CHAPTER THREE

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In this chapter an effort is made to analyse the diplomatic aspects of the Indian nationalist movement. The nature of British colonialism in India, the character of the nationalist elite and the international political environment were the factors that influenced the formulation and execution of Indian nationalist diplomacy. For most part the nationalist diplomacy adopted a policy of moderation. Sections of the radical elite, both from the Right and the Left of the political spectrum, however, followed a militant line of action in their struggle against the British. Yet the freedom struggle was led and independence achieved largely on the platform of peaceful negotiations.

The revolt against colonialism found its most organised and articulated expression in the emergence and growth of Indian nationalism. The first section of this chapter examines the evolution of the diplomacy of the Indian National Congress. As a pioneering anti-colonial movement in Asia, the mainstream Indian nationalist diplomacy displayed an all-Asian awareness and showed the way to anti-colonial struggles in other parts of Asia and Africa.

The contribution to the nationalist diplomacy of the emigrant Indian nationalists who operated from the United States and Europe, from Soviet Union and Japan in
different phases of the anti-colonial movement is also examined in detail. The strategies of nationalist diplomacy: propaganda diplomacy, active participation in international anti-colonial conferences, diplomatic activities in the metropolitan centre, and symbolic diplomacy are in evidence, as we shall see, in the study of the Indian nationalist diplomacy.

Basically there were two main approaches to the anti-colonial diplomacy in the Indian freedom struggle. The predominant and ultimately successful approach of the diplomacy of the Indian National Congress stressed the need for constitutional agitation within the framework of liberal-democratic oppositional politics. The second approach was reflected in the diplomatic and quasi-diplomatic activities of the Indian nationalists operating from foreign land, amassing diplomatic and military support to fight the British colonialism through armed struggle.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL APPROACH: DIPLOMACY OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

The diplomacy of the Indian National Congress strove to make the cause of India's freedom as the cause of Asia's freedom. Urging the ideal of national self-determination as being common to all colonies it perceived anti-colonialism and anti-racism as constituting the strongest common ideological bonds of the Asian countries.
In the educated Indian circles one can find interest in important world events as early as in the time of Ram Mohan Roy, as well as sympathies with the fate of various Asian nations, being in different forms of Western colonial oppression. The mainstream Indian nationalist movement under the aegis of the Indian National Congress, from its very inception in 1885 showed concern for foreign events. The major roots of India's foreign policy reach back into the nineteenth century. Indeed from the founding of the Indian National Congress a number of Indian nationalist leaders displayed interest in establishing a distinctively Indian outlook on foreign affairs.

The Congress party in its annual meetings passed resolutions with specific mention of world problems. Even at its first session in Bombay the resolution decried the British annexation of Upper Burma. Over the following seventy years the Indian National Congress was to adopt more than a hundred resolutions on foreign affairs. Most of these resolutions were directed against colonialism, some sought links with anti-colonial groups outside of India, all of these underlined the nationalist feeling of solidarity among the oppressed peoples everywhere.

In 1904, the expedition to Tibet and the military actions in Iran and Afghanistan were opposed in the Congress resolutions. When Dadabhai Naoroji, presiding over the Calcutta Congress in 1906, claimed Swaraj for India, he
was already referring to the awakening in Japan and in China and the Russian fight against despotism.1

This interest in foreign events in the first decade of Congress's existence was not an expression of any clear political conception, yet it contained, in a rudimentary form, many elements which later became a basis for the diplomacy of the Indian freedom movement. These include particularly the emphasis on a 'constitutional approach, sympathies with Asian countries, condemnation of colonialism and racism, strong opposition to the use of strategic and human resources of India for imperialistic aims and so on.2

Due to the growing disillusionment with the post-First World War British policy towards India, the Congress publicly dissociated itself from the foreign policy of the colonial government as contrary to the interests of the Indian people. Attempts to make unofficial international contacts to win sympathies for the cause of India's freedom outside India were strenuously made by the Congress. The Congress adopted the following resolution addressed to all governments in the world, thus announcing


its independent foreign policy. Resolution No. VI of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) meeting in Delhi on November 5, 1921 included the following statement:

(i) that the present Government of India in no way represent Indian opinion and that their policy has been traditionally guided by considerations more of holding India in subjugation than of protecting her borders;

(ii) that India as a self-governing country can have nothing to fear from the neighbouring states or any state as her people have no designs upon any of them, and hence no intention of establishing any trade relations hostile to or not desired by the people of such states;

(iii) and that the people of India regard most treaties entered into with the Imperial Government by neighbouring states as mainly designed by the latter to perpetuate the exploitation of India by the Imperial power, and would therefore urge the states having no ill-will against the people of India and having no desire to injure her interests, to refrain from entering into any treaty with the imperial power.3

The mainstream Indian nationalist diplomacy regularly expressed in its resolutions its solidarity and moral support to neighbouring and more distant Asian countries. The Congress resolutions responded to the events in China, Burma, Ceylon, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Indonesia, Syria, Palestine, Turkey and Egypt, and conversely, Indian affairs and the model of the Congress methods of struggle were echoed in anti-colonial movements in several Asian countries.

Jawaharlal Nehru, rightly regarded as the architect of nationalist Indian diplomacy and the foreign policy of independent India, greatly influenced the external dimensions of India's freedom movement. He built up the Foreign Department of the AICC covering an extensive agenda. Through his speeches and writings Nehru reiterated the need for a reorientation of Indian policy on world affairs in which he was well-versed, with highest international contacts among the nationalist leaders in India.

Nehru helped the Congress to define its stand towards world affairs. He encouraged the Indian nationalists to take an active part in the various anti-colonial conferences, most notably, the Brussels Congress (see Chapter 2). Under his stewardship the Indian National Congress drew the sympathies of enlightened people and influential organisations in several countries and helped to mobilise world opinion in favour of India's claim to independence. Above all, Nehru gave the nationalist diplomacy a definite line of action to follow with regard to specific international questions. His stand on the Bolshevik revolution, Sino-Japanese war, the Spanish Civil War, the spread of Fascism in Europe, World War II and the freedom struggles in countries like Indonesia and Vietnam was generally accepted by the mainstream nationalist leadership. Nehru's cherished political values of liberal-democracy, secularism, and non-alignment were to leave their imprint on the foreign policy of the
independent India and indeed many other post-colonial countries.

NATIONALIST DIPLOMACY IN THE METROPOLITAN CENTRE:

The British impact on the early Indian nationalists inspired in them a faith in the liberal-democratic instinct of the British and motivated their desire to extend nationalist diplomatic activities to England. All through the anti-colonial movement in India sections of nationalist elite were active in the colonial metropolitan centre, highlighting the cause of Indian independence. The earliest among them, Dadabhai Naoroji founded the British Committee of the Indian National Congress in London in July 1889. The British committee started a constitutional agitation with the object of apprising the British people on Indian problems and impressing upon them the need for redressing Indian grievances. This it did through the medium of propaganda diplomacy, parliament lobbying and deputations. The committee started its weekly paper India, which began publication in 1890 to popularise Indian thoughts and aspirations in England.4

Propagandist literature in the form of pamphlets and leaflets was also published and circulated widely among

the sympathetic British members of Parliament, academics and journalists whose services and support were sought for Indian cause. The Committee gave considerable importance to agitation in the British Parliament, as the legislative body was the sole arbitrator to take decisions on matters relating to India. Election of Dadabhai Naoroji and other members of the British Committee to British Parliament encouraged them to form an Indian group in Parliament in 1893, which moved several motions and resolutions and put questions on Indian affairs.

Another means adopted by the British Committee for the constitutional agitation was the deputations sent from time to time by the Indian National Congress in order to popularise the needs and wishes of the Indian people. These delegates held interviews and corresponded with the British ministers, members of Parliament and journalists and academicians, and published articles and papers.

The Committee reflected the increasing Indian political activity in England, wide circulation of political literature and growing interest of British members of Parliament and cultivation of friendship with the Labour Party, an emerging force in British politics.

The periodical, India, was a powerful organ of the nationalist diplomacy in the metropolitan centre, bringing to the notice of the British leaders the various aspects of the Indian situation. The publication of India however, was suspended, in 1920 when the Congress, which
had supported it financially decided that it had failed to make any change in British attitude towards India.6

The importance of propaganda activities in Europe for achieving nationalist diplomatic aims however, continued to be recognised by the Congress. The Congress session of 1920 in Nagpur discussed the necessity to spread correct information about Indian affairs outside India. This attitude was reiterated at the next session of the Congress held at Kanpur. One of the resolution concerning anti-British propaganda passed at the meeting said: "The work outside the country shall be directed to the dissemination of accurate information in foreign countries". Another significant move during the session was the decision to establish a Foreign Department of the Indian National Congress to coordinate the external dimension of India's freedom struggle.7

In an effort to internationalise the Indian freedom struggle a Students' Information Bureau was established in Berlin in 1928 with the financial aid of Congress. This was done with a view to further develop foreign contacts


6 Sitaramayya, n. 3, pp. 207-208.

7 N. V. Rajkumar (ed.), The Background of India's Foreign Policy (New Delhi, 1952), pp. 295-297.
already made with many similar anti-colonial political organizations and nationalist representatives of Asian and African countries.8

The 1932 Amritsar Congress adopted a resolution stating "emphatically" that the time had come for establishing a permanent mission for its own propagandist work in England and elsewhere and appointed a committee to collect necessary funds for the purpose and to select the personnel for the mission.9

India League in London:

In the later phase of India's freedom struggle, the diplomatic activities at the metropolitan centre were coordinated by the India League. The India League started functioning at the beginning of the 1930s after the Commonwealth of India League (formed in 1923) ceased to exist towards the end of 1930. The joint secretary of the Commonwealth of India League, V. V. Krishna Menon became the secretary to the new organisation and a leading spirit behind the many sided political and cultural activities of the India League.

The main object of the League was to support the claim of India to Swaraj. The League was later accepted by the

8 ibid, p. 345.

9 N. V. Rajkumar (ed), Indian National Congress, Resolutions on Foreign Policy, 1947-1950 (New Delhi, n.d.), pp. 41-42.
Indian National Congress as its London branch and served as a convenient meeting place for Indians with other Asian nationalists living in England.10

CONGRESS DIPLOMACY IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

In keeping with the Congress ideology its diplomacy in the USA adopted a peaceful and constitutional image focusing on the anti-colonial sentiment of American liberalism. In 1914 Lajpat Rai founded the "India Home Rule League of America" in New York and for the next five years lectured widely in the USA to mould a favourable public opinion. Through prolific writings in his periodical Young India, Rai succeeded in acquainting the American public opinion with the political situation in India under British colonialism and winning many American liberals towards the Indian side.

The League carried the propaganda of India's claim for Home Rule and with its sister organisation the "Indian Information Bureau" started a library, providing several Indian newspapers for American readers.

The role of the League in bringing the Indian national movement within the range of American understanding forms

10 For a good discussion on Krishna Menon's activities in England see T. J. S. George, Krishna Menon (London, 1964)
an important constituent of the Indian nationalist diplomacy in the United States.11

After Rai’s return to India the nationalist diplomacy in the US was guided by Taraknath Das in association with Sailendra Nath Gose who organised the "Friends of Freedom for India" which attracted the supporters of Home Rule League. Haridas Muzumdar, a student at Columbia University founded the "Young India Association" and wrote several articles in the American newspapers about India’s colonial exploitation by the British, trying for identification of the Indian movement with the American independence struggle. Nehru presented the Congress case for independence in his article 'Unity of India' published in Foreign Affairs in 1938.12

A few Indians continued their efforts through journals and books to advance the nationalist cause. The need for coordinating the propaganda work led to the founding of the "India League of America" in 1937.13

To make certain that the Congress position had a constant voice in the United States, the India League of America


12 Mazumdar later wrote a book: Haridas T. Mazumdar, Gandhi Versus the Empire (New York, 1932)

began publishing *India Today*, a monthly edited by Anup Singh, a Harvard doctorate. American public opinion brought pressure on Roosevelt administration with a large number of intellectuals interested in Indian nationalism like Pearl S. Buck, E. Stanley Jones, John Haynes, petitioning the White House.14

In late 1943 a group of Indians organised the National Committee for India's Freedom in Washington to present Congress position to the Americans. The committee used propaganda diplomacy through its monthly *Voice of India* edited by its secretary Anup Singh.15

These Indian nationalist groups played a significant role through publicising cause for India's independence when Vijaya Luxmi Pandit visited San Francisco in 1945 representing India at the U. N. Conference.

Thus, the primary task of the Congress diplomacy in the colonial metropolitan centre and other important liberal centre like the USA, was to emphasise the basically constitutional nature of the Indian nationalist movement in their opposition to the British rule in India. By adopting parliamentary and liberal-constitutional methods


15 Venkatramani & Shrivastava, n. 13, p. 250.
of protest, the Indian National Congress was able to influence the liberal public opinion in the metropolitan centre and in the USA and eventually accomplish independence from colonialism. In the next section we shall discuss the contribution of other, more radical, streams of nationalist diplomacy in India's nationalist movement.

MILITANT APPROACH TO NATIONALIST DIPLOMACY: NON-CONGRESS GROUPS

The Indian freedom struggle was not solely represented by the Indian National Congress and its diplomacy. A significant aspect of the Indian freedom movement was the role played by various non-congress political groupings among Indian emigres which used diplomatic channels and propaganda activities to make a case for Indian liberation from the British colonial yoke.

Since the rise of modern revolutionary nationalism itself the activities of nationalist emigres have been a continual source of diplomatic tussle. Any government which defines certain activities by its citizens as seditious usually regards the toleration of similar activities within the jurisdiction as an irresponsible breach of acceptable principles of international diplomacy. The revolutionary movements in Europe during World War I are good examples of this kind of diplomatic behaviour.
Like the European nationalist émigrés, whose ideologies and tactics the Indian nationalists had borrowed, their political strategy was aimed at using diplomatic channels for propagating Indian case for independence. Unlike the previous European nationalists in exile, however, the Indian nationalists found in the countries in which they took political refuge potential recruits for liberation forces drawing from masses of immigrant labour. This broader popular basis, which disaffected emigrants gave to the Indian nationalist movement abroad, made it potentially more serious than its predecessors in European diplomatic history. An analysis of this dimension of India’s nationalist diplomacy is attempted in the following pages.

MILITANT NATIONALIST PROPAGANDA IN THE USA:

The diplomatic endeavours of the early Indian nationalist groupings in the United States were aimed at achieving an armed insurrection in India. With the increasing pace of the nationalist movement at home symbolised with the Swadeshi movement, the propaganda of nationalist leaders also increased. Many Indian intellectuals in America sought to publicise the revolutionary force of the Indian nationalism. Tarakh Nath Das, who came to America in 1906 for higher studies, began publishing *Free Hindustan* in 1908. The result of cooperation with an American Irish publisher campaigning for Irish independence. The *Free Hindustan* did well for three years before it was
suppressed at the instigation of the British authorities.16

**Har Dayal and the Ghadar Propaganda**:

The man who is credited with organising Indians in the US was Har Dayal, who became a Boden Sanskrit scholar at Oxford in 1907 and came to the US in 1911 to teach at Stanford University. He founded an International Radical Club and the Fraternity of the Red Flag.17

Indian student leaders in the US joined Dayal for propaganda work and organising largely illiterate immigrant labourers. The group made the immigrant population aware of the British colonial interests in India and drainage of wealth to England. The group called for a "Ghadar", a peoples armed struggle with the support of patriotic elements of the British Indian army. The Ghadar party, whose chief ideologue and leader was Dayal, was launched in San Fransisco in 1913 and became the


stoutest anti-British organisation abroad. The party took its name from the newspaper Ghadar (Mutiny) which started publication in 1913 under the editorship of Dayal. Har Dayal was not only the editor but the declared publisher of Ghadar and the weekly was issued in Gurumukhi, Urdu, Hindi and later periodically in Bengali and Marathi as well.18

Ghadar's propaganda for overthrow of the British began reaching Indians settled in different parts of the world including members of the British Indian army. Meanwhile, the First World War broke in Europe, creating opportunity for the Ghadar leaders to mobilise Indian troops who were stationed in various theatres of the war to implement their plans for an armed uprising in India.

However, the scheme to send arms to India met with repeated setbacks and the plans for an armed uprising in India failed. Several Ghadar leaders, including Dayal, turned to Germany for financial and military support. They prepared for clandestine shipping of arms to revolutionary groups in India and were associated with other German-sponsored anti-British schemes based in the USA, Afghanistan, Turkey and other centres.

Among the prominent Indian nationalists associated with these elements were Virendranath Chatopadhyaya, Bhupendranath Dutta, Tarakanath Das, M. N. Roy, C. K. Chakraborty, Mohammed Barkatullah and Mehendra Pratap. Emile Brown, Har Dayal's biographer, observes that German support for the movement was crucial and the German agents helped in the distribution of Ghadar propaganda material in places all over the world.

To Punjabi immigrants in US and Canada, to Philippines, Malay States, Singapore, Hong Kong, China and also to India. Articles were also written in the Ghadar to inform the readers regarding 'similar' militant movements in Egypt, Ireland, Russia, China and in Mexico suggesting propitious possibilities of support from the revolutionaries of these countries in the fight against the colonial Britain.19

EXPLOITATION OF EUROPEAN POWER RIVALRIES

In the beginning of the present century Germany constituted the focal point around which international diplomacy was converging. Sections of Indian nationalist elite based in Europe realised that the Germans, being hostile to Britain, were naturally interested in any activity that tended to weaken the British, especially the Indian freedom struggle.

the flag was hoisted outside India. Addressing the Conference, Madam Cama said:

The continuance of British rule is positively disastrous and extremely injurious to the best interests of Indians. Lovers of freedom all over the world ought to cooperate in freeing from slavery the one-fifth of human race inhabiting the oppressed country, since the perfect social state demands that no people should be subject to any despotic or tyrannical form of government.20

OTHER CENTRES OF NATIONALIST PROPAGANDA

Madam Cama started the Paris India Society, or Bharat Mandal. France with its traditions of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity was an important European revolutionary centre. The Paris-based Indian nationalists could enlarge their understanding of anti-colonialism through contacts with Russian, Irish and Egyptian revolutionaries and by befriending French socialists. Paris became the headquarters for Indian nationalist propaganda. They published revolutionary pamphlets and articles, sent messages of support to fellow revolutionaries all over the world. The nationalists journeyed to different capitals of Europe, seeking diplomatic and military support. They established and maintained personal contacts and relations

20 International Socialist Congress at Stuttgrat (August 18-24, 1907) in The International Socialist Congress, Speeches and Resolutions on India. Published by the Indian Nationalist Committee, European Centre, (Berlin, 1917), p. 11.
with leaders of national liberation movements of various countries. The British intelligence took note of these activities of Cama:

Indian nationalism is not a wide enough field for her energies. Her war cry is "The Orient for the Orientals". She does not believe that any Asiatic nation will achieve independence until the power of Asia as a whole is equal to that of Europe. Egyptians, Turks, Russians, come to her for help and sympathy.21

During this period Indian nationalists were also operating from Switzerland. In Zurich, the Pro-India society started by Champakaraman Pillai in 1912 bought out a journal called Pro-India, in which it was propagated that the Indian nationalists in Europe should join hands with Germany since "the fate of the world was in Germany's hands" and she should "set the Indians free".22

More important in the propagation of nationalist ideas in Europe during this interwar period was Virendranath Chattopadhyaya. He made efforts to involve the Indian freedom struggle with different anti-British and anti-colonial forces in Europe such as the German Foreign Office, the 1917 Stockholm peace movement of the Socialist International, the Bolsheviks and the League Against Imperialism.


Chatopadhyaya's militant anti-British propaganda was expressed through the journal *The Talvar* (The Sword) financed by Madam Cama from Paris. While in London he had come in contact with Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and later moved to Paris and continued to concentrate on his journal, using it as a powerful tool of nationalist and anti-colonial propaganda.

During World War I, Chattopadhyaya fled to Germany where, with other Indian nationalists like Har Dayal, Mehendra Pratap and others, he discussed means and methods for acquiring German diplomatic and material support for Indian independence. The Indian nationalists requested the German Foreign Office for assistance in providing guerilla training to Indian revolutionaries. They also sought help of German official media to provide assistance for publishing nationalist propaganda literature.

**The Berlin Committee:**

With the support of the German war Cabinet and the German Foreign Office the nationalists formed the "Indian Independence Committee" also called the "Berlin Committee", whose primary task was to highlight the Indian situation and demand redress.23

The diplomacy of the Indian nationalists sought to

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highlight the strategic and economic importance of India for the German foreign policy goals, in the politically surcharged atmosphere of the First World War. They even gave to German authorities a plan for an uprising in India with German help. A secret treaty was drawn between the Berlin Committee and the German government in 1915 in which the German government promised that in return for the help given by the Committee they would do their best both during and after the war for securing Indian independence. The Committee demanded a return assurance from the German foreign office that if an Indian nationalist government was formed, the Germans would extend moral and material support in the form of arms, financial loans and recognition of the provisional government that may be established by them.24

After much persuasion, the German government gave its consent to the Berlin Committee for the formation of a secret parliamentary commission, which was to advise the foreign office on Indian affairs. The Berlin Committee wanted the question of India's independence to be accepted as a cardinal principle to be achieved by Germany during the war. The Berlin Committee devoted much attention to propaganda against the British government and by 1918 the

Government of India prepared a list of eighty-two leaflets and pamphlets published by them.25

From the standpoint of nationalist diplomacy, the Berlin Committee contributed towards identifying India's national interest at the time of World War I and exploiting the political situation in Europe to further the cause of India's freedom. Its members became the unofficial envoys of Indian nationalist movement. As Nehru notes in his autobiography:

> The Committee was officially honoured in every way, and its representatives were treated almost on the footing of foreign ambassadors.26

The Berlin Committee's primary aim was to provoke unrest in India with the direct support of the discontented Indians abroad, mainly those from north Africa and east Asia. They were liberally financed by the German government in this effort during the World War I. However, by 1916, all the efforts to liberate India had failed, primarily due to British counter-measures. It became clear both to the German foreign office and the Berlin Committee that no further plans for revolution in

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25 See: War Office memorandum on German Literary propaganda as regards India and the Orient, Home Political Deposite, December 1916, No. 30 (N.A.I.).

India could be undertaken. Towards the end of 1918, the Berlin Committee decided to disassociate itself with Germany.27

**Nationalist Propaganda Diplomacy In Sweden: 1917-1921:**

Disappointed with the failure of Berlin Committee the Indian nationalists in Europe were looking for new avenues for putting the Indian case. Armed with solid propaganda literature prepared by the Berlin Committee, particularly material containing critical comments on British rule in India by the British socialists through the years, Chattopadhyayaya took part in the Socialist Conference held in Stockholm. Although the Conference was an aborted attempt at world peace it gave the Indian nationalists a chance to internationalise the Indian question.

The experience with international Socialist movement gave the Indian nationalists ideas that a permanent contact must be established between them and other nationalities such as the Irish and the nationalist groups of old Czarist empire on the common basis of anti-colonialism. A branch of the Berlin Committee was started in Stockholm in 1917 under the name of "European Central Committee of Indian Nationalists" popularly called Indian National Committee in Sweden.

The objective of Indian nationalists in Stockholm was to internationalise the Indian question, that is to equate the Indian independence issue with any other problem of national self-determination. This was done by giving wide publicity to the malice of British colonialism in India from authentic and reliable sources and by actively cooperating with the other nationalities fighting colonial rule. The salient features of the propaganda included; publishing in Swedish and other major European languages brochures and pamphlets criticising British rule in India by men of eminence from Britain, India and the United States, getting them reviewed in the Swedish press, issuing press releases, expressing India's solidarity with other freedom-seeking nationalities, explaining Indian issues, and contacting influential public men in order to involve them in Indian affairs.

Among the brochures of the Indian Committee three were most important and constituted the nucleus of the entire nationalistic propaganda. The first was, "Openings of English Socialist leaders on British rule in India", a reproduction of the H. M. Hyndman's 1910 "Manifesto of Executive Council of the British Socialist Democratic Party" regarding India along with excerpts from other published books and articles of Hyndman, J. Keir Hardie and J. Ramsay McDonald.

The second brochure, "The Internationalist Socialist Congress: Speeches and Resolutions on India", was a
recollection of proceedings relating to India from four session of the Second International between 1900 to 1910. The third publication, "Some American Opinions on British Rule in India", included critical views on the subject by many eminent Americans such as William Jennings Bryan, William T. Harris, and Mark Twain.28

Throughout this period several Swedish newspapers with different political slants either reported about or quoted substantially from the major publications of the Indian nationalists. With the German defeat in the war and the change of government in Sweden, however, Indian nationalists had to move away from Stockholm. They then became active with Indian branch of the Communist International.

Exploiting the military and diplomatic difficulties which the First World War had created for the British, the Indian nationalists abroad tried unsuccessfully to engineer the overthrow of British rule in India. Though the Indian nationalist diplomacy failed to overthrow the

28 See the Indian Nationalist Committee (ed): Some American Opinions on British Rule in India (Stockholm, 1917), 68 pages. The documents of the Socialist Congresses are available in the Indian Nationalist Committee (European Centre), The International Socialist Congress: Speeches and Resolutions on India (Berlin, 1817), pp. 1-13.
British in India the movement made a significant impact on Indian politics. In the words of Savarkar:

It was through their writings and propaganda that they infused the spirit of revolution and unity among Indians. The ceaseless propaganda carried revolutionary nationalism for the people outside and inside India. They created an awareness of the political aspirations of the Indian people and developed their interest in India among many countries of Europe, US and Far East. The enemies of England all over the world began to take the Indian revolutionaries seriously and opened negotiations with their leaders.29

SOVIET UNION AND THE INDIAN NATIONALIST DIPLOMACY:

The success of the Russian revolution gave a new ideological element to the Indian nationalist diplomacy. The support for the national liberation movements in the colonies was one of the basic planks of the new Soviet diplomacy. Various sections of the Indian nationalist elite sought the Soviet support for freedom from colonialism.30

After the Russian revolution most of the Indian nationalists groups in Europe and America established


30 The Russian revolution greatly influenced the freedom struggle in India as was admitted by the official 'Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms' better known as the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms, which was published in 1918. It said: "The revolution in Russia in its beginning was regarded in India as a triumph over despotism" and "it has given impetus to Indian political aspirations." Montagu-Chelmsford Report, Report of the Indian Constitutional Reforms (Calcutta, Superintendent Government Printing, India, 1918), p. 14.
contacts with Moscow. Among them were M. N. Roy, Mahendra Pratap and his group, the Berlin Committee members, the Ghadar leaders like Har Dayal and others. Most of them personally proceeded to Moscow and met leaders of the Communist International.

They felt assured that they would get all sympathy and aid from the Bolsheviks as the latter had already proved their loyalty to the cause of national self-determination and were known to give all the help they could to the freedom movement of subject countries fighting against imperialist rule.31

Among the first Indian nationalists seeking Soviet help for Indian independence was Mahendra Pratap who had unsuccessfully sought support from Czarist Russia after proclaiming, in a gesture of symbolic diplomacy, a provisional Indian government in Kabul on December 1, 1915. His aim was to create "an indigenous Government in India instead of the present alien English Government".32

The Kabul-based nationalists formulated the following line of action to achieve their objectives:

1: To invoke the sympathy and moral support of foreign governments for the emancipation of India from the foreign yoke.


32 see M. A. Persits, Revolutionaries of India in Soviet Russia (Moscow, 1983), p. 42.
2: To disseminate revolutionary propaganda among:
   a) the Princes and ruling chiefs of India by inviting them to join the cause, b) leaders of public opinion and captains of industry, and c) the Indian soldiers, dissuading them from fighting against any foreign power.

3: To obtain arms and ammunition with a view to supply the revolutionary forces and to store them for emergencies, that is the general war of independence.33

The announcement of a nationalist government in exile created a precedence which was followed by many nationalist groups in their fight against colonialism. The proclamation of independence put the Indian question in the larger context of fight against colonialism. Pratap's provisional government tried with the help of Afghanistan and the support of Czar to organise an uprising in India. In 1916 Pratap sent two diplomatic missions to Czar to seek his support for the prospective Afghan-Indian action against Britain. Both the missions failed. With the revolution in Russia the members of the Indian provisional government in Kabul tried to contact the Bolshevik leadership for diplomatic support. Pratap visited Moscow and requested an official recognition to the Kabul-based provisional government which was not

33 Quoted in ibid, p. 43.
favoured by the Soviet leadership.34

Other groups of Indian nationalists active in the Soviet Union during this period were members of the Indian section of the Council for International Propaganda (Sovinterprop) formed in Tashkent in April 1920 and members of the Indian Revolutionary Association.35

Both these groups were supported by the Bolsheviks and advocated an alliance of the Indian liberation movement with the Soviet Union in their struggles against British colonialism.

During this period the Indian nationalist propaganda in the Soviet Union was represented by the weekly newspaper Zamindar, published in Urdu and Persian. It drew the attention of the Soviet leadership towards the Indian question and explained its importance for the fight against colonialism, that the new Soviet leadership had as a foreign policy goal. The weekly provided a rallying point for the various nationalist movements in Asia and

34 Mahendra Pratap also coordinated nationalist efforts with other Indian revolutionaries abroad like M. N. Roy, Virendranath Chattopadhyaya and leaders of Ghadar Movement. He also met and discussed the independence of India with prominent world leaders like Lenin and Kaiser William. Irrespective of the political leanings of his supporters, the Raja was ready to accept aid from any quarter to end the British rule in India. "Why", he once told a friend, "I shall be with the devil if he would fight the British empire". See: Raja Mahendra Pratap, The Story of My Life (Delhi, 1947), p. 338.

35 Persits, n. 32, p. 63.
proposed a common anti-colonial programme inspired by the success of the Russian revolution.36

The Indian nationalists operating from Soviet territory tried to politically activate the large number of immigrant Indians. This was done through a relentless anti-British propaganda in the fortnightly newspaper *Azad Hindustan*. Published in Urdu, the newspaper became a flagbearer of anti-British and anti-colonial movement and actively campaigned for alliance with the Soviet Union.37

**Comintern And Nationalist Conference Diplomacy:**

Communist-sponsored international conferences provided ideal climate to propagate ideas of liberation from Western colonialism. M. N. Roy, the most celebrated of Indian communists, took part in the Second Congress of the Communist International held in Moscow in 1920.38

The Congress was the first international forum of communists representing communist movements from different parts of the world. The most significant

36 ibid, p. 77.


resolution affecting the future of colonised countries was drafted by Lenin entitled 'Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Question'.39

Lenin held the view that the liberation movements that were gaining support in many Asian nations had a positive role to play and hence the communists should support both them and the national bourgeoisie which led that struggle. Roy did not support this approach. He denied that the national bourgeoisie was at all revolutionary in its anti-imperialist stance and said the nations should have a right to self-determination. He considered that India already had all the conditions essential to achieve a national liberation. He sought to prove that it was a proletarian socialist revolution, rather than a bourgeoisie-democratic one, as Lenin believed, that was on the agenda in India.

The debate made Roy emerge as an original Marxist theoretician and helped to publicise the issue of India's independence at an important international conference. Among the leaders of the Communist International only Roy was evolving an analysis of the different stages of development of the various colonies and the necessity of adopting suitable tactics for them.

A modern American scholar thus evaluates Roy's contribution to the Congress:

Roy played a highly significant role in the formulation of Comintern policy on the national and colonial questions... as a result of Roy's criticism, Lenin's theses on the national and colonial questions were modified.40

Thus the "Supplementary Theses" that Roy put forward at the Congress as an improvisation on Lenin's Preliminary theses made him acquire considerable prestige. Whatever the ideological differences between Roy and Lenin concerning the colonial question, the Second Congress of the Comintern played an important role in the development of the Communist movement in the colonial countries, in defining its strategies and tactics and creating a united anti-colonial front.41

On the initiative of Roy, the Indian delegates to the Congress formed a provisional All India Central Revolutionary Committee. The Committee was organised to conduct political work among Indian immigrants both in Soviet Central Asia and Afghanistan and to lead anti-colonial activities in India.42


41, In his memoirs Roy later recorded: "Lenin created a sensation by declaring that prolonged discussions with me had made him doubtful about his own theses". Roy, n. 38, p. 381.

From the stand-point of nationalist diplomacy, the participation in important anti-colonial conferences and debating points of historical significance in the conferences helped to internationalise the issue of India's independence. It also gave an ideological framework to the sections of the nationalist elites in their anti-colonial struggle.

DIPLOMACY DURING WORLD WAR TWO: EXPLOITING WORLD POWER BLOCS

With the changing complexion of the international power equation as the world witnessed rise of fascism in Europe and militarism in Japan, the Indian question became the key to the success of the Axis powers. Part of the Japanese war-time diplomacy was to overthrow the Western colonial rule from Asia; encourage independence movements, and to promote the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere with its slogan of "Asia for the Asians".43

Sections of the Indian nationalists sought to link the Indian freedom struggle with the support from the Axis powers and orientated their diplomacy towards achieving that goal. One such grouping, the Indian Independence League, based on the pre-existing nationalist organisations in Southeast Asia, saw in the Japanese strategy an opportunity to further the cause of Indian independence.

Subhas Bose's Militant Diplomacy:

World War II saw the emergence of perhaps the most significant agent in the history of the militant section of the Indian independence movement. The diplomatic activities of Subhas Chandra Bose during the war can be said to embody all the features of nationalist diplomacy so far discussed, namely, the use of nationalist propaganda; exploitation of the war situation; active participation in conferences; proclamation of nationalist government and the lobbying of foreign governments for military and diplomatic support.

Disillusioned by the moderation of the diplomacy of the Indian National Congress, Bose, who represented the radical streak in the Indian nationalist elite, sought to take military action to expel the British from India. This strand of nationalist diplomacy showed a certain continuity of approach from the diplomatic activities of Ghadarites, the Berlin Committee members and other Indian revolutionary groups in Europe during the First World War.

Following the tactics of his predecessors in this strand of nationalist diplomacy, Bose sought to exploit the British weakness during World War II with active diplomatic and military support from the Axis powers. During 1932 and 1934 Bose paid several visits to Berlin, Rome and many capitals of eastern Europe, where he discussed the Indian political situation with Indian students and sponsored the formation of Student
Associations to organise resistance in Europe. He met leaders of Axis powers, including Hitler in 1936 and saw fascism in action.44

Like the Indian nationalists during the First World War, Bose was successful in using Berlin as a base for his propaganda offensive against the British colonialism. He was allowed the use of the broadcasting facilities in Berlin. Bose inaugurated the Azad Hind (Free India) Radio which became the mainstay of relentless campaign against British war motives and tried to expose the facade of democracy and equality that the Allies considered a prime war aim. Since the mainstream nationalist diplomacy, heavily influenced by Gandhi’s precepts of non-violence and Nehru’s idealism, adhered to constitutional means of struggle, its leaders did not approve of Bose’s diplomatic approaches to the Axis powers.

For Bose political expediency dictated that he must seek military and diplomatic support irrespective of the ideological orientation of the supporting party. The political division of the world between the Allied and the Axis power blocs had sharply polarised world opinion enabling Bose to see where his interest lied.

44 For this section of Indian nationalist diplomacy, I have drawn heavily from the many published works of Subhas Chandra Bose and from his various biographies. One such useful work is Mihir Bose, The Lost Hero: A Biography of Subhas Bose (London, 1982), Especially see pp. 170-179, for Subhas' diplomatic activities in Germany.
In a broadcast from Berlin on 17 June 1942, Bose justified the need for outside help for the freedom struggle thus:

I have studied very carefully the struggle for liberty that has gone on all over the world during the last 200 years, but I have not as yet discovered one single instance where freedom was won without outside help of some sort. Where the enemy is a powerful world-empire, the need for outside help is even greater; and where that powerful empire, namely, Britain, is buttressed by a combination of several other powers it would be the height of folly not to accept any assistance offered to us... We can expect help or assistance only from those who are our friends and allies. In the present case those who are trying to overthrow the British empire are helping our liberation and are, therefore our friends and allies...45

While Bose continued pro-India Radio broadcasting and also the publication of a monthly magazine, Azad Hind, he decided something more was needed to fire the imagination of Indian nationalists around the world. An army equipped, armed and trained to fight against the English for Indian freedom would strike, he believed, an even bigger propaganda blow at the British. Thus was born the Indian Legion trained by the Germans and made up of prisoners of war from units which had fought in Africa.46


Bose planned that the Indian Legion would march with the German army across Central Asia into North-West India, but the German defeat in Russia made him look elsewhere to seek help for the cause of Indian independence.

In the existing international setting, the logical place for Indian nationalists was Japan where Prime Minister Tojo had made encouraging references to India's freedom movement and a substantive awakening among the Indians in Japanese dominated Southeast Asia promised a new political footing for Bose.47

With his departure from Germany in February 1943, the centre of anti-colonial diplomacy shifted from Europe to Southeast Asia, sparking off the most virulent propaganda for the Indian Independence movement in East Asia. This had implications for anti-colonial struggles in other parts of Asia. Japan's occupation of Southeast Asian region during the war and its support to various anti-Western movements in the region, was the backdrop against which Bose had to operate his anti-British diplomacy. Bose's return influenced the nationalist leadership in Burma where Aung San's Burmese Independence

47 In a secret memorandum submitted to the German government by Bose on the 9th April 1941, he outlined his plan for cooperation between the Axis powers and India. See Subhas Chandra Bose, The Indian Struggle (1920-1942) (Bombay, 1964), pp. 419-422.
Army (BIA) was modelled after the Indian National Army (INA). Ba Maw, the chief of State designate of Burma sent a telegram in June 1943, to Bose. It read:

I sincerely congratulate you on your return to the East. Your first statement issued in Tokyo deeply impressed the Indian people here and gave them courage and hope. Both Indian and Burmese peoples have long awaited this opportunity. The time has come for us to rise. Burma hereby pledges herself to fight on your side in your fight for national honour and independence.48

Ever since the Japanese victory over the mighty Russian empire in the 1905 Russo-Japan war, the Asian nationalists had looked at that country with admiration. To Indian revolutionaries trying to escape British wrath and persecution, Japan offered a refuge, to others it appeared as the leader of Asia. Bose was not the first Indian nationalist to establish a base in Japan. Among the earliest Indians who made Japan the centre for anti-British propaganda, was Mohammed Barkatullah, a professor of Urdu at Tokyo University and editor of two nationalist newspapers, The Islamic Fraternity and El-Islam. In the 1920s Ras Behari Bose had started the "Indian Independence League" in Japan with the object of attaining "independence for India by all possible means."49

48 Quoted in Bose, n. 46, p. 170.

To publicise India's anti-colonial struggle Bose and other Indian nationalists had attended the Pan-Asiatic Conferences in August 1926 in Nagasaki and in November 1927 in Shanghai, together with the delegates from Japan, China, Korea and the Philippines, but these conferences did not find much response in India.50

Subhas Bose arrived in Tokyo in May 1943 and took over from Ras Behari Bose the leadership of Indian Independence movement in East and South East Asia. From there he moved on to Singapore assuming the leadership of Indian Independence League and immediately announced the reorganisation of the League. Out of the first five departments of the League two were for publicity and propaganda and intelligence.

Azad Hind Government: Symbolic Diplomacy:

Under the auspices of the Japanese, Subhas Bose proclaimed an Indian nationalist government. This was done to institutionalise the rising spirit of nationalism and to give a new vigorous thrust to his diplomatic strategy. Recognising the importance of symbolism in nationalist diplomacy, Bose announced the formation of a Azad Hind Government on October 21, 1943. The

50 The first Conference was, however, noticed by the authorities in British India, Home Deptt. 24/81/28-Poll., No. 2. (N.A.I.).
proclamation of the provisional government detailed the reasons for formation of this Indian government in exile:

(It is) the duty of the Indian Independence League in East Asia, supported by all patriotic Indians at home and abroad, to undertake this task— the task of setting up a Provisional Government of Azad Hind (Free India) and of conducting the last fight for freedom, with the help of the Army of Liberation (that is, the Azad Hind Fauj or the Indian National Army) organised by the League.

Outlining the tasks of the provisional government, the proclamation further said:

It will be the task of the Provisional Government to launch and to conduct the struggle that will bring about the expulsion of the British and of their allies from the soil of India. It will then be the task of the Provisional Government to bring about the establishment of a permanent National Government of Azad Hind, constituted in accordance with the will of the Indian people and enjoying their confidence.51

**Propaganda Offensive:**

Almost immediately after its establishment, the Government of Azad Hind declared war on Britain and America. Bose, who firmly believed in the importance of political propaganda used the Provisional Government's machinery to publicise his struggle world-wide. Ably assisted by S.A. Ayer, a former special correspondent of Reuter, who was his minister for publicity and propaganda, Bose utilised,

with Japanese help, Press and Radio for launching an aggressive pro-India propaganda.

*Azad Hind* (Singapore), a daily newspaper published by the Indian Independence League headquarters, *Syonan Times* (Singapore), *Young India Weekly* (Singapore) and *Tamil Nesan* (Kualalumpur) were some of the important tools of the INA propaganda in Southeast Asia. An INA-organised broadcasting station was also used for publicity purposes with branches at Singapore and Rangoon. Justifying the need for political propaganda, Bose said:

> the reactions and repercussions of the establishment of our Provisional Government has been world wide (thanks to the unrelenting propaganda) and it will not be an exaggeration if I say that it had created panic both in London and Washington.52

The Allied Radio stations were quick to flash the news of the formation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind and its declaration of war against the Allies. The nationalist propaganda had its diplomatic advantage and, in due course, the Government of Azad Hind was recognised by Japan, Germany, Italy, Burma, Thailand, Nationalist China, the Philippines and Manchuria. A week after the formation of the Azad Hind Government Bose flew to Tokyo and was received by the Emperor of Japan and given full state honours due to a Head of State.

52 ibid, p. 219.
The visit to Japan was a shrewed diplomatic move on the part of Bose to assert his political status as the head of an Indian nationalist government in exile. With the same purpose in mind, he also attended the Great East-Asia Conference held in Tokyo in November 1943, where Japan's war-time Prime Minister Hideki Tojo announced his country's unequivocal support to the Azad Hind Government and declared Japan's intention to hand over Andaman and Nicobar islands to the provisional government of Azad Hind.53

The Azad Hind Provisional Government, in a largely symbolic diplomatic victory, established its authority for the first time on Indian territory. Bose visited Andamans on December 31, 1943, and during his visit the two islands were renamed as "Shahid" and "Swaraj" islands. Another diplomatic triumph was Bose's good use of the invitation extended to him as the head of the Provisional Government.

53 According to A. M. Nair, the one-time adviser of the Indian diplomatic mission in Tokyo and a close associate of Rash Behari Bose, the participants in the Greater East Asia Conference held to counterpoise the Allies November 1943 Conference between the Big Three and Chiang Kai Shek, were all from areas under Japanese occupation. Subhas came from Singapore, Ba Maw from Burma, Pibulsonggram from Thailand, Sukarno from Indonesia, Laurel from the Phillipines and Wang Ching-Wei from China. Subhas impressed the meet by his charismatic personality. The Conference decided that the countries within the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Scheme should maintain solidarity and go on fighting against Western imperialism until victory was won. See his book *An Indian Freedom Fighter in Japan: Memoirs of A. M. Nair* (Madras, 1982), p. 239.
by the new regime in Burma. His attendance in Rangoon at
the proclamation of Burma's independence was good
propaganda for the 'fight for freedom' angle among Indians
in Burma. Bose successfully sought diplomatic and
military help from the Burmese government under Ba Maw
and established a branch of the INA in Rangoon and
launched with Japanese military aid the final offensive on
British colonialism.

Despite defeat of Japan and with it that of the military
dimension of nationalist diplomacy, popular support for
the INA ultimately helped precipitate British withdrawal
from India. Braving criticism from several contemporaries
in the Indian nationalist movement for his alignment with
the Axis powers, Bose devised his grand strategy to
liberate India with foreign military and diplomatic aid
and thus gave a militant dimension to the Indian
nationalist diplomacy.

The study of the diplomacy of the Indian nationalist
movement reveals the growth of the anti-colonial
sentiment. By its sheer size and magnitude the national
movement in India became a common point of reference for
other anti-colonial struggles in Asia. The strategies
adopted by the Indian elite in its nationalist diplomacy
reflected in the diplomacy of other national movements in
Asia. In its range and variety, from constitutional
protest to military opposition, in its propaganda
diplomacy, in its symbolism for nationalist diplomacy and
its diplomacy at the metropolitan centre, the Indian nationalist diplomacy became the guiding factor in other anti-colonial movements.

The more militant streak of the nationalist diplomacy was reflected by the activities of Ghadarites in the USA, the nationalists in Europe during the First World war and activities of Subhas Bose during the Second. The Leftist elements in the nationalist elite took ideological and material support from the Soviet Union. By resorting to a massive propaganda diplomacy, active participation in international anti-colonial conferences, and exploiting the political divisions of the world, the Indian nationalists accomplished their independence from the British.

It is essential to remember that in case of India for the most part the nationalist elite followed a moderate attitude towards the diplomacy of the freedom struggle and the military dimensions of nationalist diplomacy were only a contributing factor in achieving independence. In the next chapter we shall examine the more militant diplomacy of the Indonesian nationalist movement, where the military and the diplomatic components of the nationalist diplomacy combine to achieve the freedom from colonial rule.