Sarojini Naidu returned from America after a very successful tour in August. In November, she went to East Africa to preside over the East African Indian Congress. One of the Congress Treasurers, Syt. Shiva Prasad Gupta, had been in Europe for many months.

Mr. Shiva Prasad Gupta attended the second World Congress of the League Against Imperialism at Frankfurt in July on behalf of the National Congress. His report of this Congress was placed before the Working Committee.

Immediately after the Calcutta Congress, the Working Committee made a grant of £30 per month for the establishment of a Students' Information Bureau in Berlin. This Bureau was opened soon after under the supervision of A. C. N. Nambiar, and it fully justified itself by the help it gave to numerous Indian students and visitors. Mr. Shiva Prasad Gupta inspected it during his European tour and he wrote in terms of high appreciation of its work. On his recommendation the Working Committee increased the grant by £2 per month for a reading room. The Bureau was run efficiently and sent full reports and accounts monthly. Its success was largely due to the honorary service of Mr. Nambiar.

The Calcutta Congress directed the A.I.C.C. to open a Foreign Department and the Working Committee authorised the working Secretary to take the necessary steps in this behalf. The Secretary had been in personal charge of the foreign work of the A.I.C.C. and had endeavoured to develop contacts with organisations and individuals in other countries. This was not particularly easy, as numerous difficulties were placed in the way of foreign correspondence by the Government censorship.

The Calcutta Congress also directed the Working Committee to take steps to summon a meeting of a Pan-Asiatic Federation in 1930 in India. The Committee called upon Mr. S. Satyamurti and the Secretary to take the necessary steps and to report. In this report it was pointed out that, if the meeting was to be held in 1930, it should take place at the time of the Congress in December 1930. Further, various difficulties in the way of holding such a Pan-Asiatic Conference were pointed out.

In compliance with the decision of the A. I. C. C., a Labour Research Department was opened, as a branch of the A.I.C.C. Office.

THE HISTORY OF THE CONGRESS

The Hindustani Seva Dal carried on their work of training volunteers in various parts of the country. Most of this work was done in Karnataka, a Province where the Head Office of the Dal and their Academy of Physical Culture were situated. But many camps were held in other parts of the country and the demand for trainers had been greater than the supply. The Dal helped greatly in enrolling members for the Congress and in the boycott of foreign cloth. They fully co-operated in organising an efficient volunteer corps for the Lahore Congress.

The Hindustani Seva Dal succeeded beyond expectation in organising a National Flag Day every month. At Calcutta they decided that the National Flag be hoisted all over the country at 8 a.m. on the last Sunday of every month. This monthly Flag unfurling became very popular. Buildings and many Municipalities had it unfurled with solemn ceremony. The H. S. Dal was reorganized and a Constitution was framed.

The month of August was no better than the previous months. Leading men were being arrested everywhere. Sirdar Mangal Singh, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Master Mota Singh who had served out his 7 years' term, and Dr. Satyapal, in the Punjab, Mr. Annapoor Nayya in Andhra, were all placed under arrest. Dr. Satyapal was sentenced to two years' R.I. Repression in the Punjab was particularly ruthless. While free men were thus being arrested, those inside the jails were being treated with undue severity. Bhagat Singh and Dutt and several other prisoners had been by this time for 6 weeks on hunger-strike. Bhagat Singh and Dutt were just then sentenced to transportation for life, in the Assembly Bomb Case. But Bhagat Singh and Dutt were also among the accused in the case known as the Lahore Conspiracy Case, although Dutt was later discharged in that Case. That Case arose out of the murder at 4 p.m. on the 17th September, 1928, of the Superintendent of Police of Lahore, named Mr. Saunders. The prisoners went on hunger-strike to secure redress of their grievances, notably to secure humane treatment to prisoners in jails, and the famous Jatindra Nath Das was one of the batch. Jatin's contention was that the treatment accorded to Indians was different to that of Europeans. He did not care for special facilities accorded to them. And he was the solitary individual who, like Mac Swiney, continued his hunger-strike to death on the 64th day, as we shall see later on.

During this year contact was established with various national and international organisations, in England and on the Continent. A Congress Muslim Party was formed in Bombay, and an All-India Nationalist Muslim Party was organised on the occasion of the A.I.C.C. meeting at Allahabad. At this meeting, the Committee endorsed the opinion of the Working Committee that Congress members of Councils should resign their seats, but deemed it proper, in view of the letters received on the subject, to hold over the matter till after the Lahore Congress. But that did not mean that those who were willing to resign earlier should not do so.



We have, in passing, referred to the hunger-strike in the Punjab. Government felt embarrassed by these strikes. They thought that the strikes were particularly designed to embarrass the Police in its prosecution of the Lahore Conspiracy Case. They therefore brought up a Bill before the Assembly on the 12th September, 1929, to enable the magistracy to go on with cases in spite of the absence of the accused, when such absence is due to the fact of their having by their own acts disabled themselves. On the 16th of September, however, Government agreed, in view of the controversial character of the Bill, to circulate it for further opinion, but reserved to themselves the right to take such action in the future as lay within their powers, should urgent necessity arise. As a matter of fact, the Governor-General did pass an Ordinance in this behalf shortly after, known as the Lahore Conspiracy Trial Ordinance.

Great events were ahead. The Lahore Congress, which has since become a historic session, required a President like any other. In the provincial voting, ten Provinces voted for Gandhi, five for Vallabhbhai J. Patel, and three for Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhi was declared duly elected, but he resigned and it became necessary under the Constitution to elect a substitute. Accordingly, a meeting of the A.I.C.C. was held in Lucknow, on the 28th September, 1929. The Presidentship of the Congress was a source of concern to the Nation.

All eyes had turned to Gandhi as the man who would rescue the Congress once again and lead it on to the path of victory. The disgust felt with Councils and some Council members, by men like Motilalji, was hardly concealed. The clear indication was given that Council members should resign. What next? Nothing but Civil Disobedience would be the logical consequence of such a course. And who could lead the Nation to victory along this untrodden path?—Who else but Gandhi? That was why he was thought of. Gandhi was pressed hard at Lucknow, even as he had been pressed earlier, to reconsider his refusal. But he saw the wisdom of installing on the *Gadi* of the Congress a younger man who would inspire confidence in the younger folk of the country. This national train had to run from one station to another, from Ahmedabad, *via* Gaya, Delhi, Coconada, Belgaum, Cawnpore, Gauhati, Madras and Calcutta, to Lahore. It carried all grades of men,—the older elements who held the flag aloft, the middle-aged who were willing to work along under the leadership of the old, and the younger elements who kicked against the pricks and resented certain methods as too slow, but were not able to formulate quicker methods themselves. If the train should move in time, free from dangers, and if it should carry all its passengers, it is better that the engine should be in the charge of a young man full of enthusiasm, daring and confidence, though the brakes should be in the charge of older and more seasoned and sedate politicians. It was, doubtless, this line of reasoning that made Gandhi adhere to his decision. Vallabhbhai did not choose to intervene between Gandhi and Jawaharlal. The attendance at Lucknow was not large and the majority of friends present voted for Jawaharlal, who was to be one of the youngest Presidents of the Congress. Bengal, strangely enough, had plumped for Gandhi, and even sent circulars to sister Provinces to vote for him.

THE HISTORY OF THE CONGRESS

The next subject that engaged the Congress Committee at Lucknow was the death of Jatindra Nath Das after 64 days' starvation in a Punjab jail and the Rev. Wizaya after 164 days in Burma. Both laid their lives at the feet of the Mother. The latter had not attracted much attention, but the former did. A word is due on Phongy Wizaya's death. The Rev. Wizaya was a Buddhist monk who was released from jail on February 28, 1929, after serving 21 months' R.I. for sedition. He was re-arrested for a seditious speech on April 4, just 5 weeks after his release, and sentenced to 6 years' transportation which was later reduced to three years. Soon after his arrest, he started a hunger-strike, demanding better treatment and the right to wear his yellow monk's robe on special days, and continued it till his death on the 164th day on 19-9-1929.

Jatindra Nath Das's death had occurred just 6 days earlier, i.e. on the 13th September 1929. Thus in two successive weeks did these two patriots lay down their lives voluntarily and wholeheartedly to preserve national self-respect. The death of Das evoked the deep distress and deeper admiration of his countrymen in India, occasioning big demonstrations and a vast procession in Calcutta. But that was not all; messages of sympathy came forth from several foreign countries, and amongst these was one from the family of Terence Mac Swiney of Ireland.

Before we pass on, let us add that the All-India Congress Committee that met at Lucknow on September 28th passed a resolution on hunger-strikes in jails which, while deeply appreciating the motive of the prisoners, expressed the opinion that a hunger-strike should not be undertaken except upon the gravest emergencies. The Committee advised those who had imposed the sacrifice on themselves to end their strike, especially in view of the self-immolation of Das and Wizaya and the fact that Government had at the eleventh hour yielded to most of the demands of the hunger-strikers and an effort was being made to secure full redress.

The situation in East Africa and the Government of India's confession that they were only advocates and not high contracting parties, were the subject of a resolution. Just then a Deputation from East Africa was touring India and the A.I.C.C. had the advantage of hearing Mr. J. B. Pandya at Lucknow. While this was so, the South African Government imposed unfair restrictions upon the Ali Brothers who wanted to visit the Union, and the Committee passed a suitable resolution on the subject.

The month of October was an eventful month. Lord Irwin who had gone to England returned on the 25th October and made an announcement to the country. In view of the announcement, Pandit Motilal Nehru summoned an emergent meeting of the Working Committee at Delhi on the 1st November, and besides the members of the Committee there were leaders of other schools of thought at the Metropolis to receive the expected announcement and concert measures for common action thereupon. On the eve of Lord Irwin's departure for England at the end of June, 1929, he had said: "When I go to England I shall seek opportunities of discussion with His Majesty's Government on these grave matters. It



will be my duty, as I have said elsewhere, to represent to His Majesty's Government the different standpoints of those who can speak for Indian political opinion." Then he had referred to the two governing pronouncements of August, 1917 and his own Instrument of Instructions from the King-Emperor wherein His Majesty affirms that, "Above all things it is our will and pleasure that the plans laid by our Parliament for the progressive realisation of Responsible Government in British India, as an integral part of our Empire, may come to fruition, to the end that British India may attain its due place among our Dominions."

In the statement Lord Irwin made on the 31st October, His Excellency said:—

"The Chairman of the Commission has pointed out in his correspondence with the Prime Minister, which, I understand, is being published in England, that as their investigation has proceeded, he and his colleagues have been greatly impressed, in considering the direction which the future constitutional development of India is likely to take, with the importance of bearing in mind the relations which may, at some future time, develop between British India and Indian States. In his judgment it is essential that the methods, by which this future relationship between these two constituent parts of Greater India may be adjusted, should be fully examined. He has further expressed the opinion that if the Commission's Report and the proposals subsequently to be framed by the Government take this wider range, it would appear necessary for the Government to revise the scheme of procedure as at present proposed. He suggested that what might be required, after the Reports of the Statutory Commission and the Indian Central Committee have been made, considered and published, but before the stage is reached of the Joint Parliamentary Committee, would be the setting up of a Conference in which His Majesty's Government should meet representatives both of British India and of the States, for the purpose of seeking the greatest possible measure of agreement for the final proposals which it would later be the duty of His Majesty's Government to submit to Parliament. The procedure by Joint Parliamentary Committee conferring with delegations from the Indian Legislature and other bodies, which was previously contemplated and is referred to in Sir John Simon's letter to myself of 6th February, 1928, would still be appropriate for the examination of the Bill when it is subsequently placed before Parliament, but would, in the opinion of the Commission, obviously have to be preceded by some such Conference as they have suggested.

"With these views I understand that His Majesty's Government are in complete accord. For, while they will greatly desire, when the time comes, to be able to deal with the question of British Indian political development under conditions the most favourable to its successful treatment, they are, with the Commission, deeply sensible of the importance of bringing under comprehensive review the whole problem of the relations of British India, in their view essential for the complete fulfilment of what they consider to be the underlying pur-

THE HISTORY OF THE CONGRESS

pose of British policy, whatever may be the method for its furtherance which Parliament may decide to adopt.

"The goal of British policy was stated in the declaration of August, 1917 to be that of providing for the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of Responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. As I recently pointed out, my own Instrument of Instructions from the King-Emperor expressly states that it is His Majesty's will and pleasure that the plans laid by Parliament in 1919 should be the means by which British India may attain *its due place among his Dominions*. Ministers of the Crown, moreover, have more than once publicly declared that it is the desire of the British Government that India should, in the fullness of time, take her place in the Empire in equal partnership with the Dominions. But in view of the doubts which have been expressed both in Great Britain and India regarding the interpretation to be placed on the intentions of the British Government in enacting the Statute of 1919, *I am authorised on behalf of His Majesty's Government to state clearly that in their judgment it is implicit in the declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as there contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion Status.*"

This announcement was made on the 31st of October, and in less than 24 hours, the leading personages were in Delhi, including Pandit Malaviya, Sir T. B. Saprū and Dr. Besant. The Working Committee of the Congress was of course there. After deep consideration, the mixed gathering came to conclusions which were embodied in a Manifesto, in which the signatories expressed their appreciation of the sincerity underlying the declaration, as also the desire of the British Government to placate Indian opinion. They proceeded:—

"We hope to be able to tender our co-operation to His Majesty's Government in their effort to evolve a scheme of Dominion Constitution suitable to India's needs, but we deem it necessary that certain acts should be done and that certain points should be cleared so as to inspire trust and to ensure the co-operation of the principal political organisations in the country.

"We consider it vital for the success of the proposed Conference that,

(a) a policy of general conciliation should be adopted to induce a calmer atmosphere,

(b) political prisoners should be granted an amnesty,

(c) the representation of progressive political organisations should be effectively secured, and the Indian National Congress, as the largest amongst them, should have a predominant representation.

"Some doubt has been expressed about the interpretation of the paragraph in the statement made by the Viceroy on behalf of His Majesty's Government regarding Dominion Status. We understand, however, that the Conference is to meet not to discuss when Dominion Status is to be established, but to frame a scheme of Dominion Con-



stitution for India. We hope we are not mistaken in thus interpreting the import and implications of the weighty pronouncement of His Excellency the Viceroy. Until the new Constitution comes into existence, we think it necessary that a more liberal spirit should be infused in the Government of the country, that the relations of the Executive and the Legislature should be brought more in harmony with the object of the proposed Conference and that greater regard should be paid to constitutional methods and practices. We hold it to be absolutely essential that the public should be made to feel that a new era has commenced even from today, and that the new Constitution is to be but a register of that fact.

“Lastly, we deem it as an essential factor for the success of the Conference that it should be convened as expeditiously as possible.”

There is no doubt that it was the wider outlook of the Labour Party that was responsible for the new alignment. Sir John Simon had written a letter to the Premier, to which reference had been made in the Viceroy's statement, and in which he advocated some sort of Conference after his Report had been published, “for the purpose of seeking the greatest possible measure of agreement for the final proposals which it would be later the duty of His Majesty's Government to submit to Parliament.” When we remember that these words were written on the 16th of October, 1929, and how the Viceroy repeated those words not only in his statement but time after time in his subsequent important pronouncements, we shall be able to understand that it was not the G.C.M. of Indian opinion that was ultimately accepted but the least common measure which had formed the basis of the proposals made by the Cabinet to Parliament. When, therefore, the leaders demanded that the public should be made to feel that a new era had commenced even from that day and that the new Constitution was to be but a register of that fact, the leaders' Manifesto was only giving expression to their inner apprehensions. The Congress members present at the meeting did not expect the minimum straightway from the Conference. Nothing was done really regarding the release of the prisoners. The release of the Martial Law prisoners of 1919 had been recommended by the Punjab Jails Committee, as also the Lahore Conspiracy prisoners of 1915. Mr. Fenner Brockway had raised the question of the release of Mr. Sambamurti in the House of Commons, but nothing was done. In the meantime, English friends had been sending cables to Gandhi to reciprocate the efforts of the Labour Government to help India. In answer, Gandhi stated that he was ‘dying for co-operation’ :—

“I have, therefore, responded on the very first opportunity that offered itself, but I have meant every word of the joint Manifesto, as I have of the now-famous Calcutta Resolution of the Congress. The two are in no sense contradictory. The letter of a document is nothing, if the spirit of it is preserved in effect. I can wait for a Dominion Constitution if I can get real Dominion Status in action. That is to say, if there is a real change of heart, a real desire on the part of the British people to see India a free and self-respecting Nation, and on the part of the officials in India a true spirit of service. But

this means substitution of the steel bayonet by the goodwill of the people. Are Englishmen and English women prepared to rely for the safety of their lives and property upon the goodwill of the people rather than upon the gun-mounted forts? If they are not yet ready, there is no Dominion Status that would satisfy me. My conception of Dominion Status implies present ability to sever the British connection if I wish to. Therefore, there can be no such thing as compulsion in the regulation of the relations between Britain and India.

"If I choose to remain in the Empire, it is to make a partnership of power for promoting peace and goodwill in the world, never to promote exploitation or what is known as Britain's imperialistic creed.

"It is likely that the Labour Government has never meant all the implications mentioned by me. In my opinion, I have not stretched the meaning of the Manifesto in stating the implications, but whether the Manifesto can bear the weight of these implications or not, it is due to the friends in England and in India that they should clearly realise my own fundamental position.

"I am fully aware that India has not developed strength enough to assert the position here adumbrated. If, therefore, it is realised now, it will be largely through the good grace of the British people. It will be nothing strange, if they exhibit it at the present juncture and it will be some reparation for past wrongs done to India.

"But if the time is not yet ripe for India to come to her own, I have patience enough to wait. I can work and live for no other goal. I recognise that mine is but the voice of an individual. How far it is representative of India's millions, no one can say. I certainly cannot."

Small as the offer made to the Indian people in the Viceroy's statement was, there was nevertheless an uproar in Parliament. The House of Commons was on the defensive. Baldwin took the responsibility on himself for agreeing to what Mr. Benn and Lord Irwin had suggested. Sir John Simon was hard put to it to defend himself and his Commission. Captain Benn spared no pains to defend himself and his Government. The Premier took up the task of defending the whole policy of conciliating India and pacifying those amongst the Indians who had till then been stroked the wrong way. The Lords were on the offensive. Lord Birkenhead unrolled the map of despotism. But as Captain Benn had pointed out in the Commons, he held no official position in the Empire and had desired that he should be divorced from politics. "He is engaged in some kind of trade or commerce, though I have no personal knowledge of it,"—added Benn. The reference was to Lord Birkenhead having taken up the Managing Directorship of the Greater London and Country Trust Limited, on £15,000 a year, soon after he had laid down the reins of office as Secretary of State on account of the change of Government. Lord Reading was the Chairman of a South African mining syndicate on £15,000 a year. It may be remembered here that it was elicited in 1934-'35 that he became the Chairman of the Imperial Chemicals,—a company

secretly formed in England to explore the mineral wealth of India without a single Indian knowing aught about its formation. This is only by the way. Captain Benn announced that there was a change of Policy, that is to say, a change of spirit, and the Conference was to meet next. Mr. Lloyd George asked whether Captain Benn accepted the interpretation of the joint Manifesto. Mr. Lansbury exhorted people to accept the Viceroy's statement at its face value. Of course the Indians would take it at its market value and found it to be a transaction under discount. The Liberals in India were only keen on the Conference which they chose to term as the Round Table Conference, but which as we shall see, was always described by Lord Irwin as the London Conference. The Congressmen interpreted the joint Manifesto in the light of the four conditions embodied in it. Captain Benn was announcing to the Indians a change of policy and allaying the alarms of members of Parliament by saying that the Policy is not changed, because it is in the Preamble, the Preamble is in the Act and the Act is in the Laws of England. This kind of feeling discouraged the younger Congressmen. A fresh meeting of all Parties was summoned in Allahabad on the 16th November, and the Working Committee met simultaneously. Every effort was made to maintain unity of spirit. We had to 'confound our enemies' and consolidate our friends. We had to leaven the Moderates and temper the Extremists. Jawaharlal and Subash Babu had tendered their resignations of the membership of the Working Committee even before the Committee itself had given any considered verdict. Pandit Motilal Nehru was more unrelenting than even his younger colleagues. It required much cajoling and coaxing to keep the Pandit to the lines of the All-Parties' gathering. He was fulminating over the artifice and duplicity practised in the Commons, the double-faced Janus that we saw in Captain Benn, the picture that the Cabinet was painting, which made it look like Swaraj to India but British Raj to England. Yet patience had to be exercised. We had formed a train at Delhi, with Independence as the engine and the Moderates as the brake, and the Congress with its several shades of opinion forming the several bogey carriages of the train. Gandhi was there in a saloon. The train had travelled from Delhi to Allahabad, and should it be derailed before it returned to Delhi?

Mr. Wilson, formerly of *The Pioneer*, was writing a series of letters to the Press and urging Lord Irwin to make a gesture before the Lahore Congress, so that the leaders of Indian politics might not have to go to Lahore empty-handed. Lord Irwin had sent an invitation through Dr. Sapru to Pandit Motilal Nehru to meet him "on the 15th inst." But Panditji could not extricate himself from his professional engagement in Lucknow by the 15th. Mr. Wilson wrote to the Press that the Viceroy would shortly be meeting Gandhi, Pandit Nehru and Pandit Malaviya. The Viceroy himself was leaving for South India on the 15th and therefore he wrote to Dr. Sapru that he would see Gandhi and Nehru on the 23rd December at Delhi, if not earlier at Hyderabad (Deccan),—and in any case before the Christmas. Lord Irwin returned to Delhi in time on the 23rd December, and his train met with a bomb accident within a mile of New Delhi at the site of the old fort, the bomb being worked by a fuse connected with a clock-work mechanism. He narrowly escaped, but his

dining saloon was damaged and one of his servants was hurt. The accident should really have told upon Lord Irwin deeply. The 23rd December, 1929, was the day on which the 'Viceroy's House' was occupied. On that day Gandhi and Motilalji were to see the Viceroy on behalf of the Congress. There were also Jinnah and Sapru and Vithalbhai Patel to represent other views. What was expected to be a heart-to-heart talk among friends became a formal deputation. Yet Lord Irwin was jovial, unperturbed by the accident of the morning. His equipoise was only excelled by his cordiality towards the guests. There was nothing of the coldness that was noticed when in November, 1927, the Simon Commission was announced to Gandhi. For 45 minutes the bomb and its effects occupied their time. Then Lord Irwin took up the subject on hand. "Where shall we begin?" enquired he. "Here is your Manifesto. Shall we begin with the political prisoners?" He was anxious to make a good beginning and 'political prisoners' would easily lend itself to a tangible proof of goodwill. But Gandhi wanted to take the Viceroy through the question of Dominion Status. Gandhi wanted an assurance on this point, that the Round Table Conference would proceed on the basis of full Dominion Status. The Viceroy's answer was that the Government view was explained in their Communique and he could make no further promise. He was not in a position to extend an invitation to the R.T.C. with any definite promise of Dominion Status.

We had the news on our way to Lahore, both of the bomb that burst under the Viceroy's train and the hopes that burst in the Viceregal lodge. "Every one to his place, and all for their life," we thought. Thus began the determination for a grim struggle in the near future. The Lahore Congress was the last session that met in the midst of the bleak winds of Northern India in mid-winter. The arrangements at Lahore did not include any house accommodation for those unaccustomed to North Indian cold. The lodging in the tents made life hard. In the Working Committee we had to warm our feet every now and then. It was intolerably cold outside, but the warmth of feeling, the heat of passion and excitement, the resentment at the failure of negotiation, the flushing of face on hearing the beat of the war drums,—oh, it was all in marked contrast with the conditions of the weather. Pandit Jawaharlal was undoubtedly the most popular young politician of the hour, even as he was the youngest statesman of the day. His speech poured forth his soul to his countrymen,—his wrath and indignation over the insults heaped on India, his plans of emancipation, his distinct socialistic ideals and his determination to win.

The Congress was in a cauldron in Lahore. Ideas and ideals were boiling on the fires of national patriotism kindled by the ever increasing arrests. Mr. Benn's statement in the 3rd week of December, that "the freest expression of opinion in India is not only desirable but at the present time is a most helpful thing," neither helped to assuage public feeling in India nor abate the policy of repression. As for Dominion Status, he had been assuring the world that Dominion Status was already in action for a decade. India's signature to the Treaty of Versailles, the appointment of an Indian High Commissioner, an Indian at the head of the Indian delegation at the League, a separate vote at the International



Navigation Commission, participation in the Conference of Dominion Legislatures, and in the Five-Power Naval Conference, a seat for India on the Governing Body of the International Labour Conference,—all these were cited as proofs of the millennium of Dominion Status, already in action.

But people were not deceived by such a toy show. They had to face hard realities, and settle issues of an immediate present.

The points of dispute at Lahore centred round these questions: shall we endorse the Delhi Manifesto? Shall we appreciate the good intentions of the Viceroy? Shall we retain the words '*under the existing circumstances*' in the resolution? Shall we not alter the 'Creed' instead of merely saying that 'Swaraj' in the Creed means this or that? Shall we boycott the Legislatures? If so, shall we not also add University bodies, Port Trusts, Schools, Colleges and Courts? Shall we include Local Bodies at all? Shall we draw up a Republican Constitution? Shall we attend the Round Table Conference on the material before us, or shall we wait for two months before we declare Independence as the Creed of the Congress?

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in his Presidential Address thanked the country for putting him in charge of the glorious heritage which we had all received,—and which he had described at some length,—and he spoke of the rapidly changing world, a world which is in labour and out of her travail will give birth to a new order. India today, he said, is a part of a world-movement alongside of other Eastern nations, but suffers because she is unable to effect that social adjustment based on equality which stability and permanence always demand. Her religious liberty was her redeeming feature, though today it has yielded place to fear, distrust and mutual suspicion. Attempts are being made to readjust the communal and political relations between the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, but the scheme evolved at the All-Parties' Conference has not satisfied the Parties concerned. The Viceroy's announcement is a seeming offer of peace. The Viceroy meant well and his language was the language of peace, but courteous phrases are a poor substitute for the hard facts around us. We have not precipitated a terrible national struggle. No,—the door of negotiation is all kept open. 'Dominion Status in action' of Captain Wedgwood Benn has been a snare for us. For us the Calcutta resolution holds and we have but one goal to-day; that of Independence. The President spoke of British Imperialism and frankly stated that he was a socialist and a republican and was no believer in Kings and Princes. Then he described the three major problems before us,—the Minorities, the Indian States, and Labour and Peasantry. Then he dealt with the question of non-violence. "Violence too often brings reaction and demoralization in its train, and in our country especially it may lead to disruption. It is perfectly true that organised violence rules the world today and it may be that we could profit by its use. But we have not the material or the training for organised violence, and individual or sporadic violence is a confession of despair. The great majority of us, I take it, judge the issue not on moral but on practical grounds and if we reject the way of

THE HISTORY OF THE CONGRESS

violence, it is because it promises no substantial results. Any great movement for liberation must necessarily be a mass movement, and a mass movement must essentially be peaceful, except in times of organised revolt." After this lucid exposition of non-violence by 'policy' as opposed to 'creed' or 'faith', the President spoke of the boycott of Legislatures, the question of debts and the necessity to overhaul the machinery of the Congress and make it really efficient, by making it a compact and disciplined body. Finally he concluded with a plea for a supreme endeavour in these words: "None of us can say what and when we can achieve. We cannot command success. But success often comes to those who dare and act; it seldom goes to the timid who are ever afraid of the consequences. We play for high stakes; and if we seek to achieve great things, it can only be through great dangers."

The question before the Lahore Congress was whether the resolution passed at the Madras Congress (1927) relating to Independence should be incorporated as part of our Creed in Art. I of the Constitution or only as an explanation to it. On this subject the Presidential speech has some interesting observations: "Independence for us means complete freedom from British domination and British Imperialism. Having attained our freedom, I have no doubt that India will welcome all attempts at world co-operation and federation, and will even agree to give up part of her own independence to a larger group of which she is an equal member." The President proceeded to observe: "India could never be an equal member of the Commonwealth, unless Imperialism and all that it implies is discarded." Other excerpts from the Presidential speech which may be helpful in understanding the real position, may be quoted here:—

"The real thing is the conquest of power, by whatever name it may be called. I do not think that any form of Dominion Status applicable to India will give us real power. A test of this power would be the entire withdrawal of the alien Army of occupation and Economic control. Let us therefore concentrate on these and the rest will follow."

In these views Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, the leader of India and the President of the year, agreed. There was therefore no difficulty whatever in conducting the transactions of the Lahore Congress. After an expression of appreciation of the supreme self-sacrifice of Jatindas and Phongy U. Wizaya, and of condolences in connection with the death of Pandit Gokarnath Misra, Prof. S. M. Paranjpe, Syts. Bhaktavatsala Naidu, Rohini Kanta Hatibaru, B. K. Lahiri and Byomakesh Chakravarti, the following resolution was passed about the recent bomb outrage:

"This Congress deplores the bomb outrage perpetrated on the Viceroy's train, and reiterates its conviction that such action is not only contrary to the Creed of the Congress but results in harm being done to the national cause. It congratulates the Viceroy and Lady Irwin and their party, including the poor servants, on their fortunate and narrow escape."

The main resolution of the Congress was about Independence.



COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE

"This Congress endorses the action of the Working Committee in connection with the Manifesto signed by party leaders, including Congressmen, on the Viceregal pronouncement of the 31st October relating to Dominion Status, and *appreciates the efforts of the Viceroy towards a settlement of the national movement for Swaraj.* The Congress, however, having considered all that has since happened and the result of the meeting between Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Motilal Nehru and other leaders, and the Viceroy, is of opinion that nothing is to be gained in the existing circumstances by the Congress being represented at the proposed Round Table Conference. This Congress, therefore, in pursuance of the resolution passed at its session at Calcutta last year, declares that the word 'Swaraj' in Art. I of the Congress Constitution shall mean Complete Independence, and further declares the entire scheme of the Nehru Committee's Report to have lapsed, and hopes that all Congressmen will henceforth devote their exclusive attention to the attainment of Complete Independence for India. As a preliminary step towards organising a campaign for Independence, and in order to make the Congress policy as consistent as possible with the change of Creed, this Congress calls upon Congressmen and others taking part in the national movement to abstain from participating directly or indirectly in future elections, and directs the present Congress members of the Legislatures and Committees to resign their seats. This Congress appeals to the Nation zealously to prosecute the constructive programme of the Congress, and authorises the All-India Congress Committee, whenever it deems fit, to launch upon a programme of Civil Disobedience including non-payment of taxes, whether in selected areas or otherwise, and under such safeguards as it may consider necessary."

Next the season for the holding of the annual Session of the Congress was altered:

"Inasmuch as the Congress is intended to be representative of the poor masses, and inasmuch as the holding of the Congress at the end of December involves very considerable expense to the poor people in providing for extra clothing for themselves and is otherwise inconvenient to them, the date of holding the Congress Session is hereby altered to some date in February or March, to be fixed by the Working Committee in consultation with the Provincial Committee of the Province concerned."

The Congress authorised the Working Committee to make all necessary consequential changes in the Constitution.

East Africa had a resolution as usual. The Congress congratulated Shrimati Sarojini Devi who went to East Africa at considerable inconvenience to herself, and also the Indians in East Africa on the national stand they took upon the Indian problem in that sub-continent. No solution of the question, it was said, that accepts communal electorates and is

based on a discriminate franchise, or that imposes disqualification on Indians holding property, could satisfy the Nation.

An important subject taken up was the Indian States, and the Congress thought it was time the Ruling Princes of India granted Responsible Government to their people and enacted laws or issued proclamations safeguarding the elementary and fundamental rights of the people such as freedom of movement, freedom of speech, freedom to hold public meetings and security of person and property.

The communal question had to be taken up afresh in view of the lapse of the Nehru Report. It was felt necessary to declare the policy of the Congress regarding communal questions. The Congress believed that in an Independent India communal questions can only be solved on strictly National lines. But as the Sikhs in particular, and the Muslims and the other Minorities in general, had expressed dissatisfaction over the solution of communal questions proposed in the Nehru Report, this Congress assured the Sikhs, the Muslims and other Minorities, that "no solution thereof in any future Constitution would be acceptable to the Congress that did not give full satisfaction to the parties concerned." On the question of the refusal of passports, the Congress condemned the refusal of these for return to India, to Syt. Shapurji J. Saklatwalla ex-M.P. and others who were living in England and other foreign countries.

The subject of Financial burdens and their repudiation was taken up after a long interval since Gaya (1922):—

"This Congress is of opinion that the financial burdens directly or indirectly imposed on India by the foreign administration were such as a Free India cannot bear and cannot be expected to bear. The Congress whilst re-affirming the resolution passed at the Gaya Congress in 1922, therefore, records its opinion for the information of all concerned that every obligation and concession to be inherited by Independent India would be strictly subject to investigation by an independent tribunal, and every obligation, every concession, no matter how incurred or given, would be repudiated, if it is not found by such tribunal to be just and justifiable."

It was not without some difficulty that the resolution on the bomb outrage was passed. The resolution was stoutly opposed by a certain section of the delegates and it was only by a narrow majority that it could be passed. On the cardinal resolution also, there was considerable objection to the incorporation of the idea of "appreciating the efforts of the Viceroy towards a settlement of the national movement for Swaraj." Again, when the Congress said that "nothing is to be gained under the existing circumstances by the Congress being represented at the Round Table Conference," serious objection was taken to the words "under the existing circumstances." The fear was that the Round Table Conference, like King Charles's head, might turn up every now and then under the pretext of circumstances having changed. But it was obvious, as Gandhi had repeatedly explained, that all his Non-co-operation was for co-operation and all his fight was for a settlement. Finally Gandhi was not able to



carry the House with him when he wanted to decentralize the work of the Congress by making the Foreign Cloth Boycott Committee, the Prohibition Committee, and the Committee for the Removal of Untouchability somewhat autonomous, and also when he wanted to reduce the strength of the Congress and render the organisation less cumbersome.

It is necessary to state that these several Committees had been brought into existence after the Calcutta Congress, since the month of February, 1929. Work was entrusted to experts. The organisation of volunteers had been entrusted to Jawaharlal and Subash Bose. For the first time, Congress work was divided into departments and entrusted to particular members of the Working Committee. But Gandhi wanted to place these Committees on a par with the All-India Spinners' Association, so that they might be functioning independently. His proposals were however viewed with suspicion, for a leader is always in advance of his following and his proposals of yesterday are only accepted by them today. This was what happened. Today (1935) the work of untouchability is being conducted apart from the dust and din of high politics by an independent organisation unaffected by the political vicissitudes of the Nation. Today again, the strength of the Congress delegates stands cut down to a third of its former strength in Bombay, and what Gandhi could not achieve at Lahore he achieved partly while he was in jail and partly after his release.

In Calcutta a year's time was given to Government to comply with the National Demand, and it was at 12, mid-night, on the 31st December that the poll on the most controversial clause was finished. The whole Congress proceeded at that hour to unfurl the flag of Complete Independence.

Altogether the Lahore Session was as strenuous a session as it was critical. The alternative resolutions put forward against Gandhi were either academic or destructive. Men who wanted to stick to "Independence and no damned nonsense," were keen on not resigning from Councils. Their attempt was to behead the main resolution or amputate its limbs and thus truncate it altogether. Amongst the ranks of the opposition some were opposed to Independence itself, and were plumping for the Round Table Conference, while others would have Independence, but would not tolerate the conventional courtesies of the Working Committee on the one hand or the Viceroy on the other, and under cover of this iconoclasm, would serve the country through Legislatures. The debates, therefore, round the main resolution ceased to be single-pointed or well-meaning. Each opponent had his own issue and his own object in combating the cardinal proposition of the House. But in the open session, there were only 15 hands raised against the main proposition. A really close division took place on the question of appreciating the Viceroy's efforts. Even on this issue, the difference in voting was 180, while on the question of condemning the bomb outrage the majority was only 84 in favour of the condemnation. In all these differences the com-



mon bond was common antipathies, not community of sympathies, convictions, or programmes.

The internal differences in Bengal which had led to long-standing election disputes, became the cause of an exchange of hot words between Subash Babu and Motilalji, and exhibited themselves markedly in the Congress week at Lahore. The leadership of the Province being the bone of contention between Syts. J. M. Sen-Gupta and Subash Chandra Bose, the differences came to a head on the issue of Council-entry on which there were sharp divergences of views. Again, while considered and thoughtful opinion asked for an examination of the financial commitments of the Nation by an Independent tribunal, an extremist view did not fail to express itself that all debts should be repudiated outright. Gandhi earnestly endeavoured to secure the change of "peaceful and legitimate means" in the Creed into "truthful and non-violent means" but did not succeed.

That question is still hanging fire, being adjourned at the last Bombay Congress (1934 October). In any case, the success of Gandhi and Jawaharlal at the Lahore Session was undeniable, in spite of the fact that almost immediately after the conclusion of the plenary session, Mr. Srinivasa Iyengar and Mr. Subash Chandra Bose announced the formation of a new organisation known as the Congress Democratic Party, which was supposed by Government at the time to indicate that the attempt to placate the left wing had not really succeeded and that a split was, after all, imminent. These friends had desired that the Working Committee should be formed by a process of election, and when it was defeated, they walked out along with certain South Indian friends. Gandhi's practice was to ask the retiring members of the Working Committee as to who would cut himself or herself out from it. In Lahore, the Working Committee for the next year was formed by preparing two independent lists, one by Pandit Motilalji in consultation with Gandhi, and one by Seth Jammalal Bajaj. There was only one name which did not coincide in the two lists. That difference was adjusted, and the W. C. was formed. But these friends wanted election. That was thrown out, with the result that there was a dramatic exit. In less than ten minutes, the news was broadcast that a new Party was formed, and as soon as this new Party, which was known as the Congress Democratic Party, was organised in Lahore, Syt. Subash Chandra Bose sent the following telegram to Mrs. C. R. Das: "Circumstances and tyranny of majority forced us to form separate Party, as at Gaya, named Congress Democratic Party. Pray spirit of Deshbandhu may guide us and your blessings may inspire us."

In the official declaration of its policy, the Secretaries stated that:—

"The new Party will, without prejudice to the Party's objective of Complete Independence for India, endeavour to the best of its ability to co-operate as far as possible with the other Parties in the country in such programmes, policies and activities as the Party may accept for the purpose of attaining its objective."



The opponents of the cardinal resolution, doubtless endorsed Council resignations, but supported a contest and a re-entry. At Lahore, we witnessed strange combinations and a fear in some, at any rate, of Gandhiji's firm hand. We know we had a rough voyage ahead, the bark was frail, the seas were boisterous, the clouds were overhanging, there was fog all round, and the sailors were undisciplined and new to their work. Our safety, however, lay in but one circumstance, namely, *the pilot knew his course*. He was a seasoned captain and had his chart and his compass. If the crew obeyed him, success was in sight. Else, we had a Court Martial by the Nation looming before us.



CHAPTER II

A FIGHT TO THE FINISH (1930)

The year of waiting was over, the year of action began for Congressmen; but before three weeks passed, there appeared a revolt in Maharashtra. We have seen how in the early years of N.C.O., Maharashtra paired with Bengal in resisting the new movement. Now the Maharashtra P.C.C. asked the Working Committee of the Congress not to urge Council boycott and asked the country to hasten to the R.T.C. on the Delhi conditions and on the basis of Independence. These questions had been settled really once for all. What were the Delhi conditions if they did not mean the change of heart indicated by the release of prisoners and the Dominion Status at work even from that day? Gandhi had refused to discuss the release of prisoners in his interview with the Viceroy on the 23rd December, 1929. The prisoners could afford to wait a while in the jails, said he; he had concentrated on the question of Dominion Status. On this the Viceroy refused to give his (Viceregal) assurances. It may be advantageous to know why Gandhi insisted on getting such assurances from the Viceroy. In 1925 Earl Winterton (Under-Secretary for India) replying to an enquiry by Mr. Lansbury as to whether Lord Birkenhead (Secretary of State) intended to invite Das and Gandhi and others to London for a negotiation of the conditions of co-operation, answered the question in the negative and stated his reasons thus:—

“Firstly, the direct conduct of the policy and the administration in India was entrusted to the Government of India and the Local Governments. Therefore it was with these authorities that such discussions must take place and no useful purpose would be served by the Government’s intervention and participation at this stage in matters which must ultimately come before them for decision, and for the decision of which they were responsible to Parliament. Secondly, though the Viceroy was about to visit this country for the purpose *inter alia* of discussing the political situation in India, it would be placing him and the Government of India entirely in a false position if his presence here was made the occasion for negotiations with Indian political parties.”

The Viceroy held the key to the situation and Gandhi wanted to get possession of that key in Delhi on the 23rd December, 1929.

The new Working Committee met on the 2nd January, 1930. The old Committee had disposed of all outstanding questions including the appointment of a permanent Secretary to the Congress. When the new Committee met, the first thing it did was to take steps to implement the Congress resolution on the boycott of Councils urging the registered voters



to compel the resignation of those who may not respond to the Congress appeal for resignation, as well as to refrain from participating in the ensuing elections to the Legislatures. As the result of this, 27 members of the Assembly resigned. It was decided to observe a day all over India as the Purna Swarajya Day and the 26th January, 1930, was fixed for the purpose.

A declaration to be issued was to be read to the people in the villages and towns all over the country, and the assent of the audience was to be taken by a show of hands. A Committee was appointed to enquire into certain obnoxious measures and laws in force in the N.W.F. Province. The several Sub-Committees were asked to prosecute their work vigorously, and an equally vigorous enrolment of the Congress members was urged on the Nation. The declaration to be read on the 26th January, was as follows:—

The following resolution has been issued on behalf of the Working Committee for adoption by public meetings all over the country on Purna Swarajya Day, Sunday, January 26th, 1930:

“We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have necessities of life, so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any Government deprives a people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or to abolish it. The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe therefore that India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or Complete Independence.

“India has been ruined economically. The revenue derived from our people is out of all proportion to our income. Our average income is seven pice (less than two pence) per day, and of the heavy taxes we pay 20 per cent are raised from the Land Revenue derived from the peasantry, and 3 per cent from the Salt Tax, which falls most heavily on the poor.

“Village industries, such as hand-spinning, have been destroyed, leaving the peasantry idle for at least four months in the year, and dulling their intellect for want of handicrafts, and nothing has been substituted, as in other countries, for the crafts thus destroyed.

“Customs and currency have been so manipulated as to heap further burdens on the peasantry. British manufactured goods constitute the bulk of our imports. Customs duties betray clear partiality for British manufactures, and revenue from them is used not to lessen the burden on the masses but for sustaining a highly extravagant administration. Still more arbitrary has been the manipulation of exchange ratio which has resulted in millions being drained away from the country.

"Politically, India's status has never been so reduced as under the British regime. No reforms have given real political power to the people. The tallest of us have to bend before foreign authority. The rights of free expression of opinion and free association have been denied to us, and many of our countrymen are compelled to live in exile abroad and cannot return to their homes. All administrative talent is killed and the masses have to be satisfied with petty village offices and clerkships.

"Culturally, the system of education has torn us from our moorings and our training has made us hug the very chains that bind us.

"Spiritually, compulsory disarmament has made us unmanly and the presence of an alien army of occupation, employed with deadly effect to crush in us the spirit of resistance, has made us think that we cannot look after ourselves or put up a defence against foreign aggression, or even defend our homes and families from the attacks of thieves, robbers and miscreants.

"We hold it to be a crime against man and God to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this four-fold disaster to our country. We recognise, however, that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence. We will, therefore, prepare ourselves by withdrawing, so far as we can, all voluntary association from the British Government, and will prepare for Civil Disobedience, including non-payment of taxes. We are convinced that if we can but withdraw our voluntary help and stop payment of taxes without doing violence, even under provocation, the end of this inhuman rule is assured. We, therefore, hereby solemnly resolve to carry out the Congress instructions issued from time to time for the purpose of establishing Purna Swaraj."

The Independence Day celebrations revealed what a fund of pent-up feeling, enthusiasm and readiness of sacrifice there lay beneath the seeming torpor and despair of the people. The fires of patriotism and sacrifice were covered by the embers of loyalty or submission to Law and Order. All that had to be done was to blow off the ashes covering the red-hot cinders of emotion and fervour. Hardly had the celebrations been concluded when the Viceroy's speech before the Legislature on the 25th January became available to the country. It blasted whatever little hope might be lingering in the minds of the optimistic or credulous section of the Indian politicians. We have already seen how Sir John Simon in his letter, Ramsay MacDonald in his reply, Lord Irwin in his statement, and Wedgwood Benn in his debates, had been studiously using the same language in describing the object as being "to explore means by which the greatest possible measure of agreement or the widest measure of general assent amongst the various classes and communities and from all parties and interests concerned may be secured in India for the proposals, which it will later be the duty of the Cabinet to place before Parliament." The Viceroy denied that he had ever "sought to delude Indian opinion into the belief that a definition of the purpose, however plainly stated, would of itself, by the enunciation of a phrase, have provided a solution for the problems which have to



be solved before that purpose is fully realised." It was up to the Viceroy when the leader raised an issue within 24 hours of his statement, and up to the Secretary of State when Lloyd George heckled Mr. Benn in the Commons, to say that the Round Table Conference was meant only to elucidate the definition of Dominion Status and not to offer a solution of the problems that lay on the way to its attainment, and India would have felt highly grateful. The Viceroy, in one word, stated that the assertion of a goal, however precise its terms, is of necessity a different thing from the goal's attainment. "No sensible traveller would," he added, "feel that a clear definition of his destination was the same thing as the completion of his journey, but it is an assurance of direction." Thus he contrasted *definition* with *solution*, *assertion* with *attainment*, and *direction* with *destination*. Then he disillusioned India about Benn's statement regarding Dominion Status being at work for ten years. Lord Irwin said:—

"Although it is true that, in her external relations with the other parts of the Empire, India exhibits already several of the attributes of a Self-Governing Dominion, it is also true that Indian political opinion is not at present disposed to attach full value to these attributes of status, for the reason that their practical exercise is, for the most part, subject to the control or concurrence of His Majesty's Government."

* * *

"The Conference which His Majesty's Government will convene is not indeed the Conference that those have demanded who claimed that its duty should be to proceed by way of a majority vote to the fashioning of the Indian Constitution which should thereafter be accepted unchanged by Parliament."

* * *

"The Conference will be convened for the purpose of elucidating and harmonizing opinion and so affording guidance to His Majesty's Government on whom the responsibility must subsequently devolve of drafting proposals for the consideration of Parliament."

* * *

Thus did the Viceroy make it clear that self-determination was out of the question, that joint deliberation or determination was only to enable Government to perform their duty. Altogether, it was evident that what India should expect was neither self-determination nor joint determination, but 'other determination.'

In answer to this speech, Gandhi wrote in *Young India* as follows:—

"His Excellency the Viceroy deserves thanks from every Congressman for having cleared the atmosphere and let us know exactly where he and we stand.

"The Viceroy would not mind waiting for the grant of Dominion Status till every millionaire was reduced to the level of a wage-earner getting seven pice per day. The Congress will to-day, if it had power, raise every starving peasant to the state in which he at least will get a living, even equal to the millionaire's. And when the peasant is fully awakened to a sense of his plight and knows that it is not the

'kismet' that brought him to the helpless state but the existing rule, unaided, he will in his impatience abolish all distinctions between the constitutional and the unconstitutional, even the violent and non-violent means. The Congress expects to guide the peasants in the right direction."

Proceeding, Gandhi made the following offer to Lord Irwin:—

- (1) Total prohibition.
- (2) Reduction of ratio to 1s. 4d.
- (3) Reduction of Land Revenue at least by 50 per cent and making it subject to Legislative control.
- (4) Abolition of the Salt Tax.
- (5) Reduction of Military expenditure at least by 50 per cent to begin with.
- (6) Reduction of salaries of the highest grade services by half or less, so as to suit the reduced revenue.
- (7) Protective tariff on foreign cloth.
- (8) Passage of the Coastal Traffic Reservation Bill.
- (9) Discharge of all political prisoners, save those condemned for murder or attempt to murder, or trial by ordinary judicial tribunals, withdrawal of all political prosecutions, abrogation of Section 124-A and Regulation III of 1818, and giving permission to all Indian exiles to return.
- (10) Abolition of the C.I.D., or its popular control.
- (11) To issue licenses to use fire-arms for self-defence, subject to popular control.

In fact, these were the terms, we are told, which Mr. Gandhi communicated to Mr. Bomanji who undertook to negotiate with Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the Prime-Minister, as early as January, 1930.

"This is by no means an exhaustive list of the pressing needs," wrote Mahatma Gandhi, "but let the Viceroy satisfy us with regard to these very simple but vital needs of India. He will then hear no talk of Civil Disobedience; and the Congress will heartily participate in any Conference where there is a perfect freedom of expression and demand." That is to say, non-compliance with these simple and vital demands would mean Civil Disobedience.

"Other nations," said Mr. Gandhi, "might have different and other means for getting their country's freedom, but for India there is no way but non-violent Non-co-operation. May you be the exponents of this *mantra* of Swaraj, and may God give you strength and courage enough to give all that you have in India's fight for Independence, a fight which is drawing very near."

The Legislative Assembly before which the Viceroy's speech was delivered was in its spring session. The atmosphere of the time was by no means genial, on account of the passing of the Textile Industry (Protection) Bill which was believed by many of its opponents to represent the enforcement upon India of Imperial Preference, in violation of the spirit of the Fiscal Convention. This led to the resignation of Pandit Madan



Mohan Malaviya and some members of his Nationalist group. Really it was providential that help should have come to the Congress movement from unexpected quarters, and so often it was Government and its unimaginativeness that brought this help. Malaviyaji was no non-co-operator. At this time, however, his position was that he would not resile even from Civil Disobedience, but that he did not endorse Independence. At this juncture, when he was still continuing as a member of the Assembly whose term had been extended, the Textile Industry Bill forced his hands.

It is necessary to state what this Bill was, and, for that, to state the history of the Excise and import duties on cotton textiles. By the time the war ended, the position was that there was an Excise duty of $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on cotton yarn and cloth of above 19 counts, manufactured by Indian mills, payable to Government for the very manufacture, not on sales or profits. The import duties which were purely Revenue duties stood at 7 per cent *advalorem*. The mill-owners, merchants and Moderates recited their services to Government in the war and pointed out that the import of foreign cloth after the war hit the Indian mills badly. In 1925, Government agreed to raise the import duties from 7 to 11 per cent, thus making foreign cloth 4 per cent dearer and to abolish the Excise duties thus making Indian cloth $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent cheaper than the former. While the Indian public were thus rejoicing over the gains to the Indian mill-cloth, Government introduced and carried the Ratio Bill early in 1927, making the foreign cloth—always sold to India in prices reckoned in pounds and shillings—cheaper by $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent by raising the exchange from 16d. (pre-war ratio) to 18d., that is, by 2d. out of 16d., i.e. by $\frac{1}{8}$ or $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, so that a packet of cloth (Lancashire) costing £1 formerly cost the Indian importer Rs. 15/- at 16d. ratio but now only Rs. 13-5-4 at 18d. ratio. So that the gains of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent to the Indian mill-owner, of 1925, were more than counter-balanced two years later by a gain to the foreigner of $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. Now the Indians were agitated over the problem and demanded a revision of the Tariff. Government agreed to raise the import duties by the Textile Protection Bill to 20 per cent on cotton textiles imported from all countries except England, which was to be charged only 15 per cent. This was objected to by Pandit Malaviya as a violation of the Fiscal Convention. To anticipate events, Japan, whose competition with Lancashire this enhancement was designed to check, gave a rebate of 5 per cent in the shipping rates on all cotton textiles brought to India and thus combated successfully the Indian tariffs, the Japanese Government in turn giving a 5 per cent bounty to the shipping companies. Later on, a surcharge of 5 per cent was made on these rates by the Government of India, but the extra five per cent charged on Lancashire goods was virtually annulled by levying an import duty of $\frac{1}{2}$ anna per lb. on cotton imported into India. Such cotton as is generally imported from Egypt and America is intended for the manufacture of cloth of higher counts which compete with Lancashire cloth. Thus what Lancashire had lost in a five per cent surcharge in India on Import duties, has been made up for by the Indian Government for her, by making dearer by 5 per cent or $\frac{1}{2}$ anna on the pound the cotton imported by Indian mills for manufacturing cloth which competes with Lancashire cloth. This is only by the way. When the Cotton Textiles Protection Bill was before the Assembly and two amend-