

MODERN INDIAN HISTORY: 6

THE BEGINNING OF GANDHIAN ERA

PS AND VISIONS, MODERN HISTORY PART 6

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The Beginning of Gandhian Era

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The second Phase of Revolutionary Movements

The revolutionary terrorists were severely suppressed during World War I, with most of the leaders in jail or absconding. Consequently, in order to create a more harmonious atmosphere for the Montague-Chelmsford reforms, the Government released most of them under a general amnesty in early 1920. Soon after, the National Congress launched the Non Cooperation Movement and on the urging of Gandhiji, C.R. Das and other leaders, most of the revolutionary terrorists either joined the movement or suspended their own activities in order to give the Gandhian mass movement a chance.

But the sudden suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement shattered the high hopes raised earlier. Many young people began to question the very basic strategy of the national leadership and its emphasis on non-violence and began to look for alternatives. They were not attracted by the parliamentary politics of the Swarajists or the patient and undramatic constructive work of the no-changers. Many were drawn to the idea that violent methods alone would free India. Revolutionary terrorism again became attractive. It is not accidental that nearly all the major new leaders of the revolutionary terrorist politics, for example, Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, Surya Sen, Jatin Das, Chandrashekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Shiv Varma, Bhagwati Charan Vohra and Jaidev Kapur, had been enthusiastic participants in the non-violent Non-Cooperation Movement.

Gradually two separate strands of revolutionary terrorism developed — one in Punjab, U.P. and Bihar and the other in Bengal. Both the strands came under the influence of several new social forces.

- One was the upsurge of working class trade unionism after the War. They could see the revolutionary potential of the new class and desired to harness it to the nationalist revolution.
- The second major influence was that of the Russian Revolution and the success of the young Socialist State in consolidating itself. The youthful revolutionaries were keen to learn from and take the help of the young Soviet State and its ruling Bolshevik Party.
- The third influence was that of the newly sprouting Communist groups, with their emphasis on Marxism, Socialism and the proletariat.

The revolutionaries in northern India were the first to emerge out of the mood of frustration and reorganize under the leadership of the old veterans, Ramprasad Bismil, Jogesh Chatterjee and Sachindranath Sanyal whose 'Bandi Jiwan' served as a textbook to the revolutionary movement. They met in Kanpur in October 1924 and founded the Hindustan Republican Association (or Army) (HRA) to organize armed revolution to overthrow colonial rule and establish in its place a Federal Republic of the United States of India whose basic principle would be adult franchise.

Kakori Robbery

Before armed struggle could be waged, propaganda had to be organized on a large scale, men had to be recruited and trained and arms had to be procured. All these required money. The most important 'action' of the HRA was the Kakori Robbery. On 9 August 1925, ten men held up

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the number 8 Down train at Kakori, an obscure village near Lucknow, and looted its official railway cash. The Government reaction was quick and hard. It arrested a large number of young men and tried them in the Kakori Conspiracy Case. Ashfaqulla Khan, Ramprasad Bismil, Ràshan Singh and Rajendra Lahiri were hanged, four others were sent to the Andamans for life and seventeen others were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. Chandrashekhar Azad remained at large.

HSRA and its activities

The Kakori case was a major setback to the revolutionaries of northern India but it was not a fatal blow. Younger men such as Bejoy Kumar Sinha, Shiv Varma and Jaidev Kapur in U.P., Bhagat Singh, Bhagwati Charan Vohra and Sukhdev in Punjab set out to reorganize the HRA under the overall leadership of Chandrashekhar Azad. Simultaneously, they were being influenced by socialist ideas. Finally, nearly all the major young revolutionaries of northern India met at Ferozeshah Kotla Ground at Delhi on 9 and 10 September 1928, created a new collective leadership, adopted socialism as their official goal and changed the name of the party to the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (Army)(HSRA).

Even though, the HSRA and its leadership was rapidly moving away from individual heroic action and assassination and towards mass politics, Lala Lajpat Rai's death, as the result of a brutal lathi-charge when he was leading an anti-Simon Commission demonstration at Lahore on 30 October 1928, led them once again to take to individual assassination. The death of this great Punjabi leader, popularly known as Sher-e-Punjab, was seen by the romantic youthful leadership of the HSRA as a direct challenge. And so, on 17 December 1928, Bhagat Singh, Azad and Rajguru assassinated, at Lahore, Saunders, a police official involved in the lathi charge of Lab Lajpat Rai.

The HSRA leadership now decided to let the people know about its changed objectives and the need for a revolution by the masses. Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt were asked to throw a bomb in the Central Legislative Assembly on 8 April 1929 against the passage of the Public Safety Bill and the Trade Disputes Bill which would reduce the civil liberties of citizens in general and workers in particular. The aim was not to kill, for the bombs were relatively harmless, but, as the leaflet they threw into the Assembly hall proclaimed, 'to make the deaf hear'. The objective was to get arrested and to use the trial court as a forum for propaganda so that people would become familiar with their movement and ideology. Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt were tried in the Assembly Bomb Case. Later, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Rajguru and tens of other revolutionaries were tried in a series of famous conspiracy cases. Their fearless and defiant attitude in the courts — every day they entered the court-room shouting slogans 'Inquilab Zindabad,' 'Down, Down with Imperialism,' 'Long Live the Proletariat' and singing songs such as 'Sarfaroshi ki tamanna ab hamare dil mei hai' (our heart is filled with the desire for martyrdom) and 'Mera rang de basanti chola' (dye my clothes in saffron colour - the colour of courage and sacrifice) — was reported in newspapers; unsurprisingly this won them the support and sympathy of people all over the country including those who had complete faith in non-violence. Bhagat Singh became a household name in the land.

The country was also stirred by the prolonged hunger strike the revolutionary under-trials undertook as a protest against the horrible conditions in jails. They demanded that they be treated not as criminals but as political prisoners. The entire nation rallied behind the hunger-strikers. On 13 September, the 64th day of the epic fast, Jatin Das, a frail young man with an

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iron will, died. Thousands came to pay him homage at every station passed by the train carrying his body from Lahore to Calcutta.

A large number of revolutionaries were convicted in the **Lahore Conspiracy Case** and other similar cases and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment; many of them were sent to the Andamans. Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were sentenced to be hanged. The sentence was carried out on 23 March 1931.

Revolutionary Terrorism in Bengal

In Bengal, too, the revolutionary terrorists started reorganizing and developing their underground activities. At the same time, many of them continued to work in the Congress organization. This enabled them to gain access to the vast Congress masses; on the other hand, they provided the Congress with an organizational base in small towns and the countryside. They cooperated with C.R. Das in his Swarajist work. After his death the Congress leadership in Bengal got divided into two wings, one led by Subhas Chandra Bose and the other by J.M. Sengupta. The Yugantar group joined forces with the first and Anushilan with the second.

Among the several 'actions' of the reorganized groups was the attempt to assassinate Charles Tegart, the hated Police Commissioner of Calcutta, by Gopinath Saha in January 1924. By an error, another Englishman named Day was killed. The Government came down on the people with a heavy hand. A large number of people, suspected of being terrorists, or their supporters, were arrested under a newly promulgated ordinance. These included Subhas Chandra Bose and many other Congressmen. Saha was hanged despite massive popular protest. The revolutionary activity suffered a severe setback. Another reason for stagnation in revolutionary terrorist activity lay in the incessant factional and personal quarrels within the terrorist groups, especially where Yugantar and Anushilan rivalry was concerned. But very soon younger revolutionaries began to organize themselves in new groups, developing fraternal relations with the active elements of both the Anushilan and Yugantar parties. Among the new Revolt Groups, the most active and famous was the Chittagong group led by Surya Sen.

Surya Sen and Chittagong Armoury raid

Surya Sen had actively participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement and had become a teacher in a national school in Chittagong, which led to his being popularly known as Master da. Arrested and imprisoned for two years, from 1926 to 1928, for revolutionary activity, he continued to work in the Congress. He and his group were closely associated with the Congress work in Chittagong. In 1929, Surya Sen was the Secretary and five of his associates were members of the Chittagong District Congress Committee. Surya Sen, a brilliant and inspiring organizer, was an unpretentious, soft-spoken and transparently sincere person. Possessed of immense personal courage, he was deeply humane in his approach. Surya Sen soon gathered around himself a large band of revolutionary youth including Anant Singh, Ganesh Ghosh and Lokenath Baul. They decided to organize a rebellion, on however small a scale, to demonstrate that it was possible to challenge the armed might of the British Empire in India. Their action plan was to include occupation of the two main armories in Chittagong and the seizing of their arms with which a large band of revolutionaries could be formed into an armed detachment; the destruction of the telephone and telegraph systems of the city; and the dislocation of the railway communication system between Chittagong and the rest of Bengal.

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The action was carefully planned and was put into execution on the night of 18 April 1930. But as it was not possible for the band of revolutionaries to put up a fight in the town against the army which was expected. They, therefore, left Chittagong town before dawn and marched towards the Chittagong hill ranges, looking for a safe place. It was on the Jalalabad hill that several thousand troops surrounded them on the afternoon of 22 April. After a fierce fight in which over eighty British troops and twelve revolutionaries died, Surya Sen decided to disperse into the neighbouring villages; there they formed into small groups and conducted raids on Government, personnel and property. Despite several repressive measures and combing operations by the authorities, the villagers, most of them Muslims, gave food and shelter to the revolutionary outlaws and enabled them to survive for three years. Surya Sen was finally arrested on 16 February 1933, tried and hanged on 12 January 1934. Many of his co-fighters were caught and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

The Chittagong Armoury Raid had an immense impact on the people of Bengal. It 'fired the imagination of revolutionary-minded youth' and 'recruits poured into the various terrorist groups in a steady stream.' The year 1930 witnessed a major revival of revolutionary activity, and its momentum carried over to 1931 and 1932. There were numerous instances of death-defying heroism. In Midnapore district alone, three British magistrates were assassinated. Attempts were made on the lives of two Governors; two Inspector- Generals of Police were killed. During this three-year period, twenty-two officials and twenty non-officials were killed. The official reaction to the armoury raid and the revival of revolutionary terrorist activity was initially one of panic and then of brutal reprisals. The Government armed itself with twenty repressive acts and let loose the police on all nationalists. In Chittagong, it burnt several villages, imposed punitive fine on many others and in general established a reign of terror. In 1933, it arrested and sentenced Jawaharlal Nehru to a two-year term in jail for sedition. He had in a speech in Calcutta condemned imperialism, praised the heroism of revolutionary youth (even while criticizing the policy of terrorism as futile and out-of-date) and condemned police repression.

Participation of women

A remarkable aspect of this new phase of the terrorist movement in Bengal was the large-scale participation of young women under Surya Sen's leadership, they provided shelter, acted as messengers and custodians of arms, and fought, guns in hand. Pritilata Waddedar died while conducting a raid, while Kalpana Joshi(Dutt) was arrested and tried along with Surya Sen and given a life sentence. In December 1931, two school girls of Comilla, Santi Ghosh and Suniti Chowdhury, shot dead the District Magistrate. In February 1932, Bina Das fired point blank at the Governor while receiving her degree at the convocation.

Nature of revolutionary terrorism

Compared to the old revolutionary terrorists, as also Bhagat Singh and his comrades, the act of ~~Chittagong~~ rebels made an important advance. Instead of an individual assassination of an individual, theirs was a group action aimed at the organs of the colonial state. But the objective still was to set an example before the youth, and to demoralize the bureaucracy. As Kalpana Joshi (Dutt) has put it, the plan was that when, after the Chittagong rebellion, the Government would bring in troops to take back Chittagong they (the terrorists)

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would die fighting — thus creating a legend and setting an example before their countrymen to emulate.

The Bengal revolutionaries of the 1920s and 1930s had shed some of their earlier Hindu religiosity — they no longer took religious oaths and vows. Some of the groups also no longer excluded Muslims — the Chittagong IRA cadre included many Muslims like Sattar, Mir Ahmad, Fakir Ahmad Mian, Tunu Mian and got massive support from Muslim villagers around Chittagong. But they still retained elements of social conservatism, nor did they evolve broader socio-economic goals. In particular, those revolutionary terrorists, who worked in the Swaraj party, failed to support the cause of Muslim peasantry against the zamindars.

Contribution of Bhagat Singh

A real breakthrough in terms of revolutionary ideology and the goals of revolution and the forms of revolutionary struggle was made by Bhagat Singh and his comrades. Rethinking had, of course, started on both counts in the HRA itself. Its manifesto had declared in 1925 that it stood for 'abolition of all systems which make the exploitation of man by man possible'.

Bhagat Singh, born in 1907 and a nephew of the famous revolutionary Ajit Singh, was a giant of an intellectual. A voracious reader, he was one of the most well-read of political leaders of the time. Bhagat Singh had, before his arrest in 1929, abandoned his belief in terrorism and individual heroic action. He had turned to Marxism and had come to believe that popular broad-based mass movements alone could lead to a successful revolution. Bismil also supported broad based movement. That is why Bhagat Singh helped establish the **Punjab Naujawan Bharat Sabha** in 1926 (becoming its founding Secretary), as the open wing of the revolutionaries. The Sabha was to carry out open political work among the youth, peasants and workers. It was to open branches in the villages. Under its auspices, Bhagat Singh used to deliver political lectures with the help of magic lantern slides. Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev also organized the Lahore Students Union for open, legal work among the students. Thus, Bhagat Singh and his comrades made a major advance in broadening the scope and definition of revolution. Revolution was no longer equated with mere militancy or violence. Its first objective was national liberation — the overthrow of imperialism. But it must go beyond and work for a new socialist social order; it must bend exploitation of man by man.

The draft of the famous statement of revolutionary position, **Philosophy of the Bomb**, was written by Bhagwati Charan Vohra at the instance of Azad and after a full discussion with him and Yashpal, defined revolution as independence, social, political and economic' aimed at establishing 'a new order of society in which political and economic exploitation will be an impossibility'.

Bhagat Singh was a great innovator in two areas of politics. Being fully and consciously secular, he understood, more clearly than many of his contemporaries, the danger that communalism posed to the nation and the national movement. He often told his audience that communalism

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Bharat Sabha was reorganized, Bhagat Singh and his comrades openly opposed the suggestion that youth belonging to religious-communal organizations should be permitted to become members of the Sabha. Religion was one's private concern and communalism was an enemy to be fought, argued Bhagat Singh.

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Earlier in 1927, condemning communal killings as barbaric, he had pointed out that communal killers did not kill a person because he was guilty of any particular act but simply because that person happened to be a Hindu, Muslim or Sikh. But, wrote Bhagat Singh, a new group of youth was coming forward who did not recognize any differences based on religion and saw a person first as a human being and then as an Indian. Bhagat Singh revered Lajpat Rai as a leader. But he would not spare even Lajpat Rai, when, during the last years of his life, Lajpat Rai turned to communal politics. He then launched a political-ideological campaign against him through a symbolic pamphlet without using any harsh word against respected Lala ji.

Significantly, two of the six rules of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, drafted by Bhagat Singh, were: 'To have nothing to do with communal bodies or other parties which disseminate communal ideas' and 'to create the spirit of general toleration among the public considering religion as a matter of personal belief of man and to act upon the same fully.' Bhagat Singh also saw the importance of freeing the people from the mental bondage of religion and superstition. A few weeks before his death, he wrote the article 'Why I am an Atheist' in which he subjected religion and religious philosophy to a scathing critique.

Decline of revolutionary terrorism and their limitations

Government action gradually decimated the revolutionary terrorist ranks. With the death of Chandrashekhar Azad in a shooting encounter a public park at Allahabad in February 1931, the revolutionary terrorist movement virtually came to an end in Punjab, U.P. and Bihar. Surya Sen's martyrdom marked an end to the prolonged saga of revolutionary terrorism in Bengal. A process of rethinking in jails and in the Andamans began large number of the revolutionaries turned to Marxism and the idea of a socialist revolution by the masses. They joined the Communist Party, the Revolutionary Socialist Party, and other Left parties. Many others joined the Gandhian wing of the Congress.

The politics of the revolutionary terrorists had severe limitations — above all theirs was not the politics of a mass movement; they failed to politically activate the masses or move them into political actions; they could not even establish contact with the masses.

But it was true that they made an abiding contribution to the national freedom movement. Their deep patriotism, courage and determination, and sense of sacrifice stirred the Indian people. They helped spread nationalist consciousness in the land; and in northern India the spread of socialist consciousness owed a lot to them.

The Left Movements

A powerful left-wing group developed in India in the late 1920s and 1930s contributing to the radicalization of the national movement. The goal of political independence acquired a clearer and sharper social and economic content. The stream of national struggle for independence and the stream of the struggle for social and economic emancipation of the suppressed and the exploited began to come together. Socialist ideas acquired roots in the Indian soil; and socialism became the accepted creed of Indian youth whose urges came to be symbolized by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose. Gradually there emerged two powerful parties of the Left, the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Congress Socialist Party (CSP).

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Factors responsible for its growth

Impact of the Russian Revolution was a big reason behind it. Another lesson was driven home - if the common people — the workers and peasants and the intelligentsia — could unite and overthrow the mighty Czarist empire then the Indian people battling against British imperialism could also do so. Socialist doctrines, especially Marxism, the guiding theory of the Bolshevik Party, acquired a sudden attraction, especially for the people of Asia. Socialist ideas now began to spread rapidly especially because many young persons who had participated actively in the Non-Cooperation Movement were unhappy with its outcome and were dissatisfied with Gandhian policies and ideas as well as the alternative Swarajist programme. Several socialist and communist groups came into existence all over the country.

In Bombay, S.A. Dange published a pamphlet Gandhi and Lenin and started the first socialist weekly, The Socialist; in Bengal, Muzaffar Ahmed brought out Navayug; in Punjab, Ghulam Hussain and others published Inquilab; and in Madras, M. Singaravelu founded the Labour-Kisan Gazette.

Student and youth associations were organized all over the country from 1927 onwards. Hundreds of youth conferences were organized all over the country during 1928 and 1929 with speakers advocating radical solutions for the political, economic and social ills from which the country was suffering. Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose toured the country attacking imperialism, capitalism, and landlordism and preaching the ideology of socialism. The revolutionary terrorists led by Chandrasekhar Azad and Bhagat Singh also turned to socialism.

Trade union and peasant movements grew rapidly throughout the 1920s. Socialist ideas became even more popular during the 1930s as the world was engulfed by the great economic depression. Unemployment soared all over the capitalist world. The world depression brought the capitalist system into disrepute and drew attention towards Marxism and socialism. Within the Congress the left-wing tendency found reflection in the election of Jawaharlal Nehru as president for 1936 and 1937 and of Subhas Bose for 1938 and 1939 and in the formation of the Congress Socialist Party.

Nehru's contribution

It was above all Jawaharlal Nehru who imparted a socialist vision to the national movement and who became the symbol of socialism and socialist ideas in India after 1929. The notion that freedom could not be defined only in political terms but must have a socio-economic content began increasingly to be associated with his name.

Nehru became the president of the historic Lahore Congress of 1929 at a youthful forty. In his books (Autobiography and Glimpses of World History), articles and speeches, Nehru propagated the ideas of socialism and declared that political freedom would become meaningful only if it led to the economic emancipation of the masses; it had to, therefore, be followed by the establishment of a socialist society, Nehru thus moulded a whole generation of nationalists and helped them accept a socialist orientation.

Nehru developed an interest in economic questions when he came in touch with the peasant movement in eastern U.P. in 1920-21. In 1927, he attended the international Congress against Colonial Oppression and imperialism, held at Brussels, and came into contact with communists

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and anti-colonial fighters from all over the world. In 1928, Jawaharlal joined hands with Subhas to organize the Independence for India League to fight for complete independence and 'a socialist revision of the economic structure of society.' At the Lahore session of the Congress in 1929, Nehru proclaimed: 'I am a socialist and a republican'. India, he said, would have to adopt a full 'socialist programme' if she was 'to end her poverty and inequality.' It was also not possible for the Congress to hold the balance between capital and labour and landlord and tenant, for the existing balance was 'terribly weighted' in favour of the capitalists and landlords.

Nehru's commitment to socialism found a clearer and sharper expression during 1933-36. He put his commitment to socialism in clear, unequivocal and passionate words in his presidential address to the Lucknow Congress in April 1936: 'I am convinced that the only key to the solution of the world's problems and of India's problems lies in socialism, and when I use this word I do so not in a vague humanitarian way but in the scientific, economic sense'. During these years, Nehru also emphasized the role of class analysis and class struggle.

Nehru developed a complex relationship with Gandhiji during this period. He criticized Gandhiji for refusing to recognize the conflict of classes, for preaching harmony among the exploiters and the exploited, and for putting forward the theories of trusteeship by, and conversion of, the capitalists and landlords. At the same time, he fully appreciated the radical role that Gandhiji had played and was playing in Indian society. Thus Nehru, did not favour the creation of an organization independent of or separate from the Congress or making a break with Gandhiji and the right-wing of the Congress. The task was to influence and transform the Congress as a whole in a socialist direction. And this could be best achieved by working under its banner and bringing its workers and peasants to play a greater role in its organization. And in no case, he felt, should the Left become a mere sect apart from the mainstream of the national movement.

Attracted by the Soviet Union and its revolutionary commitment, a large number of Indian revolutionaries and exiles abroad made their way there. The most well-known and the tallest of them was M.N. Roy, who along with Lenin, helped evolve the Communist International's policy towards the colonies. Seven such Indians, headed by Roy, met at Tashkent in October 1920 and set up a Communist Party of India. Independently of this effort, a number of left-wing and communist groups and organizations had begun to come into existence in India after 1920. Most of these groups came together at Kanpur in December 1925 and founded an all-India organization under the name the Communist Party of India (CPI).

The main form of political work by the early Communists was to organize peasants' and workers' parties and work through them. The first such organization was the Labour-Swaraj Party of the Indian National Congress organized by Muzaffar Ahmed, Qazi Nazrul Islam, Hemanta Kumar Sarkar, and others in Bengal in November 1925. In late 1926, a Congress Labour Party was formed in Bombay and a Kirti-Kisan Party in Punjab. A Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan had been functioning in Madras since 1923. By 1928 all of these provincial organizations had been renamed the Workers' and Peasants' Party (WPP) and knit into an All India party, whose units were also set up in Rajasthan, UP and Delhi. All Communists were members of this party. The basic objective of the WPPs was to work within the Congress to give it a radical orientation and make it 'the party of the people' and independent of the bourgeoisie.

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Congress. Along with Jawaharlal and Subhas Bose, the youth leagues and other Left forces, the WPPs played an important role in creating a strong left-wing within the Congress and in giving the Indian national movement a leftward direction. The WPPs also made rapid progress on the trade union front and played a decisive role in the resurgence of working class struggles during 1927-29 as also in enabling Communists to gain a strong position in the working class.

Government Response and further course of Left movement

The rapid growth of communist and WPP influence over the national movement was, however, checked and virtually wiped out during 1929 and after by two developments. One was the severe repression to which Communists were subjected by the Government. Already in 1922-24, Communists trying to enter India from the Soviet Union had been tried in a series of conspiracy cases at Peshawar and sentenced to long periods of imprisonment. In 1924, the Government had tried to cripple the nascent communist movement by trying S.A. Dange, Muzaffar Ahmed, Nalini Gupa and Shaukat Usmani in the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case. All four were sentenced to four years of imprisonment.

By 1929, the Government was deeply worried about the rapidly growing communist influence in the national and trade union movements. It decided to strike hard. In a sudden swoop, in March 1929, it arrested thirty-two radical political and trade union activists, including three British Communists — Philip Spratt, Ben Bradley and Lester Hutchinson — who had come to India to help organize the trade union movement. The basic aim of the Government was to behead the trade union movement and to isolate the Communists from the national movement. The thirty-two accused were put up for trial at Meerut. The Meerut Conspiracy Case was soon to become a cause célèbre. The defence of the prisoners was to be taken up by many nationalists including Jawaharlal Nehru, M.A. Ansari and M.C. Chagla. Gandhiji visited the Meerut prisoners in jail to show his solidarity with them and to seek their cooperation in the coming struggle. Speeches of defence made in the court by the prisoners were carried by all the nationalist newspapers thus familiarizing lakhs of people for the first time with communist ideas. The Government design to isolate the Communists from the mainstream of the national movement not only miscarried but had the very opposite consequence. It did, however, succeed in one respect. The growing working class movement was deprived of its leadership. At this early stage, it was not easy to replace it with a new leadership. As if the Government blow was not enough, the Communists inflicted a more deadly blow on themselves by taking a sudden lurch towards what is described in leftist terminology as sectarian politics or 'leftist deviation'. Guided by the resolutions of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, the Communists broke their connection with the National Congress and declared it to be a class party of the bourgeoisie. Moreover, the Congress and the bourgeoisie it supposedly represented were declared to have become supporters of imperialism.

Congress plans to organize a mass movement around the slogan of Poorna Swaraj were seen as sham efforts to gain influence over the masses by bourgeois leaders who were working for a compromise with British imperialism. Congress left leaders, such as Nehru and Bose described as 'agents of the bourgeoisie within the national movement who were out to 'bamboozle the mass of workers' and keep the masses under bourgeois influence. The Communists were now out to 'expose' all talk of non-violent struggle and advance the slogan of armed struggle against imperialism, in 1931, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was described as a proof of the Congress betrayal of nationalism.

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Finally, the Workers' and Peasants' Party was also dissolved on the ground that it was unadvisable to form a two-class (workers' and peasants') party for it was likely to fall prey to petty bourgeois influences. The Communists were to concentrate, instead, on the formation of an 'illegal, independent and centralized' communist party. The result of this sudden shift in the Communists' political position was their isolation from the national movement at the very moment when it was gearing up for its greatest mass struggle and conditions were ripe for massive growth in the influence of the Left over it. Further, the Communists split into several splinter groups. The Government took further advantage of this situation and, in 1934, declared the CPI illegal.

The Communist movement was, however, saved from disaster because, on the one hand, many of the Communists refused to stand apart from the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) and participated actively in it, and, on the other hand, socialist and communist ideas continued to spread in the country. Consequently, many young persons who participated in the CDM or in Revolutionary Terrorist organizations were attracted by socialism, Marxism and the Soviet Union, and joined the CPI after 1934.

The situation underwent a radical change in 1935 when the Communist Party was reorganized under the leadership of P.C. Joshi. Faced with the threat of fascism, the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, meeting at Moscow in August 1935, radically changed its earlier position and advocated the formation of a united front with socialists and other anti-fascists in the capitalist Countries and with bourgeois-led nationalist movements in colonial countries. The Communist Party now began to call upon its members to join the Congress and enroll the masses under their influence to the Congress. In 1938, it went further and accepted that the Congress was 'the central mass political organization of the Indian people ranged against imperialism'. At the same time, the party remained committed to the objective of bringing the national movement under the hegemony of the working class, that is, the Communist Party. Communists now worked hard inside the Congress. Many occupied official positions inside the Congress district and provincial committees; nearly twenty were members of the All-India Congress Committee. During 1936-42, they built up powerful peasant movements in Kerala, Andhra, Bengal and Punjab. What is more important, they once again recovered their popular image of being the most militant of anti-imperialists. The move towards the formation of a socialist party was made in the jails during 1930-31 and 1932-34 by a group of young Congressmen who were disenchanted with Gandhian strategy and leadership and attracted by socialist ideology. Many of them were active in the youth movement of the late 1920s. In the jails they studied and discussed Marxian and other socialist ideas. Attracted by Marxism, communism and Soviet Union, they did not find themselves in agreement with the prevalent political line of the CPI. Many of them were groping towards an alternative. Ultimately they came together and formed the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) at Bombay in October 1934 under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Dev and Minoo Masani. From the beginning, all the Congress socialists were agreed upon four basic propositions:

1. that the primary struggle in India was the national struggle for freedom and that nationalism was a necessary stage on the way to socialism;
2. that socialists must work inside the National Congress because it was the primary body leading the national struggle;
3. that they must give the Congress and the national movement a socialist direction;

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4. and that to achieve this objective they must organize the workers and peasants in their class organizations, wage struggles for their economic demands and make them the social base of the national struggle.

The notion of alternate Left leadership of the Congress and the national movement came up for realization twice at Tripuri in 1939 and at Ramgarh in 1940. But when it came to splitting the Congress on a Left-Right basis and giving the Congress an executive left-wing leadership, the CSP (as also the CPI) shied away. Its leadership (as also CPI's) realized that such an effort would not only weaken the national movement but isolate the Left from the mainstream, that the Indian people could be mobilized into a movement only under Gandhiji's leadership and that, in fact, there was at the time no alternative to Gandhiji's leadership. However, unlike Jawaharlal Nehru, the leadership of the CSP, as also of other Left groups and parties, was not able to fully theorize or internalize this understanding and so it went back again and again to the notion of alternative leadership.

The CSP was, however, firmly well-grounded in the reality of the Indian situation. Therefore, it never carried its opposition to the existing leadership of the Congress to breaking point. Whenever it came to the crunch, it gave up its theoretical position and adopted a realistic approach close to that of Jawaharlal Nehru's. This earned it the condemnation of the other left-wing groups and parties — for example, in 1939, they were chastised for their refusal to support Subhas Bose in his confrontation with Gandhiji and the Right wing of the Congress.

From the beginning the CSP leaders were divided into three broad ideological currents: the Marxian, the Fabian and the current influenced by Gandhiji. This would not have been a major weakness — in fact it might have been a source of strength — for a broad socialist party which was a movement. But the CSP was already a part, and a cadre-based party at that, within a movement that was the National Congress. Moreover, the Marxism of the 1930s was incapable of accepting as legitimate such diversity of political currents on the Left. The result was a confusion which plagued the CSP till the very end. The party's basic ideological differences were papered over for a long time because of the personal bonds of friendship and a sense of comradeship among most of the founding leaders of the party, the acceptance of Acharya Narendra Dev and Jayaprakash Narayan as its senior leaders, and its commitment to nationalism and socialism.

Despite the ideological diversity among the leaders, the CSP as a whole accepted a basic identification of socialism with Marxism. Jayaprakash Narayan, for example, observed in his book 'Why Socialism?' that 'today more than ever before it is possible to say that there is only one type, one theory of Socialism — Marxism.' Gradually, however as Gandhiji's politics began to be more positively evaluated, large doses of Gandhian and liberal democratic thought were to become basic elements of the CSP leadership's thinking.

Several other groups and currents developed on the Left in the 1930s. M.N. Roy came back to India in 1930 and organized a strong group of Royists who underwent several political and

g follow wide dogged transformations over the years. Subhas Bose and his left

Forward Bloc in 1939 after Bose was compelled to resign from the Presidentship of the Congress. The Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, the Revolutionary Socialist Party, and various Trotskyist groups also functioned during the 1930s. There were also certain prestigious left-wing individuals, such as Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, Professor N.G. Ranga, and Indulal Yagnik, who worked outside the framework of any organized left-wing party.

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The CPI, the CSP and Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose and other Left groups and leaders all shared a common political programme which enabled them, despite ideological and organizational differences, to work together after 1935 and make socialism a strong current in Indian politics.

Limitations and Drawbacks

Despite the fact that the Left cadres were among the most courageous, militant and sacrificing of freedom fighters, the Left failed in the basic task it had taken upon itself—to establish the hegemony of socialist ideas and parties over the national movement. It also failed to make good the promise it held out in the 1930s. This is, in fact, a major enigma for the historian. Several explanations for this complex phenomenon suggest themselves. The Left invariably fought the dominant Congress leadership on wrong issues and, when it came to the crunch, was either forced to trail behind that leadership or was isolated from the national movement. Unlike the Congress right-wing, the Left failed to show ideological and tactical flexibility. It sought to oppose the right-wing with simplistic formulae and radical rhetoric. It fought the right-wing on slippery and wrong grounds. It chose to fight not on questions of ideology but on methods of struggle and on tactics. For example, its most serious charge against the Congress right-wing was that it wanted to compromise with imperialism, that it was frightened of mass struggle, that its anti-imperialism was not wholehearted because of bourgeois influence over it. The Left also failed to make a deep study of Indian reality. With the exception of Jawaharlal Nehru, the Left saw the dominant Congress leadership as bourgeois its policy of negotiations as working towards a compromise with imperialism any resort to constitutional work as a step towards the 'abandonment of the struggle for independence'. It took recourse to a simplistic model of analysing Indian social classes and their political behaviour. It saw all efforts to guide the national movement in a disciplined manner as imposing restrictions on the movement. It constantly counterposed armed struggle to non-violence as a superior form and method of struggle, rather than concentrating on the nature of mass involvement and mobilization and ideology. It was convinced that the masses were ever ready for struggles in any form if only the leaders were willing to initiate them. It constantly overestimated its support among the people. Above all, the Left failed to grasp the Gandhian strategy of struggle. A major weakness of the Left was the failure of the different Left parties, groups and individuals to work unitedly except for short periods. All efforts at forging a united front of left-wing elements ended in frustration. Their doctrinal disputes and differences were too many and too passionately held and the temperamental differences among the leaders overpowering.

Nehru and Bose could not work together for long and bickered publicly in 1939. Nehru and the Socialists could not coordinate their politics. Bose and Socialists drifted apart after 1939. CSP and the Communists made Herculean efforts to work together from 1935 to 1940. The CSP opened its doors to Communists and Royists in 1935 so that the illegal Communist Party could have legal avenues for political work. But the Socialists and Communists soon drifted apart and became sworn enemies. The inevitable result was a long-term schism between the Socialists who suffered from an anti-Communist phobia and Communists who saw every Socialist leader as a potential bourgeois or (after 1947) American agent.

Achievements

The Left did succeed in making a basic impact on Indian society and politics. The organization of

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workers and peasants, discussed elsewhere, was one of its greatest achievements. Equally important was its impact on the Congress.

Organizationally, the Left was able to command influence over nearly one-third of the votes in the All-India Congress Committee on important issues. Nehru and Bose were elected Congress presidents from 1936 to 1939. Nehru was able to nominate three prominent Socialists, Acharya Narendra Dev, Jayaprakash Narayan and Achyut Patwardhan, to his Working Committee. In 1939, Subhas Bose, as a candidate of the Left, was able to defeat Pattabhi Sitaramayya in the presidential election by a majority of 1580 to 1377. Politically and ideologically, the Congress as a whole was given a strong Left orientation. As Nehru put it, Indian nationalism had been powerfully pushed 'towards vital social changes, and today it hovers, somewhat undecided, on the brink of a new social ideology.' The Congress, including its right-wing, accepted that the poverty and misery of the Indian people was the result not only of colonial domination but also of the internal socio-economic structure of Indian society which had, therefore, to be drastically transformed.

The impact of the Left on the national movement was reflected in the resolution on Fundamental Rights and Economic Policy passed by the Karachi session of the Congress in 1931, the resolutions on economic policy passed at the Faizpur session in 1936, the Election Manifesto of the Congress in 1936, the setting up of a National Planning Committee in 1938, and the increasing shift of Gandhiji towards radical positions on economic and class issues. The foundation of the All-India Students' Federation and the Progressive Writers' Association and the convening of the first All-India States' People's Conference in 1936 were some of the other major achievements of the Left. The Left was also very active in the All-India Women's Conference. Above all, two major parties of the Left, the Communist Party and the Congress Socialist Party, had been formed, and were being built up.

All parties Conference and Nehru Report

As an answer to Lord Birkenhead's challenge, an All Parties Conference met in February 1928 and appointed a subcommittee under the chairmanship of Motilal Nehru to draft a constitution. This was the first major attempt by the Indians to draft a constitutional framework for the country. The committee included Tej Bahadur Sapru, Subhash Bose, M.S. Aney, Mangal Singh, Ali Imam, Shubab Qureshi and G.R. Pradhan as its members. The report was finalised by August 1928.

The recommendations of the Nehru Committee were unanimous except in one respect—while the majority favoured the "dominion status" as the basis of the Constitution, a section of it wanted "complete independence" as the basis, with the majority section giving the latter section liberty of action.

Main Recommendations

The Nehru Report confined itself to British India, as it envisaged the future link-up of British India with the princely states on a federal basis. For the dominion it recommended:

1. Dominion status on lines of self-governing dominions as the form of government desired by Indians (much to the chagrin of younger, militant section—Nehru being prominent among them).

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2. Rejection of separate electorates which had been the basis of constitutional reforms so far; instead, a demand for joint electorates with reservation of seats for Muslims at the centre and in provinces where they were in minority (and not in those where Muslims were in majority, such as Punjab and Bengal) in proportion to the Muslim population there with right to contest additional seats.
3. Linguistic provinces.
4. Nineteen fundamental rights including equal rights for women, right to form unions, and universal adult suffrage.
5. Responsible government at the centre and in provinces.
 - a. The Indian Parliament at the centre to consist of a 500- member House of Representatives elected on the basis of adult suffrage, a 200-member Senate to be elected by provincial councils; the House of Representatives to have a tenure of 5 years and the Senate, one of 7 years; the central government to be headed by a governor-general, appointed by the British Government but paid out of Indian revenues, who would act on the advice of the central executive council responsible to the Parliament.
 - b. Provincial councils to have 5 year tenure, headed by a governor acting on the advice of the provincial executive council.
6. Full protection to cultural and religious interests of Muslims.
7. Complete dissociation of state from religion.

The Muslim and Hindu communal responses

Though the process of drafting a constitutional framework was begun enthusiastically and unitedly by political leaders, communal differences crept in and the Nehru Report got involved in controversies over the issue of communal representation.

Earlier, in December 1927, a large number of Muslim leaders had met at Delhi at the Muslim League session and evolved four proposals for Muslim demands to be incorporated in the draft constitution. These proposals, which were accepted by the Madras session of the Congress (December 1927), came to be known as the 'Delhi Proposals'. These were:

- i. Joint electorates in place of separate electorates with reserved seats for Muslims;
- ii. One-third representation to Muslims in Central Legislative Assembly;
- iii. Representation to Muslims in Punjab and Bengal in proportion to their population;
- iv. Formation of three new Muslim majority provinces— Sindh, Baluchistan and North-West Frontier Province.

als for creating the Hindu Mahasabha was vehemently oppos

Muslim-majority provinces and reservation of seats for Muslims majorities in Punjab and Bengal (which would ensure Muslim control over legislatures in both). It also demanded a strictly unitary structure.

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This attitude of the Hindu Mahasabha complicated matters. In the course of the deliberations of the All Parties Conference, the Muslim League dissociated itself and stuck to its demand for reservation of seats for Muslims, especially in the Central Legislature and in Muslim majority provinces.

Thus, Motilal Nehru and other leaders drafting the report found themselves in a dilemma: if the demands of the Muslim communal opinion were accepted, the Hindu communalists would withdraw their support, if the latter were satisfied, the Muslim leaders would get estranged. The concessions made in the Nehru Report to Hindu communalists included the following:

1. Joint electorates proposed everywhere but reservation for Muslims only where in minority;
2. Sindh to be detached from Bombay only after dominion status was granted and subject to weightage to Hindu minority in Sindh;
3. Political structure proposed was broadly unitary, as residual powers rested with the Centre.

Amendments proposed by Jinnah

At the All Parties Conference held at Calcutta in December 1928 to consider the Nehru Report, Jinnah, on behalf of the Muslim League, proposed three amendments to the report:

1. One-third representation to Muslims in the Central Legislature
2. Reservation to Muslims in Bengal and Punjab legislatures proportionate to their population, till adult suffrage was established
3. Residual powers to provinces.

These demands not being accommodated, Jinnah went back to the Shafi faction of the Muslim League and in March 1929 gave fourteen points which were to become the basis of all future propaganda of the Muslim League.

Jinnah's fourteen demands

1. Federal Constitution with residual powers to provinces.
2. Provincial autonomy.
3. No constitutional amendment by the centre without the concurrence of the states constituting the Indian federation.
4. All legislatures and elected bodies to have adequate representation of Muslims in every province without reducing a majority of Muslims in a province to a minority or equality.
5. Adequate representation to Muslims in the services and in self-governing bodies.
6. One-third Muslim representation in the Central Legislature.
7. In any cabinet at the centre or in the provinces, one
8. Separate electorates.
9. No bill or resolution in any legislature to be passed if three-fourths of a minority community considers such a bill or resolution to be against their interests.

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10. Any territorial redistribution not to affect the Muslim majority in Punjab, Bengal and NWFP.
11. Separation of Sindh from Bombay.
12. Constitutional reforms in the NWFP and Baluchistan.
13. Full religious freedom to all communities.
14. Protection of Muslim rights in religion, culture, education, and language.

Not only were the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Sikh communalists unhappy about the Nehru Report, but the younger section of the Congress led by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose was also angered.

The younger section regarded the idea of dominion status in the report as a step backward and the developments at the All Parties Conference strengthened their criticism of the dominion status idea. Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose rejected the Congress' modified goal and jointly set up the Independence for India League.

Run-up to Civil Disobedience Movement, Dandi March, Salt Satyagraha

Calcutta session of congress 1928

When the Nehru Report came before the annual session of the Congress in Calcutta in December 1928, the left lashed it out on the fact that it did not want the complete Independence and wanted only a dominion status.

Meanwhile in April 1928, the "Independence of India League" was formed with Jawahar Lal Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose as Secretaries and S. Srinivasa Iyengar as President. The Congress session at Calcutta marked an almost split among the leaders who wanted dominion and leaders who wanted complete Independence. Ultimately it was resolved that if the British parliament accepts the Nehru report by 31 December 1929, Congress would adopt the report as it is. If the report is not accepted by the British parliament, Congress would insist in Complete Independence and would organize a nonviolent 'non-cooperation' movement. The one year deadline passed and no positive reply came from the Government. This was followed by Lahore Session of Congress which was presided by Jawahar Lal Nehru.

Political activity during 1929

Gandhi travelled incessantly during 1929 preparing people for direct political action- telling the youth to prepare for the fiery ordeal, helping to organize constructive work in villages and redressing specific grievances (on lines of Bardoli agitation of 1928).

The Congress Working Committee (CWC) organized a Foreign Cloth Boycott Committee to bring ~~of foreign~~ an aggressive programme of foreign cloth boycott and public buy cloth. Gandhi initiated the campaign in March 1929 in Calcutta and was arrested. This was followed by bonfires of foreign clothes all over country.

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Other developments which kept the political temperature high during 1929 included the Meerut Conspiracy Case (March), bomb explosion in central legislative assembly by Bhagat Singh and B K Dutt (April) and the coming to power of the labour government led by Ramsay MacDonald in England in May.

Irwin's Statement (October 31, 1929)

"It is implicit in the 1917 declaration (Montagu's statement) that the natural issue of India's progress, as contemplated there, is the attainment of dominion status." He also promised a Round Table Conference when the Simon Commission submitted its report.

Delhi Manifesto

On November 2nd 1929 conference of prominent national leaders issued a "Delhi Manifesto" which demanded

1. That the purpose of the round table conference should be to formulate a scheme for implementation of the dominion status and the basic principle of dominion status should be immediately accepted.
2. That the congress should have majority representation at the conference.
3. Amnesty and a general policy of conciliation.

Viceroy Irwin rejected these demands on Dec 23rd 1929. The stage of confrontation was to begin now.

Lahore Congress and Purna Swaraj

Jawaharlal Nehru, who had done more than anyone else to popularize the concept of Purna swaraj, was nominated the President for the Lahore session of Congress mainly due to Gandhi's backing. Nehru was chosen.

- Because of oppositeness of the occasion (congress' acceptance of complete independence as its goal) and
- To acknowledge the upsurge of the youth that has made the anti-Simon campaign a huge success.

Nehru declared in his presidential address, "we have now an open conspiracy to free this country from foreign rule and you, comrades, and all our countrymen and country women are invited to join it." Further explaining that liberation did not mean only throwing off the foreign yoke, he said: "I must frankly confess that I am a socialist and a republican, and am no believer in kings and princes, or in the order which produces the modern king of industry, who have greater power of the lives and fortune of men than even the kings of old, and whose methods are as predatory as those of the old feudal aristocracy." Spelling out the methods of struggle, he said, "Any great movement for liberation today must necessarily be a mass movement, and mass movement must essentially be peaceful, except in times of organized revolt..."

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The following major decision were taken at the Lahore session-

1. The RTC to be boycotted;
2. Complete independence declared as the aim of the congress;
3. CWC authorized to launch a programme of civil disobedience including non-payment of taxes and all members of legislatures asked to resign their seats;
4. January 26, 1930 fixed as the first Independence Day to be celebrated everywhere.

December 31, 1929 at midnight on the banks of river Ravi, the newly adopted tricolor flag of freedom was hoisted amidst slogans of Inquilab Zindabad. January 26, 1930 public meetings were organized all over the country in villages and towns and the independence pledge was read out in local languages and the national flag was hoisted. This pledge made the following points:

- It is the inalienable right of Indians to have freedom.
- The British government in India has not only deprived of freedom and exploited us, but has also ruined us economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. India must therefore sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or 'complete independence'.
- We are being economically ruined by high revenue, destruction of village industries with no substitution made, while customs, currency and exchange rates are manipulated to our disadvantage.
- No real political powers are given - rights of free association are denied to us and all administrative talent in us is killed.
- Culturally, the system of education has torn us from our moorings.
- Spiritually, compulsory disarmament has made us unmanly.
- We hold it a crime against man and God to submit any longer to British rule.
- We will prepare for complete independence by withdrawing, as far as possible all voluntary association from the British government and will prepare for civil disobedience through non-payment of taxes. By this an end of this inhuman rule is assured.
- We will carry out the congress instructions for purpose of establishing Purna Swaraj.

Civil Disobedience Movement

To carry forward the mandate of Lahore congress Gandhiji placed Eleven Point Ultimatum to Irwin (31 Jan 1930) for administrative reforms and stated that if Lord Irwin accepted them there would be no need for agitation.

11-Point Ultimatum

Issue of General Interest

1. Reduce expenditure on Army & civil services by 50 percent.
2. Introduce total prohibition.
3. Carry out reforms in Criminal Investigation Department (C.I.D)

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4. Change Arms Act allowing popular control of issue of licenses
5. Release political prisoners
6. Accept Postal Reservation Bill

Specific bourgeois demands

7. Reduce rupee-sterling exchange ratio
8. Introduce textile protection
9. Reserve coastal shipping for Indians.

Specific peasant demands

10. Reduce land revenue
11. Abolish salt tax

With no positive response forthcoming from the government on these demands, the Congress Working Committee invested Gandhiji with full powers to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) at a time and place of his choice. By February-end, Gandhi had decided to make salt the central formula for the CDM.

Salt was chosen as the central formula because Gandhiji believed "There is no other article like salt, outside water, by taxing which the Government can reach the starving millions, the sick, the maimed and the utterly helpless...it is the most inhuman poll tax the ingenuity of man can devise."

Apart from this salt in a flash linked the ideal of Swaraj with a most concrete and universal grievances of rural poor without any socially divisive implications like no-rent campaign. Salt afforded a paltry but psychologically important income like khadi for the poor through self-help. Salt offered to the urban adherents the opportunity of a symbolic identification with mass suffering.

Dandi March

Gandhiji informed the Viceroy about his plan of action on 2nd march 1930 that he along with a band of seventy eight members of Sabarmati Ashram was to march from his headquarters in Ahmedabad through the villages of Gujarat for 385 kms. On reaching the coast at Dandi, the salt law was to be violated by collecting salt from the beach.

Even before the proposed march began, thousands thronged to the ashram. Gandhi gave the following directions for future actions.

1. Wherever possible civil disobedience of the salt law should be started.
2. Foreign liquor and cloth shops can be picketed.
3. We can refuse to pay taxes
4. Lawyers can give up practices.
5. Public can boycott law courts by referring from litigation.
6. Government servant can resign from their posts.

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7. All these should be subject to one condition- truth and non-violence as means to attain Swaraj should be faithfully adhered to.
8. Local leaders should be obeyed after his arrest.

It began on 12 March 1930; Gandhiji with some of his followers left the Sabarmati Ashram at Ahmedabad and made their way towards Dandi, a village on the west coast of India. After travelling for twenty-five days and covering a distance of three hundred and eighty-five kms, the group reached Dandi on 6 April 1930. Here, Gandhiji protested against the Salt Law (salt was a monopoly of the government and no one was allowed to make salt) by making salt himself and throwing up a challenge to the British government. The Dandi March signified the start of the Civil Disobedience Movement.

Spread of Civil Disobedience

The movement spread and salt laws were challenged in other parts of the country. Salt became the symbol of people's defiance of the government. In Tamil Nadu, C Rajagopalchari led a similar march from Trichinopoly to Vedaranyam. In Gujarat, Sarojini Naidu protested in front of the salt depots. In Malabar, K. Kellapan led a march from Calicut to Poyannur. In Assam, satyagrahis walked from Sylhet to Noakhali (Bengal) to make salt. In Andhra, a number of sibirams (camps) came up in different districts as headquarters of salt satyagraha. Lakhs of people including a large number of women participated actively in these protests.

The Civil Disobedience Movement carried forward the unfinished work of the Non-Cooperation Movement. Practically the whole country became involved in it. Hartals put life at a standstill. There were large-scale boycotts of schools, colleges, and offices. Foreign goods were burnt in bonfires. People stopped paying taxes. In the North-West Frontier Province, the movement was led by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, popularly known as 'Frontier Gandhi'. For a few days, British control over Peshawar and Sholapur ended. People faced the batons and bullets of the police with supreme courage. No one retaliated or said anything to the police. As reports and photographs of this extraordinary protest began to appear in newspapers across the world, there was a growing tide of support for India's freedom struggle. Though movement was started with the Dandi-March by breaking salt law but as Salt production had geographical limitations so in other parts of the country the movement included picketing of liquor shops and auctions, no revenue campaign in Bardoli, forest Satyagrahas, large scale resignation of rural officials, refusal of chaukidari tax, Prabhat Pheris - singing of national songs, vanar sena, manjari senas, magic lantern shows and Patrikas - distribution of illegal pamphlets (secretly).

Nehru's arrest in April 1930 for defiance of the salt-law evoked huge demonstrations in Madras, Calcutta and Karachi. Gandhi's arrest came on May 4, 1930 when he had announced that he would lead a raid on Dharsana salt works on the west coast. Gandhi's arrest was followed by massive protests in Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and Sholapur, where the response was fiercest. After Gandhi's arrest, the CWC sanctioned -

1. Non-payment of revenue
2. No-chowkidara tax campaign in zamindari areas
3. Violation of forest laws in the central provinces.

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Other forms of upsurges

Different areas in the country showed different forms of protests -

In Chittagong, Surya Sen's Chittagong Revolt Group carried out a raid on two armories and declared the establishment of a provisional government. In Peshawar, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan's educational and social reform works among the Pathans had politicized them. Gaffar Khan also called Badshah Khan and Frontier Gandhi, had started the first Pashto political monthly 'Pukhtoon' and had organized a volunteer brigade "Khudai Khidmatgars" popularly known as the 'Red shirts', who were pledged to the freedom struggle and non-violence.

On April 23, 1930, the arrest of Congress leaders in the NWFP led to mass demonstration in Peshawar which was virtually in the hands of Peshawar which was virtually in the hands of the crowds for more than a week till order was restored on May 4. This was followed by a reign of terror and martial law. It was here that a section of Garhwal Rifles soldiers refused to fire on an unarmed crowd. This upsurge in a province with 92 percent Muslim population left the British Government nervous.

Fiercest response to Gandhi's arrest was in Sholapur, an industrial town of southern Maharashtra. Textile workers went on strike from May 7 and along with other residents burnt liquor shops and other symbols of government authority such as railways stations, police stations, municipal buildings, law court, etc. The activists established a virtual parallel government which could only be dislodged with martial law with martial law after May 16.

In Dharsana on May 21, 1930, Sarojini Naidu, Imam Sahib and Manilal (Gandhi's son) took up the unfinished task of leading a raid on Dharsana Salt Works. The unarmed and peaceful crowd was met with a brutal lathicharge which left 2 dead and 320 injured. This new form of salt satyagraha was eagerly adopted by people in Wadala (Bombay), Karnataka (Sanikatta Salt Works), Andhra, Midnapore, Balasore, Puri and Cuttack.

In Bihar a campaign was organized for refusal to pay chowkidara tax and a call was given for resignation of chowkidars and influential members of chowkidars. This campaign was particularly successful in Monghyr, Saran and Bhagalpur. The government retaliated with beatings, torture and confiscation of property. In Bengal anti-chowkidara tax and anti-union-board tax campaign here was met with repression and confiscation of property.

In Gujarat, the impact was felt in Anand, Borsad and Nadiad areas in Kheda district, Bardoli in Surat district and Jambusar in Bharuch district. A determined no-tax movement was organized here which included refusal to pay land revenue. Villagers crossed the border into neighboring princely states (such as Baroda) with their families and belongings and camped in the open for months to evade police repression. The police retaliated by destroying their property and confiscating their land.

Forest laws in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Central provinces and timber restrictions and public sale of illegally acquired forest produce. A powerful agitation was organized in Assam against the infamous 'Cunningham circular' which forced parents, guardians and students to furnish assurance of good behavior. In United Province a no-revenue campaign was organized; a call was given to zamindars to refuse to pay revenue to the Government. Under a no-rent campaign, a call was given to tenants against zamindars. Since

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most of the zamindars were loyalists, the campaign became virtually a no-rent campaign. The activity picked up speed in October 1930, especially in Agra and Rai Bareilly.

Manipur and Nagaland took part a brave part on the movement. At the young age of thirteen, Gaidiniliu of Nagaland raised the banner of revolt against foreign rule. She was captured in 1932 and sentenced to life imprisonment.

Impact of Agitation

1. Imports of foreign cloth and other items fell.
2. Government income from liquor, excise and land revenue fell.
3. Elections to legislative Assembly were largely boycotted.

Extent of Mass participation

Several sections of the population participated in the movements.

Women

Gandhi had specially asked women to play a leading part in the movement. Soon, they became a familiar sight, picketing outside liquor shops, opium dens and shops selling foreign cloth. For Indian women, the movement was the most liberating experience and can truly be said to have marked their entry into the public sphere.

Students

Along with women, students and youth played the most prominent part in boycott of foreign cloth and liquor.

Muslim

The Muslim participation was nowhere near the 1920-22 level because of appeals by Muslim leaders to Muslim masses to stay away from the movement and because of active government encouragement to communal dimension. Still, some areas such as the NWFP saw overwhelming participation. Middle class Muslim Participation was quite significant in Senhatta, Tripura, Gaibandha, Bagura and Noakhali. In Dacca, Muslim leaders, shopkeepers, lower class people and upper class women were active. The Muslim weaving community in Bihar, Delhi and Lucknow were also effectively mobilized.

Merchants and petty traders

They were very enthusiastic. Traders' associations and commercial bodies were active in implementing the boycott, especially in Tamil Nadu and Punjab.

Tribal

Tribals were active participants in Central Provinces, Maharashtra and Karnataka.

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Workers

The workers participated in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Sholapur, etc.

Peasants

Peasants were active in UP, Bihar and Gujarat.

Government Response- Efforts for the Truce

The government's attitude throughout 1930 was ambivalent; it was puzzled and perplexed between the use of force or not to use it- if force was applied, the Congress cried 'repression' and if little was done they cried 'victory' and either way the hegemony of government was eroded. Even Gandhi's arrest came after much vacillation. But once the repression began, the ordinance banning civil liberties were freely used, including gagging of the press. Provincial governments were given freedom to ban civil disobedience organizations. The CWC was, however, not declared illegal till June. Lathicharge and firing on unarmed crowds left several killed and wounded, while 90000 satyagrahis including Gandhiji and other Congress leaders were imprisoned.

The government's repression and publication of Simon Commission Report, which contained no mention of dominion status and which was in other ways also a regressive document, further upset even moderate political opinion.

In July 1930 the viceroy suggested a round table conference (RTC) and reiterated the goal of dominion status. He also accepted the suggestion that Tej Bahadur Sapru and M.R. Jayakar be allowed to explore the possibility of peace between the congress and the government. In August 1930 Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru were taken to Yeravada Jail to meet Gandhi and discuss the possibility of a settlement. The Nehrus and Gandhi unequivocally reiterated the demands of:

1. Right of succession from Britain;
2. Complete national government with control over defence and finance; and
3. An independent tribunal to settle Britain's financial claim;

Talk broke down at this point.

First Round table Conference

The Round Table Conference was opened officially by Lord Irwin on November 12, 1930 at London and chaired by the British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald. The three British political parties were represented by sixteen delegates. There were fifty-seven political leaders from British India and sixteen delegates from the princely states. In total 89 delegates from along with ~~and~~ attended the Conference. However, the business leaders, kept away from the conference. Many of them were in jail for their participation in Civil Disobedience Movement.

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Participants

Main British Representatives:

Labor: Ramsay Macdonald, Lord Sankey, Wedgwood Benn, Arthur Henderson, J. H. Thomas.

Conservative: Earl Peel, Marquess of Zetland, Samuel Hoare, Oliver Stanley

Liberal: Marquess of Reading, Marquess of Lothian, Robert Hamilton, Isaac Foot

Indian States' Representatives: Maharaja of Alwar, Maharaja of Baroda, Nawab of Bhopal, Maharaja of Bikaner, Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, Maharaja of Nawanagar, Maharaja of Patiala, Maharaja of Rewa, Chief Sahib of Sangli, Sir Prabhahankar Pattani (Bhavnagar), Sardar Sahibzada Sultan Ahmed Khan (Gwalior)

British-Indian Representatives:

Muslims: Aga Khan III (leader of British-Indian delegation), Maulana Mohammad Ali, Muhammad Shafi, **Muhammad Ali Jinnah**, Muhammad Zafarullah Khan, A. K. Fazlul Huq, Hafiz Hidayat Hussain, Dr. Shafa'at Ahmad Khan, Raja Sher Muhammad Khan of Domeli, A. H. Ghuznavi

Hindus: B. S. Moonje, M. R. Jayakar, Diwan Bahadur Raja Narendra Nath

Liberals: J. N. Basu, Tej Bahadur Sapru, C. Y. Chintamanī, V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, Chimansal Harilal Setalvad

Justice Party: Arcot Ramasamy Mudaliar, Bhaskarrao Vithojirao Jadhav, Sir A. P. Patro

Depressed Classes: B. R. Ambedkar, Rettamalai Srinivasan

Sikhs: Sardar Ujjal Singh, Sardar Sampuran Singh

Parsis: Phiroze Sethna, Cowasji Jehangir, Homi Mody

Indian Christians: A. T. Pannirselvam

Women: Begum Jahanara Shah Nawaz, Radhabai Subbarayan

Landlords: Maharaja Kameshwar Singh of Darbhanga (Bengal), Muhammad Ahmad Said Khan Chhatari (United Provinces), Raja of Parlekhmudi (Orissa), Provash Chandra Mitter

Labour: N. M. Joshi, B. Shiva Rao

Sindh: Shah Nawaz Bhutto, Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah

Other Provinces: Chandradhar Barua (Assam), Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum (NWFP), S. B. Tambe (Central Provinces)

Government of India: Narendra Nath Law, Bhupendra Nath Mitra, C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, M. Ramachandra Rao.

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The idea of an All-India Federation was moved to the centre of discussion. All the groups attending the conference supported this concept. The responsibility of the executive to the legislature was discussed, and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar demanded a separate electorate for the so-called Untouchables.

Most of the congress leaders were absent because they were either in Jails or followed the decision of Congress to boycott the conference. So, without congress, the entire exercise turned out to be fruitless. It was difficult for progress to be made in the absence of Congress (Indian National Congress) but some advances were made. The princes declared they would join future federation of India as long as their rights were recognized and the British agreed that representative government should be introduced on provincial level.

After the failure of the First Round Conference, many leaders mainly the pro-British members of Indian Liberal Party such as Tej Bahadur Sapru, C. Y. Chintamani and Srinivasa Sastri appealed Gandhi to talk with the Viceroy. The talks between Gandhi and Irwin were arranged. Many congress leaders were released to make a favorable environment.

Gandhi Irwin Pact

The First Round Table Conference could not get any fruitful result. Main reason was the absence of Congress. The Government now started to convince Congress to participate in the Second Round Table Conference in 1931. Therefore, the Government released all Congress leaders from prison on 25th January, 1931. Finally, Gandhiji was convinced to negotiate with the Viceroy Lord Irwin. So Gandhiji and Lord Irwin met on 19th February, 1931 and after discussion for fifteen days, they signed an agreement on 5th March, 1931 known as "Gandhi-Irwin Pact."

This pact included the following matters:

- All political prisoners not convicted for violence, to be immediately released.
- Return of confiscated lands not yet sold to Third Parties by the Government and remission of all fines not yet collected.
- Confederation of right to make salt for consumption to villages along the Sea coast.
- Right to peaceful and non-aggressive picketing.
- Remission of all fines not yet collected.
- Withdrawal of emergency ordinances.

All these demands of Congress were accepted by the Government. But two demands were refused to accept:

- A demand for a public inquiry into police excesses.
- Commutation of death sentences of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru.

On the other hand, Congress on its part agreed to:

- Participate in the Second Round Table Conference,
- Discontinue the Civil Disobedience Movement.

This 'Gandhi-Irwin Pact, also known as the 'Delhi Pact', was endorsed by the Congress in its Karachi Session on 29th March, 1931. It also reiterated the goal of 'Poorna Swaraj'.

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Evaluation of CDM

Gandhi's decision to suspend the civil disobedience movement as agreed under the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was not a retreat, because:

1. Mass movement is necessarily short-lived.
2. Capacity of masses to make sacrifices, unlike that of the activist, is limited; and
3. There were signs of exhaustion after September 1930, especially among shopkeepers and merchants, who had participated so enthusiastically.

No doubt, youth were disappointed - they had participated enthusiastically and wanted the world to end with a bang and not with a whimper. Peasants of Gujarat were disappointed because their lands were not restored immediately. But vast masses of people were jubilant that the government had to regard their movement as significant and treat their leaders as equal, and sign a pact with him. The political prisoners when released from jails were given a hero's welcome.

Compared to non-cooperation Movement

The stated objective this time was complete independence and not just remedying two specific wrongs and a vaguely-worded Swaraj. Moreover the methods involved violation of law from the very beginning and not just non-cooperation with foreign rule. There was a decline in forms of protests involving the intelligentsia, such as lawyers giving up practice, students giving up school to join national schools and colleges. Muslim participation was nowhere near the Non-cooperation Movement level. No major labor upsurge coincided with the movement. But massive participation of peasants and business groups compensated for decline of other features. The number of those imprisoned was about three times more this time. At overall level Congress was organizationally stronger as well.

Karachi Congress Session

In March 1931, a special session of the Congress was held at Karachi to endorse the Gandhi-Irwin or Delhi Pact. Six days before the session (which was held on March 29) Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru had been executed. Throughout Gandhi's route to Karachi, he was greeted with black flag demonstrations by the Punjab Naujawan Bharat Sabha, in protest against his failure to secure commutation of the death sentence for Bhagat and his comrades.

Congress Resolutions at Karachi:

- i. While disapproving of and dissociating itself from political violence, the Congress admired the "bravery" and "sacrifice" of the three martyrs.
- ii. The Delhi Pact was endorsed.
- iii. The goal of Purna Swaraj was reiterated.
- iv. Two resolutions were adopted—one on Fundamental Rights and the other on National Economic Programme—which made the session particularly memorable.

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The resolution on Fundamental Rights guaranteed:

- i. Free speech and free press
- ii. Right to form associations
- iii. Right to assemble
- iv. Universal adult franchise
- v. Equal legal rights irrespective of caste, creed and sex
- vi. Neutrality of state in religious matters
- vii. Free and compulsory primary education
- viii. Protection to culture, language, script of minorities and linguistic groups

The resolution on National Economic Programme included:

- i. Substantial reduction in rent and revenue
- ii. Exemption from rent for uneconomic holdings
- iii. Relief from agricultural indebtedness
- iv. Control of usury
- v. Better conditions of work including a living wage, limited hours of work and protection of women workers
- vi. Right to workers and peasants to form unions
- vii. State ownership and control of key industries, mines and means of transport

This was the first time the Congress spelt out what Swaraj would mean for the masses—"in order to end exploitation of masses, political freedom must include economic freedom of starving millions." The Karachi Resolution was to remain, in essence, the basic political and economic programme of the Congress in later years.

Second RTC and Second Civil Disobedience Movement

The second RTC, while the congress had agreed under the Delhi pact, was held in London in December 1931. Not much was expected from the conference because of the following reason -

1. The right wing in Britain led by Churchill strongly objected by British government negotiating with the congress on an equal basis. They, instead, demanded a strong government in India. The labour prime minister Ramsay MacDonald headed a conservative dominated cabinet with a weak and reactionary secretary of state, Samuel Hoare.
2. An overwhelming majority of RTC delegates were conservative, loyalist, reactionary and communal, men who had been used by the colonial government to assert that the congress did not represent all Indians vis-à-vis imperialism, and to neutralize Gandhi and his efforts.
3. The session soon got deadlocked on the question of the minorities. Separate electorates were being demanded by the Muslims, depressed classes, Christians and Anglo-Indian. All these came together in a "minorities pact". Gandhi fought desperately against this concerted move to make all constitutional progress conditional on the solving of this issue.

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4. Princes were also not as enthusiastic about a federation, especially after the possibility of the formation of a congress government at the Centre had receded after the suspension of Civil Disobedience Movement.

The session ended with Mc Donald's announcement of:

- two Muslim majority provinces-NWFP and Sindh;
- the setting up of Indian consultative committee;
- three expert committees-finance, franchise and states; and
- the prospect of a unilateral British communal award if Indians failed to agree

The government failed to concede the basic Indian demand of freedom. Gandhi returned to India on December 28, 1931. On December 29, the CWC decided to resume the Civil Disobedience Movement.

During Truce Period (March- December 1931)

Some activity during this period kept alive the spirit of defiance. In the united provinces, the congress had been leading a movement for rent reduction and against summary evictions. In the NWFP, severe repression had been unleashed against the Khudai Khidmatgars and the peasant led by them who were agitating against the brutal methods of tax collection by the government. In Bengal, draconian ordinances and mass detentions had been used in the name of fighting terrorism. In September 1931, there was a firing incident on political prisoners in Hijli jail.

Changed Government Attitude

The higher British officials had drawn their own lessons from the Delhi pact which had raised the political prestige of the congress and the political morale of the people and had undermined British prestige. They were now determined to reverse this trend.

There were three main considerations of British policy:

1. Gandhi would not be permitted to build up the tempo for a mass movement again.
2. Goodwill of the congress was not required, but the confidence of those who supported the British against the congress-government functionaries, loyalty, and etc- was very essential.
3. The national movement would not be allowed to consolidate itself in rural areas.

After the CWC had decided to resume the civil disobedience movement, the new viceroy Willingdon refused a meeting with Gandhi on December 31. On January 4, 1932, Gandhi was arrested.

Government Action

A series of repressive ordinances were issued which ushered in virtual martial law, though under civilian control, or a 'civil martial law'. Congress organizations at all levels were banned; arrests were confiscated; Gandhi ashrams were occupied. Repression was particularly harsh on women. Press was gagged and nationalist literature banned.

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Popular Response

People responded with anger. Though unprepared, the response was massive. In the first four months alone, about 80000 Satyagrahis, mostly urban and rural poor, were jailed. Other forms of protest included picketing of shops selling liquor and foreign cloths, illegal gatherings, non-violent hoisting of national flag, non-payment of Chowkidara tax, salt Satyagraha, forest law violations and installations of a secret radio transmitter near Bombay. This phase of the movement could not be sustained for long because

1. Gandhi and other leaders had no time to build up the tempo; and
2. The masses were not prepared.

Finally in April 1934, Gandhi decided to withdraw the civil disobedience movement. Though people had been cowed down by superior force, they had not lost political faith in the congress-they had won freedom in their hearts.

Communal Award and Poona Pact

The communal award was announced by the British Prime Minister, Ramsay Mac-Donald, in August 1932. This was yet another expression of British policy of divide and rule. The Muslims, Sikhs, Christians had already been recognized as minorities. The communal award declared the depressed classes also to be minorities and entitled them to separate electorates.

Congress Stand

Though opposed to separate electorates, the congress was not in favor of changing the communal award without the consent of the minorities. Thus, while strongly disagreeing with the communal award, the congress decided neither to accept it nor to reject it. The effort to separate the depressed classes from the rest of the Hindus by treating them as separate political entities was vehemently opposed by all the nationalists.

Gandhi's response

Gandhi saw the communal award as an attack on Indian unity and nationalism. He thought it was harmful to both Hinduism and to depressed classes since it provided no answer to the depressed classes being treated as separate classes. Once the depressed classes were treated as a separate political entity, he argued, the question of abolishing untouchability would get undermined, while separate electorate would ensure that the untouchables remained untouchables in perpetuity. He said that what was required was not protection of the so-called interests of the depressed classes but root and branch eradication of untouchability.

Gandhi demanded that the depressed classes be elected through joint and if possible a wider franchise, while expressing a number of reserved seats. And to press for his demands, he went on an indefinite fast on September 20, 1932. Now leaders of various persuasions, including B. R. Ambedkar, M.C. Rajah and Madan Mohan Malaviya got together to hammer out a compromise contained in the Poona pact.

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Poona Pact signed by B R Ambedkar on behalf of the depressed classes in September 1932, the pact abandoned separate electorates for the depressed classes. But the seats reserved for the depressed classes were increased from 71 to 147 in provincial legislatures and 18 per cent of the total in the central legislature. The Poona pact was accepted by the government as an amendment to the communal award.

Gandhi's Harijan Campaign

Determined to undo the divisive intentions of the government's divide and rule policy, Gandhi gave up all his other pre-occupations and launched a whirl wide campaign against untouchability- first from jail and after his release in august 1933 from the outsider. While in jail, he had set up the all India anti-untouchability league in September 1932 and had started the weekly Harijan in January 1933. After his release, he shifted to the Satyagraha ashram in Wardha as he vowed in 1930 not to return to Sabarmati ashram unless Swaraj was won.

Starting from Wardha, he conducted a Harijan tour of the country in the period from November 1933 to July 1934, covering 20000km, collecting money for his newly set up Harijan Sevak Sangh, and propagating removal of untouchability in all its forms. He urged political workers to go to villages and work for social, economic, political and cultural upliftment of Harijans. He undertook two fasts- on May 8 and August 16, 1934- to convince his followers of the seriousness of his effort and the importance of the issue. These fasts created consternation in nationalist ranks throwing many into an emotional crisis.

Throughout his campaign, Gandhi was attacked by orthodox and reactionary elements. These elements disrupted his meeting, held black flag demonstration against him and accused him of attacking Hinduism. They also offered support to the government against the congress and the Civil Disobedience Movement. The government obliged them by defeating the temple entry bill in august 1934. Orthodox Hindu opinion in Bengal was against the acceptance of permanent caste Hindu minority status by the Poona Pact.

Third Round Table Conference

The third and last session assembled on November 17, 1932. Only forty-six delegates attended since most of the main political figures of India were not present. **The Labour Party from Britain and the Indian National Congress refused to attend.**

Participants

Indian States' Representatives: Akbar Hydari (Dewan of Hyderabad), Mirza Ismail (Dewan of Mysore), V. T. Krishnamachari (Dewan of Baroda), Wajahat Hussain (Jammu and Kashmir), Sir Sukhdeo Prasad (Udaipur, Jaipur, Jodhpur), J. A. Surve (Kolhapur), Raja Oudh Narain Bisarya (Bhopal), Manubhai Mehta (Bikaner), Nawab Liaqat Hayat Khan (Patiala)

British-Indian Representatives: Aga Khan III, B. R. Ambedkar (Depressed Classes), Ramakrishna Ranga Bhon of Bobbili, Sir Hubert Carr (Europeans), Nanak Chand Pandit, A. H. Ghuznavi, Sidney (Anglo-Indians), Hafiz Hidayat Hussain, Muhammad Iqbal, M. R. Jayakar, Cowasji Jehangir, N. M. Joshi (Labour), Narasimha Chintaman Kelkar, Arcot Ramasamy Mudaliar, Begum Jahanara Shahnawaz (Women), A. P. Patro, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Dr. Shafa'at Ahmad Khan, Sir Shadi Lal, Tara Singh Malhotra, Sir Nripendra Nath Sircar, Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas, Muhammad Zafarullah Khan.

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From September 1931 until March 1933, under the supervision of the Secretary of State for India, Sir Samuel Hoare, the proposed reforms took the form reflected in the Government of India Act 1935.

Government of India Act, 1935

The government of India act was passed by the British parliament in August 1935. The main provisions of the Act were as follows:

It provided for an All India federation comprising of British Indian Provinces, all Chief Commissioner's Provinces and Indian States. The federation's formation was conditional on the fulfillment of two conditions

- i. States with allotment of 52 seats in the proposed Council of states should agree to join federation;
- ii. Aggregate population of states in the above category should be 50 percent of the total population of all Indian states

The proposed Federation never came up because conditions were never fulfilled. The Central Government was carried on up to 1946, as per the provisions of the Government of India Act, 1919.

The Act provided for Dyarchy at the Centre. The British Government, in the person of the Secretary of State for India, through the Governor-General of India – Viceroy of India, would continue to control India's financial obligations, defence, foreign affairs and the British Indian Army and would make the key appointments to the Reserve Bank of India (exchange rates) and Railway Board and the Act stipulated that no finance bill could be placed in the Central Legislature without the consent of the Governor General.

At federal level executive the Governor-general was the pivot of the entire constitutional structure. Subjects were divided into transferred and reserved subjects. The reserved subjects were to be administered by the Governor-General on the advice of executive councilors who were not responsible to central legislature, while transferred subjects were to be administered by Governor-general on the advice of the ministers who were responsible to the federal legislature. The Governor-General could act in his individual judgment in discharging his special responsibilities for the security and tranquility of India.

At federal level legislature it provided for a bicameral legislature. The upper house (Council of States) of the legislature was made to be a permanent body with one-third of the members retiring every three years but the lower house (federal assembly) was to have a term of five years.

- The Upper House of the Federal Legislature, the Council of State, would consist of 260 members: 156 (60%) elected from the British India and 104 (40%) nominated by the rulers of the princely states.
- The Lower House, the Federal Assembly, would consist of 375 members: 250 (67%) elected by the Legislative Assemblies of the British Indian provinces; 125 (33%) nominated by the rulers of the princely states.

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Oddly enough, election to council of states was direct and that to federal assembly, indirect. The three lists for the purpose of legislation were to be federal, provincial and concurrent. The system of religion based and class based electorates was further extended. The funding for the British responsibilities and foreign obligations (e.g. loan repayments, pensions), at least 80 percent of the federal expenditures, would be non-votable and be taken off the top before any claims could be considered for (for example) social or economic development programs. The Viceroy, under the supervision of the Secretary of State for India, was provided with overriding and certifying powers that could, theoretically, have allowed him to rule autocratically. He could restore cuts in grants, certify bills rejected by the legislature, issue ordinances and exercise his veto.

At the provincial level, autonomy was sought to be provided by the Act replacing Dyarchy. The provinces would henceforth derive their legal authority directly from the British Crown and were freed from the superintendence, direction of the Secretary of states and governor-general. They were given independent financial powers and could borrow money on their own security. The Governor of the province was to exercise directly on behalf of the crown. The Governor had special powers regarding minorities, rights of civil servants; law and order, British business interests, partially excluded areas, princely states, etc.

Members of provincial legislature were to be directly elected, so were answerable and were removable by the adverse vote in the legislature. Separate electorates based on Communal Award were to be made operational. Franchise was extended and women got the right on the same basis as men. They could legislate on subjects in provincial and concurrent lists. But 40 percent of the budget was still not votable. The governor could refuse assent to a bill, promulgate ordinances and enact governor's Acts. Beside these changes, a federal court was established at the centre and the Reserve Bank of India was established.

Evaluation of the Act

Numerous safeguards and special responsibilities of the governor-general worked as brakes in proper functioning of the Act. As Jawaharlal Nehru commented: "We are provided with a car, all brakes and no engines."

In provinces, the governor still had extensive powers. The act enfranchised 114 percent of British Indian population. Moreover the extension of the system of communal electorates and representation of various interests promoted separatist tendencies which culminated in Partition of India. As the right of amendment in constitution was reserved with the British parliament this rigid constitution provided no possibility of internal growth.

British motives behind the Act

As suppression could only be a short term tactic. In long run the British strategy was to weaken the movement and integrate large segment of the movement into colonial, constitutional and administrative structure. They were of the opinion that reforms would revive political standing of constitutionalist liberals and moderates who had lost public support during Civil Disobedience movement. Repression earlier and reforms now would convince a large section of Congressmen of ineffectiveness of an extra-legal struggle. Once congressmen tasted power, they would be reluctant to go back to politics of sacrifice. Moreover reforms can be used to

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create dissensions within Congress- right wing to be placated through constitutional concession and radical leftists to be crushed through police measures. Provincial autonomy would create powerful provincial leaders who would gradually become autonomous centers of political power, Congress would thus be provincialized and central leadership would get weakened. They wanted to win Muslim support by conceding most of Jinnah's Fourteen Points; their approach was to convince the Princes to join the Federation by giving the Princes favorable conditions such as:

Each Prince would select his state's representative in the Federal Legislature. There would be no pressure for Princes to democratize their administrations or allow elections for state representatives in the Federal Legislature. The Princes would enjoy heavy in federal legislature that is 40 percent in upper house and 33 percent in lower house.

Nationalists' response to GOI Act, 1935

The act was condemned nearly by all sections and unanimously rejected by the Congress. The Congress demanded, instead, convening of a constituent assembly elected on the basis of adult franchise to frame a constitution of Independent India.

Provincial Election and Formation of Popular Ministries in Provinces 1937

In early 1937, elections to provincial assemblies were announced and once again debate on the future strategy to be adopted, began. Everyone agreed that the 1935 Act was to be opposed root and branch but it was not clear how it was to be done in a period when a mass movement was not yet possible. There was full agreement that congress should fight these elections on the basis of a detailed political and economic programme, thus deepening the anti-imperialist consciousness of the people. But what to do after elections was not yet clear. If the Congress got majority in a province, was it to agree to form a government?

There were sharp differences over these questions among the nationalists which were manifested in the form of ideological divide along the left and right lines. Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose, Congress socialists and communists were opposed to office acceptance and thereby in the working of the 1935 Act because they argued that it would negate the rejection of the Act by nationalists. It would be like assuming the responsibility without power. Also, it would take away the revolutionary character of the movement as constitutional work would sidetrack the main issue of freedom, economic and social justice, and removal of poverty.

As a counter-strategy, the leftist proposed entry into the councils with an aim to create deadlocks, thus making the working of the Act impossible (older Swarajists strategy). And, as a long term strategy, they advocated an increased reliance on workers and peasants, integration of their class organizations into the congress, thus imparting a socialist direction to the Congress and preparing for the resumption of a mass movement.

The proponents of office acceptance argued that they were equally committed the 1935 Act, but work in legislature was to be only a short-term tactic since option of a mass movement was not available at the time, and mass struggle alone was capable of winning independence. Capture or rejection of office was not a matter of socialism but of strategy. They agreed that there was a danger of being sucked in by wrong tendencies, but the answer was to fight these

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tendencies and not to abandon offices. The administrative field should not be left open to pro-government reactionary forces. Despite limited powers, provincial ministries could be used to promote constructive work.

Gandhiji's Stand

He opposed offices acceptance in the CWC meetings but by the beginning of 1936, he was willing to give a trial to Congress ministries. In its session at Lucknow in early 1936 and Faizpur in late 1937, the Congress decided to fight elections and postpone the decision on office acceptance to the post-election phase. In February 1937, elections to the provincial assemblies were held. But he did not attend a single election meeting.

Congress' Performance

The Congress contested on 716 out of 1161 seats. In its manifesto it reaffirmed total rejection of the 1935 Act, and promised release of prisoners, removal of disabilities on the basis of gender and caste, radical transformation of the agrarian system, substantial reduction of rent and revenue, scaling down of rural debts, cheap credit and right to form trade union and to strike.

Congress got a majority in all provinces, except in Bengal, Assam, Punjab, Sindh and NWFP, and emerged as the largest party in Bengal, Assam and NWFP. Because of this performance, the prestige of the congress rose and Nehru reconciled to the dominant strategy of struggle truce struggle. Congress ministries were formed in Bombay, Madras, Central Province, Orissa, United Province, and Bihar and later in NWFP and Assam also. Gandhi advised Congressmen to hold these offices lightly and not tightly. The offices were to be seen as 'crown of thorns' which had been accepted to see if they quickened the pace toward the nationalist goal. Gandhi advised that these offices should be used in a way not expected or intended by the British.

There was great enthusiasm among the people; suppressed mass energy had got released. There was an increase in the prestige of the Congress as it had showed that it could not only lead people but could also use state power for their benefit. But the Congress ministries had some basic limitations: they could not, through their administration, change the basic imperialist character of the system and could not introduce a radical era.

Work under Congress ministries

The congress ministries did much to ease curbs on civil liberties. All emergency powers acquired by the provincial governments during 1932, through Public Safety Acts and the like, were repealed; bans on illegal political organizations such as the Hindustan Seva Dal and Youth Leagues and on political books and journals were lifted. Though the ban on the Communist Party remained, since it was imposed by the Central Government and could only be lifted on its

the Congress, the Communists could in effect now f

provinces. All restrictions on the press were removed. Securities taken from newspapers and presses were refunded and pending prosecutions were withdrawn. The blacklisting of newspapers for purposes of government advertising was given up. Confiscated arms were returned and forfeited arms licenses were restored.

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Of all the British functionaries, the ones the people were most afraid of, as also hated, were the police. On the advice of Gandhiji, in the Congress provinces, police powers were curbed and the reporting of public speeches and the shadowing of political workers by CID (Central Investigation Department) agents stopped.

One of the first acts of the Congress Government was to release thousands of political prisoners and detainees and to cancel internment and deportation orders on political workers. Many of the revolutionaries involved in the Kakori and other conspiracy cases were released. But problems remained in U.P. and Bihar where several revolutionaries convicted of crimes involving violence remained in jails. Most of these prisoners had earlier been sent to Kala Pani (Cellular Jail in Andamans) from where they had been transferred to their respective provinces after they had gone on a prolonged hunger strike during July 1937. In February 1938, there were fifteen such prisoners in U.P. and twenty-three in Bihar. Their release required consent by the Governors which was refused. But the Congress Ministries were determined to release them. The Ministries of U.P. and Bihar resigned on this issue on 15 February. The problem was finally resolved through negotiations. All the prisoners in both provinces were released by the end of March.

In Bombay, the Government also took steps to restore to the original owners lands which had been confiscated by the Government as a result of the no-tax campaign during the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930. It, too, had to threaten resignation before it could persuade the Governor to agree. The pensions of officials dismissed during 1930 and 1932 for sympathizing with the movement were also restored.

There were, however, certain blemishes on the Congress ministerial record in this respect. In July 1937, Yusuf Meherally, a Socialist leader, was prosecuted by the Madras Government for making an inflammatory speech in Malabar, though he was soon let off. In October 1937, the Madras Government prosecuted S.S. Batliwala, another Congress Social leader, for making a seditious speech and sentenced him to six months' imprisonment. There was a furore in the Congress ranks led by Jawaharlal Nehru, for this action went against the well-known Congress position that nobody should be prosecuted for making a speech and least of all for a speech against colonial rule. Nehru, reportedly,

Discussed the issue with C. Rajagopalachari, the Premier of Madras and in the end Batliwala was released and went around Madras Presidency making similar speeches. The affair proved to be an exception; but it bred a certain suspicion regarding the future attitude of the Congress Right wing. Much worse was the mentality of a few of the right-wing Congress ministers. For instance, K.M. Munshi, the Home Minister of Bombay, and a light-weight within the Congress leadership, used the CID to watch the Communists and other left-wing Congressmen. The Madras Government, too, used the police to shadow radical Congressmen.

But these blemishes have, however, to be seen in the larger context of the vast expansion of
essmen ~~with~~^{and} ~~right~~^{left} ~~wing~~ⁱⁿ ~~the~~^{the} ~~country~~^{country}. Led by the left-wing, they exerted intense pressure on the right
ministers to avoid tampering with civil liberties.

The strategy of Congress agrarian legislation was worked out within certain broad parameters. First, the Congress was committed by its election manifesto and the election campaign to a

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policy of agrarian reform through reform of the system of land tenures and the reduction of rent, land revenue and the burden of debt.

But the Congress could not attempt a complete overhaul of the agrarian structure by completely eliminating the zamindari system. This, for two reasons, According to the constitutional structure of the 1935 Act, the provincial Ministries did not have enough powers to do so. They also suffered from an extreme lack of financial resources, for the lion's share of India's revenues was appropriated by the Government of India. The Congress Ministries could also not touch the existing administrative structure, whose sanctity was guarded by the Viceroy's and Governor's powers. Moreover, the strategy of class adjustment also forbade it. A multi-class movement could develop only by balancing or adjusting various, mutually clashing class interests. To unite all the Indian people in their struggle against colonialism, the main enemy of the time, it was necessary to make such an adjustment. The policy had to be that of winning over or at least neutralizing as large a part of the landlord classes as possible so as to isolate the enemy and deprive him of all social support within India. This was even more necessary because, in large parts of the country, the smaller landlords were active participants in the national movement. This was recognized by most of the leaders of the time who considered Congress a national organization, and a forum of all classes. Thus to establish and maintain major function of the Congress is to maintain harmony between different classes and to further its struggle while doing so.

There was also the constraint of time. The Congress leadership knew that their Ministries would not last long and would have to quit soon as the logic of their politics was to confront imperialism and not cooperate with it. Even when the Congress had accepted office, the usual figure given for longevity of the policy was two years. The time constraint became even more apparent as war clouds gathered in Europe from 1938 onwards. The Congress Ministries had, therefore, to act rapidly and achieve as much as possible in the short time available to them.

Further, nearly all the Congress-run states (that is, U.P., Bihar, Bombay, Madras and Assam) had reactionary second chambers in the form of legislative councils, which were elected on a very narrow franchise — while the number of voters for the assemblies in these states was over 17.5 million, it was less than 70 thousand for the second chambers. These were, therefore, dominated by landlords, capitalists and moneylenders, with the Congress forming a small minority. As a majority in the lower house was not enough, in order to get any legislation passed through the second chamber, the Congress had to simultaneously pressure their upper class elements and conciliate them. Thus the Bihar Government negotiated a compromise with the zamindars on its tenancy bills while the U.P. Government conciliated the moneylender and merchant members of its upper house by going slow on debt legislation so that their support could be secured for tenancy legislation.

Finally, the agrarian structure of various parts of India had developed over the centuries and was extremely complex and complicated. There was not even enough information about its various components — land rights, for instance. The problem of debt and money lending was also integrated with peasant production and livelihood in too complex a manner to be tackled by an easy one-shot solution. Consequently, any effort at structural reform was bound to be an extremely formidable and time-consuming operation, as was to be revealed later after independence when the Congress and the Communists attempted to transform the agrarian structure in different states of the Indian union.

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Within these constraints, the agrarian policy of the Congress Ministries went a long way towards promoting the interests of the peasantry. Agrarian legislation by these Ministries relating to land reforms, debt relief, forest grazing fee, arrears of rent, land tenures etc. were achievement of congress ministries. But most of these benefits went to statutory and occupancy tenants while sub-tenants did not gain much. Agricultural labourers did not benefit as they had not been mobilized.

The Congress Ministries adopted, in general a pro-labour stance. Their basic approach was to advance workers' interests while promoting industrial peace, reducing the resort to strikes as far as possible, establishing conciliation machinery, advocating compulsory arbitration before resorting to strikes, and creating goodwill between labour and capital with the Congress and its ministers assuming the role of intermediaries, while, at the same time, striving to improve the conditions of the workers and secure wage increases. This attitude alarmed the Indian capitalist class which now felt the need to organize itself to press the 'provincial governments to hasten slowly' on such matters.'

Immediately after assuming office, the Bombay Ministry appointed a Textile Enquiry Committee which recommended, among other improvements, the increase of wages amounting to a crore of rupees. Despite mill owners protesting against the recommendations, they were implemented. In November 1938, the Governments passed the Industrial Disputes Act which was based on the philosophy of 'class collaboration and not class conflict,' as the Premier B.G. Kher put it. The emphasis in the Act was on conciliation, arbitration and negotiations in place of direct action. The Act was also designed to prevent lightning strikes and lockouts. The Act empowered the Government to refer an industrial dispute to the Court of Industrial Arbitration. No strike or lock-out could occur for an interim period of four months during which the Court would give its award. The Act was strongly opposed by Left Congressmen, including Communists and Congress Socialists, for restricting the freedom to strike and for laying down a new complicated procedure for registration of trade unions, which, they said, would encourage unions promoted by employers in Madras, too, the Government promoted the policy of 'internal settlement' of labour disputes through government sponsored conciliation and arbitration proceedings. In U.P., Kanpur was the seat of serious labour unrest as the workers expected active support from the popularly elected Government. A major strike occurred in May 1938. The Government set up a Labour Enquiry Committee, headed by Rajendra Prasad. The Committee's recommendations included an increase in workers' wages with a minimum wage of Rs. 15 per month, formation of an arbitration board, recruitment of labour for all mills by an independent board, maternity benefits to women workers, and recognition of the Left-dominated Mazdur Sabha by the employers. But the employers, who had refused to cooperate with the Committee, rejected the report. They did, however, in the end, because of a great deal of pressure from the Government, adopt its principal recommendations. A similar Bihar Labour Enquiry Committee headed by Rajendra Prasad was set up in 1938. It too recommended the strengthening of trade union rights, an improvement in labour conditions, and compulsory conciliation and arbitration to be tried before a strike was declared.

The Congress Governments undertook certain other measures of social reform and welfare. Prohibition was introduced in selected areas in different states. Measures for the advancement of untouchables or Harijans (children of God), as Gandhiji called them, including the passing of laws enabled Harijans to enter temples and to get free access to public office, public sources of water such as wells and ponds, roads, means of transport, hospitals, educational and other similar institutions maintained out of public funds, and restaurants and hotels. Moreover, no

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court or public authority was to recognize any custom or usage which imposed any civil disability on Harijans. The number of scholarships and freeships for Harijan students was increased. Efforts were made to increase the number of Harijans in police and other government services.

The Congress Ministries paid a lot of attention to primary, technical and higher education and public health and sanitation. Education for girls and Harijans was expanded. In particular, the Ministries introduced basic education with an emphasis on manual and productive work. Mass literacy campaigns among adults were organized. Support and subsidies were given to khadi, spinning and village industries. Schemes of prison reforms were taken up. The Congress Governments removed impediments in the path of indigenous industrial expansion and, in fact, actively attempted to promote several modern industrial ventures such as automobile manufacture. The Congress Governments also joined the effort to develop planning through the National Planning Committee appointed in 1938 by the Congress President Subhas Bose.

It was a basic aspect of the Congress strategy that in the non-mass struggle phases of the national movement, mass political activity and popular mobilization were to continue, though within the four-walls of legality, in fact, it was a part of the office-acceptance strategy that offices would be used to promote mass political activity.

Problems in Congress rule

The formation of Congress Ministries and the vast extension of civil liberties unleashed popular energies everywhere. Kisan sabhas sprang up in every part of the country and there was an immense growth in trade union activity and membership. Student and youth movements revived and burgeoned. A powerful fillip was given to the state peoples' movement. Left parties were able to expand manifold. Even though it was under a Central Government ban, the Communist Party was able to bring out its weekly organ, The National Front, from Bombay.

Inevitably, many of the popular movements clashed with the Congress Governments. Even though peasant agitations usually took the form of massive demonstrations and spectacular peasant marches, in Bihar, the Kisan movement often came in frontal confrontation with the Ministry, especially when the Kisan Sabha asked the peasants not to pay rent or to forcibly occupy landlords' lands. There were also cases of physical attacks upon landlords, big and small, and the looting of crops. Kisan Sabha workers popularized Sahajanand's militant slogans: *Logan Lenge Kaise, Danda Hamara Zindabad* (How will you collect rent, long live our lathis or sticks) and *Lathi Mere Sathi* (Lathi is my companion). Consequently, there was a breach in relations between the Bihar kisan Sabha and the provincial Congress leadership.

In Bombay, the AITUC, the Communists, and the followers of Dr. BR. Ambedkar organized a strike on 7 November 1938, in seventeen out of seventy-seven textile mills against the passage of the Industrial Disputes Act. There was some 'disorder' and large-scale stone throwing at two mills and some policemen were injured. The police opened fire, killing two and injuring over seventy. The Madras Government (as also the Provincial Congress Committee) too adopted a strong policy towards strikes, which sometimes took a violent turn. Kanpur workers struck repeatedly, sometimes acting violently and attacking the police.

But they tended to get Congress support. Congress Ministries did not know how to deal with situations where their own mass base was disaffected. They tried to play a mediatory role

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which was successful in U.P. and Bihar and to a certain extent in Madras, but not in Bombay. But, in general, they were not able to satisfy the Left-wing critics. Quite often they treated all militant protests, especially trade union struggles, as a law and order problem. They took recourse to Section 144 of the Criminal Code against agitating workers and arrested peasant and trade union leaders, even in Kanpur. Jawaharlal Nehru was privately unhappy with the Ministries' response to popular protest but his public stance was different. Then his answer was: 'We cannot agitate against ourselves.' He tended 'to stand up loyally for the ministers in public and protect them from petty and petulant criticism.' To put a check on the growing agitations against Congress Ministries, the All India Congress Committee passed a resolution in September 1938, condemning those, 'including a few Congressmen,' who 'have been found in the name of civil liberty to advocate murder, arson, looting and class war by violent means.'

The Left was highly critical of the Congress Governments' handling of popular protest; it accused them of trying to suppress peasants' and workers' organizations. Gandhiji too thought that the policy of ministry formation was leading to a crisis. But his angle of vision was very different from that of the Communists. To start with, he opposed militant agitations because he felt that their overt to covert violent character threatened his basic strategy based on non-violence. At the beginning of office acceptance, as pointed out earlier, he had advised the Congress Ministries to rule without the police and the army. Later he began to argue that 'violent speech or writing does not come under the protection of civil liberty.' But even while bemoaning the militancy and violence of the popular protest agitations and justifying the use of existing legal machinery against them, Gandhiji objected to the frequent recourse to colonial laws and law and order machinery to deal with popular agitations. He wanted reliance to be placed on the political education of the masses against the use of violence. He questioned, for example, the Madras Government's resort to the Criminal Law Amendment Act, especially to its 'obnoxious clauses.' While criticizing Left-wing incitement to class violence, he constantly sought to curb Right-wing confrontation with the Left. He also defended the right of the Socialists and the Communists to preach and practise their politics in so far as they abided by Congress methods. Gandhiji was able to see the immense harm that the Congress would suffer in terms of erosion of popular support, especially of the workers and peasants, because of the repeated use of law and order machinery to deal with their agitations. This would make it difficult to organize the next wave of extra-legal mass movement against colonial rule.

The period of the Congress Ministries witnessed the emergence of serious weaknesses in the Congress. There was a great deal of factional strife and bickering both on ideological and personal bases, a good example of which was the factional squabbles within the Congress Ministry and the Assembly party in the Central provinces which led to the resignation of Dr. N.B. Khare as premier. The practice of bogus membership made its appearance and began to grow. There was a scramble for jobs and positions of personal advantage. Indiscipline among Congressmen was on the increase everywhere. Opportunists, self-seekers and careerists, drawn by the lure of associating with a party in power, began to enter the ranks of the Congress at various levels. This was easy because the Congress was an open party which anybody could join. Many Congressmen began to give way to casteism in their search for power.

of despotic ~~Gandhi~~ ~~Gandhi~~, began to feel that 'We seem to be weakening

Gandhiji repeatedly lashed out in the columns of Haryana against the growing misuse of office and creeping corruption in Congress ranks. Gandhiji, of course, saw that this slackening of the movement and weakening of the moral fibre of Congressmen was in part inevitable in a phase

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of non-mass struggle. He, therefore, advised giving up of offices and starting preparations for another phase of Satyagraha.

Jawaharlal too had been feeling for some time that the positive role of the Ministries was getting exhausted. Finally the Congress Ministries resigned in October 1939 because of the political crisis brought about by World War II. But Gandhiji welcomed the resignations for another reason — they would help cleanse the Congress of the 'rampant corruption.' The resignations produced another positive effect. They brought the Left and the Right in the Congress closer because of a common policy on the question of participation in the war.

Evaluation of Congress Rule

In the balance, the legislative and administrative record of the Congress Ministries was certainly positive. The old contention that Indian self-government was a necessity for any really radical attack on the social backwardness of India got confirmed.

One of the great achievements of the Congress Governments was their firm handling of the communal riots. They asked the district magistrates and police officers to take strong action to deal with a communal outbreak. The Congress leadership foiled the imperialist design of using constitutional reforms to weaken the national movement and, instead demonstrated how the constitutional structure could be used by a movement aiming at capture of state power to further its own aims without getting co-opted. Despite certain weaknesses, the Congress emerged stronger from the period of office acceptance. Nor was the national movement diverted from its main task of fighting for self-government because of being engaged in day-to-day administration. Offices were used successfully for enhancing the national consciousness and increasing the area of nationalist influence and thus strengthening the movement's capacity to wage a mass struggle in the future.

The movement's influence was now extended to the bureaucracy, especially at the lower levels. And the morale of the ICS (Indian Civil Service), one of the pillars of the British Empire, suffered a shattering blow. Many ICS officers came to believe that the British departure from India was only a matter of time. In later years, especially during the Quit India Movement, the fear that the Congress might again assume power in the future, a prospect made real by the fact that Congress Ministries had already been in power once, helped to neutralize many otherwise hostile elements, such as landlords and even bureaucrats, and ensured that many of them at least sat on the fence. There was also no growth of provincialism or lessening of the sense of Indian unity, as the framers of the Act of 1935 and of its provision for Provincial Autonomy had hoped. The Ministries succeeded in evolving a common front before the Government of India. Despite factionalism, the Congress organization as a whole remained disciplined. Factionalism, particularly at the top, was kept within bounds with a strong hand by the central leadership. When it came to the crunch, there was also no sticking to office. Acceptance of office thus did prove to be just one phase in the freedom struggle. When an all-India political crisis occurred and the central Congress leadership wanted it, the Ministries promptly resigned. And the opportunists started leaving. As the Congress General Secretary said at the time: 'The resignations of the ministries demonstrated to all those who had any doubts that Congress was not out for power and office but for the emancipation of the people of India from the foreign yoke.'

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The Congress also avoided a split between its Left and Right wings — a split which the British were trying to actively promote since 1934. Despite strong critiques of each other by the two wings, they not only remained united but tended to come closer to each other.

Above all, the Congress gained by influencing all sections of the people. The process of the growth of Congress and nationalist hegemony in Indian society was advanced. If mass struggles destroyed one crucial element of the hegemonic ideology of British colonialism by demonstrating that British power was not invincible then the sight of Indians exercising power shattered another myth of 'Indians inability to rule' by which the British had held Indians in subjection for a long period.

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