

The Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) was a revolutionary party set up by Ram Prasad Bismil and his associates to fight against British colonial rule in India and achieve independence for the country through an armed rebellion if necessary.

ORIGINS OF THE HINDUSTAN SOCIALIST REPUBLICAN ASSOCIATION

THE PARTY WAS INITIALLY NAMED HINDUSTAN REPUBLICAN ASSOCIATION (HRA) BY BISMIL WHEN HE FORMED IT IN 1923. THE MAIN REASON FOR THE PARTY'S FORMATION WAS MAHATMA GANDHI'S CALLING OFF THE **NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT** IN 1922 BECAUSE OF THE CHAURI CHAURA INCIDENT. WHILE SOME OF THE LEADERS OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS BROKE AWAY FROM IT AND FORMED THE **SWARAJ PARTY**, SOME OF THE YOUNGER NATIONALISTS AND WORKERS BECAME DISILLUSIONED WITH THE IDEA OF NON-VIOLENCE AND CONSIDERED REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS AS A WAY TO ACHIEVE FREEDOM. BISMIL HIMSELF HAD OPPOSED GANDHI IN THE 1922 SESSION OF THE INC AT GAYA.

HSRA Formation

- The constitution for the HRA was drafted by Bismil in 1923 at Allahabad with the blessing of Lala Har Dayal.*
- Other prominent members of the party were Sachindra Nath Sanyal and Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee (who was also a member of the Anushilan Samiti).*

- The HRA formed centres at, besides Allahabad, Agra, Kanpur, Varanasi, Lucknow, Shahjahanpur and Saharanpur.
- It also had bomb manufacturing units at Calcutta and Deogarh.
- A manifesto for the party was written by Sanyal titled 'Revolutionary'. It contained incendiary material asking the youth of the country to join the party and take part in the freedom struggle. It did not approve of the methods used by Gandhi and criticised them. The manifesto stated that it sought to achieve a 'Federal Republic of the United States of India' after overthrowing British rule.
- It also demanded universal suffrage. The material espoused a socialist society for India.
- The pamphlets were distributed in many cities in northern India.
- In 1924 - 25, many young people joined the party, prominent among them being Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Chandrasekhar Azad.

Activities of the HSRA

- The organisation conducted many robberies and raids in an attempt to raise funds to acquire arms and ammunition.

- The most famous incident was the *Kakori conspiracy*. This occurred on 9th August 1925. Members of the party looted a train carrying government money near Lucknow. An innocent passenger was killed accidentally in the process. People involved in the episode were Bismil, Ashfaqulla Khan, Rajendra Lahiri and Thakur Roshan Singh. All four were eventually hanged by the government in 1927 for their involvement.
- Chandrasekhar Azad was also involved although he evaded arrest.
- In 1928, the name of the party was changed to Hindustan Republican Socialist Association (H.S.R.A) primarily because of Bhagat Singh's insistence.
- The *Simon Commission* came to India in 1928. The lack of an Indian member in the commission (which was meant to deliberate on India's future government) was met with widespread condemnation and protest.
- National leader *Lala Lajpat Rai* was severely lathi-charged on the orders of a British officer James A Scott. The 63-year old Rai died as a result of the injuries sustained a few days later. This enraged many revolutionaries who vowed to avenge his death.
- Bhagat Singh and Rajguru (Born on *August 24, 1908*) shot another police officer John Saunders in a case of mistaken identity. They had intended to shoot Scott. However, the H.S.R.A still claimed that revenge had been exacted.

- The next major activity of the HSRA was the Central Assembly bombing case. Bhagat Singh and BK Dutt bombed the Central Legislative Assembly, Delhi on 8th April 1929. Their only intention was to "make the deaf hear" and not to harm anyone. Nobody was injured in the bombing and both the revolutionaries courted arrest after the incident.
- As they were arrested, they shouted slogans like 'Inquilab Zindabad' and 'Down with Imperialism'.
- For this case, both Singh and Dutt were sentenced to 'transportation for life'. But in the meantime, the case of the murder of Saunders was linked to Singh.
- In 1931, Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were hanged to death for it.
- In 1929, the HSRA also bombed a train carrying the then viceroy of India, Lord Irwin. He was unharmed.
- Azad was also killed by the police in a shootout at Allahabad in 1931.
- After 1931, most leaders of the party had been killed or imprisoned. The party disintegrated as there was no leadership.