INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

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PREFACE

INDIA'S STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM from British rule, better known as Indian National Movement, was a most conspicuous example of conflict between imperialism and nationalism on the two continents of Asia and Africa, and its significance lay not only in that India became an independent sovereign country but also in that in the wake of India's independence most of the countries on the two continents attained the same status. While it might not be claimed that India's freedom fighters made some direct contribution to the freedom of others it could be maintained that inspiration, philosophical and theoretical contents, and techniques and methods *were* provided, even though inadvertently. What the Indian nationalists said and did was closely and interestfully observed and, in certain cases, followed by others.

The phenomenon being so meaningful, it was but natural that statesmen, biographers, researchers, and political analysts, both in and out of India, and in the past and the present, should write on and about it. And the result was a mass of literature in the form of historical writings, doctoral dissertations, biographies, autobiographies, monographs, and textbooks. But for the simple reason that the event was so significant and covered a span of about hundred years nobody has been able to write anything conclusively, and in fact nobody would be able to do so in the foreseeable future. Books and theses, highlighting one or the other aspect of the subject and giving new interpretations to what has already been said, would continue to be published, and each of them would have something to contribute to the knowledge, because knowledge is limitless. It is with this conviction that the author has sought to present this book.

The first chapter narrates the rise of British power in India and examines the special characteristics of the British rule which created feelings of disaffection and hostility against the foreign rule. India had been invaded and ruled by the outsiders even before, but there was never a mass revolt and organized attempt to drive them out of

the soil. But the Uprising of 1857, described by many as India's first War of Independence, was the consequence of some features which were peculiar to the British rule alone. The failure of that attempt taught that there was something wrong with the attempt, its timeliness, its organization and its scope, and therefore efforts were made to remove those weaknesses and to give to the prevailing confusion in the country the shape and direction of a movement. What those efforts were have been discussed in the second chapter. The third chapter discusses the genesis and growth of the Indian National Congress which was the culmination of those efforts. This chapter also points out the attitude of the British rulers towards the Congress movement in its initial phase, when it did not draw much of public attention, as well as in its later phase when the scope and activities of the Congress began to widen.

Just at the time the Congress movement started assuming the magnitude of national movement a split occurred within its rank, and the growth was retarded, even though only temporarily. What were the causes and consequences of the split have been examined in the fourth chapter. The fifth chapter deals with the outbreak of Great War in Europe and its impact on Indian politics, particularly in so far as it kindled Indian nationalism, reunited the two wings of the Congress Party, brought the Congress and the Muslim League—set up in 1906 as a counterpoise to the Congress—closer, and created greater disenchantment between the Congress leaders and the British masters. And those who had earlier cooperated with the British war efforts in the hope that they would be able to achieve the multifarious advancement of India under the aegis of the British rule were disillusioned and became non-cooperators. What brought about this change and what was the new line of action have been examined in the sixth chapter. The political leaders differed as to the line of action, and this put the Congress Party into oblivion for some time. The new forces and alignments that emerged during the 1920's have been discussed in the seventh chapter.

During the same period (1920's), the virus of communalism entered into the body politic of India, and the Muslim League that had joined hands with Congress in 1916 began to go out of its fold and to emphasize Muslim nationalism as distinct from Indian nationalism. This has been narrated in the eighth chapter. The natural consequence of this was wider rift between Congress and the League, and this forms the subject-matter of chapter nine.

Taking advantage of the new situation, but giving the impression that they were interested in the advancement of India towards constitutional and liberal institutions the British began to move cautiously in the direction of another instalment of political reforms, and the result was the Government of India Act, 1935. These moves and gestures have been discussed in the tenth chapter. The eleventh chapter deals with the reaction to the 1935 Act in Congress Party circles, the formation of Ministries by Congress and resignation therefrom, the cleavage within the Congress, the formation of Forward Bloc by Subhas Chandra Bose, and the widening gulf between the Congress and League.

In September 1939, the Second World War broke out in Europe. While in its wake the Muslim League adopted a resolution on Pakistan, the Congress offered cooperation in the Allied War efforts and demanded the setting up of a National Government on provisional basis, hoping that that would pave the way for complete independence after the war. Its demand being turned down, the Congress launched "individual *satyagraha*." Not satisfied with the Congress line of limited action Subhas Bose left India to fight for its freedom from abroad. All these issues have been discussed in the twelfth chapter.

In view of the continued deterioration in the military situation of Allied Powers in all the theatres of the war Great Britain offered to negotiate on the future of India, and the Cripps Mission was sent to India. The arrival and failure of this Mission form the subject-matter of the thirteenth chapter. In the wake of the failure of this Mission the Congress Party adopted the "Quit India" resolution, and this led to what became known as QUIT INDIA movement. This has been discussed in the fourteenth chapter. Involved as the British were in a life-and-death struggle with Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy they suppressed the movement with all the force at their command, and there followed a period of quietude. During this period, however, a few developments took place. What these developments were have been stated in chapter fifteen.

In 1945, the Allied Powers won the war in Europe and the Far East (against Japan), and the issue of India's march towards freedom and democracy was reopened. Ultimately, in the middle of August 1947, the goal was reached, and the two independent Dominions of India and Pakistan were born. The fact that freedom came to India

in the wake of the Second World War suggests that some developments during, and as a result of, the war made it a possibility. While the efforts, sacrifices, and sufferings of the people played no less a part, the new situation with which the policy-makers in London were confronted after the war determined their attitude towards India, in fact towards the whole of the Empire. What those situations were have been discussed in the last chapter.

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CHAPTER ONE

RISE OF BRITISH POWER IN INDIA

A PORTUGUESE EXPLORER, Vasco de Gama, discovered a sea-route to India in 1498 when he rounded the Cape of Good Hope and landed at Calicut, on the south western coast of the country. In 1526, the Moghuls invaded India and by and by brought almost the entire country under their rule. Britain came in contact with this land through the East India Company (EIC) which was granted a Charter by Queen Elizabeth in 1600. After the death of Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb, in February 1707, the English and French East India Companies fought between themselves for the Indian trade and, in course of time, the English EIC was able to establish its commercial hegemony. It became the largest single promoter of this country's foreign trade. The desire for a fuller and unimpeded economic exploitation whetted the appetite for political domination, and the trading centres, known as "factories," were converted into forts and the English merchants into warriors. As a result of the three Deccan Wars, of 1746-1748, 1748-1754, and 1756-1763, the English drove the French out of south India and became the dominant force there. The holdings of the Portuguese were confined to Goa, Daman, and Diu. The battles of Plassey (1757) and Buxar (1764) made the English masters of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa.[1]

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EXPANSION OF BRITISH EMPIRE

The British authorities in London felt very sore about "the tortuous and sometimes dishonest policy of the Company in its dealings with the Nawab" (of Bengal) and "the shameful exploitation of Bengal

[1] For details, see Amaury de Riencourt, *The Soul of India* (London, 1961) 183-211. Also see Sir George Dunbar, Bt., *India and the Passing of Empire* (London, Nicholson and Watson, 1951) 72-82.

by the Company's servants during a decade or so."[2] In 1783, Britain lost her North American Colonies, and the lesson of responsibility was driven home to Parliament.[3] In 1784, Pitt's India Act was passed and the British Government assumed extensive powers of control over the political and administrative activities of the EIC. The task of expanding British power was also taken up and Lord Cornwallis was instructed to annex a considerable portion of Tipu Sultan's territory. During the regime of Lord Wellesley (1798-1805) imperialism gained a new fillip, and through the policy of "Subsidiary Alliance" he brought Hyderabad under the British control and Gwalior, Baroda, Indore, Nagpur, and Poona under direct influence. The vigorous policy of Lord Hastings (1813-1823) subdued the Marahtas, the Central States of Rajputana, and the Gorkhas of Nepal. His successor, Lord Emherst, defeated the Burmese in East. After the death of Ranjit Singh (1839) the two Sikh Wars, of 1845-46 and 1849, resulted in the annexation of the Punjab by the British[4]. The principality of Oudh, completely surrounded by British territory, was annexed in 1856. A number of smaller principalities were taken over through Lord Dalhousie's "Doctrine of Lapse." By 1856-57, the hold of the British over India was almost complete.[5] By the Proclamation of 1 November 1858, the government was transferred to the Crown, and on 1 January 1877 Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BRITISH RULE

Ruin of Indian Industry and Trade

The expansion of the British power in India was marked by a few characteristics that largely determined the course of modern Indian history, particularly during the nineteenth century. The first and foremost of them was the consistent exploitation of the Indian economy for the prosperity of Britain. During the period the British power was rising in India, the Industrial Revolution was taking place in

[2]These expressions have been used by Sir Percival Griffiths who retired from the Indian Civil Service; see his book, *Modern India* (London, Ernest Benn Limited, 1957) 48.

[3]Sir Valentine Chirol, *India* (London, 1926) 56-71.

[4]See Dunbar, n. 1, 130-9.

[5]For details of how the British established their supremacy over India, see R.C. Majumdar, *The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857* (Calcutta, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhayay, 1957) 1-19; Sir Percival Spear, *India* (Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1961) 185-224.

England and a new class of powerful industrial and manufacturing interests was emerging. This class was interested in developing its own trade and industry. Accounts of the vastness of the Indian territory and riches of its people were reaching England, and the industrialists there were not quite content over the volume of trade between England and India which, during the period of twenty years, from 1793 to 1813 stood at the average annual figure of £ 2 million. In 1780, Adam Smith published his *Wealth of Nations*, and outlined the doctrine of *laissez-faire* in economics. This doctrine suggested that trade grew through competition and the removal of restraints. The mercantile class was very much inspired by this idea, and when in 1813 the question of revision of the EIC Charter arose, it demanded an end of the Company's monopoly of the Indian and Chinese trade. The Company lost its monopoly of the Indian trade in the new Charter, and that was thrown open to all merchants of England. The China trade monopoly went the way of the old Indian one in 1833. They, unlike their predecessors, did not come to India to buy goods produced in India; they came to secure markets for goods produced in their own mills in England and to export raw materials from India to feed these mills. From 1814 onwards, the Company Government in India, as the instrument of the industrial classes of England, imposed heavy duties upon Indian goods imported into England while British goods were forced on Indians without the payment of any duty.[6] The British exports to India during fifteen years increased almost fourfold, from £ 1.4 million in 1814 to £ 4.5 million in 1828. The export of raw materials from India into England increased considerably. From the world's principal producer and exporter of cotton fabrics in the eighteenth century India was reduced, in less than 70 years, to the position of one of the biggest consumers of foreign manufactures. The export of silk goods from India also declined.[7]

[6]Major D.D. Basu gives detailed tables of the duties imposed on different goods imported into England from India; see his book, *Ruin of Indian Trade and Industries* (Calcutta, 1935) 38-51. Also see chapters on "Transit and Custom Duties," 31-66; "The Export Trade of India," 67-76; and "Ruin of Indian Manufacturers," 77-108.

[7]Dr. Tara Chand, a distinguished Indian scholar, has examined the economic consequences of British rule, and has expressed the view that the economic policy of the British proved disastrous for the Indian people; see his book, *History of the Freedom Movement in India* vol. 1 (New Delhi, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1961) 338-92

Indian shipping industry was disastrously affected by the decision of the Court of Directors to use only British ships and prohibit Indian ships for the purpose of trade. Indian paper industry was undermined by the British policy to purchase only British-made paper for use in India. Another important handicraft, viz. the damascening and inlaying of arms, weapons and shields, which was very common in north-west parts of India—Cutch and Sind—also suffered by removing the necessity for it and by active prohibition of the use and possession of arms. Iron-smelting industries were also undermined.

One village industry after another began to collapse and India became, as Jawaharlal Nehru has put it, an "economic appendage of another country."[8] The mass of handicraftsmen lost their means of livelihood and they were reduced to the level of starvation. India had been conquered before, but by invaders who settled within its frontiers and made themselves part of its life. This country never before lost its independence and was never enslaved; she had never been drawn into a political and economic system whose centre of gravity lay outside her soil. The people of India were never before subjected to a ruling class that remained interested in impoverishing them for the prosperity of a distant land. The appalling hardships of the people, resulting from the decline of the indigenous industries, made the English rule utterly unacceptable to the Indians.

Confiscation of Estates and Principalities

The British rule affected not only the artisans and craftsmen, but also the princes and estate-owners. The land tenure and revenue measures that the government took during the first half of the nineteenth century deprived *talukdars* of their estates which in many cases were held for ages, and these dispossessed landowners became the bitter enemies of the British rule.[9] Lord Dalhousie, who came to India as Governor-General in 1848, considered himself "advanced." He was a youth of 35 years and was full of energy and enthusiasm for "reform." He wanted to introduce, so far as possible, Western ideas and institutions in India. He viewed with disgust the Kingdoms and principalities which still survived "under inefficient and dege-

[8]Jawaharlal Nehru, *Discovery of India* (Calcutta, The Signet Press, 1946) 356.

[9]For a detailed study of the revenue measures, see Tara Chand, n. 7, 338-58. Also see S.B. Chaudhri, *Civil Rebellion in the Indian Mutinies* (Calcutta, The World Press Private Ltd., 1957) 8-15.

nerate chiefs." He wanted to establish a strong unitary government on the pattern of Britain and desired that even a few larger states that could remain nominally independent should be under some kind of tutelage of the British. Misgovernment in the Muslim state of Oudh, once a Province of the Moghul Empire, provided the excuse, and the state was annexed. He applied the "Doctrine of Lapse" to several Hindu principalities and annexed the large Marahta state of Nagpur in 1854, the small but powerful state of Satara, where the descendents of Shivaji ruled, in 1848, and the Marahta state of Jhansi, that was under the rule of a high-spirited *Rani*, in 1854.[10] The Raja of Mainpuri, Walidad Khan of Malaghar in Bulandshahr, and the Muslim landowners of Furrukhabad, Bareilly and Rohilkhand lost their *jagirs*. All these annexations aroused great resentment and a feeling developed that the English were a "faithless people" whose only object was to seize everything of value.

Dalhousie deprived many ex-sovereign families of their titles and pensions. The pensionary Moghul Emperor, Bahadur Shah II, was told that the imperial title would lapse after his death, and that the imperial family would be removed from the Red Fort. Nana Sahib, the adopted son of ex-Peshwa and the head of the Marahta Confederacy, was deprived of both the title and the pension on the death of his adoptive father in 1853. The Nawabs of Carnatic and Surat and the Raja of Tanjore lost their titles on the death of the holders. These losses rankled in the hearts of the Indian princes, and they became staunch enemies of the British. The upper class Mohammedans were particularly aggrieved because the Moghul Empire had been superseded, and they had been deprived of the powers and privileges they enjoyed under its rule. They were determined to extirpate the British root and branch.

In 1852, Dalhousie appointed the *Inam* ("gift") Commission to investigate the titles of landowners, and, as a consequence of its recommendations he confiscated some twenty thousand estates in the *Deccan*. This was too drastic a step and led to several cases of gross injustice for which the government did little to rectify.

[10]The Hindu law permitted adoption in case of lack of direct heirs, and the law applied to individuals as well as states. Dalhousie held the view that the government, being the paramount power, must approve all such adoptions, and in case the approval was not given, the state should "lapse" to the government; see Percival Spear, n. 5, 268. Also see TRE Holmes, *A History of the Indian Mutiny* (London, 1885) 33-9.

The effect of the above dynastic and territorial expropriations was that there was left over the country a large number of princes and landowners who felt themselves deeply aggrieved, and they were joined by thousands of disaffected followers and retainers who were threatened by ruin.

British Sense of Racial Superiority

Another important characteristic of the British rule during the hundred years from 1757 to 1858 was the scornful attitude of an average Englishman towards the Indians The British ridiculed the Indians as "Black Indians" worshipping, as they called it, "stocks and stones" and "swinging themselves on bamboo trees like beasts." They looked down upon the Indians as "Babu" and considered them creatures of an inferior breed, "half guerrilla, half Negro." The British thought they [the British] were the carriers of "White man's burden" to the "uncivilized" parts of the world. Even as late as 1917, a distinguished man of letters, William Archer, could remark that India was really a barbarous country.[11] Indians were not allowed entry in railway carriages, waiting rooms, and public parks meant for the Englishmen. The British never mixed with the Indian populace, never attempted to understand their thoughts, traditions, religious ceremonies, and social rituals. They never cared to learn the Indian language, and the result was that the Englishmen remained permanently aliens for the people of this land.

Exclusion of Indians from Higher Civil Service

The exclusively British character of the Imperial Services was another feature of the Company's Government. The educated Indians were kept aloof from the higher civil services and this led to bitter criticism all over the country. The authorities in London began to realize that the educated Indians must be associated with the governance of the country, and when the time for revision of the Company's Charter in 1833 came, reform was in the air. In the new Charter all classes of Indians, "irrespective of any distinction of race, caste and creed," were declared eligible for public office. In 1853, the Indian Civil Service examination was thrown open to the Indians. The appointments, however, depended upon the will of the rulers, and progress in that direction was very slow. Indians were admitted

[11]William of Archer, *India and the Future* (London, 1917) 294.

at a very slow rate, and this caused great irritation, particularly to the educated Indians. There were many Indians attached to the ruling dynasties and they aspired for a direct share in the administration. When this was not forthcoming these men became agitators against the British rule.

British Attempt to Reform India

During the early nineteenth century India began to be affected by the new ideas of "reform" and scientific revolution. In the beginning the EIC concerned itself only with commerce; and security and tranquility, that were essential to its promotion, were the watchwords of the Company's Government. But the liberalism, progressivism, and modernism, through which England was passing, suggested to the British masters the desirability of "reforming" the Indian society along the new ideas. A few administrators and Oriental scholars pointed out that Indian institutions "had a value of their own and should not be disturbed." But the radicals and evangelicals urged that India must be reformed, and the Indian society be released from the bonds of old and irrational traditions, dogmas, and superstition. Customs that appeared immoral, these innovators asserted, should be rooted out. The influence of the radicals was strong in the political circles in England, and the authorities in India were instructed to implement the new ideas.[12]

The reforming hand of the British first fell on the Hindu society. In 1829, Lord William Bentinck declared the practice of *suttee* illegal; the child-sacrifice was banned; and measures were taken against infanticide. The widows were encouraged to remarry under the Hindu Widows Remarriage Act of 1856. These steps were too revolutionary for the orthodox Hindus, and they felt that their way of life was being threatened. Common messing was started in jails. Railways, where the people sat "cheek by jowl," and factories, where all classes of people worked, were established. These innovations disturbed caste arrangements of the Hindus. Along with these government measures, the British and American missionaries were engaged in converting the Indians to Christianity. They were propagating the teachings

[12]A few political philosophers, such as Bentham and James Mill, were urging that societies should and could be reformed by proper laws; see Percibal Spear, n. 5, 255-6. Condorcet's *Essay on the Progress of the Human Spirit*, Bentham's *Discourse on Civil and Penal Legislation*, and James Mill's *History of British India* were read widely all over England.

of Christ and were emphasizing the superiority of Christian ethics. The British rulers in India not only connived at their activities, they gave protection to the civil rights of those who adopted Christianity by the Religious Disabilities Act of 1850. The Hindu populace began to feel that the government was planning to spoil their society and religion. Thoughts and feelings began to run high all over northern India.

Some changes in the system of law and administration were also brought about. Thomas B. Macaulay, Law Member in Bentinck's Council, produced the Indian Civil and Criminal Codes of Procedure and the Indian Penal Code to make the laws precise and exact, but the legal process still remained costly and dilatory. It was, in the words of Percival Spear, "often heartless to the Indian peasant." Currency was introduced as a daily medium of exchange, and the provision for the sale and mortgage of land was made in the legal system. The introduction of the Western concept of the rule of law and equality before the law disturbed the high caste Hindus. The great law-giver of the Hindus, Manu, had based his criminal and civil laws on caste distinctions, but the insistence of the British Courts on dealing equally with a Brahman and an out-caste was an affront to orthodox Hindu thinking. The Muslim *ryots* also felt sore over the supremacy which the English law gave to the Hindu moneylender.

The reformist zeal of the British affected education also. The Charter Act of 1813 had provided one lakh of rupees to be spent annually for the promotion of learning among the Indians. A controversy arose as to whether the British should promote Western education or Eastern knowledge. Macaulay vehemently decried Sanskrit literature and eulogized the virtues of Western science and philosophy. He suggested the creation of a class of "Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect." He urged that the medium of instruction should be English. In and after 1835, English became the official language and replaced Persian and Sanskrit. Thousands of young Indians took up English, but a large body of Hindus and Muslims resented the imposition of a foreign language.

Sense of Loss among Muslims

The decline and fall of the Moghul Empire affected the Muslims of India adversely. During several centuries of the Muslim rule the Hindus had been relegated into the background, and they were

only subjects (*ryots*) paying the *jizya* (tax exacted from all non-Muslims). The Muslims had been lords of the land in every sense; they were the holders of all key posts in the administration and army; their arts and crafts enjoyed state patronage, and pensions and honours were their exclusive privilege. With the collapse of the Moghul rule and the advent of the British rule they ceased to be the governing class. All military command was now in British hands; Muslims, as also the Hindus, were kept aloof from the high civil posts. Even in the lower ranks of public service the more conservative and less educated Muslims found themselves edged out by the keen, purposeful, better organized Hindus. The Industrial Revolution deprived the Muslim artisans and craftsmen of their means of livelihood, and they were brought almost to the starvation level. The Permanent Settlement of Lord Cornwallis elevated the Hindu collectors of revenue to the exalted position of landlords and the Muslim houses of Bengal were almost ruined.

Thus, almost the entire Muslim population of the country—rich and poor, high and low—were aggrieved against the British rule and had a great sense of loss.

Grievances of the Sepoys

The last, but not the least, important characteristic of the British rule was the unjust and improper treatment that was meted out to the Indian section of the EIC's army. While the Indian troops were asked to perform harder jobs, they were paid, fed, and lodged poorly, and the result was that they always groaned against their ill-treatment. On certain occasions they even rebelled and disobeyed the orders of the English officers. A regiment revolted in Bengal as early as 1766; there was a serious outbreak at Vellore in 1806; the first Burmese war led to mutiny among the high-caste Sepoys at Barackpore, who feared they would be sent abroad; four Bengal regiments refused to go to Sind; and in 1844, two regiments mutinied on the Sikh frontier. In 1849, four regiments refused to draw their pay, and one regiment had to be sent to Multan almost in a state of rebellion. In 1850, the 66th Infantry rebelled; and in 1852, the 38th Regiment refused when ordered to go to Burma. The British authorities did little to remove the discontent and disaffection of the Sepoys, and the grievances continued to increase.

More fuel to the fire of unrest was added during the 1850's. Dalhousie's policy of economy coupled with efficiency greatly dissatis-

fied the Sepoys in Bengal. The annexation of Oudh became very unpopular and many soldiers sympathized with the ruling house. The Sepoys fully shared the general suspicion of European innovations and of the Christianizing enthusiasm of the government. The curtailment of postal privileges and the suspension of pensions to those who were unfit for foreign service annoyed the rank and file. The British wanted the Indian soldiers to fight for them in Burma, China, and the North West Frontier Province (modern U.P.) but the latter did not like it. On the insistence of Lord Canning, the General Service Enlistment Act was passed in 1856, and the new recruits had to undertake to go anywhere they were ordered. This was regarded by many in the army as an attack on their caste.

A consciousness of power had grown up among the Sepoys, and the Bengal Army, in particular, realized how dependent the British were upon it during the Crimean War in Europe in 1856. Throughout the vast area, normally garrisoned by the Bengal Army, there was hardly one British soldier to twenty-five Sepoys. The remainder had been sent to Europe or were posted in the Punjab. No British regiment was stationed in Oudh, despite its disturbed condition, nor there was any at Delhi. Between Calcutta and Allahabad, there was only one British regiment at Dinapur, and the disgruntled element in the army fully knew the helplessness of the British. At the time Lord Dalhousie left India, the Bengal Army was sullen, insubordinate and on the verge of rebellion. At about the same time greased cartridges[13] were supplied for the new Enfield rifle, and this worked as a spark for the accumulated heap of powder magazine of dissatisfaction and resentment.

UPRISING AGAINST BRITISH RULE

Early in 1857, signs of revolt began to appear in the army. On 29 March, Mangal Pandey, a Brahman Sepoy of the 34th N.I., stationed at Barrackpur, openly mutinied. On 11 May, the troops at Meerut rose, shot their officers and marched towards Delhi. They proclaimed Moghul Emperor Bahadur Shah the Emperor of India and persuaded him to assume their leadership. The revolt against the British rule began, and the trouble spread to U.P., Bengal, Bihar, Central

[13]These cartridges had to be bitten before insertion into the rifle. The grease was said to contain fat of cows (sacred for Hindus) and pigs (impure to Muslims).

India, Rajasthan, Deccan, and the Punjab. The Sepoys rebelled in all these places, and the disgruntled princes, Nawabs and chieftains—Nana Sahib, Rani of Jhansi, Khan Bahadur Khan, Azimulla, Tantia Topi, and Kunwar Singh—assumed their leadership. The Hindus and the Muslims, the higher classes and the lower, the landowners and the farmers—all saw in the Uprising an opportunity of avenging the wrongs done to them by the British, and they openly supported the rebels. For four months, during the summer of 1857, it appeared as though the revolt of the Sepoys would develop into a real war of independence that would make re-conquest by the British impossible. But by September, it became clear that the Indian rebels were not able to work upon some settled plan and to subordinate themselves to any *one* national leader. Their strength began to shatter, and their prestige, to wane. By and by, the English were successful in overpowering the forces of rebellion everywhere.

Character of the Uprising

The Uprising, even though it was quelled, was "the most enigmatic event of British Indian history." Scholars and historians have expressed divergent opinions on the character of the outbreak. A few writers, such as S.B. Chaudhri have looked upon the revolt as "the first combined attempt of many classes of people to challenge the foreign power."[14] They call it a civil rebellion, though the initiative came from the Sepoys. Other scholars, such as R.C. Majumdar, have expressed the view that the outbreak was largely the work of the army, though the general masses also played part in it.[15] A third view has been that the rebellion was a national war of independence to drive the foreign rulers out of the country and to make it completely independent.[16]

This opinion has been questioned by many. Majumdar asserts that it would be an error to call the Uprising "a national war of independence." Another distinguished scholar, S.N. Sen, invests the Mutiny

[14]Chaudhri, n. 9, 297. He entitled his book *Civil Rebellion in the Indian Mutinies, 1857-1858.*

[15]R.C. Majumdar was the Director, Board of Editors for the Freedom Movement in India. He chose *Sepoy Mutiny* as the title for his book.

[16]See A. C. Chatterji, *India's Struggle for Freedom* (Calcutta, 1947). The Pakistan Historical Society, in its *History of the Freedom Movement*, vol. II (Karachi, 1960), has also styled it so. The Government of India was inclined to treat it as the First War of Independence, and celebrated the centenary of the outbreak at the official level.

with the honour of "a national war of independence" only in respect of Oudh and Sahabad.[17] An English writer, Sir Percival Griffiths, does not consider the insurrection as primarily a "nationalist" movement.[18] The present writer also hesitates from calling the "1857" Uprising—as the first war of national liberation. The feelings of patriotism and the conception of Indian nationality were still in the stage of infancy and did not become sufficiently strong until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The rebellion did not evoke real feelings of national unity and it remained localized, restricted and unorganized. Only one of the three provincial armies rebelled; no important prince threw in his lot with the mutineers; and many, like the Maharaja of Patiala, openly helped the British cause. Of the thousands of landlords, who had been deprived of their estates through the *Inam* Commission or through administrative changes in Oudh and North West Frontier Province, only the *Taluqdars* of Oudh rendered some help to the rebels, and they too after a pretty long time. Of the fifty million Muslims in India, only three men out of every ten thousands rallied to their restored Emperor. In a few areas, where the peasants had suffered from heavy assessment, the mutineers were helped, but nowhere there was mass support. There was no unity of purpose among the leaders of the rebels. Nana Sahib, Rani of Jhansi, Khan Bahadur Khan, Kunwar Singh, and the commanders at Delhi had their own axes to grind. One scholar of Indian history has rightly remarked that "the revolt, even if successful, would have only led to anarchy and the rule of 'war-lords' of the type quite familiar in the 18th century India or recent China."

The Sikhs, though humbled and humiliated only a few years before, remained loyal and gave unqualified support to the English armies. This was done due to their deep hostility to the Moghuls and because of their belief that the mutiny was primarily an attempt of the Muslims to revive their old glory and empire. Weak and divided leadership, almost complete lack of planning and cooperation among the different sections of the revolting elements, want of the singleness

[17]Surendra Nath Sen, *Eighteen Fifty-Seven* (New Delhi, Government of India, 1957) 411.

[18]Sir Percival Griffiths, *The British Impact on India* (London, McDonald, 1952) 259. K. M. Panikkar also believed that the British rule gave "substance to the idea of a national State," and a "conscious process of unification was set afoot," see K.M. Panikkar, *A Survey of Indian History*, 209.

of purpose, and treachery of the princely order, rich merchants, certain trusted officers and loyalty of the Sikh and Gurkha troops—these were the factors that brought about complete suppression of the mutineers. These could hardly be considered as manifestations of nationalism and patriotism.

EFFECTS OF THE UPRISING

Whatever was the character and however short was the duration, the Uprising marked a turning point in the history of modern India. It exercised a tremendous influence upon the British policy in India. The cruelties caused by the rebels upon English men, women, and children were for many years remembered with hatred. The revolt of the Brahmin regiments, particularly, shocked the British, for they had been the most-favoured of all the Sepoys, and their religious privileges had been safeguarded at the expense of military efficiency. The English became distrustful of the Indians, above all the high-caste Hindus, and began to consider themselves "as a garrison occupying a country which might always break out in a sudden rebellion.".

The heavy loss of life also made the British think "less of the virtues of zeal and enthusiasm and more of caution and prudence." It was realized that the civil Uprising was partly due to reformist and innovating policy of Lord Dalhousie and to the legislation that affected Hindu social life. The next eighty years were marked by an unwillingness to interfere with religious and caste questions. "The Indian government's honeymoon with progress," as Percival Spear has put it, "was over and was to be followed by the humdrum process of getting along with a traditionalist partner."[19] The British realized that their duty was to keep the peace and maintain law and order and bring to India some of the blessings of industrialized Europe, but not to worry about the Indians' family or private morals. The British adopted, in the post-Mutiny period, a policy of what has been called, "modest progress and steady reaction." If, therefore, there were good and liberal Viceroys, like Lords Charles Canning, Mayo, North Brooke, and George Frederick Ripon, there were also conservatives like Lords Edward P. Lytton and George Curzon who tried to undo, as much as possible, of what their predecessors had

[19]Spear, n. 5, 279.

done. If on the credit side there were the establishment of universities, construction of roads, railways and canals, introduction of local self-government in the big cities and the passage of the Indian Councils Acts, there were reactionary measures like the Press Act, the combination of the judiciary and the executive (which had earlier been separated), the Arms Act, the Forward Frontier policy, the officialization of the universities, and so on.

Apart from the general developments in the administration, the Uprising led to three major changes of policy. The Crown finally assumed control of the Indian Government; the army was completely reorganized; and a new attitude was adopted towards the Indian princely states.

Assumption of Control by the Crown

For many years, the EIC had been in the position of a mortgagee-in-possession, while the administration of Indian affairs was shared between the Governor-General and the President of the Company's Board of Directors. The Directors were nothing more than advisers, and even their old power of patronage was lost when the Charter Act of 1853 introduced the principle of competition for recruitment to the Civil Service in India. Under the Act for the Better Government of India, 1858, the President was replaced by a Secretary of State for India who was made directly responsible to the British Parliament. To assist and advise him in transacting the affairs of this country, a Council, known as India Council, functioning "during good behaviour" was created. For a few years, the Crown and Parliament showed a keen desire to supervise Indian affairs, but this gradually diminished. Power tended to concentrate in the hands of the Secretary of State, who was a member of the British cabinet, and his technical advisers in the India Office. In India, the Governor-General also became the Viceroy or the personal representative of the Queen, and he was subjected to a more rigorous control from White Hall. The days were gone when a Governor-General like Wellesley could have his own way by presenting the authorities in London with a *fait accompli*. By the end of the nineteenth century Lord Elgin (due to the opening of direct telegraphic communication in 1870) was telegraphing twice a day for instructions.

Reorganization of the Indian Army

The Indian army, being the pioneer of the insurrection, was

remodelled. The British sense of responsibility to the Indian masses was now tempered by the realization that the British Empire in India should be "far more of a permanency than their predecessors had imagined." The British element, it was felt, must be strengthened in the army in order to ensure loyalty and efficiency. The proportion of Europeans to Indians was fixed at fifty-fifty in the Bengal army and one to two elsewhere. The new army left out the Brahmans and Rajputs of Oudh, and brought in men from other areas known for their martial qualities—the Sikhs from Punjab, Gurkhas from Nepal, and Pathans from the frontier. Drastic changes were made in the organization of the army, and Jawaharlal Nehru describes this situation thus:

> The policy of balance and counterpoise was deliberately furthered in the Indian Army. Various groups were so arranged as to prevent any sentiment of national unity growing amongst them, and tribal and communal loyalties and slogans were encouraged. Every effort was made to isolate the army from the people, and even ordinary newspapers were not allowed to reach the Indian troops. All the key positions were kept in the hands of the Englishmen, and no Indian could hold the King's Commission. . . . No Indian could be employed in Army Headquarters except as a petty clerk in the accounts department. For additional protection, the more effective weapons of warfare were not given to the Indian forces; they were reserved for the British troops in India. These British troops were always kept with the Indian regiments in all the vital centres of India, to serve as "Internal Security Troops" for suppression of disorder and to overawe the people.[20]

The result of all these measures was that a high sense of loyalty and discipline developed in the Indian army, and it became the backbone of the British Empire for several decades.

Abandonment of the Policy of Annexation of Princely States

The reorganization of the army had its counterpart in a new attitude towards the Indian states, based on the need for a better balance of power. Indian Nawabs and princes still had sufficient

[20]Nehru, n. 8, 390. Much of the "formidable" Indian artillery was disbanded and the remainder was put in the hands of the Europeans; see Spear, n. 5, 278.

hold upon their subjects, and the British authorities realized the importance of their loyalty and support to perpetuate their [British] rule in the country. Moreover, even after the end of the Crimean War with Russia (1854-56), the British statesmen remained apprehensive of a Russian invasion of India. The princely states, it was felt, would be of great help if any danger threatened from abroad at a moment when the country was disaffected. The policy of extending the British dominion by absorbing the princely states, therefore, was abandoned, and the Hindu and Muslim rulers were allowed the right of "adoption." New *Sanads* were issued to them, and their existing territories were guaranteed. Although as a paramount power Britain retained the right of interference, the Queen's Proclamation of 1 November 1858 assured the princes that the Crown would regard their "rights, dignity and honour as our own." The princes were even encouraged to interest themselves in all-India matters.

Impact of Uprising of Indian Mind

A war affects men's mind, it has been said, far more rapidly than education or political agitation. The rebels were suppressed by the British with the ruthlessness of a Chengiz Khan and a reign of terror was let loose upon the armless people. G.T. Garratt writes:

> The English killed their prisoners without trial and in a manner held by all Indians to be the height of barbarity—sewing Mohammedans in pig-skins, smearing them with pork fat before execution and burning their bodies and forcing Hindus to defile themselves. They also massacred thousands of civilian population not only in Delhi, but also in the countryside. Certain guilty villages were marked out for destruction and all the men inhabiting them were slaughtered, and the indiscriminate burning of their inhabitants occurred wherever our armies moved.[21]

For a generation the happenings of the two years, 1857-1858, became a subject of talk in every village and every household, and the stories of British ferocity spread from one place to another. The occurrences at Kanpur, Lucknow, and Delhi, the rising in Oudh

[21]G.T. Garratt, *An Indian Commentary* (London, Butler and Tanner Ltd., 1918) 112. On British atrocities, also see Ainslee T. Embree, *1857 in India; Mutiny or War of Independence* (Boston, Heath and Company, 1963) 52-5.

and the fate of Tantia Tope and Rani of Jhansi helped to mould public opinion in India. The failure of the rebellion convinced the people that the method of blood and bomb without proper organization and adequate preparedness would not suffice to face the might of British Imperialism. The educated Indians read with uneasiness the virulent attacks, in the European press, on Canning, Grant, and others ("clemency Canning," "humanity pretenders" and similar other satiric phrases) who were endeavouring to restore mutual goodwill and friendliness between Indians and the English. These men, both Hindus and Muslims, realized that the political revolution in the country could not be brought about without a psychological revolution. With this aim in view, concrete and far-reaching steps were taken, in the post-Mutiny years, to generate among the masses a very real desire to liberate themselves from age-old customs, traditions, and dogmas, and ultimately to bring about their political and economic advancement. What these steps were would be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

BIRTH OF INDIAN NATIONALISM

ALTHOUGH THE BRITISH succeeded in suppressing the insurrection of 1857 they could not set at naught the revolution that was taking place slowly but steadily all over India. That was the birth and growth of nationalism. A few scholars of Indian history and culture held the view that nationalism, which meant ethnological and geographical unity and solidarity, was always a phenomenon of Indian life. Even a distinguished Western authority on nationalism, Hans Kohn, has maintained that "a truer basis of unity than modern national sentiment was to be found in a common intellectual heritage, persisting through an unbroken tradition and moulding and permeating India's whole social life to the minutest detail, and in the peculiar contemplative piety which lies at the root of all the various forms of Hinduism."[1] It might be accepted that common intellectual heritage, traditions and social life *did* create the idea of nationality, but that was far from being strong and well permeated. Percival Griffiths, a keen student of Indian history, pointed out that the advent of the Muslims introduced in the country divergences of race, religion, language and social traditions, and these, in turn, greatly marred the growth of Indian nationality.[2]

Nationalism in the modern sense of the term appeared in European vocabularies during the sixteenth century when the nation-states were born on the ruins of the Holy Roman Empire. It came into prominence after the French Revolution (commenced in 1789) that gave to the world the concepts of popular sovereignty and self-determination of nations. Nationalism meant differently to different peoples. For those who had autocratic and despotic monarchies

[1]Hans Kohn, *A History of Nationalism in the East* (London, George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1929) 349.

[2]Griffiths, *Modern India*, 67.

nationalism meant the overthrow of such institutions; for those who had inaugurated a reign of democracy and popular sovereignty it meant economic, industrial, and social development; and for those less fortunate peoples who had been brought under foreign rule the object of nationalism was political emancipation first and economic advancement afterwards. India could be put in the third category, and as a unit of the British Empire Indian nationalism was directed against the continuance of foreign rule. Several factors generated the spirit of revolt among the people. These were: Western learning and English language, socio-cultural renaissance, Indian press, reactionary rule of Lord Lytton, and the Ilbert Bill controversy. Each of these factors was strong enough to stimulate the growth of the phenomenon, and, therefore, needed a separate and detailed discussion.

WESTERN LEARNING AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The first and foremost factor for nationalism was the Western learning and English language. Lord Macaulay, who was responsible for determining the British educational policy in India, had thought that the imparting of Western education would make available to the British Government in India a cheap supply of indigenous clerks to man the various offices. He had also thought that Western education would foster among the educated youths of India a sense of loyalty towards English rule and would bring the two communities—the Indians and the British—socially, politically, and culturally nearer to each other. He wrote in 1833: "It would be the proudest day in English history, when having become instructed in European knowledge, they [the Indians] shall demand European institutions." Other Englishmen had also thought, as a distinguished British historian, Elphinstone, has pointed out, that "English education would make the Indian people gladly accept the British rule."

In 1854, Sir Charles Wood prepared a new dispatch on the Indian educational system, and in 1858, three Universities, on the model of the then London University, were opened in Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay. Western political philosophy, history, law, and literature were included in the curriculum, and English was made the medium of instructions. Even after the revolt of 1857, the policy-makers in London continued to hold the belief that the age-old social customs and mental outlook of the Indian people must change, but the emphasis now shifted from legislation to education.

Thousands of young Indians took to Western education because it opened the way to government services and the new professions of law, medicine, and teaching. Many of them studied the political ideas of Burke, Herbert Spencer, Macaulay, John Stuart Mill, Locke, Rousseau, Mazzini, Cavour, Voltaire, and Thomas Paine and were imbued with the ideas of liberty, equality, fraternity, self-determination, and national freedom. They read of the French Revolution and their political consciousness was aroused. The political and diplomatic history of modern Europe was the history of the formation of national and democratic states and the educated Indians began to apply their newly acquired ideas to their country. The educated Indians began to pose such questions: "As British subjects was it not our natural right to take part in the government of our own country?" An urge began to develop "to make India more Indian and less English." About Western education, Dadabhai Naoroji, the Grand Old Man of India, wrote: "New light has been poured on us, teaching us the new lesson that kings are made for the people and not the people for kings."[3] Two scholars of Indian history, D.S. Sarma and K.M. Panikkar, have pointed out that the introduction of Western learning brought about a profound intellectual transformation in India.[4] Griffiths also wrote: "Whatever else of good or ill Britain may have achieved in India she may justly claim to have brought about the great Indian Renaissance."[5] Raja Ram Mohun Roy, Dadabhai Naoroji, W.C. Banerjea, Surendranath Banerjea Pherozeshah Mehta, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and D.E. Wacha were all educated in Western learning, and they became the first pioneers of Indian nationalism.

The English language as such played no less important role in the development of Indian nationalism. It cut across provincial barriers and served the purpose of a *lingua franca*, a common all-India language for Indians living in distant and different parts of the country and speaking quite different tongues and dialects. It

[3]See Dadabhai Naoroji's speech read on 2 May 1867 before the East India Association, Chunilal Lallubhai Parekh, ed., *Essays, Speeches, Addresses and Writings of Dadabhai Naoroji* (Bombay, 1887) 26-45.

[4]K.M. Panikkar, *A Survey of Indian History* (Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1954) 205. He describes the introduction of Western learning as "the most beneficently revolutionary decision by the British Government in India." For Sarma's views, see his book, *The Renaissance of Hinduism*.

[5]Griffiths, n. 2, 62.

was largely through the medium of English that educated Indians began to meet each other to discuss their common problems and to feel a sentiment of oneness and community of purpose. They began to meet on common platforms to devise plans for the upliftment of their country. And the increasing means of transportation and communication facilitated this process.

SOCIO-CULTURAL RENAISSANCE

While Western education began to create in the country a new class of people interested in bringing about the political emancipation of India, a few stalwarts of Indian thought and culture undertook the task of socio-cultural renaissance. These men were: Raja Ram Mohun Roy, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Vivekanand, Rama Krishna Paramahansa, Keshav Chandra Sen, Mrs. Annie Besant, and a few others. Sir Sayyed Ahmed Khan did the same work among the Muslims. A complete generation passed away, and every reform proposed or promised from time to time proved a source of fresh disappointment. And disappointment created irritation, resentment, and discontent. Indian public opinion on almost all questions of public policy was being flouted time and again, and it was often carried to such irritating extent that a few enlightened persons came to regard it as "part of a settled policy."

Moreover, the British policy of "divide and rule"—setting one class against another in the administration of the country—convinced the personages mentioned above that unless socio-cultural awakening was brought about and a solid basis was laid for unity and nationality the ills of India would not disappear.[6] The leaven of national rejuvenation was set at work and the national life was put in a state of ferment.

[6]At first the Nizam of Hyderabad was lined up against Arcot and Arcot against Nizam; then the Marahtas were put against Muslims and Afghans against the Hindus. After 1858, when the British had firmly established themselves in the country, they adopted a policy of open hostility towards the Muslims, because they had everything to fear from them [the Muslims] as they had usurped the Mughal Empire. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the policy of divide and rule was again reversed, and the Muslims were taken under the British protecting wings. An Englishman, Howard Malcolm, himself wrote: "Hindustan could have never been subdued but by the help of her own children." *Travels in South-Eastern Asia* (Boston, 1839) 26.

The first in the line of reformers was Ram Mohun Roy. His name was associated with two great reforms, viz. the abolition of *suttee* and the introduction of Western learning in India. He was a great rationalist like Martin Luther, Descartes, and Bacon, and he vehemently denounced the age-old rituals and practices like caste and idolatory that, he thought, had become obsolete. While Roy was proud of India's past heritage and culture he wanted the people to benefit from Western science, technology, and political institutions. In August 1828, he founded the Brahmo Samaj, or Divine Society, with the object of awakening the masses from their lethargy and backwardness. He was more a social reformer than a theologian or philosopher, and has been rightly called the "prophet of Indian nationalism and father of modern India." In 1833, he undertook a journey to England to plead for the introduction of social reforms in India, and passed away at Bristol.[7]

The mantle of Roy's work devolved upon Keshab Chander Sen who spread the gospel of the Brahmo Samaj far and wide and gave a new social orientation to its tenets. He was largely responsible for the enactment of the Civil Marriage Act that abolished early marriage, made polygamy penal, and sanctioned widow remarriages and inter-caste marriages.

The Brahmo Samaj, which kept its activities limited largely to Bengal, had its repercussions all over the country. In Poona, the movement assumed the name of Prarthana Samaj under the leadership of M.G. Ranade, and later on, towards the middle of 1870's, Sarvajanik Sabha under the management of Rao Bahadur Krishnaji Laxman Nulkar.[8]

What was achieved by these in Bengal and Maharashtra was accomplished by Arya Samaj in U.P. and the Punjab. This organization was set up by a Gujrati Brahmin ascetic, Dayanand Saraswati, in April 1875. Swami Shraddhanand, Lala Lajpat Rai, later on known as the "Lion of Punjab," and Lala Hansraj were the products of Arya Samaj. Dayanand stood for the superiority of the *Vedic* culture and emphasized that the *Vedas* were the source of all knowledge. He attacked both Islam and Christianity as two proselytising

[7]For details about Roy and Brahmo Samaj, see K.C. Vyas, *The Social Renaissance in India* (Bombay, Vora and Co., 1957) 9-45; D.S. Sarma *Hinduism Through the Ages* (Bombay, Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1956) 65-83; Panikkar, n. 3, 213.

[8]For the details of its activities, see Sarma, n. 7, 83-91.

religions and started the *Shuddhi* and *Sanghatan* movements to counteract their activities.[9] His book, *Satyaratha Prakash,* was designed to give a new strength to Hinduism. He was, however, not a fanatic and threw the Arya Samaj open to all castes and communities. He raised his voice against social evils like child marriage, enforced widowhood and casteism. He was, in the words of Max Muller, a "liberal orthodox." Although not militant in organization and objectives the Arya Samaj created strong patriotism and militant zeal among the Hindus.

The impact of Western thought on Hinduism, thus, produced, as Griffiths has put it, "two main currents of thought which were afterwards to be united in the stream of Indian nationalism. The Brahmo Samaj attuned the minds of many Indian leaders to the new ideas of democracy and freedom while the Arya Samaj and the revival among orthodox Hindus led to militant Hinduism, which for the first time gave real unity to Hindu India and built up a combative nationalism."[10]

The Theosophical Society under the leadership of Mrs. Annie Besant took up the task of Hindu revivalism in the South. This society was first formed in New York City by a Russian lady, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, and an American national, Colonel Olcott, in 1875. In 1879, they came to India and set up a similar society here also. Adyar near Madras became its headquarters. Annie Besant, an Irish lady, who had developed great love for India, came here in November 1893, and began to spread the teachings of the Theosophical Society. She emphasized the oneness of religions, immortality of soul, universal brotherhood, and spiritual evolution of the world. Educational institutions were set up in the South to bring about a new awakening among the people, and Hinduism was in ferment. Mrs. Besant told the Hindus that they possessed "the key to supreme wisdom, that their gods, their philosophy, their morality are on a higher plane of thought than the West has ever reached."[11] K.C. Vyas pointed out that "the social and religious activities of the Theosophical Society gave a considerable impetus to the growing

[9] *Shuddhi* was the "purification ceremony by which non-Hindus, were converted to Hinduism." *Sanghatan* meant union of Hindus for self-defence against the onslaughts of non-Hindus; see *ibid.*, 98-9.

[10] Griffiths, *British Impact on India,* 253.

[11] Sarma, n. 7, 121.

national consciousness among the people of India."[12] Speaking of the Hindu revival, Sir Valentine Chirol also opined that "no Hindu has done so much to organize and consolidate the movement as Mrs. Besant."[13]

Rama Krishna Paramahansa also played a significant role in Hindu renaissance. He was an ascetic or *yogi* and was born in a poor but orthodox Brahmin family of Bengal in 1834. He was said to be in direct line of Chaittanya Mahaprabhu and was highly spiritual. He revived the cult of the *Upanishads* and preached the virtue of renunciation, self-sacrifice, and social service. Not highly educated Paramahansa traversed the different regions of soul by his *tapas* and *yogabhyasa*. He asserted that society could be reformed if men and women attained heights of spirituality. The great *Sanyasi* halted the tide of Westernization that had overtaken the country and pointed out that the solution to India's ill lay in its own religion and culture.

Paramahansa's work was carried forward by his very able and devoted disciple, Swami Vivekananda. He was very much influenced by the writings of some Western philosophers like Spinoza, Descartes, Hume, Darwin, Kant, Hegel, and Fichte, and he proclaimed the oneness of all religions. He founded a monastic order called Rama Krishna Mission that resembled, in some ways, Western missionary societies. He undertook extensive tours of Europe and the United States, and in 1893, he attended the World Congress of Religions at Chicago. He was said to have put Hinduism on the map of the Western world.

Vivekananda added the gospel of action to that of contemplation and awakened the people from their slumbers. Addressing the Indian youth he said: "India is to be saved by Indians themselves. You have been told and taught that you can do nothing, and nonentities you are becoming every day. What we want is strength. So, believe yourselves.... Make your nerves strong. What we want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel."[14] He told the Indians that the East was deep in wisdom and rich in spiritual virtues, and exhorted them that they should conquer the West, which was spiritu-

[12]Vyas, n. 7, 127. For Besant's ideas on social life in India, see *Annie Besant, Builder of New India* (Adyar, Madras, 1942) 315-52.

[13]Chirol, *Indian Unrest*, 29. For details of the programme of the Society, see Geoffrey West, *The Life of Annie Besant* (London, Gerald Howe, Ltd., 1929) 265-81.

[14]Quoted in Vyas, n. 7, 105.

ally shallow, through their philosophy and superiority of thought. By his teachings, Vivekananda created among the people a sense of confidence and self-reliance—virtues that were being overshadowed by the Western learning, science and technology.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak, a staunch and orthodox Hindu, Mahadeo Govind Ranade, a thinker, Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo, and a few others carried the teachings of the nineteenth-century revivalists into politics, and the spirit of nationalism was in full swing. Hindus all over the country began to come closer and discuss problems of political and economic advancement of the country.[15]

Revivalism among the Muslims

The work of national rejuvenation was not confined to the Hindus; the Muslims also read the writing on the wall and began to shake off the lethargy and depression that had overtaken them after the disruption of the Moghul Empire. In the early years of their rule, the British policy was openly hostile to the Muslims; they were looked down upon as the avowed enemies of the British rule. The East India Company had followed the deliberate policy of keeping the Muslims away from all positions of importance and strength and had increasingly depended upon the support and loyalty of the Hindus. Lord Ellenborough confessed in 1848 that "the race [Muslims] is fundamentally hostile to us and, therefore, our true policy is to conciliate the Hindus."[16]

The part played by the Muslims in the Uprising of 1857 confirmed the British in their belief that the Muslims were still unreconciled to their rule. Sir John Kaye wrote that "the prime movers in the rebellion were Musulmans."

For about a decade after 1857, the British became all the more rigid in their anti-Muslim policy. During 1852 and 1868, out of 240 natives admitted as pleaders of the High Courts, only one was a Muslim. In 1860, out of 300 students in the Hooghly College, only 3 were Muslims. In 1871, out of 2,141 gazetted posts in Bengal, 1,238 were occupied by Europeans, 711 by the Hindus, and only 92 by the Muslims. Sir William Hunter himself wrote that in Calcutta there was scarcely a government office in which a Mohammedan "can hope for any post above the rank of porter, messenger, filler

[15]For details of religious reform movements, see A.R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* (Bombay, 1948) 125-51.

[16]Quoted in Atulananda Chakravarti, *Call It Politics?* 35.

of ink-pots and mender of pens."[17] He also wrote that "after the Mutiny the British turned upon the Musulmans as their real enemies."

The result of this anti-Muslim policy was that they became the "hewers of wood and drawers of water" in a land where they had once held the highest positions and honours. Frustration, despondency, and decay overtook the entire Muslim community. After their sad experiences the Musulmans sulked, as Rajendra Prasad has stated, "in their tents, and for some time did not take advantage of the English education which had been introduced and without which government employment had progressively become more and more difficult to obtain."[18]

Revivalism among the Muslims was the need of the hour, and this was provided by the *Wahabi* movement on the one side and by the personality of Sir Sayyed Ahmed Khan on the other. Mohammad Ibn Abdul Wahab had started in Arabia a movement, known after his name as the *Wahabi* movement, designed to emphasize the virtues of Islam and the oneness of God. This was brought to India by Syed Ahmed of Rai Bareili (U.P.). He received his early education in Delhi and earned a good name not only for his learning but also for his piety. He was the accepted leader of many learned *Ulemas* of his time. After his return from *Mecca* in 1823, he established all over India branches to restore Islam to its original purity and to denounce the un-Islamic practices that had crept into the Muslim community. The *Wahabis* made Poona their headquarters.

During 1824-1849, the disciples and agents of Sayyed Ahmed preached *jehad* (a holy war) against the Sikhs of Punjab who, it was said, "ill-treated the Musulmans, prevented them from fulfilling their religious obligations and desecrated their places of worship." The British authorities did not interfere with the *Wahabis'* activities against the Sikhs upon whom they [the British] looked with disfavour. But once the Sikhs were subdued the British began to pursue anti-Muslim policies. These policies were essentially directed against the *Wahabis* because they were, among the Mulsims, the prime movers

[17]W.W. Hunter, *Indian Musulmans*, 169.

[18]Rajendra Prasad, *India Divided* (Bombay, Hind Kitabs, 1946) 95. "Coupland also points out that the Muslims failed to share in the intellectual renaissance, which the acquisition of the English language and of the knowledge of Western science and thought which it conveyed, was bringing about in Hindu India"; see his book, *The Indian Problem, 1833-1935* (Madras, 1943) 32.

in the Uprising of 1857. The *jehadis* were declared rebels against the British, and some of them convicted and sentenced to transportation for life.[19] But all these acts of repression and suppression could not wipe out the consciousness which the *Wahabi* movement had fomented among the Musulmans.

A work similar to that of Ram Mohun Roy was undertaken by Sir Sayyed for the Muslims. His ancestors had held high government posts under the Moghuls. He himself entered service under the East India Company in 1837, and loyally served the government. He suffered at the hands of the rebels in 1857 and helped the British against them. In 1869, he went to England and was very much impressed by Western liberal ideas.

In his early years, Sir Sayyed was a nationalist and believed that the Hindus and Musulmans constituted one nation. He did not fail to realize that the Hindus and the Muslims were "like the two eyes of a fair maiden," and that "it was impossible to injure the one without affecting the other or without disfiguring the maiden altogether." He wrote: "The word nation [*Qaum*] applies to people who inhabit a country. . . . Remember that Hindu and Musulman are religious words; otherwise Hindus, Musulmans and even Christians who inhabit this country—all constitute, on this account, one nation." He was the founder of the Scientific Society of which Hindus, Musulmans, and Europeans became members. Hindus, no less than the Musulmans, regarded him as their leader. Nevertheless, he was more inclined towards the revival of the Muslim community. He was very much distressed by the ruin that had overtaken the Musulmans. He was quick to realize that the apathy of the Muslims towards English education was the basic cause of their backwardness. "Defying orthodox hostility," as Coupland has put it, "he declared that modern learning was neither forbidden by the *Koran* nor dangerous to the faith it taught." He helped in founding schools at places where he was posted during his service. After retirement he devoted himself to the uplift of the Muslims. He firmly believed that only in the adoption of Western learning and literature laid the future of his

[19]A strong force under Sir N. Chamberlain was sent to deal with them in 1863, and after severe fighting it captured their stronghold. But the Wahabi activities continued throughout the 1860's, ending in the trial of the ring leaders at Patna in 1871 during which the Judge was murdered. It was a Wahabi prisoner in the Andamans who murdered Lord Mayo in 1873.

community. He strove to bring about a regeneration of the Muslims on modern lines. Aligarh became the centre of his activities and the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College was founded in 1875 to spread Western science and culture. Later on, Osmania University at Hyderabad and Islamia College at Peshawar were also set up. By the courage of his convictions and strength of his personality he gradually obtained an unrivalled hold on Muslim opinion throughout India.

All these socio-religious-cultural trends paved the way for Indian nationalism during the nineteenth century, particularly after the Uprising of 1857. They gave new life to the downtrodden, ignorant, and suffering multitudes and led to a new consciousness by unfolding the past glories of Islam and Hinduism. And with consciousness developed a sense of self-respect. This, in turn, bred, among the educated Indians at least, a yearning for ameliorating the ills of the country.

INDIAN PRESS

While Western education and socio-cultural renaissance were inoculating the educated people with political thoughts and ideas there was yet another and a more powerful agency at work, silently moulding and shaping public opinion on a much larger scale throughout the country. That was the Indian press. For quite some time, the East India Company did not permit the growth of newspapers. In 1767, the first attempt was made to start a newspaper, but the author was deported. In 1780, however, James Hicky founded the *Bengal Gazette* and this was followed by the *Madras Courier* in 1785 and *Bombay Gazette* in 1789. But these were primarily official organs. A few non-official papers were also established, but they were subjected to strict censorship. Lord Hastings abolished regulations requiring pre-censorship. Sir Charles Metcalfe[20] held the view that the supreme authority should be subjected to public scrutiny and, in collaboration with Macaulay, he repealed the licencing regulations in 1835, and the press began to enjoy considerable freedom. The newspapers began to increase in number. *The Times of India, The Statesman,*

[20]He was the Acting Governor-General in 1835. He said: "If India could be preserved as a part of the British Empire only by keeping its inhabitants in a state of ignorance, our domination would be a curse to the country and ought to cease"; quoted in Griffiths, n. 2, 68.

The Pioneer, and *The Civil and Military Gazette* were owned by the English, and a few English papers, such as *The Hindu* of Madras, *The Leader* of Allahabad, and *The Amrita Bazar Patrika* of Calcutta (and Allahabad), were owned by the Indians. some papers in Indian languages were also started, the more important of them being *The Samachar Darpan*, *The Bombay Samachar*, and *The Jame-e-Jamshed*.[21]

These papers became a powerful instrument of political education for the middle class people and stimulated the growth of nationalism.

REACTIONARY MEASURES OF LYTTON

While nationalism was making headway in India the danger of Russian penetration in Central Asia was increasing. In 1868, the Russians had occupied Samarkand and, in 1873, Khiva. Russian pressure on Afghanistan began to increase and it appeared that the whole of Russia's policy was planned with India as an objective. In March 1874, Disraeli became the Prime Minister of England and Lord Salisbury, the Secretary of State for India. Both of them were distrustful of Russia and were dissatisfied with the "too cautious and too prosaic" policy of the Government of India under Lord North Brook vis-a-vis Afghanistan. They sent in 1876, Lord Lytton to replace North Brook with the object of effecting "the virtual subordination of Afghanistan to India." Such an adventure involved the Government of India in the second war with the Amir, Sher Ali. The British Resident at Kabul, Sir Louis Cavagnari, his staff and escort were massacred, and hundreds of Indian lives were lost. England failed in all the objects for which the war had been begun. But India was the chief sufferer. Its debt increased and its live stock depleted. The people learnt that, at any time, connection with Great Britain might "involve them in some reckless and disastrous enterprise." Similarly, the dispatch of Indian troops to Cyprus during the Near Eastern crisis of 1878 caused great annoyance all over the country.

The question of admission into the Indian Civil Service (ICS) irritated the minds of educated Indians. The examination used to be held in London and it was very difficult for an average Indian

[21]By 1873, there were 38 Indian-owned newspapers in Bengal, 62 Indian language papers in Bombay Presidency, and 19 in Madras Presidency.

to travel all the long distance for an almost impossible ordeal. It was difficult to attain mastery over the foreign language that was the medium of examination and compete with the Englishmen who had the advantage of having English as their mother tongue. In 1877, the age of entrance was reduced from 21 to 19 years, thus making it all the more difficult for Indians to compete. This step was considered as an effort to go back on the policy of equal admission of Indians and Europeans. The ill-treatment of those Indians who were actually taken and the discrimination regarding their salary and other privileges also disappointed the younger people. They became bitter critics of the British rule.

The wayward hand of Lytton also fell upon the Indian press. In 1878, the Vernacular Press Act was passed and the freedom of the Indian language papers was gagged. At the behest of the Home Government, Lytton abolished the import cotton duties of 5 per cent, and this was felt to be a discrimination against India in favour of the Lancashire mill-owners. The commercial class of Western India was estranged. A costly and gigantic *durbar* was held, in 1877, in Delhi while a terrible famine was causing havoc among millions of helpless population in southern India and whose dire effects were felt even in Bengal and the Punjab. An intrepid veteran journalist of Calcutta declared that "Nero was fiddling while Rome was burning."

These ill-starred reactionary measures, combined with "Russian methods" of police repression brought India under Lytton within measurable distance of a revolution. The conditions in 1880, when Lytton relinquished office, were identical to those at the time of Dalhousie's departure in 1856. Acts of lawlessness, murders of obnoxious persons, looting of bazars, and robbery of bankers were the order of the day.

ILBERT BILL CONTROVERSY

In 1880, there was a change of government in England, and the Liberal Party under Gladstone came into power. He was known for his liberal ideas and was a believer in moral principles. "Good government," he pronounced, "was no substitute for self-government." "It is our weakness and calamity," he said, "that we have not been able to give India the blessings of free institutions."[22] He sent Ripon,

[22]Quoted in Spear, *India*, 305.

a close friend and follower, to "reform" the structure of the Indian Government. The new Governor-General repealed the Vernacular Press Act of 1878, commenced industrial legislation by passing the first Factories Act, and took steps to promote local self-government in big cities and towns. The "forward" frontier policy of Disraeli-Lytton period was abandoned; Abdur Rahman, a nephew of Sher Ali, was recognized as the ruler of Afghanistan, and a treaty with Kabul was concluded.

Ripon also sought to remove the invidious distinction existing at that time between the European and Indian members of the judiciary. Indian sessions judges and magistrates were not empowered to try European offenders, and this was a cause of great annoyance to the educated community of the country. In 1883, the Law Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, Sir Courtenay Ilbert, introduced in the Imperial Legislature a Bill, known after his name as Ilbert Bill, designed to remove the disability on Indian judges. The Anglo-Indian community opposed the enactment of the Bill vehemently, and asserted that the Indian judges were not fit to administer justice to a White offender. The European Defence Association, with branches in important cities of India, was formed to organize a campaign against the Bill. There were protest meetings and agitation, and it was proposed to kidnap Ripon and hold him to ransom. Even in England the government was under fire. Ripon had to bow to the storm and a compromise was made.

This manifestation of the British sense of racial superiority acted as a spark to powder magazine; it was an eye-opener to Indians. They learnt the lesson that they would have to undergo a long period of sacrifice and discipline if they wanted justice and equality in their own country. The educated class of people noted the extraordinary force of a minority when organized and directed by a single aim, and they applied the inference to their own situation. Demands began to arise for a national organization by means of which the grievances of the people against the British rule could be ventilated.[23] A few thoughtful men, both Indians and English, were not slow to measure the trends in the country and took steps to organize the mass discontentment into a peaceful channel. What these steps were would be discussed in the following pages.

[23]S.K. Ratcliffe, *Sir William Wedderburn and the Indian Reform Movement* (London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1923) 57.

CHAPTER THREE

GENESIS AND GROWTH OF INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

WHILE THE GROUNDWORK for the rise and growth of nationalism in India was laid in the post-Mutiny years, political life had begun to be organized even during the days of the Company's rule. In 1843, the British India Society was set up in Calcutta to voice the grievances of the people. In 1851, the British Indian Association was formed by men like Rajendra Pal Mitra and Ram Gopal Ghosh, and for the first time in 1853 this Association placed before the British Parliament proposal for Indian participation in the government. It also worked for the political uplift of the people. But the work of this Association was interrupted by the Uprising of 1857, and there was bitterness and suspicion on both sides. For about two decades the people remained silent and subdued, though some work continued to be done in the Bombay Presidency by Sir Mangal Dass Nathubhai and Naoroji Furdunji who set up the Bombay Association.

POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS AFTER 1857

In 1875, the East India Association was formed in Calcutta, and at about the same time the Sarvajanik Sabha was set up in Poona. Public life in the South was inaugurated by *The Hindu* whose founders were Messrs. N. Subbarau Pantulu, the Hon'ble Rangiah Naidu, G. Subrahamania Aiyar, and M. Veeravaghavachariar. These were practically all the public bodies in India between the fifties and early seventies of the last century. They exercised considerable influence within their limited sphere; they had neither a contemplated policy nor any systematic programme. The idea of a united nationality and national interests, the all-embracing patriotic fervour and the broad vision of political emancipation were still remote, though not altogether

foreign to the aims and objects of these associations. That work was done by the Indian Association founded, in July 1876, by Surendra Nath Banerjea. Anand Mohan Bose was its first secretary. It organized active political propaganda throughout India and awakened the people to a sense of political unity and concerted activity. The policies of Lord Lytton provided a series of irritations to the country and the Indian Association stimulated the political consciousness of the people. On its initiative, a political conference was held at the Albert Hall in Calcutta in 1883. In his opening address, S. N. Banerjea, specifically referring to the Delhi Durbar of 1877, exhorted the audience to unite and organize itself for the country's cause.

The people of the Madras Presidency organized themselves in 1884, into a powerful and energetic association, known as Madras Mahajana Sabha, to keep themselves abreast in the coming struggle. In December 1884, another important development took place. A number of delegates came from different parts of the country to take part in the Annual Convention of the Theosophical Society at Adyar. After the convention, seventeen men "good and true" met and discussed various problems affecting the interests of the whole country and developed the idea of a countrywide organization. On 31 January 1885, a public meeting of the citizens of Bombay was convened by Pherozeshah Mehta, K. T. Telang, and Badruddin Tyabji, who controlled the public life of the Western Presidency, and the Bombay Presidency Association was set up.

FORMATION OF INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

The country was, thus, prepared in men as well as material for the construction of a national organization. It only required the genius of an expert architect to devise a suitable plan and lay the foundation stone. That architect was Allan Octavian Hume. He was the son of the radical Joseph Hume. He joined the ICS and became an outstanding district officer. He played a gallant part in the Mutiny and thereafter engaged himself to welfare activities. In 1870, he became secretary to the Government of India in the Home Department. Disagreement with government policies led to his removal from the post in 1879, and in 1882 he retired from the ICS.

Hume had been closely following the trend of events, particularly during the Viceroyalty of Lytton and had been anxiously watching the clouds that were darkening the Indian horizon. The

more he watched and studied the situation, the more convinced he became that "the cure for the unrest lay in the foundation of a genuine Nationalist movement."[1]

Sir William Wedderburn, also of the ICS, was equally concerned about the political unrest in India. Like Hume, he too was a liberal-minded Englishman, and desired that the history of 1857 should not be repeated. They discussed the situation with Lord Frederick Dufferin who replaced Ripon in 1884, and who too belonged to the Liberal Party of Britain. With encouragement from the Viceroy, Hume addressed, on 1 March 1883, an open letter to the graduates of the Calcutta University as largely representing the educated community in the country.

He asked for fifty men—"with sufficient power of self-sacrifice, sufficient love for and pride in their country, sufficient genuine and unselfish heart-felt patriotism"—who would be willing to devote the rest of their life to the cause. He warned that if such men were not forthcoming there would be "no hope for India." The appeal met with a ready response, and the men, who had fully awakened to the plight of their country, mustered from different provinces at the trumpet call of a "friend, philosopher and guide." Towards the close of 1884, the Indian National Union was formed. In March 1885, the Union decided to hold a meeting of representatives from all parts of India during Christmas. In April, a manifesto was issued inviting important persons to meet at Poona and to establish a national organization.

When all the preliminaries were settled Hume sailed for England, apparently to consult friends and sympathizers in Parliament and outside but actually to guard the British public against all possible misapprehensions, suspicion, and distrust that the new organization was likely to evoke. He explained to his fellow countrymen the critical stage of the Indian political life, the aims and objects of the proposed organization and the constitutional character of the movement. In November 1885, Hume returned to India. During his stay in England cholera broke out in Poona and the venue of the Conference was shifted to Bombay. By the morning of 27 December, delegates from all parts of the country reached there. The first meeting took place next day at 12 noon in the hall of the Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit College, and the Indian National Congress was formed.

[1]Griffiths, *Modern India*, 63.

Was the Congress a National Organization?

The first session of the Congress was attended only by 72 delegates. But in course of time they began to grow, both in volume and content. In 1886, the number of its members increased to 406; in 1887, they became 600; in 1888, the number reached to 1248; and in less than two decades the Congress began to draw the attention of the masses. Its doors opened to all, and it knew no difference between "British India" and "Indian India," between one province and another, between the classes and the masses, between the rich and the poor, between towns and villages, between agricultural and industrial interests, and between castes and communities.

For a long time, however, the claim of the Congress to be considered a national organization was disputed by its critics. Some called it a "Bengalee Congress," although the Bengalees had clearly no more hand in it either in its inception or in its development than the Parsis, the Madrasis, and the Marahtas; others dubed it "Hindu Congress"; while some denounced it as an organization of the "Educated minorities" in the country. But a look into the nature of membership and aims and objects indicated that the Congress was a cosmopolitan organization. Almost all the leading personages of the country, except Sir Sayyed, joined the Congress. Men like Surendra Nath Banerjea, Dadabhai Naoroji, Sir Dineshaw Wacha, Tyabji, Telang, Arvind Ghosh, Rash Bchari Ghosh, Lala Lajpat Rai, Anand Mohan Bose, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Subramania Iyer, Pherozeshah Mehta, P. Anandacharlu, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, the Ali Brothers (Shaukat Ali and Mohammad Ali), Maulana Husain Ahmed, Dr. Khan Sahib, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, and a host of others joined its ranks and helped its growth.

The first President of the Congress was an Indian Christian W.C. Banerjea; the second was a Parsi, Dadabhai Naoroji; the third, a Muslim, Tyabji; and the fourth and fifth were two Englishmen, George Yule and Wedderburn[2] respectively. The sessions of the Congress were attended by representatives of all communities. The

[2]Wedderburn retired from the ICS in 1887. Ratcliffe writes of him: "For more than 30 years the Indian National Congress was the master concern of his public life. Its activities and aims were never out of his thoughts. . . . In the fullest possible sense he was its representative before the British people"; see Ratcliffe, *Sir William Wedderburn and the Indian Reform Movement*, 66.

first Congress was attended by two Muslims, the second by 33; and the sixth in 1890, by 156 Muslims out of 702 delegates or 22 per cent. The early resolutions and programmes of the Congress revealed that it was interested not only in the betterment of one or two particular classes of India but in the uplift of all. It demanded not only political right for the people but economic and social justice too. The claim of the Congress to be a national organization was best put by M. K. Gandhi at the second Round Table Conference in London before the Federal Structure Committee. He said: "The Congress is... the oldest political organization we have in India.... It is what it means—National. It represents no particular community, no particular class, no particular interest. It claims to represent all Indian interests and all classes.... From the very commencement the Congress had Musulmans, Christians, Anglo-Indians ... all religious sects, creeds, represented upon it more or less fully."[3]

Faith in British Liberalism and Justice

The leaders who shaped the policy and programme of the Congress during the first two decades of its existence (1885-1905) were mostly lawyers (W.C. Banerjea, Pherozeshah Mehta, and others), teachers (S.N. Banerjea, Tilak, and Gokhale), journalists (Moti'al Ghosh and G. Subramanya Iyer) and administrators (R.C. Dutt and Raja Madhav Rao, etc.). What these men thought was that India needed a balanced and lucid presentation of its needs before the Englishmen and their Parliament. Most of them came from the upper strata of Indian society and were in most cases the product of Western education. They had faith in the British sense of justice and fairplay, and believed that India's connection with the West, through England, was a boon rather than a curse. Loyalty to the British Crown was the keynote of the early Congressmen. W.C. Banerjea, who presided the inaugural meeting on 28 December, ended his address with these words: "She, Britain, had given them order; she had given them railways, and above all, she had given them the inestimable blessing of Western education.... Their desire to be governed according to the ideas of government prevalent in Europe was in no way incompatible with their loyalty to the British Government. All they desired was that the basis of the government should be wide and

[3]Quoted in B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress, 1885-1935*, vol. I (Bombay, Padma Publications Ltd., 1946) 20.

people should have their proper and legitimate share in it."[4]

At the second session of the Congress in Calcutta, S.N. Banerjea said: "Self-government is the ordering of Nature, the will of Divine Providence. Every nation must be the arbiter of its own destinies—such is the omnipotent fiat inscribed by Nature with her own hands and in her own book." And Dadabhai Naoroji spoke of "self-government or *Swaraj* like that of the United Kingdom or the Colonies." Pherozeshah Mehta declared in 1890: "I have no fears but that British statesmanship will ultimately respond to the call. I have unbounded faith in the living and fertilizing principles of English culture and English civilization."[5] Sardar Dayal Singh Majithia, Chairman, Reception Committee, called the Congress of 1893 "as the greatest glory of British rule in this country." Anand Mohan Bose, who presided over the Madras Congress in 1892, said: "The educated classes are the friends and not the foes of England—her natural and necessary allies in the great work that lies before her."[6] Similarly, Ambika Charan Mazumdar observed: "Every heart [in India] is beating in unison with reverence and devotion to the British Throne, overflowing with revived confidence in and gratitude towards British statesmanship. . . . Some of us never faltered, no—not even in the darkest days of our trials and tribulations, in our hope, in our conviction and in our faith in the ultimate triumph and vindication of British justice." Mohammed Rahimtulla Sayani, President of the 12th Congress in 1896, went so far as to say: "A more honest or sturdy nation does not exist under the sun than this English nation." S.N. Banerjea even proclaimed: "England is our guide."

The burden of these utterances was that the English people are essentially just and fair, and that if properly informed they would never deviate from truth and right, that the problem was the Anglo-Indian and not the Englishman, that what was wrong was the system and not the individual, that the Congress was essentially loyal to the British Throne and fell foul only of the Indian bureaucracy, that the English Constitution was the bulwark of popular liberties everywhere, and the English Parliament was the "mother of Democracy" all over, that the British Constitution was the best

[4]*Congress Presidential Addresses: The Indian National Congress* (Madras, G.A. Natesan and Co., 1917) 4.

[5]*Ibid.*, 91.

[6]*Ibid.*, 431-7.

of all constitutions, that the Congress was not the seditious body, and that the Indian politicians were the natural interpreters of government to people and of people to government. . . .[7]

Early Objects of Congress

The early objectives of the Congress were outlined within the framework of the ideas and attitude of those who formed the new organization. These were enunciated by W.C. Banerjea in 1885 under the following heads:

(1) The promotion of personal intimacy and friendship amongst all the more earnest workers in our country's cause in various parts of the Empire.

(2) The eradication . . . of all possible race, creed or provincial prejudices . . . and the fuller development and consolidation of sentiments of national unity . . . .

(3) The authoritative record . . . of the matured opinions of the educated classes in India on some of the more important and pressing of the social questions of the day.

(4) The determination of the lines upon, and methods by which, during the twelve months, it is desirable for native politicians to labour in the public interest.

The first Congress also adopted resolutions asking for (*a*) enquiry into the Indian administration by a Royal Commission, (*b*) the abolition of the India Council of the Secretary of State for India, (*c*) the expansion and reform of the Imperial and local Legislative Councils, established under the Indian Councils' Act of 1861, including the right of interpellation and the submission of the Budget to the Councils, (*d*) the holding of the ICS examination both in England and India, and (*e*) the reduction of military expenditure.

To these demands were added a few more in subsequent sessions of the Congress and more important of them were: (*a*) Indians must be admitted into public services in large measure, (*b*) they should be educated and made fit for higher positions in the administration, (*c*) the universities, local bodies, and the public services should form the training ground for Indians, (*d*) the legislatures should be thrown open to election and the right of interpellation and discussion of the

[7]Sitaramayya, n. 3, 98.

budget should be relaxed, (e) the police should become friendly to the people, (*f*) the taxes should be moderate, (*g*) the judicial and executive branches must be separated, (*h*) Indians should be given a place in the Executive Councils of Provincial and Central Governments and in the Council of the Secretary of State, (*i*) India should have direct representation in the British Parliament at the rate of two members to each Province, (*j*) eminent Englishmen in the public life of England should be sent over as Governors instead of members of the Civil Service, (*k*) the annual drain to England should be stemmed and indigenous industries fostered, and (*l*) land revenue should be reduced and Permanent Settlement should be made. The Congress went to the length of "deprecating the salt tax as an iniquity, excise duties on cotton goods as unfair and exchange compensation allowance to civilians as an illegal gratification."

Apart from these demands the Congress also concerned itself with poverty and famines, forest laws, commerce and industry, communal representation, Indians abroad, drink and prostitution, and women and the depressed classes. So varied were the themes that engaged the attention of the Indian politicians that the Congress could be correctly called a political, socio-cultural, and economic organization, all combined in one.

The above narrative would indicate that in the early years of the Congress, the political leaders of India were far from the concept of complete freedom from British rule. In fact, they wanted to improve the lot of Indian masses under the shadow of British skill; they had no idea of cutting off all connections with the British Throne. They stood only for representative institutions for India. They did not believe that interests of the Indians cut across the interests of the English; these, for them, were rather complementary and supplementary.

Methods of Early Congress

The methods of the early Congress Patriarchs were quite in keeping with their faith in British liberalism; they believed in the peaceful presentation of their grievances to the government and in requesting the latter to redress them. The methods of violence, force, agitation, and bloodshed were foreign to their genius. Speaking at the third session of the Congress, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya said: "And though thus far success has not crowned our efforts we must only go up to the government again and ask for their

earliest consideration of our demands or of our prayers."

In fact, methods other than those of petitions and prayers could not be adopted by the middle class gentlemen, who formed the core of the Congress, in the political and psychological climate that prevailed in the country at that time. A few delegations of Congressmen were sent to England to place before the English people and Parliament the numerous demands of the Indians. They quoted English authorities in support of their demands. A journal, *India*, was also started in London in 1890 to acquaint the British people with the rigours of the British Administration in this country. In 1893, Wedderburn organized in London an Indian Parliamentary Committee to exercise pressure on the English Parliamentarians to look towards India's political advancement.

British Reaction to Congress Movement

The birth of the Congress was hailed by some English Parliamentarians and other men of eminence. Hume has been described by many as the "father of Congress" though this assertion has been questioned by a few. Viceroy Dufferin, it was believed, advised Hume to make the Congress undertake political organization and not merely social reforms. He had all sympathies for it, and he went to the extent of inviting the delegates of the second Congress—held in Calcutta the following year—to a garden party at Government House. Wedderburn presided over the Congress at two of its sessions—in Bombay (1889) and at Allahabad (1910). David Yule, who presided over the fourth Congress in 1888 at Allahabad, was well-known for his statement: "The House of Commons regard India as a great and solemn trust committed to it by an all-wise and inscrutable Providence."[8] Charles Bradlaugh[9] was accorded a royal ovation by the 1889 session of the Congress. William Ewart Gladstone said at the third Congress in Madras (1887): "I hold that the capital agent in determining finally the question whether our power in India is or is not to continue will be the will of the 240 million of people who inhabit India." Lord North Brook was thanked by the ninth Congress (1893) for pleading in Parliament for the reduction of "Home" charges. Other Englishmen of note who sympathized with India's cause and advanced it in one form or another were Keir Hardie, Holford

[8] *Ibid.*, 79.

[9] He drafted, in 1889, a bill on the reform of the Indian Legislative Councils.

Knight, Maxton, Ben, Spoor, Charles Roberts, Pethwick Lawrence, Lord Stanley of Alderby, D.S. White, H. Morgan-Browne, John Adam, and a score of others. All of them played a notable part in canvassing support for India's cause.

The official approbation of the Congress movement, however, was short-lived. The Congress started pinpricking, and it began to grow in strength and popularity. The Administration became suspicious of the movement, and even though individual Congress leaders continued to proclaim their faith in the British rule and even though quite a few of them were bestowed with titles and honours,[10] the national movement in general evoked hostility of the authorities. Dufferin called demands of the Congress as "eminently unconstitutional," unacceptable to the people in England. He described the Congress as a "seditious body" representing the "microscopic minority" of educated Indians, and declared that minority would not be allowed to control the Administration.[11] The Governor of UP, Sir Auckland Colvin, considered the movement as "premature," and observed that the Congress "unfairly claimed to represent the Indian population."[12] Shortly after the inception of the Congress, the British Government in India began to act in opposition to Congress and to create obstacles in its progress. A gentleman, who attended the Madras Congress in 1887 "in defiance of his district officer," was called upon to give a security of Rs. 20,000 "to keep the peace." The fourth Congress found it difficult to get grounds in Allahabad whereon

[10]Favours and preferment were extended to those who were in the forefront of the movement. Sir S. Subrahamania Aiyar, V. Krishnaswami Aiyar, Sir Sankaran Nair, Sir Vepa Ramesam, T.V. Seshagiri Aiyar, and P.R. Sundra Aiyar were all Congressmen and became judges of the Madras High Court. Two of them became Members of the Executive Council, one of Madras and the other of Delhi. Sir P.S. Sivaswamy Aiyar and Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar were both in the front rank of the Congress, and both rose to the Membership of the Executive Council. Sir R.K. Shanmukham was appointed the Dewan of Cochin; Tyabji and Chandavarkar presided over the Congress session of Madras (1887) and of Lahore (1900) respectively and became judges of the Bombay High Court. Sir Chaman Lal Setalvad was a Member of the Bombay Executive Council.

[11]Dufferin spoke, on 30 November 1888, at St. Andrews dinner given by Scotchmen in Calcutta. His speech was entitled, "Political Aspirations of Indians." For details, see A.C. Banerjea, ed., *Indian Constitutional Documents, 1757-1945*, vol. II (Calcutta, A. Mukherjea, 1946) 54-62.

[12]Quoted in Sitaramayya, n. 3, 65. The UP then was the North-Western Provinces.

o put up the tents. In 1890, the Bengal Government issued to ll Secretaries and Heads of Departments subordinate to it a circular pointing out that "under the orders of the Government of India the presence of Government officials, even as visitors, at such meetings is not advisable, and that their taking part in the proceedings in any such meetings is also prohibited." On 25 June 1891, the Government of India issued a notification, restricting the rights of free press in native states.[13]

In order to arm the government with sufficient powers to deal with "seditious speeches and activities" Sections 124 (A) and 153 (A) were added, in 1897, to the Indian Penal Code. Next year, a kind of thinly-veiled censorship was put on the press through the Secret Press Committees. The five years of Lord Curzon's rule (1900-1905) were full of many reactionary measures that shocked the entire country and marked the beginning of a new phase of the nationalist movement.

British Resort to Divide and Rule

The Congress movement began to appear to the British authorities in the opening years of the twentieth century, a challenge to their rule, and they began to think of weakening it before it went out of control. They thought of putting up a strong counterpoise to check the progress of the national organization. Weaning away the Muslims from the main stream of nationalism was considered a convenient device. Mountsturt Elphinstone advised the British Government thus: "*Divid et Impera* [divide and rule] was the old Roman motto and it should be ours." The authorities took up the cue and utilized it to their full advantage. They had already divided the country into Princely India and British India. The Uprising of 1857 made the British realize that they had gone too far in the policy of direct rule and annexations. By the Queen's Proclamation of November 1858, the government promised to honour the rights and dignity of the princes. But that promise was part of a much more subtler policy that was explained by Lord Canning as follows:

> It was long ago said by Sir John Malcolm that if we made all India into *zillahs* [or British Districts] it was not in the nature of things that our Empire should last fifty years, but that if we could

[13] *Ibid.*, 66.

keep up a number of native states without political power but as real instruments we should exist in India as long as our naval supremacy was maintained.[14]

Since 1858, the princes were passing increasingly into the fold of the government, and they identified their existence with the continuance of the British rule. Now, after the formation of the Congress, was the turn of British India. Here, the main division was seen between the Muslims and the Hindus. The authorities in London decided to utilize the racial, religious, and economic differences of the two communities to their own advantage.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century the Muslims, under the leadership of Sir Sayyed, were stirring with thoughts of national unification and individual liberty. This added to the anxiety of the British bureaucracy. An alliance of the Hindus and Muslims, it was felt, would be too formidable for their dominance. And this alliance was due, the British realized, to their own policy of rendering the Muslims too weak for independent rebellion. The days of Hindu-Anglo alliance, it was thought, were gone and the days of Anglo-Muslim alliance should begin. The necessity of such a reversal of policy was brought home to the British, particularly by the publication of Sir William Hunter's book, *Indian Musulmans*, as early as 1871. He pointed out how the Musulmans, especially in Bengal, had been suppressed under the British Government, how they had been deprived of power and position, how they had been inpoverished, and how they were denied facilities of education and economic betterment. Hunter urged that the chronic sense of wrong which had grown in the hearts of the Muslims under the British rule must be removed. The Muslims if contented and satisfied, he noted, would become the greatest bulwark of British power in India.[15]

MUSLIM COMMUNALISM

Hunter's urgings became the precursor of a change of attitude towards the Muslim community. The Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh was patronized, and it became the agency for fomenting communal passion and schism. An Englishman, Beck, who became its Principal in 1883, carried forward the policy of befriending the Muslims

[14]Quoted in H.N. Brailsford, *Subject India* (Bombay, 1946) 21.
[15]William Hunter, *Indian Musulmans*, 147.

almost with a missionary zeal. He impressed upon Sir Sayyed that the educational uplift of the Muslims had not reached a stage when they could be trusted to confine themselves to constitutional agitation, and that if they were roused they might once again express their discontent in the way they did in 1857. Sir Sayyed was convinced that the participation of the Muslims in the political agitation would be to their detriment. He was made to believe that the Anglo-Muslim alliance was more to the advantage of the Muslim community than cooperation with the Hindus in the national movement.

The love of the community prevailed upon the love of motherland, and Sir Sayyed adopted an openly hostile attitude towards the Congress. Aligarh College became the centre of Muslim politics, and the English Principals there, allegedly, poisoned the minds of young Muslims, creating a schism between them and the national organization. One year after the establishment of Congress, the Muslims were led to organize themselves into a separate organization called Mohammedan Educational Congress (MEC) that later came to be known as the Muslim Educational Conference. The Muslims began to secede from the Congress. Although a few enlightened and liberal-minded Muslims, such as Abdul Rasul in Bengal, Comurduddin Tyabji in Bombay and Badruddin Tyabji, never swerved from their allegiance to the national cause, the bulk of the Muslim community were led astray. The MEC held its session at almost the same place and time as the Congress and diverted the attention of the Muslim masses. Of the seventy-two delegates who came to the first session of the Congress, only two were Muslims; at the second session, there were only 33 Muslims out of 440. When in 1890, the Muslim fraction increased to 156 out of 702, Sir Sayyed came forward with a warning to his fellow Muslims that the Congress demand for representative government of the British kind meant "majority rule," with the Hindus in the greater part of India always in power and the Muslims never.

In August 1888, he established at Aligarh, in collaboration with Raja Sheo Prasad of Banaras, the United Indian Patriotic Association (UIPA) with the following objectives:

> (1) To inform the members of Parliament and the people of England . . . that all the communities of India, the aristocracy and the princes, were not with the Congress; (2) to keep Parliament and the people of England informed about the opinions

of Hindu and Muslim organizations which were opposed to the Congress; and (3) to help in the maintenance of law and order and the strengthening of the British rule in India and to wean away people from the Congress.[16]

Several big Hindu and Muslim landlords and a few Europeans also joined this Association. A branch was opened at the house of Morrison in England, and he, after the death of Beck, became the Principal of Aligarh College. When in 1889 Bradlaugh introduced a bill in Parliament, seeking to establish democratic institutions in India, Beck sponsored, on behalf of the Musulmans, a memorandum to the effect that representative institutions were not suitable for India.[17] For a few years, the UIPA continued to oppose the Congress. In 1893, the British authorities, Principal Beck in particular, succeeded in establishing a new organization under the name "Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental Defence Association of Upper India. It had three major objectives:

(1) To place the opinion of the Muslims before the Englishmen and the Government of India and to protect their political rights; (2) to prevent the political agitation from spreading among the Muslims; and (3) to adopt all such means as would be helpful in strengthening the British rule by maintaining law and order and creating a sense of loyalty among the people.[18]

Beck and Sayyed Mahmud (Sir Sayyed's son) became its secretaries. The Mohammedan Educational Conference and the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental Defence Association disseminated into Indian politics the germs of communalism, and the bulk of the Muslim community began to feel that their betterment lay in separation from, and not in unison with, the Congress.[19]

[16]Rajendra Prasad, *India Divided*, 103.

[17]*Ibid.*, 104.

[18]*Ibia.*

[19]The role played by Beck was borne out by the tribute paid to him at the time of his death, in September 1899, by Sir John Strachey. He wrote in the columns of *The Times* (London): "An Englishman who was engaged in Empire-building activities in a far-off land has passed away. He died like a soldier at the post of his duty. The Muslims are a suspicious people. They opposed Beck in the beginning suspecting him to be a British spy, but his sincerity and selflessness soon succeeded in gaining their confidence"; quoted in G.N. Singh, *Landmarks in Constitutional Development of India*, 201. Also see Rajendra Prasad, n. 16, 103-4.

FORMATION OF THE MUSLIM LEAGUE

In the meantime the Congress movement was assuming a militant tone, and the sense of loyalty to the British Crown was being replaced by that of disgust and resentment. Towards the end of 1903, Lord Curzon announced a plan to partition Bengal, and this led to an outburst of public indignation all over the Province. The Congress adopted resolutions against the proposal in 1903 and 1904. When the Government of India announced, on 7 July 1905, finally the scheme of partition, there were public meetings and demonstrations all over the country. One month after the announcement Congress launched the *Swadeshi* movement against the British and a very tense situation developed. In 1904, direct representation in the House of Commons was demanded and a plea was also put in for the appointment of Indians to the Council of the Secretary of State and to the Executive Councils in India. In 1905, the Congress pressed for reforms and in 1906, on the insistence of Tilak particularly a resolution was passed to ask for self-government for India on the pattern of the self-governing British colonies. The resolution urged that the reforms be carried out "immediately."

The situation in India was deteriorating and the new Viceroy, Lord Gilbert Minto, who assumed office in November 1905, felt seriously concerned about it. He wrote to the Secretary of State, John Morley, thus: "As to Congress . . . we must recognize them and be friends with the best of them; yet I am afraid there is much that is absolutely disloyal in the movement, and that there is danger for the future."[20] Minto also wrote that he was thinking of "a possible counterpoise to Congress aims," and that he had in his mind the formation of a Privy Council of the native Rulers and a few other big men which would give ideas different from those of Congress.[21] Morley, in turn, warned Minto that the Mohammedans were likely to throw in their lot with the Congressmen against him (Minto).

Shortly after, the Viceroy began to devise plans to wean the Muslims away from the Congress movement. He started working on a scheme of reforms to satisfy, at least, the moderate elements in India. This spurred the Muslim leaders into action. They were faced by the fact that since the Indian Councils Act of 1892 not only the prin-

[20] Quoted in *ibid.*, 111.
[21] *Ibid.*

ciple of representation but also in practice the principle of election had been introduced in the constitution of the provincial legislatures. They felt that another scheme of reforms was sure to confirm and extend the elective principle. A deputation of about 35 Muslims, representing different parts of the country and led by H.H. the Aga Khan, met Lord Minto on 1 October 1906 in Simla and put before him two points: first, in all elections, whether for the Legislative Councils or for local bodies the Muslims must be separately represented and their representatives separately elected by purely Muslim electors; second, the extent of the Muslim community's representation must be commensurate not merely with their numerical strength but also with their political importance and the value of the contribution which they make to the defence of the Empire. The attitude of Minto, it was reported, was quite sympathetic.

Apparently encouraged by the Viceroy, Nawab Salimullah, one of the members of the delegation, issued, on 9 November 1906, a circular in which he suggested that an organization to be known as All-India Muslim Conference should be established. In the following December, a Conference was held at Dacca and was attended by representatives and leaders from all over India. On 30 December, the All-India Muslim League was established with three major objectives: (*a*) to promote among Indian Muslims feelings of loyalty towards the British Government; (*b*) to protect the political and other rights of Indian Muslims and to place their needs and aspirations before the Government in temperate language; and (*c*) without prejudice to the objects mentioned above, to promote friendly feelings between Muslims and other communities.

Role of the British in the Formation of the Muslim League

The formation of the Muslim League was a great success of the British policy of "divide and rule." The Muslim deputation which waited upon the Viceroy (on 1 October 1906) was, in the words of Maulana Mohammed Ali, the brother of Shaukat Ali, "a command performance." The details of the deputation, it was reported, were arranged between Archibald, Principal of Aligarh College, and Colonel Dunlop Smith, the Private Secretary of the Viceroy, and the former gave all the necessary instructions to Nawab Mohsin-ul Mulk in his letter of 10 August 1906.[22] Mohsin-ul-Mulk, according to Lady Minto, "engineered"

[22]See letter in *ibid.*, 112.

the deputation.[23] The Viceroy expressed sympathy with the cause of the deputationists by saying: "I am as firmly convinced, as I believe you to be, that any electoral representation in India would be doomed to mischievous failure which aimed at granting a personal enfranchisement regardless of the beliefs and traditions of the communities composing the population of this Continent."[24] Minto entertained the deputation at a garden tea-party. For him, 1 October was "a very eventful day"—"an epoch in Indian history."

An official wrote to Lady Minto on the same evening: "I must send your Excellency a line to say that a very big thing has happened today—a work of statesmanship that will affect India and Indian history for many a long years." Regarding Minto's reaction to the Muslim deputation the same official wrote that it was "nothing less than the pulling back of sixty-two millions of people from joining the ranks of the seditious opposition."[25] Almost similar was the reaction of the Secretary of State, Lord John Morley, who wrote: "All that you tell me of your Mohammedans is full of interest and I only regret that I could not have moved about unseen at your garden-party."[26] *The Times* (London) also welcomed the event and brought out a long article extolling the virtues of the Musulmans.

It appeared from the above narrative that the going-away of the Muslims from the main current of the national movement was manoeuvred by the British authorities. Ramsay McDonald, a British statesman, in *The Awakening of India* wrote: "The Mohammedan leaders were inspired by certain Anglo-Indian officials, and these officials have pulled wires at Simla and in London and sowed discord between Hindu and Mohammedan communities by showing the Muslims special favour."[27] The formation of the Muslim League

[23]*Ibid.*, 113. See also R.C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, vol. II (Calcutta, 1963) 224. Majumdar noted: "It is now definitely known that the whole of this deputation was engineered by the Government, or at least by the Englishmen under official inspiration." Maulana Mohammed Ali, as President of the annual Congress session in 1923, testified to this fact in his presidential address; see J.L. Nehru, *An Autobiography*, 117.

[24]Quoted by Coupland, *The Indian Problem, 1833-1936*, 34.

[25]Rajendra Prasad, n. 16, 114.

[26]*Ibid.*

[27]Quoted in Ashoka Mehta and Achyut Patwardhan, *The Communal Triangle* (Allahabad, 1942) 66.

was, thus, the culmination of a British move that was already afoot to divide the country and rule over it.

British Role Questioned

A few students of Indian history, however, held the view that the British authorities had very little to do with the introduction of communalism in Indian politics. They drew attention to the social, cultural, religious, and linguistic divergences between the Hindus and the Musulmans. Coupland, for example, pointed out:

> Hinduism has its primeval roots in a land of rivers and forests, Islam in the desert; Hindus worship many gods, Muslims only one; Hinduism maintains a rigid caste system, Islam proclaims the equal brotherhood of all believers. The classical language of Hindus is Sanskrit, of Muslims Arabic and Persian; the distinctive daily speech of the one is the Hindi, of the other the Urdu variant of Hindustani . . .[28]

These scholars suggested that the deep cultural and historical variances divided the Hindus and the Muslims into two watertight compartments. While the Muslims were proud of their old glory and grandeur as rulers the Hindus were not able to forget the days when the Muslims, with sword in one hand and the *Koran* in another, spread Islam in India, desecrated temples, polluted their places of worship, abducted their women and subjected them to numerous other hardships.[29] Mutual violence and killings occurred, these writers pointed out, too often. There was a serious Hindu-Muslim riot at Banaras in 1809 in which several hundred persons were killed and some fifty mosques destroyed. Again, there was serious rioting at Lahore and Karnal in 1885, at Delhi in 1886, at Dera Ghazi Khan in 1889, at Pala Kod in 1891, and in a large area in the U.P. and in the city of Bombay, when eighty persons were killed in 1893.

Some writers, such as Dr. Beni Prasad, W.C. Smith, and A.R. Desai, also assert that Muslim communalism was the outgrowth of Hindu revivalism which entered into a new phase during the closing years

[28]Coupland, n. 24, 31.

[29]Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, 229-30.

of the nineteenth century.[30] Tilak, Pal, Lajpat Rai and Aurobindo Ghosh emphasized the supremacy of Hinduism, revived the memories of the greatness of kings Ashoka and Chandra Gupta and eulogized the heroic deeds of Maharana Pratap, Shivaji, and the Rani of Jhansi. The result of their activities was that a feeling began to take roots in the minds of the Muslims that the Hindu leaders were planning to establish in the country their own government and authority.[31] It was natural, these scholars observed, that with such an apprehension in mind the Muslims organized themselves into a separate platform.

It has also been pointed out that the anti-Muslim policy of the British, to which a detailed reference has already been made, was also responsible for the weaning away of the Muslims from the Congress movement. That policy resulted in social, intellectual, and economic backwardness of the Muslims, and when the time for political agitation against the British came they were too cautious and reluctant to join the forces of opposition. They were inclined to seek redress of their grievances through loyalty and faithfulness.

This group of scholars maintained that the British authorities did not create the cleavage between the two principal communities of India; they only exploited to their advantage the wide gulf that already existed between them. Whatever their role there was no doubt that the formation of the Muslim League was welcomed by the British—both in India and England. The League began to meet in annual sessions at about the same time and place as the Congress, and a good body of Musulmans began to move further apart from the national organization.

[30]Smith pointed out that the religious movements became "the most obvious parts of nationalism"; the movement revelled in religious enthusiasm: it was aggressively and exuberantly Hindu; Wilfred C. Smith, *Modern Islam in India* (London; Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1946) 170. For Desai's views, see A.R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* (Bombay, Popular Book Depot, 1954) 347-52. Beni Prasad discussed this subject under the caption "Separatist Tendencies in Revivalism"; see Beni Prasad, *The Hindu-Muslim Questions* (Allahabad, Kitabistan, 1941) 25-32.

[31]In 1893, a Muslim newspaper wrote: "There is another party in Congress whose sole object in joining the movement is oppressing the *yavanas*. They are all Hindu revivalists . . . their object is nothing more or less than to establish a purely Hindu government"; quoted in, M.M. Ahluwalia, *Freedom Struggle in India: 1958-1909* (Delhi, Ranjit Printers and Publishers, 1965) 366.

It is interesting to note that the All-India Hindu Mahasabha was also set up in the same year as the League. With this the communal triangle was completed—with Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha as the two sides and the British Government as the base.

CHAPTER FOUR

SPLIT IN THE CONGRESS

DURING THE FIRST fifteen years of its existence the Congress was content to ask for the gradual concession of representative institutions, to press for the abolition of the Council of the Secretary of State, to demand the simultaneous examination for the civil service to be held in England and India, and to assail the military budget. It advocated the separation of the judicial from the executive functions, pleaded for fixity and permanence to the Land Revenue demand, asked for an investigation into the hardships of the farmers resulting from the Forest Laws, and protested against the excise duty on the cotton manufactured in British India. The Congress demanded reduction in salt tax and pressed for the eradication of the evils of drinking and prostitution; it also concerned itself with a number of other problems. For the achievement of these objects the national organization stuck to the method of petitions and prayers alone.[1] But the turn of the century marked the beginning of a new phase in the political life of India. This was the emergence of militant leadership in Congress. The new leaders of the movement were Tilak, Pal, and Lajpat Rai. These men denounced the Congress policy of the past fifteen years as "political mendicancy," condemned the peaceful and constitutional methods as "useless" and eulogized the virtues of direct action and forceful activity.[2] The question naturally arose: why this change occurred? The answer would probably be provided by the following factors: revivalism among the Hindus, continued apathy of the government, miserable plight of the Indians abroad, certain international developments and reactionary policies of Lord Curzon. Each of these factors was important enough to

[1]Brailsford, *Subject India*, 21.

[2]The first person to characterize constitutional agitation as "political mendicancy" was the Maharaja of Natore in 1901.

divert the course into a new channel and each, therefore, needed a detailed examination.

REVIVALISM AMONG THE HINDUS

The socio-cultural renaissance brought about by Ram Mohun Roy, Swami Dayanand, Paramahansa, Vivekananda, and others was given a new fillip by Tilak in Maharashtra, Lajpat Rai in the Punjab, and Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh in Bengal. They were the pioneers of "neo-nationalism," and drew their inspiration from the old religion of Hindus. They were well-versed in ancient learning and thought, and some of them were deeply religious. Western learning and culture was foreign to them and the English language and education were for them a device to enslave the mind of Indian youths. They expounded the doctrines of *Vedas* and the *Gita* in which, they thought, lay the salvation of men and the liberation of the country from the curse of foreign rule. "Nationalism," said Aurobindo, "is a religion that comes from God." These men identified *dharma* with nationalism and revived Hindu pride in the old epics and classical literature.

In Bengal, Pal revived the *Sakti* cult and interpreted anew the message of *Kali* and *Durga*, the household goddesses of Bengal. "Kali was the mother India," he wrote, "covered with the blackest gloom, despoiled of all wealth and without a cloak to wear, but the grim goddess, dark and naked, bearing a garland of human heads around her neck—the heads with dripping blood are those of her own children, destroyed by famine and pestilence."[3] The old gods, which had lost their appeal to the common mind, were presented as "carrying the message of new nationalism to the women and masses of the country."[4]

The writings and message of Aurobindo were inspiring and spirited. Valentine Chirol has styled him as "one of the most remarkable figures that Indian unrest has produced . . . the high priest of a religious revival which has taken a profound hold on the imagination of the emotional youth of Bengal."[5] Independence for him was the goal of life and *Hinduism* alone appeared to promise to fulfil this aspiration. He became the editor of *Vande Mataram*, an organ of the "New Spirit"

[3]Lajpat Rai, *Young India* (New York, 1916) 190-1.
[4]*Ibid.*
[5]Valentine Chirol, *Indian Unrest*, 89.

whose message echoed in every home of Bengal. His interpretation of the *Vedas* and their presentation in a new form stirred the people.

Tilak, "the Prince of Patriots," became the founder of the new movement in Maharashtra. He was deeply religious with a scholarly bent of mind. He had a great dislike for Western culture and religion. He severely criticized Christianity and Islam, and eulogized the *Vedas* and *Bhagwad Gita*. In 1893, he organized the Ganpati festival—the God of Wisdom, and followed it by reviving the Shivaji festival—the Marahta hero. He exhorted his followers to emulate the example of Shivaji and to liberate their "sacred" motherland from the "unholy" hands of the British. He established *akharas* and *lathi* clubs for the purpose of reviving military fervour and organized cow protection societies. He also started a Marahta weekly *Kesari* and an English weekly *The Marahta* for disseminating his neo-nationalism among the masses. He held the British responsible for the eclipse of all that was good in the Hindu culture. Freedom of the country was a matter of religious duty to him. "Swaraj," he said, "is my birth-right and I will have it."[6]

Lala Lajpat Rai, better known as the "Lion of Punjab," did for the Punjab what Pal was doing in Bengal and Tilak in Maharashtra. He was at once a patriot, an educationist, a social worker, a religious reformer, an effective journalist and a leading member of the Lahore bar. He was the leader of the Arya Samaj movement in the Punjab and did a lot in relieving the people from the rut of anachronistic rituals. For him, the key of freedom lay in the new religion advocated by Dayanand. Lajpat Rai played a leading role in the establishment of the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College at Lahore. He was an effective public speaker and utilized the forum of Arya Samaj to launch militant nationalism. Lajpat Rai, Chintamani wrote, had the capacity "for rousing the indignation of the masses and producing thrilling effect upon their minds."[7]

When specific mention has been made about revivalism in Bengal, Maharashtra, and Punjab it should not be concluded that it was

[6]For Tilak's role in national awakening see Dhananjay Keer, *Lokamanya Tilak* (Bombay, 1959) 78-104. Also see for Ganapati and Shivaji festivals, D.P. Karmarkar, *Bal Gangadhar Tilak* (Bombay, Popular Book Depot, 1956) 72-83. For the role Tilak played in social reform see D. A. Athalye, *The Life of Lokamanya Tilak* (Poona, 1921) 45-63.

[7]C.Y. Chintamani, *Indian Politics since the Mutiny* (Allahabad, Kitabistan, 1947) 83.

limited to the geographical boundaries of those Provinces. In fact, the whole country was surcharged with the new spirit, taking, of course, its inspiration from the centres of those activities.

CONTINUED APATHY OF THE GOVERNMENT

While the entire country was in ferment and was surcharged with a new spirit, the British rulers remained apathetic to the sufferings of the masses and the demands of the Congress. In 1892, Parliament passed the Indian Councils Act, but it did not concede to the people of India the right of electing their own representatives to the Councils. In June 1893, the House of Commons passed a resolution in support of simultaneous examinations for recruitment to the ICS, but in the following year the announcement was made that the resolution would not be enforced. While since the Uprising of 1857 the government had been pursuing the policy of not interfering in Indian religious and social life, in 1889 it appeared to be considering legislation to raise the age of consent below which sexual intercourse with a girl was to be regarded as rape. The Indian Age of Consent Bill was passed by the Viceroy's Legislative Council on 19 March 1891. It evoked resentment all over the country, particularly in Bengal and Maharashtra. Tilak, through the *Marahta*, called for a "grand central organization" based on "self-preservation, self-protection, and self-support" whose main purpose would be to counteract the reformist zeal of the British.[8]

During 1896 and 1900, a series of famines overtook different parts of the country and several million people were affected. Although the government devised the Famine Code of India people died in large numbers. At about the same time virulent bubonic plague broke out in the Bombay Presidency and thousands of people died. The measures taken by the government to contain the epidemic were both defective and inadequate. Tilak, through his paper, *Kesari*, bitterly denounced the government and told his countrymen that most of their hardships were the consequence of the British rule, and that unless it was ended there would be no improvement in their lot. Allegedly as a result of Tilak's writings the feelings of resentment were so roused that two British officers, W.C. Rand and Lieutenant

[8]Charles H. Heimsath, "The Origin and Enactment of the Indian Age of Consent Bill, 1891," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. XX, No. 4, August 1962. 491-504.

Ayearst, were shot dead while they were on special plague duty. Tilak was prosecuted for incitement to violence and was awarded 18 months' rigorous imprisonment. He was not even granted leave to appeal to the Privy Council. The Natu brothers, close associates of Tilak, were imprisoned in connection with the plague riots of Poona without trial.

These measures of repression, coupled with the sufferings of the masses in the wake of famine and plague, gave birth to feelings of indignation and disgust against the British rule.

MISERABLE PLIGHT OF INDIANS ABROAD

The anti-British feelings were further roused by the treatment meted out to Indians in the British colonies in Africa, particularly in South Africa, where they were treated as "social sub-castes." In some places, they could not even walk on footpaths, could not travel in first or second class compartments of railways, could not possess native gold and could not go out of their houses after 9 o'clock in the night. They could not own and build houses in certain localities, exclusively reserved for Europeans. They were barred from certain hotels, hospitals, and schools. Indians were driven out of tram-cars and "were spat upon, hissed, cursed, abused and subjected to a variety of other indignities." They were disenfranchised, and in 1896, the indentured emigrants in Natal (South Africa) were asked either to renew their indenture for labour or pay a poll-tax amounting to half their annual earnings. By 1898, three more disabling laws were made and the life of the Indians was made very hard. While the then Viceroy, Lord Elgin, consented to these laws being passed, the Secretary of State, Lord George Hamilton, characterized India a "nation of savages." The important official organs, like the *Civil and Military Gazette* of Lahore, openly abused the Indians.

The feelings in the country were considerably stirred. Dr. B.S. Moonje, who returned from South Africa in 1903, regretted that "our rulers do not believe that we are men."[9] B.N. Sarma told the British that there could not exist in the Empire "a permanent racial supremacy, one race dominating another."[10] The Congress, in its annual sessions, adopted resolutions expressing annoyance and

[9]Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, vol. I, 47.
[10]*Ibid.*

displeasure over the ways the Indians were being treated within the Empire. In 1900, the Congress urged that the Immigration Restrictions in Natal and the Dealer's Licences Acts of the Colony should be done away with. But the policy-makers in London remained unmoved and the condition of the Indians abroad continued to deteriorate.

DEVELOPMENTS ON THE WORLD SCENE

There was, during the nineteenth century, an all-pervading belief in the military invincibility and technological superiority of the European countries. The success of the British in India in suppressing the national Uprising of 1857 was largely attributed to this superiority. But some events took place on the international scene and these exploded that myth. These were the defeat of Italy by Abyssinia in 1896 and of Russia by Japan in 1905. These debacles exercised an enlightening effect upon the Indian mind. The victory of the non-European nations was attributed to their high sense of patriotism and spirit of sacrifice. The political leaders in India realized that if the Japanese and the Abyssinians could defeat the Russians and the Italians respectively, the Indians could also liberate their land from the "scourge of British Imperialism." Valentine Chirol wrote:

> There were many Indians to whom the discomfiture of Russia in the war against Japan meant even more than a mere humbling of a great European power by an Asiatic race. It meant also a mighty blow to the autocratic system in Russia, and to that system the Indian extremists never tired of likening a system of Indian Government concentrated in the hands of a all-powerful bureaucracy. British officialdom in India was denounced as responsible for ruining the country.[11]

The defeat of the forces of Imperial Russia by Japan served as a signal and the nationalist movement in India sprang to life.

REACTIONARY POLICIES OF CURZON

Despite the accumulating causes of despondency and irritation the main Congress body remained hopefully cooperative. "It needed a

[11]Chirol, n. 5, 114. Theodore L Shay pointed out that historians dated the so-called "revolt of Asia" from this Japanese victory; see his book, *The Legacy of the Lokamanya* (London, Oxford University Press, 1956) 88.

Curzon," as Spear has put it, "to complete the breach between a slow-moving government and politically conscious Indians."[12] In England, the Liberal Party under the leadership of Gladstone fell from power in 1894, and the Conservatives (under Salisbury from 1895 to 1902 and Balfour from 1902 to 1905) controlled the reins of government. They stood for imperialism, and Lord Curzon was sent to India as Viceroy in 1898 with the firm object of strengthening the foundations of the British rule. Two years after his stay in the country Curzon wrote: "In my belief Congress is tottering to its fall and one of my great ambitions while in India is to assist it to a peaceful demise."[13]

Chirol pointed out that Curzon regarded India as "the brightest gem in the British Crown of Empire, but as a gem of an antique and somewhat barbaric lustre which a modern setting could only spoil. For him England's mission in India was to govern her himself."[14] He wanted to make India "a great imperial asset." He liked the highest standards of administrative efficiency in the government and he came to India with a determination to overhaul every branch of the administration and to recast it into a new mould. He was reported to have been sent with "twelve problems" in his pocket. During his tenure Curzon undertook a series of measures. When he assumed charge of his office he began his "policy of efficiency" with the Calcutta Corporation Act (1899) whereby the number of the elected members was reduced to half their original strength and the administration of the Corporation was vested in a General Committee. This measure was opposed by the Indian communities of Calcutta, and twenty-eigth members of the Corporation resigned as a protest.

In order to solve the frontier problem Curzon formed a new Province known as the "North West Frontier Province" consisting of the trans-Indus districts of Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan, together with a few political agencies. The new Province was inaugurated on King Edward's birthday in 1901, the old "North-West Province" being rechristened "The United Provinces of Agra and Oudh." The Punjab Government, thereafter, exercised no jurisdiction west of the Indus except in Dera Ghazi Khan. It aroused a tempest of opposition among the older civil servants in the Punjab;

[12]Spear, *India*, 315.
[13]*Ibid.*, 317.
[14]Chirol, n. 5, 115.

one of them resigned as a protest. Curzon's mission to Lhasa at the expense of Indian revenues also become an object of severe criticism in the country.[15] The open competitive tests for the provincial civil services was abolished and his Police Commission resulted in excluding the Indians from the Special Police Service. Secret circulars encouraging the employment, on a more extensive scale, of Eurasians and Christians at the expense of the other Indian communities were sent. By a Resolution of 24 May 1904, Curzon made race, instead of merit, the test of qualification. This policy led even Lord Morley to observe that what India resented was racial domination, not so much political domination.

The administration of Curzon was also marked by a costly *Durbar* at Delhi, which bore striking resemblance to the Imperial Assemblage of 1877, in that it followed upon other terrible famines of 1892, 1896-97, and 1899 and the appearance of plague in 1896. The increasing poverty and ever-growing suffering of the masses were attributed by the educated Indians to the lack of British interests in minimizing the causes of distress.

In the teeth of universal opposition, the Official Secrets Act was passed in 1904 whereby the powers vested in the government by the earlier Official Secrets Acts of 1889 and 1898 were considerably widened. The earlier acts covered only military secrets, but the new act covered secrets relating to civil matters also. Even the newspaper criticism, likely to bring "suspicion or contempt" to government, was not spared. This step was condemned by the entire press—Indian as well as Anglo-Indian; protests from many quarters poured in; but the Viceroy was inplacable and the Gagging Act was passed.

Most of the animosity of Indian politicians against Curzon dated from the appearance of the Universities Bill that was introduced in the Legislative Council towards the end of 1903. This Bill was designed apparently to "reform" the educational system but actually to bring the university education under official control.[16] Despite much public criticism and consternation, the Bill was passed on 21 March 1904 The autonomy of the universities was almost destroyed, and they were brought under rigid bureaucratic control by increasing the number of nominated members of the Senates and of the Syndicates.

[15]Lovat Fraser, *India under Curzon and After* (London, 1911) 134-46.
[16]*Ibid.*, 175-200.

A few other provisions of the Bill checked, if not completely undermined, the noble task of bringing the fruits of Western education within the reach of Indian youths—a task undertaken by Bentinck, Macaulay, and Halifax. The Indian public, particularly in Calcutta, protested against the measure and attacked it as "a political blow deliberately aimed at the independence of the Universities." Curzon made no serious attempt to pacify the critics of government's educational policy. He rather embittered the educated Indians further by his Convocation Address, in February 1905, to the graduates of the Calcutta University. He spoke of the "untruthfulness" and "wile" of the East and denied that there was such a thing as "Indian nation."[17] This statement raised the national temper to fever heat; the whole country was shocked; and the Indian people, in the words of Annie Besant, "smarting under the afflictions of plague and famine, of broken pledges and repressive measures, rose as one man against the monstrous and studied insult flung with a high magisterial air at everything that they loved and revered, at their religion, their literature, their social institutions."[18]

Nothing was resented by the Indians more than the government resolution of 3 December 1903 announcing that the entire Chittagong division and the two Districts of Dacca and Mymensingh would be separated from Bengal and incorporated with Assam. This partition, that took place in 1905, divided the homogeneous Bengali-speaking people into two Provinces. Nationalism was very strong in Bengal, and it was probably to destroy the solidarity of the Bengalis that Curzon decided to divide them. The motive behind the plan of partition was quite clear. "In East Bengal," as Majumdar has pointed out, "the Muslims, politically less advanced and more loyal to the British than the Hindus, would be in a majority while in Bengal the Bengalis would form a minority by the inclusion of Bihar and Orissa. Thus, the Bengalis would be divided from their kith and kin; the Bengali Hindus, hated and dreaded by Curzon for their advanced political ideas, would form a minority in both Provinces, and a thin wedge would be driven between the Hindus and Muslims of Bengal. It was undoubtedly a master-plan to destroy the nascent nationalism in Bengal."[19]

[17]Chintamani, n. 7, 54.

[18]Annie Besant, *India: a Nation* (Madras, India Bookshop, 1923) 128.

[19]R.C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, vol. II, 5.

The partition served as a signal for a most extensive and intensive agitation. No British statesman served the cause of Indian nationalism, Surendra Nath Banerjea held, more than Lord Curzon did by his tyrannical measures. He observed: "He [Curzon] has built better than he knew; he has laid broad and deep the foundations of our national life; he has stimulated those forces which contribute to the upbuilding of Nations; he has made us a Nation; and the most reactionary of the Indian Viceroys will go down to posterity as the architect of the Indian National life."[20]

REVOLT AGAINST LIBERALISM AND BIRTH OF MILITANT NATIONALISM

The effect of all these measures was that a new spirit—the spirit of revolt against liberalism and constitutional methods of the Congress—was born. The leaders of the new spirit, Tilak, Pal, and Aurobindo Ghosh, advocated agitation and mass aciton. They lost all belief in the efficacy of constitutional approach which, they began to think, could bear fruit only in a democracy where the government was responsible to the people. "Liberty alone," they felt, "fits men for liberty." Piecemeal reforms could be of no avail. Ending and not mending of the British rule became their objective. The interests of the British were, these men realized, hostile to the progress of India and the latter could not be possible so long as the foreigners were on its soil. Imperialism and nationalism could not be fitted together as the former was ruinous to the country, both materially and morally. Prayers, petitions, and protests could not convince the British whose only interest appeared to be to exploit the Indian economy for their own prosperity.

Tilak boldly challenged the older moderate leadership of Pherozeshah Mehta, S.N. Banerjea, and Gokhale, and he said: "Protests are of no avail. Mere protest not backed by self-reliance will not help the people. Days of protests and prayers have gone."[21] For Tilak and others of his way of thinking *Swaraj* was their *Dharma*. Curzon's speech to the Indian merchants in which he stated that "administration and exploitation go hand in hand" brought home to the Nationalists the truth of the saying that there could be "no benevolence in politics." The language of agitation and independent

[20]Besant, n. 18, 163.
[21]Tilak, *Bal Gangadhar Tilak : His Speeches and Writings*, 44.

action, it was felt, was all the British ruling class understood. Tilak openly said: "Prepare your forces, organize your power, and then go to work, so that they cannot refuse you what you demand."[22] Reacting to the partition of Bengal Pal reiterated Tilak's conviction and said: "There can be no reform, social, economic or political, that can be got from outside."[23] These men taught the love of country and emphasized the need of unity and oneness of all the inhabitants of India. They outlined the effectiveness of direct action and agitation for the attainment of *Swaraj* which, for them, meant full self-rule under *Dharamrajya*. The advocates of these new ideas were styled as "Extremists" or militant "Nationalists" in Indian politics.

PROGRAMME OF THE NATIONALISTS

After having determined the goal of complete self-rule, the Nationalists devised a three-fold programme for effective, practical political action. It comprised boycott, *Swadeshi* and national education. Originally, the programme was designed for use in Bengal to undo the wrong that had been done by Curzon, but soon it was realized that the policies of the British affected the entire country, and the decision was, therefore, made to enforce the programme all over India. Boycott initially involved the refusal of the people to buy British manufactured goods and was designed to end the economic exploitation of the Indian people. But as the repression increased boycott became a political weapon, and a four-fold programme was drawn up: (*a*) abjuring of English cloth, salt, sugar, etc., (*b*) abjuring of English speech, (*c*) resignation of honorary offices under the government and seats in Councils, and (*d*) social boycott against persons purchasing foreign articles.[24]

The programme of *Swadeshi* meant use of Indian goods, self-help, and self-reliance. Tilak urged discarding not only of foreign goods but also foreign ideas. People were asked to take solemn vow to use *Swadeshi* and boycott foreign goods. *Swadeshi* was, as Shay put it, "an economic, political and spiritual weapon."[25]

The third element in the three-fold, programme of the Nationalists

[22] *Ibid.*, 64. For more moving writings of Tilak see Shay, n. 11, 90-108.
[23] Bepin Chandra Pal, *His Life and Utterances*, 91.
[24] Taken from Majumdar, no. 19, 47.
[25] Shay, n. 11, 96.

was national education. Western learning was decried, and Indian philosophy, culture and way of life eulogized. Efforts were made to awaken the pride of the Indian people in their past. A programme of setting up national educational institutions was drawn up to re-emphasize and to re-teach the classical values to the younger generation.

Sharply reacting to the partition of Bengal, on 20 July 1905, the Nationalists adopted, on 7 August of the same year, a resolution on boycott of British goods.

SPLIT IN THE CONGRESS

The leaders of the new spirit attempted to influence the course of the Congress movement in the direction of active political agitation, but the moderate Congressmen were not prepared to welcome any such orientation. Naoroji, Banerjea, Mehta, and Gokhale were still firmly wedded to their policy "of social reform, gradual political reform and the re-making of India largely in the image of the West." Although they were disappointed by the attitude of the British rulers,[26] they did not lose faith in the British sense of justice. Differences between the Moderates and the Nationalists began to grow and when, in 1905, at the annual session of the Congress at Banaras (from 27 to 30 December) Tilak and Lajpat Rai presented their programme for adoption by Congress, the differences came sharply into focus. Lajpat Rai told the Congress that the British bureaucracy was too busy with their own affairs, that the British press was not willing to champion Indian aspirations, and that it was hard to get a hearing in England. He observed that if "the Indians really cared for their country they would have to strike the blow for freedom themselves, and that they would have to furnish unmistakable proofs of their earnestness."[27]

While Gokhale, who presided, expressed support for the *Swadeshi*

[26]In 1905, Gokhale said in England: "Lord Curzon did not believe in the principle of liberty. ... He showed utter contempt for public opinion," and "to the end of his administration" he "did not really understand the people of India," quoted in Ahluwalia, *op. cit.*, 314.

[27]Lajpat Rai had only then returned from England where he had gone to put before the British people and Parliament the aspirations of India; see Lajpat Rai, *Young India*, 159-60.

programme, the other Moderates urged moderation.[28] Differences developed over the issue of the visit of the Prince of Wales scheduled to take place in January 1906. The Government of India wanted that no discourtesy be shown to the Royal visitor, and so the Moderates urged that the Congress adopt a resolution welcoming the Prince. The Extremist delegates, particularly from Bengal, opposed the move. However, as a result of an appeal from Gokhale the resolution was passed with the support of delegates from Punjab and Maharashtra and in the absence of Bengalis. Trouble arose over Tilak's resolution on "passive resistance" which he wanted the Congress to pass and which the Moderate leaders considered as "going too far." The Banaras session, however, adjourned "with an apparent air of compromise and reconciliation." The country was passing through the turmoil of the partition of Bengal, and neither the Nationalists nor the Moderates wanted an open rupture in the Congress. The Nationalists, nevertheless, formed another party (New Nationalist Party) within the Congress with a programme of "passive resistance" and "national reconstruction."

During the months following the Banaras session the Secretary of State for India, Lord Morley, declared that the partition of Bengal was irrevokable. Public opinion in the country suffered a rude shock and the passions rose high. Boycott and *Swadeshi* movement gained momentum in Bengal and a great yearning to secure the annulment of partition developed all over the country. The Nationalist leadership became convinced that India would have to fight for its political rights.[29] The two groups in the Congress came for the annual session in Calcutta with a determination to prevail over each other.

The presidentship of the session became a bone of contention between the Extremists and the Moderates. Bepin Chandra Pal brought forth the candidature of Tilak but Tilak was unacceptable to the Moderates. Pherozeshah Mehta, however, averted the schism

[28]Gokhale, in his Presidential address, said: "The devotion to motherland, which is enshrined in the highest *Swadeshi*, is an influence so profound and so passionate that its very thought thrills and its actual touch lifts one out of oneself. India needs today, above everything else, that the gospel of this devotion should be preached to high and low, to prince and to peasant, in town and in hamlet, till the service of Motherland becomes with us as ever mastering a passion as it is in Japan"; quoted in Annie Besant, *How India Wrought for Freedom* (Madras, Theosophical House, 1915) 418-9.

[29]See Tilak's write-up in the *Kesari* of 11 December 1906.

by securing the approval of Dadabhai Naoroji—widely accepted as the Grand Old Man of the Congress—to preside over the session. Naoroji had a difficult job to do. He himself had been a constant advocate of the policy of petitions and prayers to the government. For years he had worked in London on behalf of the Congress. His fellow-Moderates were still clinging to constitutional methods. The Extremists, on the other hand, were determined to fight for the nation's political rights. Confronted with the increasing popularity of the Extremists' programme Naoroji handled the situation very skilfully. In his Presidential speech he denounced the British Indian Government as "a barbarous despotism unworthy of British instincts, principles and civilization." He announced that he favoured *Swaraj* to be the goal of Congress. The session adopted four resolutions, one on "self-government," the other on "boycott movement," the third on *Swadeshi*, and the fourth on "national education."[30] Self-government was not put forward as a right of the country.[31] Rupture between the Moderates and the Extremists was averted.

But differences in the approach and objectives of the two wings were too deep for a permanent reconciliation. The Moderates were reluctant to launch any agitation for the attainment of *Swaraj*, and the Extremists saw no other method to reach this goal. More fuel to the fire of Extremists' annoyance with the British and disillusionment with the Moderates' approach was added during the twelve months following the Calcutta session. In March 1907, Viceroy Minto sent to the Home Government a Despatch on the "Next Instalment of Administrative Reforms for India." While the Moderates were inclined to be satisfied with the proposed scheme of reforms these were wholly unacceptable to the Extremists. In the summer of that year Aurobindo Ghosh was arrested on a charge of sedition (he was shortly after released for lack of evidence); Pal was sentenced for alleged contempt of court, and Lajpat Rai was deported for his political activities relating to the Extremist programme. These measures hardened the attitude of the Extremist leaders and they went for the annual session of Congress at Surat in December with the object of capturing the leadership of the national organization.

[30]Sitaramayya, vol. I, 85.

[31]C.F. Andrews and G. Mukerjea, *The Rise and Growth of the Congress in India*, 211.

Differences between the two wings developed from the outset. The Extremists opposed the venue of the session and alleged that Surat was purposely selected by the Moderates as a safe place where they could, with the help of local delegates, have their own way.[32] The Extremists wanted Tilak to preside but the Moderates were opposed to this. The Reception Committee elected Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh to be the president and the Extremists resented it as "undemocratic." The Congress met for the first day on 7 December. Dr. Ghosh read out his address of welcome. Then, his name was proposed for Presidency of the Congress for approval by the 1,600 delegates. When Surendra Nath Banerjea proceeded to second the proposition, the Extremists created a pandemonium. They wanted an *open* election of the President. The disorder was so great that Dr. Ghosh had to adjourn the meeting. When the delegates met next day there was again a general melee. Shoes and stones were hurled; chairs were thrown and sticks brandished. The session ended for the day and the police cleared the *pandal* of the unruly crowd. This marked the split between the "Right" and the "Left" wings of the Congress.

The two factions held their meetings separately. The Moderates took control of the Congress organization, rewrote its Constitution, declared that the Congress objective was the attainment of "a system of government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire, and proclaimed that the said objective was to be achieved 'by constitutional means'." The Extremists, meeting under the chairmanship of Aurobindo Ghosh, reaffirmed their belief in *Swaraj*, *Swadeshi*, boycott, and national education. They also set up a Committee, headed by Tilak, to bring about a rapprochement with the Moderates, but the two wings did not unite until 1916.

ACTIVITIES OF THE EXTREMISTS

The Extremists realized that an effective organization of the masses to stir up an agitation against the British was essential to success. Self-reliant and independent action, they thought, was needed to shake the foundations of the alien rule. The bulk of the Left-Wing pinned its faith in the moral and physical uplift of the people, construc-

[32]The session was first planned to be held in Pubjab, but realizing that the Extremist programme was very popular there the venue was shifted to Surat; see Shay, n. 11, 117.

tive work, boycott of foreign goods, use of *Swadeshi* material and the establishment of national institutions for the education of the common man. They also believed in "passive resistance," i.e. non-violent civil disobedience and non-cooperation with the government. They felt that loyal co-operation with the British Government in the Legislative Councils would take them no nearer their goal of *Swaraj*.

The banner of boycott was first hoisted on 7 August 1905. This was followed by the observance of 16 October 1905—the day when the partition of Bengal was effected—as a day of mourning and fasting throughout India. Processions and public meetings were held and streets of towns and cities echoed with the cries of *Bande Mataram*. There was great enthusiasm among the workers, and students activities added force to their zeal. "The months that followed the 16th October 1905," wrote Surendra Nath, "were months of great excitement and unrest."

The policy of repression followed by the government, especially of East Bengal under Sir Bamfylde Fuller, invested the agitation with a religious and revolutionary fervour. People in thousands took *Swadeshi* vow and promised to abstain from the use of foreign goods, from service under the government and from titles and honours conferred by the British to entice the patriots. "The year 1907," as Sitaramayya has put it, "witnessed the implementing of the new slogans of *Swadeshi*, boycott and national education in practical programmes. While national schools and national universities were springing up here, there and elsewhere—in Bengal, Maharashtra, C.P., Punjab and Andhra—the *Swadeshi* movement spread far and wide."[33]

The *Swadeshi* and boycott agitation gave a tremendous fillip to the national movement. It affected the British interests in India in a big way. The imports dropped considerably and many of the European business firms were either closed down or carried on very small business. It brought the nationalist movement to the millions. Above all, it made the people conscious of the curse of British domination and it created among them a yearning for freedom and self-rule.

TERRORIST WING OF THE EXTREMISTS

If the years between 1900 and 1906 were critical in the history of modern India, the period from 1906 to 1911 was known for violent

[33]Sitaramayya, vol. 1, 69.

and terroristic activities. Not all Left-Wingers (Extremists) believed in *Swadeshi*, boycott and passive resistance. There were quite a few among them who believed that force and violence, murdering of Europeans, destruction of government property and looting of treasures, alone would drive the British out of India. This small group of youngmen was called "terrorists." Their activities became prominent after the partition of Bengal. Sporadic murders of a political nature took place from time to time. The most daring of them was that of Sir Curzon Wyllie in London at a public meeting in 1907 by a youngman, Madan Lal Dhingra. On 6 December of the same year, the train, on which Sir Andrew Fraser, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, was travelling, was derailed by a bomb near Midnapur. On 23 December, the former district magistrate of Dacca, Allen, was shot, though not fatally. On 13 March 1908 serious riot broke out in Tinnevelly (Madras) and was marked by wholesale destruction of government property. On 30 April 1908, two bombs, meant to kill Kingsford, the District Judge of Muzzaffarpore who had annoyed the revolutionaries, killed two ladies Mrs. and Miss Kennedy. In November 1909, an attempt was made at Ahmedabad to blow off the carriage in which Lord and Lady Minto were driving through the city. The cult of violence was openly preached by a brother of Swami Vivekananda, Bhupendra Nath Datta, in the columns of *Yugantar*, and the people, particularly the Hindus, were exhorted to resort to murders, assassinations and terrorism. The atmosphere of revolution spread to Punjab also and serious riots occurred at Lahore and Rawalpindi. Disturbances took place in Madras, and in the United and Central Provinces the people were in ferment.

CENTRE WING OF THE EXTREMISTS

There was another group that occupied a middle position between the two above-mentioned groups. They were called the Revolutionaries. They did not approve of the activities of the terrorists and believed that a mass uprising would drive the British out of India. Strikes and *hartals*, tempering with the loyalty of the army and even *guerrilla* warfare, carried on with arms from foreign countries, were their methods. They disliked individual and secret murders. Not only the work being done by the Revolutionaries was confined to the boundaries of India; they were equally busy in London and Paris

where a huge propaganda was going on against the British. Another centre of Revolutionary propaganda abroad was on the Pacific Coast of the United States. There were two distinct associations—Indo-American Association and the Young India Association—with branches in important cities of America.

BRITISH REPRESSION OF THE EXTREMISTS

The British authorities viewed with great concern and alarm the increasing strength of Indian nationalism. They sought to cleave the movement by encouraging the formation of the Muslim League. They were happy to see the growing differences between the Moderates and the Extremists. But the activities of the terrorists enraged the British, and the Government of Lord Minto took a series of drastic measures to suppress them. The Public Meetings Act, the Indian Press Act (1910), the Seditious Meetings Act (1907), the Explosive Substances Act (1908), the Newspaper (Incitement to Offences) Act (1908), and the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act were forged. Several circulars and ordinances abrogating the rights of free speech and free criticism were issued. Processions, meetings and demonstrations were prohibited; students and citizens were prohibited from taking part in politics, and those students who took part in spite of the prohibitory orders were rusticated from schools and colleges. Nine prominent deportations took place in Bengal, namely, of Krishna Kumar Mitra, Pulin Behari Das, Shyam Sunder Chakravarti, Aswini Kumar Dutt, Subodh Chandra Malik, Satish Chandra Chatterjee, Bhupesh Chandra Nag, and Sachindra Prasad Bose. In Maharashtra, Tilak was arrested (on 13 July 1908) and was awarded six years' transportation.[34] On the same day, Harisarvottama Rao and two others were arrested in Andhra. Sardar Ajit Singh and Lajpat Rai were selected from the Punjab to receive the compliment. Aurobindo Ghosh was kept in prison for a year awaiting his trial, though he was acquitted by the court. Madan Lal Dhingra, killer of Curzon Wyllie, was hanged and Bhupendra Nath Datta, editor of the *Yugantar*, was given a long sentence.

Press prosecutions and proscriptions were witnessed everywhere The *Yugantar*, the *Sandhya*, and the *Bande Matram* were suppressed.

[31]Tilak was sent to Mandalay, and there he was kept in "virtual solitary confinement in a prison cell." Public and the press, both in England and India, condemned the severity of the sentence; see Shay, n. 11, 126.

While quite an army of "inefficient and unscrupulous men" under the name of C.I.D. officers were let loose upon society, police raids, house searches, confiscation, and espionage became the order of the day. So severe was the repression that even Secretary of State Morley was horrified and made repeated protests. On 14 July 1908, he wrote to Lord Minto: "I must confess to you that I am watching with the deepest concern and dismay the thundering sentences that are now being passed for sedition, etc. We must keep order but excess of severity is not the path to order on the contrary, it is the path to the bomb."

The Government of India, however, succeeded in repressing the Extremists and there was apparent calm in the country.

RECONCILIATION OF THE MODERATES

The policy-makers in London felt that although the Extremists and terrorists had been suppressed the revolutionary activities might start any time in the future. They, therefore, thought of throwing a bait to the country. Moreover, during the violent activities of the Left Wing the Moderates remained calm. In order to enlist their [Moderates'] continued goodwill and support the British authorities brought forth another measure of constitutional reforms. On the occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of Queen Victoria's famous proclamation of 1858, King Edward sent, 2 November 1908, to the "Princes and Peoples of India," a Royal Message fore-shadowing the political reforms that the British Government proposed to introduce in India. These were considered by the Congress in its annual session, in December 1908, at Madras and were welcomed by it.[35] The proposals were embodied in the form of a short Bill, that was introduced by Morley in the House of Lords on 23 February 1909 and which became Law on 25 May 1909. The reforms (Minto-Morley) came to be known as the Indian Councils Act of 1909.

The Congress, in its annual session at Lahore, appreciated "the earnest and arduous endeavours of Lord Morley and Lord Minto in extending to the people of this country a fairly liberal measure of constitutional reforms." But the Moderates disapproved the creation of separate electorates "on the basis of religion." They also ex-

[35]These reforms, it was pointed out, owed their origin to a memorandum furnished by Gokhale to Lord Morley and were designed to "rally the Moderates," *ibid.*, 128.

pressed dissatisfaction over "the wide arbitrary and unreasonable disqualification and restrictions for candidates seeking election to the Councils" and also for rendering the non-official majorities in the Provincial Councils "ineffective and unreal."[36]

Despite the serious shortcoming Gokhale and Pherozeshah Mehta sincerely tried to make the Reforms work.

While the government was on a war-path with the Extremists, it continued to confer titles, positions, and honours upon those who were active in the Congress movement. A. Chaudhri in Bengal took a leading part in the anti-partition (of Bengal) agitation and was made a High Court Judge; Pherozeshah Mehta was raised to Knighthood by Curzon in 1905. Syed Hasan Imam of Bihar invited the Congress for 1912 to Patna, and he became a High Court Judge, and V.S. Srinivas Shastri was nominated to the Legislative Council by Lord Pentland during the Great War. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sachchidanand Sinha, Provosh Chandra Mittar, and S.R. Das were among many others who held responsible positions in the government.

[36]The Lahore session was presided over by Malaviya, and the Resolution on the Reforms was brought out by Surendra Nath Banerjea; for details of the Resolution see Jogesh Chandra Bagal, *History of the Indian Association* (Calcutta, 1953) 190.

CHAPTER FIVE

GREAT WAR IN EUROPE AND POLITICS IN INDIA

POLITICAL LIFE IN India between the inauguration of the Minto-Morley Reforms and the beginning of the war in Europe in 1914 was subdued. This was not because those Reforms ushered in democracy or self-rule. In fact, the re-formed Councils were little better than debating societies, and the new Act had left the Government of India almost an autocracy. Under the new scheme the Legislature and the Executive derived their powers from and were responsible to different authorities—the former to the Indian electorate and the latter to the British Parliament. The two organs were bound to clash and bring about a deadlock. Such a system could not have been acceptable even to Congress—not to speak of the Extremists.

LULL IN THE STORM

The subdued political activity during 1910 and 1914 was due mainly to the fact that after the Surat "split" the Congress passed into the hands of Moderate leaders, and the Extremists had been deprived of effective leadership—their leaders, like Tilak, being exiled and deported. Aurobindo Ghosh gave up politics and took to spiritualism. In the absence of the extreme leaven, the Congress settled into an uneventful course of constitutionalism. Under the leadership of Gokhale, S.N. Banerjea, Madan Mohan Malaviya, and Tej Bahadur Sapru, the Moderate nationalists were working the reforms in a spirit of loyal cooperation, although they were aware of their shortcomings and condemned the communal electorate as "anti-democratic and anti-national."

Another important reason for the lull in the national movement was that Lord Hardinge, who succeeded Lord Minto (in 1910), sought

conciliation and pacification. The new Viceroy w as a far-sighted statesman and a keen observer of international relations. War clouds hung over Europe and that continent looked like a heap of powder magazine that could explode any moment. Hardinge felt that in the event of England becoming involved in a war with Germany an incalculable harm would be done to English war efforts if India were hostile. He endeavoured to pacify the Indian temper. He and the Secretary of State, Lord Crewe, realized that a serious and immediate grievance of the people, particularly of Hindus, was the partition of Bengal. The decision to annul the partition was, therefore, announced to synchronize with the visit to India of King George V and Queen Mary in December 1911. This step had salutary effect upon the minds of Indian political leaders. The capital of British India was shifted from Calcutta to Delhi, a former capital, whose history dated back to legendary times. Although in 1912 an attempt was made on his life, the steps Hardinge took had a salutary effect on Indo-British relations and put a quietus on agitation and violence.[1]

OUTBREAK OF WAR IN EUROPE AND DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIA

In August 1914, the World War began and India, being a dependent constituent of the British Empire, found itself automatically at war. There was no real feeling of loyalty in the minds of the Indian people towards the British; in fact, the disposition was to utilize the war as an opportunity to advance the cause of self-rule and democracy. On 17 May 1914, Tilak was released and although old and tired, he was determined to lead the people to *Swaraj*. Other Extremists, who had either been deported or had gone underground, also reappeared on the political scene and began to plan for the emancipation of the country. Further inspiration was provided by the pronouncements of the leaders of England and of the United States who began to proclaim that they were fighting for peace, freedom, democracy, and self-determination. They talked of making the world safe for democracy.

Tilak took stock of the political situation and found that the

[1]A bomb was thrown while Hardinge was entering Delhi on an elephant.

Congress, under the domination of the Moderates, was ineffective, that the Government of India Act, 1909, was unsatisfactory, and that the Muslims were becoming a dynamic force. Tilak felt that the Congress should be reinvigorated by the combination of the two wings (Moderates and Extremists), that the Muslim community, particularly the Muslim League, should be brought within the Congress fold, and that the campaign for *Swaraj* and constitutional democracy should be restarted. He undertook this task shortly after his release.

REUNION OF MODERATES AND EXTREMISTS

In collaboration with Mrs. Annie Besant, he first made an attempt to reunite the Moderates and the Extremists, but both Gokhale and Pherozeshah Mehta opposed the move. Their apprehension was that Tilak would again lead the Congress to a fight with the bureaucracy. On 19 February 1915, Gokhale passed away, and Mehta also died in November of the same year. Wacha was getting old and his vision was failing; S.N. Banerjea was not quite in tune with the new urges; Satyendra Prasanna ceased to take interest in Congress politics, though he presided over the Congress of 1915 in Bombay; Pandit Malaviya was not in a position to lead the Congress on the moderate lines. M.K. Gandhi had only then returned from Africa and had not yet started his public life "on defined lines." Leadership was almost passing out of the hands of the Moderates and Tilak appeared to be the undisputed leader of the Indian masses. Through the efforts of Annie Besant the Congress constitution was amended at the Bombay session in December 1915, and the way was paved for the re-entry of the Extremists in the Congress. In January 1916, Tilak announced the willingness of his party to join the parent body "through the partially opened door." In December of that year, Tilak attended the Congress session at Lucknow and when he entered the *pandal* wild scenes of rejoicing were witnessed, almost quite contrary to those visible at Surat nine years before. The two wings became one and the nationalist movement gathered a new momentum.

CONGRESS-LEAGUE PACT, 1916

The Lucknow session was important not only in that it brought the Moderates and the Extremists together, it also led to an *entente*

between the Congress and the Muslim League. As stated earlier the League was organized under bureaucratic encouragement to isolate the Muslims from the national movement. While the Congress launched an agitation against the partition of Bengal the Muslim League "did its best to organize opposition to the partition agitation."[2] When the talk of the Minto-Morley Reforms was in the air the League leaders, after careful and serious deliberation, put forth the demand for separate electorate for the Muslims. Mohammad Noman pointed out that the League made it "a matter of life and death."[3] Having succeeded in getting separate electorate as introduced in the 1909 Act the League leaders began to guard the special interests of the Muslims. While the Moderates and the Extremists were taking up cudgels with the British the League leaders were making manifestations of loyalty to the Emperor. The nationalist Muslims, however, continued to urge the Mohammedans that their interests were not different from those of other Indians. Badruddin Tyabji and Rahmat Ullah Sayani advised them to remain with the Congress. Mohammed Ali Jinnah (then a staunch Congressman) denounced the separate electorate as "the obnoxious virus introduced into the body politic of India with evil designs."[4]

Soon a few events occurred, and the League-government honeymoon was marred. On 2 December 1911, the partition of Bengal was annulled, and it came, as Rajendra Prasad has put it, "as a rude shock to many Musulmans."[5] They began to realize that their cause was not dear to the British, and that their interests could be sacrificed to advance their [British] own cause.[6] The

[2]Nawab Wagar-ul-Mulk, the first President of the League, told the Muslims that if they took part in the movement "our culture and civilization shall go to dust, our objective shall be lost in the air"; quoted in Mohammad Noman, *Muslim India* (Allahabad, Kitabistan, 1942) 100.

[3]*Ibid.*, 101. For origins of communal representation see K.B. Krishna, *The Problem of Minorities* (London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1939) 98-105.

[4]See Binayendra Mohan Chaudhuri, *Muslim Politics in India* (Calcutta, Orient Book Company, 1946) 20.

[5]Rajendra Prasad, *India Divided*, 117.

[6]Even before the annulment of partition some differences developed between the English Principal of the Aligarh College and Nawab Waqar-ul-Mulk, one of the founders of the Muslim League, and there was among the Musulmans great support for the Nawab. In order to get the Muslim League out of the influence of the English, His Highness the Agha Khan shifted its head office from Aligarh to Lucknow in 1910; see *ibid.*, 116.

Muslim community in India was further disappointed by the hostile attitude of the British Government towards the Sultan of Turkey during the Tripoli and Balkan wars in 1911, 1912, and 1913. They looked upon the Sultan as the *Caliph* of Islam and did not like that he should be humbled by Italy and the Balkan Powers through the connivance of England.[7] The participation of Turkey in the Great War on the side of Germany convinced the Indian Muslims that Britain was not the real friend of Islam. The treatment meted out by the Allied Powers to the Sultan in the course of fighting caused tremendous resentment among the Mohammedans. The policy-makers in London did not like the Pan-Islamic tendency of the Muslims, and a few of their leaders, like Sheikhul-Hind Maulana Mahmudul Hassan, Maulana Hussain Ahmed Nadvi, Moulvi Aziz Gul, Hasrat Mohani and Maulanas Mohammed Ali and Shaukat Ali, were interned for sympathy with Turkey.

A few young Muslim leaders, such as Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Maulana Mohammed Ali, were engaged in bringing home to their brethren the essential community of interests between the Hindus and the Mohammedans. Azad started the *Al-Hilal*, "which by its inspiring style of writing no less than by its high ideals of nationalism, freedom and sacrifice, made an appeal unsurpassed by any other paper in Urdu."[8] Mohammed Ali was conducting the *Hamdard* in Urdu and the *Comrade* in English, and these also helped "to swell the mighty current in favour of nationalism."[9] The firing on an unarmed crowd of Muslims during the Kanpur mosque affair caused great indignation among the Mohammedans. The working of the "reformed" Councils began to demonstrate that the interests of all the Indian communities were intertwined and could not be advanced in isolation from the others.

The leaders of the Muslim League could not keep themselves aloof from the main current of Muslims' annoyance with the British. They paid heed to the utterances of Extremist leaders, like Tilak, who had been telling the masses that a united India could best promote India's interest, and began to take steps to effect a rapproche-

[7]Italy snatched away Tripoli from Turkey, and Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria and Montenegro broke away from the Ottoman Empire. The Indian Muslims sent a medical mission to Turkey in 1912 under the leadership of Dr. M. A. Ansari.

[8]Rajendra Prasad, n. 5, 118.

[9]*Ibid.*

ment with the Congress. The first step was taken in December 1912 when, on the initiative of the young leaders, a meeting of the Muslim League was convened in Calcutta to consider the adoption of a new constitution for the League. This meeting was also attended by Jinnah who had earlier refused to join a purely communal organization which the League was since its inception. This meeting accepted the national ideal embodied in the Congress creed and drafted a new constitution for the League. It was enthusiastically adopted at the annual session held at Lucknow on 22 March 1913 and presided over by Sir Ibrahim Rahimtullah. The object of the League was defined, among other matters, to be "*the attainment under the aegis of the British Crown of a system of self-government suitable to India* through constitutional means by bringing about, amongst others, a steady reform of the existing system of administration, by fostering public spirit among the people of India and by cooperating with other communities for the said purpose."

The object of the League was, thus, brought in line with that of the Congress, and the latter adopted a special resolution in December 1913 (at Karachi) appreciating the change in the ideal and policy of the League.

The second step towards communal unity and common action was taken by Jinnah and some of his associates. They invited the League to hold its session in the Christmas week at the same place as the Congress. This was done at Bombay in December 1915. The League session was attended by Malaviya, Sarojini Naidu, and Gandhi-ji. They were accorded a warm reception and a great ovation when they entered the *pandal*. Both the Congress and the League decided to cooperate in formulating a common scheme of post-War reforms and in pressing its adoption by the British authorities. A joint committee was set up for the purpose.

The deliberations of this Committee resulted in the formulation of a joint scheme of reforms which provided the following:

(1) In the Central Legislature, one-third of the Indian elected members should be Muslims.

(2) The principle of separate electorates for Musulmans was accepted. In Bengal and the Punjab, where the Muslims were in a majority, they were to have slightly less than their proportion of population might justify, that is 40 per cent against a population proportion of 52.7 per cent and 50 per cent against the population proportion of 54.8 per cent of the elected seats respectively. In other

Provinces where they were in a minority they were allowed representation much in excess of their proportion of population; for instance, in U.P. they were given 30 per cent seats against a population of 14 per cent, and in Madras 15 per cent against a population of 6.6 per cent.

(3) The minorities were also given the right of vetoing legislation concerning their community, if they were opposed to it. No Bill, it was laid down, or any clause thereof nor any resolution introduced by a non-official member affecting one or the other community shall be proceeded with if three-fourths of the members of the community in the particular Council opposed the Bill, any clause thereof or any resolution.

In addition to this, the plan also elaborated a scheme of constitutional reforms. It was demanded that definite steps should be taken towards self-government by instituting the reforms, and that in the reconstruction of the Empire India should be lifted from the position of a dependency to that of an equal partner.

This scheme became the basis of a pact between the Congress and the League a year later. In December 1916, both the parties held their annual sessions at Lucknow at the same time and accepted the scheme almost in full. The resolution adopted at the joint session began by stating:

> Having regard to the ancient civilization of India, the progress made in education, the public spirit shown, His Majesty, the King-Emperor, should be pleased to issue a proclamation that it is the aim and intention of the British policy to confer all government on India at an early date, that as a definite step in that direction the Congress-League Scheme should be forthwith granted, and that in the reconstruction of the Empire India should be lifted from the position of a dependency to that of an equal partner in the Empire with the self-governing Dominions.

An Appraisal

The Congress-League pact was hailed as a significant step towards national solidarity. Tilak said: "The Lucknow session has become the most important session of the Congress." The then President of the Congress commented that "it was the Indian National

Congress. . . . Hindus and Muslims have been brought together."[10] The historian of the Congress, Sitaramayya, wrote: "It was truly an enlivening spectacle to see Tilak and Khaparde sitting side by side with Dr. Rash Behari Ghose and Surendra Nath Banerjea. Mrs. Besant was there with her two co-adjutors—Arundale and Wadia. . . . Amongst the Muslims were men like the Raja of Muhammadabad, Mazar-ul-Haq, A. Rasul, and Jinnah. Gandhi and Polak were there too."[11]

Nobody then realized that the Lucknow Pact involved the abandonment of a principle dear to the Congress both before and after 1916. That principle was that Hindus and Muslims jointly comprised the Indian nation. The acceptance of the system of communal representation, of the principle of weightage, as also of "communal veto" in legislation proved to be the most fatal blunder of the Congress leadership. While the constitutional reforms demanded by the Congress and the League were ignored by the British they picked up the communal agreement and embodied it in the next instalment of reforms they introduced in India after the Great War. The policy-makers in London were interested in creating a rift between the two major communities of the country,[12] and separate electorate appeared to them as a convenient device to do so. All that could be said in defence of the then Congress leaders was that they regarded the concessions to the Muslims to be temporary and they strove to bridge the gulf that had been cause between the Hindus and the Muslims. Their hope probably was that once the Muslims, who had joined the League, came into the fold of the Congress the latter would be able to work out a plan of Hindu-Muslim unity and to create an atmosphere of cooperation between them. But the leaders of the national movement were sadly disappointed, and instead of coming closer the Muslim League began to go further apart during the 1920's. The submission to League communalism and a compromise on the fundamental issue of Indian nationality proved disastrous for the country. R.C. Majumdar expressed the view that "the Congress

[10]Quoted in Shay, *The Legacy of the Lokamanya*, 133.

[11]Sitaramayya, vol. I, 127-8.

[12]The ruling class remembered the words of Lord Bryce who said: "When the differences of caste and religion which now separate the people of India from one another have begun to disappear new dangers may arise to threaten the permanence of British power"; quoted in Noman, n. 2, 135.

action in 1916 well and truly laid the foundations of Pakistan thirty years later."[13]

HOME RULE MOVEMENT

The First World War was important for India not only in that it witnessed the unity between the Congress and the League on the one side and the Moderates and Extremists on the other; it was also significant in that it broke lull in Indo-British relations and gave a new impetus to the national movement. The involvement of England in the war appeared to the Indian nationalists, particularly the Extremists, a God-sent opportunity and they decided to advance their own cause. While cooperating with British in conducting the war, the leaders of the national movement thought of extricating the political life of India from the lethargy and inertia into which it had fallen during the past few years. The Congress had become a backwater in politics and more so, after the death of Gokhale and Mehta. The leadership of the new resurgence, therefore, fell on the shoulders of Tilak who became a more astute revolutionary during his six years of internment.

Realizing that the British disliked the word *Swaraj* and considered it "seditious and dangerous" and taking a cue from the propaganda of Annie Besant, Tilak decided to use the term, "Home Rule" rather than *Swaraj* as the goal of his movement. He proceeded to form the Home Rule League. In December 1915, he conferred with his fellow-Nationalists, and as a result of their deliberations the Indian Home Rule League was set up on 28 April 1916, with headquarters at Poona. The object of the League was "to attain Home Rule or Self-Government within the British Empire by all constitutional means and to educate and organize public opinion in the country towards the attainment of the same."

A similar organization was set up by Annie Besant. She was a great lover of India and was deeply interested in the educational, religious, and social uplift of the Indian people. She, however, realized that it was difficult to do much in these fields unless the people of this country wielded political power. Dr. Besant alleged that "British rule in India is insufficient in the matters that concern the Nation's life, that India is slowly wasting away and will inevitably

[13]Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, vol. II, 353.

perish unless she regains her right to rule herself."[14] Self-rule for her did not mean separation of India from the Empire; it only meant Home Rule within the Empire. She did not conceive of India becoming an independent country. On her return to India in the autumn of 1913, she endeavoured to bring the Moderates and the Extremists together and also to make the Congress a dynamic organization;[15] but in both of her attempts she was disappointed. In order to bring about a psychological revolution in the country she brought out, on 2 January 1914, the first number of *The Commonweal*, a weekly. This journal demanded self-government for India "not as a gift but as a right."

Realizing that the weekly paper was not effective Besant started a daily newspaper under the title *New India*. It urged that "instead of asking for Reforms piece-meal we should bend our energies to win Self-Government, Home Rule, and make the Reforms for ourselves." She brought, as Sitaramayya has put it, "new ideas, new talent, new resources and altogether a new method of organization."[16]

At the Bombay session, in December 1915, Annie Besant urged the Congress to consider the formation of a Home Rule League to propagate the ideal of self-rule for India, but the Moderates felt that such an organization "would serve to overlap and perhaps weaken the Congress."[17] The President of the session ruled out Besant's proposal on the ground that it contravened Article I of the Congress constitution.[18] For nine months she waited to give the Congress the fullest opportunity to adopt her scheme. The rebellion in Ireland (at Eastar, 1916) directed Besant's attention to that country and ultimately she herself founded the Home Rule League, with headquarters in Madras, on 1 September 1916.

Those who joined the League were constitutionalists and favoured no violence and revolutionary agitation. They had no aim of obstructing the British war efforts against Germany and Austria-Hungary.

[14]Quoted in Geoffrey West, *The Life of Annie Besant* (London, Gerald Howe Ltd., 1929) 229.

[15]She wanted the Congress to launch a national movement "embodying religious, educational and social, as well as political reforms," *ibid.*, 232.

[16]Sitaramayya, vol. I, 119.

[17]S. N. Banerjea, *A Nation in Making*, 237.

[18]This Article restricted the scope of the demand for self-rule by the words "bringing about a steady reform of the existing system of administration"; see Majumdar, n. 13, 362.

They, in fact, preached cooperation with the government in order to enable the latter to win the war. The Home Rule League, however, believed that Home Rule was India's right and she must have it. A "Home Ruled India," they thought, would be an asset to the Empire in its war with the Central Powers (Germany and Austria-Hungary). After the Lucknow session of the Congress, the League worked to popularize the scheme of Reforms, jointly drawn up by the Congress and the Muslim League, among the masses, and its work was endorsed both by the Congress and the Muslim League.

During the year 1917, the two Home Rule Leagues, of Tilak and Besant, worked in close cooperation with each other—Tilak's activities mostly confining to the Provinces of Bombay and C.P., and Besant's field of work covering the rest of the subcontinent. Branches of the League were established all over India and the demand of self-rule became very popular. Tilak travelled to all parts of the country and exhorted the people to unite under the banner of the Home Rule League. He directed his wrath not against the British Empire or the Emperor, but against the bureaucracy. His writings and speeches earned him the goodwill of all and he became the man of the masses. Lokamanya infused among the people the spirit of patriotism, fearlessness, self-respect and sacrifice, and they began to clamour for an administration which would be responsible to them.

Similarly, the lady from Ireland (Besant) became an exponent of the urges and aspirations of the Indian people. Her lectures from the pulpit and her articles in *The Commonweal* and *New India* became a talk of the country. Even the Moderates, who had earlier decried her programme, admitted that Annie Besant "stirred the country by the spoken as well as the written word as scarcely anyone else could do."[19] Her real contribution to the national movement was the awakening she brought about among the women of India who rendered to it "uncalculating heroism, the endurance and the self-sacrifice of the feminine nature." "The women," Besant said, "marched in procession when the men were stopped and their prayers in the temples set the internal captive free. Home Rule has become so intertwined with Religion, by the prayers offered up in the great Southern Temples and spreading from them to village temples,

[19]Chintamani, *Indian Politics since the Mutiny*, 102.

and also by its being preached up and down the country by *Sadhus* and *Sanyasis*.[20]

BRITISH REPRESSION DURING THE WAR

The British authorities became seriously concerned about the Home Rule movement in India. They were engaged in a life and death struggle with Germany and Austria-Hungary and did not like that the political situation in this country should go out of hands. The decision was taken to curb the Home Rule Leaguers who were in the fore-front of the agitation. Several reactionary measures, already in operation, were tightened up. These were the Ingress to India Ordinance of 5 September 1914 to prevent the entry of "undesirable" aliens, Defence of India Act of 18 March 1915 to supersede the ordinary Criminal Law of the land to repress political crime and the Press Act to stop the Home Rule propaganda. Circulars were issued prohibiting school and college boys from participating in the Home Rule movement. In July 1916, Tilak was prosecuted, allegedly, for delivering seditious speeches and was ordered to furnish a personal bond of Rs. 20,000 "with two sureties of Rs. 10,000 each, to be of good behaviour for a period of one year." Later, externment order was served upon him, and his entry into the Punjab and Delhi was banned.

Annie Besant also was subjected to the policy of repression. She was called upon to furnish security for her press and *The Commonweal* and *New India*, and altogether she deposited and forfeited a sum of Rs. 20,000. On 14 June 1917, the Government of Madras issued orders of internment against Besant and her two associates, G.S. Arundale and B.P. Wadia.[21] The internment of these leaders created a storm of opposition and indignation from one end of the country to another. Protest meetings were held and police repression was condemned. So severe was the repression that Montagu delivered a soul-stirring speech in the House of Commons on 12

[20]Quoted in Sitaramayya, vol. I, 130.

[21]Wadia was the assistant editor of *New India* and Arundale was the leading contributor. The Governor of Madras, Lord Pentland, summoned Besant for interview and told her that she was to be interned. She said to Pentland: "There is just one thing I should like to say to Your Excellency, and that is that I believe you are striking the deadliest blow against the British Empire in India," quoted in West, n. 14, 237.

July. He drew up a scathing indictment of the whole system of Indian governance. He described the Government of India as "too wooden, too iron, too inelastic, too anti-diluvian to be of any use for the modern purpose."[22] The Nationalist press made a political capital out of Montagu's speech and used it as a text to preach the necessity of immediate change in the government of the country. Jinnah joined the Home Rule League immediately after the internment of Besant and her two associates. A joint meeting of the All-India Congress Committee and of the Council of the Muslim League was convened on 28 July and it expressed its sense of deep appreciation of the work done by the Home Rule League and strongly criticized the attitude of the government. It made a strong and dignified representation to the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India, asking for the immediate grant of a substantial instalment of *Swaraj*. The meeting asked for a Royal Proclamation announcing the acceptance of the Indian political demands and the release of the interned leaders.

MONTAGU-CHELMSFORD REFORMS

The continued political agitation in India and the Congress-Muslim League unity caused great uneasiness in London. In the early summer of 1917, the war situation in Europe became grave. Germany restarted the submarine warfare and several British vessels were sunk. In April 1917, the United States joined the war on the side of the Allied Powers and put at the disposal of the British Government unlimited resources of fighting material and food-stuffs. But that was not enough and the need of more help from India was felt.

At about the same time there occurred the Mesopotamia "muddle." The Sultan of Turkey had entered into the war on the side of Germany and the campaign against him was entrusted to the Government of India. It was thoroughly mismanaged. In 1916, Parliament appointed a Commission to investigate into the situation. The report of this Commission was submitted in May 1917, and the entire blame was put on the shoulder of the Government of India which, it was alleged, failed to supply adequate men and material. The publication of this Report led to a debate of first

[22]Quoted in Sitaramayya, vol. I, 134. Montagu was an Under-secretary of State for India.

class importance in the House of Commons in which Austen Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for India, was severely criticized by Montagu. Premier Lloyd George, realizing the gravity of the situation, asked Chamberlain to resign and appointed Montagu in his place. The new Secretary of State felt that attempts should be made to enlist support and cooperation in the war of at least those elements in India who were friendly towards Britain and were inclined to help her in the hour of peril.

Soon after the assumption of office he made the following declaration on 20 August 1917:

> The policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. They have decided that substantial steps in this direction should be taken as soon as possible."[23]

Shortly after, Montagu came to India "to learn the wishes of the people" and investigate the possibilities of a major programme of reforms. He remained here for six months, toured different parts of the country with Viceroy Chelmsford, consulted leaders of different parties and groups and returned to England with enough material for digestion and report. On 8 July 1918, the report, known as Montagu-Chelmsford Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms, was published.[24]

[23]For text, see Banerjea, *Indian Constitutional Documents, 1757-1915*, 201. The Imperial War Conference had already, in one of its resolutions (16 April 1917) on the status of India, placed on record its view "that any such adjustment should be based upon a full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth and of India as an important portion of the same, should recognize the right of the Dominions and India to an adequate voice in foreign policy and foreign relations."

[24]The main features were:

(1) There should be, as far as possible, the complete popular control in local self-governing bodies and the largest possible independence for them of outside control.

(2) The Government of India must remain responsible to the British

Reactions in India

The reaction to the scheme of reforms in the political circles of India was mixed. The followers of Annie Besant declined to accept it and urged amendments. Besant declared: "I find myself unable to accept the scheme as it stands . . . The Scheme is penetrated with distrust of Indians . . . There is about it no vision for India of even future evolution into freedom."[25] She observed that the Reforms were "unworthy of England to offer and India to accept." Tilak and his colleagues, who then dominated the Congress executive, convened a special session of the Congress at Bombay, August 1918, and adopted a resolution criticizing the proposal as "unsatisfactory, inadequate and disappointing."[26] The Moderates continued to conduct themselves as loyal citizens of His Majesty's Empire.[27] They

Parliament, but provision was made that the Indian Legislative Council should be enlarged with elected representatives so that it might influence the government in increasing quantity.

(3) The Provinces should be the domain in which the earlier steps towards the progressive realization of responsible government should be taken. The provincial governments should be divided into parts—one reserved and the other transferred. The reserved departments should be administered by the Governor-in-Council, i.e. the Governor acting on the advice of his Executive Councillors. The transferred subjects should be administered by the Governor acting on the advice of his Ministers. The latter should be responsible to the elected members of the provincial legislatures. The Governor should enjoy over-riding powers even over transferred subjects.

[25]Quoted in West, n. 14, 240.

[26]Bagal, *History of the Indian Association*, 216. Tilak described them as marking "a sunless dawn."

[27]In his Presidential address to the Madras Congress (1914), Bhupendra Nath Basu openly said: "The two extremes—the one of separation, the other of subordination—are both equally impossible and must be put out of our mind. The ideal that we must pursue, and which the Congress has set up before itself, is that of coordination and comradeship, of a joint partnership on equal terms. I do not say that it must materialize today, but I do say that every step must point in that direction."

Even Mahatma Gandhi, who assumed leadership of the Congress after the expiry of some and the eclipse of the other early patriarchs, declared (at the Madras Law Dinner in April 1915) his loyalty to the British Empire. He said: "I discovered that the British Empire had certain ideals with which I have fallen in love. . . . I am no lover of any government. . . . That government is best which governs least. And I have found that it is possible for me to be governed least under the British Empire. Hence my loyalty to the British Empire"; Banerjea, n. 23, 194.

welcomed the Reform proposals as a "substantial instalment in India's struggle for self-rule" and regarded them "as greater than the Acts of 1853, 1859, 1909 as promising the boon of provincial autonomy." In November 1918, they met in Bombay under the leadership of Surendra Nath Banerjea, and organized a new party—the Liberal Federation. This time, the Moderates left the Congress (in 1907, the Extremists had left), and did not come into its fold during the next thirty years.[28]

THE ROWLATT ACT

In the meantime (on 11 November), the war ended in Europe and the armistice was signed. The authorities in India were relieved from the anxieties of the battle-front and they directed their attention more seriously to the activities of the Home Rule Leaguers. Despite all the measures of repression Tilak and Besant carried on their propaganda for self-government well through 1917 and 1918. Realizing that the Defence of India Act, that had armed the government with extraordinary powers to control the press, to deport editors and other individuals at will and to set up special tribunals to judge political crimes, would lapse after the war, the Viceroy had, on 10 December 1917, set-up, under the chairmanship of an English judge, Sydney Rowlatt, a committee to recommend measures to deal with acts of sedition. This committee recommended that the provincial governments must be vested with powers of internment, and that in certain defined areas political crimes should be tried without the help of jury.[29]

On the lines of these recommendations two Bills were drawn up and these were designed to perpetuate, in a modified form, the obnoxious provisions of the Defence of India Act. The Bills were published in the *Gazette of India* and were known as "Rowlatt Bills."

The Congress felt very much disappointed over the appointment of the Rowlatt Committee, and in its Calcutta session, in Decem-

[28]Secession from the Congress was very painful for Surendra Nath Banerjea who had nursed it from the beginning, but he did so because the differences with the Extremists were fundamental and "upon a matter equally fundamental, namely, the question of Self-Government for India"; see Banerjea, n. 27, 302.

[29]H.H. Dodwell, ed., *The Cambridge History of India*, vol. VI (Delhi, S.Chand and Co., 1958) 585-6.

ber 1917, denounced it. But this had no effect, and the Bills were slated for passage. This cast a great gloom in the Indian political circles.

In December 1918, the annual session of the Congress was held at Delhi and the demand for complete Responsible Government and the full status of the Dominion for India was reiterated. The Congress also adopted a resolution urging the British Parliament and the Peace Conference, that was to be held in Paris early next year, to recognize India as "one of the Progressive nations to whom the principle of self-determination should be applied." It also decided to present India's case to Parliament that was to consider the Montagu-Chelmsford Scheme. Tilak, who had already gone to England to fight his case against Sir Valentine Chirol,[30] was entrusted the task of organizing the campaign in England. He first organized the London Committee of the Congress and then presented his case before the Parliamentary Committee which was examining the Scheme of constitutional reforms for India. He addressed several political organizations, arranged lunches and dinners, interviewed people of different shades of opinion and exhorted eminent journalists to write for India's case for Home Rule. He aroused great public support for his demand. But the authorities in the government remained unmoved, and they made few amendments in the original Scheme of reforms. On 23 December 1919, the Montagu-Chelmsford Scheme became a formal act of Parliament, and came to be known as the Government of India Act, 1919.

[30]Chirol had denounced Tilak and the Indian national movement in his book, *Indian Unrest*, and Tilak filed a civil suit against him.

CHAPTER SIX

CONGRESS FROM COOPERATION TO NON-COOPERATION

THE OBDURACY of the Chelmsford Government in passing the Rowlatt Bills, in the teeth of opposition from the Indian public, caused great annoyance even to the moderate leadership in the Congress Party. Its faith in the British sense of justice began to dwindle. Gandhi, in particular, realized that not until Indians became masters of their country could they expect to improve their lot and live with freedom and dignity. He had already witnessed the hardships and indignities that were inflicted upon Indians in South Africa by the British rulers there. He, however, considered violence and terrorist activities as futile as the early Congress technique of adopting resolutions in annual sessions and presenting them to the British authorities. While in Africa he had developed a technique of popular passive resistance—he called *satyagraha*—and he decided to apply the same to the Indian problem.

This term was a combination of two words—*sat* and *agraha*. *Sat* meant truth and *agraha* meant firmness. Jointly, the term meant *firm assertion of truth*. This was not so much a device of agitation as a process of self-purification. It was a new technique of action which, though perfectly peaceful, implied non-submission to what was considered wrong and, as a consequence, a willing acceptance of pain and suffering involved in this.[1] Gandhi's device was based upon universal humanitarian principles of love, righteousness, harmlessness and human dignity.

GANDHI PREPARES PEOPLE FOR SATYAGRAHA

He had already tried the efficacy of his weapon in Champaran,

[1]This was how Nehru explained the term later on; see Jawaharlal Nehru. *Discovery of India*, 430.

Khaira, and Ahmedabad. In Champaran (a district town in Bihar) he successfully defied in April 1917 the restrictions imposed upon his movement under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code of India and carried on his investigations into the complaints of the peasants against the English indigo planters.[2] In 1918, Gandhi advised the *patidars* (cultivators) to resort to *satyagraha* against taxation in Khaira[3]—a district in Bombay. Although the move was not a complete triumph and a compromise was made between the peasants and the government, the campaign had significant indirect results. *Satyagraha* took firm roots in the soil of Gujarat. The same year, Gandhi succeeded, through his *satyagraha*, in obtaining from the mill-owners of Ahmedabad an increase of 35 per cent in the wages of the workers. By his "experiments with truth" in the above cases he became convinced that *satyagraha* was the most effective weapon to fight against British injustice and misrule. On 29 February 1919, he announced that he would resort to *satyagraha* if the Rowlatt Bills were passed. The non-official members of the Imperial Legislative Council asserted that the consideration of the Bill be postponed for the new Council that was to be constituted under the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. But the authorities paid no heed.

True to his words, Gandhi published, on 18 March, the following pledge:

> Being conscientiously of the opinion that the Rowlatt Bills are unjust, subversive of the principles of liberty and justice and destructive of the elementary rights of an individual on which the safety of India as a whole and the State itself is based, we solemnly affirm that in the event of these Bills becoming law, we will faithfully follow truth and refrain from violence to life, property and person.

This warning too had no effect, and the Bills were passed on 21 March. Gandhi fixed 6 April 1919 to be a day of country-wide *hartal*.

[2]He returned the *Kaiser-i-Hind* gold medal which had been conferred upon him for humanitarian work during the war by the Indian Government.

[3]There was a widespread failure of crops in Khaira and the peasants wanted the revenue assessment for the year suspended. Gandhi exhorted the people to question government's authority to tax them, and his campaign brought about tremendous awakening among the peasants of Gujarat; see Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Beacon Hill, Boston, 1957) 538. Also see Sitaramayya, vol. I, 141.

The people took up the call and strongly protested against what they called the "black" Rowlatt Act. The day, however, went off quietly.

JALLIANWALA BAGH TRAGEDY AND MARTIAL LAW IN PUNJAB

In the early summer of 1919, the Punjab was in the midst of great commotion and ferment. The Congress leaders there—Satyapal and Kitchlew—were going ahead with preparations to hold the annual session of the Congress in Amritsar. They invited Gandhi to visit Amritsar and advised them on the organization of the session and also to direct the civil disobedience movement in the Punjab. Gandhi, then in Bombay, decided to go to Amritsar, but he was asked by government not to leave the city. He refused to obey the order and left for the Punjab. While on the way he was arrested and brought back to Bombay. This news reached Ahmedabad—a place Gandhi had made his second home and where he was held in great esteem and veneration—and the people got infuriated. They began to indulge in violent and terrorist activities. The railway lines were damaged; telegraph wires were cut; shops were looted; a magistrate was burnt alive, and a police sergeant was beaten to death.

The people in the Punjab also were annoyed, but they remained calm until 10 April when the quietitude was broken by the District Magistrate of Amritsar. On that day, he called Satyapal and Kitchlew to his residence and sent them to Dharamsala, a hill town in the Punjab, for internment. This news spread in Amritsar like wild fire. The people resorted to *hartal*, closed their shops and marched in a procession towards the bungalow of the District Magistrate to demand the release of the two leaders. The police ordered the processionists to stop and disperse, and resorted to firing when the order was defied. The crowd became panicky and began to destroy government property and assault the Europeans. This led to more firing, resulting in a few deaths.

The people were allowed to arrange for the funeral of the dead, and the atmosphere became very tense. The law and order of Amritsar was entrusted to an Army Brig.-General, Dyer. On 12 April he promulgated Section 144 of the Indian Criminal Procedure Code and banned all meetings and processions. Immediately after this, the city Congress authorities announced that a public meeting would be held the following day at 4.30 P.M. in Jallianwala Bagh to condole

these were designed to dismember the Turkish Empire almost completely. Much resentment was expressed by the Indian Muslims, and the *Ulemas* began to incite them against the British.

Gandhi perceived in the situation an opportunity to cement the bonds of Hindu-Muslim unity. While in South Africa, he had felt that there was no genuine friendship between the two communities. He had nevertheless realized that the cooperation of the Muslim community was vital to India's struggle for freedom. He sought the friendship of "good Musulmans" and tried to understand the Muslim mind "through contact with their purist and most patriotic representatives."[6] He urged the Hindus to give all support to the movement which the Muslims were planning to launch. On 24 November 1919, an All-India Khilafat Conference, under the chairmanship of Gandhi, met in Delhi, and resolved to withdraw all cooperation with the government until the promises made to the Sultan of Turkey were redeemed. An All-India Khilafat Committee was also set up to organize mass support for the Muslim cause.

AMRITSAR CONGRESS—RESOLUTION ON FULL RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

The policy-makers in London felt seriously concerned about the new phase into which the Indian national movement was entering. In order to strengthen the hands of "moderate" and "liberal" elements and also to soothe the anguish of the people, a Royal Proclamation was issued, and the Viceroy was directed to exercise full measure of clemency to "political offenders." Most of the political prisoners were hurriedly released from jails. The authorities also pushed the Indian Reforms Bill through Parliament with unusual promptitude.

In December (1919), the annual session of the Congress was scheduled to be held at Amritsar, and most of those who had only a few days before come out of prisons swelled the ranks of delegates. The main issue before the Congress Party was whether to cooperate with the Constitutional Reforms or to obstruct their successful enforcement in the country. While Gandhi and Malaviya favoured cooperation, Tilak, C.R. Das, and B.C. Pal urged rejection of the new measure. After a good deal of discussion and examination of the Reforms, a compromise was struck, and while the Congress thanked the British

[6]Gandhi, n. 3, 441.

authorities for the Reforms, it served notice that "self-rule" was the "ultimate goal" of the Indian people, and that they would "so work the Reforms as to secure an early establishment of Full Responsible Government."[7] The authorities were also told that cooperation from the bureaucracy alone would evoke cooperation from the Congress.[8]

Dismemberment of Turkish Empire

At the Amritsar Congress Gandhi was, as Sitaramayya has described it, "the apostle of cooperation," and Das, Pal and a few others were in favour of non-cooperation, but within eight months this situation was reversed, and the cooperator became a non-cooperator and the non-cooperators turned into cooperators. This reversal was the result of dismemberment of the Turkish Empire on the one side and the report of the Hunter Committee on the other. Let us examine each of them in some detail.

On 19 January 1920, a deputation led by Dr. M. A. Ansari met Chelmsford, and urged that the Empire of the Sultan must be preserved intact and the sovereignty of the Sultan as Caliph not be disturbed. But the attitude of the Viceroy on both the issues disappointed the deputationists. In early March, another deputation under Maulana Mohammed Ali went to London, but talks with the Prime Minister proved abortive. The deputation was told that while Turkey would be allowed to retain "ethnically Turkish lands she would lose those provinces which were not Turkish." The Muslims in India felt sorely grieved on this attitude.

On 14 May, the terms of the peace treaty (Treaty of Sevres), that were proposed to be offered to the Sultan, were published. These convinced the Indian Muslims that the Sultan was going to be deprived of all his territories in Europe and in Asia, and that the Holy Places of Islam were going to pass into non-Muslim hands. The entire Muslim world, including the Muslims of India, was filled with "righteous" indignation and a strong movement in support of the Khalifa was launched in India.

[7]For details see Sitaramayya, vol. I, 179-80.

[8]Shay, *The Legacy of the Lokamanya*, 142-3. Gandhi was in favour of "responsive cooperation"—cooperate when cooperation was desirable; non-cooperate when non-cooperation was essential.

Hunter Committee Report on Jallianwala Bagh Massacre

Another important event which turned Gandhi's heart against the British was the publication of the report of the Hunter Committee that was set up by the Government of India to enquire into the Martial Law incidents in the Punjab. The Congress had also set up a non-official committee[9] for the same purpose, and this committee published "unimpeachable evidence of the most brutal atrocities committed by the forces of the Crown, including outrages on helpless women."[10] The Hunter Committee did not go that far, but it *did* report cases of flogging, whipping, indiscriminate arrests, and confiscations. The Minority Report of the Hunter Committee recorded cases of unheard of brutality and barbarity.[11] The Congress leaders had hoped that the British authorities would take appropriately stern action against the wrong-doers and would grant compensation to those who had suffered at the hands of the Martial Law administrators. But the Imperial Legislative Council adopted an Indemnity Act and all those who took part in the Punjab "atrocities" were afforded protection. O'Dwyer remained untouched. (Twenty-one years later he was shot dead, on 13 March 1940, during a public meeting at Caxton Hall, London, by Udham Singh whose father was a victim of the massacre.) General Dyer was declared unfit for future service in India, but even this action of the Indian Government was disapproved by the House of Lords. The punishments awarded to petty officials were also revised, and most of the perpetrators of the "crime" went unpenalized.

GANDHI OUTLINES PROGRAMME OF NON-COOPERATION

Both these events made Gandhi a rebel against the British *raj*, and he decided to fight against what he decried as British "injustice" to the Muslim community. He observed that Britain could not expect

[9]The members of this Committee were M. L. Nehru, C.R. Das, M.R. Jayakar, M.K. Gandhi, and Abbas Tyabji.

[10]Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle, 1920-1942* (Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1964) 39.

[11]See Disorders Inquiry (Hunter) Committee Report, 162-6. Also see Sir Valentine Chirol, *India: Old and New* (Macmillan and Co., London, 1921) 179. The Hunter Committee report was published in March 1920. See also Edward Thompson and G. T. Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India,* (Central Book Depot, Allahabad 1962) 609-11.

the Indian people to submit meekly "to an unjust usurpation of rights which to the Muslims mean a matter of life and death." Non-cooperation with the government, he observed, was the only way left to Indians to get their wrongs redressed. On 20 March 1920, a manifesto was published and the following programme of non-cooperation was outlined:

(1) Surrender of titles and honorary offices and resignation from nominated seats in local bodies; (2) refusal to attend government levees, *durbars* and other official and semi-official functions held by government officials or in their honour; (3) gradual withdrawal of children from schools and colleges, owned, aided or controlled by government and, in place of such schools and colleges, the establishment of national schools and colleges in the various provinces; (4) gradual boycott of British Courts by lawyers and litigants and the establishment of private arbitration courts by their aid for the settlement of private disputes; (5) refusal on the part of the military, clerical and labouring classes to offer themselves as recruits for service in Mesopotamia; (6) withdrawal by candidates of their candidature for election to the "Reformed Councils" and refusal on the part of the voters to vote for any candidate who may, despite the Congress advice, offer himself for election; and (7) boycott of foreign goods.

CONGRESS ADOPTS GANDHI'S PROGRAMME

The findings of the Hunter Committee, the publication of the peace terms to be offered to the Caliph-Sultan and Gandhi's manifesto created a critical situation in the country and in order to review it the All-India Congress Committee met at Banaras on 30 May. It recorded the "indignant protest" of the country on both the issues and decided to call a special session of the Congress to consider the situation further and to examine Gandhi's new programme.

This session was held in Calcutta from 4 to 9 September. It was presided over by Lajpat Rai who had only then returned from a tour of the United States. In a resolution, the Congress expressed its "deep and bitter disappointment at the drift, tone and tendency, and final conclusions of the Majority Report of the Hunter Committee" and expressed "its complete and total dissent from the findings and recommendations of the deliberate opinion."

The more important resolution the session was confronted with was on non-cooperation presented by Gandhi. He urged the

Congress to adopt the policy of "progressive non-violent non-cooperation" until the wrongs were righted and *swaraj* (self-rule) was established.

Tilak, Malaviya, Lajpat Rai, Mrs. Besant, Moti Lal Nehru, C.R. Das, and B.C. Pal opposed Gandhi's resolution. These leaders had doubts "as to the country being with us in the self-denying ordinance which non-cooperation presents to the people."[12] The resolution was, however, carried by 1,886 delegates against 884. It then came up for approval before the annual Congress at Nagpur. The opponents of the non-cooperation programme met secretly before going to the session, and Das brought 250 delegates from East Bengal and Assam at a cost of Rs. 36,000 from his own pocket to undo what had been done in Calcutta. But the spirit of Gandhiji prevailed and Das's opposition fell through. He himself magnanimously moved the resolution of the day and Lajpat Rai seconded it. What was passed at Calcutta was virtually reaffirmed. The event was a "personal triumph" of the Mahatma, and seasoned men, like Pal, Malaviya, Jinnah, Das, and Lalaji, were simply overpowered.[13]

The constitution of the Congress was also vitally amended at Nagpur. The former goal of "self-government within the British Empire" was replaced by "the attainment of *swaraj*" by the people of India. While, till then the Congress favoured only constitutional means, the Nagpur session permitted the use of "all legitimate and peaceful means."

LAUNCHING OF NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

The year 1921 opened with intense activity, unprecedented cooperation between the Hindus and Muslims and joint political action for securing redress for the Khilafat and Punjab wrongs. Gandhiji and the Ali Brothers—Shaukat Ali and Mohammed Ali—undertook whirlwind

[12]Sitaramayya, vol. 1, 196.

[13]Before presenting his non-cooperation programme before the Congress formally, Gandhi had convened, on 2 June 1920, a conference of leaders of all parties at Allahabad and had enlisted their support. Almost simultaneous to the special session of Congress, the Muslim League also met, on 7 September, at Calcutta and took the decision to join the Congress non-cooperation movement; see Masani, op. cit., 121.

tours of the country and propagated the Nagpur Resolutions.[14] They received enthusiastic response from the people. Several prominent lawyers, such as Moti Lal Nehru, Das, Jayakar, Rajendra Prasad, and Vallabhai Patel, gave up their lucrative practice at the bar and plunged into the movement. Quite a few distinguished Musulmans, like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Dr. Ansari and the Ali Brothers, also joined the struggle. Thousands of students boycotted government schools and colleges. National schools, colleges and universities were started in all parts of the country—National College at Calcutta, another at Patna, the National Muslim University at Aligarh, the Gujarat Vidyapith, the Bihar Vidyapith, the Kashi Vidyapith, the Tilak Marahta Vidyapith, and the Bengal National University. The teachers and students of the Anglo-Arabic College in Delhi actively supported the campaign, and in U.P., the Punjab and Bombay also the students were in the fore-front.

The "no-vote" campaign against the election under the Reforms Scheme, held in November 1920, was a remarkable success, and reportedly 80 per cent of the voters refrained from voting. From a number of places the ballot boxes were sent empty.

In January 1921, Seth Jamna Lal Bajaj gave up his title of Rai Bahadur and donated one lakh of rupees to the Tilak Swaraj Fund for the maintenance of non-cooperating lawyers. In February, the visit of the Duke of Connaught (uncle of King George), who had come to India to inaugurate the "Reformed" Councils and to assuage the Indian feelings, was successfully boycotted.

On 31 March, the Congress Working Committee (CWC) met at Bezwada and decided to raise a Swaraj Fund of one crore of rupees, to enlist one crore Congress members and to introduce 20 lakhs of *charkhas*. Boycott of foreign cloth was openly preached; use of *swadeshi* goods was propagated, and anti-liquor agitation was launched. On 8 July, the All-India Khilafat Committee met at Karachi, and its President, Maulana Mohammad Ali, declared that it was "unlawful for any faithful Muslim to serve from that day in the Army or help or acquiesce in their recruitment."

[14]Often times, the two Maulanas preached even violence, but Gandhiji abhorred it. When, in April 1921, Lord Reading became the Viceroy of India he drew Gandhiji's attention to the speeches of the Ali Brothers "as falsifying the view of the non-cooperation movement" put forward by him. Gandhiji wrote to them and secured from them a statement repudiating any such intention on their part.

Government Resort to Repression

There was great ferment and commotion all over India and the bureaucracy was deeply shaken. It resorted to forceful suppression of the non-cooperation movement. Sections 108 and 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code were promulgated at important centres of the agitation. Orders were issued restricting the entry of Das in Mymensingh, of Rajendra Prasad, and Maulana Mazar-ul-Haq in Arrah, of Yakub Hasan in Calcutta and of Lajpat Raj in Peshawar. Lahore was put under the Seditious Meetings Act. Pilgrims, assembled in the Nankana Gurdwara, were suddenly pounced upon and shot down by the police, resulting in 195 casualties.

Repression was more severe in the United Provinces. Thousands of volunteers were put in jail without trial; hundreds of them were wounded by firing, and many were killed. Merciless firing took place at Dharwar on 1 July. In September, the Ali Brothers were arrested. Gandhiji felt so much agitated over the government atrocities that he urged the CWC, which met in Delhi on 1 November, to authorize each Provincial Congress Committee to undertake, on its own responsibility, the civil disobedience campaign, including non-payment of taxes, "in the manner considered most suitable."

Congress Boycotts Visit of Prince of Wales

In mid-November 1921, the Prince of Wales came on an official visit to India, professedly with the object of congratulating the people for their "magnificent contribution" to the British war efforts. But the country had already been profusely rewarded in Jallianwala Bagh, and it needed no more retribution. The Congress gave a call to the people to boycott the Royal visitor. On the day the Prince landed in Bombay there were clashes, rioting and bloodshed, and 53 persons lost their lives and 400 were wounded as a result of police firing. Wherever the Prince went there were black flag demonstrations and *hartals.*

The Government of Lord Reading was filled with rage over the treatment the Congress meted out to the Prince of Wales. Thousands of volunteers in U.P., Bombay, Bengal, and the Punjab were arrested and put in prisons. Enrolment of volunteers was declared illegal under the Criminal Law Amendment Act. Even the leaders were not spared. By the end of 1921, Das, his wife and son, Lajpat Rai, Moti Lal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Azad were put behind the bars.

Pandit Malaviya sought to bring about a *rapprochement* between the government and the Congress, and urged the Viceroy, who was then in Calcutta, to release the civil disobedience prisoners. The Prince planned to celebrate the Christmas in India, and Reading was anxious to avoid all untoward happenings during the celebrations. He expressed willingness to concede to Malaviya's suggestion and also to discuss the futher scheme of reforms with the Congress leaders. But Gandhi demanded not only the release of all prisoners who had been arrested under the Criminal Law Amendment Act but also the release of the Karachi and *Fatwa* prisoners.[15] He also urged that the people's right of picketing should be conceded. The Viceroy turned down these demands, and the negotiations broke down. The programme of boycott of the Prince's visit was resumed. The city of Calcutta observed complete *hartal* on the Christmas Day.

LAUNCHING OF INDIVIDUAL CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

In the last week of December 1921, the scene of interest shifted from the boycott to the annual Congress which met at Ahmedabad. It resolved to create a National Volunteer Corps and called upon the youths, above the age of 18 years, to become its members. It decided to organize "individual" civil disobedience and "mass" civil disobedience when the masses have been sufficiently trained in the methods of non-violence. Gandhi was made the sole executive authority and was vested with full powers to launch the programme. He lost no time and, on 12 January, inaugurated a "no-tax" campaign in Guntur (an Andhra district) to make the first experiment in mass civil disobedience.

Some 300 leaders of the various political parties made yet another attempt to settle the dispute with the government. From 14 to 16 January, they conferred in Bombay and unanimously adopted a resolution. On the one side, the resolution urged the Congress not to launch the civil disobedience programme and on the other, it exhorted the government to convene a Round Table Conference

[15]Karachi prisoners—Ali Brothers, Dr. Kitchlew and various others-were those who were convicted on 1 November 1921 for having participated in the All-India Khilafat Conference held at Karachi in July 1921, where the resolution regarding military service was adopted. *Fatwa* prisoners were those *Ulemas* who had endorsed this resolution in a *Fatwa*.

with the object of examining the grievances of the people. The conferees also demanded abrogation of the Criminal Law Amendment Act and the Seditious Meetings Act. The release of *all* prisoners was also asked for.

So long as the Prince of Wales was in India Lord Reading was anxious to see that his visit was not disturbed by hostile demonstrations of the non-cooperators. But when the Royal visitor left the shores of the country the Viceroy summarily rejected all the demands. Gandhi now became almost convinced that only the launching of the civil disobedience movement would bring the authorities down from their high pedestal. He decided to start the movement in Bardoloi—a sub-division of Gujarat—and the CWC exhorted the people of the rest of the country to cooperate with the people of Bardoloi "by refraining from mass or individual civil disobedience of an aggressive character, except upon the express consent of Mahatma Gandhi previously obtained."

On 1 February, Gandhi again wrote a letter to the Viceroy, demanding (1) release of all prisoners, (2) freedom of the press from administrative control, and (3) a guarantee that the government would refrain from interference with all non-violent activities of the non-cooperators. He also informed the Viceroy that failure to do so within seven days would compel him to commence the civil disobedience campaign and to advise the people in Bardoloi not to pay taxes. Reading sent a prompt reply, justified the policy of repression and held the Congress Party responsible for riots in Bombay and lawlessness in other parts of India.

Chauri Chaura Incident—Suspension of Movement

In view of the recalcitrant attitude of the authorities the Congress leadership was left with no alternative but to launch the movement. But before Gandhi could actually make some headway, a misfortune struck the movement at the outset. This was the tragedy at Chauri Chaura, near Gorakhpur in U.P., on 5 February. While a Congress procession was passing a mob pushed 21 constables and one sub-inspector into a police station and set it on fire. All of them perished in the flames. Similar tragic events had already taken place on 17 November 1921 in Bombay and on 13 January 1922 in Madras. Gandhi was sorely grieved by all these occurrences. He realized that the country was not yet ready for a non-violent movement along the lines he envisaged. On his suggestion, the CWC suspended, on 12

February, the mass civil disobedience programme and instructed all Congressmen to stop their activities in that direction. In order to prepare the masses psychologically before the political movement could be launched, the CWC drew up a constructive programme involving enlistment of one crore members, organization of national educational institutions and panchayats and popularization of use of *swadeshi* goods.[16]

Gandhi's Imprisonment

The decisions of the CWC did not satisfy the bureaucracy, and a feeling began to haunt it that Gandhi was out for a bigger trouble. The authorities decided to separate him from the masses in order to dampen their enthusiasm, and on 13 March put him under arrest. The trial began in Ahmedabad. He pleaded guilty, took upon himself full responsibility for the occurrences in Madras, Bombay, and Chauri Chaura and told the British judge, Broomfield, that he would "do the same again" if he were set free. The judge sentenced him to six years' imprisonment.

Even before the arrest Gandhi had perceived that the hand of the authorities would fall on him some day. In order that the people might not be left in wilderness and without directions as to the future course of action, he wrote an article in *Young India* of 9 March 1922 under the caption "If I Am Arrested" and advised the rank and file of the Congress Party to remain calm and peaceful if that eventuality happened. This expression of wish by the Mahatma was enough for the people, and there was perfect lull in the wake of his imprisonment.

But this time the quietude was broken by the government. After removing the "General" it sought to disperse and demoralize the "Army" and imprisoned thousands of Congress volunteers in Andhra in connection with the "no-tax" campaign there. But the Congressmen were lovers of freedom and not mercenaries. They mustered up together and carried on the constructive programme for national rejuvenation.

AN APPRAISAL OF GANDHI'S PROGRAMME

The civil disobedience programme of the Mahatma could not make much headway and he later on realized that it was "a Himalayan

[16]Bose, n. 10, 73.

blunder" on his part to have launched the movement without adequate ground work and proper training of the masses. But the movement was not quite fruitless. Gandhi's followers went to the towns and villages, and the countryside was filled with the activity of innumerable messengers of the new gospel of action. And the call of the action was two-fold: it involved challenge and resistance to foreign rule and action to fight the social evils like the disunity of the nation, the backwardness of the depressed classes and the practice of untouchability. "What had been," in the words of Griffiths, "almost totally an affair of the educated few became the concern of every Indian, rich or poor, learned or ignorant, lawyer, shopkeeper or agriculturist. Gandhi taught India a new self-respect, which could be content with nothing less than self-government. He inspired his countrymen with a readiness to suffer in the cause of their country. ... Gandhi, who had himself learned from Britain the meaning of justice and freedom, imparted those ideas to his fellow-countrymen with such success that Indian nationality became a reality and Indian nationalism a unanimous expression of the feeling of Indians."[17]

Professor Coupland also pointed out that Gandhi "converted the nationalist movement into a revolutionary movement." He gave it a direction and a purpose—a purpose which became dear to every heart in India. The later stalwarts of the Congress, like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, felt that Gandhi made the Congress a "dynamic" organization,[18] and what many other nationalist leaders put together could not do, Gandhi alone was able to achieve. The programme of organizing national educational institutions, of popularizing the use of *khadi* and boycotting the foreign goods and of setting up panchayats was something that began to eat into the vitals of the British *raj* in India. The bureaucracy began to feel the impact of the forces that were let loose by Gandhiji, and a deep concern about the safety of the Empire began to be felt in the official circles in London.

[17]Griffiths, *Modern India*, 67.

[18]Bose wrote about the Congress in 1921: "In short, all the features of a modern political party became visible in India. The credit for such achievements naturally belongs to the leader of the movement—Mahatma Gandhi."

CHAPTER SEVEN

SHIFT FROM CONGRESS TO SWARAJ PARTY

IN 1918, the Secretary of State for India, Montagu, came on a visit to confer with the Liberal and Congress leadership on the question of the constitutional reforms for India. While the Congress leaders were non-committal, the Liberals assured Montagu that they looked upon the scheme jointly drawn up by him and the Viceroy as the "fulfilment of the war-time pledge." After the Secretary of State left India, they set up, under the guidance of S.N. Banerjea, the Liberal Federation with the avowed object of cooperating with the British authorities in the introduction of next measure of constitutional reforms. Even after the Congress decision to non-cooperate, the Liberal Federation remained responsive and continued to stick to the policy of "moderation" and "gradualness in change." In November 1920, elections for the Central and Provincial Legislatures, under the Government of India Act 1919, were held, and while the Congress boycotted, the Liberals remained steady in their decision "to give the Reforms a fair trial." This cut the Liberal Federation once for all from the Congress. And when the Congress leaders and volunteers began to suffer police *zoolum* and long-term imprisonments the Liberals and Moderates enjoyed titles and honours. S.N. Banerjea was conferred Knighthood; Lord Sinha was made the first Indian Governor of Orissa and Bihar; and a few others were similarly rewarded.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CONGRESS PARTY AND LIBERAL LEADERS

The Liberals left the Congress not only due to their attitude towards the Reforms but due to basic differences with the Mahatma whose influence had begun to dominate the Congress policies and decisions. Gandhi was essentially a man of religion and wanted to spiritualize politics. "Politics," he said, "bereft of religion, is absolute dirt,

ever to be shunned." The Liberals, on the other hand, considered religion as "a purely personal matter," and they hesitated from making any reference to religion in their "crusade for Swaraj." They emphasized the secular character of the nationalist movement. Another basic difference between the Liberals and Gandhi was that while even after the Rowlatt Bills and Jallianwala Bagh "massacre" the former continued to have belief in the British sense of justice and righteousness the latter lost all faith in the good intentions of the British Government. The Liberals believed that cooperation with the government in working out the new Reforms would make the realization of "Full Responsible Government" easier.

Gandhi's dream of *Swaraj* for India was also different from the objective of the Liberals who contented with only "Dominion Status within the British Empire." While in 1920, Gandhi characterized the British Government as "satanic" and wished to sever the British connection, the Liberals saw no wisdom in pressing for immediate independence for India. The political methods of the Liberal Federation and the "Gandhian Congress" also differed. Gandhi believed that *satyagraha*—non-cooperation, Civil Disobedience and individual *satyagraha*—and social reforms, village uplift, emancipation of women and reorientation of education were essential to the deliverance of India from the clutches of foreign rule; the Liberals thought that while social reforms were good they need not be combined with a purely political programme. The Congress and the Liberal Federation also had different general economic outlooks. While the Liberals thought of the economic regeneration of India along Western lines, the Congress laid emphasis on indigenous institutions and methods. The Liberal leaders were also at variance with the Congress on some more important problems of the day like Hindu-Muslim unity, prohibition, primary education, reform of caste, untouchability and so on.[1] These differences made it rather impossible for the Congress and the Liberal Federation to cooperate, and the two parted company in 1920, not to unite again during the next few decades.

Resentment among Congressmen over Gandhi's Suspension of Satyagraha—Sentiment in Favour of Council Entry

Not only the Liberals left the Congress, a band of old and senior Congressmen also began to question Gandhi's programme and deci-

[1]B.D. Shukla, *A History of the Indian Liberal Party* (The Indian Press Allahabad, 1960) 269-85.

sions. In November 1921, the Congress at Ahmedabad had decided to launch "individual" and "mass" civil disobedience movement, and Gandhi was vested with full powers to organize the campaign. In December of the same year, Lajpat Rai and his principal colleagues in the Punjab, C.R. Das, Subhas Chandra Bose, and most of the Bengal, Congress Committee members, including its Secretary, B. N. Sasmal, and Moti Lal Nehru and most of the important Congress leaders of the United Provinces were placed under arrest. All these men, who were languishing in jails, reproached the Mahatma for his decision to suspend the *satyagraha* movement in the wake of the Chauri Chaura incident. "Why should," Pandit Nehru asked, "a town at the foot of the Himalayas be penalised if a village at Cape Comorin failed to observe non-violence?" "Isolate Chauri Chaura," he held, "and if need be, Gorakhpur, but go on with civil disobedience, individual and mass." Das felt that "the Mahatma opens a campaign in a brilliant fashion, he works it up with unerring skill, he moves from success to success till he reaches the zenith of his campaign—but after that, he loses his nerve and begins to falter." Jawaharlal Nehru also was unhappy when he learnt of the stoppage of the movement "at a time when we seemed to be consolidating our position and advancing on all fronts."[2] Similarly, Hardyal Nag and Dr. Moonje resented Gandhi's action.

It was not that the enthusiasm of these Congress leaders diminished, but that they felt that the way the Congress was following was a very zigzag one and not a sure road to success. They were warm apostles, though reluctant converts, of non-cooperation under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, but they were sadly disappointed when the latter suspended the movement at the very time when they thought the country was just getting into it. They began to uncover many shortcomings in Gandhi's programme. The introduction of the *Khilafat* issue (essentially a religious issue) into national politics was considered by these leaders as unwise, because the attachment of the Muslim community as such with the Congress Party could not be preserved for long, and once the Khilafat issue was dead, the Musulmans in large numbers would leave the national organization and swell the ranks of the Muslim League.

[2]Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (Jonn Lane, The Bodley Head, London, 1936) 81.

The above-named leaders also felt that the success of the Congress programme, in view of the frightful coercion and repression by the government, needed a long period of training and education of the masses who were required to make sacrifice of offices, power and pelf and undergo hardships and tortures at the hands of the bureaucracy. The policy of boycott of the new scheme of Constitutional Reforms, as adopted by the Calcutta Congress in 1920, had turned out to be a failure. While it was true that about 80 per cent of the voters did not turn up to cast their vote the Liberals and some other elements captured those bodies and lent support to the government. "Through their help," as Bose has put it, "the government was able to demonstrate to the world that in their policy of repression they had the support of the elected members of the Legislature."[3]

Das and other Bengal leaders, then in the Alipore Central Jail, evolved a new programme of non-cooperation—non-cooperation within the Legislatures. The plan provided that instead of not entering into the Legislatures the Congressmen should get in these in large numbers and "carry on a policy of uniform, continuous and consistent opposition to the government." In May 1922, Mrs. Das, while presiding over the Bengal Provincial Conference of Congress workers at Chittagong, expressed the sentiments of her husband and pleaded for a change in the Congress tactics and approach. She suggested that the policy of carrying non-cooperation into the Legislative Councils was "worth a trial." This point of view began to attain increasing popularity in the rank and file of the Congress Party, and the number of "advocates" of Council-entry began to increase.

SPLIT WITHIN THE AICC

Probably to wean the new element away from the parent organization the British authorities set Moti Lal Nehru free. The Congress Working Committee (CWC) was, after the arrest of Gandhi, confronted with the question of what to do next. Gandhi had given some guidelines through his write-up in *Young India*, but that did not prove adequate. Now that Nehru came out of jail, the AICC met at Lucknow, from 7 to 9 June, to consider further line of action. Because of different opinions the question whether civil disobedience in one form or another or some other measures of similar

[3]Bose, *The Indian Struggle, 1920-1942*, 78.

character should be adopted was left unresolved.[4] The AICC, however, set up a Committee, with Hakim Ajmal Khan as Chairman, to visit important centres of political activity in the country and to report on the general psychological climate. This Committee was described as Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee (CDEC). It went round the country and found that the people were quite spirited and enthusiastic. In its report, the Committee, however, recommended that the country was not yet prepared "to embark upon general mass Civil Disobedience of a limited character," and that the Provincial Committees be authorized "to sanction limited mass Civil Disobedience on their own responsibility." The Committee also recommended that "non-cooperators should contest the election on the issue of the redress of the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs and immediate *Swaraj*" and should non-cooperate with the government for the attainment of these objectives.[5]

In July 1922, Das also came out of the jail, and he began to propagate his programme of Council-entry more vigorously.

The report of the CDEC came up for discussion before the AICC at Calcutta in November. The schism among the Congress leaders became quite manifest, and the discussions and debates in the session became a kind of tournament between the contending groups—one group, led by Das, Hakim Ajmal Khan, and Moti Lal Nehru, supporting the idea of going to the Provincial Legislative Councils and failing the Administration from within, and the other group, representing the majority of delegates and led by C. Rajagopalachari, Dr. Ansari, and K.R. Iyengar, opposed to this programme. After five days of deliberations the AICC resolved that the country was not prepared for mass Civil Disobedience. It, however, authorized Provincial Congress Committees to sanction, on their own responsibility, limited Civil Disobedience that may be demanded by any situation, subject to the fulfilment of the conditions laid down in that behalf. The more important and controversial issue of Council-entry was left undecided.

The annual session of the Congress at Gaya (in December 1922) became almost a battle-ground between the advocates of entering the Councils and the opponents of Council-entry who now came to be

[4]See resolution in Sitaramayya, vol. 1, 243.

[5]The members of the CDEC were Jamna Lal Bajaj, Moti Lal, Dr. Ansari, Rajagopalachari, and V.J. Patel. For details of its recommendations, see *ibid.*, 246-9.

known as "No-changers" under the leadership of Rajagopalachari. The AICC's resolution (of November 1922) on Civil Disobedience was virtually ratified, and the country was called upon to get ready in men and money to take up the programme any time. The Gaya Congress was a victory for the No-changers and a disappointment for the advocates of Council-entry. Das, who presided over the session had gone to the session with his resignation from the Congress in one pocket and constitution of a new party in another. First, he tendered his resignation and then announced the decision to form a new party. The parent-organization (Congress) suffered another setback, the first being the exit of the Liberals.

FORMATION OF THE SWARAJ PARTY—AIMS AND OBJECTS

Moti Lal and Das left Gaya with "a sense of defeat" but with a determination to go ahead with their programme. On 1 January 1923, the formation of another party, known as the Swaraj Party, was announced, and the decision to wreck the Constitution of 1919 from within the Councils was taken. In March, the first Swarajist Conference was held at the residence of the Nehrus and the constitution and plan of campaign of the Party were drawn up. The "immediate" objective was proclaimed to be the attainment of Dominion Status.[6] Their method was that of obstructionism—to contest the election on the issue of the redress of the wrongs done by the British bureaucracy, to oppose every measure of the government, including the budget, to move resolutions necessary for the healthy growth of the national life and the consequent displacement of the bureaucracy and, if returned in majority, to throw out all legislative enactments by which the British proposed to consolidate their power. The Swarajists considered the capturing of "legislature seats as necessary to check them from falling in the hands of 'undesirable' persons" who were becoming a tool in the hands of the bureaucracy. They decided to carry non-cooperation, as Dr. Sitaramayya has put it, "into the very aisles and chancel of the Bureaucratic Church." This programme, in their thinking, was quite in tune with the policy of non-cooperation. The biographer of Das, P.C. Ray, has observed: "If a successful revolution was unthinkable ... if a consistent life of detachment

[6]There were two opinions on the goal of the party, and this was only a compromise decision; see Bose, n. 3, 85.

and renunciation could not get us a 'place in the sun,' then the only way in which India could be put on the road to *Swaraj* was by pursuing a policy of consistent and persistent obstruction of all measures initiated by the existing bureaucracy and thereby forcing the pace of the Reforms."[7]

Defining the aims of Swaraj Party Das himself said that they wanted "to destroy and get rid of a system which does the country no good and can do no good," and that they wanted to build in its place "a beautiful mansion."[8] The Swaraj Party leaders declared that outside the Councils they would cooperate with the constructive programme of the Congress and would work under the leadership of Gandhi. They also announced that in case their methods failed to deliver the goods, they would unhesitatingly abide by Gandhi's Civil Disobedience movement "if and when he launched one."

Achievements and Activities of the Swaraj Party

The Swarajists fought the election of 1923 and were pitted against the Liberals. They did not join the Liberal Federation because the latter was identified with the British and had achieved little during the past three years of its existence. The Liberals hardly ever condemned the bureaucracy even for its serious lapses and the Swarajists frowned at their [Liberals'] association with the alien government. They considered the attitude of the Liberals as "unpatriotic." They achieved remarkable successes and became a majority in Central Provinces (C.P.), a dominant party in Bengal and influential in U.P. and Bombay. In the Central Legislative Assembly, they won 45 out of 145 seats. They did good work in the Provincial Councils but their work was memorable in the Central Assembly. Here the leader was Moti Lal Nehru who could, by the support of the Nationalist Party and some Independents, command a working majority.

On 18 February 1924, the Swarajists carried by majority a resolution relating to the Act of 1919. It provided that the Governor-General-in-Council should take steps to have the Act of 1919 revised with a view to establishing "Full Responsible Government in India," that he should summon at an early date "representatives to a Round Table Conference to recommend ... a constitution for India," and that he "should place the said scheme before a newly elected Indian

[7]P. C. Ray, *Life and Times of C. R. Das* (Oxford University Press, London, 1927) 189.

[8]*Ibid.*, 201.

Legislature and submit the same to the British Parliament to be embodied in a Statute."

The government appointed a committee, known as the Muddiman Committee,[9] for the said purpose, and Moti Lal was offered a place on it. But he declined the offer, on the ground that the terms of reference of the Committee were not satisfactory. As a retort to the "extremely disappointing" attitude of the government, the Central Assembly, under the influence of the Swarajists, threw out some of the demands for grants in the 1924-25 budget and refused leave to introduce the entire Finance Bill. In February 1925, V.J. Patel introduced a Bill asking for the repeal of certain obnoxious measures like the State Prisoners Act of 1850, the Frontier Outrages Act of 1867 and the Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act of 1921. The Bill was passed except for the omission of the Frontier Outrages Act. The Swarajists demanded the release of Gandhi, who fell seriously ill, and the demand was fulfilled. The government suffered a defeat over the Swarajists' resolution calling for release of certain political prisoners. On certain other matters also the government faced a hostile majority. The Swarajist bloc resorted to frequent walk-outs to register their protest against government high-handedness. They boycotted all receptions, parties, and functions organized by the Viceroy. In Provincial Legislatures also the Swarajists created great obstacles and made the job of the governments very difficult.

Swarajists Drift from Obstruction to Cooperation

The Swaraj Party, however, was not able to bring, as it had hoped to do, the machinery of the government to a dead-end, and both at the Centre and in the Provinces, the Administration went on as usual. The Nationalist Party of Lajpat Rai and Pandit Malaviya began to realize that the policy of obstructionism was doing more harm than good to the Hindu populace, and with this realization it became lukewarm in its support to the Swaraj Party. This weakened the position of the Swarajist bloc. Moreover, Moti Lal and other Swaraj Party leaders also began to realize that the obstructionist policy had failed to bear fruit, and should be replaced by a policy of reconciliation and construction. It might also be mentioned that the Swaraj Party

[9]The Home Member, Sir Alexander Muddiman, was the chairman and other members where Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, M.A. Jinnah, Sir Sivaswami Aiyer, and Dr Paranjpye--all Liberal leaders with the exception of Jinnah.

leaders developed weakness for power and positions and began to aspire for participation in the governance of the country.

Thus, while the forces were at work in India to disintegrate the Swaraj Party, developments in England also brought about its early demise. In October 1924, the General Election took place there and the Labour Party was defeated. The Conservatives came into power. Lord Birkenhead assumed office of the Secretary of State for India. He spoke of the Swaraj Party as "the most highly organized political party in India," and the work it was doing was "even more difficult to deal with than open rebellion."[10] The obstruction of the Swarajists began to convince even the Conservatives that the scheme of 1919 was defective in ways more than one. They began to cajole the Swarajist leadership, in the hope that some kind of settlement would be reached with Das and Nehru, if not with Gandhi and others.

Spilt Within Swaraj Party

From the middle of 1925 onwards, particularly after the death of Das in June, the Swaraj Party began to swerve from its original policy of "undiluted opposition." The first departure took place in Central Provinces where S.B. Tambe, the Swarajist President of the Council, accepted an Executive Councillorship under the government. His act was thoroughly approved by N.C. Kelkar and other prominent Swaraj Party leaders of Maharashtra.[11] The Central Legislative Assembly was granted the right of electing its own chairman. Vithalbhai J. Patel was elected for the post and he accepted it. Moti Lal Nehru, having earlier refused to serve on the Muddiman Committee, now accepted membership of the Skeen Committee that was set up to report on the early Indianization of the Army. Lajpat Rai joined the Assembly as a Swarajist and accepted the deputy leadership of the Party. Severe dissensions developed within the rank and file also and the organization began to disintegrate. The Party Executive Committee, in its meeting at Nagpur, on 1 November 1925, denounced Tambe's action as "a flagrant breach of discipline" and called it as "treachery to the Party." Nehru still expressed adherence to the

[10]The Governor-General resorted to his power of "certification" to restore the Bill.

[11]Kelkar openly wrote to the press, criticizing the rigidity of the Swarajist discipline. He advocated "a policy of revolt from hidebound obstruction."

programme of the Party which included "cooperation, non-cooperation, construction, destruction, as occasion and national interests demanded." He threatened to take disciplinary action against Kelkar and Jayakar, but they retorted that he himself showed them the way by accepting the membership of the Skeen Committee. Kelkar raised the slogan "Back to Amritsar": "Back to the Lokamanya." He openly spoke for "Responsive Cooperation." The Party began to move towards a crisis. The two Wings, however, agreed, on 4 December 1925, to cease all public controversy regarding the policy of the Swaraj Party until the annual Congress met.

This meeting was held at Kanpur in December, and in the midst of bickerings from Kelkar, Jayakar, and Moonje, the following resolution was adopted: "No member of the Swaraj Party in the Council of State, in the Legislative Assembly or in any of the Provincial Councils shall thereafter attend any meeting of any of the said Legislatures or any of their Committees except for the purpose of preventing his seat from being declared vacant and of throwing out the Provincial budget or other measure involving fresh taxation."

Pandit Malaviya moved the following amendment: "That the work in the Legislatures shall be so carried on as to utilize them to the best possible advantage for the early establishment of full Responsible Government, cooperation being resorted to when it may be necessary to advance the national cause and obstruction when that may be necessary for the advancement of the same cause."[12] This amendment was seconded by Jayakar who, while doing so, severely criticized Nehru for accepting the membership of the Skeen Committee. He also announced his own as well as his colleagues' (Kelkar and Moonje) resignations from the Legislatures.

FORMATION OF NATIONALIST PARTY

On 14 February 1926, Kelkar and Jayakar formed the Responsivist Party and proclaimed "responsive cooperation" as their creed. They began to come closer to Pandit Malaviya and Lajpat Rai and in early April formed a new party, called the "Nationalist Party." The object of this party was to accelerate "the establishment of Swaraj"

[12]Malaviya did not like the policy of the Swaraj Party. During 1923-26, he remained in the Central Legislative Assembly but he did not cooperate with the Swarajists; see Bose, n. 3, 120. Also see M.R. Jayakar *The Story of My Life* (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1959) 726-9.

of the "Dominion type by all peaceful and legitimate means (excluding mass Civil Disobedience and non-payment of taxes) with liberty to resort inside the Legislature to Responsive Cooperation." It was a wholly Hindu Party working in close cooperation with the Hindu Mahasabha.

Attempt to Reunify Swaraj Party—Failure

The Responsivists differed from the Swarajists on two main points. First, they did not appreciate opposition to the government in the Legislatures and favoured only "discriminate opposition." Second, they did not like the "pro-Muslim" attitude of the Swarajists and the Congress leaders. The Hindu-Muslim unity, to which a detailed reference would be made in following pages, had become a dead letter, and communalism was raising its head again. Many Hindu Congressmen went into the fold of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Responsivists also identified themselves with the politics of the Hindu communalism.

Moti Lal Nehru was pained to see the monster of reactionary politics defiling the face of "Mother India." He made attempts to reunify the two Wings of the Swaraj Party, and on 21 April 1926, a meeting was held at Sabarmati. It was attended, among others, by Jayakar, Moonje, Sarojini Devi, Kelkar, Lajpat Rai, and M.S. Aney. An agreement was reached, and the signatories decided to welcome, subject to confirmation by the AICC, the response made by the government to the Swarajist demand, of 18 February 1924, if, in the Provinces "the power, responsibility and initiative necessary for the effective discharge of their duties are secured to Ministers."[13]

But the agreement did not last for long. Hardly was the ink over it dry that many Congressmen expressed dissatisfaction and asserted that "the position of the Congress had been compromised even more at Sabarmati than at Kanpur." Serious differences arose between Moti Lal and the Responsivists, the former declaring that office could be accepted only if the Ministers were freed from the control of the Governor-General and the Governor and were made "fully responsible" to the Legislature and also, if the Ministers were given "full control of the Services in the transferred departments." Jayakar, the spokesman of the Responsivists, denounced Panditji's interpretation of the Sabarmati Pact as "a complete repudiation of the

[13]Sitaramayya, vol. I, 300.

terms of the same." When the Pact came up for "confirmation" before the AICC at Ahmedabad, on 5 May 1926, Moti Lal and the Responsivists gave expression to the "irreconcilable differences" that existed between them, and both sides declared that the Pact no longer existed. Shortly after, differences developed between Moti Lal and Lajpat Rai about work in the Central Assembly. Rai considered the Swarajist policy of walk-out "as distinctly harmful to the interests of the Hindus," while Moti Lal was adamant about it. The "Lion of Punjab" resigned from the Congress Party in the Assembly.

In November 1926, the third, and final, elections were held under the 1919 Act. Without the support of the Swarajists, the Responsivist Party lost all its support among the masses and strength in the Legislatures. Through the cooperation of all sections of Congressmen, the Swarajists improved their position considerably. In the Central Assembly, they secured 38 out of a total of 104 elected seats and in the Provincial Councils they formed the largest single party. But on the whole the election results were a great set-back. Several other political parties, under different names and with different aims, sprang up, and the Swaraj Party nowhere could pursue successfully its policy of "continuous, constant and uniform obstruction."[14] Moti Lal Nehru was left almost alone to take up the election fight on behalf of the Swaraj Party or Congress.

CONGRESS BACK TO PEDESTAL

In view of the disintegration of the Swaraj Party after the Sabarmati Pact and also of the failure of the policy of complete non-cooperation Moti Lal and his supporters had begun to, what Sitaramayya has termed, "coquet with the idea of cooperation, speaking of Responsive Cooperation, honourable cooperation, cooperation if possible and obstruction if necessary, and cooperation for all that the Reforms (of 1919) were worth."[15] The political trends in the country, as visible

[14]The other parties which secured seats, for example, in the Central Assembly were: Nationalist Party (18) and Central Muslim Party and Non-party (22). There were 12 Europeans, 13 Independents, 26 officials, 14 nominated, and 15 others. The Swaraj Party suffered due to the revival of communalism in the country. "Some of its Hindu members drifted towards the Nationalist Party and some of its Muslim members joined the communal organizations; see Nehru, n. 2, 159.

[15]Sitaramayya, vol. 1, 304. The words in the bracket (of 1919) inserted by the author.

during the election campaign of November 1926, and the orgy of communal violence and bloodshed during the whole year convinced the Swarajists and the Congressmen that the creed of "consistent and persistent" obstruction would do no good to the cause of the Indian people. Meeting in the annual session at Gauhati the Congress "definitely" declared that the Congressmen would "refuse to accept Ministerships or other offices in the gift of the government and oppose the formation of a Ministry by other parties until, in the opinion of the Congress or the AICC, a satisfactory response is made by the government to the National Demand," that they would "refuse supplies and throw out budgets until such response is made by the government," and also that they would throw out "all proposed legislative enactments by which the bureaucracy" sough "to consolidate its powers." More important than these was the decision that the Congressmen would move resolutions and support measures and bills which were necessary for advancing "the economic, agricultural, industrial and commercial interests of India," and "for the protection of the freedom of person, speech, association and of the press and the consequent displacement of the bureaucracy." These decisions struck formal nails in the coffin of the Swaraj Party and nobody heard about it in the later years of the nationalist movement.

CONGRESS DURING SWARAJISTS' PRE-DOMINANCE

During 1923-1926—the period of Swarajists' pre-dominance—the Congress went into eclipse. The political atmosphere of the country during 1923 was disturbed by the continued Hindu-Muslim riots. The Khilafat movement came to an inglorious end, and the Muslim leadership began to pass into the hands of the Muslim League. Gandhi's confinement in jail plunged the Congress Party into gloom. The Council-goers [Das and Moti Lal] broke away from the Congress at Gaya and organized the Swaraj Party. In such circumstances, there was little hope that Civil Disobedience would be launched as a national programme in the near future. In the shadow of these disappointments, a special session of the Congress was held at Delhi in September 1923 under the presidentship of the great Muslim Divine, Maulana Azad, to consider the move of Das and Nehru. A resolution was adopted endorsing the formation of the Swaraj Party, and the pro-Council Party got the Congress declared that "such Congressmen as have no religious or other conscientious objections

against entering the Legislatures are at liberty to stand as candidates and to exercise their right of voting at the forthcoming elections." And this Congress, therefore, suspends all propaganda against entering the Council." The annual session of the Congress (1923) at Cocanada, while reaffirming the principle and policy of boycott of the Councils, declared, in a new interpretation of non-cooperation, that "non-cooperation could be effected as much from inside the Councils as from outside." It stressed constructive work as adopted at Bardoloi and called upon the nation to prepare itself to take up Civil Disobedience.[16]

RELEASE OF GANDHI—JUHU CONVERSATIONS—FULL FREEDOM OF ACTION TO SWARAJ PARTY

Due to serious appendicitis Gandhi was released from jail unconditionally on 5 February 1924. He went to Juhu, by the sea-side near Bombay, to recuperate. The Nehrus also went there to explain to him the Swarajists position and to gain his "passive cooperation at least, if not his active sympathy."[17] But the Mahatma could not be influenced and no compromise could be made with Moti Lal. In May, he issued a statement expressing his fundamental difference with the Swarajists and saying that Council-entry was inconsistent with non-cooperation. He, however, granted full liberty to them to pursue their programme in the Councils, unfettered by any obstruction from the "No-changers."

After the Juhu conversations the AICC decided, at Ahmedabad in June 1924, to confine the work of the Congress to constructive activities. A joint programme of five boycotts was drawn up. These were: foreign cloth, law courts, schools and colleges, titles and legislatures. Shortly after, Gandhi also made a sort of alliance with Das and Moti Lal that the Swaraj Party might work within the Councils, and that other parties should devote themselves to different fields of constructive work. This agreement was endorsed by the 39th Congress at Belgaum in December 1924. Gandhi gave full freedom of action to the Swaraj Party, and conceded all that was demanded

[16]The constructive programme drawn up at Bardoloi, in February 1922, included hand-spinning and hand-weaving, removal of untouchability, promotion of inter-communal unity, suppression of the drug traffic and so on.

[17]Nehru, n. 2, 124.

by the latter. Later on, as President of the AICC, he did not allow that body even to examine the record of the Swarajists in the Assembly. The Congress went into self-imposed retreat, and the Congressmen patiently carried on "serving" the people, working for the constructive and social reform programme of the Mahatma. Towards the close of 1926, the Congress again came to the front and took up the reins of the national movement in its own hands.

CHAPTER EIGHT

COMMUNALISM IN INDIAN POLITICS

FOR A FEW YEARS after the Lucknow Pact of 1916, the Congress and the Muslim League cooperated with each other and worked in unison. In July 1917, both parties expressed strong resentment over the various orders of the Bengal and Madras Governments, promulgated to suppress the Home Rule workers; both carried on propaganda on behalf of the Home Rule League; both asked for a formal pronouncement by the British authorities to make India a self-governing member of the British Empire; and leaders of both the parties jointly met the Secretary of State, Montagu (who was on a visit to India) to emphasize that the scheme of reforms drawn up by them should be accepted.[1] Even while some reactionaries among the Hindus and Muslims incited communal hatred and serious riots broke out at some places like Kitarpore—the two All-India parties did not lose their balance and continued to hold on to their national character. Both the Congress and the League first cooperated in the agitation against the Punjab wrongs, then in the Khilafat movement and then in the non-cooperation programme. The Khilafat question was purely religious in character and concerned only the Muslims. But Gandhi adopted it—and encouraged others to do so—partly because he thought that the cooperation of the Muslims was essential to India's struggle for freedom, and that support to them in their cause would make many more Muslims nationalist-minded, and partly

[1]For details, see Mohammad Noman, *Muslim India* (Kitabistan, Allahabad, 1942) 161-75. M.A. Jinnah, in his Presidential address to the Muslim League in 1917, urged that the government should make it clear that self-government for India was not "a mere distant goal," but "the definite aim and object of the government to be given to the people within a reasonable time"; Lal Bahadur, *The Muslim League* (Agra Book Store, Agra, 1954) 117.

because he felt it his duty "to help a brother in distress." Maulana Azad, on the other hand, realized that the cooperation of the non-Muslims in the struggle for the Caliphate would be very useful. While Gandhi goaded the Hindus, Azad prepared the Muslims, and a basis was laid for partnership between the two communities. The Hindus in large numbers participated in the Khilafat campaign, and the Muslims *en masse* joined the non-cooperation movement. The general slogan "Hindu-Musulman *ki jai*" echoed all over the country, and Hindu divines—like Swami Shradhanand—the great Arya Samaj leader—preached from the steps of *Jama-i-Masjid* of Delhi India's unity and oneness to a mighty assemblage of the Hindus and the Muslims.

END OF HINDU-MUSLIM UNITY—COMMUNAL RIOTS

The honeymoon between the two major communities of India, however, did not last for long. In fact, it appeared that even during 1916-1922 the Hindu-Muslim solidarity was only superficial. The Musulmans honoured the Lucknow Pact because it was in their interest. They made a common cause with the Congress in its non-cooperation movement, probably because they needed its support in the Khilafat agitation. The orthodox Muslims—particularly the Muslim leaders of Aligarh like Khan Bahadur Sheikh Abdullah and Maulana Syed Sulaiman Ashraf— critically denounced the Congress-League Scheme, and described it as a Muslim surrender of basic rights "for the sake of maintaining friendship with the Hindus."[2] This section of the Muslim population did not even like the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi—a non-Muslim—in the Khilafat movement, and those of the Khilafat leaders who moved hand in glove with the Mahatma—like the Ali Brothers—were openly criticized, and even ridiculed.[3] The feelings were openly expressed that under leadership of Gandhi the Muslims would lose their own separate identity.

Whatever facade of unity was established during the Khilafat and non-cooperation movements was gone when the Muslims found that they were losing their cause. Even before the formal demise of the Caliphate was announced the Muslims of Malabar, known as Moplahs, killed in August-September 1921, several

[2] *Ibid.*, 115-6.
[3] *Ibid.*, 141-2.

hundred Hindus, looted their houses and shops, raped Hindu women, converted Hindus to Islam and committed other "unmentionable" atrocities.[4] The Moplahs were as much agitated over the Khilafat issue as the Muslims elsewhere, but the difference was that the creed of non-violence was not allowed to be propagated there as it had been done in other parts of the country.[5] Maulana Mohammed Ali tried to reach there to control the situation, but he was arrested on the way. When the news reached the Moplahs they became all the more violent, and more severe atrocities were perpetrated upon the Hindus—largely out of ignorance and fanaticism. The government published exaggerated stories in the press, and the Hindu feeling was stirred up. There was serious tension all over the country, and Hindu-Muslim riots occurred at several places.

In November 1922, the National Assembly (Turkey's Parliament) declared an end of *Sultanate* in Turkey, and the Sultan fled on a British vessel. On 24 July 1923, Turkey signed with Allied Powers the Treaty of Laussane, and on 3 March 1924, the office of Khalifa was ended by a formal decree of the National Assembly. The Indian Musulmans were left without a cause to fight for, and they were, in the words of Hafeez Malik, "aimless and rudderless on the high seas of Indian politics." The communal-minded Muslims, who had been thrust into oblivion by the mass enthusiasm of the non-cooperation days, rose again, and began to taken part in the political life of their community. Muslim nationalism parted company with Indian nationalism. The Malabar tragedy was followed by the Muslim "atrocities" upon Hindus in Multan where many Hindus were killed and their property was either looted or burnt. The happenings in Multan were followed by Muslim "fury" in Saharanpur. Serious riots also occurred in Bombay, Lucknow, Shahjahanpur, Allahabad, Delhi, Nagpur, and Jubbulpore. In Kohat, a whole population of twenty thousand was looted, pillaged and plundered on 9 and 10 September 1924. The climax was reached in December 1926 when Swami Shradhanand was murdered on his sick bed by a Muslim fanatic who had gone to meet him in his house in Delhi. A few other Arya Samaj leaders were also murdered.[6]

[4]The Moplahs were the offspring of the Arab migrants who settled in Malabar, and they belonged to the martial race.

[5]Noman, n.1, 207.

[6]Inder Prakash, *Hindu Mahasabha* (The Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha, New Delhi, 1938) 57-8.

The Hindu conscience was stirred by these ghastly happenings all over the country. The orthodox among the Hindus had already founded the Hindu Mahasabha which, in the words of Inder Prakash, was "an enlarged and more comprehensive edition of the Arya Samaj." This was formed "to safeguard the economic, social, religious and political interests of the Hindus as opposed to those of the Musulmans." While the Hindu Mahasabha movement *did* make some headway, it did not catch the fancy of the masses, and the movement remained confined to a select class of the Hindu population. But the countrywide political awakening brought about by Gandhi's programme of non-cooperation, the religious enthusiasm of the Muslims manifested in the Khilafat agitation, the proselytising activities of the Muslims and the Christians, and above all, the Moplah atrocities awakened the Hindus to a sense of the dangers that lay before them. A few influential Hindu leaders, such as Pandit Malaviya, Lajpat Rai, Swami Shraddhanand, and Dr. Moonje, were sad and disappointed over Congress policies and programmes. The Congress slogan of "No Swaraj without Hindu-Muslim unity" did not appeal to them. Gandhi's philosophy of love and non-violence as a means of securing internal law and order, bringing about Hindu-Muslim unity and protecting the country from foreign invasion, appeared to them as "unrealistic." These men also realized that the policy of "responsive cooperation" paid more than that of "constant and consistent non-cooperation." While the Hindu Mahasabha desired Hindu-Muslim unity it did not believe that Swaraj was impossible of achievement without the cooperation of the Muslims. Malaviya and Lajpat Rai—in the fore-front of the national movement—found that the cooperation of most of the Muslims with the Congress programme "emanated from a desire to seek the support of the Hindus in the Khilafat movement." Once their cause fizzled out, the Muslims began to "spread in the political life of the country the poison of communalism."

Both left the Congress politics and, aided in their efforts by Shraddhanand and the veteran Marahta Hindu Nationalist, Dr. Moonje, took up the cause of "Hindu renaissance." The slogan of Hindu solidarity, consisting of *Sangathan*, *Shuddhi*, and *Achhut Uddhar*, was raised. The branches of Hindu Mahasabha were opened all over India, and newspapers in English (*The Hindustan Times*), Urdu (*Tej*), and Hindi (*Arjun*) were started to preach the gospel of Hindu solidarity. Several Hindu institutions independent of the Hindu Mahasabha, like Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Shuddhi Sabha, Dayanand Salvation

Mission, Dalituddar Sabha, Hindu Abla Ashram, Shuddhi Sabha and All-India Kshatri Sabha, came into existence, and took up the *Shuddhi* work, professedly "in sheer self-defence." Ceaseless and determined attempts were made to reconvert the people to Hinduism.

The *Shuddhi* movement caused great annoyance to the Muslims and they were very bitterly against it. Dr. Kitchlew of Amritsar started, in 1923, the "Tanzeem" and "Tableegh" movements, as an exact reply to the *Sanghattan* and *Shuddhi* movement of the Hindus. These were intended "to organize the Musulmans as a strong and virile community."[7]

The reactionary and sectarian politics of the Muslims led to more reactionary movement among the Hindus.[8] On *Vijay Dashmi* day of 1925, the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSSS) was formed by Dr. K.B. Hedgewar "to protect the Hindu race, religion and culture, and consequently to achieve all-sided progress and regeneration of the ancient Hindu Nation." This movement was intended "to infuse among the Hindus the spirit of collective life irrespective of caste, creed or profession and to transform the latent strength of the Hindus into a great nation-building force." The branches of the RSSS were set up all over India, and the cult of Hindu nationalism was spread among the masses. In 1928, the "Order of the Hindu Youths" was set up at Lahore to spread the gospel of Hindu nationalism among the youngmen. During the 1930's, more sectarian and reactionary organizations under different names were started, both by the Hindus and the Muslims, and the inter-communal tension was considerably accentuated.

MUSLIM LEAGUE DRIFTS AWAY FROM CONGRESS

While the Hindu-Muslim *entente* was coming to an end, the Muslim League also began to drift away from the Congress. In 1913, the League had adopted, following the advice of Congress leaders, self-government as its goal.[9] On 8 September 1920, it also accepted Gandhi's non-cooperation programme and formally became a party to the launching of the struggle against the British rule. But the League was,

[7]Noman, n. 1, 218.

[8]Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle, 1920-1942*, 121.

[9]B. M. Chaudhry, *Muslim Politics in India*, 20-21. Congress also adopted that programme on this day.

as Humayun Kabir has put it, "by its character and composition, incapable of taking part in direct action." "The struggle on behalf of the Muslims was," as Kabir further observed, "carried on by the Central Khilafat Committee."[10] In view of a very powerful public support to Gandhi's policy and programme, the Muslim League went, during 1921-1923, in Jinnah's own words, "into the background."[11] The annual session of the League in 1923 could not be held for want of a quorum. When the Caliphat was abolished by the Turks themselves the Central Khilafat Committee suffered a serious set-back, and the Muslim League began to come to its own. Once again, it became the premier organization of the Muslim community. M.A. Jinnah, even after joining the League in 1913, continued to take part in Congress politics. On occasions he acted as a go-between between the Congress Party and the League. But he did not appreciate Gandhi's non-cooperation programme which in his thinking was "taking them to a wrong channel." When in December 1920 the Nagpur Congress adopted Gandhi's programme, Jinnah left the Congress for good.[12] Gandhi's first Civil Disobedience movement, in which the "peaceful" demonstrators indulged in acts of violence, pained Jinnah, and he became convinced that "neither Gandhi nor his methods were for him." He assumed the leadership of the newly revived League, and its policies after 1923 became more sectarian and reactionary. The gulf between Jinnah's League and Gandhian Congress continued to widen.

Bases of Hindu-Muslim Differences

Before taking the narrative further it would be pertinent to examine the fundamental ingredients of the differences between the Hindus and the Musulmans. The first and foremost was, of course, the religion. The Hindus had myriads of gods and goddesses; the Muslims worshiped only one god--Allah; the former had their places of pilgrimage and centres of religion only inside the country; the latter looked for that purpose outside the Indian soil—Mecca and Medina; and while Hindu-

[10]Humayun Kabir, *Muslim Politics, 1906-1942.* (Gupta Rahman Gupta, Calcutta, 1944) 3.

[11]See Jinnah's Presidential address to the League session at Lahore, Noman, n. 1, 219-20.

[12]Lal Bahadur, n. 1, 166. H.H. the Agha Khan, permanent President of the League, had left the organization in 1913, because he did not like that the League should pass into the Congress fold.

ism was based upon tolerance and detested proselytisation, the followers of Islam considered all outside their pale as infidel—*kafirs*, and took it as their duty to convert them to their own faith —even by force and compulsion. The Hindus revered the cow like a mother,[13] but the Muslims killed it for eating, and while the former considered it their religious obligation to protect cows from the hands of the Muslims the latter felt obliged to perform the sacrificial slaughter on the *Id-al Adha* festival. There was great tension between the two communities when their festivals clashed, as, for instance, when the *Moharrum* fell on the days when *Ramlila* was celebrated. While *Moharrum* was celebrated because of a past tragedy and brought mourning and tears, the *Ramlila* marked the victory of good over evil and, therefore, was an occasion for joy and festivities. The two did not fit in.

The method of the two communities of offering prayers to the Almighty also differed. The Muslims needed quiet, particularly at the time of sunset, to offer *namaz* in the mosques and, therefore, objected to music or noise in the vicinity of their place of worship. but the Hindus, on the other hand, sounded songs and rang bells in their temples just at the same time. "*Arti* and anti-*namaz* disputes," as Jawaharlal Nehru has put it, "assumed major proportions."[14]

(These religious differences between the Hindus and Muslims had not been something new and had existed even before the British came to India. The two communities, nevertheless, lived in peace and amity for long. Hindus took part in Muslim festivals and the Musulmans attended Hindu festivities. So long as the Congress remained primarily a socio-political body of social reformers, the British allowed it to exist and prosper. But when the extreme element in Congress got the upper hand and began to clamour for the freedom of India the British authorities decided to make political capital out of these differences, and developed the policy of "divide and rule" vis-a-vis the two communities. Even a petty communal disturbance was given great prominence in the newspapers, and tension and bitterness increased in big cities. Political reactionaries of the two sides, who had been pushed into oblivion during the days of non-cooperation and Khilafat, emerged into prominence and fanned the fire of inter-

[13]Even Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* of 15 September 1940: "Mother cow is in many ways better than the mother who gave us birth. ... Hinduism will live so long as there are Hindus to protect the cow."

[14]Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Glimpses of World History*, 135.

communal strife.[15] Apparently, they claimed to be the guardians of the interests of their community but, in fact, they did more harm than good. These men definitely played into the hands of the foreign rulers. Serious Hindu-Muslim riots usually occurred whenever the demand for the transfer of power from British to Indian hands became strong and insistent, and whenever the two major communities showed greater unity of purpose and action. The Congress-League pact of 1916 was followed by such riots in 1917-1918. And when the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs had brought an almost complete unity between the Hindus and Muslims and when at the time of *Id-al-Adha* of 1921, the Musulmans gave up, of their own accord, the sacrifice of cows, certain incidents happened and a rift was created in the lute.

Explaining away the reason of the wide gulf between the Hindus and the Muslims, F.K. Khan Durrani suggested that what distinguished the Hindus from every other people was their "racial exclusiveness." "We Muslims," he observes, "came to this country twelve centuries ago as conquerors. We ruled over the country, but have been treated by the Hindus all along as untouchables. We cannot eat with them and cannot enter their homes or otherwise associate with them without defiling their homes and persons. Every person is an untouchable in the eye of the Hindus. Twelve centuries of common domicile have failed to break down the Hindus' racial exclusiveness."[16]

The reasons for Hindu-Muslim disunity were economic also. The Industrial Revolution, which came to India in the wake of the British rule, hit the Muslims harder than the Hindus, because there were relatively more artisans and craftsmen among the Muslims, and they were almost ruined with the spread of machine-made goods. The Hindus had taken to English education earlier, and due to the anti-Muslim policy of the British, particularly after 1857, the Hindus had got most of the government jobs. The Hindus, on the whole, were richer also. "The village financier or banker was," to quote Nehru, "the *Bania* ... who exploited the Hindu and Muslim tenants and landholders alike, but his exploitation of the Muslims took a

[15]See J. L. Nehru, *An Autobiography*, 459, and also Rajendra Prasad, *India Divided*, 124.

[16]F.K. Khan Durrani, *The Future of Islam in India* (Iqbal Academy, Lahore, 1926) 86-7.

communal turn—especially in Provinces where the agriculturists were mainly Muslims." The economic hardships of the Muslims made them bitter with the Hindus—prospering and living with a much higher standard in their midst.

The Musulmans also had political grievances against the Hindus. Most of the government jobs, trade and industry were monopolized by the Hindus, and the unemployed middle-class Muslims felt that they should have due share in them. These Musulmans resented Hindu domination and desired that whatever rights and places were won by the Hindus, their share in them must be fixed.[17] The Muslim nationalism, as represented by the Muslim League, was in fact a middle-class affair but it influenced the masses.[18] It was because of this peculiar character of the Muslim League that its members did not participate in either the non-cooperation programme or the Khilafat movement. Only when both the movements died down, did the Leaguers reappear on the Indian political scene and began to play a prominent role in widening the gulf between the Hindus and the Muslims.

Effort for Hindu-Muslim Entente—Unity Conferences

The growing Hindu-Muslim tension and the widespread communal riots in the country intensely disturbed Mahatma Gandhi who came out of prison in February 1924. He felt that if the evil was not nipped in the bud before it was too late it would soon "grow into a national calamity."[19] He resorted on, 18 September, to a twenty-one day fast with the object of appealing "to the hearts of the Hindus and Musulmans to arrest the progressive deterioration of the communal situation by putting a stop to this fratricidal conflict."[20] In order to persuade Gandhi give up his fast a unity conference was called in Delhi six days after the fast. Mrs. Annie Besant, Shaukat Ali Khan, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Swami Shradhanand, Malaviya, Moti Lal Nehru, and many other national leaders attended the conference, but Gandhi did not relent. Maulana Mohammed Ali, who was at that time the President of the Congress, convened in Bombay, on 21 and 22 November an All-Parties Conference. The

[17]Home Study Circle, *Nationalism in Conflict in India* (Delhi, 1942) 194.

[18]Nehru, n. 15, 721. Also see the views of Maulana Shibli, quoted in Rajendra Prasad, n. 15, 122.

[19]Bose, n. 8, 103.

[20]Rajendra Prasad, n. 15, 124.

Conference appointed a committee of fifteen representatives of all political parties to prepare a scheme of Swaraj, including a communal settlement, and to report not later than the 31 March 1925. A formula for promoting Hindu-Muslim unity was also devised.[21] As a result of the efforts made by the leaders of the two communities to promote Hindu-Muslim unity the riots ceased for some time. A few leaders of the Congress Party, such as Moti Lal Nehru, Patel, and Annie Besant, were invited to attend the annual session of the League (1924) held in Bombay, and a new orientation was given to the policy of the League.

The reason for this gesture on the part of the League leaders appeared to be a new agitation for constitutional reforms. In February 1924, Moti Lal Nehru had demanded, in the Central Assembly, a Round Table Conference "to draw up a constitution for India establishing full responsible government in this country." Sir Malcom Hailey replied, on behalf of the Government of India, that the government would soon investigate into the complaints against the Reforms of 1919, and that a committee would be set up to recommend another instalment of constitutional changes. Such a committee was set up under the chairmanship of Sir Alexander Muddiman, the Home Member of the Government of India, and in the early summer of 1925, the Viceroy was called to London for consultations. The hope arose in India that further concessions would be made by the British authorities. The report of the Muddiman Committee, however, proved disappointing, and the Hindu-Muslim tension again started. In July 1925, riots took place in Allahabad, Delhi, and Calcutta. There were about thirty riots in 1926, and the tension became very acute when in December of that year Shraddhanand was assassinated.

Muslim Proposals

The annual session of the Congress at Gauhati (December 1926) adopted a resolution calling upon the CWC to take immediate steps, in consultation with the leaders of Hindus and Muslims, for removal of the severe tension between the two communities, and to submit

[21]Jinnah said at this Conference that he had not come there not "to say what the Musulmans wanted but he was there to sit with the Hindus as a co-worker." He appealed to all the delegates "to put their heads together not as Hindus or Mohammadans but as Indians"; quoted in Noman, n. 1, 228.

its report to the AICC not later than 31 March 1927. Srinivasa Iyengar, the Congress President, had some informal meetings with Hindu and Muslim leaders and members of the Central Legislature. Malaviya and Lajpat Rai put forth proposals of joint electorates. Jinnah, who still felt that "India will get Dominion responsible government the day the Hindus and Muslims are united," welcomed the gesture. On his initiative some prominent Muslim leaders met, on 20 March 1927, in Delhi, and put forth what became known as "Muslim Proposals" as the basis of Hindu-Muslim unity. They indicated willingness to agree to joint electorates for Provincial and Central legislatures provided (1) Sind was made into a separate Province; (2) the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan were treated on the same footing as the other Provinces; (3) in the Punjab and Bengal the proportion of Muslim representation was in accordance with their population; and (4) in the Central Legislature it was not less than one-third of the total.

The Congress leaders were eager to bring about a settlement of the Hindu-Muslim differences. The CWC met, in May, in Bombay and adopted resolutions substantially accepting the Muslim proposals. It also adopted a formula dealing with the social and religious aspects of the Hindu-Muslim question. As a result of these developments it appeared for some time that an understanding had been reached. But shortly after, the Muslim proposals were criticized and denounced by a section of the Muslim League—particularly by the Punjab Muslim League—and the unity efforts receded into the background. In the summer of 1927, communal riots took place in Bihar, U.P., the Punjab, and Central Provinces, and hundreds of people were killed and injured and much damage was done to property.

Lord Irwin's Appeal for Unity—More Unity Conferences

While the political leaders of India were engaged in the task of establishing peace and unity between the Hindus and the Muslims, the British authorities were examining the lines on which further constitutional reforms could be introduced. The report of the reforms inquiry committee (Muddiman Committee) was placed before the Central Assembly in September 1925. Moti Lal Nehru put forth the "National Demand," to the effect that Dominion Status should at once be conceded by the British Parliament, and that a Round Table Conference of the British and Indian representatives should meet to finalize the ways and means of implementing the new

reforms. But the Government of Lord Reading was averse to these proposals and nothing substantial was done until the termination of Reading's Viceroyalty.

In April 1926, Lord Irwin succeeded Reading, and the new incumbent was deeply distressed by the communal frenzy in the country. He was a man of "religious convictions," possessed a human outlook on life, and was moved by what Masani styled "the stirrings of Gandhi's heart."[22] He felt that a new constitution was necessary for India, and for this the cooperation between the Hindus and the Muslims was essential. In an address to the Central Assembly, on 29 August 1927, Irwin exhorted the two communities to give up the butchery in which they off and on indulged. Maulana Shaukat Ali, in response to the Viceroy's appeal, invited leaders of different communities to meet in a conference in Simla. These men met from 16 to 22 September, but failed to arrive at any agreement on the two questions of music before the mosques and sacrifice of the cow. The conference ended in a fiasco.[23] But the issue was soon taken up by Congress President Srinivasa Iyengar, and another Unity Conference was held at Calcutta on 27 October. It adopted a resolution setting forth the norms of behaviour for both the Hindus and the Muslims, and an atmosphere of friendly feelings was apparently restored.

INDIAN STATUTORY (SIMON) COMMISSION

But the apparently good intentions of the new Viceroy could not carry the country much further on the road to democratic institutions. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms were prudently hedged round by checks and reservations, and subsequent attempts to show that the assurance of Dominion Status for India was implicit in them were "a mere toying with words."[24] The Swaraj Party had been agitating for Swaraj or Home Rule, but Lord Birkenhead—the Secretary of State for India in the new Conservative Government—was inclined "to contract rather than to expand any further promises of constitutional reforms." He believed that the British were in India "for the good of India." He wrote:

[22]Masani, *Britain in India*, 126. Also see Bose, n. 8, 125.

[23]Noman, n. 1, 249-52.

[24]The Second Earl of Birkenhead, *The Life of F.E. Smith, First Earl of Birkenhead* (Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1960) 506.

> The British Government were averse from using the phrase "Dominion Status" to describe even the ultimate and remote goal of Indian political development, because it had been laid down that Dominion Status meant "the right to decide their own destinies," and this right we are not prepared to accord to India at present or in any way to prejudge the question whether it should ever be accorded. I think it is fair to infer from this that separatism should be regarded as a hostile movement.[25]

Section 84 (a) of the Government of India Act, 1919, provided that at the expiration of ten years after the passing of the Act a Statutory Commission would be appointed to enquire "into the working of the system of government, the growth of education and the development of representative institutions in British India and matters connected therewith, and to report "whether and to what extent it is desirable to establish the principle of Responsible Government or to extend, modify or restrict the degree of Responsible Government then existing therein, including the question whether the establishment of Second Chambers of the Local Legislatures is or is not desirable." In keeping with this stipulation the Commission should have been appointed in 1929 but Lord Birkenhead decided to antedate it by two years. This was done for several reasons. First, he wanted "to disrupt the Swaraj Party by accelerating constitutional reforms as it was already torn by divided counsels."[26] Second, the General Election was due to be held in England in 1929 and the victory of the Labour Party was apprehended. Birkenhead did not like a Socialist Government to handle the appointment of the Commission, because he was not prepared to take the "slightest risk in this matter." The die-hard Conservatives in England, such as Birkenhead, Sir Samuel Hoare and Reading, were outraged when anybody spoke about India reaching Dominion Status. "How could India, with its communal differences, its many languages and religions, its Indian States and British Indian provinces, and last, but not least, its inability to defend itself, these men asked, "ever become a Dominion after the manner of Canada, Australia, and South Africa."[27] Birken-

[25] *Ibid.*, 518.

[26] Birkenhead considered the Swaraj Party as "the most highly organized political party in India."

[27] *Ibid.*, 521. Birkenhead considered the Hindu-Muslim differences as "unbridgeable."

head, in particular, feared least the Labour Party should concede the Indian demand for Home Rule. He considered India "a prize possession" of England which lived "on it." In one of his speeches before the graduates of the Oxford University in 1927, he exhorted the younger generation to "hold India to the last drop of your blood."

Professor A.B. Keith was of the view that the appointment of the Commission was accelerated because of the trade union movement in England and the youth movement in India. The socialistic ideas were becoming popular all over England and the Trade Unions there were becoming militant. The All-India Congresses of students and of youths and All-India Youth Congress were spreading a good deal of disaffection against the British rule and there was general unrest all over the country. The discontented elements, the authorities in London felt, must be satisfied before the situation got out of hand.

And then, the working of the Reforms of 1919 had revealed a number of constitutional defects, and the authorities desired to remove some of them—not so much to satisfy the nationalist urge of Indians as to make the governmental machinery run more smoothly and effectively.

India Decides to Boycott the Commission

Goaded by all these considerations, the British Government announced, on 26 November 1927, the appointment of the Indian Statutory Commission, headed by Sir John Simon—a constitutional lawyer of repute and distinction. There were six other members (all Members of Parliament) but not one of them was Indian. Even Lord Sinha, a member of the House of Lords, was not included. Not one of the Indian Liberals, who had all along cooperated with the government, was provided a place. Birkenhead opposed the inclusion of Indians on the Commission because, he felt, if there were only two or three Indian members, they would not be the true representatives of the Indian opinion, and if all the various interests were provided representation the Commission would become "a body of uncontrollable size." The Secretary of State also felt that in a very large body the prospects of an agreed report would be "infinitely remote." Whatever the reasons, the exclusion of Indians from the Commission was resented almost by all the political organizations and their leaders. The terms of reference of the Commission were also found unsatis-

factory. It was only asked to "inquire" and "report" and not to suggest the new measures of reforms. To the Congress Party, in particular, which by then had begun to demand Full Responsible Government, the setting up of the Simon Commission appeared to be no more than "a kind of patch-work."

In December, the annual session of the Congress was held at Madras. Expressing resentment of the Congress Dr. Ansari, in his presidential address, said: "No sane or self-respecting Indian can ever admit the claim of Great Britain to be the sole judge of the measure and time of India's political advance. We alone know our needs and requirements best, and ours must be the decisive voice in the determination of our future."[28] The Congress adopted a resolution on the boycott of the Statutory Commission, declared that the Commission was appointed "in utter disregard of India's right of self-determination," and called upon the people of India and all Congress organizations in the country "to boycott the Commission at every stage and in every form."[29] In another resolution "complete National Independence" was declared to be the goal of the Indian people. Moti Lal Nehru, then in England, looked upon the Commission as "an eye-wash." He announced the broad principle that "the British Parliament, the people and the government have no shadow of a right to force a constitution upon us against our will." He asked for a mixed Commission representing the British authorities and the Indian people.[30] Annie Besant felt that the Commission added insult to injury. The All-White Commission "alienated the sympathies of the most practical, seasoned and balanced statesmen" of the Liberal Party.[31] T.B. Sapru criticized the decision of the British Government in unmistakeable terms.[32] The Hindu Mahasabha too expressed great annoyance.

The Muslim League, however, became divided on the issue. Some of its leaders, such as Jinnah, Sir Ali Imam, the Maharaja of Mohammedabad, and Yakub Hasan, declared at its annual session

[28]For text of the address, see *Congress Presidential Addresses*, Second Series (G.A. Natesan and Co, Madras) 841.

[29]For details of the resolution, see Sitaramayya, vol. 1, 318.

[30]See C. S. Iyer Ranga, *India in the Crucible* (London, 1928) 144.

[31]Shukla, *A History of the Indian Liberal Party*, 300.

[32]The Liberals considered the exclusion of Indians as "a deliberate insult to the people of India"; Bose, n. 8, 145.

in Calcutta, in December 1927, that the Statutory Commission was quite "unacceptable to the people of India." They declared that the Musulmans had "nothing to do with the Commission at any stage and in any form."[33] Sir Mohammed Shafi, an influential Musulman of the Punjab and one-time member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, organized a separate session of the League at Lahore at about the same time when Jinnah was meeting with his followers in Calcutta. The Lahore session adopted a resolution in favour of cooperation with the Commission[34].

Thus, with the exception of a section of the Muslim League, a few Europeans and Anglo-Indians, the entire country opposed the composition and the terms of reference of the Commission. On the initiative of Jinnah, all political parties—except the Hindu Mahasabha and the Congress—issued a manifesto outlining the reasons for their decision to boycott the Commission.[35] The Hindu Mahasabha supported the boycott but preferred to issue its own statement. The Congress leaders did not sign the manifesto, because they insisted that "a Round Table Conference, in which British and Indian statesmen would participate as plenipotentiaries, should be invited" or "at least a Commission with majority of Indians sitting on equal terms" should be set up.[36]

Arrival of the Commission—Countrywide Boycott

Undeterred by the boycott decision of the Indian political parties Viceroy Irwin declared, on 2 February 1928, that the Simon Commission would go ahead with its work whether or not the people cooperated with it. The country took it as a challenge, and the following day, when Simon and his colleagues landed in Bombay, an All-India *hartal* was observed. There was great commotion in the country. Birkenhead had advised Simon to see, at all stages, important people "who are not boycotting the Commission, particularly the Muslims and the depressed classes." He told the Commission Chairman that the British policy was "to terrify the immense Hindu population by the apprehension that the Commission is being got hold of by the Muslims and may present a report altogether destructive of the Hindu

[33]Lal Bahadur, n. 1, 186-7.

[34]For how Lord Birkenhead succeeded in creating a rift in the Muslim League, see Birkenhead, *The Last Phase*, vol. II, 254.

[35]For details of the manifesto, see Noman, n. 1, 257.

[36]*Ibid.*, 256.

position, thereby securing a solid Muslim support and leaving Jinnah high and dry." On 8 February, Simon, in pursuance of Birkenhead's directive, proposed a joint free conference between the Commission and leaders of political parties in the Central Assembly. The offer was considered by leaders of all parties who met in New Delhi, and "an absolutely unanimous and unequivocal decision" was taken to continue to boycott the Commission and to do nothing with it "at any stage or in any form."[37]

The boycott was a complete success, and wherever the Commission went—Calcutta, Madras, Lahore, Lucknow, Patna, and other cities—it was greeted with black flag demonstrations, placards and banners bearing the words, "Go back, Simon." The Viceroy felt injured, and Simon considered "a deep resentment at the antics and demeanours" of the boycotters. The government resorted to the usual methods of coercion and repression. Peaceful demonstrators, led by Lajpat Rai in Lahore, were assaulted by the police and the "Lion of the Punjab" was subjected to baton and *lathi* blows. Lalaji, who was already ailing, succumbed to the blows. In Lucknow, Govind Ballabh Pant and Jawaharlal Nehru also suffered *lathi* blows. "Lucknow was converted," as Sitaramayya has put it, "into an armed camp with thousands of mounted and foot police and for four days there were brutal attacks by the police."[38] In other places also, the demonstrators were subjected to the most inhuman treatment.

On 31 March 1928, the Commission went back after establishing, what Simon called, "personal contact with all communities and classes in various parts of India." But this claim was a mere piece of "terminological inexactitude," because the report of the Commission itself, published on 7 June 1930, pointed out that the leaders of the Central Assembly were "pledged to the boycott of the Commission not only officially but also to the length of boycotting it socially,"[39] and, therefore, the Commission could contact none except some leaders of the South Indian Liberal Federation or the Justice Party as it was called and some Muslim organizations.

Recommendations of Simon Commission

From 11 October 1928 to 13 April 1929, the Simon Commission

[37] *Ibid.*, 268-9.
[38] Sitaramayya, vol. 1, 320-1.
[39] *Ibid.*, 321.

again visited India, and this time also its proceedings were vigorously boycotted. Undeterred by the opposition of a large section of the Indian people, the Commission completed its task and made the following principal recommendations: (*a*) complete autonomy in the Provinces including the department of law and order, but the Governor on the administrative side, to be given over-riding powers in certain matters like internal security, (*b*) federal government at the Centre, embracing not only British India but the princely States as well, (*c*) British troops and British officers to stay on in Indian regiments for many years, (*d*) Provincial Legislative Councils to be enlarged, (*e*) the Governor-General to select and appoint members of his Cabinet, (*f*) and the High Courts to be under the administrative control of the Government of India. The Commission also expressed the view that "communal representation cannot be justly regarded as a reason for the communal tension," and that there was "no solid ground for supposing that if communal representation were abolished communal strife would disappear."[40]

AN APPRAISAL

The purely foreign personnel of the Commission had already ignited the Indian mind and no responsible statesman in the country pinned much hope on the outcome of its deliberations. So, when the report of the "Simon Seven" was published, there was no unexpected disappointment. Not only sufficient respect and consideration was not shown to the demands of the people those were contemptuously disregarded.[41] For the past several years the demand of Dominion Status was being reiterated, and in fact the 1927 Congress had adopted "complete National Independence" as its goal; but not even a pretense in this direction was made. Under the guidance of the magnetic personality of Mahatma Gandhi the Indian people had been, since the close of the Great War, demanding the right of self-determination, but the British authorities (particularly the Conservative Party), while talked too much about it during the

[40]For details, see Noman, n. 1, 309. Also see Bose, n. 8, 193-4 and Lal Bahadur, n. 1, 189-90.

[41]Lord Birkenhead could not "imagine any more terrible fate in the world in the present situation in India than to try to hack out a new constitution with such talkative and incompetent colleagues," see Birkenhead, n. 24, 520.

War, showed no inclination to concede it even in the closing years of the 1920's. The Commission not only did not recommend a Responsible Government at the Centre, even the Provincial Governments were to be restricted by the over-riding powers of the Governors. Such recommendations were bound to evoke condemnation from all quarters in India, and the Congress, the Hindu Mahasabha, and the Muslim League denounced them in unmistakeable terms. Even the Labourites in England, who came into power in June 1929, set aside abruptly the Simon Report and recommendations, and inaugurated an era of Round Table Conferences. What these conferences were, why they were held, and what was their outcome would be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER NINE

RIFT BETWEEN CONGRESS AND MUSLIM LEAGUE

LORD BIRKENHEAD, who left the India Office in October 1928, had, it seemed, very poor opinion about Indian political leadership, and he held the belief that Indians were incapable of running free democratic institutions. This Conservative statesman thought that the Hindu-Muslim differences were "unbridgeable," and that the two communities would never be able to arrive at an understanding with regard to the future set-up of the governmental system. While speaking in the House of Lords on 26 November 1927 on the appointment of the Simon Commission Birkenhead threw almost a challenge to Indian politicians to produce "an agreed constitution" for India.[1]

APPOINTMENT OF THE NEHRU COMMITTEE

The appointment of the Simon Commission caused, as pointed out in the preceding chapter, tremendous resentment and frustration in India. The people were goaded to set at naught the designs of the foreign masters. The Muslim League, meeting in Calcutta, recommended "Hindu-Muslim unity on the lines laid down by the Unity Conference." The annual session of the Congress, in December 1926 (at Madras), directed the Working Committee to convene an All-India All-Parties Conference for the purpose of drawing up a constitution for India, acceptable to all parties, and thereby meet the challenge of the Secretary of State. The CWC accordingly sent invitations to a number of organizations, and the All-Parties Conference met at Delhi in February and March 1928 to discuss

[1]Bose, *The Indian Struggle, 1920-1942*, 144.

the question of a constitution for India on the basis of "Full Responsible Government," with special reference to the communal problem, Altogether 25 sittings were held, but the progress was barred by communal discord in which the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha were the protagonists. After having discussed the preliminary fundamental problems it adjourned to meet again.

By the time the Conference met again, on 19 May 1928, in Bombay, the breach had widened and hardened.[2] Instead of publicly recording failure the Conference appointed a small committee, with Moti Lal Nehru as Chairman, "to determine the principles of the new constitution for India and draft a report thereon."[3] This Committee was asked to complete its work before 1 July 1928.

Nehru Report

The Nehru Committee, as it came to be called, worked for three months and submitted its report, known after the name of its Chairman, "Nehru Report." Its main recommendations were the following:

(1) The future constitution of India should be based on "Full Responsible Government on the model of the constitution of the self-governing Dominions," and the conceding of the Dominion Status should be "the next immediate step" and not "a remote stage of our evolution."

(2) The North-West Frontier Province (with its Muslim majority of over 90 per cent) should acquire the same status as other Provinces, and Sind (with its Muslim majority of over 70 per cent) should be detached from Bombay and become a separate Province.

(3) The Committee, unlike the authors of the Congress-League Pact of 1916, made no concession to the Muslim standpoint on the question of separate electorates. "In theory," it declared, "separate electorates violated the essential principles of responsible government; in practice they had failed to pave the way to a better understanding between the communities . . . . They should be discarded therefore, and all elections made by joint or mixed electorates." The

[2]For differences, see Noman, *Muslim India*, 271-2. Also see Lal Bahadur, *The Muslim League*, 192-4.

[3]The Members were: Sir Imam Ali and Shuaib Qureshi (Muslims) M. S. Aney and M. R. Jayakar (Mahasabha), G. R. Pradhan (non-Brahmin), Sardar Mangal Singh (the Sikh League), Tej Bahadur Sapru (Liberal), and N. M. Joshi (Labour). Jawaharlal Nehru, then General-Secretary of the Congress, was nominated Secretary of the Committee.

only communal safeguard should be "reservation" of seats, and this should only be afforded to the Muslims and not to any other community or group except the non-Muslims in the North-West Frontier Province. Nor should seats be reserved for Muslims where they were in a majority, but only at the Centre and in the Provinces in which they were in a minority. The right to contest other than reserved seats should be conceded but no "weightage" should be allowed.

(4) The constitution of India might be federal in character and the Indian States would be welcome to join it. In case, they did not opt to join, their "claims must not obstruct the advance to Dominion Status. They must accept the same position in the new 'Commonwealth of India' as they occupied at present in the Indian Empire."[4]

(5) There should be inserted in the constitution a "Declaration of Rights" assuring, *inter alia*, the fullest liberty of conscience and religion.

(6) The new Indian Legislature should be empowered to legislate and budget for the Indian army, and that its control should be transferred to a responsible Indian Minister of Defence.

(7) The legislative power of the Commonwealth should be vested in a bicameral legislature and the executive power in the King "Exercisable by the Governor-General as the King's representative, acting on the advice of the Executive Council." The Governor-General, while free to appoint the Prime Minister, should appoint the other members of the Executive Council on the Prime Minister's advice. The same provisions for responsible government would apply to the Governors and Executive Councils in the Provinces.[5]

Reaction of the Congress to Nehru Report

The Nehru Report was presented to the All-Parties Conference which met at Lucknow from 28 to 30 August 1928. The Conference declared itself in favour of Dominion Self-Government. But a group[6]

[4]In 1927, the Indian States' Peoples Conference had come into existence with the object of attaining "responsible government for the people in the Indian States through representative institutions under the aegis of their Rulers"; and this aim was endorsed by the Congress at its 1928 session. The Nehru Report declared that the people in British India would make common cause with the people in the States.

[5]Coupland, *The Indian Problem, 1833-1935*, 88-94.

[6]This group formed an Independence League to advocate Complete Independence as against Dominion Status.

of Congressmen, led by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, told the Conference that though they would not oppose the acceptance of the Report they could not vote for it as that would commit them to acquiescence in Dominion Status, and that they would be satisfied for no less than "Complete Independence" for the country. The AICC met in Delhi on 4 and 5 November reiterated the goal of "Complete Independence" as "there can be no true freedom till the British connection is severed," endorsed the communal solution of the Nehru Committee, and expressed the view that the proposals of the Nehru Committee were "a great step towards political advance."

The annual Congress, which met in Calcutta in December, adopted a resolution accepting the constitution recommended in the Nehru Report "if it is accepted in its entirety by the British Parliament on or before the 31st December 1929." In the event of its non-acceptance by that date or its earlier rejection, the Congress declared that it would organize a campaign of "non-violent non-cooperation by advising the country to refuse taxation and every aid to government." The Congress also resolved that the propaganda to familiarize the people with the goal of Independence would be continued.

Muslim Reaction to Nehru Report—Jinnah's "Fourteen Points"

The reaction of the Indian Musulmans to Nehru Report was mixed. The Nationalist Muslims, under the leadership of Maulana Azad, Dr. Ansari, and T.A.K. Sherwani, supported it wholeheartedly. The followers of Sir Mohammed Shafi adopted a *non possumus* (we cannot—a form of refusal) attitude. Another group, led by H.H. the Aga Khan, who had led the Muslim deputation to Viceroy Minto in 1906, wanted to secure for the Muslim community all the possible advantages. The group felt that the Nehru Report repudiated the Lucknow Pact of 1916 regarding "weightage" and "separate electorate," and that the Hindus were determined to secure power for themselves. The fourth group of Muslims was led by Jinnah. Although due to his dislike of Gandhi's programme of non-cooperation he had left the Congress Party, he was still a firm believer of Hindu-Muslim unity.[7] He felt that the destiny of Muslims was linked with the

[7]Jinnah was, till late 1920's, a liberal Musulman. He desired to become "the Muslim Gokhale"; see Hector Bolitho, *Jinnah: Creator of Pakistan* (John Murray, London, 1954) 12. Sarojini Naidu, a distinguished Congress leader, described Jinnah as "the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim

rest of Indian population. As late as December 1927, at the Muslim League Conference in Calcutta, he advocated a nationalistic point of view, and expressed his adherence to joint electorate and to the Delhi Proposals sponsored by him.

Jinnah left for England in May 1928 and returned six months later. He was distressed to find that serious differences had emerged within the Muslim community. He found that it was sharply divided on the provisions of the Nehru Report, and he endeavoured to bring about unity between the several groups. He convened a Muslim All-Parties Conference to meet in Delhi on 31 December, and invited Agha Khan to preside over. But Agha Khan and the men around him were found uncompromising in their opposition to the Nehru Report. They gave vent to fears that the Hindus wanted "to dominate Muslims by sheer force of their numbers."[8] Jinnah, on the other hand, pleaded that the Hindus and Musulmans "have got to be reconciled and united and made to feel that their interests are common and they are marching together for a common goal." He asserted that there could be no progress for India "until the Musulmans and Hindus are united."[9] No compromise could, however, be arrived at, and the Conference adjourned to meet again "before the end of May 1929." Jinnah was authorized to negotiate with the representatives of the various groups of Muslims regarding the form which the Muslim demands should take and to place an agreed formula before the next session.

After a good deal of discussion and consultations with the leaders of various groups, Jinnah prepared the draft of a very comprehensive resolution accommodating the divergent points of view. Its main points were as follows:

(1) The form of the future constitution of India should be federal, with the residuary powers vested in the Provinces.

(2) A uniform measure of autonomy should be granted to all Provinces.

(3) All Legislatures and other elected bodies should be constituted on the definite principle of adequate and effective representation of

unity"; see Sarojini Naidu, *Mohammed Ali Jinnah, An Ambassador of Unity: His Speeches and Writings, 1912-1917* (Ganesh Publishing House, Madras 1918) 7.

[8]Quoted in Noman, n. 2, 281.

[9]*Ibid.*

minorities in every Province without reducing the majority in any Province to a minority or even equality.

(4) In the Central Legislature, Muslim representation should not be less than one-third.

(5) Representation of communal groups should continue to be by separate electorates as at present provided that it shall be open to any community at any time to abandon its separate electorate in favour of joint electorate.

(6) Any territorial redistribution should not, in any way, affect the Muslim majority in the Punjab, Bengal, and the N.W.F. Province.

(7) Full liberty of belief, worship and observance, propaganda, association and education should be guaranteed to all communities.

(8) No bill or resolution or any part thereof should be passed in any Legislature or any other elected body if three-fourths of the members of any community in that body opposed it as being injurious to the interests of that community.

(9) Sind should be separated from the Bombay Presidency.

(10) Reforms should be introduced in the N.W.F. Province and Baluchistan on the same footing as in other Provinces.

(11) Adequate share for Musulmans should be provided in the constitution in all the services of the State subject to the requirements of efficiency.

(12) Adequate safeguards for the protection and promotion of Muslim culture, education, language, religion, personal laws and charitable institutions, and for their due share in the grants-in-aid given by the State should be provided in the constitution.

(13) No Cabinet, either Central or Provincial, should be formed without at least one-third of the ministers being Muslims.

(14) No change should be made in the constitution by the Central Legislature except with the concurrence of the States constituting the Indian Federation.[10]

The draft resolution incorporating all these points was placed before the Muslim League session in March 1929 in Delhi. The session was presided over by Jinnah, and in his opening speech he appealed to the representatives of various groups to set their personal differences aside and take "a united decision" on the future constitution of the Government of India.[11] But the appeal fell on deaf

[10]These came to be known as Jinnah's "Fourteen Points."

[11]*Ibid.*, 288.

ears, and Jinnah's efforts to bring about reconciliation failed. The followers of Azad (Nationalist Musulmans) advocated acceptance of the Nehru Report while the followers of Shafi and Agha Khan described the Nehru Report as a "death warrant" for the Muslim community. Nehru's recommendation of mixed electorates was severely criticized and his attitude in preparing the report was styled as "chameleon-like." Moti Lal was accused of having fallen "into the trap of the Mahasabha" and of taking "one-sided" view. These reactionary Musulmans held the framers of the Nehru Report guilty of disregarding the elementary rights of Minorities. The differences between the supporters and opponents of the Nehru Report were very acute, and the session ended in pandemonium. No final decision could be made even on Jinnah's Fourteen Points. These points, however, brought Jinnah closer to Mohammed Shafi and other Musulmans to whom the cause of the community was dearer than the welfare of the country. The Nationalist Muslims left the League for good and formed a separate party, called the Nationalist Muslim Party, in July 1929. The Muslim League became completely alienated from the Congress, and its leaders began to clamour for a "separate homeland for the Muslims." The efforts to draw up a constitution acceptable to all parties proved abortive, and Birkenhead's challenge turned out to be true.

IRWIN'S DECLARATION ON DOMINION STATUS FOR INDIA

Alongwith the marches of the Simon Commission and the Unity Conferences were taking place other important developments in India and England. Talking about India first, the country was in the midst of a great ferment. A few revolutionaries in Lahore murdered Saunders, an Englishman and Inspector of Police, believed to be responsible for lathi blows on Lajpat Rai which proved fatal. Sardar Bhagat Singh, nephew of the great revolutionary of Punjab, Ajit Singh, and Batukeshwar Dutt threw a bomb in the Assembly at Delhi, and both of them were arrested. In the wake of their arrest, a large number of young men all over India were rounded up. In mid-1929, the government started at Lahore the all-India conspiracy case, and it aroused great public excitement. Jatindra Nath Das, one of the prisoners in the case, resorted to hunger-strike for lack of proper amenities so long as they were under trial, and this led to intense agitation throughout India. Demands were made all over the country that the

government should concede to the just demands of the alleged conspirators. The authorities remained callous and on 13 September 1929, Jatindra Nath died in jail. "His martyrdom acted," in the words of Subhas Bose, "as a profound inspiration to the youth of India, and everywhere youth and student organizations began to grow."[12] Provincial Youth Association and Provincial Students' Association emerged in Bengal; Youth Conferences met in Poona and Ahmedabad, and the Punjab Students' Conference was held in Lahore. In the Central Provinces and the Madras Presidency also, the students were in an agitated mood.

Contemporaneous with the awakening among the students was a great unrest among the workers. There were strikes, meetings, and demonstrations in centres of industry. A strike in Bombay almost completely paralysed the textile industry, and the government arrested, in March 1929, thirty-one trade union leaders from all over the country. These men were taken to Meerut for trial and the trial dragged on for nearly four years. The accused were refused bail and were subjected to great hardships inside the jail. This led to great resentment all over India. In July 1929, the CWC called upon Congressmen to resign their seats in the Legislatures. The Congress demand relating to the acceptance by the government of the Nehru Report was still unfulfilled, and Gandhi was touring the country to prepare the masses for the Civil Disobedience movement which he had in mind. The peasantry of Bardoloi had, during 1928, already waged a successful battle against the government under the leadership of Vallabhbhai Patel on the issue of increase in land revenue, and that episode brought about tremendous awakening among the people.[13]

[12]Bose, n. 1, 162.

[13]There was going to be in Bardoloi, in 1928, the periodical settlement of land which occurred once in a stated period of 20 or 30 years, and as a result of which the land revenue was raised by about 25 per cent. The people of Bardoloi wanted that before the taxes were raised an impartial enquiry should be made as to the conditions of labour, prices, roads and general economic conditions, and the enhancement should be effected, if at all, with the same proportion. All the peaceful and constitutional means of persuasion had been tried upon and proved of no use. Then a no-tax campaign was launched. Vithalbhai J. Patel, elder brother of Vallabhbhai Patel, threatened the Viceroy to resign from the Presidency of the Central Assembly. The government yielded and an understanding was reached. Gandhi gave to Vallabhbhai the title of "Sardar" for his courage and bravery in guiding the movement; see *ibid.*, 152.

In the midst of great upheaval in India there occurred the change of government in London. The Conservative Party went out of office and the Labourites came in, with Ramsay MacDonald as Premier and Captain Wedgewood Benn as Secretary of State for India. A few days before the Election, which was held in May 1929, MacDonald had stated at a Commonwealth Conference: "I hope that within a period of months rather than years there will be another Dominion added to the Commonwealth of Nations—a Dominion of another race, a Dominion which will find respect as an equal within the Commonwealth. I refer to India." After coming into power the Labour Government invited Irwin to England for consultations, and the Viceroy remained there for some months. On 25 October, he came back to New Delhi, and on 31 October, he made the following announcement:

> 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 realization of Responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.
>
> In view of the doubts which have been expressed both in Britain and India regarding the interpretation to be placed on the intentions of the British Government in enacting the Statute of 1919 I am authorized, 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 progress as there contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion Status.[14]

Irwin also declared that when the Simon Commission Report had been considered and published, a Round Table Conference would be held in London in which His Majesty's Government would 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."

Explaining why Irwin made the above announcement, Sir Samuel Hoare, who succeeded Wedgewood Benn at the India Office

[14]Banerjea, *Indian Constitutional Documents*, 177.

in 1931, wrote:

> Irwin made that statement because Indians deeply resented their exclusion from an enquiry that affected their whole future. Irwin wanted not only to soothe their irritated nerves but to recreate some measure of Indian goodwill towards any proposals. Gandhi, in particular, needed to be convinced of our sincerity if Congress, the only organized political force in India, was to be diverted from its policy of frontal opposition.[15]

Congress Seeks Clarification and is Disappointed

In less than 24 hours (on 1 November) the leading personages met in Delhi, and issued a statement under the signatures of not only more advanced Congressmen like Mahatma Gandhi, Moti Lal Nehru, and Vallabhbhai Patel but also moderates like T.B. Sapru and V.S. Shastri, nationalist Muslims like Azad and Ansari, Hindu Mahasabhaites like Malaviya and Moonje, and Annie Besant and Sarojini Naidu.[16] The signatories expressed appreciation of the Viceroy's sincerity and of "the desire of the British Government to placate Indian opinion," and requested that "certain acts should be done and certain points should be cleared so as to inspire trust and to ensure the cooperation of the principal political organizations in the country." They also declared: "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 Constitution for India." In other words, the signatories of this statement interpreted the Viceroy's announcement to mean that the proposed conference would be charged with the same task as the Nehru Committee. The Muslim League kept quiet on the Viceroy's statement.

There was an uproar in the British Parliament over both the statements—those of the Viceroy and of the Indian leaders. The Secretary of State for India was asked whether the interpretation of the Indian leaders vis-a-vis the Viceroy's statement was correct, and he replied that the policy towards India had not changed. This vague reply created uneasiness in the political circles of India and an atmosphere of uncertainty prevailed. Vithalbhai Patel acted as an intermediary,

[15]Quoted in Birkenhead, *op. cit.*, 521.

[16]Dr. Kitchlew, Subhas Bose and Abdul Bari (Patna) issued a separate manifesto opposing acceptance of Dominion Status for India; see Bose, n. 1, 172.

persuaded the Viceroy to meet the Indian leaders personally and clarify the issue to their satisfaction. The meeting was fixed for 23 December. But before the interview could take place an attempt was made by the revolutionaries to wreck the train in which Irwin was returning to New Delhi. This incident chilled the atmosphere, and when Gandhi, Moti Lal, Sapru, Vithalbhai, and Jinnah met the Viceroy, the latter refused to make any further promise than what had been stated in his *communique*. He also expressed his inability to call the Round Table Conference "with any promise of Dominion Status." The hopes that were raised by the Viceroy were shattered in the Viceregal Lodge.

LAHORE CONGRESS SESSION—RESOLUTION ON COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE

The Congress leaders who met Irwin brought disappointment to the Congress annual session that met on the bank of River Ravi, near Lahore. The delegates were enraged over the tactics of the British authorities. The Left-Wing element within the Congress Party, represented by J. L. Nehru, Subhas Bose, and Srinivas Iyengar, advocated more positive and virile action. The young Nehru, who presided over the session, condemned British imperialism, Kings and Princes, and declared himself a socialist and a Republican. He pleaded for "action" and deprecated "timidity." "Taking of high stakes and going through great dangers," he said, "were the only way to achieve great things." He described Wedgewood Benn's "Dominion Status in action" talk a "snare" and emphasized that nothing less than "Complete Independence should be the goal of the Congress Party."

Gandhi was moved by the aspirations of the Left-Wingers and appreciated the goal of Complete Independence. But he deprecated any precipitate action and won Nehru over to his own point of view.[17] So, while the Congress adopted a resolution on Complete Independence and stated that the word "Swaraj" in Article I of the Congress Constitution should mean "Complete Independence," it spoke only mildly as to the methods to achieve that objective. The resolution called upon Congressmen and others taking part in the national movement to abstain from participating directly or indirectly in future elections"

[17] *Ibid.*,175.

and directed the "present Congress members of the Legislature and Committees to resign their seats." It also authorized the AICC, whenever it deems fit, to launch upon a programme of Civil Disobedience including non-payment of taxes.[18]

At mid-night of 31 December the *Tricolour* Flag of Independence was hoisted and 26 January of each succeeding year was fixed for the celebration of "Independence Day" all over the country.

Iyengar and Bose were not satisfied by this resolution and were excluded from the Congress Working Committee. They walked out from the Lahore session and announced the formation of another party, they called the "Congress Democratic Party." This was done to launch a more positive and virile action. In an official declaration of its policy, the new party, however, decided to cooperate 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."

CONGRESS LAUNCHES "A FIGHT TO THE FINISH"

In accordance to the decision taken at Lahore, "26 January 1930" was celebrated all over India as Independence Day, and much enthusiasm and willingness for sacrifice was visible throughout the country. The world was passing through an economic crisis and the people in India were also on the verge of starvation. Cloth and bread became scarce for the peasants and workers. The labour movement was becoming class-conscious, militant and dangerous, both in ideology and in organization. Sufferings of the people were on the increase and apathy of the government was unmitigated.

From 14 to 16 February the CWC met at Sabarmati and vested Gandhi with full powers to launch the Civil Disobedience movement "at the time and place of his own choice." There was, at that time, great resentment in the country on the Salt Tax which fell too heavily upon the poor people. Gandhi decided to commence the agitation against the same tax. On 27 February, the plan of campaign was announced, and the Mahatma declared that he would first defy the Salt Law along with "seventy-eight chosen members" of his Ashrama.

[18]The Congress also declared that the entire scheme of the Nehru Committee had lapsed. For details of the text of the resolution, see Sitaramayya, vol. I, 357.

But before resorting to his device, he wrote a letter (on 2 March) to the Viceroy, apprising the latter of the situation in the country and putting before him his "eleven point" programme to ease the situation, failing which, he wrote, he would start his Civil Disobedience movement.[19] Lord Irwin promptly replied the letter, and deprecated Gandhiji's contemplated course of action, saying that such a course would "involve violation of the law and danger to the public peace." Gandhiji was left with no alternative. On 12 March, he began his march to Dandi, a sea-coast village in Gujarat. Great enthusiasm was displayed by the villagers all along the route, and to them Gandhiji preached the cult of non-violence and self-sacrifice. As the *padacharees* marched forward, the barometer rose up. A high sense of patriotism pervaded the country and the cult of non-cooperation and non-violence reached into the hearts of the people. After a journey of 24 days, the party reached its destination, and Gandhi violated, on 6 April, the Salt Law by picking up salt lying on the beach. Soon after, he urged the people to celebrate the week, April 6 to 13, as the "National Week" and to fetch or manufacture contraband salt, to picket liquor shops, opium dens and foreign cloth dealers' shops, to burn foreign cloth and to leave government schools, colleges and services.

The country took up the call most readily. Huge public meetings were held all over the country—in Calcutta, Madras, Patna, Karachi, Delhi, and Peshawar, etc. Hundreds of government servants left their jobs; scores of legislators withdrew from the Legislatures, and hundreds of people violated the Salt Law. Liquor shops were boycotted, and the peasants refused to pay taxes and return debts. By June, the country appeared to be in full revolt, and in many places the writ of British *sirkar* almost ceased to run.

Attitude of Muslim League Towards Congress Movement

As already pointed out earlier the Muslim League went completely out of the Congress fold, and even Jinnah, a late convert to the gospel of Muslim communalism, left the Congress for good and became a staunch advocate of the interest of his own community. He made up his differences with Mohammed Shafi, and the two Wings of the League joined hands. When Gandhi started his campaign, Jinnah declared on behalf of the League: "We refuse

[19]For the eleven points, see *ibid.*, 178.

to join Mr. Gandhi, because his movement is not a movement for complete independence of India, but for making the 70 milllion Muslims of India dependent of Hindu Mahasabha."

Following his lead, the bulk of the Muslims remained aloof from the movement. Nevertheless, some Nationalist Muslims, under the leadership of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (better known as Frontier Gandhi) Azad and a few others, made common cause with the Congress, and courted arrests and suffered at the hands of the government.

Attitude of Government—Measures of Repression

The British bureaucracy did not take kindly to Gandhi's movement. Even before the campaign was actually launched the government began to put in prison thousands of Congress workers for one reason or the other. Subhas Bose was sentenced to a year's rigorous imprisonment. After Gandhi's march towards Dandi, government repression became more severe. Police firing, *lathi*-charges, and arrests became the order of the day. On 16 April, Nehru was put in jail, and his imprisonment was followed by that of thousands of others. Women were not spared and in Delhi alone about 1,600 of them were arrested. On 23 April, the Bengal Ordinance was promulgated and the life of the freedom fighters was made miserable. The military authorities in Peshawar committed dreadful butchery. The obnoxious provisions of the Press Act of 1910 were enforced and the local Press was put under strict official surveillance. As a protest against this repression several nationalist newspapers and magazines stopped publication. Under a few other Ordinances civilian property was destroyed wantonly; unarmed men and women were beaten up, and the people inside the prison-houses were starved and suffocated. In several places, the police resorted to firing, and hundreds of men and women were killed.

On 5 May, the Mahatma was arrested. His imprisonment had serious repercussions in the country. There were *hartals*, mass demonstrations, public meetings and processions. More and more Congress volunteers courted arrest, and jails were full to capacity. On 27 June, the CWC met in Allahabad, and on the suggestion of Moti Lal, then acting-President of the Congress, it adopted a resolution designed to organize more thoroughly the boycott of foreign cloth. The CWC was declared unlawful, and Nehru was sentenced to six months' imprisonment. Section 144 of the Indian Criminal

Procedure Code was promulgated, and meetings, processions, and demonstrations were declared illegal. The machinery of repression was in full swing.[20]

The Government of Lord Irwin, however, began to feel the growing strength of the Congress movement. The Viceroy, in particular, realized that steps would have to be taken and should be taken to placate the nationalist urges of the Indian people. In close collaboration with the authorities at home Irwin began to move in that direction. The issues as to how he moved and what were the consequences would be examined in the following chapter.

[20]Sitaramayya, vol. I, 370-420.

CHAPTER TEN

ROUND TABLE CONFERENCES AND THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT, 1935

BEING RESPONSIBLE for law and order and being the head of the Administration in India Lord Irwin was engaged in the task of suppressing the civil resisters. But he seemed to have realized that the sheer force of military strength would not cow down the patriotic impulse of the Indian people, and that no useful purpose would be served by measures of repression. Speaking before the Calcutta Association, the Viceroy said: "Howsoever emphatically we may condemn the Civil Disobedience movement we should, I am satisfied, make a profound mistake if we underestimate the genuine and powerful meaning of nationalism that is today animating much of Indian thought, and for this no complete or permanent cure has ever been or ever will be found in strong action by the government."[1] According to the opinion of D. Madhava Rao, the chief correspondent of *The Morning Post* in India, "Irwin regarded the appointment of the Simon Commission . . . as a fundamental mistake on the part of British statesmen responsible for the Government of India," and he "sincerely" believed that the British Government "had to set right the wrong done to India."[2]

FIRST ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

The Viceroy made more efforts to establish cordial and cooperative relationship between the British and the Congress Party. In January 1930, he reiterated the assurances he had given to the Indian people in October 1929, explained the purpose and scope of the proposed

[1]Quoted in Masani, *Britain in India*, 130.

[2]D. Madhava Rao, *The India Round Table Conference and After* (Heath Cranton Ltd., London, 1932) 32.

Round Table Conference (RTC) and appealed for cooperation.[3] On 12 May, he made another statement surveying the situation in India and abroad and fixing up the date for the RTC, which was 12 November 1930.

On 7 June, the Report of the Simon Commission was made public, and the issue of another instalment of constitutional reforms became more alive. But the political climate of the country was very tense and the question was how to ease it. George Slocombe, correspondent of *The Daily Herald*, took the initiative. On 20 June, he met Moti Lal Nehru who was till then a free man, and discussed the terms and conditions on which the Congress leaders would be willing to take part in the RTC. He also requested Sapru and Jayakar to discuss with Gandhi and other Congress leaders, then in jail, possibility of their participation in the proposed Conference. With the permission of the Viceroy, who welcomed Slocombe's efforts, Sapru and Jayakar met the Mahatma, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Sarojini Naidu, and Moti Lal Nehru (who was also imprisoned) in Yervada jail in mid-August, but there was not much progress in the talks. On 15 August, the Congress leaders issued a statement that unless the British granted a "national government responsible to the people" including defence and finance, and conceded to India the right to secede at will from the British Commonwealth, they would not be able to take part in the London parleys. The Labour Government found these demands too high, and the efforts for a concord fell through.

The plans for the RTC, however, went ahead, and eighty-nine "distinguished statesmen" representing the British political parties, Indian Liberal Feberation, Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha, depressed classes, and the Indian States, conferred in London at St. James Palace from 12 November 1930 to 19 January 1931. Without covering much ground the Conference adjourned *sine die*. Without the participation of the Congress leaders nothing substantial could be achieved, and while winding up the deliberations on the last day Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald declared that "steps would be taken to enlist the cooperation of those sections of public opinion which had held aloof from the Conference."[4]

[3]Noman, *Muslim India*, 305.

[4]MacDonald declared that Responsible Government at the Centre would be given if the Indian people agreed to "safeguards" and "federation"; see Bose, *The Indian Struggle, 1920-1942*, 196.

Congress Reaction to Premier's Announcement at RTC—Reassertion of the Goal of Complete Independence

Within two days of the termination of the Conference the CWC met at *Swaraj Bhawan*, Allahabad, and adopted a resolution it marked "privileged." The British Government was condemned for the methods it had employed "of making a show of consulting representatives of India," and the resolution of Independence passed at the Lahore Congress was reiterated. MacDonald's declaration of policy was described as "too vague and general to justify any change in the policy of the Congress," and the country was called upon "to carry on the struggle with unabated vigour." The CWC also urged the people to observe the anniversary of the Independence Day which was due to fall on 26 January.[5] This resolution indicated that insofar as the Congress was concerned the first round of discussions in London was wholly futile, and the end of the journey was still far ahead.

MUSLIM LEAGUE DEMANDS SEPARATE STATE FOR MUSULMANS

The first RTC was a bigger disappointment to the leadership of the Muslim League. Jinnah and his colleagues emphasized in London that unless their demands were met "in a reasonable manner," they would not accept any constitution for India. On their return from England, the League leaders met in Allahabad—with Dr. (Sir) Mohammed Iqbal in the chair. Iqbal had been dominating the Muslim political thought since the end of the Khilafat movement. He was a very prominent poet and writer, and in 1927 was elected to the Punjab Legislative Assembly. At the Allahabad session, he put forth his plan for a separate State for the Muslims as a solution of the Hindu-Muslim deadlock. He said: "I would like to see the Punjab, N.W.F.P., Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single State. Self-government within the British Empire, or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim State appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of North-West India. I, therefore, demand the formation of a consolidated Muslim State in the best interests of India and

[5]For details of the resolution, see Sitaramayya, vol. I, 424-5.

Islam."[6] Dr. Iqbal, thus, became the architect of the State of of Pakistan—a name coined three years later by Chowdhry Rahmat Ali.[7] In and after 1933, Ali started, in England, a definite campaign for Pakistan.[8]

IRWIN MAKES ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO SECURE CONGRESS COOPERATION—GANDHI-IRWIN PACT

The British politicians were anxious to secure the cooperation of Gandhi and other Congress leaders because they realized that no scheme of constitutional reforms would succeed unless the principal political party of India assented to it. Irwin, a true Christian and far-sighted statesman, was uneasy over the "no-tax" campaign that was going on strongly in Gujarat, the United Provinces, and parts of Bengal. The Civil Disobedience movement, in one form or the other, was going on almost all over the country. The boycott of British goods was in full swing and terroristic activities were rampant in Bengal and the N.W.F. Province. The only way to ease the situation, the Viceroy thought, was to enlist the support and goodwill of the Congress. On 25 January 1931, he exhorted the Indian public to consider the Prime Minister's statement of the 19th January, and declared that Gandhi and all other members of the CWC would be released soon to consider the matter "freely and fearlessly." All of them were accordingly set free. Sapru, Jayakar, and V.S. Sastri persuaded Gandhi to see the Viceroy and discuss the possibility of a *rapprochement* with the government. The discussions between Irwin and Gandhi lasted for fifteen days, and resulted, on 5 March, in an agreement, known as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

[6]Quoted in Noman, n. 3, 312. Iqbal emphasized the "Muslim nationality, and rejected the notion that India was a social unity." "India is," he said, "an Asia in miniature. India is a continent of human groups belonging to different races, speaking different languages and professing different religions"; see F.K. Khan Durrani, *The Meaning of Pakistan* (Shaikh Mohd. Ashraf, Lahore, 1946) 156. Through his poetry Iqbal "idealized Islam not merely as a religion, but as a comprehensive political system."

[7]Ali derived the name from the first letters of the Provinces to be included in Pakistan: *P* standing for Punjab, *A* for Afghanistan, *K* for Kashmere, *S* for Sindh, and *tan* for Baluchistan. Pakistan could also be translated as "the land of the pure" (*pak* for pure and *star* for land).

[8]Khan A. Ahmed, *The Founder of Pakistan* (W. Heffer and Sons Cambridge, 1942) 3.

On behalf of the Congress Party Gandhi agreed to discontinue the Civil Disobedience movement, to stop the boycott of British commodities and to take part in the second RTC for drafting a constitution on the basis of (*a*) Federation, (*b*) Responsibility, and (*c*) Safeguards or reservations in the interest of India for such matters as defence, external affairs, minorities, and the financial credit of India.

On behalf of the government the Viceroy agreed to withdraw ordinances promulgated in connection with the Civil Disobedience movement, to release prisoners who were imprisoned in connection with that movement, to return property which was seized during it, to permit people living within a certain distance of the sea shore to collect or manufacture salt free of duty, and to permit peaceful picketing of liquor and opium shops.[9]

An Appraisal of the Pact

By concluding the Pact both the Viceroy and the Mahatma found themselves placed in a very delicate predicament. Jawaharlal Nehru and other Left-Wing Congressmen such as Subhas Bose, thought that Gandhi had "unwittingly sold India," and a few die-hard Conservatives in England, like Winston Churchill, felt that Irwin had sold Great Britain.[10] But the signatories of the Pact had their own reasons for arriving at the compromise. Gandhi's Civil Disobedience movement had undermined respect for law and order, and riots and assassinations of officials and policemen had become frequent. Such a phenomenon was "slowly but surely demoralising the government." Irwin had begun to realize that "influence" and not "power" would serve the interests of Britain better in the changed conditions of the twentieth century.[11] Moreover, just at the time the Congress launched its movement in India the authorities in England were deeply involved in the worldwide economic depression and the Viceroy did not like that the political situation should go out of hand. Gandhi, on his part, felt that the enthusiasm of the people was waning and the campaign might not last for long.[12] The growing rift between the Congress and Muslim League probably also depressed the Mahatma, and he felt that he would not be able to challenge the British authority

[9]For full text of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, see Sitaramayya, vol. I, 437-42.

[10]Masani, n. 1, 140. Also see Bose, n. 4, 208-9.

[11]*Ibid.*

[12]Rao, n. 2, 43.

with the same strength and support he was able to muster in the early 1920's. Both the statesmen (Irwin and Gandhi) realized that "prudence was the better part of valour," and they decided to sign the Pact.

From 26 to 29, March the annual session of the Congress was held at Karachi and the Pact was endorsed. The Congress appointed and authorized Gandhi to represent it at the second RTC, reiterated *Purna Swaraj* as its goal, and directed its representative [Gandhi] to work in the direction of giving to the nation control over the defence forces, external affairs and finance, fiscal and economic policy. The annual Congress also outlined the fundamental rights and duties of the Indian people which the new constitution should provide.[13]

With mandate from the Congress Gandhi began to look forward to the second round of deliberations in London.

Breach of Gandhi-Irwin Pact

But even before the ink was dry on the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, the spirit in which it was signed began to disappear. Despite the best efforts and urgings of the Congress leaders the government went ahead with the execution of Sardar Bhagat Singh, Sukh Dev, and Raj Guru on 23 March in connection with the Lahore Conspiracy Case. This event cast great gloom in the Congress circles and suggestion came forth that Gandhi should break with Irwin. But the Mahatma refused to do so and did not agree "to identity himself with the revolutionary prisoners."[14]

On 18 April, Irwin's tenure in the Viceregal Lodge came to an end, and Lord Willingdon took his place. While professing friendliness and sincerity the new Viceroy began to break the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in several respects. In a number of towns in the U.P., the armed police and the magistracy terrorized and harassed the people, raided the houses of Congress workers, burnt the Congress flag and insulted the women. Public meetings were prohibited, and prosecutions were launched. In Gujarat, the confiscated property of the peasants was restored with great difficulty. In Bengal, Congressmen were imprisoned without trial, and legal practitioners were made to furnish undertakings. In Bombay, prisoners were

[13]For other resolutions, see Sitaramayya, vol. I, 456-65.
[14]Bose, n. 4, 204.

not released; peaceful picketing against liquor at unlicensed places was not allowed; several students were rusticated from schools, and cultivators were subjected to coercion. In Delhi, undertakings were demanded of students. In Madras also, several violations of the Pact took place.

On 20 June, Gandhi wrote to the Home Secretary to the Government of India and asked for an enquiry into the allegations of breaches of the Pact, but there was no response. On 21 July, he sent another letter and asked for clarification on certain matters in the Pact. The government was anxious that the Mahatma should participate in the RTC, and Willingdon made satisfactory response to this. Gandhi decided to go to London.

GANDHI MAKES ANOTHER EFFORT FOR HINDU-MUSLIM UNITY—BUT NO RESULT

While Gandhiji was negotiating with the Viceroy his mind was deeply concerned about the question of Hindu-Muslim unity. At the time of the Karachi session serious communal riots occurred in Kanpur and Banaras. Hundreds of people were killed or wounded; shops and temples were put on fire, and houses were plundered. Gandhi felt very sad and he began to say that his participation in the RTC depended on his ability to solve the Hindu-Muslim question beforehand.[15] He sought to placate the Muslims again and met their leaders in April. While the Nationalist Muslims, who had organized themselves as Muslim Nationalist Conference under the leadership of Sir Ali Imam, declared that "separate electorate was not only a negation of Indian nationalism but also positively harmful to Muslims themselves," the League leadership emphasized not only separate electorate but a separate home for the Musulmans.[16] The reactionary Musulmans repeated the Fourteen Points of Jinnah and insisted on their acceptance by the Congress. In a mood of utter depression Gandhi felt like agreeing to separate electorates, but Subhas Bose, Dr. Ansari, Sherwani, and a few other Nationalist Muslim leaders expressed serious opposition.[17] In the last week of August (on 29 August) the Mahatma sailed for England—in the hope that he would be able to resolve the deadlock there.

[15]Noman, n. 3, 313.
[16]Prasad, *India Divided*, 134.
[17]Bose, n. 4, 214-5.

SECOND ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE — FAILURE AGAIN

In mid-September 1931, 107 distinguished delegates, representing the three British parties, British India and the Indian States, assembled in London, and continued to confer up to 1 December. The issues mainly discussed and examined were two: the future constitutional structure for India and the representation of minorities. Speaking before the Federal Structure Committee of the RTC, Gandhi emphasized the Indian ideal pictured by the "three beams of Central Responsibility, Federation and Safeguards" in Indian interests, and demanded complete control over the defence forces and foreign affairs. "If these were granted," he said, "he would not himself aspire to Complete Independence."[18] His speech indicated that despite the Lahore Resolution on Independence he was inclined to be satisfied with Dominion Status. This was, of course, deviation from the mandate that was given to him by the Karachi Congress, but he, it seemed, did so in the hope that Dominion Status would ultimately lead to Complete Independence. Even this could not be achieved, and greater disappointment came from his own countrymen. The delegates representing the Hindu intelligentsia pleaded for federal responsible government for India but the representatives of the Muslim League (Jinnah, Agha Khan, and Zaffarullah Khan) opposed the plan and described it "unworkable."

Another important element at the Conference, the Indian princes, also rejected the scheme of federation. They were 601 in number in India, and controlled two-fifths of the country and a quarter of the total population. These princes acknowledged the paramountcy of the British Crown only and were independent of the Government of India. Their apprehension was that if the British withdrew from India, their States would be absorbed, their titles abolished and their privileges and personal power subjected to the will and whim of the rulers of free India. Most of them, therefore, displayed little enthusiasm for freedom or any scheme or plan in that direction. No agreement could be reached on the question of what should be the structure of the Indian political system.

On the question of representation of minorities also, there was implacable feud. Apart from the Muslims who, under the League banner, were asking for a separate State, the "Untouchables," or as

[18]Sitaramayya, vol. I, 494; Masani, n. 1, 144-5.

dubbed by the British, "Scheduled Castes" 50 million in numbers or one-seventh of the country's population, were clamouring for separate representation in the legislative bodies. At the Conference they were being represented by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. He was brilliant and intelligent, having had his education at Columbia University (New York) and the London School of Economics, but could not get a decent placement in life. While he aspired for a job in the Civil Service, he could get only clerkship. "He roamed," as Mosley has put it, "around Western India doing a variety of jobs, all of which ended (sometimes abruptly, with a beating) when it was discovered that he was an Untouchable. These experiences made Ambedkar very bitter with the "High Caste Hindus," and he formed a party to lift his fellowmen from that position of degradation. The British authorities sent him to the RTC to represent the Untouchables. There he demanded that the millions of Untouchables must get "separable constituencies" and "rigid protection."

Gandhi, who was profoundly distressed by the lot of the Untouchables and had begun to take interest in their problem (he called them *Harijans* or children of God), stated before the Minorities Committee that the different communities of India "were encouraged to press. ... their own respective views," that the "so-called Untouchables were Hindus" and could "not be classified as a separate class," that the Congress alone represented political India, and that "the Hindus and Muslims could and should live together in a united India without separate electorates or special safeguards for minorities." Gandhi declared that he "would not be a party to the separate representation of other communities." But the Mahatma's assertion was countered by delegates other than Ambedkar also. The Maharajadhiraj of Darbhanga and the Raja of Bobbili—the two big *zamindars*—called for "safeguards" for the Indian land-holders. Unruly scenes in the Minorities Committee were stirred up whenever the communal question was taken up. On 8 October 1931, the representative of the Congress [Gandhi] declared: "It is with deep sorrow and deeper humiliation that I have to announce utter failure on my part to secure an agreed solution of the communal question through informal conversations among and with the representatives of different groups." He suggested adjournment *sine die* of the Minorities Committees and the hammering into shape, as quickly as possible, the fundamentals of the constitution.

RAMSAY MACDONALD'S POLICY STATEMENT

No solution of the Hindu-Muslim question was in sight. The various delegates were firmly sticking to their own points of view. Realizing that the Conference was not making much progress, Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald wound it up and on 1 December, declared before the plenary session, that the British Government held the view that "responsibility for the Government of India should be placed upon the Legislatures, Central and Provincial, with such provisions as may be necessary to guarantee, during the period of transition, the observance of certain obligations and to meet other special circumstances and also with such guarantees as are required by the minorities to protect their political rights." He further said that the British Government was prepared "to recognize the principle of responsibility of the Executive to the Legislature if both were constituted on an All-India Federal basis." MacDonald expressed the view that "the N.W F. Province should be constituted a Governor's Province of the same status as other Governors' Provinces, and that Sind should be constituted a separate Province if satisfactory means of financing it could be found." The Prime Minister also stated that since the Indian delegates failed to agree, the British Government would have to decide "as wisely and justly as possible what checks and balances the constitution is to contain to protect the minorities from unrestricted and tyrannical use of the democratic principle expressing itself solely through the majority power."[19]

This statement of policy, it seemed, was the outcome of some sort of alliance between the British authorities and the representatives of the Muslim League. In early 1930's, the Congress movement was gaining new momentum, and the foreign rulers felt very uneasy and alarmed. In October 1931, the general election put the Conservatives in power. Sir Samuel Hoare took the place of Wedgewood Benn, and Willingdon succeeded Irwin. The policy of *divide et impera* was again utilized and another step was taken to split the Hindus and Musulmans still more widely. The new manifestation of this policy was the Communal Award of 16 August 1932. This would be discussed later. Here, it might be mentioned that Gandhi had begun to perceive the sinister designs of British diplomacy and in one of his speeches before the Minorities Committee he had declared

[19]Quoted in Prasad, n. 16, 135-6.

that the Congress would not be a party to "special reservation" or "special electorates" for the minorities. When on 1 December the speech of MacDonald was over, the Mahatma declared that they had "come to the parting of ways," and that their ways would hereafter "take different directions." Three days later, he left London for home—a saddened, grieved, and an intrigued man.

Muslim League's Reaction to MacDonald's Statement

There was all jubilation within the Muslim League circles over the policy statement of 1 December. The authorities in London had reacted favourably to its demands. A special session, with Zaffarullah Khan in the chair, was held, and a strong plea for an All-India Federation was put forth. The League demanded prompt and formal announcement regarding the future safeguards for the Musulmans, and further demanded reforms in Frontier which was a point of honour for them, the separation of Sind and the provincial autonomy.[20] The Agha Khan pleaded for unity between the League and the All-India Muslim Conference and suggested the formation of only one organization of the Muslims, to be called "United Muslim League Conference." He urged that the Indian Muslims should press their demands "with all the influence at their command."[21]

Congress Reaction to MacDonald's Statement—Resumption of Civil Disobedience

Gandhi returned to India on 28 December 1931. The situation in the country was deteriorating. The labour and youth circles, represented by the Naujawan Bharat Sabha of U.P., the All-India Trade Union Congress, and other trade unionists had been opposing the Gandhi-Irwin Pact since its inception. A few revolutionaries in Bengal were engaged in acts of terror and violence. In April 1930, there occurred the Armoury Raid incident in Chittagong; in August, the head of the Intelligence Branch of the Police, Lowman, was seriously wounded, and towards the end of the year, Lt. Col. Simpson, the Inspector-General of Prisons, Bengal, was done to death. In 1931, three Magistrates in Midnapore and an Indian police officer in Chittagong were assassinated. An unsuccessful attempt was made to kill the District Magistrate of Dacca.

[20]Noman, n. 3, 315-6.
[21]Quoted in Rao, n. 2, 88.

An ugly situation was developing in the U. P. and the N.W.F. Province also. In the U.P., the condition of the peasantry was miserable, and the Provincial Congress Committee (PCC) there was carrying on a "no-rent" campaign against the *zamindars* and *talukdars*, who allegedly were enjoying the support of the government. In the Frontier Province, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his brother, Dr. Khan Sahib, were preparing a band of followers, known as *Khudai Khidmatgars*, for the non-cooperation movement of Gandhi. The militant race of the Frontier was being trained and disciplined into a corps of volunteers to serve humanity "irrespective of any religious or other prejudice." The movement was making great headway, and some incidents of violence also occurred.

The Government of Lord Willingdon resorted to measures of repression, and repeated attempts were made to cow down the spirit of the Indian nationalists. The grievances of the U.P. peasantry were not redressed and hundreds of Congressmen, including Jawaharlal Nehru, Sherwani and Purshottamdas Tandon were put in prison. The "Red Shirt" volunteers of Ghaffar Khan were declared an illegal body, and the two brothers, alongwith some other Frontier leaders, were put under arrest. In Bengal, hundreds of people were jailed without trial under the authority of a new Ordinance. The Emergency Powers Ordinance, issued in the U.P., on 14 December 1931, and the three Ordinances, promulgated in the N.W.F. Province on 24 December put the machinery of repression in full swing.

A day after he landed in Bombay (29 December), Gandhi sent a telegram to the Viceroy and expressed great regret over the shootings and arrests the government had been resorting to. The Private Secretary of the Viceroy in reply justified all the measures. The Mahatma then sought an interview with Willingdon and wrote to him that if satisfactory response were not made the Congress would launch Civil Disobedience movement again. The Viceroy, a sincere representative of the British Conservatives, refused to grant the interview under the threat of Civil Disobedience.[22]

On 4 January 1932, four new Ordinances were issued. These were the Emergency Powers Ordinance, Unlawful Instigation Ordinance, Unlawful Association Ordinance, and Prevention of Molestation and Boycott Ordinance. These measures covered almost

[22]For details of the correspondence exchanged between Gandhi and Willingdon, see Sitaramayya, vol. I, 510-20.

the entire life of the Indian people, and even Secretary of State for India Hoare admitted, on 26 March, that these were "very drastic and severe."[23] Even before the Civil Disobedience campaign could be launched, thousands of Congressmen, including Gandhi and Congress President Vallabhbhai Patel, were arrested. The government took possession of Congress offices and *Ashrams*. The police resorted to *lathi*-charges to disperse the crowds that assembled to execute the programme of Civil Disobedience, and even women and children were not spared. The homes and hearths, farms and fields, cattle and jewellery, and household furniture and utensils were either destroyed or confiscated. Full use was made of the extraordinary powers conferred by the Ordinances upon the executive branch of the government.

Despite all the measures of repression, the Civil Disobedience movement was in full swing. Meetings and demonstrations were held; foreign cloth and liquor shops were picketed; taxes and land revenue were withheld; salt was manufactured, and national flags were hoisted on several government buildings. Despite restrictions, the Congress session was held in Chandni Chowk, Delhi, and the resolution on Complete Independence was reiterated. "The activities in 1932," in the words of Subhas Bose, "did not compare unfavourably with those of 1930." While the Muslim Leaguers did not join the movement, the Nationalist Muslims were in the fore-front of the fight. The campaign was further strengthened by the support of Muslim divines and priests who had formed the *Jamiat-ul-Ulemai Hind* under the leadership of Mufti Kifayetullah.

THE COMMUNAL AWARD

While the Congress was engaged in the fight, the British authorities went ahead with their plan of further widening the gulf between the national organization and the communal-minded Muslim and Hindu leaders. The Lothian Committee, that was set up after the second RTC to determine franchise and electoral seats, came to India on 17 January 1932 and commenced its investigations. On 11 March, Gandhi wrote to Hoare that if the government decided to carve out separate electorates for the Untouchables or "depressed classes" he would "fast unto death." But the warning fell on deaf ears, and on

[23] *Ibid*, 525.

17 August 1932, Ramsay MacDonald, announced the "Communal Award." For the purpose of representation in Provincial Legislatures (Lower House only) the people of India were divided into water-tight compartments. A certain number of seats were alloted to Muslims, Europeans and Sikhs, and members of these communities were to vote in separate constituencies. In the name of securing adequate representation of "depressed classes" in Legislatures, members of those classes were treated as a minority community. While they were also entitled to stand for election from the general constituencies earmarked for the Hindus, they were allotted some seats which were to be filled up only by them voting separately. Seats were also allotted to Indian Christians and Anglo-Indians, and these were to be filled up by voters voting in separate communal electorates. Separation of Sind from Bombay was accepted in principle.[24]

The Prime Minister gave it to appear that the Award was announced because the Indian communities were unable to reach a settlement acceptable to all parties on communal questions, and also because His Majesty's Government did not like that "India's constitutional advance" should on that account be frustrated. The Award was the manifestation of a very sinister policy of exploiting the communal differences to the benefit of the British Empire. It appeared to be the continuation of the traditional and well-tried policy of "divide and rule."

GANDHI'S "FAST UNTO DEATH" — POONA AGREEMENT

Gandhi was not slow to read in between the lines. From inside the jail he immediately wrote to MacDonald about his decision to "fast unto death." Instead of making any amends the Prime Minister sent a leisurely reply (on 12 September while Gandhi wrote on 18 August), and imputed to the Mahatma "inimical intention in respect of the depressed classes." The "Father of the Nation" was left with no choice, and on 20 September, the fast began.

The Congress and other Liberal leaders first endeavoured to persuade Gandhi not to resort to the heavy ordeal, but after the fast had begun, they made concerted efforts to save his life. On the initiative of Malaviya, several Hindu leaders met in Poona, and on 25 September, they concluded an agreement known as the Poona

[24]For text of the Award, see *ibid.*, appendix VI, 656-64.

agreement. It provided that "the depressed classes would forgo their separate electorates and content themselves solely with the general Hindu electorates." The "caste Hindus," however, were to concede to the depressed classes certain "safeguards." The latter were to have 148 seats out of those assigned by the Communal Award to the general constituencies in the various legislatures. The members of the depressed classes, who were registered in the general electoral roll in a constituency, were to form an electoral college which was to elect a panel of four candidates for each of such reserved seats. The general electorate, in its subsequent choice, was to choose one of these four. This agreement could be altered by common consent.

The terms of the agreement were communicated to the authorities in London, and the latter readily accepted them—probably because it gave to the depressed classes 148 seats while MacDonald's Award gave them only 71, and also because it did not end separate electorate completely. Gandhiji, however, gave up the fast, and he was released from prison. In the Indian political circles the question was often asked whether the Poona agreement really served the purpose it was designed to. It, however, proved of one great advantage, and that was that the Hindus decided to launch a campaign against the removal of Untouchability, and the All-India Anti-Untouchability League was formed for this purpose, and its branches were set up all over the country. The task of uplifting the depressed classes was taken up with all earnestness, and many temples, public wells and *dharamsalas* were thrown open to them.

ANOTHER EFFORT FOR HINDU-MUSLIM UNITY—DIFFERENCES WIDEN

In the wake of Gandhi's fast, an attempt was made to settle Hindu-Muslim differences. Pandit Malaviya and Maulana Shaukat Ali took the initiative, but the "reactionary" Muslim leaders obstructed their efforts from the outset. On 7 October 1932, the President of the All-Parties Muslim Conference stated that "it was highly inopportune to reopen the question of separate versus joint electorate, and that the Muslim community was not prepared to give up this safeguard.[25] He, however, indicated willingness "to consider definite proposals comprehending all the vital issues involved if initiated by

[25]Prasad, n. 16, 137.

the majority community." The latter part of the statement gave some encouragement to Malaviya, and he urged the All-Parties Muslim Conference to appoint a Committee to confer with the representatives of Hindus and Sikhs. This Committee was promptly set up. On 3 November 1932, the Unity Conference, with representatives of Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims and Indian Christians, met in Allahabad in an atmosphere of cordiality. Agreement was reached on several questions which vexed Hindu-Muslim relations,[26] but the problem of representation in the Bengal Legislature on the one side and the Central Legislature on the other marred the final outcome of the Conference. The Muslims demanded at least 51 per cent of the total number of seats in Bengal, but the Europeans were unwilling to surrender any seat alloted to them under the Communal Award. In regard to the question of Muslim representation in the Central Legislature, the Award had only provided that the matter would be decided subsequently. Now that Malaviya was endeavouring to negotiate on the issue with the Muslims. Hoare declared that the Muslims would get $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent of the British Indian seats in the Central Legislature. Assured of better terms by the British, the Muslims showed no inclination to carry on discussions with the Hindu leaders and get lesser representation.

The represenatives of the various Muslim organizations including the Muslim League met in Delhi, and on 20 November, declared that the proposed basis of the agreement devised at Allahabad was "injurious to Muslim interests, impractical and unacceptable." They held the majority community responsible for failure to recognize the minorities "just and reasonable claims," and expressed their approval of the Communal Award. They declared: ". . . since the majority community were obstinately . . . and irrevocably opposed to granting us safeguards and protection which, as a minority, we are entitled to, and since no further advance towards responsible self-government for India was possible except on the basis of the Award, it was advisable, even with its obvious defects from the Muslim point of view, to accept it."[27] A few more meetings of the Unity Conference were held in the third week of December 1932, but the "reactionary" Muslim leaders obdurately stuck to their point of view, and all efforts of Malaviya and Congress leaders failed.

[26] *Ibid.*, 140.

[27] Quoted in Noman, n. 3, 318-9.

THIRD ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE—WHITE PAPER ON CONSTITUTION REFORMS

Unhampered by the developments on the Indian political scene, the British authorities continued to work on their new scheme of constitutional Reforms for this country. In December 1931, Parliament adopted a resolution whereby the Indian policy of His Majesty's Government as set out in the Premier's statements of 1 December 1931, was approved. On 17 November 1932, the third last session of the RTC was held, and it lasted till 24 December 1932.[28] This session put together the final features of a concrete plan for a new Indian constitution, and the same was embodied in a White Paper presented to Parliament in March 1933. A Joint Select Committee (JSC) of both Houses (16 members from each) was set up to examine and scrutinize the plans.

The White Paper did not satisfy any party or group of politicians or any community in India. The Central Legislature recorded "a strong protest against some of the fundamental issues raised by the White Paper." The Legislative Councils of Bihar and Orissa condemned the proposals in unmistakable terms. The Congress leaders disapproved the proposals as "the complete negation of the Indian national demand." The Indian Liberals received the White Paper with "supreme dissatisfaction," and proposed "substantial modifications." The Hindu Mahasabha considered the franchise provisions of the White Paper as "pre-eminently pro-Muslim and highly unjust to the Hindus. The Muslim League looked down upon the scheme as "deception," and the All-India Muslim Conference expressed deep disappointment over the numerous statutory restrictions, financial safeguards, and special responsibilities of the Governor-General and the Governors. The Indian princes were unhappy over the conditions stipulated for their entry into the Federal scheme. The White Paper evoked opposition from some quarters even in Great Britain.[29]

[28]This conference was a much smaller body than the two previous ones and the Congress leaders did not take part. Even the Labour Party did not cooperate with this conference, see Philip Cox, *Beyond the White Paper* (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1934) 21.

[29]For grounds of opposition from different elements, see N. Gangulee *The Making of Federal India* (James Nisbet and Co., Ltd., London, 1936) 163-75.

The JSC, which held its first sitting on 12 April 1933, consulted delegates "representative of the constructive political talent of India" (28 in all, 21 representing British India and 7, the Indian States), examined witnesses representing the Chamber of Princes, the Civil Service Associations, Chambers of Commerce, and the European Association of India, heard Secretary of State Hoare, and thoughtfully looked into the grounds of criticism from all quarters. After eighteen months of deliberations, it published its report on 22 November 1934. Reacting sharply, the Hindu Mahasabha condemned "in unequivocal terms" the weightage and the separate representation conceded to the Muslims. Malaviya and C.Y. Chintamani organized almost a campaign against the representation provision of the scheme. While the Muslim League opposed the "Federal" part it welcomed the latter part of the proposals which dealt with "Provincial Autonomy." Jinnah declared that the Federation as proposed would be "wholly rotten, totally unacceptable, and absolutely unworkable.[30] The Congress adopted a non-committal attitude, and its President, Rajendra Prasad, commenced negotiations with Jinnah with the object of devising a formula of representation in the Central and Provincial Legislatures which could satisfy all parties. The negotiations lasted for about a month, but they bore no fruit. Both the leaders issued a statement indicating their failure to reach an agreement.

Undaunted by the situation in India, the authorities in London went ahead with the JSC's recommendations. Upon the basis of these recommendations, a Bill was drafted, and was published on 22 January 1935. After some amendments, Parliament passed the Bill on 24 July, and on 2 August, it received the Royal Assent, and became an Act. It came to be known as the Government of India Act, 1935.

[30]Noman, n. 3, 322.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

FROM FORMATION TO RESIGNATION OF MINISTRIES

WHILE DURING 1934-1935, the authorities in London were engaged in pushing through the Parliament a new Constitution for India, the Government of Lord Willingdon in New Delhi was going ahead with its reactionary policies to suppress completely the Civil Disobedience movement and revolutionary terrorism. Civil liberties were almost wholly curtailed; about 2,100 detenus were in jails, and securities were demanded from over 500 newspapers. Nothing sensational happened in the country. The imagination of the Indian people, however, was being caught by developments on the world scene. In January 1935, the Fascist dictator of Italy, Mussolini, launched aggression against an independent African country, Abyssinia; signs of civil war between the army generals and the democratic government were becoming manifest in Spain; Hitler had come into power in Germany, and was engaged in a systematic repudiation of the Versailles Treaty of 1919 and Germany's other international obligations for the purpose of "redressing the wrongs" the Allied Powers had done to his country after victory in the First World War, and the militarists of Japan had already (in 1932) occupied the North Eastern Provinces of China, known as Manchuria, and were planning to attack China proper. These developments were suggesting to the Indian mind that if other nations could be aggressive and fight for their advancement, why not the Indians. The developments in the U.S.S.R., in particular, were making a tremendous impact on the minds of the young Indian nationalists. A few young Congress leaders, like J.L. Nehru and Subhas Bose, toured several countries of Europe and were very much influenced by socialistic ideas. The more radical elements inside the Congress formed the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) in 1934 under Subhas Bose, and they were emphasizing "the solidarity of the Indian people with the enslaved peoples of the world," and were urging an unrelenting struggle against British Imperialism.

The Muslim League, which had become a less potent force in Indian politics after the era of Round Table Conferences, was staging a comeback. Mohammed Ali Jinnah was intensely depressed by the Hindu-Muslim differences and had settled in London to practise at the British Bar. The League leaders in India began to feel the need of Jinnah's leadership. Dr. Iqbal and Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan, then on honeymoon in Europe, met him and painted a very sad picture of the condition of the Muslim League. They succeeded in converting him from a "Nationalist Muslim" to a "Muslim Nationalist."[1] In October 1935, he returned to India, became the League President and made Herculean efforts to revitalize the League. In April 1936, Jinnah convened a special session in Bombay, and the decision was taken to fight the elections in Provinces under the new constitutional framework. A campaign for separatism and anti-Hinduism was also launched.

CONGRESS REACTION TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT, 1935

In view of the above circumstances the issue before the Congress Party was what should be done about the new Act. To consider this matter it met, in April 1936, at Lucknow under the presidentship of Nehru. The Government of India Act was condemned on various grounds, and the need for a Constituent Assembly in the name of the Indian people was stressed. Nehru declared: "If we rejected the White Paper what then are we to do with this new charter of slavery to strengthen the hands of imperialist domination and to intensify the exploitation of the masses?"[2] The Congress, however, decided to contest the elections on the basis of a manifesto to be pre-

[1]According to Nehru, Jinnah accepted the leadership of the Muslim League "not because he really believed in Islam or Pakistan, but because it was a policy which would win him easy attention and secular power," and also because that would give him "a chance to lash back at Gandhi and those Congress leaders who had snubbed him"; see Leonard Mosley, *The Last Days of the British Raj* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1961) 68.

[2]"The cardinal objection to the Act," as explained by Dr. Sitaramayya, "was that it was the product neither of self-determination nor even of joint determination, but of 'other determination.' In addition, the scheme of government laboured under the clear disability—want only and deliberately planned—of the body politic being so shaped as to have a trunk without a head and therefore of its activities remaining uncontrolled or uncoordinated"; Sitaramayya, vol. II, 12.

pared soon. The CSP was strongly opposed to the idea of accepting the ministerial office and, therefore, the Lucknow session did not commit itself either side on this issue.

On 23 August 1936, the AICC adopted and published its election manifesto. It, *inter alia*, declared that "the Congress has rejected the Government of India Act of 1935," and that it "has resolved to develop internal strength by working in the Legislatures." The manifesto also declared that the Congressmen inside the legislatures would "resist British Imperialism" and would work "to end its various Regulations, Ordinances and Acts."[3] In a way, the Congress Party decided to go to the Legislatures "not to cooperate with the Act but to combat it." The annual session of the Congress, held at Faizpur in December 1936, endorsed the manifesto and reasserted that the Congress had nothing to do with the office and the ministry. The Congress President declared that any deviation from this policy would "mean a kind of partnership with British Imperialism in the exploitation of the Indian people ... an association to some extent with British Imperialism in the hateful task of the repression of our advanced elements."

ELECTIONS FOR LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLIES

In February 1937, elections under the 1935 Act were held for the Legislative Assemblies of eleven Provinces. Out of a total of 1,585 seats, the Congress won 711, with clear majority in five Provinces—United Provinces, Central Provinces, Madras, Bihar, and Orissa. In Bombay Presidency, Bengal, Assam and the N.W.F. Province, Congress emerged as the biggest single party, and in the Punjab and Sind it was in a comparatively smaller minority.[4]

After the elections were over, the Congress, being the most important and powerful party in and out of the Legislatures, was confronted with the question of forming the ministries. The CSP launched an "anti-ministry" movement, and Sardar Sardul Singh Cavesheer of the Punjab, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, and Mrs. Vijay Laxmi Pandit of U.P. and Sarat Chandra Bose of Bengal, though not members

[3]For details of the manifesto, see *ibid.*, 24.

[4]Out of a total number of 175 seats in the Punjab the Congress won only 18, and out of 60 seats in Sind, the Congress secured only 7. In Bombay, the Congress got 86 out of 175; in Bengal 54 out of 250; in Assam 33 out of 108; and in N.W.F.P. 19 out of 50.

of the CSP, supported its move. Even Nehru extended moral support. On 1 March 1937, the Congress, in a resolution, declared that it "entered the Legislatures not to cooperate with the new Constitution or the government but to combat the Act and the policy underlying it," and that the immediate object of the Congress in the Legislatures is to fight the new Constitution, to resist the introduction and working of the Federal part of the Act and to lay stress on the nation's demands for a Constituent Assembly." *Purna Swaraj* or complete independence as the Congress objective was reiterated. "1 April 1937" was observed as the "Anti-Constitution Day" with a peaceful *hartal* in order to demonstrate the will of the Indian people to resist the imposition of the new Constitution.

But in the meantime, opposition to office-acceptance began to fizzle out, and even Gandhi and Nehru began to swerve from their resolve. The Governors invited the party leaders to form ministries, and on 17 March 1937, the AICC met in Delhi to consider the issue. After thoughtful deliberations it "authorized and permitted the acceptance of office in Provinces, provided the Congress Party in the Legislature was satisfied and was able to state publicly that the Governor would not use his special powers of interference or set aside the advice of ministers in regard to constitutional activities." This change in the Congress attitude was probably brought about by the deteriorating communal situation in the country. Nehru, as Congress President, had chalked out a programme at Lucknow, in April 1936, of appealing the Muslims to join the Congress on grounds of hunger and freedom. But the appeal had fallen on deaf ears of the Muslim League, and the latter was going further apart. The Muslims under the banner of the League were demanding a separate federation of their own comprising the Punjab, N.W.F. Province, Sind, Kashmere, and Baluchistan. They were even willing to cooperate with the new constitutional framework provided their demand was conceded by the British authorities. In such a situation, the danger was that if the Congress insisted too much upon non-cooperation with the new scheme it might lose hold over the country's politics. The Congress, therefore, demanded an assurance from the Governors that they would not use their special powers.

But the Secretary of State for India, Zetland, in the House of Lords and R.A. Butler, in the House of Commons, simultaneously declared that these assurances could not be given, "for the special powers of the Governors are a part of the Act which he is not autho-

rized and competent enough to delete." The CSP whipped up its opposition to office-acceptance and declared that any such move would be inconsistent with the Congress policy and would weaken the struggle for freedom.

A convention of the Congress Party was held in Delhi to examine the situation created by the Zetland-Butler pronouncement. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, one of the top-ranking leaders, moved a resolution on office-acceptance, but the attitude of the CSP leadership remained unchanged. The result was an impasse, and for three months the situation remained chilled.

The political climate of Europe was, in the meantime, getting from bad to worse and the clouds of war were hovering over the horizon. The policy-makers in London and New Delhi did not like that in the event of involvement in troubles at home they should face an ugly situation in India. On 21 June 1937, the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, issued from Simla a short statement on the Governors' position and held out the assurance that the Governors would not interfere with the policies of the ministers, would not obstruct in the day-to-day administration of the Provinces and would not exercise their "special powers" arbitrarily. It was also proclaimed that in "all matters falling within the ministerial field, including the position of minorities, the position of the Services, etc., the Governor will ordinarily be guided in the exercise of his powers by the advice of his ministers who would be responsible not to Parliament but to the Legislature."[5]

This statement resulted in a sort of "gentleman's agreement" between Linlithgow and Gandhi by which the Congress got the assurance that practically speaking the Governors would not exercise their powers so far as these related to their "special responsibility."

On 8 July, the Congress Working Committee met at Wardha, and adopted a resolution permitting the Congressmen "to accept office where they may be invited thereto." But the resolution made it clear that the office was to be accepted and utilized for the purpose of combating the new Act on the one hand and prosecuting the constructive programme of the Congress on the other. The interim ministries, that had been formed shortly after the election, resigned,

[5]For text, see C.H. Philips, *The Evolution of India and Pakistan* (Oxford University Press, London, 1962) 334-5.

and in July itself the Congress formed ministries in seven out of eleven Provinces—U.P., C.P., Bihar, Orisa, N.W.F. Province, Bombay, and Madras. Assam had a Congress ministry in September 1938 when the first ministry was overthrown. In Sind, there was a Cabinet supported by Congress; in the Punjab the Ministry of Sir Sikander Hayat Khan, leader of the Unionist Party, was in opposition to the Congress Party, and in Bengal, after December 1941, there was a new Cabinet, and the Congress participated in it.

MINISTERIAL CRISIS IN U.P. AND BIHAR

At the time the Congress formed ministries, thousands of detenus were in jails in the Punjab, Bihar, Bengal, and the Andamans. The Andaman prisoners had made a formal declaration to Gandhi that they no longer had their faith in violence, but even that did not lead to their release. Several Congress leaders, like Rash Behari Bose, Lala Har Dayal, Dr. Tarak Nath Das, Mahendra Pratap, and Sardar Ajit Singh, were in exile, and in several places the Congress detenus were on hunger strike. Police atrocities and high-handedness were unabated. There was unrest among the factory workers, and the farmers were undergoing tremendous hardships and sufferings. The Congress had chalked out a lengthy programme of work, like tenancy reforms, debt relief, land reforms, labour legislation, reform of jails, decrease in hours of work, recognition by the government and employers of Trade Unions, housing of workers and reformation of the police administration. The Congress Ministries undertook to enforce this programme with great zeal and gusto, but in several cases they were obstructed by the Governors. In contravention of the Viceroy's assurance, the Governors began to interfere in the day-to-day administration, and in certain cases there was a good deal of bad blood between the Ministers and the Governors. Matters reached to a head in U.P. and Bihar when in pursuance of the manifesto of 23 August 1936, the Ministers began to issue orders for release of the political prisoners, and in some cases the release of detenus was delayed and in others the orders were not endorsed by the Governors. There were also instances when in the name of "grave menace to peace and tranquility" the Governor-General counter-manded the release orders. The Congress Ministers, as a protest against this attitude, resigned on 15 February 1938.

HARIPURA CONGRESS

The common man in India was sad and disappointed over the slow progress of the Congress Ministries. The radical and leftist element within the Congress, never happy over the formation of ministries by Congressmen, was ignited over the non-fulfilment of assurances held out by the Viceroy. The strength and popularity of this element began to increase and more and more Congressmen began to swell its ranks. The leader of the radical wing, Subhas Bose, began to advocate with greater vigour and force that the Congress should not make any compromise with the British rulers. The ideas and arguments of Subhas appealed so much that he was selected for the Presidency of the fifty-first session of the Congress that was held at Haripura from 19 to 21 February 1938.

At this session he proclaimed that as President of the Congress he would do all within his power "to resist this unwanted federal scheme with all its undemocratic and anti-national features." He warned the British rulers that they should not indulge in the mistake of believing that the Congress would swallow the federal part of the Act in the same way as it had accepted ministries "despite protestations to the contrary." The annual Congress also adopted a resolution expressing resentment against the Government of Lord Linlithgow which was described as "personal and autocratic, neither responsible nor responsive to popular opinion." It alleged that the British authorities intended "not to expand but restrict liberty of the people," and asserted that there "can be no true freedom for the country so long as this Act is not ended and new constitution framed by a Constituent Assembly, elected on the basis of adult franchise." The Haripura Congress also told the Viceroy that it had no desire "to precipitate a crisis which may involve non-violent, non-cooperation and direct action," and requested him to reconsider his decision in regard to the release of political detenus and to advise the Governors to act constitutionally and accept the advice of their Ministers.

VICEROY REASSURES NON-INTERFERENCE

Linlithgow, a keen observer of international affairs, was feeling alarmed over the march of events in India and abroad. Europe, to him, appeared to be moving towards a catastrophe. He felt that if the radical element within the Congress Party got the upper

hand, much harm would be done to Britain in the eventuality of a war in Europe. Perceiving the wisdom and desirability of not losing completely the goodwill of the moderates within the Congress he responded to their appeal and intervened in the crisis between the Congress Ministries in U.P. and Bihar on the one side and the Governors on the other. On 25 February—four days after the end of Haripura Congress—the Governors expressed their willingness to re-examine individually remaining cases of political prisoners and to follow the advice of the Ministers as to the result of that examination. While for President Bose and a group of young Congressmen around him this was not enough, Gandhi, Nehru, Azad, Patel, and Rajendra Prasad favoured a compromise with the British. Their point of view prevailed, and the Congress Ministers in U.P. and Bihar were directed to resume office.

SUBHAS BOSE LEAVES CONGRESS AND FORMS FORWARD BLOC

Bose was not quite happy over the decision and he began to move away from his elderly colleagues. The cleavage during the days after Haripura continued to widen, and the Congress passed through tremendous internal commotions and convulsions. In May 1938, Bose, as President, convened a Premiers' Conference to discuss the problems of Industrial Reconstruction and Power Resources, and in pursuance of its decisions he laid down, in October, the principles of national planning and launched the National Planning Committee under the chairmanship of Nehru for drawing up a plan of industrialization of the country. This annoyed Gandhi who was in favour of small-scale industries.

Another irritant between Bose and Gandhi was the attitude of each towards the future course of national struggle. The world situation was constantly deteriorating. In mid-March 1938, Hitler had seized Austria, and the union of that country with Germany was proclaimed. Shortly thereafter, the Nazi dictator began to prepare for the annexation of Czechoslovakia. Hoping that another world war might be averted, England and France concluded with Germany, on 30 September, a Pact at Munich and agreed to persuade the Czech Government to fulfil Hitler's demand, viz. to cede the Sudetenland, preponderantly inhabited by the German people. The appeasement of the Fascist dictator whetted his appetite, and he began to lay claims to the rump Republic of Czechoslovakia.

Bose, a keen observer of world events, began to perceive that the nations of Europe were heading towards war, and that England would soon be engulfed in it. He began to prepare the Indian masses for a national struggle which should synchronize with the coming war. But Gandhi and his followers, engaged as they were in their ministerial and parliamentary work, did not favour the idea of struggle.[6]

The relations between Bose and Gandhi deteriorated further in January 1939 when the question of election of President for the new term arose. Subhas announced his candidacy, and the Mahatma put up Sitaramayya to oppose him. Bose won by a majority of about 95 votes. This disturbed Gandhi intensely. Unable to suppress his agony he came out with a public statement that the defeat of Sitaramayya was his "own"—that is Gandhi's. Bose presided over the Tripuri session, held in March, and proposed that the Congress should give to Britain an ultimatum demanding "independence within six months," and should simultaneously prepare for mass Civil Disobedience to enforce this demand. His contention was that pressed as the British Government were by developments in Europe she would not be able to face an all India *satyagraha* for a long period and would grant independence to the country. But this proposal was opposed by Gandhi, Nehru, and others who felt that the people were not yet fully prepared for such a movement, and it would be useless to fritter away energies in an uncertain direction. Bose, a sickly person at the session, could not mobilize much support for his proposal, and it fell through. He felt very sad and disappointed.

The critics of Bose's radicalism opposed him on other matters too. According to the Congress Constitution, the President was entitled to select the personnel of the CWC—the executive body. A practice had, however, developed that the members of the CWC were selected by Gandhi, or at least with his concurrence. But apprehending that his nominees would not be acceptable to Gandhi, Bose did not announce the names of the members. Over a month after the end of the Tripuri session passed and the Congress activities were almost at a standstill, a meeting of the AICC was convened in late April at Calcutta to resolve the deadlock. The names for the CWC proposed by Bose were not accepted by the Gandhites, and as a protest he resigned from the Presidency. Shortly after, he announced the formation of the "Forward Bloc," and himself

[6]Bose, *The Indian Struggle, 1920-1942*, 332.

became its first President. This was a radical and progressive party within the Congress and was set up to rally the entire left-wing under one banner.

OTHER RADICAL PARTIES IN INDIAN POLITICS

The birth of the Forward Bloc sharpened the internal conflict within the Congress Party. From 22 to 24 June 1939, the AICC met in Bombay, and it took a decision to prohibit the members of Congress from practising *satyagraha*, and declared that "any movement of *satyagraha* for any purpose should run under the direction, control and superintendence of the Provincial Congress Committee concerned." Bose opposed this decision and expressed himself in favour of struggle in view of the world situation. He and his adherents observed "9 July 1939" as a day of protest against the Bombay decision. This step caused great annoyance to the Gandhites, and he was asked to explain his conduct. On 7 August, he told the CWC that he had the constitutional right to give expression to his opinion regarding any resolution passed by the AICC, and that if doing that was a crime he was prepared to confess that he was "the arch-criminal."[7] This did not satisfy the CWC, and he was disqualified from becoming a member of any elective Congress Committee for three years as from August 1939. This marked almost a complete breach between him and the Congress, and the former launched a propaganda offensive against the latter. A rival organization to the Congress was in full swing.

The Forward Bloc was not *the* only organization with leftist programme working outside the fold of the Congress Party. There was the Communist Party of India whose existence, though banned by the Government of India, was making itself felt more and more. Then, there was M.N. Roy who had slipped out of India in 1915 to get in touch in Java with German agents who were procuring arms for a revolution in India. His plot then failed. When, in October 1917, the Bolshevik Revolution occurred in Russia he went to Moscow and impressed Lenin by his sharp intellect so much that the latter put him on the Executive Committee of the newly formed "Communist International." For a time, Roy was in Tashkent, Central Asia, training Indians, who had gone to Russia, via Afghanistan

[7]For details of Bose's letter see *ibid.*, 116-7.

Legislature. On 17 October 1937, the League changed its creed from "full Responsible Government" to "full Independence" and adopted a resolution which read as follows: "Resolved that the object of the All-India Muslim League shall be the establishment in India of full Independence in the form of a federation of free democratic states in which the rights and interests of the Musulmans and other Minorities are adequately and effectively safeguarded in the Constitution." The branches of the Muslim League were organized in every Province and district, and Jinnah toured the whole country to propagate the League point of view.

FRUITLESS CONGRESS-LEAGUE NEGOTIATIONS FOR AMITY

The communal programmes and pronouncements of the Mahasabha on the one hand and of the League on the other stirred up communal passions, and antagonism between the Hindus and Muslims pitched up quite high. The Musulmans, in large numbers, began to flock under the banner of the League and communal-minded Hindus began to swell the ranks of the Mahasabha. There were, during 1938, outbreaks on the occasion of *Holi* and *Mohurram* in U.P. and Bihar and bitter clashes, in some cases lasting for several days, at Banaras, Allahabad, Banda, Barabanki, Gaya, Jubbalpore, and Bhagalpur, and in hundreds of villages.

The Congress leadership was sad and disappointed over the political climate in the country. Gandhi, Nehru, Subhas, and others began to feel that if the goal of "Complete Independence" was to be attained it was vital that the people presented a united front to the "enemy." They particularly realized the importance of the Muslim League which was growing in size and popularity among the Muslim masses, and felt that an understanding *should* be reached with Jinnah and his colleagues. They approached Jinnah to find out what the League wanted and what its definite objectives were. In mid-May 1938, Bose, as President of the Congress, sent several letters to Jinnah, but the latter only replied: "...it is not possible for the All-India Muslim League to treat or negotiate with the Congress the question of Hindu-Muslim settlement except on the basis that the Muslim League is the authoritative and representative organization of the Musulmans of India."[12] Nehru also opened correspondence with

[12] *Ibid*, 361.

the League leader, but the latter sent long replies without spelling out in clear and unambiguous terms what he actually had in mind. On Nehru's repeated requests Jinnah presented eleven demands to the Congress which, *inter alia*, meant that the Congress should "withdraw all opposition to the Communal Award," give up the song of *Bande-Mataram*, not interfere with the Muslim's practice of cow-slaughter and, above all, should recognize the League as "the one and only authoritative and representative organization of the Indian Muslims."[13]

Admitting the League's claim would have amounted to changing the fundamental character of the Congress. Thousands of Muslims had been in the forefront of the Congress movement, and now Jinnah was demanding that they all be pushed out and the Congress be converted from a national into a communal organization. The demand was too heavy for the Congress to accept, and it was probably made so purposively in order that it might never be conceded and the odium for the failure of talks might conveniently be placed on the shoulders of the Congress leaders. Jinnah's letter of 9 October 1938 to Nehru closed all doors for a settlement and the rupture became wider. Gandhi also made efforts to iron out the differences but he too failed to win over Jinnah.

MUSLIM LEAGUE DEMANDS DIVISION OF INDIA

With Jinnah in the chair, the Sind Provincial Muslim League declared, on 10 October 1938, that it was "absolutely essential in the interests of an abiding peace of the vast Indian continent and in the interests of unhampered cultural development, the economic and social betterment and political self-determination of the two nations, known as Hindus and Muslims, that India be divided into two Federations, viz. the Federation of Muslim States and the Federation of Non-Muslim States."[14] Shortly after, two League leaders, Syed Abdul Latif and Sir Mohammed Shah Nawaz Khan, drew up schemes for a separate state for the Musulmans. Rahmat Ali began to say openly: "We are Muslem, not Hindu, Pakistani, not Hindustani, and Asian,

[13]Asoka Mehta and Achyut Patwardhan, *The Communal Triangle in India*, 199.

[14]See A.H. Albiruni, *Makers of Pakistan and Modern Muslim India* (Shaikh Mohammed Ashraf, Lahore, 1950) 218. Also see for details, Reza-ul-Karim, *Pakistan Examined*, 125.

not Indian."[15] He extended the boundaries of his Muslim Federation and suggested that it was to comprise *Pakistan* (N.W.F.P., Sind, the Punjab, Baluchistan, and Kashmere), *Usmanistan* (Hyderabad) and *Bang-i-Islam* (Bengal and Assam). During the first half of 1939, the campaign for a separate homeland for the Musulmans was built up, and the gulf between the Congress and the League continued to widen.

MUSLIM ORGANIZATIONS OTHER THAN THE LEAGUE

It would be pertinent to mention here that the League was not the only organization of the Indian Musulmans active in the country's political life. There was the *Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Hind*—an old and important organization of Muslim divines and old-fashioned scholars from all over the country. It was set up in 1919 by Maulana Mohammad-ul-Hasan—a celebrated divine of India—to give weight and vigour to the Khilafat agitation. In 1921, the *Jamiat* issued a *fatwa* and called upon the Muslims to join the Non-Cooperation and the Khilafat movements. After the death of Mohammad-ul-Hasan, Mufti Kifayatullah became the head of this organization and in 1930 and 1932, he exhorted the Musulmans to participate, and support the Civil Disobedience movement launched by the Congress. The headquarters of this organization was in Delhi, but the Deoband School—a Muslim theological seminary—was the centre of its activities.[16] The *Ulemas*, though conservative and religious in their outlook, were thoroughly opposed to foreign rule and cooperated with the Congress on the political plane. In 1939, the *Jamiat-ul-Ulema* took the initiative of bringing all the Muslim organizations (other than the League) together and forming a joint front against the League. That front was known as the Azad Muslim Conference and it continued to play a significant role in Indian politics thereafter.

Another separate organization of the Muslims, which formed part of the Conference, was the *Ahrars*—a combination of lower-middle-class Muslims. This was chiefly limited to the Punjab. It was aggressive in its outlook, but very often cooperated with

[15]Rahmat Ali, *The Millat of Islam and the Menace of Indianism* (W. Heffer and Sons, Cambridge, UK, 1940) 7.

[16]For the *Jamiat's* attitude towards the Muslim League and its demand for Pakistan, see Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi, *The Deoband School and the Demand for Pakistan* (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1963).

the Congress in its normal activities. Then, there were the *Momins*—quite vocal though not so well-organized. They were mostly the poor weavers, but detested the League policies and were friendly to the Congress. Although they avoided political action, they extended full support to the national movement under the banner of the Congress Party. The *Shia* Muslims had an organization of their own. Though mainly a religious group it expressed itself on political issues. For example, it favoured joint electorates for all. The *Shias* differed with the League, though some of them were prominent in its politics. The *kisans* of Bengal also organized themselves separately, and their combination was known as Krishak Sabha All these organizations, opposed to the League, joined hands in 1939, and cooperated with the *Jamiat-ul-Ulema* in the formation of the Azad Muslim Conference.

WAR IN EUROPE—REACTION OF CONGRESS

While the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha, and a few other political groups were weakening the bonds of India's unity the Congress, being the premier national organization, was seriously concerned about their activities and was endeavouring to foment a united front against the British Imperialism. During the first six months of 1939, the international situation deteriorated still further. In mid-March, Hitler seized the rump Republic of Czechoslovakia and also occupied Memelland — a strip of territory on the northern border of East Prussia taken away from Germany in 1919 and ceded to Lithuania. The same month, Nazi Germany imposed her control over the agricultural and mineral resources of Rumania. In April, Mussolini made Albania a part of the Italian empire. In the Far East, Japan's militarism in the quest of a "New Order in East Asia" was on the march. In February, it occupied the island of Hainan and a month later, the Spratley island. England and France were appeasing Hitler and Mussolini in Europe to avoid another world war, and the United States, committed to uphold the territorial integrity of China, disinclined to become involved in hostilities with Japan for the sake of China. To the keen observers of world events in the Congress Party the policies of the U.S., the U.K., and France appeared as inevitably leading to a world conflagration. At the Tripuri session, in March 1939, the Congress passed a resolution entirely disapproving British foreign policy "culminating in the Munich

Pact, the Anglo-Italian Agreement and the recognition of rebel Spain." It dissociated itself from the British policy of "consistently" aiding the Fascist Powers and helping "in the destruction of democratic countries." It expressed opposition to "Imperialism and Fascism alike," and declared that "world peace and progress required the ending of both of these."[17]

The storm on the international scene continued to gather. In early August, the CWC reiterated the position the AICC had taken at Tripuri, and while condemning Fascist aggression in Europe, Africa, and the Far East it expressed full sympathies "with the peoples who stand for democracy and freedom." The British policy in regard to Czechoslovakia and Spain was decried as "the betrayal of democracy," and as a first step in protest against that policy, the Congress members of the Central Legislative Assembly were called upon "to refrain from attending the next session of the Assembly."[18]

Ultimately, the inevitable came. On 1 September, Hitler's armies invaded Poland; on 3 September, the U.K. and France declared that there existed a "state of war" between them and Germany. With this, the Second World War was on. On 3 September itself, the Viceroy, without consulting or even taking into confidence the Indian leaders or the Central Legislature, proclaimed that India was at war. Indian troops began to be dispatched to Singapore and the Middle East for the defence of the British Empire, and a number of Ordinances designed to equip the Indian bureaucracy with stringent powers to suppress "internal disorder" were issued by Linlithgow. Steps were also taken, through the British Parliament, to so amend the Government of India Act of 1935 as to concentrate, in the event of a war emergency, all powers of the Provincial Governments into the hands of the Central Government.

After having taken the crucial decisions the Viceroy started consultations with the Indian leaders as if to secure their endorsement and support on what he had already done. In order to decide what attitude the Congress should adopt towards the war, the CWC met at Wardha from 8 to 14 September. Subhas was invited specially. He stressed again that India should launch its freedom struggle at once and utilize Britain's involvement in the European war to the advantage of the country. He warned the Congress leaders

[17]For details of the resolution, see Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom* (Orient Longmans, Bombay, 1959) 245.

[18]Nehru, *Discovery of India*, 431.

that if they did not make full use of the opportunity, the Forward Bloc would do so. His assertions had their effect, and on 14 September, the CWC adopted a resolution and took a grave view of the steps the Viceroy had taken. It declared that if the war was "to defend the *status quo*, imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interests and privileges, then India can have nothing to do with it. If, however, the issue is democracy and a world order based on democracy, then India is intensely interested in it." The resolution further stated that if Britain was fighting "for the maintenance and extension of democracy, then she must necessarily end imperialism in her own possessions and establish full democracy in India." The right of the Indian people to frame their constitution "without any external interference" was also asserted. The CWC asked the authorities in London to declare what their war aims were "in regard to democracy and imperialism" and how those aims were "going to apply to India and to be given effect to at present."

The CWC resolution was endorsed by the AICC on 9 October, and the demand was reemphasized that India must be declared an independent country, and democracy and the principle of "self-determination of dependent peoples" should be given widest possible application.[19]

CONGRESS MINISTRIES RESIGN

The contention of the Congress executive in demanding immediate independence was that only a free and democratic India would have some stake in the victory of Fascist Powers, and that the explicit realization of that stake alone would goad the Indian people to suffer and sacrifice on behalf of the U.K. and its allies.[20] The Viceroy conversed with Gandhi, Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, Bose, Jinnah, Savarkar, and Ambedkar and issued a statement on 17 October. As for the freedom of India, he held out the pledge that "Dominion Status" was the goal of British policy in India, and that to that end the Act of 1935 would be reconsidered after the war "in the light of Indian views" and "with due regard for the opinions of the minorities." As to immediate action, the Viceroy proposed the establishment of an advisory council—a Consultative Group—representing all India

[19]D.C. Tendulkar, *Mahatma, 1938-1940* (Government of India, New Delhi, 1952) vol. V, 177.

[20]For details of Congress arguments, see Nehru, n. 18, 434-6.

"to associate the Indian public opinion with the prosecution of the war." Almost, a similar statement was made by the Secretary of State for India, Lord Zetland, in London the following day.

Both statements caused great disappointment in Congress circles. Linlithgow was, in 1939, making a pledge that had been made by Lord Irwin ten years ago, in 1929. What disappointed the Congress leadership most was that the U.K. talked of freedom and democracy in the world, but in India whatever the Constitutional Government existed was suspended and severe restrictions were clamped on personal liberty, public meetings, and demonstrations. Imprisonment without trial became the order of the day. The Viceroy began ordering the Provincial Governments to carry out the war policy, and the latter became powerless and almost puppets in the hands of the former.

In order to review the position of the British rulers as outlined by the Viceroy, the CWC held a special meeting and described that position as "wholy unsatisfactory and calculated to arouse resentment." It called upon the Congress Ministries in U.P., C.P., Bihar, Orissa, Madras, and the N.W.F.P. to resign, and the same was done by the end of October itself. An impasse between the British Government in India and the Congress Party commenced.

CHAPTER TWELVE

DEMAND FOR PAKISTAN

THE MUSLIMS all over India were sad and disappointed over the policy of the British Government to force upon them the Constitution of 1935, particularly the Federal scheme which, according to a resolution of the Muslim League, adopted on 7 August 1939, "allows a prominent, hostile and communal majority to trample upon their religious, political, social and economic rights." The League resolution also expressed regret at "the utter neglect and indifference shown by the officers and Governors of the Congress-governed Provinces in exercising their special powers to protect and secure justice to the minorities. This resolution indicated that by late 1930's even the Muslim League was not in a mood to pin its faith in the British.

MUSLIM LEAGUE RESOLUTION ON PAKISTAN

When the war broke out in Europe, Jinnah expressed, on 7 September, sympathy for Poland, Britain, and France, but he declared that if the authorities in London wanted to prosecute the war successfully they should take Muslim India into confidence "through their accredited organization, the All-India Muslim League." The League working Committee also declared that "real Muslim cooperation and support to Britain in this hour of trial could not be secured successfully if H.M.'s Government and His Excellency the Viceroy were unable to secure to Muslims justice and fairplay in the Congress-governed Provinces." In the wake of this resolution, the CWC invited Jinnah to let it know what the League grievances against the Congress ministries were, but the latter rebuffed the gesture.[1] On 18 September, the Muslim League told the British Government that "no assurances must be given as to

[1]Nehru, *Discovery of India*, 432.

the constitutional advance nor any new constitution framed without the consent and approval of the League — the only organization that can speak on behalf of Muslim India."[2]

The Congress Party was already hostile and unwilling to lend support to the British war efforts. The policy-makers in London realized that if the Muslim League, commanding a huge Muslim following, also went out of hand, a grave situation would be created. It seemed they decided to give further encouragement and, in fact, incitement to disruptive forces in India so that the influence of the Congress might be weakened. On 10 September, the Hindu Mahasabha had already declared that the task of defending India from any military attack was "of common concern to the British Government as well as Indians." It, however, declared that in order to make the cooperation of Hindus "effective," Britain should introduce responsible government at the Centre and revise the Communal Award. Similarly, the Liberal Federation, All-India Christian Conference, and the Indian Princes extended unconditional support to the government. Many distinguished Indians, such as Rabindra Nath Tagore, urged the people to stand by Britain and resist the "disastrous policy of domination by force." In mid-October 1939, the British Government sought to appease the Muslim League also. In his statement of 17 October, the Viceroy accepted, at least implicitly, the League's claim to speak for the Muslims of India.

Feeling disappointed over the unyielding and uncompromising attitude of Britain, Gandhi, Rajendra Prasad, and Jinnah jointly met the Viceroy to discuss the British Government proposal for expanding the Executive Council. The Congress leaders took the stand that they would not be able to cooperate unless Britain accepted the Congress viewpoint, expressed in the Working Committee resolution of 14 September. Jinnah insisted that both the British Government and the Congress Party should recognize that the League was "the sole representative body of the Indian Muslims." A meeting ground between the three contending parties could not be found, and on 5 November, the Viceroy made a statement of failure of these talks.

Jinnah declared 2 December 1939 as the "Deliverance Day"—a relief from Congress rule which "at last ceased to function," and the

[2]Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol. V, 163.

League celebrated the occasion with great joy and gusto.[3] The Muslim League whipped up its campaign for Pakistan, and on 24 March 1940, its 27th session at Lahore adopted the following resolution:

> It is the considered view of this session of the All-India Muslim League that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principle, viz. that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the north-western and eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute "Independent State" in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.[4]

In his presidential address, Jinnah proclaimed that the division of India into two autonomous States was the only solution to the Indian problem.[5]

EVOLUTION OF PAKISTAN SCHEME

The idea of Pakistan continued to evolve in the months and years to come. In November 1940, a special sub-committee of the Muslim League announced that the Pakistan scheme proposed to provide, without transfer of population, a separate homeland for the entire Muslim community, with the exception of $1\frac{1}{2}$ crores, covering one-third of the total area of India. The area claimed by the League for Pakistan was to consist of Sind, Baluchistan, the Punjab, N.W.F.P. Delhi Province, some districts in U.P., Bengal (excluding two districts), Assam, Hyderabad Deccan, Kashmere, and a few districts in Madras. Each of these areas was to constitute a separate unit, owing allegiance to one common regional sovereign State. The latter, it was suggested, could enter into treaties with similar Hindu States regarding matters of common concern and if necessary, some federal form of arrangement could be divised to unite, on a voluntary basis,

[3]For Jinnah's appeal for the observance of Deliverance Day, 2 December, 1939, see Philips, ed., *The Evolution of India and Pakistan: 1858-1947*, Select Documents, 352.

[4]For full text of the resolution see *ibid*, 354-5.

[5]For details of the address see *ibid.*, 353.

the different regional sovereign States of India, each being directly responsible to the British Government. On 10 January 1941, Jinnah appealed, in Bombay, to Hindus to approach the Pakistan scheme "with fresh minds," and declared that if the country were partitioned between them, Hindus and Muslims could regard each other as friendly neighbours and say to the world "Hands off India." In April, at its annual session in Madras, the League made Pakistan its creed. On 26-27 December, the Working Committee of the League asserted that it stood immutably for Pakistan, and that Muslim India would never accept Hindu *raj*.

On 11 October 1942, Jinnah said: "We, the Muslims of India, are determined to attain our national freedom and independence by establishing our own independent sovereign states in the north-western and eastern parts of this sub-continent which are our homeland and where we are in a majority." He called it "a matter of life and death." "Either we achieve Pakistan" he said, "or we perish." Three weeks later, he again said: "To Congress or Hindu India Pakistan is anathema. To Muslims of India it is an article of faith." In an interview granted by Jinnah to *The New York Times* correspondent, Herbert Mathews, on 6 February 1943, the League leader also asserted that the north-western and north-eastern states of Pakistan "would be connected by a corridor running along the northern borders of the United Provinces and Bihar." Later on, in 1945, giving a definite picture of Pakistan, the General Secretary of the Muslim League, Liaquat Ali Khan, observed that Pakistan would embrace the N.W.F.P., Baluchistan, the Punjab, Sind, Bengal (including Calcutta) and Assam. The Muslim communalism under the League auspices, thus, continued to grow and the demand for the partition of India became insistent.

BRITISH APPEAL FOR AID

While the three main contending factions in India—the British rulers, Congress Party, and the Muslim League—were moving further apart from each other, the military situation of the war in Europe was becoming grave. After completing the conquest of Poland, Hitler did not take any military action in western Europe for eight months. This was the period of what has been called "phony war" or styled by others as "sitting war," *Sitzkrieg*. This war ended on 9 April 1940 when the German troops started the invasion of Denmark

and Norway and got easy victory. On 10 May, offensive against Luxembourg, Belgium, and Holland was launched and the Nazis occupied the three countries without facing much resistance. On 5 June, the invasion of France was begun. Realizing that it would not be able to resist the German military might successfully, the French Government surrendered and signed the armistice terms on 22 June. Even before France capitulated, German bombers inaugurated (on 18 June) air raids on British hearths and homes. Premier Winston S. Churchill said in the House of Commons: "The battle of France is over; the battle of Britain is about to begin. Let us, therefore, address ourselves to our duty, so bear ourselves that if the British Commonwealth and Empire last for a thousand years men will say: 'this was their finest hour'." The Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy appealed to the people of this country to realize the gravity of the military situation of the war and extend all possible cooperation and support.

LEAGUE OFFERS COOPERATION BUT DEMANDS PRIZE

The Muslim League expressed concern and showed willingness to cooperate if England sought close cooperation of the League and "such other parties as were willing to cooperate on an all-India basis."On 27 June, Jinnah met the Viceroy and presented "tentative proposals." He demanded that "no pronouncement or statement should be made by H.M.'s Government which would in any way militate against the basic and fundamental principles laid down by the Lahore resolution of the division of India in the north-west and the north-east of India, and that no interim or final scheme of constitution should be adopted by the British Government without the previous approval and consent of Muslim India. For the period of war, Jinnah suggested, the Viceroy's Executive Council should be enlarged within the framework of the presently existing constitutional law—the Muslim representation being equal to the Hindus if the Congress came in, and that there should be a War Council consisting of not less than 15 members, including the president, to be presided over by the Viceroy and empowered to organize defence efforts and finance and here also the representation of the Muslims to be equal to Hindus if the Congress came in; otherwise they should have the majority. The response which the Viceroy made to Jinnah's demands did not satisfy the League, and the later declared so on 28 September. The League also repudiated the

proposals of Non-Party Conference for an "interim" government put before the Viceroy by T.B. Sapru, on the ground that the "two-nation theory" was completely ignored by the Conference.

CONGRESS DEMAND FOR PROVISIONAL NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

The reaction of the Congress to the British appeal for aid was also prompt and sharp. It has already been mentioned in the preceding chapter that when asked by the Congress, in September 1939, the British Government refused to state its war aims and to make some significant advance in the direction of full Responsible Government in India. In mid-November of that year, the CWC interpreted the British attitude "as a desire to maintain Imperialist domination of India in alliance with the reactionary elements in the country" and declared that "in no event can the Congress accept the responsibility of government, even in the transitional period, without real power being given to popular representatives." The Congress executive emphasized that the Constituent Assembly was "the only democratic method of determining the constitution of a free country" and the only "adequate instrument for solving the communal and other difficulties." Realizing that there was great excitement in the country and apprehending lest the people should take to violent course the CWC, however, left the door open to explore the means of arriving at an "honourable settlement" with the British Government. It also emphasized that the basic policy of the Congress was non-violent and peaceful settlement.[6]

In March 1940, the annual session of the Congress was held at Ramgarh, in Bihar. The country was in the midst of great turmoil and tension. The people, rich and poor, were being compelled to contribute to war funds and subscribe to war loans. The one-man rule of the Governors in the Provinces flourished and the oppression of the masses at the hands of petty police officials was intensifying. The Congressmen were being put behind the bars for, what Nehru described, "their normal activities." Utmost use was being made of the Defence of India Act to suppress the nationalist zeal and enthusiasm of the people. The Ramgarh Congress, in a formal resolution, reiterated that "nothing short of Complete Independence can be accepted by the people of India," and that no permanent

[6]Nehru, n. 1, 440.

solution was possible "except through a Constituent Assembly." While the Congress did not decide anything about its war policy, it felt that Civil Disobedience was "*the* only course left."[7] It, however, had no inclination to embarrass the British at a time when they were involved in a life-and-death struggle. Writing in the *Harijan* of 6 April 1940, Gandhi noted that "until the conditions for starting Civil Disobedience were fulfilled it could not be started in any case." He also declared: "*We do not seek our independence out of Britain's ruin. That is not the way of non-violence.*"[8] On 20 May, Nehru stated: "Launching a Civil Disobedience campaign at a time when Britain is engaged in a life-and-death struggle would be an act derogatory to India's honour."[9]

When France succumbed to Germany and the Viceroy appealed for aid and cooperation C. Rajagopalachari, a man of sharp intellect and penetrating powers of analysis and Premier of Madras when the Congress Ministry functioned there, insisted on another attempt to seek an understanding with Britain. On his initiative the Congress, on 27 July, made an offer of cooperation in the war, provided its demand for Independence was conceded and a provisional National Government, responsible to the then Central Assembly, was formed at the Centre. The Viceroy, it was suggested, would continue to hold office, but he would not, it was to be presumed, veto the decisions of the National Government. These steps if taken, the Congress leadership indicated, would create the "psychological background" in the country and would enthuse the people to come forward with "the fullest cooperation in the war."[10]

Viceroy turns down Congress Demand

The Viceroy in New Delhi and the Secretary of State in London, it seemed, wanted to get full aid and support form the Indian people in their fight against Germany, but they had no inclination to transfer

[7]Nehru, n. 1, 442. Also see Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 32. (Italics added.)

[8]Quoted in *The Indian Struggle, 1920-1942*, 344. (Italics added.)

[9]*Ibid.* In April, there gathered in Delhi representatives of the various Muslim nationalist parties under the auspices of *Azad* Muslim Conference. They condemned League's resolution on Pakistan, supported the Congress demand for a Constituent assembly and proclaimed their determination to fight shoulder-to-shoulder with their countrymen for the attainment of Complete Independence.

[10]Nehru, n. 1, 443. Also see Nehru, *Toward Freedom*, 370-1.

power into their hands. In reply to Congress demand of 27 July, for a provisional National Government the Viceroy issued, on 8 August, a statement on "India and the War," and observed that the new constitution should be primarily the responsibility of the Indians themselves, but Britain "could not contemplate transfer of their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life. Nor could they be parties to the coercion of such elements into submission to such a government." The constitutional issues could not be decisively resolved, the Viceroy asserted, "at a moment when the Commonwealth is engaged in a struggle for existence."

He, however, observed that after the war was over "a representative Indian constitution-making body would be set up, and the Indian proposal as to its form and operation would at any time be welcome." In the meantime, he observed, his Executive Council would be enlarged and an Advisory War Council would be established "which would contain representatives of the Indian States and of other interests in the national life of India as a whole."[11]

INDIVIDUAL SATYAGRAHA

The reaction to Viceroy's statement in Indian political circles was sharp and mixed. The League considered it as "a considerable progressive advance" towards, and an approach to, the point of view taken up by it, and it expressed satisfaction. The Hindu Mahasabha also adopted a conciliatory attitude. T.B. Sapru, representing the Liberal Federation, said the declaration opened "a new vista," and he urged its acceptance. Sir Sikandar of the Punjab Unionist Party considered it "a substantial concession to Indian opinion" and suggested that the Congress and the Muslim League should "concentrate their attention on points of substance."

To the Congress Party, however, the Viceroy's statement offered nothing but disappointment. There was not even implicit recognition of its demand for a provisional National Government. The President of the Congress, Maulana Azad, was so much depressed that he refused an invitation from Linlithgow even to discuss, because

[11]For text see Parl. Papers, X, *India and the War* (1939-40), Cmd. 6219.

he saw no scope for fruitful discussions.[12] On 15 September, the Congress withdrew the offer of cooperation it had made on 27 July. Gandhi, who only a few months before was unwilling to launch any Civil Disobedience movement, decided to start resistance to the British war efforts, and he announced his plan for "direct action." On 17 October, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, a trusted disciple of the Mahatma, inaugurated the campaign at Panaur, ascribing it necessary for three reasons—first, because the Congress demand for a National Government had been rejected; second, because freedom of speech against the war effort had been denied and third, because the British rulers were not prepared to admit that India was a belligerent not of her own free will.

Gandhi did not offer *satyagraha* himself, because he felt his imprisonment would cause greater embarrassment to the government and might be interpreted as a signal to all Congressmen to follow his example. He, at that time, favoured only "individual" *satyagraha*. On 7 November, a research student at the Gandhi *Ashram*, Brahm Dutt Nirmal, offered *satyagraha*, and this was followed by numerous others. Towards the end of November, "individual" *satyagraha* was offered by Congressmen all over the country. It continued during December.

FURTHER DETERIORATION IN MILITARY SITUATION OF ALLIED POWERS

While this movement was on in India, the military situation of the United Kingdom and its Allies deteriorated still further. In the second week of August, the Germans started large-scale air attacks upon Britain and the British war machine was put in jeopardy. The Italian troops were striking against Greece, and the security of eastern Mediterranean was endangered. In the Far East, Japan had occupied most of eastern China, Chinese sea-ports, main cities and centres of industrial production. On 23 September, the Japanese entered into northern Indo-China, and the thrust for the conquest of South-east Asia began. Four days later, Japan concluded the Tripartite Agreement with Germany and Italy, and the three "aggressors" began to talk of a "New Order in Europe and Greater East Asia."

[12]Azad declined the invitation without consulting the CWC members; see his book, n. 7, 36.

In such circumstances, the Viceroy decided not to let the situation in India go out of hand. The forces of repression were let loose and the police and magistracy were put to full use. On 26 October, an Order forbade publication of matter "calculated to hinder the war efforts or of reports of meetings or speeches designed to foment opposition to the government's war policy." On 30 October, Nehru was arrested under the Defence of India Rules, and in November, all the Congress Ministers in eight Provinces, who took part in the movement, were put in jail alongwith hundreds of influential leaders. On 3 January 1941, Azad was arrested even before he "had a chance of offering individual *satyagraha*."[13] During the first three months of 1941, Congressmen continued to offer *satyagraha*, and by 3 March, 4,749 of them were arrested and Rs. 2,09,663 were collected as fines. The Muslim League characterized, on 23 February, the Congress move as "an attempt to bring pressure on the British Government to concede its demand."[14] It warned Linlithgow that if he conceded Congress demands, the Musulmans would resist "with all their power."[15] During 1941, the Civil Disobedience movement, however, continued, but there was not much enthusiasm on the part of Gandhi and his followers.

AMERY'S STATEMENT ON INDIA'S CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTION, 22 APRIL 1941

Not only the Government of India was engaged in suppressing the Congress movement; the authorities in London also adopted a more reactionary attitude towards the Congress demands. On 22 April 1941, the Secretary of State for India, Leopold S. Amery, made a statement in the House of Commons and observed:

> Anxious as we are to see the responsibility of Indian Government resting on Indian shoulders we can only transfer it to an authority that can assume it without immediately breaking down or breaking up. At this crisis of the war the basis of administrative and legislative power could not be changed, or the direction of India's war efforts given to an entirely new Executive.... Indian statesmen must first find the indispensable measure of agreement, freely

[13] *Ibid.*, 38.
[14] Noman, *Muslim India*, 341.
[15] *Ibid.*

reached, before Britain could contribute further towards her own task of joining with them in crowning peace and unity with freedom. . . . .

Disappointment in Indian Political Circles

Amery's statement appeared to the Congress leadership more retrogressive than the Viceroy's statement of 8 August 1940. His demand for an agreement, among the Indian statesmen belonging to different parties, as a condition precedent to any change at the Centre caused great annoyance and resentment. Mahatma Gandhi attacked what he called Amery's "callousness" and "contemptuous disregard of the situation in India," and said: "The Secretary of State had insulted Indian intelligence by reiterating *ad nauseam* that Indian political parties have but to agree among themselves and Britain will register the will of united India." "Admittedly," Gandhi pointed out, "the gap between the Congress and the Muslim League seemed unbridgeable, but if the British statesmen withdrew, recognizing that this was only a domestic quarrel, Congress, the League and all other parties would come together out of self-interest and devise a home-made scheme for the Government of India."

T.B. Sapru also described Amery's statement "indiscreet and unfortunate" and called British policy as of "mortgaging our future to certain intractable leaders." V.N. Savarkar, President of the National Liberal Federation, said the speech had created "depression and hopelessness among all who had worked for a better understanding between Britain and India."

DOCTRINE OF "FOUR FREEDOMS" AND ATLANTIC CHARTER

The German war-machine was in full swing and its bombers were causing terrific damage and havoc to British military targets and centres of industrial production. The political and military authorities in London began to feel that they would not be able to withstand the German might for long, if left to themselves. After December 1940, Churchill sent several letters and cables to the U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt telling him that if the United States did not defend the United Kingdom, its own security would be seriously jeopardized. These communications created a war hysteria in Washington, and the policy-makers there began to prepare the American people psychologically for participation in the European war. On

6 January 1941, Roosevelt enunciated the doctrine of "Four Freedoms"—freedom of speech and expression everywhere in the world, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear—and he urged Congress (American Parliament) to make the United States "arsenal of democracy."

On 14 August 1941, after several meetings in mid-Atlantic Ocean, Roosevelt and Churchill issued a statement of common war aims and principles—known as the Atlantic Charter—and declared, *inter alia*, that they "respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them."

These pronouncements roused some hopes in India, and the Congress urged that if Britain were sincere and honest about them, why not apply them to this country. To this, Churchill replied, on 9 September, that those principles referred only to European countries and not to the evolution of self-government within the Empire. This created acute frustration and disappointment in India, and the leaders and the people found themselves in a doleful situation. Gandhi, Rajendra Prasad, Acharya Kripalani, Sapru, and V.D. Savarkar reacted sharply and observed that Churchill's statement was a clear indication that the Viceroy's Declaration of 8 August 1940 remained the British Government's last word, and that she was not willing to concede Congress demands.

SUBHAS BOSE LEAVES INDIA

Of all the people Subhas Bose was perhaps the most depressed over the British attitude. He was a widely travelled person and had seen people in different lands fighting and campaigning for their political freedom and economic advancement. He wanted that the torch of freedom struggle should be kept burning in his country also. He was, in the words of Ganpuley, "an independent thinker, not a leftist but radical and a fast thinking politician." His view in 1939 was that the fight should be launched to so weaken the position of the British that they were forced to come to terms with the nationalist forces in India. But his views were not in line with those of Gandhi, Nehru, and Azad, and he resigned from the Congress Presidentship—an office he had won by defeating the Mahatma's candidate, Sitaramayya. After the attack of France by Germany, Subhas met Gandhi and

urged the launching of Civil Disobedience campaign. But the Mahatma remained non-committal and repeated the view that the country was not prepared for a fight and any attempt to precipitate it would do more harm than good. Bose met Jinnah, but because he [Bose] was thoroughly opposed to Pakistan and held the view that the acceptance of Pakistan would mean the complete victory of British policies, the League leader also did not welcome his ideas for a mass movement. He also met the great revolutionary leader of Mahasabha, Savarkar, but he too was unwilling to take up the struggle at that moment.

Subhas considered Britain's involvement in the war as "a golden opportunity" for India, but he was sad that neither the Congress nor any other political party was prepared to utilize it to the fullest advantage. He himself decided to take up the fight. He declared his intention to lead personally a batch of Forward Bloc volunteers to demolish the "notorious" Holwell Monument which had been built to perpetuate "the now disproved Black Hole of Calcutta" story. On 2 July 1940, he and his companions were arrested and he was put in the Presidency jail. On grounds of illness, he was released on 5 December of the same year, but was interned in his Elgin Road residence.

Although the Congress individual *satyagraha* movement was then on, Bose was not quite happy over its progress. He had read the histories of many countries which had regained their freedom by the help of "the enemies of the enemy." Instead of languishing in confinement Bose thought of utilizing the "Fascist reactionaries" to destory the "Imperialist monster." In order to supplement from outside the struggle going on at home, Subhas decided to leave for Germany. Under the nose of Calcutta police, he escaped from home on 26 January 1941. On 25 March, he reached Berlin via Kabul and Moscow in disguise, and began to discuss with Hitler the possibility of forming an army of Indians residing in German-occupied territory and from among the Indian Prisoners-of-War (POWs) who had either been captured or had deserted in the African theatre of operations. In November, he set up the "Azad Hind Radio" with the object of telling the Indian people "about the British, about their betrayal, about the evil of foreign rule and about their own duties to their country." In early 1942, he succeeded in forming the first battalion of the "Free India Legion" in Germany and persuaded the Indian POWs to take up arms against Britain. In April 1942,

he set up the "Free India Centre" to discuss plans and policies without any interference from the German authorities.

Bose continued to build up the Legion, and its strength reached to 3,500 men. These troops lived and worked in Europe for the freedom of India under most trying circumstances.

But Subhas Babu began to realize that Germany had nothing to offer him in the way of an advanced base in any of its theatres of war for his fight to free India. He also felt that in Europe he would not have either the men or the finances to work out his idea of building up a real National Army. He saw better opportunities for his work in the South-east Asian region. There, Rangoon, the capital city of Burma, fell into the Japanese hands, and the latter began to move towards the north and the west. On 22 June, an "Indian Freedom Congress" meeting at Bangkok (Thailand) decided to form an "Indian Independence League" for the whole of Greater East Asia under Rash Behari Bose—another revolutionary leader. These developments impressed Bose very much, and he decided to move to Japan. In a submarine supplied by Germany he sailed, on 8 February 1943, for the Far East. A new element entered into India's struggle for freedom.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE CRIPPS MISSION

DURING THE 12-month period, from June 1940 to June 1941, the military situation of the Allied Powers in the European and Asian Theatres became very grave. After the capitulation of France the Germans had started war against the British Isles, and it was only the flow of American arms and ammunition that saved the British war machine from complete destruction. Realizing that victory over the United Kingdom would not be easy, Germany opened war in the Balkan Peninsula and took over the island of Crete and thereby came in possession of a valuable base of operations against the British Mediterranean fleet. The war spread into the Middle Eastern region also.

GERMANY ATTACKS SOVIET UNION AND JAPAN BOMBARDS PEARL HARBOUR

On 22 June 1941, in violation of the Pact of Non-aggression and Neutrality concluded on 23 August 1939, Germany launched an attack against the Soviet Union and with this, the war entered into a new phase. The Nazi troops achieved astounding victories at several points within the Russian territory, and this brought home to the authorities in London and Washington the gravity of the military situation. They realized that if the Nazis succeeded in overpowering Russia the position of Germany would become very strong and Britain would not be able to hold on for long in the face of the added strength of Germany. With British Isles in hand, Hitler would become the master of Europe—nay the whole of Africa and several countries of Asia. Equipped with their resources and manpower, the Nazi dictator, it was felt, would march towards the Atlantic for the conquest of the "New World." With this realization, both Churchill and Roosevelt declared their solidarity with Stalin and proclaimed that they would give all aid and military material to the Soviet Union.

In the Asian Theatre also, the Allied Powers were in a sad plight. The Japanese had penetrated into Indo-China and their thrust, in the quest of a "New World Order," was on in the South-east Asian region. The negotiations that were started by the Japanese diplomats in Washington, in April 1941, to resolve the conflict with the United States in a peaceful manner produced no result, and all of a sudden, the Japanese bombers struck at the American navy in Pearl Harbour, on 6 December 1941. The news of the disaster wrought by Japan reached America, and the Administration, Congress and the people were full of rage and annoyance. War was declared upon Japan and the United States, thereafter, became fully involved in fighting.

CONGRESS LEADERS ARE RELEASED

While Britain and its Allies were, thus, involved in the war, the Congress was carrying on the Civil Disobedience campaign against the British. Subhas Bose had left the country to make friendship with the "enemies of the enemy" and to reinforce the freedom struggle from abroad. The Muslim League's demands for Pakistan was becoming more and more insistent, and its leaders were no longer in a mood to extend cooperation in the war efforts.[1] The policy-makers in London began to realize that much damage would be done to the war cause by an unfriendly India, and that, therefore, efforts should be made to reconcile differences with the Congress Party, particularly. As a first gesture in that direction, Churchill ordered, on 4 December 1941, the release of many of its leaders, including Azad and Nehru.

The Congress Party had no inclination to have the British Imperialism replaced by that of the Japanese. When asked at a press conference at Calcutta, Maulana Azad, the then Congress President, declared that if attacked, "Indians should take up the sword to defend the country."[2] On 16 January 1942, the CWC passed a resolution and offered cooperation in the war effort once again. But this offer was subject to the government changing its attitude.[3] The British

[1]Churchill also wrote: "The two great Indian political parties—the Congress and Muslim League—were either actively hostile or gave no help"; see Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War, The Hinge of Fate* (Cassell and Co., Ltd., London, 1951) 182.

[2]Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 39.

[3]*Ibid.*

authorities, however, made no immediate response.

PRESIDENT CHIANG KAI-SHEK VISITS INDIA

On 10 February, the President of the Republic of China, Chiang Kai-shek, and his wife came to India—apparently at the instance of London—with the object of rallying "Indian opinion against Japan and to emphasize the importance for Asia as a whole, and for India and China in particular of Japanese defeat."[4] They conferred with Nehru, a few other Congress leaders and some members of the Viceroy's Executive Council, such as Sir Sultan Ahmed, M.S. Aney, and Ramaswamy Mudaliar. Chiang impressed upon Congress leadership the urgency and desirability of an understanding with the British rulers in the face of a common danger from Japan.

FALL OF SINGAPORE AND RANGOON

In January 1942, Thailand, on the side of Axis Powers, declared war on the U.S. and U.K., and on 15 February, Japanese General, Yamashita, took control of Malaya. On the same day, Singapore—British stronghold in South-east Asia—fell into Japanese hands. This caused great consternation in London. The security of the Indian subcontinent was now directly endangered. The Japanese navy was, it appeared, free to enter, almost unchallenged the Bay of Bengal. "India was threatened," as Churchill has recorded, "for the first time under British rule with large-scale foreign invasion by an Asiatic Power."[5]

On 8 March, the Japanese army entered Rangoon, and this appeared to be a prelude to the conquest of the whole of Burma. It [Japanese Army] had engulfed the whole island barrier of the Dutch East Indies, together with Thailand and all British Malaya, and also occupied the Andaman Islands. The Japanese occupation of southern Burma now menaced India itself. Invasion of eastern India carried with it the danger of the loss of Calcutta and the severance of all contact with China through Burma. There was also the danger of serious upheaval inside India, and the whole plan of the war was likely to be affected. The Japanese could also become the domina-

[4]Churchill, n. 1, 183.
[5]*Ibid.*, 182.

ting factor in the western India Ocean. "This would," Churchill thought, "result in the collapse of our whole position in the Middle East, not only because of the interruption of our convoys to the Middle East and India but also because of the interruptions to the oil supplies from Abadan without which we cannot maintain our position either at sea or on land in the Indian Ocean area."

ROOSEVELT'S COUNSEL TO CHURCHILL TO MAKE UP WITH CONGRESS PARTY

So long as the American people were out of the war they remained largely unconcerned about how Britain was dealing with the nationalist forces in India. But the news of the disaster the U. S. Navy suffered at Pearl Harbour staggered the American prestige, and the public opinion became more and more insistent in demanding that "India's voluntary cooperation in the war effort must be secured."[6] Towards the end of February 1942, Roosevelt instructed American diplomat Averell Harriman to sound Churchill "on the possibility of a settlement between the British Government and the Indian political leaders."[7] After the Japanese began to advance westward into Asia, the Congress leaders made to the British authorities proposals to create some common front against them, to recognize India's sovereign status and to form an all-India National Government. "The U. S. Government also," as Churchill recorded, "began to express views and offer counsel on Indian affairs."[8] On 10 March, two days after the fall of Rangoon, Roosevelt sent to the British Premier a long cable on the Indian problem. He wrote: "It is merely a thought of mine to suggest the setting up of a temporary government in India, headed by a small representative group—this group to be recognized as a temporary Dominion Government. ... The central temporary governing group ... would have certain executive and administrative powers over Indian services, such as finances, railways, telegraphs and other things which we call public services. "This representative group," Roosevelt further wrote, "would be charged with the duty of considering the structure of the permanent government of India." "Perhaps some such method," he noted, "might cause the people of India to forget past hard feelings and to become more loyal to the British

[6]Azad, n. 2, 47.
[7]Churchill, n. 1, 185.
[8]*Ibid.*

Empire. . . ." The Chief Executive added that it was "none of my business" to meddle into the affairs of the Empire, but that he would "want to be of help." The move towards the achievement of self-government of India, Roosevelt, however, observed, would originate in London.[9]

In view of the cooperative attitude of the Congress Party, suggestion from the American President and grave danger to the defence of India, the Indian political situation was discussed by the War Cabinet, and Churchill and almost all his colleagues felt that effort must be made to break the political deadlock, to make an offer of Dominion Status after the war to the peoples of India "in the most impressive manner," and to send Sir Stafford Cripps to India "to conduct direct discussions on the spot with the leaders of all Indian parties and communities."[10] On 11 March, the day after Roosevelt's cable, Churchill announced the Cripps mission.

Sir Stafford Cripps was well-versed in Indian politics and had close relations with Gandhi and Nehru. After Germany's attack of the Soviet Union he had been sent on "a most delicate mission" to Moscow to devise close collaboration between the British and Russians, and after his return his reputation stood very high in the eyes of the British public. By choosing a man of Cripps's eminence for a mission to India Churchill apparently wanted to display to the Indians, the Americans and his own people at home that he attached great importance to the solution of India's problem; but the more real reason appeared to be that he wanted to still what he described "febrile agitation" in India and to gain time "for the problem to be calmly solved."

CRIPPS MISSION

Cripps arrived in Delhi on 22 March, and soon after, started conferring with leaders of Congress, Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha, and representatives of the Princes, Nationalist Muslims and other political parties. Jinnah and Sir Firoz Khan Noon, a Muslim member of Viceroy's Executive Council, sent notes to the British statesman, stating that if Britain did anything to sacrifice the interests of Muslim

[9]Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins, An Intimate History* (Harper and Brothers, New York, 1948) 511-2. Also see Churchill, n. 1, 189.

[10]*Ibid.*, 190.

India, great harm would be done to its war effors, and that if H.M.'s Government wanted to secure free and equal partnership of the Muslims, the demand for Pakistan must be accepted. Other political leaders also presented their point of view to Cripps. These discussions being over, Sir Stafford made the following proposals on behalf of the British Government. First explaining the object, he stated that Britain wanted to create a new Indian Union "which shall constitute a Dominion associated with the United Kingdom and the other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown, but equal to them in every respect in no way subordinate in any respect of its domestic and external affairs." Then he declared:

> (*a*) Immediately upon cessation of hostilities, steps shall be taken to set up in India . . . an elected body charged with the task of framing a new Constitution for India.
>
> (*b*) Provision shall be made for participation of Indian States in the constitution-making body.
>
> (*c*) His Majesty's Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the constitution so framed subject only to (*i*) the right of any province of British India, that is not prepared to accept the new constitution, to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession if it so decides[11]

The essence of Cripps proposals was that Britain would recognize India's independence *after the war* if demanded by a constituent assembly. The only change that could be made *during the war* was that the Viceroy's Executive Council would be entirely Indian and consist of leaders of the political parties. In order to solve the communal problem the scheme gave to the Provinces option to join the Union.

The Congress leaders, Azad and Nehru who conversed with Cripps, expressed the view that there should be immediately a National Government, and that without constitutional change, there should be definite assurance indicating that the new government would function as a free government whose members would act as members of a Cabinet in a constitutional government. They also expressed willingness *to entrust to the Commander-in-Chief freedom and authority*

[11]For details, see Appendix, cited in Azad, n. 2, 228-9.

to control and conduct the military, technical, and naval defence. They enquired from Cripps as to what would be the position of the Governor-General in the proposed scheme, and were told that the Governor-General would "function as constitutional head like the King in the United Kingdom," and that "power would rest with the Council as it rests with the British Cabinet."[12] This position was taken by Cripps without consultation with Lord Linlithgow but "presumably with the assistance of Louis Johnson"—the then Personal Representative of Roosevelt in India.[13] The Viceroy felt neglected—in fact, offended—and sent to Churchill a despatch pointing out that he and Cripps "could have got Nehru's agreement to the original proposal, had not Cripps and Johnson worked out this new arrangement."[14]

Churchill read this communication from New Delhi to John Hopkins and George C. Marshall in the course of discussions at 10 Downing Street, 10.30 to 12, on 8 April. Hopkins was the Administrative Assistant and a great confidant of Roosevelt and Marshall was the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army. They were in London to discuss with the British Premier and Minister of Defence "plans for establishment of a new front on the European Continent." Churchill told them that it was a very grave matter that India demanded self-government "at a time when the Japanese were dangerously close to her borders and destroying shipping in the Indian Ocean at an alarming rate."[15] The same day, Hopkins cabled the President that Johnson should not make any attempt to mediate "the Indian business," and that the United States should not make any proposal which the British Government was likely to reject.[16] To Cripps, Churchill wrote that he would be repudiated if he "went too far."[17] Fresh instructions came for him to deal with the Indian constitutional problem, and the result was that when Azad sought a second interview with Cripps, the British diplomat did not state categorically that the Executive Council would have "full and unfettered freedom of decision." He told Azad that "the position now enjoyed by the

[12]Azad, n. 2, 49.

[13]Sherwood, n. 9, 524.

[14]*Ibid.*

[15]William D. Hassett, *Off the Record with FDR—1942-1945* (Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1958) 35.

[16]Sherwood, n. 9, 524.

[17]*Ibid*, 52.

Viceroy could not be changed without a change in the law."[18]

Failure of Mission

The Congress Party had nothing to do with the position as presented by Cripps. There was nothing very new and really substantial in what he offered. While the Congress demanded changes in the governmental system immediately, Cripps proposal lay emphasis only on the future. The continued stay of the Viceroy at the helm of affairs meant so many limitations, and as Nehru has put it "even the very acceptance of the principle of self-determination was fettered and circumscribed in such a way as to imperil our future."[19] The public opinion in India was getting restive, and it was felt no longer politic for the Congress Party to let the mass enthusiasm drift into depression or undirected and ill-considered channels. On 11 April, the CWC adopted a resolution and rejected the Cripps proposals. It restated that "only a free and independent India" could "undertake the defence of the country on a national basis," that the "fettered and circumscribed" acceptance by Britain of India's right of self-determination was not acceptable, that the Congress "has been wedded to Indian freedom and unity and any break in that unity..... would be injurious to all concerned," and that the British proposal would encourage separation "at the very inception of a Union" and would create friction "just when the utmost cooperation and goodwill are most needed." In a letter Azad informed Cripps that the British offer as it stood was unacceptable to Congress and to the people of India.[20] Towards the end of April, the AICC met at Allahabad and confirmed what the CWC had decided, viz. that it was impossible for Congress to "consider any schemes or proposals which retain even a partial measure of British control in India."

The Cripps mission failed, and on 12 April, he left for London by air.

Roosevelt Calls for Another Effort

Churchill sent a message to Roosevelt, while Cripps was still in India, that negotiations with the Indian leaders had failed "on general broad issues." He wrote back to the British Premier that "all possible efforts" must be made to prevent a break-down of the Cripps negotia-

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] Nehru, *Discovery of India*, 462.

[20] *Ibid.* 470-2. Also see Azad, n. 2, 62-3.

tions. He noted: "Should the current negotiations be allowed to collapse . . . and should India subsequently be invaded successfully by Japan, with attendant serious defeats of a military or naval character for our side, it would be hard to overestimate the prejudicial reaction [against the U.K.] on American public opinion. The feeling is held almost universally that the deadlock has been due to the British Government's unwillingness to concede the right of self-government to the Indians." "It is impossible for American public opinion to understand," Roosevelt asserted, "why, if there is willingness on the part of the British Government to permit the component parts of India to secede after the war from the British Empire, it is unwilling to permit them to enjoy during the war what is tantamount to self-government." He expressed the feeling that a solution could be found "if the component groups in India could now be given an opportunity to set up a National Government . . . with the understanding that after a period of trial and error the Indian people would then be enabled to decide upon their own form of constitution and their future relationship with the Empire."[21]

Churchill considered Roosevelt's suggestion as "an act of madness" and "idealism at other people's expense."[22] He took up the contents of Roosevelt's cable with Hopkins, who was still in London, and told him that if the policy suggested by Roosevelt was pursued the whole subcontinent of India would be thrown "into utter confusion while the Japanese invader was at its gates." After pointing out the damage that would be done to the Allied war cause, he told the American diplomat that serious differences would develop between the U. S. and the U.K. if any attempt was made "to reopen the Indian constitutional issue in this way at this juncture."[23] This was sufficient indication for Hopkins that "the subcontinent of India was one area where the minds of Roosevelt and Churchill would never meet." He told his boss in Washington that the matter should not be emphasized "at the present time." The Chief Executive followed the advice.

CHURCHILL'S RELUCTANCE TO CONCEDE CONGRESS DEMANDS

It would be pertinent to examine here why the British Prime Minister

[21]For details see Sherwood, n. 9, 53, and Churchill, n. 1, 193.
[22]*Ibid.*, 194.
[23]Sherwood, n. 9, 531.

adopted such a hostile attitude towards the demands of the Congress Party. The first reason, of course, appeared to be the military situation of the war. As early as 7 January 1942, he noted: "I hope my colleagues will realize the danger of raising constitutional issues, still more of making constitutional changes in India at a moment when enemy is upon the frontier. The idea that we should 'get more out of India' e.g. putting the Congress in charge at this juncture seems ill-founded." "Bringing hostile elements into the defence machine," he felt, "will paralyse action."[24] During March-April, the situation became worse. The resources of Britain were "slender and strained to the full." "The armies," as Churchill has pointed out, "had surrendered or were recoiling before the devastating strokes of Japan. Our Navy had been driven out of the Bay of Bengal and indeed out of most of the Indian Ocean. We had apparently been out-matched in the air." "This was no time," the British Premier recorded, "to determine the future relationship of India to the British Empire."[25]

The more real basis of Churchill's attitude towards India's demand for a National Government was his concern about the solidarity of the British Empire. Since 1931, he had been fighting "obstinately and often fiercely" to retain the British rule in India. "The spectacle of Gandhi," as Alan Moorehead has put it, "affronted him." "It was alarming and also nauseating to see Mr. Gandhi, a seditious Middle Temple lawyer, now posing as a *fakir* or a type well-known in the East, striding half-naked up the steps of the Viceregal Palace."[26] After he became, on 11 May 1940, the Prime Minister of Coalition Government, he openly stated that he had not become the First Minister of H.M.'s Government "to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire." Hopkins revealed, later on, that during the entire war no suggestions from Roosevelt were "so wrathfully received" by Churchill as those relating to solution of the "Indian problem." One of Churchill's closest and most affectionate associates told Hopkins: "The President might have known that India was one subject on which Winston would never move a yard."[27] Sherwood

[24]Churchill, *The Second World War, The Grand Alliance* (Cassell and Co., Ltd., London, 1950) 614.

[25]Churchill, n. 1, 194. Azad has given some other reasons also for Churchill's rigidity; see Azad, n. 2, 52.

[26]Allan Moorehead, *Churchill* (Thames and Hudson, London, 1960) 69

[27]Quoted in Sherwood, n. 9, 512.

also wrote thus:

> It was indeed one subject on which the normal, broad-minded, good-humoured, give-and-take attitude which prevailed between the two statesmen was stopped cold. It may be said that Churchill would see the Empire in ruins and himself buried under them before he would concede the right of any American, however great and illustrious a friend, to make any suggestions as to what he should do about India.[28]

From a government headed by so die-hard a Conservative as Churchill no better treatment of the Indian problem could possibly be expected, particularly at a time when Britain was struggling for its own survival.

[28] *Ibid.*

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

THE ONE-ACT PLAY performed by the Director of the White Hall [Churchill] on the stage of Indian politics was over; but the impression it left on the mind of the audience was one of disappointment, depression and sorrow. The Congressmen were sad because there was, in the Cripps proposal, no willingness to make the Executive responsible to the Legislature. The Muslim League disliked the offer because "the freedom of a province to cut out of the union ... was neither clear nor full to the point of conceding the segmentation of India as desired by it in the demand of Pakistan." The Hindu Mahasabha resented the very idea of dismembering "Hindustan even in a rudimentary form." The depressed classes did not find adequate safeguards in the new Scheme. The people in the Princely States were not given any consideration in the proposal, and, therefore, they had nothing to do with what Cripps offered. The Indian Christians and leaders of Labour organizations held views almost identical to those of the Congress. The only organization that looked with favour upon the offer was the Radical Democratic Party, but that Party was hardly of much significance in the country. The British authorities, it was becoming manifest, had no desire to arrive at any settlement with the nationalist forces in India.

POLITICAL CLIMATE OF INDIA AFTER CRIPPS' DEPARTURE

Before, during, and after the Cripps Mission, the Government of India was engaged in suppressing even the "normal political and public activities."[1] Many Congressmen were still in jail, and the prison doors were being closed on many more. In early May, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, a prominent leader of U.P., was arrested under the Defence

[1]Nehru, *Discovery of India*, 478.

of India Act, and the President of U.P. Provincial Committee, Krishna Datt Paliwal, and several others were detained shortly after. The indication was that the government was planning to take more stringent measures to disintegrate the Congress and prevent it from functioning freely.

Subhas Bose had been watching from Berlin the march of events in India and on the military fronts. He was broadcasting fiery and inflammatory speeches to incite the Indian public against Britain and was telling them that "Britain's difficulties" were "an opportunity" for them to attain their freedom. He was urging the people "to cooperate intimately with Japan in the noble task of creating a great Asia."[2] Although pro-Japanese sentiment was not very strong, it was increasing. The Congress Party did not like that the bitter anti-British feelings among Indian people should develop into pro-Japanese sentiments, because it hated the Japanese imperialism as much as it detested the British, and the Congress leaders had no desire, as Nehru has put it, "to change masters." The public rejoicings over Japan's victories caused great anxiety and apprehension to Congress leaders, and they began to feel that continued inactivity and lack of direction would do much harm to India's struggle for freedom.

Difference among Congress Leaders

After the failure of Cripps Mission, wide differences developed among the top leaders of the Congress Party as to the future course of action. Having become convinced that the British authorities were not prepared to concede Congress demands Nehru felt that the minimum conditions on which to negotiate with Britain should be a formal declaration by her, acknowledging the independence of India at once and asking the various parties to get together and form a Provisional Government. This government, he thought, should negotiate with Britain how best it could cooperate with the military efforts of the United Nations,[3] and the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied

[2]For details of Bose's broadcasts in April-May 1942, see Government of India, Publication Division, *Selected Speeches of Subhas Chander Bose* (New Delhi, 1962), 138-45.

[3]After the Pearl Harbour episode, twenty-six nations, including the U.S.A., the U.K. the U.S.S.R., and China, signed a short document on 1 January 1942, pledging maximum war effort. This, later on, came to be known as United Nations Declaration.

forces should *be fully supported in regard to "his" decisions relating to the military matters.*[4] On the question of resistance to the Japanese, Nehru felt that non-violent non-cooperation on the part of the unarmed civilian population would be "the only method." His thinking was that there should be no submission to the Japanese, no obeisance to their orders or no acceptance of any favours from them. "If the invading forces sought to take possession of the people's homes and fields," Nehru asserted, "they must be resisted even unto death." He even thought of guerrilla units to harass the enemy, but felt that that would not be possible, as it required training, arms and the full cooperation of the regular army."[5]

Congress President Azad felt that negotiations should be resumed with Britain and full cooperation to the United Nations be extended if Britain made "absolute promise" of independence "after the war," and if the American President or the United Nations guaranteed fulfilment of that promise.

But Gandhi, the Father of the Nation as he was then being called, was developing wholly new ideas on the question of conflict with Britain. In 1940, he was opposed to any programme of *satyagraha*, as that was likely to jeopardize the Allied war efforts, and was, with great efforts by Azad and others, persuaded to agree to "individual" *satyagraha*. In the summer of 1942, he became an advocate of mass action to drive the British out of the Indian soil. The change in the Mahatma's thinking was brought about probably by continued apathy of the authorities in London and the unmitigated hardships of the people in India. Moreover, the danger of Japanese attack of India by sea and advance towards Calcutta via Burma was increasing. During May and June, the Congress leaders were devising plans of resistance to the Japanese; but the problem was too gigantic, and what they were doing or could do was no more than, what Nehru describes, "only scratching the surface." Catastrophe and disaster for India appeared imminent. The Mahatma began to feel that the British in India would have the same fate as they had in Singapore, Malaya, and Burma, viz. surrender without much resistance.[6] He considered Japanese imperialism worse than British,

[4]Nehru outlined these ideas to John Lampton Berry, Secretary of US Mission in New Delhi. For details, see Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942* (Washington D.C., 1959) vol. 1, 689.

[5]Nehru, n. 1, 474.

[6]Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, VI, 174.

Imperialism, and wanted the country "to oppose Japan to a man." He felt, after the failure of Cripps mission, that the withdrawal of the British from India would "remove the bait," and the Japs might not attack India. Even if they did, Gandhi thought, Free India would be in a better position to deal with the invaders. "Unadulterated non-cooperation," he wrote, "would then have full sway." Britain, he thought, should be called upon to quit India and "leave the country in the hands of God."[7]

Rajagopalachari—or Rajaji as he was popularly called—well known in Congress circles for his sharp intellect and penetrating vision, was disturbed by the panic which prevailed among the people and authorities of Madras in the summer of 1942. On 6 April, Cocanada and Vizagapatam were bombed by the Japanese, and several towns and villages along the eastern coast were evacuated by the people at the instance of the authorities. The Japanese ships were cruising in the Bay of Bengal, and the invasion of India was widely feared. In view of all this, he began to lose confidence in the efficacy of non-violence and felt that the League's demand for Pakistan must be complied with in order to establish unity and a solid front against the British. The Congress-League combined strength alone, he felt, would make the country's demand for a national government irresistible.

Four different lines of thought as to the future course of action were, thus, crystallizing within the top leadership of the Congress Party.

AICC DELIBERATIONS AT ALLAHABAD

The storm was gathering and India lay, in the words of Nehru, "helpless and inert, bitter and sullen." The danger that the country would become a battleground for the British and Japanese forces was increasing. In order to discuss the situation and devise a clear-cut policy for the future, the AICC and the CWC met at Allahabad towards the end of April. Rajaji moved, at the AICC, a resolution that the League demand for Pakistan must be conceded and a joint Congress-League front be presented to the British authorities. But

[7]See the *Harijan* of 10 May 1942, quoted in Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, 196. After the failure of Cripps Mission, Gandhi wrote several articles in the *Harijan* urging the British to withdraw from India.

only a few within the ranks of the Congress Party could perceive the wisdom of the proposal, and the resolution was defeated by an overwhelming majority (120 to 15).

The real tussle, however, took place on the two points of view, one put forth by Gandhi and the other taken by Nehru. The Mahatma suggested the policy of non-violent non-cooperation against the Japanese if the latter invaded India and the presentation of the demand for withdrawal from India to the British. While Nehru agreed with the Mahatma's suggestion for a call to Britain to relinquish its hold over India and recognize India's freedom, he was not quite enthusiastic about Gandhi's policy of how to deal with the Japanese invader. He did not like to give to the U.S., the U.K. or even to the Indian people the impression, which Gandhi's draft resolution which he submitted before the AICC, appeared to give, that the Congress in any way favoured Japan.[8] He held the view that a free India should cooperate with the Allied Powers in the common war against Fascism and militarism, because his belief was that Germany and Japan would, if successful in the war, turn out to be greater enemies of freedom and democracy than the Allied Powers were. Moderation, however, prevailed among the AICC members, and there was no direct confrontation between the followers of the Mahatma and the supporters of Nehru. A compromise resolution was introduced and adopted. It contained, in the main, three things, viz. that Britain should relinquish its hold over India, that Congress continued to adhere to the concept of non-violent non-cooperation, and that the Congress was opposed to the operation of foreign troops in India. The resolution also pointed out that the creed of non-violent non-cooperation against Japanese invader was adopted by the Congress because of the "intrasigence of the British."

"QUIT INDIA" RESOLUTION

The weeks after the AICC session at Allahabad were a period of subdued tension within the ranks of the Congress Party. Rajaji,

[8]Such passages in Gandhi's draft resolution were:

" . . . Japan's quarrel is not with India. She is warring against the British Empire. . . . If India were free her first act would possibly be to negotiate with Japan.

" . . . The Committee desires to assure the Japanese Government and people that India bears no enmity with Japan or toward any other nation . . . the Committee hopes that Japan will not have any designs on India."

having lost his resolution there, was planning to campaign in favour of conceding the League demand. In June, he, several times, met Jinnah to obtain a measure of unity between the Congress and the League, in the face of external danger, but his efforts bore no fruit. Instead Jinnah declared, on 22 June, that the League's Pakistan demand was "immutable." He, rather, administered to Britain his oft-repeated warning that if she surrendered to Congress "in any matter detrimental to Muslim interests" serious consequences would follow.

Japan was knocking at the gates of Assam and the danger to India's security was increasing. Bose was, day in and day out, inciting the people to welcome the Japs as "deliverers" and "helpers." His broadcasts from Berlin were gaining popularity, and out of intense ill-will against Britain, pro-Japanese sentiment was increasing. Gandhi was developing the apprehension that if the Congress could not utilize the mass enthusiasms against Britain, the people might passively accept Japanese aggression. He was also getting almost convinced that in view of the attitude of the Muslim League no solution of communal problem would be found so long as the British were on the Indian soil.[9] He began to feel unhappy over the modification of his draft resolution at Allahabad, and thought that the British *must be asked to quit India.* His line of thinking was that in view of the serious menace to India from the Japanese, Britain would not dare to face the Congress Party agitation and would come to terms with it. Quite a few of Gandhi's followers, like Patel, Kripalani, and Rajendra Prasad, endorsed his views.

Congress President Azad and Nehru, on the other hand, did not see quite eye to eye with Gandhi. Azad felt that in that critical stage of the war, the British "would not tolerate any mass movement" and would put all Congress leaders in jail.[10] He asserted that in such an event, the people would be left leaderless, would resort to violent activities against the British and might not be able to offer effective resistance to the Japanese. He could not "for a moment see how the non-violent movement of Gandhi's conception could be launched or maintained in war conditions."[11]

Nehru felt that the Congress cannot and should not stand idly by and allow the country's affairs to be mismanaged by a foreign

[9]Sitaramayya, vol. II, 337.
[10]Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 76.
[11]*Ibid.*

power. He favoured the Mahatma's view that the British should be called upon to leave India, but he insisted that India should proclaim its willingness to fight the Axis Powers "if given an opportunity to do so honourably and effectively."

In mid-June, Gandhi conferred with Azad and Nehru to persuade them to accept his view, but the latter countered Gandhi's arguments with their own. Matters reached to such a stage that the Mahatma asked both Azad and Nehru to resign from the CWC if they were too sure of the efficacy of their stand.[12] But Patel intervened, and the crisis was averted. A meeting of the CWC was convened at Wardha, and after one week of discussions, persuasions, and compromise it adopted, on 14 July, a resolution which, *inter alia*, stated that the "abortive Cripps proposals showed in the clearest possible manner that there was no change in the British Government's attitude towards India," that the frustration in India over British intransigence "has resulted in a rapid and widespread increase of ill-will against Britain and a growing satisfaction at the success of Japanese arms," that the Congress desires "to build up resistance to any aggression on or invasion of India by the Japanese or any foreign power," and that the Congress would change the ill-will against Britain into goodwill only "if India feels the glow of freedom."

The resolution emphasized that the communal tangle could not be solved so far because of the British policy of "divide and rule," and that once the British rule was withdrawn, "responsible men and women of the country will come together to form a Provisional Government representative of all important sections of the people of India." This government, it was pointed out, would evolve a scheme to convene a Constituent Assembly, and representatives of free India and of Great Britain "will confer together for the adjustment of future relations and for the cooperation of the two countries as allies in the common task of meeting aggression."

The Congress Executive clearly declared in the resolution that "in making the proposal for the withdrawal of British rule from India, the Congress has no desire whatsoever to embarrass Great Britain or the Allied Powers in their prosecution of the war, or in any way to encourage aggression on India or increased pressure on China by the Japanese or any other Power associated with the Axis group." The resolution emphasized that the Congress, while impatient to

[12] *Ibid.*

achieve the national goal, did not wish to take any hasty step, or course of action "that might embarrass the United Nations." The Congress pleaded that its "very reasonable and just proposal" be accepted by Britain "not only in the interest of India but also that of Britain and of the cause of freedom to which the United Nations proclaim their adherence."

In case this appeal went unheeded, the resolution further said, the Congress would "then be reluctantly compelled to utilize all the non-violent strength it might have gathered since 1920, when it adopted non-violence as part of its policy, for the vindication of political rights and liberty." The widespread struggle, it was pointed out, "must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji." It was also stipulated in the resolution that "the final decision" on the aforesaid issues would be taken by the AICC on 7 August at Bombay.[13]

This resolution was described by the government, the press, and the people as the "Quit India" resolution.

The Congress Party declared in unmistakable terms that it would resist the Japanese invaders with all the strength at its command, that it would help the United Nations in defensive operations against aggressive powers, and that it had no intention to start any big movement unless forced to do so by British policy. On 15 July, Gandhi told the foreign press that if the movement had to be launched it would be a non-violent one. Moreover, the Congress gave to the authorities in London 24 days to arrive at a political settlement with it. Gandhi's private secretary, Mahadev Desai, asked Miss Slade also known as Mira Ben[14] —to meet the Viceroy and explain the purport of the resolution. But the Viceroy's Secretary replied that the government would not tolerate any revolution during the war, and the Viceroy would not meet any representative of an organization which spoke in those terms.

FURTHER DETERIORATION IN MILITARY SITUATION OF ALLIED POWERS

The Congress resolution came at a time when the military situation of the Allied Powers was very grave. In the Pacific and Indian Ocean

[13]For details see AICC, *Indian National Congress, March 1940-September 1946* (Allahabad, 1947) 120-4. Also see Sitaramayya, vol. II, 340-2.

[14]She was the daughter of a British admiral, but had adopted the Indian way of life under the influence of Gandhi.

areas the Japanese were advancing like a whirlwind. They had already occupied Hong Kong, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaya, Siam, and the Dutch Indies. In May 1942, Japan seized Burma, and the British, along with Chinese soldiers under Joseph Stilwell, a Commander of the U.S. Army, were compelled to retreat into India. In the words of the British General, Earl Alexander, it was "a complete military defeat."[15] Although the force of the Japanese onslaught was stopped—mainly by the monsoon and the need for consolidating the gains of "five months" fighting—the Japs poised for an assault on Calcutta. It was also feared that they might invade Australia, for they were already in possession of the outer defences of that great island continent—Portuguese Timor to the west, Solomon Islands to the east, and Rabaul and northern New Guinea.

In the European Theatre, Hitler's armies were on the march. In June, the German armies led by Rommel took over Libya, several Egyptian cities and were marching towards Alexandria. The Egyptian capital city, Cairo, was in imminent danger of attack, and with that the security of the Suez Canal and all Allied communications with Asian countries were likely to be jeopardized. The Royal Air Force was getting ready to be evacuated to Palestine. In the second week of July, the Allies lost about a hundred thousand tons of shipping in the Atlantic ocean. The Soviet troops succumbed in the Caucasus, and on other fronts also the Russian resistance was not quite hopeful. Stalin was entreating London and Washington to open against Germany a "second front" in Western Europe. The Anglo-American military authorities were conferring in London to devise plans for launching offensive against the Axis Powers. The attention of the Allied statesmen, thus, was fully absorbed in the war.

CHIANG KAI-SHEK URGES SETTLEMENT WITH GANDHI

Chinese President Chiang, involved as he was in a life-and-death struggle with Japan since 1937, was deeply disturbed by the continued deterioration in Indo-British relations. Reference has already been made to his visit to India in February 1942 to urge the Congress leaders to exercise restraint in launching a movement against the British rule. He watched Cripps activities in India with great interest and concern, but the failure of his mission distressed him. He

[15]John North, ed., *The Alexander Memoirs* (London, 1962) 93.

wrote to President Roosevelt that a political settlement between the Congress Party and the British Government was most vital to secure the goodwill and support of the Indian people in the war. But the American Chief Executive made no serious effort to bring about such an understanding. The Wardha resolution intensely disturbed the Generalissimo. While he quite appreciated the Congress plan of a movement for India's freedom and independence, he was disturbed over the consequences to China resulting from any such move. Burma had virtually passed into the hands of Japan and the Burma Road, the only supply line for China, was almost closed. Chiang felt that if the British Government rejected the July 14th resolution, the Congress might start its movement. Apprehending lest a political upheaval in India should retard the flow of American military supplies to China through India he wrote, on 25 July, to Roosevelt again that if the Congress leadership was forced to launch its movement, great harm would be done to the cause of the United Nations. He expressed the view that if Britain conceded Congress demands, the whole of India would resist the Axis aggression. The Chinese President appealed to Roosevelt to "rise to the occasion" and avert the worse from happening. In strong and forthright words he told Roosevelt that if *he* did not mediate in the dispute between Britain and India, a terrific blow would befall the United Nations.

GANDHI WRITES TO ROOSEVELT FOR U.S. SUPPORT

Here it might be mentioned that before the CWC actually adopted the Wardha resolution Gandhi sent a letter to Chiang,[16] on 14 June, and explained the points that were later on included in that resolution. On 1 July, he also sent a letter to Roosevelt to enlist active American support for the freedom struggle. He clarified the proposal that the Allied troops might be maintained in India at their expense and India be used as a base for preventing Japanese aggression and defending China. This offer was, however, on condition that "the British should unreservedly and without reference to the wishes of the people of India immediately withdraw their rule." He also noted that even if the British authorities remained adamant on their stand the Congress Party would not take any "hasty action" that might "encourage

[16]Nehru wrote a similar letter to Madame Chiang.

Japanese aggression on India or China."[17] It was also worth noting that the Officer-in-Charge of the American Mission in New Delhi, George Merrell, and Colonel Louis A. Johnson, Personal Representative of President Roosevelt in India, were making, after the failure of Cripps mission, fervent appeals to their chief bosses in Washington that earnest efforts should be made by the American Government to bring about some settlement between Britain and the Indian Nationalists. Johnson even recommended a "formula" suggesting the outlines of a settlement. The U.S. Under Secretary of State, Sumner Welles, also wrote to Roosevelt and recommended favourable action on Chiang's proposals.

ROOSEVELT FORWARDS CHIANG'S MESSAGE TO CHURCHILL

Merrell's communication evoked no attention in the State Department until the third week of July, and then also, there was nothing except harsh words for the Congress Party and its leadership. Johnson's view that the Allied military situation would be strengthened if a National Government were set up in India was rejected by Roosevelt. Johnson left for Washington and never returned in the same capacity—as Personal Representative of the President. Sumner Welles was only advised to obtain Churchill's "thoughts" and "suggestions" on Chiang's message. To Gandhi, Roosevelt sent a reply which reached the addressee only after the latter had been locked up in the prison house. The "Supreme Champion of Asiatic Freedom," as Chiang was then considered in America,[18] heard, in reply to his message to Roosevelt, that the British Government felt it had already made a fair offer to the Indians, and that under the circumstances then prevailing it could go no further. The Chinese leader was advised to keep out "for the time being." The American Chief Executive took up with Churchill the issue of a National Government in India in a cursory fashion, and the latter told the former that any such suggestion "at the moment" would seriously harm

[17]For details, see State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1942*, vol. I, 677-8. Also see *The Hindustan Times*, June 11, 1966, col. 8, 6. Gandhi also wrote to Roosevelt that the Allied declaration that they were fighting "to make the world safe for freedom of the individual and for democracy sounds hollow so long as India and for that matter Africa, are exploited by Great Britain, and America has the Negro problem in her own home."

[18]Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, 456.

the military efforts of the United Nations, and that the Government of India was sufficiently strong to suppress any agitation of the Congress if launched.

On 18 June, Churchill was due to reach Washington to discuss with Roosevelt the future military strategy in Europe. Probably to close the mouths of the American authorities and to save Churchill of the embarrassing demands and suggestions from them, Sir Stafford —supposedly an old friend and well-wisher of the Indian people— declared, on 16 June, in a statement to the United Press of India that "we are not going to walk out of India right in the middle of the war, though we have no wish to remain there for any imperialistic reasons." "Strategically India," he observed, "is too vital for our own and our Allies' efforts against the Axis to take any such step without jeopardizing the future of Russia, China, and the United States, to say nothing of India herself." The military and political leaders in the U.S. perhaps took a cue from Cripps's statement and did not raise with the British Premier issues relating to India. Undisturbed by his American friends and admirers, Churchill returned to London and began to watch the developments in India. On 14 July, the CWC adopted its famous "Quit India" resolution at Wardha, and shortly after, the Government of Lord Linlithgow in New Delhi proposed to arrest and intern Gandhi, Nehru, and principal members of the CWC. The drastic policy was immediately endorsed by the War Cabinet headed by Sir Winston.[19] Without yet letting the Americans know about this decision, the British authorities proceeded to guard against possible adverse public reaction in the United States. On 27 July, the same old "friend" of India, Cripps, broadcast a message to the American people, reminded them of the offer he had made to the "Indians" four months earlier, denounced the obduracy of Gandhi and his companions, pin-pointed Gandhi's opposition to the stationing of the U.S. troops on Indian soil and emphasized the seriousness of the Japanese threat to the security of Allied Nations. In the end, he entreated the Americans for support of the measures H.M.'s Government might take "to safeguard the interest of the United Nations."

Four days after this broadcast, Roosevelt was informed of the plans of the Government of India, and the American President, having no other considerations at that time except the contingen-

[19] *Ibid.*

cies of war, acquiesced. The authorities in London and Washington began to await 7 August.

AICC ENDORSES WARDHA RESOLUTION

Unmindful of what was transpiring between New Delhi, London, and Washington and full of enthusiasm and hope, the members of the AICC began to assemble in Bombay. Gandhi had been talking so much about some action "to protect the honour of India and affirm her right to freedom," but on the appointed day he came to the meeting without any definite and clear-cut plans about the nature of that action. He probably still hoped that *some* agreement with the British Government *would* be reached. While a few Congress leaders, such as Patel, Prasad, and Kripalani, shared Gandhi's optimism, Azad and Nehru cherished no such hope. In the first meeting, the Mahatma pleaded for a settlement with the government and expressed a wish to meet the Viceroy for that purpose. Late on the evening of 8 August, the CWC resolution of 14 July was endorsed by an overwhelming majority of members. The resolution stressed that the continuance of the British rule in India was good neither for India nor "for the success of the cause of the United Nations," suggested that a provisional government should be formed if India was to "resist aggression," expressed the intention of not embarrassing "in any way the defence of China and Russia," and resolved, in the event of continued British recalcitrance, to start "a mass struggle on non-violent lines" under the "inevitable leadership" of the Mahatma.

The AICC made still another fervent appeal to Britain and the United Nations to respond to "the call of reason and justice." Moreover, it did not decide to launch the movement at once, but *only after all attempts to bring about an agreement were frustrated by the British and Gandhi gave the sanction.*[20] In their concluding speeches Gandhi and Azad openly declared that they would again approach the Viceroy and the heads of the principal United Nations "for an honourable settlement."

GOVERNMENT ARRESTS CONGRESS LEADERS

The AICC decided that on the following morning (9th August) Nehru would explain to the United States Government and the people

[20]For details of the AICC resolution of 8 August, see Philips, ed., *The Evolution of India and Pakistan*, 342.

(because that country had become the chief spokesman of the United Nations), through the radio, the scope and contents of the "Quit India" resolution. But Churchill and Linlithgow had already finalized their plans to arrest the Congress leaders and crush their movement. In the early hours of the morning of 9th August, the police swooped in, and confronted Gandhi, Nehru, Azad, Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Kripalani, Asaf Ali, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, and a host of others with warrants of arrest. These men had no alternative but to step in in the police cars waiting outside their gates and to welcome the hospitality of the government behind the prison bars. About 148 Congress leaders were arrested, and their internment was followed by the imprisonment of the rank and file all over the country.

This step of the British rulers worked as a spark, and the "Quit India" movement began—*and was not launched.* The bureaucracy did not even allow the Congress leadership an opportunity of explaining to the countrymen what it actually wanted them to do—some kind of non-cooperation of protest *hartals* or cessation of work in the country or general strike or some other form of nation's protest. In the absence of leaders and without a proper lead as to the actual line of action, the people spontaneously did what they could or what they thought would paralyse the administration and bring an end of the foreign rule. There were disturbances all over the country. The people in Bombay, Bengal, U.P., and Bihar took the lead in the movement. Communications were disrupted; electric and telephone wires were cut; police stations were raided and burnt; railway carriages were attacked and put on fire, and even military vehicles were destroyed. The students and teachers abstained from schools and colleges, and many universities were closed. They played an important role all over India. Workers in the factories refused to attend to duties. There were mob violence, lawlessness, riots and disorder in certain places. In a word, the country reacted sharply and violently to the government act in arresting the leaders. "For the first time since the great revolt of 1857," in the words of Nehru, "vast numbers of people rose to challenge by force (but a force without arms!) the fabric of British rule in India."

Reactions to the Movement

The developments in India in the wake of the Quit India resolution evoked disapproval in certain quarters, denunciation in others, and strong action from the authorities. T.B. Sapru, the Liberal leader,

called the Wardha resolution "ill-considered" and "ill-opportune," and urged "a concerted effort on a collected basis for the settlement of our internal dispute." Ambedkar, the leader of the depressed classes, described Gandhi's mass Civil Disobedience plan as "irresponsible and insane," and even suggested that it was better to wait for the termination of the war for settling the dispute with Britain. Later on, he even equated Gandhi with Jinnah and stated that both should quit politics. Jinnah appealed to all Muslims to keep aloof from the disturbances, warned Congressmen not to picket, harass or interfere with Muslims, condemned the campaign, which, he said, was aimed at forcing Congress demands "at the point of bayonet," declared that those demands, if conceded, "with a view to pacifying Congress' arrogant attitude" would involve the surrender of all Muslim rights, and appealed to the Hindu public to "stop this internecine civil war before it was too late." The Muslim League, all through the movement, maintained the attitude of "benevolent neutrality" towards the government.[21] Savarkar, the spokesman of the Hindu Mahasabha, also appealed to all Hindus, on the very day Gandhi and other Congress leaders were arrested, not to lend any support "to the Congress move."[22] He was a votary of Hindu communalism—*Hindutwa*—and there appeared to him nothing in the Congress move to advance this cause. The Sikhs, traditionally loyal to the British, remained aloof from the movement, and on certain occasions even decried it.

The British Labour Party leader Clement Attlee, then Deputy Prime Minister, approved the arrest of Congress leaders, and his Party and Trade Union Congress issued, on 12 August, a statement making "an earnest appeal to the Indian people" that the Congress movement would seriously endanger "not merely Indian freedom but the freedom of the whole world," and that the victory of the United Nations was "as much of concern to India as to Britain, the Dominions, Russia, America, and other United Nations." The two British organizations expressed their belief that "the establishment of a free India in the post-War world is secure and is not endangered by any possibility of evasion or procrastination by the British Government."[23]

[21]For details of Jinnah's comment and interview to an American journalist, see Sitaramayya, vol. II, 462.

[22]*Ibid.*, 466.

[23]*Ibid.*, 411-2.

In the United States, while a few distinguished authors, like Pearl Buck and Lin Yu Tang, and publicmen, like Wendell Wilkie (the rival of Roosevelt in the Presidential election in 1940) and Henry A. Wallace (then Vice-President of America) espoused the cause of dependent India, the more important newspapers, like *The New York Herald, Tribune, Washington Post, Washington Star, Washington Time Herald, Baltimore Sun, Christian Science Monitor*, held the Congress Party responsible for the ugly situation in India and denounced the "violent activities" and "lawlessness" in strong terms. Only Chiang Kai-shek sent "voluminous" protests to Roosevelt over the arrest of Congress leaders, but the American President hesitated to do anything except to forward them to Churchill. The British Premier resented Chiang's message as "intervention" in the affairs of the Empire, and told Roosevelt to advise the Chinese leader to "mind his own business."

The Government of India pressed into service its entire machinery to suppress the movement. The AICC and PCCs were declared unlawful organizations, and the Provincial Governments were given discretionary powers in the matter of proscribing local Congress organizations. By the end of the year (1942), the police and the army resorted to firing 538 times, and, as a result, 40 persons were killed, and 1,630 injured. About 26,000 persons were convicted and 18,000 were detained under the DIR during the same period. Rs. 25,000,000 were collected by way of fines upon the people.[24] Thousands of people lost their hearths and homes as a result of military action at several places. At five places, the mobs were even machine-gunned from the air. Sir Ramaswami Iyer, member of the Viceroy's Executive Council and for Information and Broadcasting, was so much pained by the atrocities of the government that he resigned from his post. But the Viceroy chose his successor shortly after, and the repression continued until either all the revolutionaries were suppressed or went underground. The movement apparently came to an end, and the bureaucracy rejoiced over its achievement.

[24]These figures taken from *ibid.*, 374-8.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

INTERRAGNUM BETWEEN "QUIT INDIA" MOVEMENT AND QUITTING INDIA

THE YEAR 1943 opened with a lull in the storm, but with feelings of agony and frustration prevailing all over the country. Thousands of Congressmen, including all the principal leaders, were in jail, and the whereabouts of those who were not, or who could not be, confined within the four walls of prison houses were unknown. Thousands of those who lost their near and dear ones or lost their property were sad that one more attempt to get rid of the foreign rule had been foiled. The rivals of the Congress Party were mocking and jeering that the Civil Disobedience movement once again had proved its inefficacy to force the demand for India's freedom upon the British Government. Linlithgow was maligning the Congress that professing non-violence, its leaders planned to thrust India into an orgy of violence, bloodshed and loot. The policy-makers in London were deeply involved in a struggle for their own survival, and they did not have even the inclination to examine seriously Congress demands. The great leader of the New World (Roosevelt) had at that time no other major concern but the war with Axis Powers and in the order of priorities, the independence of India occupied much less importance in his policy formulations. Among the great personalities outside India Chiang Kai-shek alone displayed some sympathy for the cause of this country, but he was a non-entity insofar as decisions about the future of India were concerned.

In the midst of the above phenomena and particularly the absence of the principal actors, nothing very spectacular could be expected to take place on the stage of Indian politics. This, however, did not mean that the country was just sleeping and nothing whatsoever occurred. There *were* some events during 1943—maybe not quite as sensational as in 1942—sufficiently important to mark the continuity

of India's advancement towards the ultimate goal. These were: Gandhi's fast, All-India Leaders' Conference to demand release of Congress leaders, resignations from Viceroy's Executive Council, formation of the Indian National Army and proclamation of Provisional Government of Free India by Subhas Bose, departure of Linlithgow and arrival of Wavell, and reiteration of Pakistan demand by Muslim League. Each of these events was important in its own way and would be discussed in a chronological order to make the narrative coherent.

GANDHI'S FAST

After the failure of Cripps mission the government authorities had begun to allege that the Congressmen were mad after power. In the wake of the Bombay Resolution, they began to hold the Congress Party responsible for violence and bloodshed in the country. Gandhi was pained to see all this. Even at the time of the AICC session in Bombay, the Congress President was inclined to propose that Jinnah might form the National Government. The government propaganda that Congress had planned the violent movement led the Mahatma write to the Viceroy a letter on 23 September 1942 and express disapproval of what happened in the country after the arrest of Congress leaders. Had Linlithgow given publicity to Gandhi's view those who were indulging in violent activities perhaps would have desisted from doing so, but the Viceroy suppressed the letter, and the agitation and violence continued. And the government continued to slander the Congress. This disturbed the Mahatma very much. He probably also felt sad that he directed his colleagues to launch Civil Disobedience movement at a time when the people had not yet been properly trained and prepared for that course. In order to protest against the conduct of Linlithgow's Government and also as a measure of self-purification, Gandhi decided to undertake a 21-day fast, and informed the Viceroy accordingly. The authorities, both in New Delhi and London, concluded that he had chosen that path to embarrass them further and in the event of death to hold them responsible for it. Such a feeling annoyed them, and instead of persuading Gandhi to give up his resolve, they remained unmoved and even completed the arrangements for his cremation.[1]

[1]Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 91.

On 10 February 1943, the fast began and the news spread all over. After 9-10 days, Gandhi's condition deteriorated considerably, and serious concern and resentment began to be expressed in India.

RESIGNATIONS FROM VICEROY'S EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

The first and most spectacular indication of the annoyance was the resignations of H.P. Mody, M.S. Aney, and N.R. Sarkar from their membership of the Viceroy's Executive Council. Such resignations as protest against government policies of repression occurred even earlier, more notable being those of C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer, S.P. Sinha, T.B. Sapru, and Shankaran Nair. But this time the three resignations came as an open and unambiguous protest against the Viceroy's unwillingness to take action on Gandhi's fast. These men declared in a joint statement that they, in view of differences on "a fundamental issue," could "no longer" retain their offices. The authorities, however, remained unmoved, and the resignations were accepted, without even a word of regret from the Viceroy.

DEMAND FOR RELEASE OF CONGRESSMEN

Another display of the peoples' concern about Gandhi's life was the holding in Delhi, on 19 February, of a conference of leaders of different shades of opinion and affiliations. One hundred and fifty personages, including Sapru, Dr. Jayakar, Shyama Prasad Mukerjea, Master Tara Singh, N.M. Joshi, Sir Maharaj Singh, and Sir A.H. Ghaznavi, adopted a resolution urging the Viceroy to release Gandhi immediately. Cables were also sent to Churchill and to Arthur Greenwood and Sir Percy Harris, leaders of the Opposition and the Liberal Party in the House of Commons respectively for the same purpose. Sapru, who presided over the meeting, expressed the hope that the government would arrive at some settlement with the "rebel" Congressmen—as the then Home Member had described them. But Linlithgow remained adamant; Churchill put the responsibility for his arrest on Gandhi himself; and other British leaders chose to remain quiet.

Gandhi stood the ordeal successfully, and on 3 March, he ended the fast. There was jubilation and sense of relief all over the country, and the peoples' belief in Gandhi's extraordinary strength and super-

natural powers was further reinforced.

Six days later, the All-India leaders met, and under the signatures of 35 of them, including those of Sapru, Jayakar, Bhulabhai Desai, and Rajaji, a statement was issued, and both the government and the Congress were urged to reconsider their policy to bring about a reconciliation "at the present juncture." They expressed the hope that if Gandhi was set free he would do his best to solve the "internal deadlock." But the authorities made no gesture in that direction.

On 22 May, Sapru and a few other Liberal leaders urged appointment of an impartial tribunal to investigate the charges made by the government against Congress leaders or alternately to release them so as to enable them to review the situation and attempt a solution of the deadlock. But the Viceroy rejected the appeal. On 24 July, the non-Party Leaders' Conference appealed both government and Gandhi to close the "present dismal chapter of strife and ill-feeling in the country," asked for the release or trial of political leaders, and urged participation in the government. The British missionaries residing in India also made a similar appeal, but to no result.

First in February and then in April, the Personal Representative of President Roosevelt in India, William Philips, sought from the Viceroy permission to see Gandhi and the members of the CWC, but both the times the request was turned down. He then sent a letter to Roosevelt criticizing the British attitude towards India and telling him that if the *impasse* between Britain and India continued, it might "affect our conduct of the war in this part of the world, and our future relations with the coloured races." He urged Roosevelt to initiate the move to break the deadlock. In early May, Philips went to Washington, and Churchill happened to be there. Instead of himself taking up the contents of Philips's letter with the British Premier, Roosevelt arranged an interview between Philips and Churchill. When the American diplomat began to talk about constitutional advancement of India, the British statesman became hot and blue, and told him that India was only Britain's "business" and no American "interference" would be tolerated.

During 1943, the minds and energies of the policy-makers in London were fully absorbed in the war. In late January, the Allied troops entered into Tripoli (Libya) and drove the Germans 1,300 miles westward. In March, the American troops launched vigorous attack on West Africa, and the German and Italian troops surrendered. By May, Africa was almost lost to the Axis Powers. In

June, the Anglo-American troops attacked the heavily-fortified Islands of Lampredusa and Pantellaria, and next month they landed in Sicily. The enemy was pushed out of all these islands. Air attacks on the Italian mainland were also launched. Enraged over Mussolini's failure to secure aid from Germany, the people demanded his dismissal from Premiership, and the same was done. The Fascist Party was dissolved. On 3 September, Italy surrendered unconditionally. In the Russian theatre also, the Allies were making rapid gains. The starving German troops surrendered and were forced to withdraw 400 miles westward from Stalingrad. Some 185,000 square miles of Soviet territory was cleared of the Germans. In the Far East, the major Japanese offensive was checked, and in early September, the U.S. Army General, Douglas MacArthur, attacked New Guinea. In November, the Admiral of the U.S. Navy, Chester W. Nimitz, attacked and occupied the Gilbert Islands, and these provided to America valuable strategic bases.

Despite these victories, the end of the war was nowhere in sight. The capital city of Italy, Rome, was still under the occupation of the Germans. They were strongly entrenched on the Dnieper river in Russia. France continued to be under their military occupation, and there was no hope of its early liberation. Their fighting spirit and potential was uncrushed, and Hitler was still talking of world conquest. Japan was in possession of vast empire in Asia and the Pacific, and she controlled 95 per cent of the world's rubber and 70 per cent of the world's tin-producing areas.

Confronted with such a situation the British authorities had no inclination to relax their hold over India which, they thought, was vital to the security of the United Nations.

FORMATION OF INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY

Another important event of the year "1943" was the formation of the Indian National Army (INA) and the proclamation of "Provisional Government of Free India." While the fighters for freedom inside the country had been locked up in jails, Subhas Bose was keeping the torch burning from outside. Reference has already been made in Chapter Twelve to the formation of "Free India Legion" by Bose in early 1942 in Germany and also to his departure from Europe to the Far East in February 1943. The Free India Legion became the precursor of the INA, or better known as Azad Hind Fauj, whose

formation was announced by the Indian Independence League on 8 July 1943. It was organized out of a large number of Indian soldiers who fell prisoners into the Japanese hands when they conquered the Malayan Peninsula. The formation of the Fauj was the consequence of an agreement between Bose and the authorities in Tokyo. Its object was to fight "against the oppressions of India." On the following day (9 July) at a huge mass rally at the Padang, Singapore, Subhas declared: "Indians outside India, particularly Indians in East Asia, are going to organize a fighting force which will be powerful enough to attack the British Army in India. When we do so, a revolution will break out not only among the civil population at home but also among the Indian Army which is now standing under the British flag. When the British Government is, thus, attacked from both sides, it will collapse, and the Indian people will then regain their liberty."[2] He organized the INA so that it might serve the purpose of a "second front" in India's war of emancipation. On 25 August, he assumed its direct command, and thereafter became known as Netaji. A new slogan, *Jai Hind*—victory for India—was also raised.

On 21 October, the Indian Independence League proclaimed the formation of "Provisional Government of Free India" at Singapore, and Bose became its political and military head also. A week later, this "government" declared war on the British, and the INA became its military organ. From February 1944 onward, it fought in Burma alongwith the Japanese. But when in late April 1945, the Japanese surrendered to the British it also laid down arms. On 19 August 1945, it was announced in Tokyo that Subhas was killed in a flying accident on Formosa. A very promising career came to an end, and one of the most outstanding warriors was snatched by Providence from the hands of the Indian people even before their battle was won.

DEPARTURE OF LINLITHGOW AND ARRIVAL OF WAVELL

The year "1943" also witnessed the end of over $7\frac{1}{2}$ years of Linlithgow's rule. He was one of those Viceroys who had nothing but to look after only the British interests. Even during his unusually long period of stay in the Viceregal House, he failed to comprehend the

[2]For details see R.I. Paul, ed., *India Calling: S.C. Bose* (Dewan's Publication, Lahore).

Indian problem in its correct perspective and advise his bosses in London on more flexible and liberal lines. He displayed marvellous capacity to rule with a strong hand but little wisdom to appreciate that the spirit of nationalism once kindled could not be kept suppressed by force for all times to come. Even on the eve of his departure he stated, on 2 August 1943, before a joint session of the Central Legislature, that the leaders of Indian political parties were responsible for the continued constitutional deadlock, that "the war and the absence of agreement amongst those concerned in India" stood in the way of implementing the Federal Scheme of 1935 which was "a sound one," and that while His Majesty's Government was willing "to transfer power to Indian hands," the divisions among the political leaders discouraged her from doing so. In the end, Linlithgow observed: "If there is to be any progress, Indian public-men should, without delay, start to get together and to clear the way for it."[3] He surreptitiously avoided any reference to Jinnah's allegation, made four months earlier (in April), that Britain had no willingness to part with power, and also Azad's public statement that the National Government be placed in the hands of the Muslim League, and the Congress would extend full cooperation to such a government.

A couple of days after this address, the Viceroy, apprehending lest there should be disturbances and demonstrations on the occasion of the first anniversary of Gandhi's arrest, ordered the detention of thousands of persons all over the country and of over 300 in Bombay alone. This probably was the last of the countless reactionary measures Linlithgow took during his tenure.

There was, as they say, an end to everything, and the term of Linlithgow also ended. On 18 October, Sir Archibald Wavell came to New Delhi as the new Viceroy and Governor-General. Before being designated for the post he was Commander-in-Chief of India and had a brilliant distinguished record as a field commander. He hardly had the qualities of a statesman and himself maintained that he "was nothing but a simple soldier (who wrote a little, studied a little, considered a little)." The selection of a soldier for the high office indicated how seriously the Government of Churchill in London was interested in using India and its resources to advance the Allied war cause. Before assuming charge of the new office Wavell had made certain statements which created the impression that probably the

[3]Quoted in Sitaramayya, vol. II, 550.

new Viceroy would take some concrete steps to resolve the Indian deadlock. For example, he observed that "the political progress of India was not debarred during the war" and that he owed a debt to India which he hoped "to repay."[4] He expressed his ambition "to lift the poor man of India from poverty to security, from ill health to vigour, from ignorance to understanding." Speaking before the Royal Empire Society a few days before his departure for India, Wavell observed that he was going to India "with the sense of very great responsibility but also with the vision of a great future in front of India."

The optimism created by these speeches and pronouncements was, however, watered down by the attitude of Amery, the Secretary of State for India. Speaking on the floor of the House of Commons, on 28 October, he stated, in answer to a question by Sorenson—a Labour Member—that the Congress leaders had "embarked upon a policy of irresponsible sabotage of the war effort," and that until they make it clear "that their policy is entirely clear," there was no possibility of any conversations taking place with Congress leaders.[5] He also warned the new Viceroy to be sufficiently careful in dealing with the problem of India's constitutional advancement, and in unmistakable terms declared that Britain was not prepared *to go beyond the Cripps proposals during the war.* Probably to harden Wavell's attitude, Amery repeated the allegation, in the course of farewell address to the new Viceroy, that the Congress leaders instigated "open rebellion in time of war," and that they would not "qualify" to resume "any part in the constitutional shaping of India's future" until they disavowed "that course of action."

With such goadings and instructions from home, Wavell could hardly do anything to rectify, in his own terms, "mistakes" and "blunders" which the British authorities had made in India. He began to speak the language of Amery and declared that the Cripps offer remained open, and that "the offer of cooperation in the government on this basis by the leaders of Indian opinion is still open to those who have a genuine desire to further the prosecution of the war and the welfare of India."

The complacent view taken by the new Viceroy satisfied neither the Congress leadership nor the non-Party leaders nor even the

[4] *Ibid.*, 548.
[5] *Ibid.*, 558.

Muslim League, and the political deadlock in the country continued.

MUSLIM LEAGUE REITERATES DEMAND FOR PAKISTAN

The last, but not the least, important event of the year "1943" was Jinnah's reiteration of the Pakistan demand, and an attempt to negotiate with Gandhi on that basis. It has already been stated in Chapter Twelve (section on "Evolution of Pakistan Scheme") that on 6 February 1943, the League leader talked of a corridor running along the northern borders of the U.P. and Bihar to connect the two wings of the State of Pakistan. Speaking on the occasion of the 24th session of the League, from 24 to 28 April 1943, Jinnah invited Gandhi to negotiate with him [Jinnah] to settle the Congress-League dispute on the basis of Pakistan. He, in fact, accused the Congress leaders of not being willing to change their policy either vis-a-vis the government or the League. The government also had been all these days proclaiming that it was unable to take any significant step towards India's constitutional advancement. In order to counteract the allegations of both, Gandhi from inside the jail wrote to Jinnah a short letter expressing a desire to meet him. But the Government of Linlithgow could not find it convenient to forward the letter to the addressee. Both the Mahatma and the League President were told that Gandhi—a person who promoted "an illegal mass movement" and embarrassed "India's war effort at a critical time"—could not be granted facilities for political correspondence. Not that Gandhi-Jinnah dialogue if facilitated would have necessarily resulted in some sort of compromise or understanding, but the Viceroy nipped the very attempt in the bud. The League leader—who had held out almost a challenge that the government would not "dare" to stop Gandhi's letter to him if sent—only chose to allege that Gandhi's letter was designed only "to embroil" the League "into clash with the British Government" and to seek his own release "so that he would be free to do what he pleases thereafter."[6]

During the months after the annual session of the League, Jinnah continued to consolidate the position of his party and avoided any direct confrontation with the authorities. When in October, Linlithgow delivered his "valedictory address" before the Chamber of Princes and reemphasized unity between the political parties, Jinnah

[6]Statement given to *The Times of India*, quoted in *ibid.*, 509

only mildly criticized Britain for its unwillingness to transfer power into Indian hands. When after the arrival of the new Viceroy, the Working Committee of the Muslim League met in Delhi, in November, the demand for Pakistan was reiterated, but no serious disapproval of Wavell's attitude vis-a-vis the Indian political situation was recorded.

RELEASE OF GANDHI FROM JAIL

While the League leadership was only flirting with the British master, Gandhi was impatient about the future of the country. In February 1943, the Government of India published a pamphlet under the title *Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances, 1942-43*, and put the entire blame upon the Congress, particularly upon the Mahatma. Gandhi felt severely distressed, but he only told the correspondent of the *News Chronicle* (London), who sought an interview with him, that he had "complete and categorical replies" to all the allegations, and that he would deal with them when he would be a free man. After the refusal of the Viceroy to forward his letter, to which reference has been made in the preceding pages, to Jinnah, Gandhi sent, in July 1943, a long communication to the Government of India, and refuted all the charges made against the Congress Party in the pamphlet mentioned above. For more than two months there was no reply. When it came, on 14 October, the Secretary of the Home Department, Sir Richard Tottenham, had nothing but insulting language and more severe charges against the Congress leadership. Gandhi, in particular, was decried for utilizing Britain's military straits as an opportunity to advance the cause of India's freedom.

In the third week of October, Wavell stepped into the Viceregal Palace, and a couple of days later, Gandhi wrote directly to him. He again asked for permission to get in touch with the CWC members so as to seek a solution of the continuing deadlock. He also reiterated that the Congress Party had always been opposed to the Japanese invader, and that in no way it ever stood in the way of the Allied war efforts. To this request there was no response whatsoever. During January-April 1944, Gandhi exchanged more letters with the Viceroy but nothing came out of them, and even the permission to see the Working Committee members was not granted. The authorities continued to stick to the view that so long as the Bombay resolution was not disowned, contact between Gandhi and other principal Congress leaders could not be established.

Allied hands. On 15 August, the American Seventh Army attacked the Mediterranean coast of France and captured the ports of Toulon and Marseilles. By the middle of 1944, the Allies also captured the Gilberts, Marshalls, and Marianas islands in the Pacific, and on 11 August, they recovered the island of Guam. On 4 August, Myitkyina and its airfields were taken, and this facilitated airlift of supplies to China. Most of the Japanese were retreating from Assam and Burma. These gains hardened the attitude of the British authorities and they began, it appeared, to feel that even if the Congress Party remained non-cooperative, not much harm would be done to the war efforts of the United Nations.

GANDHI APPROACHES JINNAH ON BASIS OF RAJAJI'S PROPOSALS

Simultaneous with exchange of letters with the Viceroy, Gandhi also approached Jinnah to seek some solution of the communal tangle. Neither he nor the CWC members at that time had any inclination to see the bifurcation of India into two separate states. Gandhi, however, felt that unless the Congress and the Muslim League made up their differences the freedom of the country could not be attained. Hence, a new attempt to converse with Jinnah. Rajaji acted as the go-between. He had been urging all through that the creation of Pakistan alone would solve the Hindu-Muslim problem. On 8 April 1944, he presented to Jinnah a plan, more or less conceding the League demand set forth in the Lahore Resolution. But Jinnah's position was non-committal. On 30 June, he repeated the offer to the League leader, and this time with the consent of Gandhi.[9] The main points of the offer were as follows:

> (1) Subject to the terms set out below as regards the constitution for a free India, the Muslim League endorses the Indian demand for independence and will cooperate with the Congress in the formation of a Provisional Interim Government for the transitional period.
>
> (2) After the termination of the war a commission shall be appointed for demarcating contiguous districts in the north-west and east of India wherein the Muslim population is in absolute majority. In areas thus demarcated, a plebiscite of all the in-

[9] *Ibid.*, 631.

habitants ... shall ultimately decide the issue of separation from Hindustan. If the majority decides in favour of the formation of a sovereign state separate from Hindustan, such a decision shall be given effect to, without prejudice to the right of the districts on the border to choose to join either state.

(3) In the event of separation, a mutual agreement shall be entered for safeguarding defence, commerce and communications, and other essential purposes.

(4) Any transfer of population shall only be on an absolutely voluntary basis.

(5) These terms shall be binding only in case of transfer by Britain of full power and responsibility for the governance of India.[10]

This scheme marked a departure from the earlier position of the Congress whose leaders always in the past vehemently opposed the division of the country and emphasized the unity of all peoples belonging to different castes, creeds, and religions. A few Congress leaders, like President Azad, then in jail, were unhappy about both the steps Gandhi took—in writing to Wavell and approaching Jinnah[11]—but the League leadership was rejoicing with the thought that the Patriarch of the Congress was after all inclining to concede its demand. During July-August, Gandhi corresponded with Jinnah on the basis of Rajaji's formula, but the League President remained non-committal. He then sought an interview, and went to Bombay, on 9 September, to see Jinnah whom he now began to address as *Quaid-i-Azam*—great leader. The talks were "frank and friendly," but broke down on the issue of Pakistan. On 8 October, Jinnah proclaimed: "There is only one realistic way of resolving Hindu-Muslim differences. This is to divide India in two sovereign parts, Pakistan and Hindustan." Gandhi's move to resolve differences with Jinnah also failed.

DESAI-LIAQUAT PACT

Ever since the release of Gandhi the vast and varied sections of the Indian public—the students' organizations, Trade Unions, women's congregations, Bar Associations, Chambers of Commerce, Local

[10] *Ibid.*, 633.
[11] Azad, n. 1, 93-4.

Bodies, the non-Party leaders, Liberals, Hindu Mahasabhites, depressed classes, and the Non-League Muslim *Majlis*—had been pleading and appealing for the release of the CWC members. The leading newspapers of the country were editorially and otherwise urging that steps should be taken by the government to resolve the deadlock. But the authorities remained stubborn and averse. In early January 1945, Amery declared in the Commons that there was no plan of releasing the Congress leaders in the foreseeable future. With such an attitude on the part of Britain, Gandhi became convinced that it would be no use negotiating with the Viceroy on the issue. He also felt that the British would not grant independence to India unless and until the Congress and the Muslim League reached some accord as to the future of the country and the immediate formation of an interim National Government. He lent support to Rajaji's formula, but Jinnah did not relent. Now, he surreptitiously blessed Bhulabhai J. Desai's proposals to make yet another attempt to appease the League leadership.

Desai was the leader of the Congress Party in the Central Assembly and was a personal old friend of the Deputy Leader of the Muslim League, Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan. In January (1945), he gave to Liaquat Ali "Proposals for the Formation of Interim, Government at the Centre," and according to the Congress historian Dr. Sitaramayya, Desai did it with the permission and concurrence of Gandhi.[12] These proposals were as follows:

The Congress and the League agree that they will join in forming an interim government the centre. The composition of such government will be on the following lines:

(*a*) Equal number of persons nominated by the Congress and the League in the Central Executive. Persons nominated need not be members of the Central Legislature.

(*b*) Representatives of minorities (in particular Scheduled Castes and the Sikhs).

(*c*) The Commander-in-Chief.

The government would be formed and function within the framework of the existing Government of India Act. It is, however, understood that if the Cabinet cannot get a particular measure passed

[12]Sitaramayya, vol. II, 649.

by the Legislative Assembly, they will not enforce the same by resort to any of the reserve powers of the Governor-General or the Viceroy. This will make them sufficiently independent of the Governor-General.

It is agreed between the Congress and the League that if such interim government is formed, their first step would be to release the members of the Congress Working Committee.

Desai and Liaquat Ali decided that the above scheme would be placed before the Viceroy, and that if he agreed to invite the Indian leaders to form an interim government on the basis of that scheme, the Congress and League leaders would do so. After such a government were formed, the two leaders agreed, it would proceed "to get the withdrawal of Section 93 in the Provinces" and "to form as soon as possible provincial governments on the lines of a coalition."[13]

For quite some time the League General-Secretary remained quiet on Desai's proposals, and when he finally gave his reply, it was no better than outright rejection. He told Bhulabhai that the proposals could be made a basis for discussion, but that it was his "personal opinion," and that the proposals should be placed before Jinnah who alone could entertain any proposals on behalf of the League "with authority." He also told Desai that if any real headway was to be made, the proposals should emanate from Gandhi or at least should carry Gandhi's "definite approval and open support." Liaquat Ali, however, reminded Desai of the various resolutions of the Muslim League demanding Pakistan.

In the meantime, the war in Europe came to an end and the Indian politics began to move in a different direction. Desai's proposals to Liaquat Ali became meaningless.

END OF WAR IN EUROPE

From the summer of 1944 onwards, the Allied troops made rapid gains on all the battle-fronts. Paris was taken over on 25 August; Brussels on 3 September; and Antwerp on the following day. By the end of the year (1944) it was clear that Germany would lose the war. From 2 to 11 February 1945, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin conferred at Yalta to discuss, *inter alia*, plans for Germany's final defeat. Shortly after, assaults were launched upon all

[13] *Ibid.*, 652.

fronts. On 7 March, Coloque fell, and by the middle of April, the industrial heart of Germany, Ruhr valley, was encircled. The Soviet troops in the East re-captured all the Baltic States and took over Poland. They reached within striking distance of Berlin—the capital of Germany. Sandwiched by the Anglo-American troops in the West and the Russian in the East, Hitler lost all hopes for further resistance. On 30 April, he was reported to have committed suicide, and on 7 May, the Germans laid down arms and signed a document of "unconditional" surrender. On the following day, the victory of the United Nations in Europe (VE-Day) was celebrated.

On the Far Eastern front also, the Allied armies were moving from victory to victory. On 23 February 1945, the capital city of the Philippines, Manila, was occupied. On 21 March, Mandalay (Burma) was retaken, and on 3 May, Rangoon was reoccupied.

With the termination of war in Europe, the coalition government of the United Kingdom, which was formed by Churchill on 11 May 1940, broke down and Churchill resigned on 23 May. General elections were proclaimed to be held on 5 July 1945. Although Winston was still the head of the "Caretaker Government" his Conservative Party was being seriously threatened by the Labour Party. While the achievement of Churchill in winning the war was lauded, his handling of the Indian problem was being severely criticized. A few Labour Party Members of Parliament, like Sorenson, Morrison, and Bevin, were denouncing the continued imprisonment of CWC members. A few distinguished publicmen, such as philosopher Bertrand Russell, were urging that Britain should "Quit India" after the end of the Japanese war, and that understanding to that effect should be given at once. The noted novelist and writer, Bernard Shaw, was refusing to celebrate victory in Europe, because millions of people all over the world were still being subjected to tyranny, injustice, and exploitation. Now that Germany lay crushed, the public opinion in the United States was clamouring that the Indian deadlock should be resolved. The new Administration of Harry S. Truman (Roosevelt died on 12 April 1945) was concerned about war with the Japanese. Although Burma and the Philippines had been liberated, Japan was still in control of Singapore and Indonesia. The Japanese home islands were practically untouched. Although Stalin had promised at the Yalta conference that the Russian troops would participate in the war against Japan "ninety days after the surrender of Germany" there was no certainty that they would really do so. Truman and his

military advisers felt that cooperative India could make significant contribution to operations against the Far Eastern enemy. With this realization, renewed pressure was put on Churchill that he should take some steps to win over the goodwill and support of the Indian public.

With all the above pressures, persuasions and appeals, Churchill moved in his usual dramatic style and suddenly called, in May, Wavell to London—apparently to discuss the next step for India.

BRITISH GOVERNMENT PROPOSAL FOR INDIANIZATION OF EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

On 14 June, a White Paper embodying new proposals for the Indianization of the Viceroy's Executive Council "without prejudice to a final settlement of the Indian constitutional problem" was issued by Amery in London. These proposals were:

(1) The Executive Council would be reconstituted and the Viceroy, in nominating members, would select them from leaders of Indian political life ... with balanced representation of the main communities, including parity for Muslims and Caste Hindus.

(2) The Viceroy would call a conference of leading Indian politicians to invite from it a list of names from which he would make recommendations for appointment, but he would have unrestricted freedom of choice in so doing.

(3) The Members of the Executive Council would be Indians, with the exception of the Viceroy and the C-in-C; the latter would retain his present position as War Minister, which was essential so long as the defence of India was a British responsibility. External affairs would be in charge of an Indian member.

It was pointed out, further, that these proposals would not affect the relations of the Crown with the Indian States through the Viceroy as Crown representative.

On the same day, Wavell in New Delhi observed that while the Viceroy's veto power would not be eliminated, it would not be used unsparingly. He also issued invitations to Indian leaders[14] to

[14]Those invited were: leaders of Congress and Muslim League, leaders of Sikhs, leaders of the Nationalist Party and the European Group in the Assembly, Premiers of the Indian Provinces, or those who were last Premiers before the introduction of "Section 93" rule. The Hindu Mahasabha was not invited.

advise him at a conference to open in Simla on 25 June. On 15 June, Nehru, Patel, Azad and all former Presidents of the Congress were released.

SIMLA CONFERENCE

The invitation was accepted by all, and on 25 June, the Conference opened. Difficulties arose at the outset between Congress and Muslim viewpoints. The Congress Party insisted on its claim that being a national organization it must have Muslim as well as Hindu representatives in the proposed new Council, but the Muslim League insisted that all Muslim representatives must be nominated by it alone. The Punjab Unionist Party, headed by Malik, Khizar Hayat Khan and including in its ranks Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs, claimed one of the Muslim seats on the proposed Council, and showed unwillingness to submerge itself in the communalism of either the Muslim League or the Congress. On 29 June, the Conference adjourned to "enable the delegates to carry on further consultations." The CWC prepared a list of 15 names, but Jinnah informed the Viceroy that he would not be able to submit a list unless certain conditions were fulfilled. The first condition was that the right of the Muslim League to choose the entire Muslim membership of the Council should be recognized. The second demand was an assurance that the Viceroy would overrule majority decisions of the Council if these were opposed by the Muslim *bloc* on the grounds of adversely affecting the Muslim community.

Wavell personally conferred with Jinnah, Gandhi, Azad, and Hayat Khan to save the Conference from failure, but on 14 July, he announced that no agreement had been reached, and that the Congress and Muslim League leaders failed to agree on the allocation of seats on the Executive Council.

The then Congress President, Maulana Azad, later on in his book, *India Wins Freedom*, asserted that Jinnah was, in a way, suggesting that "the Congress should give up its national character and function as a communal organization." He attributed the failure of the Simla Conference to the "instransigent attitude" of the Muslim League. But the Congress leadership could not be wholly absolved from this situation. Had it not been consistently appeasing Muslim communalism since 1916 when it put down signatures on the Lucknow Pact! Even in the mid-1940's, Gandhi twice—first through Rajaji's formula

and then through Desai's proposals—created in Jinnah's mind the conviction that the Congress had started swerving from its earlier position of a united and independent India, and that the Congress could not attain its goal without conceding the League demand. The Mahatma, of course, made those concessions in good faith and in the hope that these might pacify Jinnah and the solution of the communal problem might be nearer at hand, but in the midst of deep enthusiasm for liberation from foreign rule he ignored the fact that communalism was bad in principle, bad in politics and any succumbing to it was bound to be detrimental for the country. Appeasement of the League whetted its appetite further and further, and the result was obduracy and instransigence.

RENEWED EFFORTS TO RESOLVE INDIAN DEADLOCK

During and after the Simla Conference two important events occurred. One was the general elections in England and the victory of the Labour Party, and the other was the surrender of Japan and termination of hostilities in the Far East. Three days after the announcement by Wavell of the failure of the Indian parleys (on 17 July the head of the new Government in London, Clement R. Attlee, went to Postsdam to confer with Truman and Stalin as to how to bring about the "unconditional" surrender of Japan, and the three leaders were together up to 2 August. Finding that Japan was not willing to surrender unconditionally the United States dropped, on 6 August, an atom bomb on Hiroshima. On 8 August, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan, and on the following day, a second atom homb fell on Nagasaki. The Japanese militarists were completely demoralized, and on 14 August, they proclaimed their "unconditional" surrender. The United Nations heaved a sigh of relief, and the authorities in London became more seriously seized of the Indian problem. At the opening of the new Parliament the King had declared: "In accordance with the promises already made to my Indian peoples, my Government will do their utmost to promote in conjunction with leaders of Indian opinion early realization of full self-government in India." The government invited Wavell to London "in order to review with him the whole situation," and he reached there on 25 August.

WAVELL'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF 18 SEPTEMBER 1945

On 18 September, the Viceroy returned to India and announced that H.M.'s Government would soon convene a constitution-making body, that in the meantime discussions would be held with representatives of the Legislative Assemblies in the Provinces "to ascertain whether the proposals contained in the 1942 Declaration are acceptable or whether some alternative or modified scheme is preferable," and that the representatives of the Indian States would also be consulted as to how best could they "take their part in the constitution-making body." Wavell also announced that elections to the Central and Provincial Legislatures, so long postponed owing to the war, would be held "during the coming cold weather," and that soon after the publication of the election results, steps would be taken "to bring into being an Executive Council which will have the support of the main Indian parties." This Council, he stated, would, during the preparatory stages, carry on "urgent economic and social problems."

On the following day, Prime Minister Attlee also made a statement almost on identical lines, but adding that the broad definition of British policy towards India, contained in the Declaration of 1942 (commonly known as the Cripps proposals) "stands in all its fullness and purpose," and that the Declaration "envisaged the negotiation of a treaty between the British Government and the constitution-making body. The British Government, he observed, was considering the contents of such a treaty, and in that treaty nothing would be provided which would be "incompatible with the interests of India."[15]

CONGRESS DECIDES TO CONTEST ELECTIONS

A couple of days after the above statements, the AICC met in Bombay to consider them. Many CWC members, who had come out of jails only a few weeks before, were seething with discontent against the British rule, and they asked the question: Was a reiteration of the Cripps offer all for which they suffered the agonies of imprisonment and the people, the hardships of war. Not only that the Cripps plan alone was the reward, even this was hedged in with conditions and innovations. Far from granting complete independence, the British

[15]For text of Attlee's statement, see Sitaramayya, vol. II, 669-70

authorities only spoke of "alterations" and "modifications" in the Cripps scheme. When they talked of "consultations" with the "representatives of the Indian States" they did not clarify whether those "representatives" would represent the princes or they would be the spokesmen of the people. While recording disapproval and dissatisfaction against the Viceroy's statement the Congress decided to contest elections envisaged therein.

The new Secretary of State for India, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, in two statements, first on 23 September, and the second on 4 December, tried to clarify some "misunderstandings" that had been created by the Viceroy's statement, and asserted that H.M.'s Government regarded as urgent the setting up of a constitution-making body by which the Indians will decide their own future." In the latter statement, the Secretary of State also mentioned that a Parliamentary Delegation would soon be sent to India to learn at first hand the views of leading Indian political figures and to help the British Government in its desire that "India should speedily attain her full and rightful position as an Independent Partner State in the British Commonwealth." Addressing the Associated Chambers of Commerce in Calcutta, on 10 December, Wavell also assured the Indian people "political freedom and a government or governments, of their own choice." He, however, asserted that unless some "reasonable settlement" was reached between the Congress, the minorities, "of whom the Muslims are the most numerous and most important," and the rulers of Indian States, the British could not abandon their responsibility of governing India.

The events from early 1946 onwards began to move in quick succession, and ultimately in August 1947, the independence of India was attained. What these events were, and how they brought about the separation of the "most precious gem" from the British Crown would be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

BRITAIN QUITS INDIA

THE FIRST IMPORTANT event of 1946 was the holding of elections for the Central and Provincial Legislatures. Lord Wavell had announced that elections, long overdue (the Central Legislature, now 10-years-old, had had several extensions since the end of its normal 5-year term in 1940) would be held as soon as possible, that the life of the Central Assembly would expire on 1 October 1945, general elections to the Chamber being completed in time for new members to take their seats at the budget session of 1946, and that, as electoral rolls for the Council of State were not ready the life of that Chamber had, therefore, been extended to 1 May 1946, arrangements being made for holding general elections for that Chamber as soon as possible after that date.

A Government of India announcement of 28 September stated that polling in connection with the Central Legislative Assembly elections would take place in Assam on 21 November, in the Central Provinces on 22 November; in the Punjab on 23 November; in Bombay, Bihar, and the U.P. on 26 November; in Orissa on 29 November; in Madras and Sind on 1 December; in N.W.F.P. on 4 December; and in Bengal on 10 December.

It has been stated in the preceding chapter that although the Congress Party did not quite like Wavell's announcement of 18 September, it had decided to contest the forthcoming elections and had reiterated its adherence to "its national and international objectives" laid down in the resolution of 8 August 1942 and "its conviction that the independence of India must be unequivocally recognized, and that her status among the United Nations must be that of an independent nation."

The Muslim League announced that the Wavell proposals "contained nothing new" and were "the same old Cripps proposals" which it rejected in 1942. It said: "The only solution of the Indian constitutional problem lies in the acceptance of Pakistan." In a

Press interview on 8 November, Jinnah gave a detailed definition of the State of Pakistan which the League would seek to establish in India.

The Akali Sikh Congress, the Working Committee of the All-India Scheduled Castes, the National Liberal Federation, and the Communist Party of India also announced their position vis-a-vis Wavell's announcement.

The elections to the Central Legislative Assembly were, however, held according to schedule, and an announcement of 1 January 1946 showed that of the 102 elected members of that body, the Congress Party had returned 56; the Muslim League, 30; the European Group, 8; Independents, 6; and the Akali Sikhs (represented for the first time), 2. The other 40 members of the Assembly were nominated on 4 January 26 being official and 14 non-official.

Voting for the 11 Provincial Legislatures was held over a period of $3\frac{1}{2}$ months, commencing with elections in Assam on 9 January 1946, followed by elections in Sind, the Punjab, and the N.W.F.P., and ending in other Provinces at various times up to the middle of April.

An analysis of the election results showed that the Congress Party, which at the elections of 1937 won 704 of the total of 1,585 seats in the 11 Provincial Assemblies, had increased its strength to 930, and was an absolute majority in eight Provinces (Assam, Bihar, Bombay, C.P., Madras, N.W.F.P., Orissa, and U.P.) having won an additional three Provinces (Assam, Bombay, and the Frontier Province) since 1937. In the three remaining Provinces Congress was the second strongest party, having increased its representation in Bengal from 52 to 86, in the Punjab from 19 to 51, and in Sind from 7 to 22. The reason for Congress reverses in these Provinces appeared to be the League propaganda which beclouded all political issues and fomented religious sentiments and communal passions.

The analysis also showed that the Muslim League which in 1937 captured 109 of the 492 Muslim seats obtained a spectacular success in capturing 428 such seats, and this indicated that its influence was increasing in Indian politics since 1937. Among other features of the elections was the emergence in the Punjab of the *Panthic* Akalis who won 22 of the 32 seats reserved for the Sikhs; the rout of the Hindu Mahasabha; the disappearance in Madras of the Justice Party, long influential in that Province; and the decline in the Punjab of the Unionist Muslims, whose representation was reduced from 96 to 20 members.

Final figures of the votes cast were as follows: Congress Party—11,683,053; Muslim League—4,530,538; Communists—653,489; Scheduled Castes Federation—509,217; Punjab Unionists—413,815; Hindu Mahasabha—285,567; Akali Sikhs (mainly Punjab) 178,509; Krishak Praja Party (mainly Bengal)—132,581; *Jamiat-ul-Ulema* (non-League Muslims)—132,190; Nationalist Muslims (mainly U.P.)—125,434; Radical Democratic Party—118,661; Ahrars—67,461; Momins (Bihar)—29,168; and Khaksars—21,100.

Congress polled 80 per cent of the General votes cast and the League 74 per cent of the Muslim votes cast, over half the Congress Muslim vote being polled in the Frontier Province.

On 28 January 1946, Lord Wavell addressed the Central Legislative Assembly and reiterated the intention of His Majesty's Government to establish a new Executive Council formed from the political leaders and to set up, as soon as possible, a constitution-making body.

PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION

While the Indian political parties were engaged in the election campaign, a Parliamentary Delegation came to New Delhi on 6 January 1946 to learn at first hand, what Pethick Lawrence called, "the views of Indian political leaders" as to the future of India Representatives of all British political parties were included in it. The Parliamentarians visited many cities and towns making contacts with leaders of Indian life and with Indian peasants, workers, etc. They also conferred with Wavell and Commander-in-Chief Auchinleck. On the last day of their stay (8 February), the leader of the Delegation, Robert Richards, stated at a press conference that all members of the Delegation recognized the fact that party differences had disappeared in the unity of the demand for independence.[1]

CABINET MISSION FOR INDIA

On 19 February, Attlee stated in the House of Commons that in view of the paramount importance, not only to India and to the British Commonwealth but to the peace of the world, of a successful outcome of discussions with leaders of Indian opinion on problems arising out of the early realization by India of self-government, the

[1]Keesing's, *Contemporary Archives, 1946-1948*, 7786.

British Government had decided "to send out to India a special mission of Cabinet Ministers (Secretary of State—Pathick Lawrence, President of Board of Trade—Cripps, and First Lord of the Admiralty A.V. Alexander) to act in association with the Viceroy in this matter." On 15 March, Attlee stated in the Commons:

> India herself must choose what will be her future Constitution. What will be her position in the world. I hope that the Indian people may elect to remain within the British Commonwealth. I am certain that she will find great advantages in doing so. In these days that demand for complete, isolated nationhood, apart from the rest of the world, is really outdated.... The British Commonwealth and Empire is not bound together by chains of external compulsion. It is a free association of free peoples.[2]

He also stated that the situation had completely changed, and that any attempt "to persist with old methods would lead not to a solution, but a deadlock." The British Premier also observed: "We cannot allow a minority to place a veto on the advance of the majority."[3]

This part of Attlee's statement was strongly criticized by the League which considered it detrimental to its demand for Pakistan. Jinnah said: "Attlee has fallen into the traps of false propaganda. There is no question of holding up the progress of the majority; Indian Muslims are not a minority, but a nation. Our position remains definite—we stand for the division of India and the establishment of Pakistan."

On 23 March, the Mission landed in Karachi, and its leader, Pethick Lawrence, commented that the Mission had open minds on the Indian constitutional question, and that Indians would decide for themselves freely whether they wished to remain in the Commonwealth or would be completely independent. Similarly, Cripps observed that the Mission had not come to adjudicate between the dispute of the Indian people, "but to find out means for the transfer of power to Indian hands."

The utterances of these leaders made a profound impression upon the Indian mind and the Mission was welcomed, unlike the Simon Commission, all over the country. It started conferring with

[2]George Bennett, ed., *The Concept of Empire, 1774-1947* (Adam and Charles Black, London, 1962) 420-1.

[3]Keesing's, n. 1, 7785.

the Congress and League leaders at Simla on 5 May, but on 12 May, the talks broke down.

Cabinet Mission Plan

Four days after the end of Simla parleys, the Cabinet Mission announced a plan to serve as a basis of agreement between the Indian parties for the future of India. While rejecting Pakistan the Mission recommended a Union of India embracing both British India and the Indian States. The main outlines of the plan were (*a*) an all-India Union Government and a legislature dealing with foreign affairs, defence and communications, (*b*) all remaining powers to vest in the Provinces, (*c*) the all-Union Legislature to be composed of equal proportions from Hindu majority and Muslim majority Provinces with representatives of the Indian States, and (*d*) the constitution-making machinery to arrive at a Constitution to be framed by a Constituent Assembly formed of representatives of Provincial Assemblies and of States—each Provincial Assembly being a separate unit.

In order to give to the minorities greater assurance, the Mission divided the country into three groups—*A,B,* and *C*. Group *A* was to include Madras, Bombay, U.P., Bihar, C.P., and Orissa; Group *B* to comprise the Punjab, Sind, N.W.F.P. and British Baluchistan (this Group was to constitute a Muslim majority area), and Group *C* was to include Bengal and Assam (here the Muslims were to have a small majority over the rest). This grouping was devised to satisfy "all legitimate fears" of the League, and in their majority Provinces to enable the Muslims to exercise almost complete autonomy in most of the subjects.

A day after the announcement of the above plan Lord Wavell invited 14 prominent Indian leaders to serve as members of an "Interim" Government. The CWC accepted, on 26 June, the long-term proposals, but rejected the principle of equal representation of Congress and the League in the proposed government. The League accepted the proposals and agreed to participate in the proposed Constitution-making body, but it made it clear that the ultimate objective of Pakistan was in no way renounced.

Formation of "Caretaker" Government

On 9 May, the Viceroy's Executive Council, including the C-in-C, resigned in order to facilitate the arrangements which the Cabinet Mission was making. On 26 June, the Viceroy announced that

until an Indian Government was framed he would set up a temporary "Caretaker" Government of officials to carry on in the interim period. This government functioned up to 25 August, and on that day it resigned to make room for an "Interim" Government.

Nehru Changes Stand on Cabinet Mission Plan

In the meantime, however, a few other developments took place, and these vitiated the communal air once again. This was the election of Nehru to the Presidency of Congress Party. While the Rightists in the Congress canvassed for Patel, Maulana Azad, and a few others supported Nehru. Azad, President since February 1940, urged the voters to elect Nehru and the same was done. Assured of profound confidence of the Congressmen in his leadership, the new President sought to lead the country in his own light. He, it seemed, did not like the partition of India, and acquiesced to the Cabinet Mission Plan because, as Mosley has put it, "Gandhi was for it, and he [Nehru] felt he would be outvoted if he opposed it."[4] Nehru had very poor opinion of Jinnah's qualities, did not consider him "really a Muslim at all"[5] and probably thought that an "opportunist" like Jinnah had no business to bring about the ruin of the Indian people which in his thinking any partition plan entailed.

After his election as Congress President, Nehru addressed a press conference on 10 July, and in answer to the question whether the Congress had accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan *in toto* he replied that the Congress Party was "completely unfettered by agreements and free to meet all situations as they arise," and that he, "as President of the Congress, had every intention of modifying the Plan." In regard to the division of India into three groups as proposed in the Plan Nehru observed that "the big probability is, from any approach to the question, that there will be no grouping." On the problem of minorities also he said: "We shall, no doubt, succeed in solving it, but we accept no interference in it; certainly not the British Government's interference."

These statements from the mouth of no less a person than the President-elect of Congress Party caused profound concern to the Muslim League leadership. Jinnah, in particular, had developed

[4]Mosley, *The Last Days of the British Raj*, 26.
[5]See Mosley's interview with Nehru, quoted in *ibid.*

great disregard for and distrust of Gandhi, Nehru, Congress Party and the Hindus in recent years, and he had only reluctantly accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan "as a cut and dried scheme to meet the objections from both sides." Nehru's remarks at the press conference gave him [Jinnah] an inkling of the new President's mind and intention, and he became a still stronger votary of the Pakistan scheme. A meeting of the Working Committee was convened in Bombay on 27 July, and the decision to withdraw League's acceptance of the Plan was taken. A resolution was also adoped, setting aside 16 August 1946 as "Direct Action Day"—a day on which the Muslims would renounce all titles and honours conferred upon them by the British and would demonstrate their will and determination to achieve Pakistan.

An Appraisal of Nehru's Statement

While it was rather hard to submit that after the Congress-League acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Proposals things would have moved exactly in the direction of solution of political deadlock and some new complications would have not arisen, it could be asserted with some measure of exactitude that Nehru's remarks of 10 July betrayed a lack of statesmanship and political sagacity. Out of deep enthusiasm for freedom for an undivided India, he failed to "read the writings on the wall" and appreciate the strength and popularity of Muslim League and its great leader, Jinnah. In the recent elections to Central and State Assemblies, although the Congress had captured most of the general seats, ninety per cent of the Muslim seats had been won by the Muslim League, and this should have sufficiently indicated to Nehru which way the wind was blowing. And then, the League was not the only element clamouring for bifurcation of the country. The Sikhs—though Hindus—had their own *gurus*, their own shrines (*gurudwaras*), their own ways of life, and principles and tenets of religion and faith. Their scripture—the *Granth Sahib*—emphasized virtues and living habits which were not wholly identical to those of the Hindus or the Muslims. The Sikh leaders, like Master Tara Singh, were demanding an independent State for themselves, they called *Khalistan*. Dr. Ambedkar—though no longer having the same old hold upon the Untouchables—was still there to pinpoint the interests of minorities other than the Musulmans. The Indian princes were unwilling to reconcile to an independent and a united India. If the people of the States had organized their own conference to agitate for the freedom of India in collaboration

with the Congress Party the rulers had their own organizations—the Chamber of Princes—to emphasize separation and vested interests. The Chancellor of the Chamber was, in 1946, the Nawab of Bhopal—a Musulman and he, alongwith a number of other *Maharajas*, *rajas*, *nawabs* and *jagirdars*, was asserting that if the British decided to quit India, the paramountcy which the Princely States owed to the British Crown "would not automatically be transferred to the newly independent State." A few bigger States, like Hyderabad, did not join the Chamber of Princes, and emphasized that they would become completely independent after the withdrawal of the British power from India.

Thus, the centrifugal elements were very strong and vocal all over the country, and these should have sufficed to bring home to Nehru the desirability of accepting a federated India rather than a divided one which was bound to be the result in the face of so many disintegrating forces. Moreover, how could the Congress Party or Nehru alone alter the Cabinet Mission Plan—an agreement to which other parties were also signatories? But sometimes, over-ambitiousness or a desire to chart out an independent course of action on the part of an individual mars the progress of the entire organization—nay of the whole mass of community. Too much of talk is bad politics, and Nehru's observations at the 10 July press conference were, to say the least, most unwise, impolitic and untimely. Maulana Azad has recorded that the "statement was wrong."[6] Nehru's biographer, Michael Brecher, described it "a serious tactical error"—as "one of the most fiery and provocative statements in his forty years of public life."[7]

MUSLIM LEAGUE OBSERVES DIRECT ACTION DAY

The Congress Executive felt seriously disturbed over the harm that had been done by Nehru's remarks. Without daring to condemn it (because of the force of Nehru's personality) it adopted a resolution, merely reiterating its adherence to the Cabinet Mission Plan. But it was now too late. Jinnah searched only excuses and opportunities to advance the cause of the Muslim League, and the latest was provided by Nehru. He had fixed up his eyes on 16 August and

[6]Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 155.
[7]Mosley, n. 4, 27.

had begun planning how to make the "Direct Action Day" a success. In a statement, the League President pointed out that the "Day" would be observed not for any "direct action" to enforce the Pakistan demand but to explain to the Muslims all over India the contents of the League Council resolution of 27 July. He called upon the Musulmans to conduct themselves peacefully and "not to play in the hands of their enemy."[8]

But Jinnah's counsels for moderation were not enough to quiet the fears of Congress leadership. Shaheed Suhrarwardy, a prominent member of the League Working Committee and a very influential leader of Bengal Muslims, was preaching the cult of violence. On 5 August, he wrote in *The Statesman* of Calcutta: "Bloodshed and disorder are not necessary evil in themselves, if resorted to for a noble cause. Among Muslims today, no cause is dearer or nobler than Pakistan."[9] The Muslim urchins, obviously under inspiration from their elders, were shouting in the streets and lanes: *Lar ke linge Pakistan*; *Bunt ke rahega Hindustan* (We shall have Pakistan by force; India shall have to be partitioned). Slogans like these unnerved the Congressmen, and on 15 August, Nehru met Jinnah in Bombay in a last-minute bid to get the League leader cancel the observance of Direct Action Day and cooperate with the Congress in the formation of Interim Government. But Jinnah was a hard nut to crack. The conversations produced no result, and 16 August was observed as planned.

From the early morning, bands of Muslim Leaguers, allegedly joined by large numbers of *goondas* from the suburban areas, began killing of innocent Hindu men, women, and children, looting of their shops and godowns, and burning of their houses and other belongings. For three days, the bloodshed and orgy of violence continued, and reportedly about 7,000 persons were done to death. Thousands of people were wounded, hundreds of them seriously. The army and the police passively observed the massacre. Chief Minister Suhrarwardy called the military into action only when the Hindus appeared to be taking the upper hand. What happened in Calcutta had repercussions in other parts of the country. The Muslim majority in two towns of East Bengal—Noakhali and Tipperah —took a cue from their brethren, and started similar violence and

[8]Sitaramayya, vol. II, 805.
[9]Quoted in, Mosley, n. 4, 32.

bloodshed. Cases of abduction of women, rape, conversion to Islam, arson, and killing and stabbing became the order of the day. Thousands of families left their hearths and homes and fled to Bihar—a pre-dominantly Hindu Province—as refugees. The news in the press and the stories of sufferings related by these men and women roused among the Hindus a spirit of revenge and retaliation, and Muslims of Bihar had the same fate as the Hindus of Calcutta, Noakhali, and Tipperah. Trouble spread to other parts of the country also. There was a sporadic outburst of murder and arson at Garhmukteshwar—in western U.P.—and terrific events occurred at Dasna. There was violence and rioting in Meerut city and some of the structures of the *pandal*, where the annual session of the Congress Party was being held, were burnt. Cases of stabbing and arson occurred in Bombay and Ahmedabad also.

The conscience of all who witnessed the happenings or heard the stories of brutality was stirred. The Mahatma left, on 6 November 1946, for East Bengal to restore communal harmony there, and Nehru visited Bihar to end the week's horrors. In other places, leaders of government and political parties jointly appealed for the cessation of communal strife.

FORMATION OF INTERIM GOVERNMENT

While after the withdrawal of its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan, the League leadership was devising plans for the observance of Direct Action Day, the Viceroy was endeavouring to foment a National Government in the country. On 6 August, he asked Congress President Nehru to assist him in the formation of an Interim Government and a week later, the latter expressed willingness to do so. Nehru requested Jinnah also to cooperate, but the League President showed no such inclination. On 18 August, he announced that the Congress was prepared to form a government on the basis of 6-5-3 formula, with 6 Congressmen, 5 Muslim Leaguers, and 3 representing other minorities. Names of the Congress leaders to be included in the proposed government were submitted. Wavell also asked Jinnah to suggest the names of League representatives, but the latter expressed regrets.

On 2 September, the formation of the Interim Government or Provisional National Government, as Sitaramayya has styled it, with 12 members, 3 being Muslims, was announced. Nehru became

its Vice-President. Jinnah described Wavell's action in forming the government as "unwise and unstatesmanlike" and "fraught with dangerous and serious consequences." He alleged that the Viceroy had "added insult to injury" and "struck a severe blow to the Muslim League and Muslim India." Wavell and Nehru reopened talks with Jinnah, and succeeded, on 15 October, in persuading him that the League nominees would enter the government. The League got 5 seats, and on 24 October, the government was reconstituted[10]

League Obstructs Functioning of Interim Government

The Muslim League, it appeared, had no intention, from the outset, to cooperate with the Congress Party in the governance of the country, and it entered the government not to make the Cabinet Mission Plan a success but to convince the authorities in London that collaboration between the two major parties was just not possible, and that partition alone would resolve the conflict. It demanded —and was supported by Wavell—one of the major portfolios, and the Congress agreed to allocate to its nominee (Liaquat Ali Khan) the Department of Finance.[11] There was nothing wrong in the demand, because after all, the League represented a sizable section of the Indian populace, but what was unfortunate was the obstructionist tactic adopted by Liaquat Ali. Finance was the life-blood of all Departments, and all their proposals for income and expenditure were subjected to severe scrutiny by the Department of Finance. While modifications were quite frequent, complete rejections were not uncommon. The Congress Ministers, in particular, felt seriously handicapped and a good deal of acrimony ensued. Liaquat Ali introduced a budget, allegedly, designed "to harm the industrialists and businessmen, the majority of whom were Hindus." The British authorities and the Congress leadership became almost convinced that all attempts to bring about a lasting harmony between the Congress Party and the Muslim League would lead to nothing but failure.

League Boycotts Constituent Assembly

The attitude of the Muslim League towards the Constituent Assembly that had been convened by His Majesty's Government to draw up

[10]The League nominees were: Liaquat Ali Khan, I.I. Chundrigar, Abdur Rab Nishtar, Ghaznafar Ali Khan, and J.N. Mandal.

[11]Wavell suggested, and Azad concurred, that the League be given the Home Department, but Patel did not like to part with this; see Azad, n. 6, 166.

a constitution under the Cabinet Mission Plan was also an indicator in the same direction. On 14 November, Jinnah declared boycott of that Assembly, and asserted that only "the creation of Pakistan and Hindustan would bring about a solution of the present communal situation." He styled the decision to summon Constituent Assembly as "blunder of a grave and serious character," and stated that the Viceroy was "blind to the present serious situation and the realities facing him," and that he was "playing into the hands of Congress." On 25 November, Jinnah observed that the Central and Provincial Governments should consider an exchange of populations as the best means of settling the prevailing communal strife.

ATTLEE'S BID TO HEAL THE CONGRESS-LEAGUE BREACH

During the closing months of 1946, the League launched a vehement campaign for its Pakistan demand, and the chances of a *rapprochement* with the Congress Party appeared dimmer. The dispute now appeared to be no longer between India and Britain, but between the factions of India themselves. The Labour Government decided to prepare the ground for Indian independence. Prime Minister Attlee invited Nehru from Congress, Jinnah and Liaquat Ali from the League, and Baldev Singh from the Sikh Conference to London, on 30 November, to discuss some of the issues arising out of the positions taken by them, and they conferred there from 3 to 6 December. The major differences arose on the interpretation of the clauses relating to grouping in the Cabinet Mission Plan. The League representatives stuck to the view that the Constituent Assembly had no right to change the structure of the Plan, and that any change regarding grouping—which they held was an essential feature of the Plan—would alter the basis of the agreement. The Congress leader opposed the grouping arrangement and asserted that the Constituent Assembly enjoyed the power of making necessary changes in the Cabinet Mission scheme. The Sikh leader emphasized protection of the minorities' interests only. The British participants in the parleys upheld the League point of view, but this did not heal the breach between the Congress and the League. The leaders returned to India without any agreement. The League Members in the Interim Government continued to pursue obstructionist tactics, and the attitude of the Congress and League leaders towards each other hardened still further.

ATTLEE FIXES DATE FOR TRANSFER OF POWER

The functioning of the Interim Government, the League's decision to boycott the Constituent Assembly[12] and the failure of the London conference convinced the authorities that Britain must withdraw from India "by a fixed date." The transfer of government responsibility into Indian hands, Attlee in particular felt, alone would resolve the Congress-League deadlock. On 20 February 1947, he stated on the floor of the Commons that Britain intended to transfer power to "responsible Indian hands" not later than June 1948, that if an Indian constitution had not by that time been worked out by a fully representative Indian Constituent Assembly, H.M.'s Government would consider handing over the powers of the Central Government either to "some form of Central Government for British India" or to existing Provincial Governments in some areas, or otherwise as seemed "best in Indian interests."

Nehru described this decision as "wise and courageous" and as removing "all misconceptions and suspicions." He called it "a challenge" to India, and expressed a determination "to meet it bravely in the spirit of that challenge." He also appealed the Muslim League to cooperate in the constitution-making. But Jinnah declared, on the 23 February, that League would "not yield an inch in its demand for Pakistan." He described the Constituent Assembly's acts invalid and demanded its dissolution. Three days later, the League Secretary-General (Liaquat Ali), declared that "the majority party in this country is doing its best to monopolize for themselves the power being surrendered by the British," and that the League was "not prepared to submit to a change of masters."

MOUNTBATTEN MISSION

Lord Wavell viewed with dismay the decision of H.M.'s Government to withdraw from India without finding a solution to the communal tangle. He was in favour of a gradual withdrawal so that, as Mosley has put it, "bloc by bloc, Province by Province, the Indians would be faced with the responsibility of settling their own future and making

[12]The Constituent Assembly opened on 9 December, 1946, but there was no League representative.

their own peace with each other."[13] He drew up a plan for this purpose and despatched it to Attlee. But the British Premier had taken the final decision, and Wavell's scheme did not appeal to him. The Congress Party was still demanding "Quit India," and the League's watchword was "Divide and Quit." The hazards of staying on appeared to be more serious than the risks involved in withdrawing. Attlee "sacked" Wavell, and appointed Lord Mountbatten to succeed him in the Viceregal Palace. R.P. Masani has pointed out in his book, *The British in India*, that the new Viceroy was sent with instructions "to expedite the withdrawal." Mountbatten later, on 14 November 1968, while delivering the second Jawahar Lal Nehru Memorial lecture at Cambridge University, revealed that before accepting the offer from Attlee he insisted on having power to make his own decisions in India, and that he was given "plenipotentiary powers."[14] He arrived in Delhi with his wife and younger daughter Pamela on 22 March.

Mountbatten had been the Admiral of the Fleet and Supreme Commander in South-East Asia during the war. He had displayed remarkable capacities of "getting on with all kinds of people," and he possessed "an extremely lively, exciting personality." His wife also possessed unusual qualities of "making friends and influencing people," and in choosing the Earl for the task of arranging the transfer of power to Indian hands Attlee was impressed by the qualities of both.

Shortly after his arrival, Mountbatten began to converse with the Congress, League, and Sikh leaders. He first tried "very hard" to revive the Cabinet Mission Plan with Jinnah "in order to retain the unity of India," but the latter would not hear of it. He found that differences among them were so wide that partition of India alone would solve the problem. Having himself become convinced he began to convert the Congress leadership to the idea of partition. Gandhi, Nehru, Azad, and Patel considered the bifurcation of the country as a great evil,[15] and they ridiculed Rajaji when he urged

[13]Mosley, n. 4, 50.

[14]*The Hindustan Times*, 15 November 1968, p. 16.

[15]Gandhi said: "If the Congress wishes to accept partition, it will be over my dead body"; quoted in Azad, n. 6, 186. Azad felt that "instead of removing communal fears, partition would perpetuate them by creating two states based on communal hatred"; *ibid.*, 185. Addressing a public meeting in Lucknow, Patel observed: "The earth may split and the heavens may fall, but India will not be divided."

acceptance of League's Pakistan demand; but they were now confronted with a situation where no alternative presented itself. They began to accept the idea of partition as an inevitable evil. After converting the Congress leaders, Mountbatten devised a scheme whereby the elected members of the Constituent Assembly should vote, Province by Province, whether they wished power to be transferred to a unified or partitioned India. Then the plan was taken by his Chief of Staff, Lord Ismay, to London and was placed before the Cabinet on 2 May. On 17 May, the Viceroy met the Indian leaders and learnt from Nehru that his plan as it then stood would be rejected by Congress, League, and the Sikhs equally. The plan was redrafted and taken to London by Mountbatten himself. There he apprised the authorities of the discussions he had had with leading Indian statesmen. On 30 May, he came back to Delhi and held more discussions on 2 June, with the Congress, Sikh, and League leaders.

NEW PLAN FOR TRANSFER OF POWER

On 3 June, Attlee announced in the House of Commons the intention of H.M.'s Government to introduce legislation during the current session for the transfer of power in India during 1947 on a Dominion States basis, to one or two successor authorities, leaving it to the Indians themselves to decide whether or not there should be partition. He said:

> Any constitution framed by the then Constituent Assembly cannot apply to those parts of the country which are unwilling to accept it, and that Bengal, the Punjab, Sind and British Baluchistan representatives who are not participating in the Constituent Assembly would decide whether their constitution is to be framed (*a*) in the existing Constituent Assembly, or (*b*) in a new and separate Constituent Assembly consisting of the representatives of those areas which decided not to participate in the existing Assembly.

Reaction to the New Plan

The Indian political circles reacted sharply to Attlee's announcement. On 4 June, Gandhi said: "The British Government is not responsible for partition. The Viceroy has had no hand in it—he

is as much opposed to division as Congress itself. But if the Hindus and Muslims cannot agree on anything else, then the Viceroy is left with no choice."[16] He expressed confidence that the two parts of India would ultimately unite. Nehru, President of Congress Party, observed: "It is with no joy in my heart that I commend these proposals to you, though I have no doubt in my mind that this is the right choice." Seeing no alternative other leaders of Congress also acquiesced.[17] The Muslim League was all jubilant and announced its acceptance in a formal resolution on 9 June. The All India Depressed Classes League endorsed the new British Plan. The Sikhs also expressed satisfaction.[18]

INDIAN INDEPENDENCE BILL, 1947

Having secured a go-ahead signal from different sections of political India, the authorities in London proceeded, rather speedily, with the partition plan, and on 18 July, the Indian Independence Bill was given Royal assent. The Congress Party mouthpiece, *The Hindustan Times*, described it as "the noblest and greatest law ever enacted by the British Parliament." The organ of the Muslim League, *The Dawn*, said by this "momentous and unique legislation" Britain was "entitled to the highest praise from all freedom-loving peoples of the world."

At mid-night on 14-15 August, the British rule in India came to an end, and the power was formally transferred to the two new Dominions of India and Pakistan which officially came into existence. Just before mid-night Nehru made a great speech in the Assembly and said, *inter alia*, "Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but substantially. At the stroke of the mid-night hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom." Lord Mountbatten was sworn in as the first Governor-General of the Indian Dominion on 15 August, and he administered the oath of office to the Cabinet. Consequent on the transfer of power, both

[16]Keesing's, n. 1, 8633.

[17]On 15 June, the AICC adopted a formal resolution, accepting the partition plan. For details of the resolution see Government of India Press, *Partition Proceedings*, 6.

[18]The Hindu Mahasabha, under Shyama Prasad Mukerjee, opposed the partition plan.

Chambers of the former Indian Legislature ceased to exist, and their functions were taken over by the Constituent Assemblies of India and Pakistan.

The battle-cry for the ouster of the British from India first raised in 1857 bore fruit after ninety years' of ceaseless struggle. The top leaders of the Congress Party in India and of the Muslim League in Pakistan were saddled into positions of power and responsibility. The common man in both the countries was apparently happy that the end had ultimately been reached. But for the present writer what was achieved in 1947 was only the "beginning of the end." Beneath the rejoicings of victory, while the drums of victory were resounding in the capitals of India and Pakistan, the shrieks of the millions were besmirching the gaiety of the occasion. Innocent men, women and children were being massacred by the fanatic and ferocious communalists in both countries, and were being deprived of their hearths and homes; the machinery of law and administration existed but in name; the erstwhile agitators and resistors were startled to find themselves confronted with tremendous responsibilities of governance, and the bureaucracy was in a defiant mood—only half willing to bow down to the new bosses. Several hundred maharajas, nawabs, and chieftains were still indecisive about their future relationship with free India, and a few of them were even clamouring for independence. The 150 years of British rule had deprived the people of all their wealth and means of livelihood, and the common man was on the verge of starvation. If the freedom from foreign domination was to have any meaning it was essential that the economic revolution was also brought about and the lot of the common man improved. These were the multifarious problems with which the new rulers were to grapple, and these were undoubtedly challenging in the extreme. How the challenge was met by the Congress rulers was beyond the scope of the present study.

WHY DID BRITISH QUIT INDIA?

Before closing the story of India's march towards freedom, it would be pertinent to examine the circumstances and factors which influenced the British decision to part with the "brightest jewel of the Crown" so quietly and peacefully. Almost *the* first in founding Empire Britain turned out to be the first in liquidating it. The phenomenon, in so far as India was concerned, could be explained within the frame-

work of the following factors: ferocious communal killings, rebellion of the Indian Navy and new spirit of patriotism in the armed forces, mass stirring in the wake of Indian National Army trials, weakening of British strength and prestige, problems of reconstruction at home, Britain's involvement in the Cold War, and new concept of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Communal Situation

Communal riots had been a common phenomenon of the Indian political scene during the past several decades, but the barbarities perpetrated in the wake of League's Direct Action Day stirred the conscience of the British rulers. Starting from Calcutta, the trouble spread to East Bengal and Bihar, and in no time engulfed the entire country. Lord Wavell was intensely disturbed, and sent to the authorities in London alarming tales of those happenings. The Government of Lord Attlee began to perceive that countless British and Indian lives would be lost and huge amount of money spent if an attempt were made to suppress by force the growth of nationalist aspirations which had become very strong during the war period. Any such attempt, the authorities thought, would bring great discredit to the socialist government in the eyes of the British people, the masses of India, and the world public opinion. They bent their nerves to bring about some sort of *rapprochement* between the Hindus and Muslims, but there was no success. While Wavell and Secretary of State Pethick Lawrence favoured still more efforts in that direction, Attlee felt disgusted with the Indian political scene. The Congress had all along been holding Britain responsible for the communal strife, and the British Premier wanted to extricate his country from the stigma. Moreover, the partition of the country into two Dominions appeared to be the only solution of the Hindu-Muslim deadlock, and when the policy-makers in London found that the Congress Party also was willing to accept that [partition], they decided to transfer power by a fixed date.

Rebellion of Indian Navy

Another important factor which influenced the British decision to get out of India was the loss of faith in the loyalty of the armed forces, in particular the Navy. Force and military superiority had been largely the backbone of Britain's hold over India. When in 1857, the troops rebelled, the foundations of the British rule were

shaken. Since then, the foreign master was always on guard to devise such military policies as were likely to ensure unmitigated loyalty of the armed forces. But the Second World War created a situation where this loyalty could not be depended upon. Thousands of young men from different parts of the country and belonging to different castes and communities had joined the armed forces to fight for the victory of Allied Powers in the hope that such victory would bring about their emancipation from foreign rule also.[19] After the fighting was over, these men began to clamour for the freedom of India, and to support the Congress movement. For the first time since the Uprising of 1857, political agitation began to germinate in the armed forces. The Ratings of the Royal Indian Navy stopped work on 19 February 1946, and gave notice to the government that unless their demands were met by a particular date they would resign *en bloc.* This brief "mutiny" was coupled with "strikes" at Air Force bases, and signs of open revolt were visible in Bombay, Calcutta, and Karachi. Although suppressed, the new spirit of patriotism in the armed forces brought home to the British that they could not keep India under subjugation for long with the help of Indian troops. The British troops in the Indian Ocean area could hold India against insurrection for some more years, but after several years of involvement in the war they too were clamouring to go home.[20] Thus, the main prop of hold over India falling, the British rulers were not slow to realize the wisdom of quittng India before much damage was done to their future interests in this country.

Indian National Army Trials

The tremendous nationalist stirring in the wake of the trial of certain Indian Nationalist Army (INA) Officers also, it seemed, greatly influenced the British decision to transfer power into Indian hands. After the end of the war the British authorities declared that Col. Shah Nawaz, Captain Sehgal and Lt. Dhillon, and other INA men would be tried by a court martial for alleged crimes

[19]As early as 14 August 1941, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill had announced, in the Atlantic Charter, that they would "respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live," and that after the destruction of the Nazi tyranny they would provide to all peoples "the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries," and to "live out their lives in freedom from fear and want."

[20]Mosley, n. 4, 12.

of waging war against the King-Emperor. This created great sensation in the country, and on 22 September 1945, the CWC appointed a committee, comprising Nehru, T.B. Sapru, Bhulabhai Desai, and Asaf Ali (all distinguished jurists) to defend these men. The trials commenced on 5 November in the Red Fort of Delhi and lasted up to 31 December. On 3 January 1946, the court pronounced the three principal accused guilty of the crime, and sentenced them to transportation for life. Several other trials were held subsequently.

During the hearings many blood-curdling and heart-rending tales of INA sufferings during the war came to public light. The freedom of expression permitted within the precincts of the court "led ot the elaboration of liberal and democratic theories about the right of a subject nation to wage war for its freedom." The arguments advanced by the Defence Counsels were published in the newspapers and were read with great interest all over the country. The names of Dhillon, Sehgal and Shah Nawaz overshadowed, for a moment, the names of Congress leaders, and demands were made throughout India for their release. During November 1945 and February 1946, there were mass demonstrations in Calcutta and Bombay in support of the demand, and the police on certain occasions resorted to firing in which a number of lives were lost. The Commander-in-Chief, Auchinleck, granted clemency to the three accused, and on 6 February 1946, 11,000 members of the INA were released unconditionally. On 2 May, the Government of India announced that it had been decided not to proceed any further with the trials, and that remaining charges against men awaiting trial would be withdrawn. After their release, the INA officers and soldiers toured different parts of the country and were hailed with cries of *Jai Hind*. There was tremendous jubilation among the masses, and the authorities, both in India and England, became convinced that freedom must be accorded to the people of the subcontinent.[21]

Weakening of British Power and Prestige

The weakening of British power and prestige during the war indicated to the British authorities that they would not be able to hold on to India for long. Since the suppression of the 1857 Uprising

[21]On this point, see Spear, *India*, 414 and also R.C. Majumdar, H.C. Roychaudhuri and Kalikinkar Datta, *An Advanced History of India*, vol. III (Macmillan, London, 1962) 992.

an impression had grown that the British power was invincible. But the military reverses suffered by the British troops at the hands of the Japanese exploded that myth. They had to evacuate Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaya, and Burma; their finest ships—the "Republic" and "Prince of Wales"—were sunk, and their prestige and influence was at the lowest ebb. Britain was no longer in a position "to demonstrate in Asia the background of strength and influence which had for so long enabled her to rule a million people with one-man-on-the spot."[22]

In Europe also, Britain was in great strait. As a result of five years' of fighting her military and industrial potential was on the point of complete exhaustion, and she had been reduced to the status of a second or third rate power. For foodstuffs and wherewithal for industrial reconstruction she depended upon foreign resources, and her economic and financial experts were running back and forth between Washington and London. While the American Government was willing to assist in the economic recovery of England, she was urging that freedom and democracy, for which the Allied Powers fought in Europe and Asia, must be granted to India. The problems at home were so vast and acute that any attempt for continued involvement in the Indian political scene was deemed as unwise and unrealistic. The socialist thinking in England was already in favour of separating the Indian jewel from the British Crown. In the wake of the new situations into which England was placed by the war, even the die-hard Conservatives, like Churchill, began to come close to the idea that independence should be granted to India. The bulk of the British electorate also favoured parting with power.

Personality of Lord Attlee

Of all the British statesmen who perceived the wisdom of quitting India Attlee was the first and foremost. Since the days of his work on the Simon Commission, he had developed great interest in India's problems. After the assumption of Premiership he began to apprehend that if Britain continued to rule India by sheer force of armed strength she would lose the goodwill of the Indians, and much harm would be done to the future Indo-British relations. He

[22]See Mosley, n. 4, 12-3. On 21 February 1947, Britain issued a *White Paper entitled "The Economic Survey for 1947," and presented* an "extremely *dismal picture of closed factories, widespread unemployment, dwindling coal supplies and a virtually empty treasury.*"

thought that Britain's commercial and political interests would be served better if India were friendly and in a cooperative posture—rather than on a war path. He had, what Roy Jenkins has described, "imaginative faith in the need for self-government in India," and he "was determined to achieve that end at almost all cost."[23] That was why he sent out to India the Cabinet Mission, despatched Mountbatten to partition, and announced the decision to withdraw by a definite date—a decision for which he alone was largely responsible.

Britain's Involvement in Cold War

Another very important factor which influenced the decision to grant independence to India in 1947 appeared to be Britain's involvement in the "cold war." Even before the fighting with Germany and Japan ended, the United Kingdom, alongwith the United States, became involved in trouble with the Soviet Union which had been an ally in the war. On 26 May 1942, Britain had signed a 20-year alliance with Russia pledging mutual support against Germany, and the hope was entertained in London that friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union would continue in the post-war period also. But the hopes proved a delusion, and the British authorities found that Stalin was planning to foment World Communist Movement. As early as 18 August 1945, Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin voiced protest against Soviet violation of war-time commitments and agreements, and asserted: "We must prevent the substitution of one form of totalitarianism for another." In the course of a visit to the United States, Churchill denounced, on 5 March 1946, at Fulton, Mo., the Soviet "Iron Curtain" across Europe from Adriatic to the Baltic seas. The Soviet leaders also, in addition to bringing the states of Eastern Europe into their fold, launched anti-West propaganda, and

[23]Roy Jenkins, *Mr. Attlee: An Interim Biography* (London, 1948) 123. Also see Boyd, *British Politics in Transition*, 211. The then Press Secretary of Attlee, Francis Williams, writing later on in April 1961 on Attlee in his book entitled *A Prime Minister Remembers* pointed out that at the time the British authorities decided to hand over power a lot of people urged they must have safeguards for British trade and industry, but that the British business people in India said, "No, we don't ask for anything. We are perfectly content to rest on goodwill." Attlee subsequently told Williams, "They were abundantly justified. There are more British business people in India than ever before, and they are treated absolutely fairly. The same goes for the civil servants." See *The Hindu* (Madras), 11 April 1961.

and urges of other Dominions and could still derive commercial, financial and political benefits, it was not difficult for her to add two more to the list. While Attlee announced the decision to quit India and give her the unfettered right of determining her future, he expressed the hope that the people would choose to associate themselves with the Commonwealth. The hope was fulfilled, and the wisdom of the decision became manifest when both India and Pakistan decided to become members of the Commonwealth and to maintain and develop cordial relations with Britain in almost all fields.

HOPE OF CONTINUED FOOTHOLD

A few nationalist leaders, like Maulana Azad, gave still another explanation for Britain's decision to withdraw from India. These men contended that the British decided to quit only after ensuring their continued foothold on the Indian subcontinent. In their view, the British plan to partition India and then to transfer power was the culmination of the policy of "divide and rule." Azad, for example, wrote:

> If a united India had become free according to the Cabinet Mission Plan, there was little chance that Britain could retain her position in the economic and industrial life of India. The partition of India in which the Muslim majority Provinces formed a separate and independent state would, on the other hand, give Britain a foothold in India. A State dominated by the Muslim League would offer a permanent sphere of influence to the British. . . . With a British base in Pakistan, India would have to pay far greater attention to British interests than she might otherwise do.[25]

Before concluding the narrative it might be submitted that the British decision to quit India was by no means an act of political magnanimity. It was only the force of circumstances and the inscrutable march of time that brought about the end of the British rule. And before they left they ensured that there would be a permanent imbalance on the Indian subcontinent. The transfer of power 10 months earlier than scheduled appeared to be a step in that direction. The result of this haste was that the Princely States were not able

[25]Azad, n. 6, 191-2.

to decide about their future status and the question of accession to India or Pakistan; the frontiers between the two Dominions were not fully settled and carved out; the minorities in India and Pakistan were not given enough opportunity to migrate from one country to another; and a few other problems were left unsolved. All these continued to cause bitterness and hostility between India and Pakistan in the post-independence era, and this possibly was a British intent.

While Britain's partitioning of India might be lamented, the Indian nationalists did not resist the British move squarely. They, of course, fought for a united India, but they permitted the creation of conditions which led to the eventual partition of the country. First, they welcomed the annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1911, and this resulted in the separation of Bihar and Assam from Bengal and the conversion of the new Province of Bengal into a Muslim majority Province. Second, the Congress, in order to take the Muslim community into its fold, accepted separate electorates in the Lucknow Pact of 1916. Third, the Congress Party fought for the extension of provincial autonomy and the break-up of the influence of the Centre. Fourth, the Congress accepted the separation of Sind—a pre-dominantly Muslim Province contiguous to the other Muslim areas of Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Province—from Bombay by 1932. Fifth, the Congress did not reject the Communal Award in 1932 completely and made a compromise in the Poona Agreement. Sixth, the leaders of the Congress Party continued, throughout, to talk of the principle of self-determination, and they implicitly took the position that no agreement should be imposed upon the Muslims of India.

The partition plan was, of course, inherent in the British strategy, but the acceptance by the Congress of the above principles played no less an important part.

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