CHAPTER III

STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE: GANDHIAN LEADERSHIP AND
BENGAL'S MILITANT NATIONALISTS

Before we start discussing the attitude of the militant nationalists of Bengal towards the Gandhian leadership over the nationalist movement it is necessary for us to focus our attention on two major points: (1) the change brought about by Gandhi in the character of the Congress, and (2) the source of Gandhi's strength over the masses of the Indian people. In the pre-Gandhi period the Congress, in spite of an extremist challenge within it, was largely controlled by a moderate group. The Moderates adopted a method which lacked vigour and provided no scope for mass participation. Their method remained confined to prayer and petition to the Government which was condemned by the large section of the Bengal nationalists, along with the extremists in other parts of the country, as a policy of mendicancy. Under Gandhi's leadership the Congress was soon turned into a fighting organisation and it came close to the masses. This radical transformation of the masses was welcomed by the militant nationalists of Bengal though they could not accept the Gandhian ideology as a whole. They believed that the new Congress was a suitable instrument to launch a relentless struggle against the foreign rule under Gandhi's leadership, if possible, and without it, if necessary. But gradually it became clear to many that the masses of India had identified themselves more with Gandhi than with the political programme of the Congress. In
course of time, as we shall see, this Gandhi-mass identification became a great problem for the militant nationalists of Bengal who wanted a mass movement but found Gandhi reluctant for it. Therefore, besides referring to the radicalization of the Congress by Gandhi we propose to make an enquiry about the basis of Gandhi's mass popularity.

Radicalization of the Congress by Gandhi

The Congress and the history of India's nationalist struggle were so intertwined that it is very difficult to think of one without the other. According to Coupland, the Congress was synonymous with Indian Nationalism.\(^1\) "The history of the Congress", N. Srinivasan wrote, "is the history of the making of a nation".\(^2\)

But this potentiality of the Congress was beyond the imagination of its founder, Allan Octavian Hume. It was conceived and hatched up by Hume in league with the British authorities with the aim of using it as "a safety-valve" to check the swelling disaffection and unrest against the alien rule.\(^3\)

The fundamental objects of the Congress as chalked out by Hume were three-fold:

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"First: The fusion into one national whole of all the different and, till recently, discordant elements that constitute the population of India;

"Second: The gradual regeneration along all lines, mental, moral, social and political of the nation ... 

"Third: The consolidation of the union between England and India, by securing the modification of such of its conditions as may be unjust or injurious to the latter country."  

The Congress functions were carried on in general on the basis of the following assumptions:

(1) The British Government represented for India "the Divine favour of Providence," (2) The Indian people must have unshakable faith in the British sense of justice and must remain loyal to the British Crown, and (3) The means of negotiations with the Government must remain restricted to "petition" and "prayer". The Congress leaders mainly restricted their activities to protesting against the bureaucratic hegemony and demanding a number of administrative reforms. They wanted that the people of India within the British empire should gradually be given the same rights which the people of Britain and other European countries enjoyed. Referring to this objective W.C. Bonnerjee, the first President of the Congress said in 1885: "Our desire

to be governed according to the ideas of government prevalent in Europe is in no way incompatible with our thorough loyalty to the British Government."⁵ Explaining the policy of "petition and prayer", Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, while addressing the third session of the Congress observed:

"Though thus far success had not crowned our efforts, we must only go up to government again and again and ask their earliest consideration of our demands, or of our prayers, and entreat them, again and again, to concede to us this reform."⁶ The Congress leadership continued to follow this liberal or moderate policy until it entered into the Gandhian era after the first world war.

But long before the rise of Gandhi this policy of the Congress, its faith in the British sense of justice and its method of petition and prayer, became quite incompatible with the political culture that arose in Bengal with the growth of militant nationalism which we have already described. Under its impact the nationalists of Bengal began to think in terms of a struggle against the British government rather than an appeal to it. Aurobindo and Vivekananda whose contributions to the growth of militant nationalism we have discussed in a previous chapter were thoroughly dissatisfied with the policy.


of the Congress. "I say of the Congress", wrote Aurobindo, "thus this — that its aims are mistaken, and the spirit in which it proceeds towards their accomplishment is not the spirit of sincerity and whole-heartedness and that the methods it has chosen are not the right methods, and the leaders, in whom it trusts, are not the right sort of men to be leaders; in brief that at present the blind led, if not the blind, at any rate by the one eyed". Swami Vivekananda expressed his disappointment at the Congress programme for its indifference to the welfare of the masses. "Can you tell me", he asked, "what Congress has been doing for the masses? Do you think merely passing a few resolutions will bring you freedom? I have no faith in that. The masses must be awakened first." The Congress in those days was not a mass party and it had no constructive programme for social and economic upliftment of the people. Vivekananda who spent his whole life for the regeneration of India through social service and constructive work voiced his indignation against the Congressmen for their apathy towards the mass. And he asked: "Will it do merely to say, 'Hand the government of the country over to us'?" As a constructive genius, he criticized the mentality of the Congressmen for imitating the habits of Englishmen instead of learning their

superior skill for changing the country's economic condition. "You have not the capacity to manufacture a needle," he said referring to the Congressmen, "and you dare to criticise the English! Fools! Sit at their feet and learn from them the arts, industries and the practicality necessary for the struggle for existence. You will be esteemed once more when you will become fit. Then they too will pay heed to your words. Without the necessary preparation, what will mere shouting in the Congress avail?" 10

During its anti-partition agitation Bengal was able to shake the moderates at least for the time being from their never failing faith in the British sense of justice. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the prince of the moderates, warned the Government that he would have to say, "good-bye to all hope of co-operating in any way with the bureaucracy in the interests of the people! I can conceive of no graver indictment of British rule than that such a state of things should be possible after a hundred years of that rule." 11 Though the Congress was then dominated by the Moderates, it could not escape the heat of the swadeshi and boycott preached and practised by Bengal. The Benaras Congress of 1905 endorsed Swadeshi and boycott of foreign goods as "constitutional and effective means". 12 Dadabhai Naoroji, President of the


Calcutta session of the Congress (1906) declared 'swaraj' as the goal of the Congress and said that the time for it "had arrived long past". The Calcutta Congress also passed, to the great chagrin of the moderates, resolutions on swaraj, swadeshi, boycott and national education. The spirit of militant nationalism had by that time developed, though to a lesser extent, in other parts of India also and it was represented by leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai. The Congress was then virtually divided into two groups, the moderate group and the extremist group, the leadership remaining in the hands of the former. In 1907 at the Surat session of the Congress there was an open conflict between the two groups and the extremist, who were in a minority were driven out of the Congress and the Congress was turned purely into an organization of the moderates. The new constitution that came into being in 1908 set the goal of the Congress to "the attainment by the people of India of a system of Government similar to that enjoyed by the self governing members of the British Empire and participation by them in the rights and responsibilities of the empire on equal terms with those members." And the "constitutional" means for the achievement of that goal were, as mentioned by Sir Wedderburn in his Presidential address at the Allahabad


session of the Congress in 1910: (I) constructive work in India, educating and organizing public opinion; (II) representations to the Government of India regarding proposed reforms and (III) propaganda in England. Most of the extremist leaders were then imprisoned, and as an historian, referring to the political situation of the country of this period, has put it: "The Extremists having lost the support and protection of the Congress stood in isolation to bear the brunt of Government wrath." 

The moderate Congress, with extremist leaders eliminated from it, could not supply any inspiring leadership before the people. Referring to this leadership during the first world war, the same historian wrote: "In 1914 however the national movement was at a low ebb. The Moderate politicians had lost their appeal to the public; the extremist leaders were scattered to the four winds; .... But the work of the Extremist leaders had not been in vain. During the anti-partition days the Indian people, especially the younger generation, had been stirred to its depths and their outlook had been changed from one of mendicancy to militancy." This change of outlook took place particularly in Bengal where the anti-partition agitation was immediately followed by an

17. Ibid., p. 448.
underground revolutionary movement culminating in the Indo-German conspiracy during the First World War. The Bengal nationalists with their militant approach could not reconcile themselves to the liberal style of politics. The motive force of the Congress as late as 1915 was, as explained by the Congress President of that year, S.P. Sinha: "My first duty to-day is to lay at the feet of our august and beloved sovereign our unswerving fealty, our unshaken allegiance and our enthusiastic homage." But this style of politics was radically changed by Gandhi who turned the Congress into a mass party and a fighting organization, and thus made it more acceptable to the militant nationalists of Bengal.

Under Gandhi's leadership the Congress began to wear a new look. "The nationalist movement — or at least its major forces — had assumed," Coupland wrote, "from 1920 onwards quite a new complexion. The majority of the Congress, which not so long ago under Mr. Gokhale's lead had been the British Government's ally, had become under Mr. Gandhi's lead its enemy." 19

"The Congress, as Gandhi has shaped it", Brailsford noted, "differs from its older self and from the liberals in its revolutionary conception of the struggle in which it is engaged. Though it has renounced violence, it relies on various forms of "disobedience" to the British rulers of

19. R. Coupland, n. 1, part I, o. 80.
India and preaches the duty of "revolt". The Liberals, who rely solely on politeness and persuasion to achieve their end by gradualism, stand at the opposite extreme. Given this starting-point, it is intelligible that Congressmen should hold that every patriotic Indian ought to be within their ranks. Referring to the special session of the Congress held in Calcutta in September 1920 Nehru wrote that "It began the Gandhi era in Congress politics ... The whole look of the Congress changed; European clothes vanished and soon only khadi was to be seen; a new class of delegate, chiefly drawn from the lower middle classes, became the type of Congressmen; the language used became increasingly Hindustani, or sometimes the language of the province where the session was held, as many of the delegates did not understand English, and there was also a growing prejudice against using a foreign language in our national work; and a new life and enthusiasm and earnestness became evident in Congress gatherings." 21

After securing full control over the Congress, Gandhi realised that if Congress was to discharge the responsibility of a national party, it would have to be shaped as a fighting organization by rejecting the moribund constitution of "petition" and "prayer" of the Moderates. 22 "The Congress", Gandhi

22. "I would say to the moderates", Gandhi wrote, "mere petitioning is derogatory; we thereby confess inferiority." *CWMG, Vol. X*, p. 60.
wrote, "had practically no machinery functioning during the interval between session and session, or for dealing with fresh contingencies that might arise in the course of the year". The goal of the Congress was now defined as "Swaraj" by the people of India by peaceful and legitimate means. A pyramidal structure of the Congress was built up — primary members paying four annas annually forming the wide bottom and a new body, the Congress Working Committee, forming the top of the pyramid, and close to the top was placed the All India Congress Committee to be elected "on a linguistic and "proportional basis". From now "the Congress represented the masses and became a revolutionary body under the leadership of Gandhi ... It was a Congress in which, instead of the President and the leaders driving the people, the people drove him and the leaders." Dr. Ambedkar gave a very correct picture of the Congress of that time. Gandhi, Ambedkar observed, "introduced three main changes ... It made the Congress a mass organization by opening its membership to all and sundry. ... It forged sanctions behind its resolutions by adopting a policy of non-cooperation and civil disobedience ... It put out what is called a constructive programme of social amelioration ... Thus by 1922, the Congress was completely transformed by Mr. Gandhi. The new

24. Young India, 3 November 1920.
Congress was entirely different from the old, except in name".26
"After 1920", Coupland wrote, "when under Mr. Gandhi's leadership it became a revolutionary movement, it gradually built up by a nation-wide organization which not unreasonably claimed the allegiance of all Indian patriots and developed a kind of 'parallel government', prepared to take delivery when the time came."27

The Congressmen inspired by a scintillating pulsation of thirsting nationalism entered into a period of ceaseless activities restraining themselves by the canons of satyagraha and non-violence. How did the militant nationalists of Bengal with their tradition of passive resistance and violent revolutionary movement respond to Congress politics, now radicalized, democratized and revitalized by Gandhi?

Source of Gandhi's Mass Popularity

Before we discuss this response it is necessary to examine, as we have indicated earlier, another problem of major significance, namely, the source of Gandhi's popularity over the Indian masses. This point appears to us very relevant for a critical examination of the central theme of our subject. The militant nationalists of Bengal were undoubtedly attracted by the mass character and fighting mood of the new Congress and they tried to use it for launching a nation-wide struggle

against the foreign rule. But Gandhi's philosophy, his ethical values and methods of struggle appeared to them as obstacles to the launching of such a movement. They thought that Gandhi had created an instrument of struggle, but the Gandhian philosophy had paralyzed the will for such a struggle. They could not accept Gandhian leadership nor could they dispense with it because the Indian masses mobilized under the banner of the Congress remained actually under the influence of Gandhi. For a mass struggle Gandhi was necessary, but the Gandhian method, in the eye of the militant nationalists of Bengal, was unsuitable for it. Under such circumstances, a strained relation developed between Gandhi and the militant nationalists of Bengal. They tried to influence Gandhi, pressurize him and even revolted against him. In this intra struggle within the organization the main strength of Gandhi was his influence over the Indian masses. What was the basis of this influence? This question appears important to us.

The basis must be sought not in his ideas, nor in his political leadership, but possibly in the excellence of his personal character-transparent sincerity, iron determination, honesty of purpose, courage of conviction, simple mode of living, passion for justice and straightforwardness. An embodiment of all traditional virtues, Gandhi was a charismatic leader dealing with modern problems. He had an appeal for all - orthodox religious people as well as modern elites, social reformers as well as revolutionaries, thinkers as well as
fighters. His life was his message — there were many who did not agree with his message, but there were few who did not admire his life. He had a cause to fight for but no enemy to fight against. Conversion and not annihilation was the object of his fight. If he could not change the hearts of many he was able at least to enter into the hearts of millions of Indians. They accepted him as their own leader and felt a sense of personal loyalty towards him.

It is significant that the people accepted him as Mahatma before the Congress accepted his political leadership. In 1919 he came into prominence in Indian politics by advocating satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act and by supporting the Muslim cause of the Khilafat, and he captured the imagination of nationalist India by his programme of non-cooperation against the British Government in 1920. But even before this he became Mahatma of the Indian people. Referring to the Lucknow session of the Congress held in December 1916 Sri Prakash wrote: "All around the pandal where the Subject Committee meeting of the Congress was being held, there was constant shouting of 'Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai' ('Victory to Mahatma Gandhi'). I remember that this greatly annoyed S. Satyamurthi who said that Mahatmaji might as well go out and receive his ovations so that the work of the Committee may proceed. There is no doubt that the large noises outside were disturbing the proceedings rather badly."  

popularity of Gandhi was certainly not due to his political role because he was not yet considered as a significant figure in the Indian nationalist movement. Recalling his first meeting with Gandhi during this time Jawaharlal Nehru wrote: "My first meeting with Gandhiji was about the time of the Lucknow Congress during Christmas 1916. All of us admired him for his heroic fight in South Africa, but he seemed very distant and different and unpolitical to many of us young men. He refused to take part in Congress or national politics then and confined himself to South African Indian question." 29 Gandhi's popularity with the Indian masses thus has a non-political foundation, and it was gradually extended throughout the country. He earned it not as a Congressman nor as a leader of the nationalist struggle. He became a popular figure even when he was a loyalist. In 1915 the Kaiser-i-Hind medal was conferred on Gandhi by the British Government. In 1918 Gandhi attended a war conference convened by the Viceroy in Delhi and started a campaign to recruit soldiers for the British. Even at the Amritsar Congress (1919) Gandhi stood for the acceptance of the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms and opposed C.R. Das who condemned the new Act as "inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing." In spite of his attempt to organize a satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act in 1919 Gandhi had not yet emerged as the supreme leader of the nationalist struggle. Nevertheless, the Congress delegates had a special fascination and regard for Gandhi. Recalling

29. Jawaharlal Nehru, n. 21, p. 35.
his personal experience of the Amritsar Congress Raghukul Tilak wrote: "The leaders were all on the dais but Gandhiji characteristically sat among the delegates below. When the President announced his name and as he, clad in dhoti and kurta and wrapped in a rough blanket, walked slowly towards the dais, all eyes turned to him, and the Congress pandal, for the first time, rang with shouts of 'Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai'."

Gandhi became the supreme leader of the nationalist movement by organizing non-violent mass struggles against the foreign rule. These struggles increased his popularity but his tremendous hold on the people was not simply due to his political leadership. It had a different source — his ability to identify himself with the people without any mental reservation. As Nehru had put it: "Gandhiji knew India and especially the Indian masses, as very few, if any, have known them in the past or the present... He could merge himself with the masses and feel with them and because they were conscious of this, they gave him their devotion and loyalty".

The charisma of Gandhi sprang largely from this source.

Gandhi was the leader of a modern nationalist mass movement, but he led the life of a traditional Indian saint. If the modern educated people followed him for the prospect of the movement he led, the illiterate millions of India felt


attracted towards him for the way of life he followed.

Analysing the basis of Gandhi's popularity among the Indian masses Subhas Chandra Bose wrote: "His (Gandhi's) simple life, his vegetarian diet, his goat's milk, his day of silence every week, his habit of squatting on the floor instead of sitting on a chair, his loin cloth — in fact everything connected with him — has marked him out as one of the eccentric Mahatmas of old and has brought him nearer to his people. Wherever he may go, even the poorest of the poor feels that he is a product of the Indian soil — bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. And when he talks of conquering through love and ahimsa (non-violence), they are reminded of Buddha and Mahavira and they accept him." Brailsford, a liberal British, also shared the same view, and he wrote: "Literally Gandhi stripped himself naked and led the life of the poor peasants he would serve. He has, indeed, renounced all the goods of life — save only power; and power, as the Hindu tradition believes, comes to the ascetics from his austerities. His fasts and his days of silence ranked him with the old hermits ... They (the Indian masses) understood him with ease, and noted that he spoke with authority and the assurance of absolute belief. He soon had his devoted disciples. The rich poured money at his feet, and the poor faced at his bidding the lathis and prisons of the

police. All called him saint and some saw in him an incarnation of God."

Gandhi was popular with the masses and he was necessary for the political leaders who thought in terms of mass struggle. Even the non-Gandhian leaders who felt the need of mass movements could not ignore him, however strongly they might have differed with his politics or ideology. They usually sought to enlist Gandhi's support behind their programme instead of challenging his leadership even when they could not approve of it. This was best evidenced in the country's nationalist politics when Gandhi's leadership was seriously challenged by Subhas Chandra Bose in 1939. The Congress Socialist Party which had its support for the programme of Bose ultimately refused to oppose Gandhi at the Tripuri crisis (1939). As an explanation for this stand of the Party, Acharya Narendra Dev wrote: "To-day no struggle will have a nation-wide character and attract the attention of the world unless Gandhiji associates himself with it. This may provide a sad commentary on the state of our political advancement, nevertheless we cannot ignore it. To-day we want a powerful mass movement and unless Gandhiji gives the call, the masses and the classes will not be drawn into it in large numbers. So it is no use asking the Congress to start the struggle ignoring Gandhiji".34 Many other nationalist

leaders of India felt similarly and they believed that without the active support from Gandhi, nationalist struggle in India would not achieve mass character. Gandhi was also, it appears, conscious of his position and he knew that Congressmen in general did not believe in his ideology and methods but could not ignore him because of his very pre-eminent position as a charismatic mass leader. A few months after the resignation of Subhas Chandra Bose from the Congress presidency, Gandhi wrote, particularly pointing towards his opponents: "They believe in my hold on the masses but they do not believe in the things which I believe have given me that hold. They merely want to exploit me and will grudgingly pay the price which my ignorance and obstinacy (according to them) demand."35

This tremendous hold of Gandhi over the Indian people, both illiterate masses and the educated section, led many nationalist leaders to acknowledge his leadership in spite of their differences with him. This tendency was present in Bengal also. But the tradition of rational culture and militant nationalism was so strong in Bengal that there always existed an opposition to Gandhi at different levels and sometimes this opposition broke out in open revolts.

**Bengal's Superiority Complex**

Apart from this tradition, Bengal had another area of anti-Gandhi base which arose out of a sense of superiority

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Bengal enjoyed in the past over the non-Bengalis. The blithe assumption that the rest of India was waiting to accept the lead of Bengal was a typical Bengali assumption. There was a strong element of ethnocentricity among the Bengalis and even the most farsighted, it appears, were prone to it. A few citations from the leading Bengalis who dominated the political and intellectual lives of Bengal would illustrate the magnitude of superiority complex Bengal in those days was suffering from. "If we in Bengal," Tagore wrote in his Swadeshi Samaj, "succeed in selecting a leader of the Samaj and making our social liberty bright and permanent, then the rest of India will follow." 36 "In politics," in the opinion of Aurobindo Ghosh, "the Bengali has always led and still leads ... for what Bengal thinks tomorrow, India will be thinking tomorrow week ... Let Bengal only be true to her own soul, and there is no province in which she may not climb to greatness." 37 In a speech in Bombay on 19 January 1908 Aurobindo explained the position of Bengal in India. "It is God," he told, "who is working in Bengal ... If anybody had told you that Bengal would come forward as the saviour of India, how many of you would have believed it? ... still in Bengal there was an element of strength. Whatever the Bengali believed, ... there was one thing about the Bengali,

that he lived what he believed." Chittaranjan Das, the un-
crowned king of Bengal during the early phase of the Gandhian
era, maintained that the Bengali was "a distinct type, a
distinct character, and a distinct law of his own." "In
this world of men", he continued to wax emotional—about
this unique race, "the Bengalee has a place of his own — a
claim, a culture and a duty. ... In the wonderful variety
of God's infinite creation the Bengalee represents a distinct-
ive type; nay more, it is the life and soul of that type. And
with the dawn of this consciousness in our souls, the mother
radiant in her glory, revealed her infinite, her universal
beauty before us." Subhas Chandra Bose, the strongest
contender of Gandhi for political supremacy, wrote: "I am
firmly convinced that in the fight for Swaraj she (Bengal)
goes far ahead of others ... Although Mahatma Gandhi, who
is the sponsor of the national movement, happens to be a non-
Bengali, still no other province can claim national activi-
ties on such a tremendous scale as Bengal." The citations
above are typical of the Bengali feeling of superiority over
the rest of the Indians in both intellectual and political
platforms.

This faith of superiority of the Bengalis over the
other Indians was confirmed by the utterances of praises from

38. Aurobinda Ghosh, Speeches (Aurobinda Ashram, Pondichery,

39. Rajen Sen and B.K. Sen (es.), Deshbandhu Chittaranjan
(Calcutta, 1926), pp. 16-17.

40. Subhas Chandra Bose, The Mission of Life (Calcutta, 1953),
p. 5.
the leading non-Bengali stalwarts. "What was done in Bengal", Lajpat Rai believed, "found its echo in the rest of India."

According to Gokhale, "Bengal has always been the home of feeling and of ideas more than any other part of India ..." "The Bengalees", he asserted, "are in many respects a most remarkable people in all India ... In almost all the walks of life open to the Indians, the Bengalees are among the most distinguished ... Where will you find a scientist in all India to place by the side of Dr. J.C. Bose or Dr. P.C. Roy? Or a jurist like Dr. Ghosh? Or a poet like Rabindranath Tagore? ... These men are not mere freaks of nature. They are the highest products of which the race is regularly capable." Dadabhai Naoroji gratefully acknowledged in his Presidential speech (1906) the famous saying of Sir Syed Ahmed about the superior mental faculties of the Bengalis. "I assure you", said Sir Syed, "that the Bengalees are the only people in our country whom we can properly be proud of, and it is only due to them that knowledge, liberty and patriotism have progressed in our country. I can truly say that they are really the head and crown of all the communities of Hindustan ..." After the rise of Gandhi, the Bengalis found that their old position of pride was swiftly swamped by Gandhi and his non-Bengali followers, and they found themselves tuned to the lower fiddle.

42. D.G. Karve and D.V. Ambekar (edited), n. 12, pp. 25, 35.
43. The Indian National Congress, Part I, n. 5, p. 855.
In the national politics and could not accept the eclipses of their shine by Gandhi. It is also to be noted that in the pre-Gandhi Congress at least twelve times Congress Presidents came from Bengal. During the Gandhian era only two Bengalis were elected Congress President twice each but none of them could complete their second term because of their serious differences with Gandhi. Thus in the new situation of Gandhi-dominated national politics, Bengal became an unhappy partner with a feeling of being 'let down', which was a causative factor for a dormant and constant irritation against Gandhi. Even Gandhi was regarded in Bengal as an anti-Bengali Mahatma. A Bengali correspondent explaining the prevailing anti-Gandhi sentiment in Bengal wrote (1931) to him that the Bengalis "say you are not immune from provincial bias. They are taking every opportunity to undermine your influence in Bengal by appealing to the sentiment of local patriotism ... The insidious appeal made to their sentiment of local patriotism easily estranges them from you and your path of non-violence." In reply Gandhi wrote: "I regard myself as incapable of having any provincial bias. Bengal is as dear to me as the Punjab." And to relieve himself from the allegation of the anti-Bengali biasness he admitted: "I owe a special debt to Bengal for the inspiration it gave me in my youth." Gandhi, on the

44. At the Ahmedabad Congress 1921, C.R. Das was the President but could not preside because of his imprisonment. He presided over the Gaya Congress in 1922 but resigned soon after. Subhas Bose was made Congress President in 1938 and was elected President in 1939 also though he was forced to resign soon.

45. Young India, 11 June 1931.

46. Ibid.
other hand, believed that Bengal herself was not free from the curse of provincialism. "Bengal thinks", he said in the speech at Bengal Provincial Congress Conference at Faridpur on 3 May 1925, "that she must rule the whole of India and that the whole of India is to be merged in that little province called Bengal".

Thus the meeting ground of Gandhi and Bengal did not take place on a smooth surface. Bengal required a leader to accomplish the task of liberation continuing the tradition of her militant nationalism. But Gandhi came with a message of non-violence denouncing Bengal's path outright. Differences in such circumstances were bound to arise. We shall study in this long chapter the reaction of the militant nationalists of Bengal to Gandhi's leadership beginning with the agitation against the Rowlatt Act and culminating to India's freedom and partition, with particular reference to the roles of C.R. Das and Subhas Chandra Bose.

47. CWMG, Vol. XXVII, pp. 29-30.
The Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act was the first political movement organized by Gandhi in India. It was started by Gandhi with leaders who were at that time close to him and its centre was Sabarmati Ashram. Soon after the Rowlatt Bills were introduced in the Imperial Legislative Council, a small conference was held in the Ashram of Gandhi which was attended by Vallabhbhai Patel, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, E.G. Horniman, Umar Sobani, Shankerlal Banker and Indulal Yajnik. A satyagraha pledge was thereupon drafted by Gandhi and signed by them on 24 February 1919. The pledge along with a manifesto signed by Gandhi was published in

48. During the war the Defence of India Act was widely used to suppress the revolutionary movement, but it was to expire six months after the termination of war, and, therefore, on 10 December 1917 the Government appointed a Committee with Justice Rowlatt as President to "report on the nature and extent of the criminal conspiracies connected with the revolutionary movement in India" and "to advise as to the legislation, if any, necessary to enable Government to deal effectively with them." It submitted its report on 15 April 1918, a week before Montague and Chelmsford submitted their reform proposals. On the basis of its recommendations two bills, known as Rowlatt Bills, were introduced to the Imperial Legislative Council in February 1919. They contained drastic provisions for arrest and trial with scant regard for formalities associated with the rule of law. Gandhi started a Satyagraha against this Act.

49. Umar Sobani, Shankerlal Banker and Horniman were prominent members of the Bombay branch of the Home Rule League founded by Mrs. Annie Besant. In November 1915 Umar Sobani and Shankerlal Banker started the weekly Young India with Jammadas Dwarkadas (another leader of the Home Rule League) and K.M. Munshi as editors. Later on, in 1919, the journal was handed over to Gandhi who became its editor.

the *Bombay Chronicle* which was edited by B. G. Horniman. In this manifesto Gandhi denounced the revolutionaries who believed in violence and condemned the Rowlatt Bills on the ground that it would affect not simply the few revolutionaries but a large majority of peace-loving people also.\(^{51}\) To inaugurate the movement Gandhi started a Satyagraha Sabha in Bombay, and to give publicity to the satyagraha campaign he set forth on a propaganda tour. He visited first the United Provinces and then Madras. In Allahabad he had a long talk with Motilal Nehru, and in Madras he stayed with C. Rajagopalachari who became one of his most prominent lieutenants. When he was in Madras with Rajagopalachari the idea of a general hartal throughout the country with fast and prayer suddenly dawned upon his mind. While explaining his plan of hartal to Rajagopalachari he said: "It is very difficult to say whether all the provinces would respond to this appeal of ours or not, but I feel fairly sure of Bombay, Madras, Bihar and Sind."\(^{52}\) By that time Gandhi had no influence in Bengal and, therefore, it was natural that he did not expect any response from it.

The Rowlatt Act was opposed by all shades of political opinion in India\(^{53}\) and in the Imperial Legislative Council Surendranath Banerjea, Srinivasa Shastri, Tej Bahadur Sapru, M.A. Jinnah,

\[^{51}\text{For the text of the manifesto see P. C. Bamford, pp.4-5.}\]

\[^{52}\text{D. G. Tendulkar, n.50, Vol.I, p.244}\]

\[^{53}\text{See, for example, Amrita Bazar Patrika, 13 January 1919 ; The Hindu, 22 January 1919 ; New India, 18 January 1919.}\]
Vithalbhai Patel spoke vehemently against it. As a protest Jinnah resigned from the Council and Surendranath, as he recorded in the reminiscences of his life, "warned the Government of the ... intense agitation which it (the Rowlatt Act) was bound to provoke." Later on he commented, "The Rowlatt Act was the Parent of Non-cooperation". The Home Rule League leader, Mrs. Annie Besant, condemned this Act severely in a series of articles in New India, as well as from the platform. But no older political leader approved of the proposed satyagraha movement of Gandhi on the ground that whatever might be the intention of Gandhi, the movement would ultimately degenerate into violent mob upheaval. On 14 February (1919) Mrs. Besant went to see Gandhi at his house in Bombay and tried, without success, to prevent him from starting the civil disobedience movement. Paying no heed to the warnings of the experienced leaders Gandhi, taking his South African experience as his guide, proceeded with his scheme of satyagraha movement against the Rowlatt Act. The date of the hartal, which would be the signal for the start of the movement, was fixed at first for 30 March and later on changed to 6 April. There was a good response to his call for satyagraha from many parts of the country. With reference to this movement Pattabhi Sitaramayya wrote: "Nevertheless, there was a good response from all parts of India except, at first, Bengal."  

55. Ibid., p.300.  
call for hartal. On 6 April, the day of hartal declared by Gandhi, G. R. Das addressing a large meeting in Calcutta said: "Satyagraha is spiritual force. It is the power of love. With love we shall conquer the self. We shall give up selfishness, hatred and envy and shall be self-controlled. This is no doubt the message of Mahatma Gandhi but it is the time-honoured message of India, the message of Prahlad, Meera Bai and Vasishtha. The Rowlatt Act is an obstacle to the movement for freedom. We cannot attain freedom unless we remove the obstacle. For that we have to enkindle love for our country, we have to be satyagrahis and give up hatred and envy. Rise, brothers, prepare yourselves and rest assured that the goal cannot be attained by persons of weak mettle." It was largely through C. R. Das that Gandhi ultimately found a foothold in Bengal politics which was dominated mainly by the revolutionaries. In Calcutta the hartal of 6 April was, however, followed by demonstrations and protests which continued throughout the month. Referring to these demonstrations a Russian publication, analysing various documents, wrote: "Between 11 and 13 April demonstrations were also held in Calcutta. Masses of people marched through the streets calling on the town population to join the demonstration. Workers and office employees of the town transport took an active part in the hartal. By midday on 11 April there were clashes between

the strikers and the police. On 12 April the demonstrations and meetings continued. The police used armed force but could do nothing to check the masses. On 13 April troops were called into the town and by the next day the demonstrations were crushed, although order was not restored until 30 April." 58 Pattabhi Sitaramayya also referred to these violent demonstrations which were put down by the Government. "Bad news", he wrote, "came from far-off Calcutta." 59 The response of Bengal was, however, not massive in scope. In several areas of Bombay, Sind and the Punjab the movement took a more formidable shape though in many cases it degenerated into violence. The violence at Ahmedabad, Nadiad and Kheda and particularly in the Punjab 60 which led to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 13 April, forced Gandhi to suspend the movement on 18 April. "He found it difficult," as Tendulkar has put it, "to interest people in the peaceful side of satyagraha," and in a statement issued during that time Gandhi admitted: "I had called upon the people to launch upon civil disobedience before they had thus qualified themselves for it, and this mistake of mine seemed to me of a Himalayan magnitude." 61


60. Though Gandhi regarded the developments in the Punjab "unconnected with the satyagraha movement" (D.G. Tendulkar, n.50, Vol.I, p.261), they arose directly out of his anti-Rowlatt Act agitation and, therefore, the developments of the Punjab of this period cannot be studied without the context of the Gandhian movement.

61. D.G. Tendulkar, n.50, Vol.I, pp.261,280. See also *The Hindu* 21 April 1919 for a similar statement. As a mark of protest against the Jallianwalebagh atrocities Rabindranath Tagore in a letter to the Viceroy on 29 April renounced his knight-
Though there was a good response to Gandhi's call for a satyagraha movement against the Rowlatt Act, this response did not follow the norms of satyagraha. The people found in Gandhi's satyagraha a suitable method to express their discontent against the foreign rule, but the norms of Gandhi appeared to them irrelevant.

Gandhi's satyagraha of 1919 had a limited objective - repeal of the Rowlatt Act. It was not conceived in the light of India's basic conflict with England or as a part of India's struggle for national independence. Gandhi opposed the Rowlatt Act because he considered it unjust. His attitude towards the British government was still cooperative, and this was fully revealed in the stand taken by him in the Amritsar session of the Congress held in the last week of December 1919. The most important topic discussed in this session was the policy of the Congress towards the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms Act.\(^63\) Gandhi was in favour of cooperation,
and explaining his views on the reform scheme he wrote in the Young India of 10 December: "I would simply urge that we should take the fullest advantage of it and loyally work to make it a success." In the Congress session C.H. Das moved a resolution condemning the Reforms Act's "inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing", and urging the British Parliament to "take early steps to establish full Responsible Government in India in accordance with the principle of self-determination." The draft resolution of C.H. Das was fully in conformity with the earlier resolutions passed by the Congress on the subject. The special session of the Congress which met in Bombay in August 1918 declared that "nothing less than self-government within the empire can satisfy the Indian people," and the reform proposals, as recommended in the Montague-Chelmsford report, were regarded as "disappointing and unsatisfactory". In the Delhi annual session (December 1918) the Congress adopted a resolution on self-determination urging the British Parliament to pass an act establishing "at an early date complete responsible government in India." At Amritsar, Gandhi, however, stood for cooperation with the Government in working out the reforms, and, therefore, he proposed an amendment to the resolution of Das. This

Assent to the Reform Act and the Royal Amnesty to political prisoners not guilty of actual violence.

64. For the full text of the draft resolution and for the speech of C.H. Das on it see Monindra Dutta and Haradhan Dutta (ed.), Deshbendhu Rachana Samagra (Tulikalam, Calcutta, 1384 B.E., English Works, pp. 72-74). Henceforth this book will be referred to as English Works.

65. For resolutions of the special session of Bombay and annual session of Delhi see Chakrabarty and Bhattacharyya (compiled), Congress Resolutions and Documents, pp. 20-24. For the speeches of C.H. Das at the Bombay and Delhi sessions of the Congress see Manindra Dutta and Haradhan Dutta (ed.), English Works, n. 64, pp. 63-72.
gave rise to a serious controversy, and "for sometime it looked", as a delegate to the session later on recalled, "as if there might be a confrontation between Das and Gandhiji." Ultimately, however, a compromise was arrived at, and in the final resolution which was adopted, all the points of C.R. Das were retained but to accommodate Gandhi two more points were added. Here the militant nationalist attitude was clearly represented by C.R. Das with which Gandhi could not agree.

The Amritsar resolution was virtually a triumph of Gandhi over Das because the Congress after all agreed to work the reforms. This triumph of Gandhi was more personal than political. Referring to the Amritsar Congress Bamford of the Intelligence Bureau wrote: "It was soon apparent, however, that the sense of the Congress was in no way disposed to meet the Reforms Act in the spirit in which it had been granted ... and it was clear that the consensus of extremist opinion was to accept nothing short of Swaraj which, up


67. The reforms resolution in its final form read thus: "This Congress (1) reiterates its declaration of last year ... for full responsible government and repudiates all assumptions to the contrary; (2) adheres to the resolutions passed at the Delhi Congress regarding constitutional reforms and is of opinion that the Reforms Act is inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing; (3) urges that Parliament should take early step to establish full responsible government in India in accordance with the principle of self-determination; (4) trusts that, so far as may be possible, they will work the reforms so as to secure an early establishment of full responsible government and (5) offers its thanks to the Rt. Hon. E.S. Montagu for his labours in connection with the reforms." Chakraborty and Bhattacharyya (compiled), Congress Resolutions and Documents, pp. 25-26. The first three points were taken from the draft of C.R. Das and the last two were added to accommodate Gandhi's point of view.
to this point, seems to have meant self-government within the British Empire." 68 In spite of this attitude the resolution of the Congress to work the reforms was attributed by him "to the personal influence of Gandhi." 69 R.C. Majumdar also wrote that the acceptance of Gandhi's view by the Amritsar Congress "speaks a volume on the great hold that Gandhi had already effected not only upon the masses but also upon the educated politically-minded classes in India by his personality and saintly life and the introduction of the new weapon of satyagraha in Indian politics." 70

Though Gandhi's triumph can be explained by his personal influence, the question that appears more intriguing is: why did he adopt a cooperative attitude at Amritsar after waging, though unsuccessfully, a satyagraha movement against the Rowlatt Act? Was he satisfied with the reforms proposals? Referring to the reforms proposals he wrote in his Autobiography: "It was not wholly satisfactory even to me." "But", he continued, "I felt at that time that the reforms, though defective, could still be accepted. I felt in the King's announcement and its language the hand of Lord Sinha, and it lent a ray of hope." 71 In this announcement

69. Ibid.
71. It refers to the Royal Proclamation signifying the King's assent to the Reform Bill on 24 December 1919.
72. In January 1919 S.P. Sinha was appointed by Montagu as Under Secretary of State for India with a seat in the House of Lords. This gesture of goodwill was well received by Gandhi.
the king said: "It is my earnest desire at this time that, so far as possible, any trace of bitterness between my people and those who are responsible for my Government should be obliterated. A new era is opening." As the harbinger of a new world order based on mutual trust, cooperation and goodwill, Gandhi expected that the Royal Proclamation might usher in a new era of friendship and understanding between India and England. The Royal Proclamation was full of noble sentiments and Gandhi thought India should respond benevolently without doubting those sentiments. While justifying his stand at the Amritsar Congress he said: "The Indian culture demands that we shall trust man who extends the hand of fellowship. ... The Indian culture demands trust and full trust."74 C.R. Das, Tilak and others judged the reforms in the light of the principle of national self-determination, and found them disappointing, and in order to promote the cause of Indian self-determination further they adopted the strategy of bargaining. Gandhi, however, thought differently. Encouraged by the "ray of hope" which he found in the language of the king's announcement of the reforms proposals, he was eager to respond benevolently and in good faith, not because he considered the reforms adequate but he expected a change in the Indo-British relations promoting mutual trust and friendship. The Congress men did not share this Gandhian optimism but many of them supported his move because of their regard for him. As Bamford has put it: "It is probable that his (Gandhi's) advocacy of tolerance at the Amritsar Congress was governed mainly by his own personal instinct towards benevolence which he never succeeded in conveying to his followers". Gandhi believed that a favourable response from India regarding

the reforms might generate such goodwill in Indo-British relations as to facilitate the removal of India's major grievances against the British rule.

**Militant Nationalists of Bengal in Alliance with Gandhi.**

At that time India had two major grievances against the British— one was in connection with the Khilafat agitation and another in connection with the 'Punjab wrong' resulting from the Jallianawala Bagh tragedy and the proclamation of the martial law. Gandhi was closely associated with both those grievances and the Congress had also formed a committee to report on the 'Punjab wrong'. The conciliatory attitude shown by the British Government during the announcement of the Reforms Proposals urged Gandhi to believe that the acceptance of the Reforms would lead to an amicable and reasonable solution of all these problems. Gandhi himself observed: "Having had my share of responsibility in the drawing up of the Congress report on the Punjab wrongs, I felt that all that still remained to be done in that connection must claim my attention. There had to be dealings with Government in that matter. Then similarly there was the Khilaafat question. I further believed at that time that Mr. Montagu would not betray or allow India's cause to be betrayed. The release of the Ali Brothers and other prisoners too seemed to me to be an auspicious sign. In these circumstances, I felt that a resolution not rejecting but accepting the reforms was the correct thing." Thus, while recommending the acceptance

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76. The Ali Brothers, Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali, were interned in May 1915 and were released in December 1919 on the eve of the Amritsar Congress. Many other prisoners were released after the Royal Amnesty was declared during that time.

of the Reforms Proposals Gandhi thought not in terms of the principle of national self-determination but in terms of its impact on the Indo-British relations. An opponent of all kinds of diplomacy, Gandhi stood for a moral transformation of the Empire and for the establishment of Indo-British relations on genuine trust and good-will eschewing all duplicity and double-dealing. This approach of Gandhi, according to the logic of militant nationalism of Bengal, was naïve.

The expectations of Gandhi about the dawn of a new era in Indo-British relations leading to an amicable settlement of the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs were completely belied. The peace terms presented by the Allied powers to Turkey which emanated from the Conference at San Remo were published in India on 15 May 1920 and they contained proposals curtailing severely the temporal powers of the Sultan of Turkey. The Muslims considered this as a breach of promise on the part of the British Government and as a dangerous measure against their religion. Towards the end of May

78. Did the British Government actually give any pledge against the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire? In an important speech on 10 November 1914 the British Prime Minister Asquith said that the war against Turkey did not mean a crusade against the Islamic faith. On 5 January 1918 Lloyd George declared that the Allied powers had no intention to challenge the maintenance of the Turkish empire in the hands of the Turkish race with Constantinople as its capital. Thirdly, the famous Fourteen Points of President Wilson contained the following principle:

"The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmoled opportunity of autonomous development ...." The Khilafatists interpreted these statements as assurances against the dismemberment of the Ottoman empire. Gandhi also accepted this interpretation and these 'assurances' were referred to in Gandhi's journals. See CWMG, Vol. XXII, pp. 412-413; Vol. XVI, pp. 104-105.
the Report of the Hunter Committee was also published. It was not an unanimous report, the five European members signed a Majority report and the three Indian members signed a Minority Report. Both the reports - the Majority and Minority - exonerated the Government of India from all blame. As regards General Dyer, who was directly responsible for the Jallianwala Bagh firing, the Majority Report held that his conduct was open to criticism only in two respects: first, "he started firing without giving the people ... a chance to disperse", and, second, "he continued firing ... after the crowd had commenced to disperse." The Minority Report, however, took a graver view of his conduct and condemned him in stronger language. It did not find any justification for the Martial Law and strongly denounced the punishments inflicted during that period. The Congress Sub-Committee which was appointed to conduct an inquiry into the Punjab disturbances also found the Martial Law unjustified and the measures taken under it unnecessary. After the submission of the Hunter Committee's Report the British Government simply pronounced a mild censure on General Dyer and removed him from active service. Though this measure was supported by the House of Commons, the House of Lords passed a resolution by a large majority deploring the removal

79. The Hunter Committee was set up by the Government in October 1919 to investigate and report on the disturbances in the Punjab. The members of the Committee were: Lord Hunter (Chairman), Mr. Justice Rankin, Mr. Rice, Major General Sir George Barrow, Mr. Thomas Smith, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, Sultan Ahmad and Pandit Jagat Narain.


81. The report of the Congress Sub-Committee was submitted on 26 March 1920.
of Dyer and appreciating his services. Public subscriptions were raised to present a purse to him and he was given a hero's welcome on his arrival in Britain. 82

Such attitudes of the British Government towards the Khilafat movement and the 'Punjab wrong' disillusioned Gandhi completely. His expectations about a new pattern of Indo-British relations based on mutual trust, sympathy and goodwill were shattered to pieces. He himself wrote in an article entitled 'Mr. Montague on the Khilafat Agitation': "When at Amritsar last year I pleaded with all the earnestness I could command for cooperation with the government and for response to the wishes expressed in the Royal Proclamation, I did so because I honestly believed that a new era was about to begin, and that the old spirit of fear, distrust and consequent terrorism was about to give place to the new spirit of respect, trust and goodwill. I sincerely believed that the Mussalman sentiment would be placated and that the officers that had misbehaved during the martial law regime in the Punjab would be at last dismissed and the people would be otherwise made to feel that a Government that had always been found quick (and rightly) to punish popular excesses would not fail to punish its agents' misdeeds. But to my amazement and dismay, I have discovered that the present representatives of the Empire have become dishonest and unscrupulous. They have no real regard for the wishes of the people of India and they count Indian honour as of little consequence." 83

It was under such circumstances that Gandhi gave a call to the country for a non-cooperation movement. To discuss this issue a special session of the Congress was summoned in Calcutta in September 1920.

What was the attitude of the militant nationalists of Bengal towards this movement? There were two issues involved — khilafat question and Punjab wrong. Since the closing years of the first world war the Muslim population of India had been perturbed by the prospect of the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire by the Allied powers. The Sultan of Turkey was also the Caliph of Islam and, therefore, the Indian Muslims had deep regard for him, and they hoped to prevent a dissolution of his empire through pressure on the Government of India and the British Cabinet. Khilafat Committees were organised in different provinces of India and a Central Committee was also formed. A Khilafat conference was held in Delhi in November 1919 to which Gandhi, who had full sympathy for the Muslim aspirations, was invited. The resolutions passed by this conference recommended boycott and non-cooperation with the government unless the problems were solved in accordance with the expressed desires of the Muslims, and this was a clear indication of the extent of Gandhi's influence over the movement. The Hindu nationalists of Bengal as well as of other parts of India were, however, not emotionally involved in the Khilafat question. It was an Islamic problem and had nothing to do with India as such. Its main objective was the retention of Turkish suzerainty over Jazirat-ul-Arab which included Hadjas, Yemen, Nejd, Iraq, Palestine and Syria. In the initial stage the Khilafat leaders depended mainly on the Turkish nationalists who under the leadership of Kamal Pasha set up an independent government at Angora. They
expected the new government to come to the rescue of the Caliph and initiated a movement for the collection of funds for the purchase of war materials for Angora. The Bengal Provincial Khilafat Committee adopted a scheme for the formation and despatch of a volunteer corps to Angora and a number of volunteers were actually enrolled at Dacca, in Eastern Bengal (now capital of Bangladesh), for this purpose. This movement obviously could not inspire the nationalists even though it involved violation of a pledge given by the British government. The pan-Islamic character of the Khilafat movement went against nationalism and Gandhi's optimism about the emergence of Hindu-Muslim unity out of this movement was not shared by the militant nationalists of Bengal.

After the release of Ali Brothers and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad at the end of December 1919, the Khilafat movement of Bengal developed extremist tendencies characterized by fiery speeches and resolutions. A Bengal Khilafat Conference was held in February 1920 in Calcutta under the presidency of Azad where an extraordinarily violent speech was delivered by Maulana Abul Bari of Lucknow. He said that in the event of any dismemberment of the Turkish empire every kind of retaliation would become valid for the Muslims, and, they could sacrifice every Christian's life and property without committing any sin before God, because the

Gandhi however found no contradiction between the love for the country and loyalty to the pan-Islamic movement struggling for a 'just' cause. In an appeal to the Muslims issued immediately after the arrest and prosecution of the Ali Brothers Gandhi stated: "The brave Brothers are staunch lovers of their country, but they are Muslims first and everything else after, and it must be so with every religiously minded man." — Independent (Allahabad), 2 October 1921.
"Christians had burnt the Muslim's heart". If he could get at his disposal cannon and guns, he would be prepared, the Maulana thundered, to declare war and burn Christians having saturated them with Kerosine Oil. The Calcutta Conference passed a resolution recommending boycott of British goods and stating that the Muslims should give up their loyalty to the British and assist the Caliph if his dominions were dismembered by the allied powers. The conference also resolved to observe an All-India protest day. The extremist and violent tendencies of this conference frightened many within Bengal as well as outside, and Gandhi soon took initiative for guiding the movement along the non-violent channel. In his manifesto of 7 March Gandhi stated that if their demands were not granted the Muslims must resort to non-cooperation and follow it non-violently. In this manifesto he wrote: "Many look upon the Calcutta resolutions with the deepest alarm. They scent in them a preparation for violence. I do not look upon them in that light, though I do not approve of the tone of some of them." Referring to the threat of the boycott of British goods he observed: "There should be no boycott of British goods by way of revenge or punishment. Boycott, in my opinion, is a form of violence. Moreover, even if it were desirable, it is totally impracticable". "I cannot approve of," he continued, "ostracism against those who do not adopt the remedy of non-cooperation. It is only a voluntary withdrawal which is effective. ... Advice to the soldiers to refuse

85. For a summary of the speech of Abdul Bari see P.C. Bamford, Appendix E., pp.240-242.
to serve is premature. It is the last, not the first step ... Moreover, every step withdrawing cooperation has to be taken with the greatest deliberation. We must proceed slowly so as to ensure retention of self-control under the fiercest heat.  

The principles and methods of Gandhi were quite different from those suggested by the Bengal Khilafat Conference, and these were welcomed by the Bengali paper, Nayak. But Gandhi's acceptance of the idea of an all-India protest day from the Bengal conference and his proposal to observe 19 March as Khilafat Day with a hartal gave rise to misgivings in the hearts of many Bengali Hindu nationalists. Though Nayak supported the Khilafat movement if it could be carried on according to Gandhi's satyagraha principles, it feared that the encouragement of hartal would actually lead to violence. It, therefore, advised the Muslims of Bengal not to walk into the trap. Most of the Hindu leaders of Bengal, however, remained aloof from the hartal of 19 March. The Central Khilafat Committee met in Bombay in April (1920) and resolved that in the event of the break-up of the Turkish empire a non-cooperation movement would be launched and the following measures would be adopted not simultaneously but gradually in the following order of priority:

1. All titles and honours to be relinquished,
2. Resignations by members of councils,
3. Private servants to give up their posts,
4. Resignations of subordinate Government servants including the Police.

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86. Young India, 10 March 1920.
87. Nayak, 8 March 1920, Bengal N.M., No. 11, of 1920.
89. Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal, to Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, 26 November 1921, Home Political File No. 415 of 1921.
(5) Resignations of superior Government servants.
(6) Withdrawal of Mussalmans from the Army.
(7) Withdrawal of Mussalmans from the Army.

This scheme was drawn up by a Special Committee of which Gandhi was the principal member. The scheme was considered dangerous by the non-Muslim section of Bengal, both the liberals and the militant nationalists. The Liberal journal, the Bengalee, feared that the participation in the movement by the ordinary human being "that falls short of the high moral and spiritual level of Mahatma Gandhi" would inevitably lead to the outbreak of violence. The Nayak also opposed the scheme largely on this ground.

Towards the end of July the Khilafat agitation entered into a new phase and became integrally related to the Punjab problem giving rise ultimately to the general non-cooperation movement. On 1 August Gandhi gave the signal for the impending non-cooperation movement by sending a letter to the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, surrendering his Kaisar-i-Hind gold medal as well as Zulu and Boer war medals. In his letter Gandhi referred to the Khilafat problem as well as the Punjab question and wrote: "In my humble opinion the ordinary method of agitating by way of petitions, deputations and the like is no remedy for moving to repentance a Government so hopelessly indifferent to the welfare of its charge as the Government of India has proved to be ... I have, therefore, ventured to suggest the remedy of non-cooperation which enables those who wish to dissociate themselves from the Government

90. P.C. Bamford, p. 152.
91. Bengalee, 10 June 1920.
92. Nayak, 9 June 1920; Bengal N.N., No. 25 of 1920.
and which, if it is unattended by violence and undertaken in an ordered manner, must compel it to retrace its steps, and undo the wrongs committed." In the new context the attitude of the militant nationalists of Bengal became favourable for the movement proposed by Gandhi.

In the Amritsar session of the Congress (1919) the Bengal contingent led by C.R. Das voted, as we have seen, against the reforms proposals and they had no intention to cooperate with the British in the constitutional field, though they did not formulate any scheme of a broad non-cooperation movement. The militant nationalists of Bengal thought that the British bureaucracy which could commit the crime of Jallianwala Bagh massacre did not deserve any cooperation, whatever might be the nature of the constitutional reforms. Echoing this sentiment Motilal Ghosh wrote: "If the fountains remain as it is, the addition of a few more conduits will not make the water any more drinkable than it was." The nationalist mind of Bengal was thus more or less prepared for a struggle against the foreign rule. It, however, conceived the struggle as directed against the British government itself and not against any particular 'wrongs' committed by it.

Though the militant nationalists of Bengal did not oppose the Khilafat agitation which now became an integral part of the broader non-cooperation movement, they did not consider it a cause worth fighting for. "The Bengal Congressmen",

93. Young India, 21 July 1920.
94. Editor of the Amritabazar Patrika, a leading nationalist daily.
95. Amrita Bazar Patrika, 1 December 1919.
Broomfield writes, "found it objectionable that Gandhi should insist upon coupling a communal issue of this kind (it refers to the Khilafat movement) with non-cooperation, and according to men like Azad a place of prominence in this movement." Gandhi's support to the Khilafat agitation could not bring about Hindu-Muslim unity in any part of India on a permanent basis, but the temporary fraternity between the two communities which was found in some of the provinces was also largely absent in Bengal. In Delhi even the orthodox Arya Samajist leader, Swami Shraddhanand, was invited by the Muslims to speak on communal unity from Jumma Masjid, but the Muslims of Calcutta raised objections about the presence of Hindus in mosques which was considered by them "unseemly and inadmissible". A section of the Muslims of Bengal did not approve of Gandhi's influence over their community. The Bengal Muhammadan Association was the only Muslim organization of India which during that time stood for loyal cooperation in order to "save the Muslim community from the foolish and nauseating movement of Mr. Gandhi." Nawab Khan Bahadur Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury, a big and influential Zamindar from Mymensingh in Eastern Bengal, published a significant pamphlet over his name condemning the non-cooperation movement and criticising the role of Abul Kalam Azad as an apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity alongside Gandhi. In this striking publication he further argued that instead of non-cooperating with the Government, the Muslims should

98. P. C. Bamford, p.164.
try to utilise the power granted by the new constitution to promote their own interests. In another article he explained his views thus: "Non-cooperation will not in any way help us in overcoming the present down-trodden condition to which the Mussalmans have fallen. On the other hand, if we can cautiously utilise the responsibilities to which we have been entrusted under the Reforms, I doubt not that we will be able to improve our condition by degrees and develop our various resources which will ultimately help in attaining our end in view." He was appointed a minister by Lord Ronaldshay, the Governor of Bengal, which gave him an opportunity to promote the interests of his community in his own way. Thus, a small section of the Muslims of Bengal refused to join the Non-cooperation movement and maintained their separate communal character. The vast majority which took part in the movement also tried to retain their separate identity, and, as Broomfield has pointed out, "even at the height of the non-cooperation and Khilafat movements, the Hindu-Muslim alliance in Bengal had never been as close as it was in many other provinces." The Muslims resented the lukewarm attitude of the Bengali Hindu nationalists towards their agitation in the earlier stage (that is, before the Khilafat agitation became merged with the general non-cooperation movement) and, later on, they resisted the attempt of the Congressmen to unite the Khilafat committees with the District Congress organizations. The purpose of these Congress-

100. Bengalee, 31 October 1920.
102. Government of India, Home Department, Political, Deposit 63, June 1921.
men most of whom belonged to the school of militant nationalism was to bring the Muslims to the mainstream of the nationalist politics by persuading them to dissolve their separate organizations and join the Congress. But the Muslims insisted that the two organizations had different objectives.

The militant nationalists of Bengal found no relation between the Khilafat agitation and the freedom movement of India, but they believed that, taking advantage of the anti-British feelings which arose among the Muslims out of the Khilafat agitation, they might try to persuade them to join the Congress and thus strengthen the nationalist movement. Subhas Chandra Bose reflected their mood when he wrote: "The introduction of the Khilafat question into Indian politics was unfortunate." "The real mistake in my opinion," he further observed, "did not lie in connecting the Khilafat issue with the other national issues, but in allowing the Khilafat Committee to be set up as an independent organization throughout the country, quite apart from the Indian National Congress ... If no separate Khilafat Committees had been organized and all Khilafat Moslems had been persuaded to join the ranks of the Indian National Congress, they would probably have been absorbed by the latter when the Khilafat issue became a dead one." Gandhi, however, did not think in such strategic terms of the nationalists.

Though the nationalists adopted a tolerant attitude towards the Khilafat agitation after it became a part of the broader non-cooperation movement, the speeches of the Khilafat leaders and the way in which the movement was actually conducted continued to frighten the Hindus. An official note dated 9 October

103. Subhas Chandra Bose, The Indian Struggle 1920-1942 (Asia Publishing House, Bombay 1954), pp. 71, 81-82. Herein after this book will simply be referred as The Indian Struggle 1920-1942, with a reference to this fn.
1921, for example, stated: "It must also be borne in mind that the feeling is growing among the Hindus that the Khilafat agitation as it has been carried on during the last 6 or 7 months spells danger to them." Muhammad Ali, the great Khilafat leader and the closest associate of Gandhi during those days, declared, for example, in Madras, on 2 April 1921, that if India were invaded by Afghanistan for the purpose of destroying the power opposed to the Khilafat, he would assist the invading army. This declaration caused considerable uneasiness among the Hindu nationalists and in spite of various attempts to allay these fears, their apprehensions continued to persist. When the movement was going on in full swing, one Bengali journal wrote: "Should a strong Moslem empire be established stretching from Constantinople to Afghanistan, what would be the result?" Referring to the views of the Khilafat leaders the Bengali observed: "They perhaps think that supreme salvation of the country will take place if the English are driven off and Turkish supremacy is founded instead. Needless to say, no Hindu of either party (it refers to the Congress party and the liberal group) will be able to support this view."  

Whatever might have been the reservations of the militant nationalists of Bengal towards the Khilafat agitation, they accepted the principle of a struggle against the British, though they could not fully accept

104. Government of India, Home Department, Political File No. 303 of 1921.

105. Englishman, 4 April 1921. For the whole controversy arising of the alleged threat of Afghan invasion and Md. Ali's comment, see Indian Annual Registrar, 1922, pp. 206-12. For Gandhi's comment see Young India, 4 May 1921.

106. The Prabhakar, 29 December 1921, Bengal N.N., No. 1 of 1922.

107. Bengali, 3 January 1922, Bengal N.N., No. 1 of 1922.
Gandhi's programme about it. In the special session of the Congress which was held in Calcutta in September 1920 to discuss Gandhi's resolution on non-cooperation the main opposition came from Bengal. It was led by B. C. Pal and C. R. Das, particularly the latter. The main thrust of Bengal's opposition was that the Congress should not boycott the reformed councils but use them as instruments of struggle. The amendment was moved by B. C. Pal, and while seconding it, C. R. Das, explaining his views on the councils, said: "These are not gifts of the British Government. Reforms have been wrung out of the hands of the British Government. I want to make the councils an instrument for the attainment of Swaraj and to use the weapon which is in the hollow of your hands to bring about full, complete Swaraj ... What you have earned through toil and struggle for the last thirty-five years you should not give up by entirely shutting yourself out." 108 The amendment moved by Pal proposed a mission to England to present the Congress demands and formation of a representative committee to devise a non-cooperation programme suitable to various provinces. It may be pointed out here that Pal who had already developed the idea of imperial federation became more and more moderate in his political outlook and gradually lost his following in Bengal. His cautious attitude and scrupulous concern to keep the non-cooperation movement within the constitutional limits 109 gradually led Pal away from the Bengal nationalists who

108. See Hamendranath Das Gupta, n. 57, pp. 46-47.
109. For Bipin Chandra Pal's idea of imperial federation and his concept of non-cooperation movement see Chapter V, Section foot-notes 1 and 2.
rallied behind C.H. Das. The main purpose of the militant nationalists of Bengal who were represented by Das was to make the non-cooperation movement more vigorous and with that end in view he opposed Gandhi's programme about the boycott of the reformed councils. As Jawaharlal Nehru has put it: "Mr. C.R. Das led the opposition, not because he disapproved of the spirit behind the resolution, for he was prepared to go as far or even further but chiefly because he objected to the boycott of the new legislatures." In spite of this opposition, Gandhi's resolution was carried by a small majority in the Subjects Committee. The Muslims who attended this conference in large number in order to have the non-cooperation resolution passed constituted a solid bloc of support for Gandhi. With reference to the special session of the Congress in Calcutta the report of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee stated: "In the Subjects Committee all Muhammadan members, except Mr. Jinnah, voted with the Mahatma, while many prominent non-Muslim Nationalists supported Mr. Das, who led the opposition to Mahatmaji." In the open session C.H. Das, B.C. Pal and others spoke in favour of the amendment but here they were defeated by a larger majority. According to the report published

110. With reference to the Councils, Gandhi's resolution stated: "Withdrawal by candidates from election to the reformed councils and refusal on the part of the voters to vote for any candidate who may, despite the Congress advice, offer himself for election." For full text see Young India, 15 September 1920.

111. Jawaharlal Nehru, n. 47, p. 64.

112. The Committee was formed by the AICC at its meeting in Lucknow held in June 1922 to consider the question whether civil disobedience in some form or other could be adopted in view of the continued repression by the Government even after the suspension of all "aggressive activities" by the Congress. This Committee was formed after the virtual withdrawal of the Non-cooperation Movement by the Bardoli resolution of the Congress Working Committee (February 1922) which we shall discuss later.

113. P.C. Bamford, p. 16.
in *Young India* of 15 September, 1855 voted in favour of Gandhi and 873 against and of the Bengal delegates 551 supported his resolution and 395 opposed. It is interesting to note that more than half of the delegates did not take part in the voting at all. According to one report out of a total of 5,373 registered delegates only 2,735 voted. By that time a small Gandhian group had arisen in Bengal around Jitendralal Banerjee but the success of Gandhi in enlisting the support of a large majority of Bengal delegates is explained by the Muslim votes, the votes of the Marwari and Hindustani communities of Bengal.

The special session of the Congress in Calcutta was a triumph for Gandhi but it cannot be regarded as a defeat for Bengal. Here they were not engaged in a zero-sum game to which position they virtually found themselves in Amritsar. In Calcutta, Bengal led by Das was in agreement with the fundamental point of Gandhi's programme — a non-violent non-cooperation movement against the British Government and differed on some of the items in the programme and these differences were resolved by a compromise.

114. Bengalee, 10 September 1920.
115. Jitendralal Banerjee was a Professor of English. He gave up his profession and joined Gandhi's Movement in the year 1920. He remained a loyalist Gandhian upto the end.
This movement was sought to be launched by Gandhi specifically for the removal of two grievances, namely, injustice towards Islam and Khalifa, and secondly, oppression in the Punjab. It was, however, on the request of others that the 'establishment of Swaraj' was also included in the resolution as one of the objectives of the movement. This satisfied C.R. Das and the militant nationalists of Bengal. Indulal Yajnik, a well-known nationalist of that period, wrote that after Gandhi drafted his resolution on non-cooperation "many of us thought it absolutely necessary that the demand for Swaraj should be included in the resolution. Gandhi gladly agreed to include the sovereign demand for Swaraj." The nationalists equated swaraj with complete independence and therefore Yajnik regarded it


111. Tendulkar, however, wrote that Gandhi included the demand for Swaraj in the resolution on non-cooperation placed before the special session of the Congress in Calcutta (September 1920) on the request of Vijayaraghavachari and Motilal Nehru. D. G. Tengulkar, n. 25, Vol. II, p. 9.
as a 'sovereign demand', but, as we have pointed out in Chapter II, Gandhi's concept of Swaraj was different. In August 1920 C.R. Das, while explaining the nationalist view of swaraj, observed: "We, want the right to establish our own system of government. That is the central idea of Swaraj". In December of the same year Gandhi, on the other hand, wrote: "Government over self is the truest swaraj, it is synonymous with moksha or salvation." \(118\) Though they could not accept Gandhi's interpretation of the term 'Swaraj', its inclusion in the resolution was regarded by the militant nationalists as a compromise in their favour.

Moreover, Gandhi accepted boycott of foreign goods as an item in his programme due to their pressure. While moving his resolution on non-cooperation, Gandhi explained his personal views on the boycott of foreign goods and the considerations which led him to accept it.

He said: "The boycott of foreign goods is included in the resolution ... Swadeshi means permanent boycott of foreign goods. It is, therefore, a matter of redundancy. But I have taken it in, because I could not reject it as a matter of conscience. I know, however, it is a physical impossibility. So long as we have to reply on the pins and needles — figurative and literal both — we cannot bring about a complete boycott of foreign goods. I do not hesitate to say this clause mars the musical harmony, if I may claim it without vanity, of the programme." On one point Gandhi was, however, adamant — boycott of the Councils. In the speech on his resolution Gandhi referred to this controversy and said: "Sharpest differences of opinion existed regarding this, and if the house has to divide on it, it must divide. If it must divide, you will consider that it must divide on one issue, whether Swaraj has to be gained through the councils or without the councils. If we utterly distrust the British Government and we know that they are utterly unrepentant, how can you believe that the councils will lead to Swaraj and not tighten the British hold on India?" Under such circumstances, the militant nationalists of Bengal under the leadership of C. N. Das and Byomkes Chakravarti decided to bow to the majority decision without, however, being convinced of its wisdom. They decided not to contest the election and issued a manifesto announcing the withdrawal of their candidature. On 30 November C. N. Das said in a press conference: "Non-cooperation

119. Young India, 15 September 1920.
120. Ibid.
121. Servant, 15 September 1920.
is our only chance. A complete programme of non-cooperation with renunciation of titles and honorary offices at one end and refusal to pay taxes at the other should be at once adopted and worked out within the shortest possible time. The programme of non-cooperation is an organic whole. Work should be undertaken in all directions, so that a call for the enforcement of the complete programme may be made within the shortest time. I was not for boycott of the councils as I wanted to work out the principle of non-cooperation from within the councils, but in obedience to the Congress resolution we withdrew our candidatures and the matter has no practical importance now. The Calcutta resolution was actually a defeat for such moderate leaders of the Congress as Mrs. Besant, Pandit Malaviya and Jinnah (Bipin Chandra Pal's name may also be included in this category) who were afraid of a mass national upsurge. The resolution on non-cooperation brought both Gandhi and Das to the forefront of the nation.

It was against this background that the annual session of the Congress was held at Nagpur in December 1920. The elections to the reformed councils were over by that time. The Congressmen did not contest any seat but there was no national boycott of the elections. The elections were won mainly by the Liberals and they began to cooperate with the Government which gave the foreign rule the appearance of popular support. It was for this reason that C.R. Das opposed the Council boycott policy of Gandhi. He wanted the Congress to capture the councils and then follow a policy of

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122. See Hemendra Nath Das Gupta, n. 57, p. 49.
non-cooperation with the government. This would have deprived the government of the camouflage of popular support and strengthened the national movement. This issue was, however, already dead when the Nagpur Congress was held. But this did not reduce the tension between the Gandhians and the militant nationalists within Bengal. There was intense rivalry between the two groups, one led by Jitendralal Banerjee and the other by C.R. Das, and both of them tried to extend their influence over the members of the party and to send their followers as delegates to Nagpur. During the time of the election of the Subjects Committee at Nagpur the two groups of the Bengal delegates began to fall out and eventually Gandhi had to interfere.

The Nagpur Congress was dominated by two persons — Gandhi and Das. In his account of this session of the Congress Tendulkar writes: "Das was there with a large number of delegates from Bengal to oppose Gandhi." C. R. Das went to Nagpur not to oppose Gandhi's non-cooperation struggle. His opposition to the Council boycott programme of Gandhi had also become irrelevant by that time. The opposition at Nagpur was limited mainly to some aspects of Gandhi's proposals regarding the boycott of schools and courts. The militant nationalist leaders of Bengal were fully aware of the inadequacies of the existing educational and judicial systems, but the past experience of the swadeshi

movement in Bengal convinced them that the boycott of schools and
courts could not be sustained unless alternative arrangements could
be made simultaneously. The opposition of Das to Gandhi's programme
of boycott of schools and courts must be understood in this light.
The resolution on non-cooperation which was adopted in Calcutta
stated that there would be 'gradual' boycott of schools and colleges
and of British courts, but in the new draft resolution prepared by
Gandhi for the Nagpur session he removed the word 'gradual' and made
it immediate and wholesale. The opposition of Das and others led
to substantial changes in this draft and in the final resolution
passed by the Nagpur Congress the importance of providing alternative
national educational institutions was emphasized. So far as the boy­
cott of schools and colleges was concerned the final resolution
called upon the parents to make decisions about the withdrawal of their
children below sixteen and "concurrently to provide for their train­
ing in national schools or by such other means as may be within their
power in the absence of such schools". The students over sixteen were
asked to join the boycott if their conscience prompted them to do so,
and "either to devote themselves to some special service in connec­
tion with the non-cooperation movement or to continue their education

126. For Gandhi's draft resolution see CWMG, Vol.XIX, pp.182-185.

Explaining the term 'gradual' which was used in the Calcutta
resolution, the Report on Draft Instructions for Congress Orga­
nizations, issued immediately after the special session in Cal­
cutta, stated: "The introduction of the adjective 'gradual' in
the item regarding schools in the resolution simply means that
immediate results are not expected because of the existing infa­
tuation about Government schools. It does not mean that propa­
ganda should be so carried out as to bring about only a gradual
withdrawal of boys and girls from schools and colleges". CWMG,
in national institutions." The layers were asked to make greater efforts to suspend their practice. The final resolution also added to Gandhi's draft the call for a nation-wide organization, extending to the village level, for a band of national workers and for a National Fund to be called the All India Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund to finance the movement. It laid special stress on the observance of the principle of non-violence and on hand spinning and weaving. C.R. Das did not agree fully with the approach of Gandhi, but, as his biographer says, he was able to secure from Gandhi an assurance that he would be free to pursue his own political propaganda. This possibly led him to believe, as Jayakar was inclined to think, that a national upsurge launched "in seeming accord with new doctrine" would ultimately give him freedom "to modify it to suit his conception of a popular movement." Under such circumstances, Das agreed to move the resolution on non-co-operation at Nagpur.

Thus the non-cooperation movement launched by Gandhi with the backing of the Khilafat Muslims was given full support by the militant nationalists of Bengal. In spite of this unity the basic difference between the three elements continued. The militant nationalists joined the movement to fight for swaraj taking non-violence as a strategy. The Gandhians sought to rectify the Punjab 'wrong' and the Khilafat 'wrong' through self-suffering in accordance with the doctrine of satyagraha. The Muslims fought for the Caliph and considered non-violence as the price to win the cooperation of the

127. For the Congress resolution on non-cooperation as passed by the Nagpur Congress see CWMG, Vol. XIX, pp. 576-578.
Hindus. The militant nationalists welcomed Gandhi’s scheme of a non-cooperation movement and tolerated his views on satyagraha and programme of hand-spinning and weaving in view of his tremendous hold over the masses.

During the non-cooperation movement the Congress became a very popular organization in Bengal because of the support given to it by the revolutionaries. In 1920-21 most of the revolutionaries were released and a large section of them had already decided in jail to support the movement. The Jugantar leader Surendra Mohan Ghosh wrote that while in jail they discussed among themselves about their future plan and "the consensus was that if we were released we would also have to join the Congress and plunge into the movement to work among the masses, the people of our motherland." The revolutionaries were not converted to the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence, but they understood the necessity of mass movement, and, hence, their decision to support the non-cooperation struggle. They discussed the matter with C. R. Das and he, as Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit Roy, an outstanding leader of a revolutionary group in Bengal, has recorded, asked them to join the movement, and told them that even if the non-cooperation strategy failed, the movement would bring them to the limelight of Bengal politics and they would be able to guide the country in their own way in future.  


131. Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit Roy, Bharate Sashastra Biplab

contd ......

arranged a meeting between Gandhi and the revolutionaries behind closed doors in September 1921, but even before that, during the special session of the Congress in Calcutta (September 1920), Surendra Mohan Ghosh and Purna Das, another veteran revolutionary leader of Bengal, met Gandhi and assured him that if C.A. Das remained with him (Gandhi), the whole of Bengal would follow him. Referring to this meeting with Gandhi, Ghosh wrote: "We were very much impressed with that first meeting with Gandhiji, it remained in our mind enshrined for ever."

In Nagpur also the Jugantar group assured Gandhi of its support to his movement. Arun Chandra Guha, a leader of the Jugantar group, wrote: "(A) fairly large batch of leading Jugantar workers attended the Congress (Nagpur Congress of December 1920) to support N.C.O. On their behalf Bhupendra Kumar Datta had a long discussion with Gandhi. During the discussion the Jugantar representative told Gandhi frankly about their reservation regarding non-violence. Yet as a mass movement, they felt it would enthuse the people with a revolutionary urge and that was a matter of prime importance. So they gave him word that during the continuance of his movement, they would not reorganize their party or encourage any violent activity." The attitude of the Anushilan Samity, the other important revolutionary group of Bengal, towards the Non-cooperation movement has given rise to some

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132. The Indian Struggle 1920-1942, n. 103, p. 60.
misunderstanding. Arun Chandra Guha wrote that it was opposed to the movement. But Tarapada Lahiri in the book *Freedom Struggle and Anushilan Samiti* observed: "After several conferences of its members and thoughtful deliberations, the Anushilan Samiti decided to join the non-cooperation movement and its members threw themselves into the movement whole-heartedly". He referred to the view of Arun Chandra Guha and wrote: "His knowledge of facts is also very poor." As a matter of fact, there was a sharp difference of opinion among the leaders of the Anushilan Samiti, and their supreme leader, Pulin Das, refused to support the non-violent movement of Gandhi. He had a long discussion with Gandhi and ultimately he firmly declined to support him. But a group of the Anushilan Samiti led by Haren Sen, Pratul Ganguli, Ramesh Acharya, Ramesh Chandra Choudhury and others could not agree with Pulin Das, and in a written manifesto they expressed their disagreement with him. Analysing the role of the Anushilan Samiti during the Non-

135. He wrote: "Jugantar workers in detention in Hazaribagh Central Jail decided to support the movement. A similar decision was taken in Bajshahi Central Jail. On the other hand, their Anushilan colleagues took a different line; they decided to oppose the movement." *Ibid.*, p. 44.


138. For Pulin Das's interview with Gandhi see Bhabotosh Roy (ed.), *Biplabi Pulin Das* (Revolutionary Pulin Das) (Gita Publishers, Calcutta, 1965), pp. 266-272.

139. Nareyan Bandyopadhyay, *Biplaber Sandbane* (In Search of contd ......
cooperation movement, Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, a renowned leader of the party, wrote: "As their lives were completely devoted to the service of the community and country, they served them through the Congress programmes during the non-cooperation movement but they were never detracted from their firm convictions. ... We tried our best to utilize all our activities to enhance the cause of revolution. Naren Sen, who was the second man in command next to Pulin Bihari Das in our secret revolutionary party, was also the Secretary of Dacca Congress Committee. And the Assistant Secretary was also our man. In this way the Dacca Congress was also in our hands." "The official Congress party leaders", he continued, "seldom suspected our motives. Many of them thought that we had eschewed the path of violence and were sincere believers in the Congress creed of non-violent non-cooperation. But we took the Congress work only as a camouflage for the achievement of our end." But during the non-cooperation movement a new organization called Bharat Sevak Sangha was formed under the leadership of Pulin Das, and its mouthpiece, Hak Katha, carried on a propaganda against the movement with humour and vehemence. Identifying Pulin Das group with the Anushilan Samiti David M. Laushey wrote: "Anushilan while not engaging in terrorist activities during the Non-cooperation move- ment, nevertheless did not give the movement its support. In fact, Anushilan began publishing a series of leaflets called the Hak Katha especially to voice its opposition to the Congress policy." Referring to this observation of Laushey, Tarapada Lahiri commented:

"The writer is manifestly misinformed. The Hak Katha was published

after the movement had run its race out, and was on the decline."142
The whole controversy should be judged against the background of
the division of the Anushilan Samiti into two groups with divergent
views towards the Non-cooperation movement. In spite of the hostile
attitude of a section of the Anushilan Samiti, the revolutionaries
of Bengal, by and large, supported the movement. The official records
stated: "Upto this time (Non-cooperation movement) there had been
no evidence of any connection between terrorists and the Congress
party; ... In 1920 and 1921 the terrorists, who had begun to
reorganize, exploited the Non-cooperation movement to the full for
the purpose of recruitment, and deliberately set about capturing the
Congress in Bengal."143

The Non-cooperation movement had two outstanding leaders to
guide it, one was Gandhi and another Das. Gandhi was already a name
to conjure with. He met opposition from many well-known political
leaders, but the teeming millions of India, by and large, stood
behind him. They accepted him from their hearts as their Mahatma.
Referring to the nature of his influence among the people, the Bengali
of the liberal group wrote: "Many of them do not understand what
non-cooperation means. ... They know that Gandhi is a saint preaching
this principle for India's welfare. That is enough for them.144 C.R.
Das also returned from Nagpur (January 1921) with a firm determina-
tion to devote himself exclusively to the national movement. Though

142. Tarapada Lahiri, n. 136, p. 166.
143. Terrorism in India 1917-1936, p. 13.
144. Bengali, 6 October 1920, Bengal N.N., No. 42 of 1920.
he was at that time at the top of the legal profession in India, he gave up his practice. His renunciation, enthusiasm and sincerity prompted the Bengalis to give him the title of Deshbandhu, 'friend of the country'.

The attitude of the two leaders towards the non-cooperation was, however, not identical. As a product of militant nationalism of Bengal tradition C.R. Das took it as a fighting programme to achieve swaraj for his country. As the prophet of a new social order, Gandhi took it as a means to change the hearts of the British bureaucrats through suffering. As he himself wrote in an article on 'The Congress and Non-cooperation': "I believe that our first duty is to compel justice from the Imperial Government in regard to the khilafat and the Punjab. In both these matters injustice is being sustained by untruth and insolence. I, therefore, consider it to be the duty of the nation to purge the Government of the uncleanness before they can cooperate with each other."

If Gandhi stood for the removal of the injustice of the British rule, C.R. Das and the militant nationalists were against the British rule itself. The difference between Gandhi's perception of the movement and that of C.R. Das may again be understood with reference to the conversations which they had with Subhas Chandra Bose immediately after his arrival in India. Bose passed Indian Civil Service in England in 1920 but resigned his post in May 1921 and came back to India to take part in the national struggle which was then going on in full swing. He reached Bombay on 16 July and the same afternoon obtained an interview with Gandhi. This interview disappointed Bose and he wrote: "What his real expectation

145. Hamendranath Das Gupta, n. 57, p. 50.
146. Young India, 4 August 1920.
was I was unable to understand ... My reason told me clearly, again and again, that there was a deplorable lack of clarity in the plan which the Mahatma had formulated and that he himself did not have a clear idea of the successive stages of the campaign which would bring India to her cherished goal of freedom." He then came to Calcutta and met C.R. Das and he was fully satisfied. Referring to this meeting Bose wrote: "During the course of our conversation I began to feel that here was a man who knew what he was about ... By the time our conversation came to an end my mind was made up. I felt that I had found a leader and I meant to follow him." Subhas Chandra Bose was a full-blooded nationalist and could not understand Gandhi by its logic. Later on, when Gandhi's role became clearer to him, he realized that Gandhi was thinking in terms of changing the heart of the British Government. Referring to his first meeting with Gandhi Bose wrote subsequently: "Looking back on the incident today, it strikes me that possibly the Mahatma expected a 'change of heart' on the part of the British Government, leading to an acceptance of India's national demands."

If the main concern of Gandhi was to change the heart of the foreign rulers, the militant nationalists of Bengal were interested in embarrassing the alien Government. They laid main stress

147. The Indian Struggle 1920-1942, n. 32, pp. 54-55.
148. Ibid., p. 55.
149. Ibid., p. 54, fn. 1.
on the bonfires of foreign cloth, fomenting labour trouble, organizing no-tax campaign and sending volunteers to fill the jails.

During the period January-October 1921 there were 108 strikes in Bengal. The Assam Bengal Railway Strike which was closely connected with the unrest of the tea-garden workers of Assam and the no-tax campaign in Midnapore District were two important


151. Instigated by a group of Congressmen of Bengal the workers of many of the tea gardens of Assam who had been hard hit by the trade depression left their job and agreed to go back to their homes in Bahar and the United Provinces. Thousands of such workers came to Chandpur which was the only outlet on their homeward journey. Chandpur, the terminus of the Assam Bengal Railway, was a steamer station on the river Padma in East Bengal, and the workers in order to continue their journey must cross the river by steamer. The workers, crowded in a congested area in the station yard, gave rise to various problems and cholera broke out in a virulent form. The Government used Gurkha soldiers to chase them out of the railway yard, and it was in protest against this Gurkha outrage that a strike was declared both on the Assam Bengal Railway and on the river steamers. These strikes denied the Assam tea garden workers any opportunity to leave the town.

C. F. Andrews wrote a good account of the Chandpur affair on the basis of his personal experience and it is included in Marjorie Sykes (ed.), C. K. Andrews: Representative Writings (National Book Trust, Government of India, New Delhi, 1973), pp. 79-94.

152. In order to promote local self-government an Act was passed by the Government in 1919 establishing union boards for the villages. These union boards were very unpopular, because, it was argued, that the real power instead of being transferred to the villages was actually retained in the hands of the Government officials, and the additional taxation which was imposed for the establishment of the union boards did not give the people any advantage.

Ajoy Kumar Mukherjee, one of the participants to the movement, told me in an interview that Gandhi refused to support this Satyagraha, though he gave full support to a similar movement started earlier by Sardar Patel at Bardoli Taluk. Gandhi's refusal disappointed many in Bengal and Biren Sasmal decided to rise in revolt against Gandhi and started the no-tax campaign. When the movement was successful, Gandhi himself congratulated Sasmal and said: "Your success justifies your revolt."

For a similar account see N.N.Das, History of Midnapore, Part two (Midnapore Samskriti Parishad, Calcutta, 1962), pp. 87-89.
events that took place in Bengal during the Non-cooperation move-
ment. The Railway strike was organized by J.M. Sen Gupta who was
President of the Railway Employees Union. He was a Calcutta High
Court lawyer who gave up his practice and joined the Non-cooperation
movement. The no-tax campaign of Midnapore was led by B.N. Sasmal,
another leading lawyer. Its success brought him into prominence
before the public eye and gave the people of Midnapore consider-
able strength and self-confidence. The Chittagong Burma Shall
strike was also an important event of this period.\footnote{153}

Under the leadership of C.R. Das the non-cooperation movement
was thus launched in Bengal not purely on Gandhian line, and this
naturally could not satisfy the rising Gandhi group within the
Bengal Congress. Their mouthpiece, the \textit{Servant}, therefore, demand-
ed subordination of the provincial leadership to the central
\footnote{154} authority. During the year (1921) a tussle was going on
between the militant nationalist group and the Gandhian group
within the Bengal Congress. Though C.R. Das was the leader of
the provincial Congress, the Gandhian group was reluctant to
accept his leadership on the ground that he was not a true
follower of Gandhi. It July their leader Jitendralal Banerjee
resigned from the BPCC in protest against the way in which the
Das group was trying to use labour trouble for political purpose.\footnote{155}
Gandhi was against the use of labour strikes for political purpose
and on 16 February 1921 he wrote in \textit{Young India}: "I don't deny

\footnote{153}{For details see N.C. Banerjee, \textit{At the Cross Roads (1885-1946)},
(A.Mukherjee & Co., Calcutta, 1950), pp. 155-156.}
\footnote{154}{\textit{Servant}, 26 July 1921.}
\footnote{155}{H.N. Das Gupta, \textit{Subhas Chandra}, (Jyoti Prokashalaya, Calcutta,
1946), pp. 4, 5.}
that such strikes can serve political ends. But they do not fall within the plan of non-violent Non-cooperation". G.R. Das did not agree with this view and in his Presidential Address delivered at the Gaya session of the Congress in December 1922 he referred to this problem and defended his stand.  

The Gandhian group, however, soon made an attempt to bring the Provincial Congress Committee under their control. The attempt failed, and it was soon followed by several measures by which the domination of the Das group was established more strictly over the party.  

In spite of Gandhi's leadership the non-cooperation movement took a violent character mainly outside Bengal. In August 1921 the Moplah rebellion broke out in course of which numerous atrocities were committed. The Moplahs were a band of fanatic Muslims who had settled in the Malabar coast. Instigated by the Khilafat agitation, they rose in armed rebellion against the Government and a large number of Hindus also were killed and converted to Islam in complete disregard of the much-advertized communal unity. The outburst of violence took place for the second time in connection with the visit of the Prince of Wales in India in November. The Congress interpreted the visit as an attempt by the Government to rally public support behind it and the AICC meeting in Bombay in July 1921 decided to boycott this visit. The Congress Working Committee declared the observance of hartal all over India on 17 November, the day of the arrival of the Prince of Wales in Bombay. On that day the boycott demonstration in Bombay resulted

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156. See Chapter V, p. 422.
158. For full text of the resolution see Chakrabarty and Bhattacharyya (compiled), Congress Resolutions, p. 38.
in violent clashes between the boycotters and the supporters of the Government, and a large number of people lost their lives. In Calcutta, the hartal of 17 November was, however, completely successful mainly due to the whole-hearted co-operation of the Congress and Khilafat volunteers. The unexpected success of the peaceful hartal unnerved the Government of Bengal and it declared the Congress and Khilafat volunteers unlawful associations under the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908. The Government was determined to follow a policy of repression which, however, gave the movement a new impetus. As Subhas Chandra Bose wrote: "We had been spoiling for a fight in Calcutta and the official notification (it refers to the notification declaring volunteer organizations unlawful) therefore was thrice welcome to us."

The Provincial Congress Committee of Bengal decided to defy the official ban and C.R. Das was appointed the Congress Dictator for Bengal with power to nominate his successor to lead this civil disobedience movement. The non-cooperation struggle thus entered into a new and most vigorous phase and the police force was also affected by it, though its character remained remarkably peaceful and orderly. The movement in Bengal became so popular and widespread that the Government found it impossible to suppress it by force, and, therefore, it became eager for a compromise.

The Prince of Wales was due to arrive in Calcutta on 26 December and the Government was anxious for an immediate settlement so that his visit might not be boycotted. The Governor

159. The Indian Struggle 1920-1942, n. 32, p. 63.
160. Ibid., pp. 64-65.
General, Lord Reading, under such circumstances, sent Madan Mohan Malaviya, an experienced national leader with moderate views, to Das with proposals for a compromise. Malaviya accordingly met Das who was then in the Presidency Jail of Calcutta. The proposal of the Government which Malaviya carried was that if the Congress agreed to call off the movement immediately and thus give up the plan of boycotting the visit of the Prince of Wales on 24 December, the Government would withdraw the notification declaring the volunteer organizations illegal and release all those who had been arrested under the Criminal Law Amendment Act. Moreover, a Round Table Conference would thereafter be summoned to discuss the constitutional progress of India. C.R. Das was in favour of accepting the proposal. His arguments, as recorded by Subhas Chandra Bose, were: "Rightly or wrongly, he (C.R. Das) said, the Mahatma had promised Swaraj within one year. That year was drawing to a close. Barely a fortnight was left and within this short period something had to be achieved in order to save the face of the Congress and fulfil the Mahatma's promise regarding Swaraj. The offer of the Viceroy had come to him (C.R. Das) as a god sent. If a settlement was made before December 31st and all the political prisoners were released, it would appear to the popular imagination as a great triumph for the Congress. Round Table Conference might or might not be a success, but if it failed and the Government refused to concede the popular demands, the Congress could resume the fight at any time and when it did so, it would command greater prestige and public confidence." 161

161. Ibid., pp. 67-68.

When Gandhi launched the movement, he promised Swaraj within one year which appeared fantastic to many. It

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Gandhi, however, raised various questions before considering the proposed terms of settlement, and when he ultimately agreed, it was then too late. "The Government of India", Bose wrote, "tired of waiting had changed their mind. The Deshbandhu was beside himself with anger and disgust. The change of a life-time, he (C.R. Das) said, had been lost."

Shortly after the failure of the negotiations, the annual session of the Congress was held in December 1921 at Allahabad. C.R. Das was elected President for this session, but since he was in jail, Hakim Ajmal Khan presided over it. In Ahmedabad the Congress resolved "to continue the programme of non-violent non-cooperation with greater vigour," and "to organize individual civil disobedience and mass civil disobedience when the mass of people have been sufficiently trained in the methods of non-

brought intense demoralization among the people when swaraj could not be achieved within the period promised by Gandhi. "'Swaraj' within one year", Subhas Chandra Bose wrote, "was not only unwise but childish. It made the Congress appear so foolish before all reasonable men."

Ibid., pp. 70-71.

Trailakya Nath Chakraborty, better known as Trailokya Maharaj, a well-known leader of the Anushilan Samity, wrote in his Autobiography about the feeling of demoralization and disappointment among the people, particularly among the prisoners, when no swaraj came within the specified period. When that period passed, he observed, "a large number of people were disappointed." Previously, he wrote, it was believed by almost all that nobody would remain in prison after one year and that "Mahatma Gandhi would make arrangement for our release also, but in reality nothing happened like that." Trailakya Nath Chakraborty, Jaile Trish Batsar (Thirty Years in Jail) (Ananda Hindustan Prakashani, Calcutta, 1554 B.E.), pp. 89-90.

162. The Indian Struggle 1920-1942, n. 32, p. 68.
violence." It also appointed Gandhi "as the sole Executive authority of the Congress". Armed with the resolution of the Congress sanctioning civil disobedience, Gandhi wrote a letter to the Viceroy on 1 February 1922 intimating him that after seven days a mass civil disobedience movement would be launched at Bardoli, a small tahsil in Surat district. The whole of India was looking forward to the impending struggle with great suspense and excitement, but the programme was given up by Gandhi because of the Chauri Chaura incident on 5 February 1922.

At Chauri Chaura, a village in Gorakhpur district in Uttar Pradesh, 21 policemen were burnt alive in a police station by an infuriated mob. Gandhi imposed upon himself a five days' fast and in the Young India of 16 February he wrote: "God had been abundantly kind to me. He has warned me the third time that there is not as yet in India that non-violent and truthful atmosphere which alone can justify mass disobedience, which can be at all described as civil ....". Meanwhile, the Working Committee of the Congress met at Bardoli and discussed the situation for two days, 11 and 12 February. It accepted Gandhi's stand and asked all Congress organizations to stop "activities specially designed to court arrest and imprisonment" and "all volunteer processions and public meetings merely for

163. Chakrabarty and Bhattacharyya (Compiled), Congress Resolutions, p. 41.
165. According to Gandhi the first warning came during the anti-Rowlatt Act agitation, second warning during the Bombay riot after the arrival of the Prince of Wales, and the third warning through the Chauri Chaura incident.
the purpose of defiance of the notification regarding such meetings." It advised the Congress workers to engage themselves to the following constructive activities:

1. to enlist at least one crore of members of the Congress,
2. to popularize the spinning wheel and to organize the manufacture of hand-spun hand-woven khaddar,
3. to organize national schools,
4. to organize the Depressed classes for better life,
5. to organize the temperance campaign,
6. to organize village and town panchayats,
7. to promote unity among all classes and races and to organize a social service department, and
8. to continue the Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund collections.

The Bardoli resolution was confirmed by the AICC which met in Delhi on 24 and 25 February. On the advice of C.R. Das and under the leadership of J.M. Sengupta, the Bengal delegates, which included a number of revolutionaries, opposed the Bardoli resolution in the AICC meeting. A prominent leader of the Jugantar Party recalled: "C.R. Das called on us to visit him in jail ... In the office of the superintendent of the jail, we met him, J.M. Sengupta being with us. The Deshbandhu explained to us why the suspension move must be opposed tooth and nail in the AICC at Delhi. We started under J.N. Sengupta's leadership for the AICC meeting at Delhi, we opposed but ... we were defeated." In spite of

166. For full text of the Bardoli resolution of the Working Committee see Chakrabarty and Bhattacharyya (compiled), Congress Resolutions, pp. 42-45.

this defeat the militant nationalists asserted themselves so powerfully in this meeting that Gandhi realized that the majority was not backing him sincerely. On 2 March he said: "... I am a sadder and I hope a wiser man today. I see that our non-violence is skin-deep ... This non-violence therefore seems to be due merely to our helplessness. It almost appears as if we are nursing in our bosoms the desire to take revenge the first time we get the opportunity. Can true non-violence come out of this seeming forced non-violence of the weak? Is it not a futile experiment I am conducting?" 168

Struggle Withdrawn — Bengal's Revolt:
Gandhi's Compromise.

The Bardoli decision created consternation all over India particularly in Bengal. C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Lala Lajpat Rai who were all in prison shared the popular resentment. "To sound the order of retreat", Subhas Chandra Bose wrote, "just when public enthusiasm was reaching the boiling point was nothing short of a national calamity." 169 The militant nationalists of Bengal who had joined Gandhi's non-cooperation movement with much expectation was now disillusioned of his leadership. The dissatisfied elements of Bengal were, however, profoundly impressed by the mass movement launched by Gandhi and by his technique of non-cooperation, but they felt that he was not able to apply his technique in the best possible

168. Young India, 2 March 1922.
169. The Indian Struggle 1920-1942, n. 32, p. 73.
way. It was believed that it was possible to use this technique more effectively against the British. How? On this point the militant nationalists of Bengal were divided into two groups. One group thought that the technique of non-cooperation should be extended to the Council also. Their view was that instead of boycotting the Council, they should capture it, and adopt a programme of opposition to the Government in all possible ways. C.R. Das was the leader of this group in Bengal, and he was supported by a section of Congressmen throughout the country. It was in fact not a new programme. C.R. Das and others pressed for it previously, as we have noted, at the special session of the Congress held in Calcutta in September 1920, and they raised this demand now with greater vigour. This group which now came to be known as the pro-change group openly challenged Gandhi's scheme of council boycott but did not oppose at least openly other items of his programme.

The other group took a more bellicose stand and its opposition to Gandhi was more fundamental and basic. The leaders of this group condemned Gandhi's doctrine of non-violence, considered his Constructive Programme irrelevant for India's freedom struggle and believed that Gandhi was not interested in organizing the peasants and workers of the country who alone could make a non-cooperation struggle effective and successful. The nationalist press of Bengal sympathetic to this group

169A. The attack of the moderates on Gandhi, took a different line. They accused Gandhi of a collusion with the Communist party of Russia. "Is there any truth" asked a moderate leader in the Legislative Assembly debate, "in the statement wired by Reuter sometime ago made by a Soviet Chief Zinovieff at a meeting of the Central Communist Organization that about

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became extremely critical of Gandhi, and in no other part of India was Gandhi and his politics subjected to such bitter criticism as in Bengal during this period. A cursory glance at the comments of the nationalist press and literature of this period would give an idea of the intense anti-Gandhi feeling that arose in Bengal.

The Bengali press was vehement in the denunciation of the Bardoli resolution. The Nayak wrote: "This lamentable outcome of non-violent non-cooperation will undoubtedly fill many with serious regret. The wants and grievances for the removal of which non-cooperators made such sacrifices all remain, while what is gained is that the Non-cooperation agitation is practically suspended. A sardonic laughter bursts out of Anglo India's lips." The Deshbandhu, observed: "Feeling is gaining strength in the country that the Bardoli and Delhi decisions have checked national agitation. Some have gone so far as to doubt the heart-felt sincerity of Mahatma Gandhi." "All wise men", the Swaraj commented, "have been saying that the Congress of Naoraji and Tilak is now no more, and the Congress of Mr. Gandhi too has not many days more to live." A journal of the Bengali nationalists pointed out: "Mr. Gandhi is trying to achieve the impossible. If the government spends each time a few thousands of the amount of money they have, number of gundas will fight among themselves and be able to postpone

7 million gold roubles were spent in subsidising the Gandhian movement in India?" And further asked, "If so, have the Government taken any and what steps in that connection?"


170. Nayak, 14 February 1922, Bengal N.N., No.8 of 1922.
171. Deshbandhu, 1 March 1922, Bengal N.N., No. 10 of 1922.
172. Swaraj, 26 February 1922, Bengal N.N., No.9 of 1922.
mass civil disobedience. And if next time some policemen can be roasted, the Mahatma will be made to starve himself to death."

With reference to the Constructive Programme recommended by the Bardoli resolution and confirmed by the AICC at Delhi, the Nayak wrote: "We are firmly convinced that social reform will not be possible until and unless we are recognised as a separate independent nation under an independent ruler. Social reform is not possible in a dependent, conquered and imitative nation... Seeing that no startling political trick can be played after Bardoli and Delhi, the Mahatma has requested his countrymen to pay attention to social reform, the Mahatma has requested every Hindu to do away with untouchability. But our question is: Why this love for depressed Hindu community? We warn the Mahatma that this will bring about a split in his party, and the Hindus will stand aloof."

After the arrest of Gandhi on 10 March 1922 the Indian Daily News contrasted the nationwide excitement caused by his externment from the Punjab in 1919 with the calmness with which the news of his arrest was received by the people this time. This was, according to its analysis, due to the steady decline of Gandhi's popularity which followed from his failure to win swaraj within one year and his Bardoli retreat. Analysing the Bengal politics in this context it wrote: "As a matter of fact opinion in the Bengal camp is sharply divided just at the present moment as to its allegiance to the

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173. Banglar Katha, 3 March 1922, Bengal N.N., No.10 of 1922.
174. Nayak, 8 March 1922, Bengal N.N., No.11 of 1922.
175. In March 1919 the Government did not allow Gandhi to enter into the Punjab and Delhi. But in spite of this order Gandhi started towards Delhi, and on his way he was arrested and brought to Bombay. The news of Gandhi's arrest spread like

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Mahatma. The majority are for disowning him and carrying on the 'work of the mother land' on their own account. This rank and file, the 'volunteers', the seduced students from Bengal schools and colleges are finding their occupation and regretting their folly ... The lower classes on whom the Mahatma's teaching had such a powerful effect have started critically examining their god and some are reported to have detected its clay feet already." In March 1922 the Bijoli, criticising the Gandhian approach to non-violence and constructive programme, observed: "He (Gandhi) wanted to make these 33 crores of men non-violent at one word. But spending so much energy in trying to render unarmed, down-trodden, quiet, dependent Indians non-violent is waste of energy. He can do a great good to the world if he pitches his tent on the banks of the Thames and makes lakhs of armed worshippers of violence there non-violent. Let India acquire power and let powerful England learn selflessness and forbearance. Mr. Gandhi was pained to see that most non-cooperators pay lesser attention to constructive programme than to delivering non-violent blows on the government. But we believe it is a part of the human nature, man wants to return blow for blow." "We fail to understand", the organ of the Swaraj Party wrote, "the logic of the argument that he who does not know how to use the

wild fire throughout the country and it led to violent outburst in the Punjab. The Jallianwalla Bagh tragedy was a sequence of this agitation.

176. The Indian Daily News, 13 March 1922, Bengal N.N., No. 11 of 1922.
177. Bijoli, 17 March 1922, Bengal N.N., No. 12 of 1922.
charkha is not fit to undertake civil disobedience. If we abide by that condition, then most of the leaders will have to grow under the unjust laws of the government without protesting against them."\textsuperscript{178} The \textit{Ananda Bazar Patrika} also considered non-violence as a "big joke to those who had no power to strike others" and wrote that "it is difficult to determine whether Indians will gain their purpose of securing swaraj if they have to build themselves up to non-violent ideal."\textsuperscript{179} The \textit{Atmasakti} found no relation between Gandhi's constructive programme and struggle for freedom and wrote: "Since the Bardoli resolution the swaraj movement has been gradually developing into a swadeshi movement. If you silently spin at the charkha, wear khaddar, stop the sale of wine, remove untouchability, all your sufferings will disappear. There is no doubt that there will be some economic and moral progress. ... We want full and complete independence. We see no preparation for that." Referring to the Gandhian doctrine of complete non-violence it added: "We do not think there is strong reason for thinking that it will be possible to render the country totally non-violent by giving it education and making it wear khaddar. We do not know if non-violence will be regarded as the highest good; but those who want to win independence of the country by adopting it had better give up the profession of politics and go to the forest and practise devotional austerities. We have seen very few

\textsuperscript{178} \textit{Banglar Katha}, 10 March 1922, Bengal N.N., No.10 of 1922.
\textsuperscript{179} \textit{Ananda Bazar Patrika}, 11 October 1922 and 21 October 1922.
who really believe in the policy of non-violence."\(^{180}\)

The renowned revolutionary leader, Upendranath Banerjee, who was arrested and sent to Andaman along with Barindra Kumar Ghosh and others, wrote extensively during this time condemning the Gandhian approach. He observed: "If non-cooperation implies severance of all relations with administration, there is no reason to include such items as khadi, Hindu-Muslim unity, social emancipation of the untouchables within it. They are parts of social service activities and they have some relation with economics, but they are almost totally unconnected with politics." If the political emancipation of the country was made conditional upon the successful implementation of the Constructive Programme, the country, he thought, would never become independent.\(^{181}\) By producing their own cloth through the charkha, the peasants, Upendranath wrote, might improve a little their economic conditions, but that would not solve their main problem - exploitation by the Zamindar and the Mahajan.\(^{182}\) Referring to the workers he pointed out that they could not be expected to produce their own cloth through the charkha after the day-long labour and they would not gain anything economically by purchasing costly khadi from the market. Therefore, he wrote, "if the only way to achieve swaraj lies through khaddar and non-violence, the workers are not likely to show any interest in it."\(^{183}\) Denouncing the strictly

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180. Atmasakti, 5 July 1922, Bengal N. N., No.28 of 1922.
182. Pather Sandhan (In Search of the Way), p.26 in Ibid.
moral and non-violent approach of Gandhi he observed: "Those who want to achieve national independence by following this policy should better go to the forest and start meditation instead of remaining in the political field."\textsuperscript{184} Gandhi's Constructive Programme was also considered by him completely irrelevant to the national struggle. The Constructive Programme, he wrote, was wholly 'civil', it had nothing to do with 'disobedience'.\textsuperscript{185}

It was feared by many in Bengal that the Hindu-Muslim unity brought about by the movement would no longer last and all the sacrifice made by the people at the call of Gandhi would go in vain. The \textit{Nayak} observed in March: "The Khilafat party is sure to secede from the Congress gradually — No pain is being spared to bring about a breach between Hindus and Muslims. Why did these fifteen thousand men go to jail willingly? Had not this attempt - this sensation - been fruitless? Every thoughtful Bengali is thinking about it and demanding the answer to this question. The Mahatma has not been able to answer this question rightly. So we must speak out plainly now, Bengal will not go wrong this time - she will neither non-cooperate nor wear khaddar."\textsuperscript{186} The sentiment of Bengal against the Gandhian Congress was so strong during this period that with reference to the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee\textsuperscript{187} the

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\textsuperscript{184} \textit{Pather Sandhan}, n.182, p.12. \\
\textsuperscript{185} \textit{Ibid.}, p.22. \\
\textsuperscript{186} \textit{Nayak}, 7 March 1922, Bengal N.N., No.10 of 1922. \\
\textsuperscript{187} This Committee was formed by the AICC at a meeting in Lucknow held in June 1922. Its objective was to study the political situation of the country and to examine whether a civil disobedience movement in some form or other could be launched in view of the continued policy of repression followed by the Government.
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Atmasakti wrote in August 1922: "The Civil Disobedience Committee have finished their tour ... So far as can be guessed the Committee will say that until there is a greater use of khaddar in the country, civil disobedience must be postponed. The result will be that the impossible will not happen. Most men in the Congress do not believe that Swaraj will be had through what is now being held up as the constructive programme. So many will give up all efforts and sit idle. The charkha will again begin to spin cobwebs and the members of the congress will yawn and say: 'The country did not work according to our directions; so, how can it get swaraj?' Signs of this despair are being seen on all sides. We have given up real work and have engaged ourselves in a wordy warfare." 188 In some quarters of Bengal a feeling arose that the non-cooperation movement and boycott of British goods under Gandhi's leadership had actually helped the millowners of Bombay and Ahmedabad region at the cost of Bengal. The Swaraj, for example, wrote: "It was from this platform (i.e., non-cooperation movement of Gandhi) that the millowners of Bombay, Ahmedabad and Nagpur played a trick with Bengal and are still playing a trick in the matter of khaddar. Considering these, the suspicion spontaneously rises in the mind that Mahatma Gandhi acted as an agent of the mill-owners. Bengal is an agricultural country - a country of raw products - and the Parseis and Bhatias of Bombay can easily play tricks with the Bengalis. But we cannot say that the eyes of the Bengalis are not opening." 189

188. Atmasakti, 23 August 1922, Bengal N.N., No.35 of 1922.
189. Swaraj, 21 July 1922, Bengal N.N., No.30 of 1922.
It may not be irrelevant to point out here that if the motive of Non-cooperation movement was viewed by some as a Gandhi-mill-owners' "trick" to throttle Bengal economically, a liberal westerner, Brailsford, has viewed the retreat of Gandhi from the no-tax campaign at Bardoli as a Gandhi-Zamindar conspiracy. "Blaming himself", he wrote, "for what happened, Gandhi then announced that India was morally unfit for the struggle and, to the amazement to his followers and the world, called off the campaign before it was well begun. Was this his real reason? Certainly it was only one and probably not the chief of his reasons. Tax resistance by peasants in the north would have involved a strike against rent. It is significant that Gandhi and his working committee went out of their way to assure the landlords (Zamindars) what Congress would scrupulously respect their legal rights. This singular man is a born conservative whom history has turned into a revolutionary. The British Government saved him by a public trial and a heavy sentence from the unpopularity that might have engulfed him — a mistake it never repeated. 190

It was maintained by some that the acceptance of Gandhi's non-cooperation movement was a set-back in the political life of Bengal. Bengal, it was held, had already passed beyond that stage and had adopted violent method as the only way to achieve national independence. By giving up this method and by going back to passive resistance, Bengal, they argued, had actually committed a blunder. The Naba Sangha of Chandernagore, for example, wrote: "In view of the stage of attainment that the life of the Bengalis have reached, they will have to fall back if they have to follow the dictates of Mahatma. Bengalis

190. Henry Noel Brailsford, n. 20, p. 20.
know very well the path which they will have to follow. Bengalis cannot give up the creed of fire ... But being a dependent nation, they lost their senses a little under a temporary excitement in the hope of getting independence. The signs of returning sense are appearing again today." 191 It suggested the revival of revolutionary organizations of Bengal, and wrote: "Forming these organizations is now the only work in the country, and the more they become well-established, the more will they be able to improve the country ..." 192 In spite of its moral excellence Gandhi's non-violence, it was feared, would enervate the country, and, therefore, it was felt that Bengal should continue its own politics based on strength. "The spotless character of the Mahatma", the Nava Sangha wrote, "has made men pure in character, but has rendered the nation inactive. A lofty character like his cripples ordinary men and breaks their backbones. ... Bengalis must preserve their own individuality ..." 193

These comments in the press were in large measure a true reflection of the feelings and sentiments of the vast majority of the people of Bengal. But even in the midst of such an atmosphere, the positive contributions of the Gandhian movement were not completely glossed over by the nationalist press of Bengal. The Deshbandhu which, as we have seen above, took a critical view of the Bardoli

191. The Nava Sangha, 23 July 1922, Bengal N.N., No.30 of 1922.
192. Ibid.
193. Ibid., 27 August 1922, Bengal N.N., No.35 of 1922.
and Delhi decisions, admitted that "Mahatma Gandhi has done much good to the country." It referred to his contributions in quickening the feeling of national consciousness, in promoting the desire for unity, in fostering the spirit of national self-respect and self-reliance, in developing courage and power of endurance of the people and in strengthening their self-confidence. "In all these", it wrote, "there is a great chance of the ruling community losing their power." The Pravasi, a journal with pronounced nationalist views, also wrote in its Baisakh (April-May) issue of 1922: "No nation loves foreign rule, and hence he who finds faults with such a rule becomes popular. It cannot be denied that the Mahatma's influence is partially responsible for creating a spirit of hostility against government and western civilization." It was, however, reserved for the Servant to give full support to the new programme of the Congress. Referring to the Delhi meeting of the AICC it observed: "That the AICC has succeeded in evolving a definite and satisfactory programme of work out of all this national ferment gives one a correct measure not only of the dominant personal authority of Mahatma Gandhi which continues undiminished as being the expression of the influence of religion and morality on politics but also of the earnestness and sense of discipline of the provincial leaders".

The militant nationalist leaders of Bengal particularly the leaders of the Anushilan and the Yugantar were thus completely

194. Deshbandhu, 21 February 1922, Bengal N.N., No. 8 of 1922.
195. Pravasi, Baisakh (April-May) 1922.
196. Servant, 3 March 1922.
disillusioned of the Gandhian leadership. But, in spite of this disillusionment, they decided to remain within the Congress of Gandhi because they felt that the country was in need of a mass struggle against the British Government. Gandhi's concept of a mass cooperation movement had a lasting effect on their mind, though they believed, as we have already written, that Gandhi was not able to apply the technique in the proper manner. They, therefore, decided to prepare the country for a mass struggle through the Congress in their own way. Though they were extremely critical of Gandhi's doctrine of non-violence, they decided not to take recourse to any violent action in near future until their preparations for a nation-wide movement were complete. Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit Roy, himself an outstanding figure in the underground revolutionary movement of Bengal, wrote that the leaders of the Anushilan Samiti and the Yugantar group who were in the Midnapore jail came to an agreement that in future they would work unitedly for a national revolution remaining within the Congress and giving up their mutual rivalry. Though the leadership of the Jugantar and Anushilan could not, as we shall see later, give up their old rivalry, they remained in the Congress and did not actually take up any programme of revolutionary action in future. This impact of the Gandhian movement on the strategy of the old revolutionaries of Bengal should not be lost sight of. It should be understood clearly that an armed national uprising still


The Government intelligence report, referring to the post-non-cooperation period, stated: "The time was to come when there would be few districts in the province (it refers to Bengal) where terrorists were not represented in local Congress Committees". Terrorism in India 1917-1956, p. 15.
remained their ultimate objective and they maintained their own separate group for surreptitious activities, but they believed that the time was not yet ripe for violent movement. The preparatory work must be carried on openly and non-violently. Thus, though they did not become non-violent, they at least deferred violence.

We have explained above, in brief outline, the views of the two schools of thought that arose in Bengal against Gandhi's programme in the immediate post-Bardoli period. The leader of the pro-change group, C.R. Das, was determined to follow his obstructionist strategy inside the Council. When the Bardoli resolution was adopted by the Congress, he was in the Alipore Central Jail, where a large number of Congress prisoners including Subhas Chandra Bose were also sent. Das discussed with them his future scheme and received a favourable response from a section. The orthodox followers of Gandhi, however, did not agree with him and they were not prepared to change the programme as laid down by Gandhi before his arrest. The Congress prisoners inside the Alipore Jail were thus divided into two groups and they became the heralds of the future pro-change (Swaraj) and no-change parties of Bengal. Das's scheme became known to the outsiders also, and Basanti Devi (Mrs. C.R. Das) who was elected President of the Bengal Provincial Conference, held at Chittagong, in May 1922, referred to this strategy in her speech for the consideration of the Congressmen. The Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee formed in 1922 also discussed the question of Council entry and three members (Hakim Ajmal Khan, Motilal Nehru and

Vithalbhai J. Patel) supported the extension of non-cooperation to the Councils and an equal number of members (M.A. Ansari, C. Rajagopalachari and S. Kasturiranga Iyengar) favoured the continuation of their boycott. Thus for several months prior to the Gaya session of the Congress in December 1922 the Council-entry programme of C.R. Das remained a subject matter of lively discussion among the Congressmen. Stalwarts among the leaders like Motilal Nehru, Lajpat Rai, Vithalbhai Patel, N.C. Kalkar gave full support to it.

But a large section of Bengali revolutionaries adopted a lukewarm attitude towards the plan of C.R. Das. The programme did not appear sufficiently inspiring to them. They, as we have already pointed out, were in favour of organizing the masses for a final civil disobedience movement against the British. On the eve of the Gaya session of the Congress the famous revolutionary leader of Bengal, Upendranath Banerji, wrote: "It appears that the group which wants to enter the Council in order to quarrel (with the Government) will become sufficiently strong in the Gaya Congress ... Most of the members of this group are lawyers, barristers and moneyed people. They will not go to any trouble and disturbance. If they can achieve something by shouting in the Assembly, that is, if the British grants another dose of reforms, they will turn into good and obedient boys like the moderates. Those who really want complete independence will gradually find themselves unwanted in this party." Referring

199. For the recommendations of the Committee regarding the Council entry see F.C. Bamford, pp. 79-80.
to this group he further observed: "One must not expect much from them. The real work lies outside the Council among the workers and peasants." Organization of the workers and peasants, he explained, was the only way to prepare the country for Civil Disobedience, but this work, he warned, could not be done by going to the Council or by producing hand-spun khaddar. The Council-entry programme, he wrote, might at best end in the grant of another Reform Act by the British.

A section of the nationalist press of Bengal was also critical of the Council-entry programme of C.R. Das. On 18 April 1922 the Ananda Bazar Patrika wrote: "If the proposal to capture union boards, district and local boards and legislative councils by non-cooperators for purposes of carrying on non-cooperation work is acted upon, the principle of non-cooperation will not remain unimpaired." About the same time another journal of Calcutta

The Swaraj Party, it may be mentioned here, stood for Dominion Status and not for independence. Subhas Chandra Bose wrote: "As the Swaraj Party was more practical, it wanted to define clearly what Swaraj meant, but a complete agreement was not possible on the question, because there were two groups among the Swarajists. It was, therefore, decided, as a compromise, to declare in the constitution that the 'immediate' objective of the party was the attainment of Dominion Status." The Indian Struggle 1920-1942, n. 103, p. 85.


Though Upendranath laid emphasis on the organization of the workers and peasants, he approached the problem from a nationalist and not from the communist point of view. During this period M.N. Roy was trying to spread communism in India and particularly in Bengal, and in course of time a section of the Bengal revolutionaries was converted to communism. But a group of nationalists also adopted socialist ideas though they could not accept the Marxism philosophy and the international affiliation of the communist movement.
expressed the fear that the Congressmen after entering the Council might succumb to the lure of power and high office. "If the non-cooperators", it wrote, "enter the councils and offer incessant opposition to Government and resign in a body on Government vetoing their decision and then again enter the councils at a fresh election and continue as before, then the non-cooperation movement may be helped ... But the risk of succumbing to official bandishments after entering Council must also be considered." Similar views disapproving and condemning C.R. Das's scheme continued to appear in the nationalist press of Bengal for several months. "Some revolutionary groups," a biographer of C.R. Das wrote, "even threatened to shoot him" (C.R.Das).

The organs of the Gandhian group of Bengal, the Servant and the Sevak, were naturally opposed to the Council-entry programme of C.R. Das.

Under such conditions of Bengal, the Congress session was held at Gaya in December 1922 with C.R. Das as President. He was elected President of the All India Congress while he was in jail and after his release in August 1922 he started propagating his own ideas which appeared different from those of Gandhi not only on the question of Council-entry but also on other points. He attended the United Provinces Provincial Conference at Dehradun where he declared that he wanted swaraj for the masses and not simply for the middle class. On the advice of Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das did not express his views on the issue of the Council-entry till the report of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee.

203. Bandemataram, 29 April 1922, Bengal N.N., No.18 of 1922.
204. Hemendranath Das Gupta, n. 57, p. 85.
205. Ibid., p. 83.
was submitted. After the submission of its report he issued a statement on 7 November 1922 explaining clearly his views on Council-entry and adding the following points to his programme:

(a) Congress propaganda must be carried on outside India also,

(b) India should join the 'Great Asiatic Federation',

(c) The Congress must define the system of government it had in view,

(d) Khaddar should be regarded as a symbol of swaraj and not as a means of attaining swaraj,

(e) The peasants and the labourers should be organized.

It is significant that the points added by C.R. Das to his Council-entry programme represented, more or less, the views of the revolutionary group of Bengal which was opposed to his programme. But the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee which met on 24 November 1922 declared itself strongly against the Council-entry and all the office-bearers elected except C.R. Das who was President were no-changers. Das, however, continued his efforts to win over the critical section of the Bengal revolutionaries. In his famous Presidential speech at the Gaya Congress he expressed his faith in non-violence and in the technique of non-co-operation struggle but did not say anything directly approving the Constructive Programme of Gandhi. He, on the other hand, declared that 'no construction is possible without destruction' and that khaddar must be taken as 'the symbol of swaraj' and not as an instrument which would 'lead us to swaraj'. He found no necessary relation between khadi and civil disobedience, and said: "I am not in favour of the restrictions which have been put upon the practical adoption of any system of civil disobedience."

206. P.C. Bamford, pp. 82-83.
He reiterated his faith in all the points mentioned in his statement of 7 November. Swaraj, he emphasized, must not "lead to the concentration of power in the hands of the middle class" but should establish a government of the people and by the people. He explained the necessity of organizing peasants and labourers on the basis of their class interests for strengthening the struggle for swaraj and asked the Congress to form a strong committee for this purpose. "Our demand for swaraj", he declared, "must now be presented in a more practical shape. The Congress should frame a clear scheme of what we mean by a system of government which may serve as a real foundation for swaraj." He also referred to the necessity of foreign propaganda and India's participation in the great Asiatic Federation which he described as "the union of the oppressed nationalities of Asia." Thus, along with his Council-entry scheme, Das tried in his Gaya address to incorporate the programme of the Bengal revolutionaries as far as possible. Das' proposal in favour of the Council-entry was, however, outvoted both in the Subjects Committee and in the open Congress at Gaya. In the Subjects Committee a resolution for Council boycott was moved by C. Rajagopalachari and it was passed by 203 votes against 87. Bengal had 40 representatives in theSubjects Committee and of them only 15 supported Das. In the open session the resolution supported by Das was lost by 1740 votes to 890.

207. For Das' Presidential speech at the Gaya Congress see Manindra Dutta and Haradhan Dutta (ed.), n. 84, English Works, pp. 116-156. Also Congress Presidential Addresses, 1911-1934, second series, n. 15, pp. 557-605.
Immediately after the Congress concluded its session at Gaya, C.R. Das announced his resignation of the office of Congress President, and on 1 January 1923 the Swaraj Party was formed within the Congress with Das as President and Motilal Nehru as Secretary. The relations between the Swarajists and the Gandhian non-changers remained extremely strained until a compromise was arrived at in a special session of the Congress held in Delhi in September 1923 under the presidency of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Rajagopalachari did not attend this session and it was guided mainly by Muhammad Ali who was released from jail shortly before the session was held. He claimed to have received a message from Gandhi asking him to bring about a compromise between the two rival groups of the Congress and moved a resolution permitting those who had no conscientious objection to stand for election, and suspending the propaganda against Council-entry. The resolution was passed by a majority. The message of Gandhi which Muhammad Ali claimed to have received was described by Tendulkar as a "fictitious product of his lively imagination."\(^\text{210}\)

In the Gaya Congress the Gandhian leadership was challenged by the militant nationalists under the leadership of C.R. Das, though the revolutionary group of Bengal, by and large, was not at all

\(^\text{210}\) Ibid.

For Muhammad Ali's view on this matter see Indian Annual Register, Vol. I, pp. 37-40.
enthusiastic about the Council-entry programme of Das. But the points other than the Council-entry which Das included in his programme ultimately led the revolutionaries to come to an understanding with him. In this connection the following intelligence report of 1924 may be quoted: "Mr. C. R. Das was released from jail in August 1922 and about this time the proposal to non-co-operate within the Councils was first seriously mooted. But this policy was not at first supported by the Jugantar Party. Among the Bengal representatives on the All India Congress Committee, elected about November 1922, were four important members of this Party, namely Amarendra Chatterji (ex-absconder), Upen Banserji (ex-convict), Bepin Ganghli (ex-convict) and Satyen Mitter (ex-detenu). Similarly, on the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, elected at the same time, the Jugantar was, out of a total of sixty, represented by Satyen Mitter, Bepin Ganguly, Bhupati Mazumdar (ex-State Prisoner), Gopen Ray (ex-convict) and Amarendra Chatterji, while Monoranjan Gupta (ex-State prisoner) was one of the Assistant Secretaries. On the Executive Council of this Committee were Gopen Ray, Amarendra Chatterji and Bepin Ganguly. Most of these individuals at the time of their election appear to have held anti-council entry views but that they had not decided opinion on the subject and merely desired to serve their own ends, is apparent from the fact that Mr. C. R. Das gained them over to his side before or at the Gaya Congress in Christmas week, 1922. How Mr. C. R. Das gained their support was, at that time, a mystery, for it was known that his policy had little chance of success at the Congress at Gaya, but information subsequently received indicates that at this period he entered into a definite pact with these revolutionists. In April 1923, the 24-Parganas police learnt that the Swarajya Party which was formed by
Das after his defeat at the hands of the Gandhites at Gaya had agreed to co-operate with revolutionists as long as the latter abstained from overt acts and that as soon as revolutionary methods were adopted the Swarajya Party would stand aside and would not interfere.211 The Government, however, had "definite and indisputable" confirmation of the report about the co-operation of the revolutionaries with the Swaraj Party and this was regarded by the Government as the "most dangerous development" in Bengal politics. The Government of Bengal further believed that the revolutionaries received financial assistance from the Swaraj Party.212 The Intelligence Branch had reliable information that Bepin Ganguly who was then hiding in Calcutta was being assisted by Das himself both with money and with the occasional loan of a motor car.213

After the revolutionaries agreed to support C. R. Das they were given important positions of authority in the party. Satyen Mitra, a leader of the Jugantar group, who was C. R. Das's private secretary in 1921, later on became one of his principal lieutenants - a position which he shared with Subhas Chandra Bose. In February 1923 Upendranath Banerji and Mon Mohan Bhattacharya, an ex-detenu, were appointed to the Swaraj Party Publicity Board. Satyen Mitra, Pulin Das as well as Basanta Majumdar and Nagendra Guha Roy who were well-known ex-detennues were placed in the Propaganda Board of the Party. The two principal journals of the

211. Government of India, Home Department, Political, File No. 61 of 1924.
212. Government of India, Home Department, Political, File No. 379/VII (Part II) of 1924.
213. Government of India, Home Department, Political, File No. 61 of 1924.
Party, the *Forward* and the *Swadesh* were managed by the revolutionary leaders Amarendra Chatterji and Mon Mohan Bhattacharya respectively. The cause of Das was also taken up by such journals as *Atmasakti* and *Bijali* which were already brought out under the supervision of the Jugantar Party. These two journals were printed at Amarendra Chatterji's press (93/1A Bowbazar Street, Calcutta) which was continuously used by the revolutionaries for secret meetings. It was also used as the main centre of the Swaraj Party until Das was able to capture the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee after the special session of the Congress held in Delhi in September 1923. When the Calcutta Corporation came under the control of the Swarajists in 1924, Das became Mayor of Calcutta and Subhas Chandra Bose who was intimately connected with the revolutionaries was elected the Chief Executive Officer.

The support of the revolutionaries made the Swaraj Party a formidable force within the Bengal Congress. The revolutionaries had their organizations spread out in various parts of Bengal and they had their influence in every district. In the beginning of 1923 the Congress machinery of Bengal was under the control of the Gandhians but they lost their hold over it rapidly, and the Bengal Congress came under the control of a group, known as the Central Party, which was favourably inclined towards the Swarajists. Moulana Akram Khan was then made President of the

214. Government of India, Home Department, Political, File No. 61 of 1924.
216. See p.
Bengal Congress Committee, but the former Secretary, Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, a devoted follower of Gandhi, refused to hand over office. Thus, for several months there were two Provincial Congress Committees in Bengal, one under the control of the Gandhians, and another under the influence of the Swarajists. Ultimately the Committee of Akram Khan was recognized as the genuine representative Committee of the Bengal Congress. The Bengal Congress was virtually swamped by the pro-changers and the Bengal Provincial Conference of 1924 "showed that Bengal was 90 percent Swarajist."

The revolt against the Gandhian leadership, initiated by C.R. Das, the acknowledged leader of the militant nationalists of Bengal, now became an all-India affair. The Council-entry programme found response from many quarters. Due to the efforts of Das and Mutilal Nehru the strength of the Swaraj Party continued to grow in other provinces also, and the compromise between the two rival groups of Congress which was agreed upon at the special session in Delhi in September 1923 was possibly due largely to this increasing strength of the Swarajists. As Subhas Chandra Bose has put it: "(The) Swarajists had made so much progress that nothing could hamper them any more. Deshbandhu Das attended the Congress at the head of a large contingent of delegates and the Bengal votes served to turn the scales. As soon as it was clear that the Swarajists would

win the day, the 'No change' Party agreed to compromise."

Soon after the Bengal delegates returned triumphantly to Calcutta from Delhi a number of them belonging to the revolutionary group were arrested by the police. They included such leaders as Upendranath Banerji, Amarendra Chatterji, Man Mohan Bhattacharya, Jadugopal Mukherji, Bhupen Datta, Jyotish Ghosh, Manoranjan Gupta, Bhupati Majumdar and Kali Prasad Banerji.

We have already referred to the decision of the revolutionary leaders of Bengal not to resort to a violent action at least for the time being. This decision was, however, not accepted by a section of young members who came to be known as the Revolting Group or the Advance Group. They began to preach the necessity of violence and there was a recrudescence of political dacoities and assassinations. This led to the arrest of these revolutionary leaders who had by now associated themselves with C.R. Das's group. They were not in favour of the resumption of violent revolutionary activities at that time but had to suffer imprisonment because of the activities committed by the members of the Revolting Group.

Soon after their arrest, Gopinath Saha on 12 January 1924 murdered in Calcutta a British merchant named Ernest Day whom he had mistaken for Tegart, the Commissioner of Police, Calcutta. Gopinath who was executed in March was closely connected with Bhupati Majumdar and

219. The Indian Struggle 1920-1942, n. 32, p. 86.
220. Government of India, Home Department, Political File No. 61 of 1924.
Manoranjan Gupta. Manoranjan Gupta who was included among those arrested in September 1923 himself stated that they did not encourage Gopinath to commit the murder and that he (Gopinath) secured the revolver from Santosh Mitra who belonged to the revolting Group. By that time the Bengal Congress came virtually under the control of the revolutionaries who had great admiration for Gopinath's spirit of self-sacrifice but could not support his violent action for strategic reason. At the Serajgunge session of the Bengal Provincial Congress held in May 1924 they passed the following resolution: "The Conference, whilst denouncing (or dissociating itself from) violence and adhering to the principle of non-violence, appreciates Gopinath Saha's ideal of self-sacrifice, misguided though it is in respect of the country's best interest, and expresses its respect for the great self sacrifice."

The domination of the revolutionaries over the Swaraj Party of Bengal made the Government extremely cautious about its activities. On 25 October 1924 a large number of Swarajist leaders — about forty in number — were arrested in Calcutta and other parts of the province. The Congress office, the offices of the Swaraj Party and the private houses of prominent Swarajists were raided and searched causing tremendous excitement throughout the country. Subhas Chandra Bose, the Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta


Corporation, and two prominent Swarajist members of the Bengal Legislative Council, Anil Baran Roy and Satyen Mitra, were included among those arrested. The arrests, made partly under Regulation III of 1818 and partly under the Bengal Ordinance promulgated by the Governor General on 24 October, were, according to the official circles, necessary for destroying a revolutionary conspiracy. The warrants for the searches were to the effect that they were to be conducted for recovery, if possible, of revolvers, bombs and explosives. After these arrests, the Government passed in the beginning of 1925, the Bengal Criminal Amendment Bill by which its power to suppress the 'terrorist' activities was increased. While introducing the bill the Government maintained that the Serajgunge resolution on Gopinath Saha gave a new impetus to the activities of the revolutionaries and that their decision (decision of the revolutionaries) to postpone the overt acts of violence was not


In the Mandalay jail where Subhas Chandra Bose was sent in early 1925 he told his fellow prisoners that once a German gentleman met C.R. Das and expressed sympathy for the Indian struggle for independence. He proposed to help the struggle with about 400 revolvers. Instructed by Das, he met Subhas Bose and Satyen Mitra who, however, already got the information from other sources that this man was actually a British spy. They, therefore, refused to talk with him on this matter. When Bose told C. R. Das about this, he was extremely sorry for his gullibility.

Nalini Kishore Guha, n.215, p.351*

By sending the man to Subhas and Satyen, C. R. Das, however, gave unmistakable indication that they were connected with some revolutionary group which believed in armed revolt. In this connection we may refer to the observations of Subhas Chandra Bose about a letter written to the Bengal Government by the London authorities which was published in the Forward, the journal of the Swaraj Party. Bose wrote: "Forward, the Swarajist paper of Calcutta, happened to get hold of and publish a letter, written to Calcutta from London on the subject, in which an agent of the India Office was reported to have said that I had been arrested on the verbal testimony borne against me by certain people, but that there was no documentary evidence against me".

The Indian Struggle 1920-1942, n.103, p.107.
wholly successful. Moreover, the Government hinted that one important section of the revolutionaries was working in close alliance with the Swaraj Party. The support of the revolutionaries gave the Swaraj Party a special character in Bengal.

C. R. Das led the Bengal party almost independently. At the Coconada session of the Congress held in December 1923, a serious clash arose between him and the central leaders on the Hindu-Muslim Pact, better known as the Bengal Pact, concluded by him in order to promote communal unity in the province and to enlist the support of the Muslims of Bengal behind the Swaraj Party. The Hindu-Muslim fraternity brought about by Gandhi by supporting the Khilafat agitation did not survive the Non-cooperation movement and it was followed by serious communal riots. Instead of promoting communal unity on a religious basis, Das tried to achieve it on an economic and political foundation. The Pact provided for joint electorate and special weightage for the Muslims on account of their backwardness. There were provisions also for such matters as music before mosques and cow killing which frequently gave rise to communal disturbances. Though the Muslims, by and large,

225. Proceedings of the Bengal Legislative Council, 1925, Vol.XVII, No. 1, pp.3-25. The following passage appears to be most significant:

"In the Government statement the Serajgang resolution praising Gopinath Saha is referred to as the starting point of a new impetus to the conspiracy; our information is that for one reason or another pressure was thereafter brought to bear on the leaders not altogether successfully, to postpone overt acts and strengthen their organization and, a matter of very great importance, our information shows that one important section of the conspiracy was relieved of the necessity of obtaining funds for their operations and support of absconders through the old channels of dacoities and obtained their funds from elsewhere".

226. For the full text of the Bengal Pact, see Manindra Dutta and Haradhan Dutta (ed.) English Works, n.67, pp.287-290.
welcomed the Pact, many Hindu leaders thought that it was unjust to their own community. A large section of the nationalist press also took a critical attitude towards the Pact. As M. R. Jayakar has put it: "His (C. R. Das's) attitude towards the Bengal Moslems was very friendly; but many of his critics doubted whether this feeling arose purely from a sense of political expediency or was genuine in its inspiration. He once entered into a pact with Bengal Moslems, which gave that community, what his critics thought, a great deal more than their due." 227 Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, on the other hand, paid a warm tribute to Das for concluding this Pact and gave his full approval to its main provisions. He wrote: "Mr. C. R. Das was a great realist and immediately saw that the problem (Hindu-Muslim problem of Bengal) was an economic one. He realized that till the Musalmans were given the necessary assurances for their economic future, they could not be expected to join the Congress whole-heartedly. He, therefore, made a declaration which impressed not only Bengal but the whole of India. He announced that when Congress secured the reins of power in Bengal, it would reserve 60 per cent of all new appointments for the Musalmans till such time as they achieved proper representation according to population. He went even further in respect of the Calcutta Corporation and offered to reserve 80 per cent of the new appointments on similar terms. He pointed out that so long as the Musalmans were not properly represented in public life and in the services, there could be no true democracy in

The Pact was accepted by the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and Das tried to have it endorsed by the Coconada session of the All India Congress. When the matter was raised in the Congress session, there was an attempt to put it aside on the ground that a Committee was already formed to consider an all-India Pact. The way in which the Bengal Pact was treated by some leaders offended C. R. Das and he felt that there was an attempt to ignore Bengal. This feeling was clearly expressed in the speech made by him on that occasion. He said: "You may delete the Bengal Pact from the resolution but you cannot delete Bengal from the Indian National Congress. Bengal demands her right of having her suggestion considered by the National Assembly. What right has anybody to say that Bengal has to be deprived of her right? Bengal will not be deleted in this unceremonious fashion. I cannot understand the argument of those who cry 'delete the Bengal Pact'. Is Bengal untouchable? Will you deny Bengal the right of suggestion on such a vital question? If you do, Bengal can take care of itself". The Coconada Congress, however, decided that the National Committee formed for this purpose would make its recommendations after considering the views of the Provisional Congress Committees.

Meanwhile Gandhi had been released from prison in February 1924 after an operation for appendicitis, and it soon became clear that he was firmly opposed to the political programme of the Swaraj Party. He actually tried to develop the Congress according to his

own ideas as laid down in the Bardoli resolution of 1922 and was prepared for a confrontation with the Swarajists. In April C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru met Gandhi and tried for a compromise, but the attempt failed. In a statement issued on 22 May Gandhi observed: "After having discussed with the Swarajist friends the vexed question of entry into the Legislative Assembly and the Councils by Congressmen, I am sorry to have to say that I have not been able to see eye to eye with the Swarajists. ... I retain the opinion that council entry is inconsistent with non-cooperation, as I conceive it." 230

At the AICC meeting held at Ahmedabad in June, Gandhi moved certain resolutions at least three of which constituted a direct challenge to the Swaraj party. By one resolution he proposed to limit the membership of the organization to those who gave a certain amount of self-spun yarn regularly every month. The proposed resolution had also a penalty clause which stated: "Any member failing to send the prescribed quantity by the prescribed date shall be deemed to have vacated his office and such vacancy shall be filled in the usual manner ..." 231 This was virtually an attempt to change the Congress constitution because so far every one who subscribed to the Congress objective of swaraj through peaceful methods could become its members by paying four annas. Gandhi wanted to replace four annas by an amount of self-spun yarn. The motive of Gandhi obviously was to bring


231. For the text of the proposed resolution see Young India, 19 June 1924.
the Congress organization under the control of his devoted followers by ousting the Swarajists who were indifferent to or critical of the Charkha. In the AICC meeting the resolution was naturally stoutly opposed by the Swarajists, who, later on, led by Das and Motilal Nehru, left the meeting. Those who remained in the meeting apprehended that the resolution in its existing form, if passed, might destroy the Congress, and, therefore, they pressed for the withdrawal of the penalty clause. Gandhi at first did not agree, and an amendment to remove the penalty clause was defeated by 67 to 37. When Gandhi found that a significant number of his own followers were opposed to him, he agreed to have the penalty clause rescinded. The resolution was thus passed without the penalty clause.

By another resolution Gandhi proposed that only those Congressmen who had full faith in the various non-cooperation resolutions of the Congress including the five boycotts (boycott of the mill-spun cloth, government law courts, schools, titles and legislative bodies) should be elected to various Congress offices and those members who did not believe in the said boycotts must vacate these offices. It was directed clearly against the Swarajists, but in view of the attitude of the Congressmen with regard to the previous resolution, Gandhi, after a long consultation with the Swarajists, agreed to modify it. He, however, refused to change in any way his resolution on Gopinath.

232. The Indian Annual Register, 1924, Vol. I, pp. 608-609(a)
233. For full text see Young India, 19 June 1924; See also Pattabhi Sitarayya, R. 56, Vol. I, p. 275.
Saha. We have already referred to the murder of Day by Gopinath and the Serajgang resolution passed by the Bengal Provincial Conference on it. The Serajgang resolution, as we have seen, appreciated Gopinath Saha's ideal of self-sacrifice while denouncing his violent action. In Gandhi's draft there was no appreciation for Gopinath Saha. It read in part: "the AICC strongly condemns this and all such political murders and is emphatically of opinion that all such acts are inconsistent with the Congress creed and its resolution of non-violent non-cooperation and is of opinion that such acts retard the progress towards swaraj, and interfere with the preparations for civil disobedience." C.R. Das opposed this resolution and insisted that the Serajgang resolution be accepted. When Das's proposal was put to the vote, it was lost by 70 to 78. Gandhi's motion was thus carried by a narrow margin.

In the Ahmedabad session of the AICC there was thus a tough fight between the militant pro-changers and the Gandhian no-changers. In this fight Gandhi thought he was "Defeated and Humbled". This was the title of an article written by Gandhi during this time and published in Young India. He had to modify two of his resolutions mentioned above and the Gopinath resolution was carried only by a bare majority. He was not prepared for such a tough opposition at Ahmedabad. He now

234. See p. 212.
237. Young India, 3 July 1924.
understood that it would not be possible for him to convert the whole Congress to his views and, therefore, to maintain the unity of the organization he must adopt a compromising attitude. Describing Gandhi's state of mind of this period Jawaharlal Nehru wrote: "Probably he wanted the Congress to consist only of people who were believers in his constructive programme of khadi etc., and was prepared to drive out the others or make them conform. But although he had the majority with him, he weakened in his resolve and began to compromise with the others ... He seemed to be completely at sea, unable to find his bearings."233 It now became evident to Gandhi that there were two groups within the Congress — a political group with faith in militant nationalism and his own followers with faith in Constructive Programme. In the postcript to the article "Defeated and Humbled" he observed: "The two methods represent two opposite mentalities. This is not to say that one is wrong if the other is right. Each may be right in its own place. But for one organization to work both is to weaken both and therefore to damage the national cause."239

Having failed to develop Congress into "a homogenous organization", Gandhi wrote in the same article: "We must now, therefore, do the next best thing." What was that "next best" alternative? It was a working compromise between the two groups by providing each group an opportunity to carry on its activities unobstructed by the other maintaining at the same time the unity of the Congress. The Ahmedabad meeting did not lead to the split of

233. Jawaharlal Nehru, n. 21, p. 127.
239. Young India, 3 July 1924.
the Congress because of the sagacity of Gandhi and compromising attitude of C.R. Das. C.R. Das accommodated non-violence as well as Constructive Programme with his Council-entry politics which was interpreted as an extension of Gandhi's strategy of non-co-operation. On this point (Council-entry) the difference between them, however, persisted, but it lost its significance because the experience of the AICC meeting at Ahmedabad convinced Gandhi that the boycott and the non-cooperation movement could no longer be continued. He wrote in *Young India*: "I am just as keen a believer as ever in the five boycotts. But I clearly see, as I did not at the time of the AICC meeting, that whilst we maintain them in our persons, there is no atmosphere for working them."²⁴⁰ It meant that the Gandhians might continue the "five boycotts" individually but there should remain no movement for it.

Henceforth Gandhi's main objective was to reconstruct the Congress structurally as well as functionally so that both the groups might work within the Congress freely in their own ways. This was partly achieved in early November (1924) when Gandhi, Das and Motilal Nehru came to an agreement about the future activities and constitution of the Congress. This agreement which is sometimes called the Calcutta Pact or the Gandhi-Das Pact was first announced in the form of a statement issued from Calcutta on 6 November 1924. Its salient points were:

(a) the programme of non-cooperation should be suspended as a national programme except in respect of refusal to use foreign cloth;

²⁴⁰ "The Realities", *Young India*, 11 September 1924.

²⁴¹ It was also known as Bengal Pact. See Hemendranath Das Gupta, n. 57, p. 100.
(b) the constructive programme should be carried on by all sections within the Congress;
(c) the Swaraj Party should carry on the work in the Council on behalf of the Congress, and
(d) all Congress members would have to contribute 2000 yards of hand-spun yarn per month.242

The agreement was ratified at the Belgaum session of the Indian National Congress held at the end of December with Gandhi as President. The next step in the process of reconciliation was taken by Gandhi during the Patna session of the AICC held in September 1925. Here he set up a new organization known as the All India Spinners' Association (AISA) "as an integral part of the Congress organization, but with independent existence and powers ..."243 It was an association within the Congress for the orthodox followers of Gandhi who had full faith in Charkha and other items of the Constructive Programme. The Congress proper was left to the Swaraj group to be used by the nationalists as a political organization. The Congress franchise was again altered at Patna, and spinning did not remain an essential qualification. It was resolved that anybody paying four annas annually or 200C yards of hand-spun yarn was entitled to be a member of the Congress. The Congress was thus bifurcated organizationally into two wings — the Swarajist wing and the Gandhian wing, though they remained in close contact with each other. Referring to this changed attitude of Gandhi towards the Swaraj Party Subhas

242. For full text of the Agreement see 'Joint Statements with Swaraj Party leaders', Young India, 13 November 1924. See also Report of the Thirty-Ninth Indian National Congress at Belgaum (1924), (Publisher not mentioned), p. 72.

243. For the full text of the resolution giving rise to this Association see D.C. Tendulkar, n.25, Vol. II, p. 204. Also The Indian National Congress 1925 (AICC, Allahabad, 1926), p. 3.
Chandra Bose wrote: "It may be that he found the position of the Swarajists to be too strong in the country to be able to overthrow them and so he bowed to the inevitable. Or it may be that he felt that the changed circumstances in the country warranted a change in tactics." Both the factors must be taken into consideration to account for the change in Gandhi's attitude. At Ahmedabad he saw the strength of the Swaraj group and later on it appeared to him that the conditions of the country were no longer favourable for the non-cooperation or the boycott movement. In the context of the withdrawal of the non-cooperation as a national programme, the Council-entry politics of the Swaraj Party ceased to be a heresy.

This changed attitude of Gandhi brought C.R. Das very close to him and their relations became extremely cordial, and this created an atmosphere very favourable for Gandhi in Bengal. He came to Bengal on the eve of the Belgaum Congress as well as after it, and addressed the people in different parts of the province. With reference to this tour Tendulkar wrote: "Gandhi influenced Bengal greatly ... From the humblest peasant to the highest intellectual the message of charkha had appealed ... He won the hearts of every section of the society." Gandhi was regarded by that time not as a rival but as an ally of Das and this made him more acceptable to the people of Bengal. Even if the report of Tendulkar is considered exaggerated there is no doubt that his influence in Bengal began to rise.

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244. The Indian Struggle 1920-1942, n. 32, p. 102.
But inspite of this favourable atmosphere the orthodox Gandhian group was not satisfied with Gandhi's policy of compromise with the Swaraj Party. The no-changers not only of Bengal but throughout India feared that this policy of compromise and concession would change the Gandhian character of the Congress. They were in favour of continuing his original programme as laid down in the Bardoli resolution without making any concession to the Swarajist line. They, for example, wanted Gandhi to stick to the original resolutions drafted by him for the Ahmedabad meeting of the AICC which we have already discussed, and they were disappointed when he modified them for accommodating the Swarajists. The Gandhi-Das statement issued from Calcutta on 6 November 1924 was also subjected to severe criticism by the no-changers. They thought the Swaraj group had faith neither in Constructive Programme nor in non-violence, and therefore, Gandhi's earnest attempt to appease them was absolutely unwarranted. Gandhi had to issue a long statement to justify his stand against the criticism of his most devoted followers. In course of that statement he said: "It is not to be wondered at that no-changers are intensely dissatisfied with the agreement arrived at between the Swarajists and myself ... Many no-changers regard it as a lapse if not a betrayal ... I have come to the conclusion that it is in the interest of the country to give the Swaraj Party the fullest possible chance of working out its own programme without let or hindrance from no-changers. The latter are not bound to participate in its activity, if they do

246. See pp. 145-146

not like it ... The Swaraj Party is a party of orderly progress. It may not swear by non-violence as I do, but it accepts non-violence as a policy and it discountenances violence because it considers it to be useless if not even harmful." The explanation did not satisfy the no-changers and they continued to express their grievances. On the eve of the Belgaum Congress (December 1924) which finally ratified the Gandhi-Das statement, Gandhi wrote: "I am besieged with angry or sorrowful protests from the no-changers."

The orthodox followers of Gandhi were not satisfied with the settlement of the Belgaum Congress by which a separate organization — the All India Spinners' Association — was set up for them within the Congress. Their strong protests continued to pour in and they said: "The Swarajists do not want your (Gandhi's) spinning association. Why not start it outside the Congress and surrender completely to the Swarajists?" With reference to his Presidential address at Belgaum the Servant, the organ of the Gandhian group in Bengal, wrote: "We only regret what use is this speech to us, who have rejected Gandhi in spirit and are only hugging Gandhi in form." The Dainik Basumati also commented: "Many will be at first disappointed to read Mahatma Gandhi's address. We do not believe that his address will

249. Ibid., p. 169.
250. Satish Chandra Dasgupta was the President of the Bengal branch of the AISA.
252. Servant, 27 December 1924.
enrich our political literature. On pursuing it we are led to think that even the strong convictions of the Mahatma are, as it were, giving to despair. It was believed by some that the Belgaum compromise was an attempt to reconcile two contradictory elements within the Congress and they thought that it would not last long and would ultimately lead the Congress to disintegration.

The Bengalee, for example, observed: "Belgaum has killed the Congress... It was dying no doubt from the day that Mr. Gandhi captured it in 1920 with the help of his new Khilafat allies. But though it had gradually ceased to represent the political thought of the country and had been slowly but surely developing into a satyagraha organization all these years, the decaying process has been completed this Christmas at Belgaum. But the transformation has not been quite normal. The old Congress is now practically split up into two bodies - one half being Mr. Gandhi's Satyagraha, and the other half Mr. C. R. Das's Swarajist Party. The union is not real and organic but artificial and inorganic. Satyagraha as Mahatma Gandhi has understood it all these years cannot honestly enter into any real alliance with the swaraj as Mr. Das has been seeking to realize. Mr. Das's swaraj is essentially a political concept, ... Mr. Gandhi's satyagraha is essentially a religio-ethical movement". "He (Gandhi) has sold", the Bengalee continued, "the Congress as a political organization to the Swarajists. It is an act of unreason and injustice of which we thought at one time Gandhi was actually incapable. But the old Gandhi is gone.

He has killed the Congress...\textsuperscript{254}

The Belgaum settlement satisfied both Gandhi and Das but it could not satisfy the orthodox followers of the former and the revolutionary allies of the latter in Bengal. If the no-changers accused Gandhi of surrendering to the Swarajists, the revolutionary group within the Swaraj Party of Bengal feared the surrender of C.R. Das to Gandhi. After the Gandhi-Das understanding was arrived at, C.R. Das became almost a spokesman of Gandhi in Bengal. He was satisfied when the Swaraj Party was given the right to carry on the work in the Council on behalf of the Congress. The other items in the programme which he mentioned in his statement of 7 November \textsuperscript{255} 1922 and elaborated in his Gaya speech were almost forgotten. Even within the limited sphere of the Council politics he began to think in terms of cooperation with the Government rather than consistent and continuous opposition. Explaining this changed view of C.R. Das towards the Council during this period his biographer wrote: "Deshbandhu Das was anxious for an early settlement of the Indian political problem as he wanted to utilize the machinery of Government in the service of the people."\textsuperscript{256}

There arose by

\textsuperscript{254} Bengalee, 3 January 1925, Bengal N. N., No. 2 of 1925.

\textsuperscript{255} See p. 124.

\textsuperscript{256} Hemendranath Das Gupta n. 57, pp. 118-119.

It is not clear whether Das was influenced in any way by Gandhi's view on the Council. However, it may be noted that in his statement issued on 22 May 1924 Gandhi observed: "With regard to the method of work in the Councils, I will say that I would enter a legislative body if only I found that I could use it to advantage. If, therefore, I enter the Councils, I should, without following a general policy of obstruction, endeavour to give strength to the constructive programme of the Congress". D. G. Tendulkar, n. 50, Vol. II, p. 129.
this time a tendency for cooperation in the Swaraj Party as a whole. This deviation took place mainly because of two reasons. First, there were some elements in the Swaraj Party who fell victims to the lure for power, and the government tried to win over them by holding out before them the prospect of high office. Secondly, the leaders themselves gradually became aware of the sterile character of their politics of obstruction and undiluted opposition. By their politics of opposition they could not bring about any administrative deadlock because the government had the power of veto and certification by which it could always override the decision of the legislature. Their work in the Council appeared to be profitless particularly after the withdrawal of non-cooperation as a national programme. Under such circumstances they began to think in terms of a better constitutional system where cooperation might be possible. Thus if the weaker and the opportunist elements were tempted by the bureaucratic overturer, the leaders and the loyal elements were disappointed by the output of their council-entry strategy. This crisis of the Swaraj Party was clearly described by Jawaharlal Nehru thus:

"The general tone of the Swarajists went down. Individuals here and there began to slip away to the other side... The Swaraj Party carried on in spite of these defections, but father and Mr. Das became a little disgusted with the turn of events and somewhat weary of what seemed to be their profitless work in the legislatures." 257 In such a situation C. R. Das became

eager for a new constitutional arrangement which might provide a basis for cooperation. The government was also eager for a political settlement and the governor of Bengal, Lord Lytton, wanted to meet C. R. Das. With the help of two Europeans who were friendly to Das, a secret meeting was arranged between Das and Lytton in which the governor suggested that as the first step preparatory to a political settlement Das should make a public statement denouncing political violence. Das agreed, and on 29 March 1925 he issued a manifesto in which he said: "I have made it clear and I do it once again that I am opposed to the principle of political assassination and violence in any shape or form. ... I consider it an obstacle to our political progress. ... I am therefore eager that this evil should not grow any further and that this method should cease as a political weapon in my country. I have also made it clear and I again make it clear that I am equally opposed to and equally abhor any form of repression by the government. ... We are determined to secure Swaraj and political emancipation of India on terms of equality and honourable partnership in the Empire."  

Das expected a prompt response from the British side in the form of concrete proposals of constitutional reforms, but though the Secretary of State for India welcomed Das's manifesto in one of his important speeches in the House of Lords there was no immediate announcement about further constitutional advance for India.

259. Hemendranath Dasgupta, n.57, p.119. Full text is given.
Birkenhead's pronouncement on the revision of India's constitution came on 7 July 1925, about three weeks after the death of C. R. Das. It did not contain any concrete proposal and appeared disappointing to all. Subhas Chandra Bose thought that it was the death of C. R. Das which led the British government to issue such an empty pronouncement. He wrote: "Their arch-enemy was dead; therefore, things would settle down now for a while. They would accordingly not decide anything in a hurry but would watch developments." Das, however, expected "big things" from Birkenhead and once he started his efforts for a political understanding with the British, he continued it with vigour till his death. In his Presidential address at the Bengal Provincial Conference held at Faridpur on 2 May 1925 he spelled out briefly the terms on which India would be prepared to cooperate with the government. The conference was attended by Gandhi himself. In his Faridpur speech Das preferred Dominion Status to independence, denounced revolutionary violence, gave full support to Gandhi's Constructive Programme and promised cooperation with the government under certain conditions. Explaining these conditions he said: "In the first place,
the government should divest itself of its wide discretionary powers of constraint, and follow it up by proclaiming a general amnesty of all political prisoners. In the next place, the government should guarantee to us the fullest recognition of our right to the establishment of Swaraj within the Commonwealth in the near future, and that in the meantime, till Swaraj comes, a sure and sufficient foundation of such Swaraj should be laid at once. What is a sufficient foundation is, and must necessarily be, a matter of negotiation and settlement. Soon after the Faridpur Conference C.R. Das died on 16 June 1925.

After Gandhi accepted the right of the Swaraj Party to carry on its political activities on behalf of the Congress, there remained no difference between Gandhi and Das. But in spite of Das-Gandhi reconciliation, the revolutionary group, which constituted the major section of the Swaraj Party of Bengal, maintained its opposition to Gandhi, and this opposition was now expressed through the criticism of C.R. Das. The main theme of his Faridpur speech was condemned by the revolutionary group though it had the support of Gandhi. After the death of Das, Gandhi, in an article entitled "Long Live Deshbandhu", wrote: "The Faridpur speech had a great purpose behind it. It was a generous response to the Anglo-Indian friends who were anxious for the great patriot to make his position clear and make the first approach. He made it. The cruel hand of death has removed the author of the gesture from our midst."

to the people, there is no reason why we should not cooperate with the Government." Ibid., p. 334.

268. Ibid., p. 335.
But I would like to assure Englishmen who may be still doubtful
about the sincerity of Deshbandhu's motive that throughout my stay
in Darjeeling,\textsuperscript{269} the one thing that struck me most forcibly was
his utter sincerity about that utterance. Can this glorious death
be utilized to heal wounds and forget distrust?\textsuperscript{270} The concilia-
tory gesture of C. R. Das towards the British government which was,
thus, supported by Gandhi, was, however, strongly condemned by the
revolutionary nationalists of Bengal. They believed in uncompro-
mising struggle against the British, and, therefore, C. R. Das's
accommodating policy and his outright denunciation of political
violence in pursuance of that policy made them now extremely cri-
tical of Das. Their journal \textit{Atmasakti} wrote: "After the publica-
tion of the Deshbandhu manifesto,\textsuperscript{271} the appearance of a new party
in the political field of the country has become necessary. ... When the young men of the country ranged round the Deshbandhu
after the internal dissension at the Gaya Congress, they were
under the spell of the rosy intoxication of new hopes. Their de-
termination was to achieve the lofty ideal of full independence,
to abolish all kinds of social, political or commercial bondage
and to create the fullest opportunities for the development of
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C.R.Das went to Darjeeling on 16 May 1925 in order to take
rest in Step Aside which belonged to Sir Nripendra Nath
Sircar, later Law Member in the Viceroy's Executive Council.
Gandhi was then touring Bengal and he was invited by Das to
visit Darjeeling. Accordingly, Gandhi went to Darjeeling on 4
June and remained with Das for five days.

\textsuperscript{270} Young India, 25 June 1925, Amrita Bazar Patrika, 20 June
1925, \textit{Forward}, 20 June 1925.

\textsuperscript{271} We have referred to it in f. n. 259 of this chapter.
the manhood of all the inhabitants of the country irrespective of caste, creed or religion. The Deshbandhu fully assented to the ideal of the Young men and they assembled under his flag. The next step was the creation of the Swarajya Party. But there were points where the views of the Deshbandhu did not tally with the views of the workers. The Young workers do not accept non-violence as a creed as the Deshbandhu has done. Subhas Bose was closer to them.\(^{272}\) This comment was published in the Atmasakti before Das delivered his Faridpur speech which was, however, condemned by a wider section of Bengal nationalists. "The Presidential address of Das is solely pervaded with a desire for compromise," wrote the Swaraj.\(^{273}\) The Ananda Bazar Patrika described C.R.Das's policy of compromise as a "neo-moderate policy."\(^{274}\) The Amrita Bazar Patrika also branded him as a moderate and wrote : "Mr. Das, it seems to us, had prepared his speech for Lord Birkenhead."\(^{275}\) In the monthly journal Basumati the great Bengali novelist, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya, wrote in an article that the Faridpur address of Das was hailed by the moderate leaders of Bengal as their own triumph.\(^{276}\) Thus, in the last phase of his life, as C.R.Das became more and more inclined towards the Gandhian politics, he lost the support of the Bengal revolutionary group.

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\(^{272}\) Atmasakti, 17 April 1925, Bengal N.N., No.18 of 1925.
\(^{273}\) Swaraj, 2 May 1925, Bengal N.N., No.19 of 1925.
\(^{274}\) Ananda Bazar Patrika, 4 May 1925.
\(^{275}\) Amrita Bazar Patrika, 3 May 1925.
\(^{276}\) Basumati, (Monthly), Asad 1332 B.E. In this article Sarat Chandra wrote that C.R.Das asked him to prepare an appeal in Bengali requesting the Bengal revolutionaries to give up their policy of violence. Accordingly he prepared a draft in a soft language and showed it to Das. Das, however, was not satisfied and wanted the appeal to be written in a more straight-forward and unequivocal language. Sarat Chandra did not agree and the appeal was not issued. This article of Sarat Chandra is included in Sarat Rachanavali, Vol.V, pp. 528-533.
Towards Civil Disobedience: Bengal's Pressure and Gandhi's Adjustment.

After the death of C.R. Das, Gandhi supported J.M. Sengupta of the Swaraj Party and helped him to don the "triple crown" which Das himself "had wearing." Sengupta was elected the Mayor of Calcutta, president of the Bengal Swaraj Party and also of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. In the ensuing years Gandhi's influence in Bengal politics was exerted through J.M. Sengupta and his associates, though it was opposed by a section from the beginning. This opposition became strong when Gandhi supported Sengupta in the Mayoral election, and Gandhi ultimately had to issue a statement justifying his support and answering his critics. The influence of Gandhi was, however, soon challenged by Subhas Chandra Bose who was released from prison in 1927 and was widely acknowledged as the natural leader of Bengal. A staunch nationalist representing the militant tradition of Bengal, Subhas Chandra was not prepared to compromise with the Gandhian approach. Though he regarded himself a political disciple of C.R. Das, he made no attempt to revive the politics of compromise which C.R. Das followed in last phase of his life. As we have mentioned earlier, there arose two groups

277. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, n.56, Vol.I, p.284. The "triple crown" were leadership of the Swaraj Party in Council, Mayoral position in the Calcutta Corporation and the Presidentship of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee.

278. For life and activities of Sengupta see Padmini Sengupta, Deshpraya Jatindra Mohan Sengupta (Publications Division, Government of India, 1969).

279. Young India, 18 July 1925.

among the militant nationalists of Bengal after the retreat of Bardoli: one was represented by C.R. Das and another by the revolutionaries. Though the revolutionaries supported C.R. Das, they were not in full agreement with him. In Das they found an ally, but in Bose they discovered their leader. Like the revolutionary nationalists Bose stood for full independence and believed in a relentless struggle against the British imperialist rule. He also tried to make non-cooperation effective by organizing the workers and peasants, and considered the Constructive Programme of Gandhi irrelevant to the freedom movement. Like them, again, he was against the use of premature violence, but was prepared to use it under favourable conditions. His difference with Gandhi was basic and fundamental. The philosophical difference would be discussed in Chapter V and here we shall examine how under the leadership of Bose the influence of Gandhi was rapidly eroded from the Bengal politics.

So far as the national movement was concerned the difference between Bose and Gandhi centered around two basic points. One was the goal of the national movement — whether complete independence or dominion status. This point was settled in the Lahore session of the Congress (1929-30) in favour of complete independence but the process gave rise to extreme bitterness between Gandhi and Bose. The second point was the nature of the movement to realise independence. This point will have to be discussed in the context of the Indian situation and later on, with the approach of the second world war, in the context of the international situation.

We shall first discuss, in historical context, the controversy between dominion status and complete independence in course
of which Bose appeared almost as a rival to Gandhi. After the release of Bose the main issue in the national politics of India was the agitation against the Simon Commission which was appointed in November 1927 to consider constitutional advances for India. The Congress in its Madras session of 1927 decided to start a boycott movement against the Simon Commission which served as the signal for a widespread political agitation in the country. Besides this agitation the Congress along with other political forces of the country tried to frame a constitution for the future of India, and the outcome of this effort was the Nehru Report, prepared by a Committee headed by Motilal Nehru. The Nehru Report recommended Dominion Status for India, but in the All Parties' Conference which was held in Lucknow in August 1928 to discuss the recommendations of the Committee, Subhas Chandra Bose and other younger leaders including Jawaharlal Nehru raised their voice in favour of complete independence, though for the sake of maintaining national unity, they decided not to oppose the recommendations formally. Immediately after the Lucknow Conference was over, they formed an Independence League in order to create a strong public opinion in the country in favour of complete independence. Tracing the genesis of the Independence League Bose wrote: "A private meeting of members of the Congress Left Wing was therefore held at Lucknow to decide our course of action and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and I suggested

281 For the text of the resolution see Chakrabarty and Bhattacharyya (compiled), Congress Resolutions, pp. 55-56.

282 For the full text of Nehru Committee's recommendations see Ibid., Appendix II-B, pp. 193-207.
that instead of dividing the House and thereby wrecking the All Parties Conference, we should content ourselves by voicing our protest at the Conference and then proceed to organise an Independence League in order to carry on an active propaganda in the country in favour of independence. This suggestion was accepted by the meeting of Left-Wingers and following it, Pandit J.L. Nehru and I made our position clear at the All Parties Conference on the question of independence, but refrained from dividing the House. After the conference, we started organizing branches of the Independence League all over the country and in November, at a meeting held at Delhi, the Independence League was formally inaugurated. Through Students Movement, Youth Movement and Trade Union Movement Bose tried to introduce a radical trend in Indian politics which was not consistent with the Gandhian way. This force of national radicalism which came to be known as Leftism tried to articulate sharply the demand for national independence in the place of dominion status. In the Bengal Provincial Conference of 1928 which was presided over by J.M. Sengupta, Bose introduced a resolution calling for complete independence for India and it was passed by the Conference. Previously in the Madras Congress (1927) which gave the call for boycotting the Simon Commission a resolution was passed on independence to the great irritation of Gandhi.

285. "... In my humble opinion" Gandhi wrote, "it (The Independence Resolution) was hastily conceived and thoughtlessly passed." Young India, 5 January 1928. In an interview to 'Indian Daily Mail' he was asked "... is it true that you did not approve of the Independence Resolution?" Gandhi's reply was, "that is an open secret". The Searchlight, 6 January 1928. Again in an article "Independence V. Swaraj" contd ...
In this atmosphere of rising militancy the annual session of the Congress was held in Calcutta in December 1928. In view of the strong sentiment in favour of complete independence, Gandhi, by way of compromise, moved a resolution stating that the "Congress will adopt the Constitution (Nehru Constitution) if it is accepted in its entirety by the British Parliament on or before the 31st December 1929, but in the event of its non-acceptance by the date or its earlier rejection, the Congress will organise a campaign of non-violent Non-cooperation by advising the country to refuse taxation and in such other manner as may be decided upon. Consistently with the above, nothing in this resolution shall interfere with the carrying on in the name of the Congress of the propaganda for complete Independence."  

A large number of Bengal revolutionaries had joined this session as delegates and they pressed Subhas Chandra Bose to oppose this resolution of Gandhi demanding complete independence immediately. Since Subhas Chandra was a signatory to the Nehru Report (though personally he was consistently in favour of complete independence), he did not think it proper to oppose Gandhi's resolution but at last he had to succumb to the requests of his revolutionary followers. Bhupendra Kumar Datta, a leader of the Jugantar group, gave a brief account of the pressure which the revolutionaries brought on Subhas Chandra and compelled him to move an amendment demanding complete independence. He wrote that Bose at first

286. For the text see Chakrabarty and Battacharyya (compiled), Congress Resolutions, pp. 56-57.
refused to move any amendment because he had already agreed to accept Gandhi's resolution. But a strong group of revolutionaries including the famous Bengali novelist Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay urged Bose to move the amendment. At last he agreed to do so. While introducing the amendment Subhas Chandra said in his speech: "You are aware that the Bengal delegates, or at least the majority of them, assembled and resolved to have this amendment moved on their behalf and that they were prepared to accept the vote of the House, whatever the consequences might be. Even if I did not stand here today to move the amendment, I can assure you that some other members would have stood up to do so on their behalf." Bose shared the faith of the militant nationalists of Bengal that without a struggle the British would never grant independence or even real dominion status to India and therefore it was futile to give a one-year notice to the Government. "Only madness or folly," he wrote, "could have led one to hope that the mighty British government would concede even Dominion Home Rule without a struggle." In his speech at the Calcutta Congress he said: "I should like to put one straight question. In the main resolution you have given twelve months time to the British government. Can you lay your hands on your breasts and

287. Bhupendra Kumar Datta, "Biplobi Gandhi O Bharater Biplabandolana" (Revolutionary Gandhi and India's Revolutionary Movement)" in Sailesh Kumar Bandopadhyay (ed.), Gandhi Parikrama (Mitra and Ghosh, Calcutta, 1376 B.E.), pp. 278-279. This pressure was absent in other provinces of India and therefore the individual left leaders in other provinces could not go very far.


289. The Indian Struggle 1920-1942, n. 32, p. 158.
say that there is a reasonable chance of getting Dominion Status within the period? Pandit Motilal has made it clear in his speech that he does not believe so. Then why should we lower the flag for these twelve months? Why not say we have lost the last vestige of faith in the British government and that we are going to take a bold stand?²⁹⁰ He pointed out that a resolution in favour of complete independence would create a new mentality among the people without which independence would not be achieved. Subhas Chandra's amendment which was supported by Nehru was, however, lost by 973 votes to 1350.²⁹¹ About two-thirds of Bengal delegates supported Bose's amendment.

Though defeated, the Calcutta Congress was a great triumph for Subhas Chandra Bose and the militant nationalists of Bengal. The demand for national independence was a demand for struggle against the British rule and they were able to create an atmosphere favourable for it, and Subhas Chandra became the principal spokesman of the militant politics of India. For organizing the Congress session Bose had raised a Volunteer Corps with himself as the G.O.C. This Corps which was composed largely of the Bengal revolutionaries worked in a military style to the great annoyance of Gandhi. Referring to the activities of the Volunteers, Mirod C. Chaudhuri wrote: "The first expression of Bose's militarism was seen at the session of the Indian National Congress in

²⁹¹ The Indian Struggle 1920-1942, n. 32, p. 157.
Calcutta in 1928. For it Bose organized a volunteer corps in uniform, its officers being even provided, so far as I remember, with steel-chain epaulettes. Bose designated himself as its General-Officer-Commanding, G.O.C., for short, ... Mahatma Gandhi, being a sincere pacifist vowed to non-violence, did not like the strutting, clicking of boots, and saluting, and he afterwards described the Calcutta session of the Congress as a Bertram Mills circus, which caused great indignation among the Bengalis."

Moreover, "during the sittings of the Congress a procession of 10,000 workers visited the Congress pandal to demonstrate their solidarity with the struggle for national freedom and to appeal to the Congress to take up the cause of the starving workers." Such demonstrations of the workers were also hitherto unknown to the Congress session and they were not consistent with the Gandhian methodology. The militant nationalists of Bengal under Subhas Chandra's leadership were now on the offensive.

In 1929 the Indian politics was dominated by the Gandhian politics of negotiation as well as the revolutionary politics of violence. In early months of the year there was no reaction of the British government to the notice served to it by the Calcutta Congress. In June 1929 the Labour Party came to power in Britain and the new Prime Minister, Ramsay Macdonald, invited the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, to come to London for consultation. Coming back to India, he, on 31 October, made an important declaration stating that in the judgement of the Government "it is implicit


294. The Indian Struggle 1920-1942, n. 32, p. 158.
in the declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as there contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion Status." He also stated that after the publication of the report of the Simon Commission a Round Table Conference would be held in London in which "representatives of different parties and interests in British India and representatives of Indian States" would be invited. Gandhi and several other Congress leaders considered this declaration as a conciliatory gesture and issued a Manifesto (Delhi Manifesto) appreciating the sincerity of the announcement and suggesting that the proposed Round Table Conference should be held to frame a scheme of Dominion Constitution for India and not simply to discuss when Dominion Status would be granted. Though Jawaharlal Nehru signed this Manifesto after some hesitation, Bose opposed it, and, along with few others, he issued a separate Manifesto opposing the acceptance of Dominion Status. The Gandhi group, however, continued negotiations with the government and on 23 December Gandhi and Motilal Nehru met the Viceroy and sought the assurance that Dominion Status would soon be granted to India. The Viceroy could not give any such assurance and thus the negotiations failed.

295. The declaration of 1917, made by Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, on 20 August was: "The policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the government of India is in complete accord, is that of increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the Empire."


297. The Indian Struggle 1920-1942, n. 32, p. 172.
Along with the Gandhian politics of negotiation there was a 
revival of the violent movement in 1929, and the most important 
event of this movement was the throwing of bombs in the Assembly 
Hall in Delhi on 8 April and the arrest of Bhagat Singh and 
Batukeshwar Dutta in this connection. Bhagat Singh was a leader 
of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army and the revolutionaries 
of Bengal were closely connected with this organization.

Bhagat Singh was executed on 23 March 1931, six days before 
the commencement of the Karachi Session of the Congress. And the 
Congress with the consent of Gandhi promptly adopted a resolution 
admiring "the bravery and sacrifice of the late Sardar Bhagat 
Singh". This resolution was contrasted in Bengal with Gandhi's 
opposition to a similar resolution on the Bengali revolutionary 
Gopinath Saha which had the effect of intensifying anti-Gandhi 
feeling in Bengal, particularly among the militant nationalists.

298. Terrorism in India 1917-1956, pp. 73-76.

A revolutionary leader of Bengal wrote that during the 
Congress session of 1928 Bhagat Singh and Ramsaran Das came 
to Calcutta, met him and asked for bombs and arms. But he, 
like many other veteran leaders of the Anushilan Samiti and 
Jugantar Party, believed that the time was not yet ripe for 
vigorous activities, and, therefore, he at first refused to 
give them arms. But Bhagat Singh pointed out that the polit­
cal consciousness of the people of the Punjab and Delhi 
was not as developed as that of Bengal, and violent revolu­
tional activities were necessary to arouse them. At last 
he gave them arms and bombs. See Trailakya Chakraborty, 
n. 161, pp. 135-137.

298A. Important part of the resolution was: "This Congress, while 
dissociating itself from and disapproving of political 
violence in any shape or form, places on record its admira­
tion of the bravery and sacrifice of the late Sardar Bhagat 
Singh and his comrades Syts. Sukhdev and Rajguru, and 
mourns with the bereaved families the loss of these lives". 
Report of the Forty-Fifth Indian National Congress (General 
Secretaries, Forty-Fifth Indian National Congress, Karachi, 
n.d.), p. 32.

298B. See p. 217 of this chapter.
A Bengalicorrespondent referring to this development wrote to Gandhi: "... They (Bengalis) question your integrity and sincerity and try to belittle you (and your cause) by surreptiously propagating an idea in Bengal that while you gave your active support to the resolution about Bhagat Singh at Karachi you severely criticized the late Deshbandhu Das for his responsibility in carrying out an exactly similar resolution ... praising Gopinath Saha who lost his life on the gallows under exactly similar circumstances; and in this they say you are not immune from provincial bias. They are taking every opportunity to undermine your influence in Bengal by appealing to the sentiment of local patriotism. They say that many Bengal youths sacrificed their lives even within this very year for the same cause for which Bhagat Singh and his comrades died. Among those who thus died in Bengal there were Benoy Bose and his comrade; there were the Chittagong raiders — the twenty-one lads, who died fighting bravely against the British troops on the Jalallabad Hills whose deeds were much more courageous and romantic than you would imagine, but how strange —you did not find romance there: not a word of sympathy passed from your lips! The insidious appeal made to their sentiment of local patriotism easily estranges them from you and your path of non-violence." Gandhi published this report in his Young India and tried to counter the allegation of his biasness against Bengal.

However, the throwing of bomb in the Assembly Hall led to the arrest of twenty-four persons in all and an all-India
Conspiracy Case was started at Lahore about the middle of 1929. The conspiracy case prisoners began a hunger strike at Lahore jail in protest against ill treatment and this gave rise to an intense agitation throughout India. It may be mentioned that Jatin Das continued his hunger strike for 63 days until his death on 13 September and this produced a wave of indignation against the government throughout the country particularly in Bengal. Jatin Das took a leading part in organizing the Bengal Volunteer Corps which was formed by Subhas Chandra Bose during the Calcutta session of the Congress (1928). Only twenty-five at the time of death, his martyrdom gave a fillip to the militant youth movement in India. Subhas Chandra Bose identified himself with the spirit of this movement though he did not encourage violent activities directly during this time. Gandhi did not even express any sympathy for the death of Jatin Das. Subhas Chandra Bose wrote: "In this connection the attitude of the Mahatma was inexplicable. Evidently the martyrdom of Jatin Das which had stirred the heart of the country did not make any impression on him. The pages of Young India, ordinarily filled with observations on all political events and also on topics like health, diet, etc., had nothing to say about the incident. A follower of the Mahatma who was also a close friend of the deceased wrote to him inquiring as to why he had said nothing about the event. The Mahatma replied to the effect that he had purposely refrained from commenting because if he had done

so, he would have been forced to write something unfavourable."

In December 1929 the Congress session was held in Lahore in order to declare complete independence as the goal of the national movement. Though Gandhi was elected president for this session, he declined the offer, and Jawaharlal Nehru ultimately became the choice at the behest of Gandhi at the Lucknow A.I.C.C. session. The Bengal delegates, however, did not support Nehru and they wanted Gandhi to preside over the Lahore session. "Bengal", Sitaramaya wrote, "strangely enough had plumped for Gandhi, and even sent circulars to sister provinces to vote for him." Bengali feared that by making Jawaharlal Nehru President of the Congress, Gandhi was actually trying to win over him from the camp of the left nationalists. As Subhas Chandra Bose has put it: "For the Mahatma it was essential that he should win over Pandit Nawaharlal Nehru if he wanted to beat down the Left Wing opposition and regain his former undisputed supremacy over the Congress. The Left Wingers did not like the idea that one of their most outstanding spokesmen should accept the Presidentship of the Lahore Congress, because it was clear that the Congress would be dominated by the Mahatma and the President would be a mere dummy." Referring to his election as President Jawaharlal Nehru himself observed: "I have seldom felt quite so annoyed and humiliated as I did at that election. It was not that I was not sensible of the honour, ... and I would have rejoiced if I had been elected in

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300. *The Indian Struggle 1920-1942*, n. 32, p. 163.
the ordinary way. But I did not come to it by the main entrance or even a side-entrance; I appeared suddenly by a trap-door and bewildered the audience into acceptance."

In the Lahore session of the Congress Gandhi moved the independence resolution which declared that "the word 'swaraj' in Article I of the Congress Constitution shall mean complete Independence." As a preliminary step towards organizing a campaign for complete independence the resolution urged the country to boycott the Central and Provincial Legislatures and appealed "to the nation zealously to prosecute the constructive programme of the Congress." It also authorized the AICC "whenever it deems fit to launch upon a programme of Civil Disobedience, including non-payment of taxes, whether in selected areas or otherwise, and under such safeguards as it may consider necessary." Subhas Chandra Bose was not satisfied with Gandhi's resolution and he moved an amendment to it which may be quoted in full. The amendment was:

"In order to bring about the overthrow in India of British Imperialism and its Indian Allies and achieve complete independence, this Congress resolves on the one hand to carry on ceaseless campaign in favour of independence with a view to establishing parallel government in India and on the other hand launch the

303. Jawaharlal Nehru, n. 21, p. 194.
campaign of civil disobedience including non-payment of taxes and general strikes wherever and whenever possible.

"With a view to give effect to the above two-fold programme, the Congress calls upon the people of the country to undertake at once the task of organizing the youths, workers and the peasants and other oppressed sections of the Indian people.

"In order to ensure concentration on the above programme and in conformity with the new Congress creed, this Congress declares complete boycott of the central and provincial legislative committees appointed by the government, local bodies, including the institutions like Port Trust and Law Courts and calls upon the Congressmen to abstain from participation in future election, upon the present members of the legislatures, committees and local bodies to resign their seats, and upon the lawyers to suspend their practice forthwith.

"This Congress further authorises the All-India Congress Committee to give effect to the above programme according to circumstances prevailing in the country and to meet any situation that may arise while executing the above programme."

While moving this amendment Bose compared his methods with those mentioned in Gandhi's resolution and said: "Mine is a programme of all-round boycott. I do not think it will be of any use to take up one item in the programme of boycott and leave out others. It will not be consistent with our creed of independence

to go and practise in law courts. It will not be consistent either to enter local bodies, some of which, like the Calcutta Corporation, require the oath of allegiance to be taken ... I should like to submit, at this stage, that if you are not prepared to go in for complete boycott, it will be no use for you to boycott the Councils only." Referring to Gandhi's resolution he said in this speech: "The resolution refers to the constructive programme as the method whereby we have to achieve the political emancipation of India. I would like the House to consider whether the constructive programme, which the Congress has been pursuing for the last few years, is something which is sufficient to enable us to reach the goal of complete independence. No doubt there is a reference to civil disobedience in the resolution. But I submit that civil disobedience will never come until we can organize the workers and peasants and depressed classes on their specific grievances." 306

It is clear that Subhas Chandra Bose was opposed to the linkage between the non-cooperation movement and the Gandhian philosophy and he tried to make the movement effective by organizing strikes of the workers and peasants. This was the programme of the militant nationalists of Bengal which we have explained earlier. 307 With reference to Bose's amendment Gandhi said: "It is really a substantive resolution to be substituted for the original resolution", and added "we are not declaring independence, mind you." 308

the amendment and, as expected, Gandhi's resolution was carried by the majority.

All the Left Wingers including Subhas Chandra Bose were excluded from the new Working Committee of the Congress formed at Lahore. Gandhi read out ten names for the Committee but Abdur Rahim from Bengal objected to the procedure and wanted that individual names should be put before the house and voted upon. Satyamurti also opposed the procedure and proposed three additional names for the Working Committee — Shrinivasa Iyengar, T. Prakasam and Subhas Chandra Bose. On votes being taken as to whether the list proposed by Gandhi should be voted upon as a whole or not, 78 votes were in favour of taking it as a whole and 62 were against this procedure. However, the exclusion of Bose and other left leaders from the Working Committee led immediately to the formation of the Congress Democratic Party under Bose's leadership. It must have reminded him of the foundation of the Swaraj Party under the guidance of C.R. Das and just after its formation he sent the following message to Mrs. Das:

"Circumstances and tyranny of the majority forced us to form a separate party, as at Gaya, named Congress Democratic Party. Pray spirit of Deshbandhu may guide us and your blessings may inspire us." 311

The Congress Democratic Party could not play any effective role in Indian politics because of the arrest of Subhas Chandra Bose in January 1930.

309. They were Motilal Nehru, Abul Kalam Azad, Rajagopalachari, Vallabhbhai Patel, J.M. Sengupta, Sardul Singh Cavesher, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Satyapal, Jairamdas Daulatram and Gandhi himself.


India was now at the threshold of the second mass movement under the leadership of Gandhi. The first movement of 1920 was initiated by him, but the second movement was almost forced on him, and Bengal played the most prominent role in this game. The intense propaganda for a showdown with the British created an atmosphere uncongenial for a non-violent struggle and Gandhi's main concern was to find out a form of civil disobedience which would not erupt into nationwide violence. If the militant nationalists pressed for an anti-British struggle, Gandhi stood for a non-violent movement. The task of canalising the tidal wave of national aspirations through non-violent means was not easy for Gandhi. Before launching the civil disobedience movement in 1930 Gandhi, for example, told Rabindranath Tagore: "I am furiously thinking day and night, and I do not see any light coming out of the surrounding darkness." "There is a lot of violence in the air," he said, and in these circumstances, civil disobedience, Gandhi feared, involved "undoubted risks." He, however, assured the poet that he was searching for a form of movement which would not explode into a nation-wide violence.

At last he decided to launch the satyagraha campaign by manufacturing salt without paying the tax and thus by breaking the salt law. On 12 March 1930, after previous notice to the Viceroy, Gandhi started on foot from his Sabarmati Ashram with a band of selected followers towards Dandi, a village on the sea-coast of Gujarat, more than two hundred miles away. As they proceeded, the village flocked from all sides to greet their 'Mahatma' and his followers with flowers, prayers and national slogans. This famous

Dandi March which was a procession more of pilgrims than of fighters was given wide publicity in the country and the whole of India found itself stimulated by a new wave of devotional, non-violent patriotism. The Gandhian group in Bengal, now much stronger than what it was in 1920, also organized similar marches to break the salt law. The Abhoy Ashram and the Khadi Pratishthan took initiative in organizing such demonstrations, and the march from Bankura to Pichhabani in Contai of Midnapore district led by Abhoy Ashram drew the attention of the whole country.

In spite of this initiative the Gandhians had control neither over the Congress organization nor over the movement in Bengal. The Congress of Bengal was then sharply divided into two distinct factions — the Gandhian group was supported by a section of the Anusilan Samity and the Subhas group by the Jugantar. The militant nationalists of Bengal who were included in both Jugantar and Anusilan were thus now divided. The Big Five constituted a separate group which did not identify itself with any of the two above factions but supported one or the other according to its convenience. It had five important leaders, and hence the name Big Five. During this period they supported the Jugantar group against the Gandhians, but gradually some of its leaders particularly Bidhan Chandra Roy and Nalini Ranjan Sarkar moved towards Gandhi, but Sarat Bose continued

313. The origin and character of these two Gandhian organizations have been discussed in Chapter IV.


315. They were Nirmal Chandra Chunder, Bidhan Chandra Roy, Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, Sarat Chandra Bose and Tulsi Goswami.
to give his full support to his younger brother Subhas. When the Civil Disobedience movement began, the BPCC was under the control of the Jugantar - Big Five alliance and therefore the Anushilan - Gandhite faction formed a separate organization under the name Bengal Civil Disobedience Council with J. M. Sengupta as President and Profulla Chandra Ghosh of the Abhoy Ashram as Secretary. During this time the election of Mayor took place in Calcutta and the two groups put up two different candidates, and each group accused the other of corruption.

Subhas Chandra Bose was elected Mayor defeating his rival Gandhian candidate J. M. Sengupta. The conflict within the Bengal Congress took the form of a rivalry between Subhas Bose and the Gandhians and it was carried on mainly through the two important newspapers of Bengal of that period, the Liberty, supporting the former and the Advance, supporting the latter.

The civil Disobedience Movement in Bengal came under the control mainly of the Subhas group who had little faith in the Gandhian values. The nature of this movement was described by a confidential report of the Government thus:

"There have been hundreds of cases in which purchasers of foreign cloth or customers of liquor shops have been attacked


and beaten by volunteers for ignoring the requests of 'peaceful' pickets ... it is now the usual practice for 'pickets' to seize foreign cloth from purchasers and burn it, and to snatch away opium, Ganja and bottles of liquor from consumers ... The dealers and vendors too, have been frequently subjected to insults, assaults and even to the punishment of social boycott. On several occasions, excise vendors have had their shops polluted with night soil and in some cases bombed; while in Calcutta Marwari foreign cloth merchants who have failed to observe the restrictions of the cloth boycott have been assaulted by goondas and had their faces blackened with tar. The moral effect of such methods has naturally been considerable and today there are comparatively few Hindus who have the courage to smoke cigarettes in public or to venture forth in shirts or dhuties which have not at least the appearance of 'khaddar'. The fear of assault has kept many consumers away from the liquor shops and this has led to a considerable increase in illicit distillation.\textsuperscript{319} The impact of this movement on the morale of the police force and the "Magistracy" of the province was considerable, and according to an official report "there is a noticeable disinclination to perform any act that will bring them into disfavour with Congress."\textsuperscript{320}

During the non-cooperation struggle of 1920 the Bengal revolutionaries remained quiet, joined Gandhi's movement and gave him

\textsuperscript{319} Government of India, Home Department, Political, File No. 14/20 of 1931.

\textsuperscript{320} Government of India, Home Department, Political, File No. 163 of 1931.
full opportunity to carry on his experiment with nonviolence. Even after the movement was over, they carried on their work non-violently in order to prepare the country for an ultimate showdown with the British Government. Only a small revolting group, as we have stated earlier, tried to revive violent activities. This revolting group now became a formidable force with popular sympathy behind it. This time Gandhi also made no attempt to win them over as he did previously. On 18 April the Chittagong Armoury Raid took place by a group of young revolutionaries under the leadership of Surya Sen. The raid and the series of outrages which followed it, fired the imagination of the revolutionaries all over Bengal, and the leaders of different groups who tried to keep violence in abeyance found it impossible to control their younger members any longer. The report of the Intelligence Bureau of the Government of India stated: "The news of the Chittagong armoury raids was received by revolutionaries all over the province with amazement. Some could not believe that such a daring coup was the work of Bengali terrorists. When the truth was known, the effect was electric, and from that moment the outlook of the Bengali terrorists changed. The younger members of all parties, whose heads were already crammed with ideas of driving the British out of India by force of arms, but whose hands had been restrained by their leaders from committing even an isolated murder, clamoured for a chance to emulate the Chittagong terrorists".

August 1930 Binoy Krishna Basu, a student of the Medical School of Dacca, fired at close range at Lowman, Inspector General of Police, who died of his wounds. The same Binoy Basu along with two others, Dinesh Chandra Gupta and Badal Gupta, dressed as Europeans and armed with revolvers, entered the Writers' Buildings, Calcutta, on 8 December and shot Inspector-General of Prisons, Simpson, dead. Two others were wounded as they went down the corridor firing into the rooms of other officials. Finding no escape, the three revolutionaries tried to commit suicide. Badal Gupta took potassium cyanide and died immediately. Binoy Bose and Dinesh Gupta shot at their own heads, and the former died a few days later. Dinesh Gupta who recovered was tried and sentenced to death. The press of Bengal showed great sympathy for the daring acts of the revolutionaries particularly after the withdrawal of the Press Ordinance following the Gandhi-Irwin pact in March 1931. Sympathy for Dinesh Gupta and other revolutionaries


For a brief reference to the Gandhi-Irwin Pact see fn.272 of this chapter.
widespread and in some cases unrestrained, and demands for their reprieve were loud and persistent. Subhas Chandra Bose as the Mayor of Calcutta also expressed indirectly his sympathy for them in course of a speech on a resolution condemning the Writers' Buildings shooting incident. He said: "It will not do simply to brand as 'misguided' the youths who are responsible for these incidents ... There are people in this country, whatever their number may be, who want freedom not merely following the Congress programme, but, if need be, they want freedom at any price and by any means. ... India has chosen the path of non-violence as the best and easiest path to follow for the achievement of India's freedom. ... But until the goal is reached, I do hope that we shall not be content simply by passing resolutions of condemnation or by branding youths as 'misguided', but we shall at the same time explore the deeper psychological causes which account for these tragic incidents." Many Congressmen of Bengal who fought non-violently had great admiration and unconcealed sympathy for the revolutionaries. "It is true", the intelligence report concluded, "that the Congress formally dissociated itself from terrorism, but it was equally clear that if some of the workers and leaders of the Congress had been given a free hand they would not have been averse to giving, their general support to terrorism".

324. Terrorism in India 1917-1936, p.43.
325. Liberty, 11 December 1930.
326. H. W. Hale, n.3x, p.30.
There is no doubt that during the Civil Disobedience Movement the revolutionaries were held in greater esteem by the average Bengali than the non-violent followers of Gandhi. By that time the Gandhian organization in Bengal was much larger than what it was in 1920, but the appeal of Gandhi for the general people of Bengal had largely declined.

The way in which the Civil Disobedience Movement was led by Gandhi was responsible for further erosion of his influence from Bengal. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact concluded by him on 5 March 1931 came to Bengal as a bombshell. The suspension of the movement and participation of the Congress in the forthcoming Round Table Conference caused resentment particularly among the militant nationalists of Bengal, because the Pact contained provisions for the release of the political prisoners incarcerated in connection with the non-violent movement but not in connection with the revolutionary struggle. Therefore, though most of the political prisoners were released in the rest of India, a large number of Bengal

327. According to Gordon the people "in Bengal were more sympathetic, on the whole, to the personal and political drives behind revolutionary activity. Few could equal Gandhi in his principled adherence to non-violence. A Bengali Gandhian such as Nripendra Chandra Banerji and the Vaishnava C.R. Das were closer physically and culturally than Gandhi to the revolutionaries in Bengal and could never condemn them without reservation. This was one issue which divided Gandhi and many Bengalis". Leonard A. Gordon, n.316, pp. 221-222.

328. For Gandhi-Irwin Pact, 5 March 1931, see Sir Maurice Gwyer and A. Appadorai, n. 304, p. 232.

By this Pact Gandhi, on behalf of the Congress, agreed, among other points, to suspend the Civil Disobedience Movement and to participate in the discussion of the forthcoming Round Table Conference, and the Viceroy, on behalf of the Government, agreed to release all political prisoners arrested in connection with the non-violent movement, to withdraw the emergency ordinances, to permit people who live near the seashore to manufacture salt free of duty and to allow peaceful picketing of liquor, opium and foreign cloth shops.
revolutionaries remained within prison. There was a feeling in Bengal that Gandhi was not interested in the release of political prisoners who did not follow his non-violent strategy. Subhas Chandra Bose who condemned the Pact outright reflected the opinion of a large section of the Bengali people, and the Gandhian group, led by J.M. Sengupta, which was entrusted with the task of justifying the Pact found itself in a very difficult position. Subhas Bose wrote: "Of all the Provinces, Bengal was most hostile to the Pact but even there, there was a party led by the Late Mr. Sengupta pledged to support the Mahatma." Sengupta, however, could not convince at least a section of his own followers about the wisdom of the Pact particularly in view of the continued imprisonment of the Bengal revolutionaries. Immediately after the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed a conference of the All-Bengal Students' Association which was dominated by the Anushilan group passed a resolution requesting the students all over Bengal to give their full support "to secure purna swaraj for the country" and "to secure the release of all detenues and political prisoners and commutation of sentences of death passed on accused persons".

According to the terms of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact Gandhi attended the Second Round Table Conference which was a complete failure. No progress was made about the drafting of the future constitution of India and Gandhi came back to India on 28 December 1931 empty-handed. In January 1932 the Civil Disobedience Movement

329. For his criticism of the Pact see The Indian Struggle 1920-1942, n. 32, pp. 208-209.

330. Ibid., p. 203.

331. Liberty, 8 March 1931.
was resumed. In early January Subhas Chandra Bose stated: "At the time the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was concluded we felt that the time for cessation of hostilities had not arrived and that the fight would have to be continued. But our voice was then drowned. Today we stand vindicated". Referring to the resumption of the struggle he further observed: "In this connexion, I would like to say that there is still a danger ahead of us. After the fight goes on for sometime, there might be another proposal for a pact like the last Delhi pact (it refers to the Gandhi-Irwin Pact). If that is to be prevented, opinion of the rank and file should be roused and mobilized from today and those joining the fight should make it clear that their sole object consists in winning independence and they will not tolerate fresh pacts and negotiations".

But, after resuming the struggle, Gandhi actually concluded another pact leading to a complete side-tracking of the movement and ultimately its withdrawal. On 16 August 1932 the British Prime Minister, Ramsay Macdonald, announced the Communal Award which would be the basis of the future constitution of India. This Award granted separate electorate to the Depressed Classes in selected areas, though Macdonald promised to accept any alternative schemes mutually agreed upon by the Depressed Classes and other Hindus. On 20 September Gandhi who was then in Yeravda jail started a fast unto death and declared that it would cease only if the system of common electorate for the Hindus and

332. Ibid., 3 January 1932.

333. Sir Maurice Gwyer and A. Appadorai, n.304, for MacDonald's statement see pp. 259-261 and for the Communal Award by His Majesty's Government, pp. 261-265.

334. Ibid., p. 260.
the Depressed Classes was restored. The news of this fast stirred the whole country from one end to the other to its depth and the most prominent Hindu and Depressed Class leaders including Ambedkar came to Poona and conferred together to save the life of Gandhi. The outcome of these deliberations was the Poona Pact which was signed on 25 September and readily accepted by the British Government. The Poona Pact retained joint electorate for the Hindus and the Depressed Classes and 148 seats were reserved for the latter in the Provincial Legislatures as against 71 seats given to them by the Communal Award.

Gandhi's fast has diverted the attention of the country from the Civil Disobedience Movement and it lost all its dynamism, and ultimately it was called off by the Congress on the advice of Gandhi. Subhas Chandra Bose who was then in Vienna issued a manifesto jointly with Vithalbhai J. Patel severely condemning Gandhi's decision. In this manifesto signed on 9 May 1933 they said: "We are clearly of opinion that as a political leader Mahatma Gandhi has failed. The time has therefore come for a radical reorganization of the Congress on a new principle and with a new method ... If the Congress as a whole can undergo


336. Subhas Chandra who was released from jail after the conclusion of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was again arrested on 2 January 1932. By the end of 1932 his health was in an alarming condition and on 22 February 1933 he was released on condition that he must go to Europe for medical treatment. Thereupon, he came to Vienna in March and entered Dr. Furth's sanatorium. Vithalbhai J. Patel, a prominent Congressman and a great nationalist, was also then in Vienna almost in an invalid condition and died in October 1933.
this transformation, it would be the best course. Failing that
a new party will have to be formed within the Congress, composed
of all radical elements." 337 While discussing "The Role of
Mahatma Gandhi" in the Indian Struggle, he expressed his strong
conviction that "India's salvation will not be achieved under
his leadership." 338 In course of an interview with the
journalist Alfred Tynanuer in Vienna Bose said: "Gandhi is an
old, useless piece of furniture. He has done good service in
his time but is an obstacle now." 339 Through Subhas Chandra's
condemnation of Gandhi the views of the militant section of
the Bengal nationalists were forcefully expressed. During this
time, on 23 July 1933, J.M. Sengupta died, and Subhas Chandra
Bose rapidly emerged as the undisputed leader of the militant
nationalists.

If the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement dis-
appointed the radical nationalists of Bengal, the Poona Pact,
concluded to save the life of Gandhi, antagonized almost the
entire caste Hindus of the province. According to the provi-
sions of this Pact, 30 of the total 78 non-Muslim seats in the
Bengal Legislative Assembly would remain reserved for the scheduled
castes. The caste Hindus of Bengal thought that it constituted
a great injustice to them and the All Parties Hindu Conference
which met in Calcutta in February 1933 sent a memorandum to the

337. For full text of the Manifesto see The Indian Struggle
1920-1942, n. 32, p. 357.
338. Ibid., p. 298.
339. Cited in Hugh Toye, Subhas Chandra Bose: The Springing
British Prime Minister demanding revision of the Poona Pact. The caste Hindus felt that though under the Communal Award their political representation had been less than what they were justly entitled to, the Poona Pact had made their position worse. Under such circumstances criticism of Gandhi mounted considerably among the caste Hindus of Bengal and many caste Hindu leaders joined the Congress Nationalist Party in order to safeguard their rights and interests. Rabindranath also personally wrote to Gandhi: "I am fully convinced that if it (Poona Pact) is accepted without modification it will be a source of perpetual communal jealousy leading to constant disturbance and a fatal break in the spirit of mutual cooperation in our province." Ramananda Chatterjee, editor of Prabasi and Modern Review, observed: "It was unnecessary in Bengal to reserve 30 "general" or Hindu seats for the depressed castes ... Untouchability is perhaps least in evidence in Bengal. It is certainly not as rampant as in Madras. Yet the settlement gives to the depressed classes 30 seats both in Madras and Bengal. In Bengal many of those whom Government have classed as depressed refuse to be so styled."

The nationalist journal Liberty stated that there was no depressed class problem in Bengal, and "if", it added, "the Poona

341. Bhola Chatterjee, n. 317, p. 76.
342. For the genesis of this party see p. 266.
agreement was welcomed in this province, that was because Bengal was more anxious for saving Mahatmaji's life than for safeguarding her own interest." Ambedkar should agree, it further observed, to annul the Poona agreement so far as Bengal was concerned. The Poona Pact gave rise to a serious and wide-spread anti-Gandhi feeling among the Hindus of Bengal. Referring to this feeling of the Bengali Hindus Subhas Chandra Bose wrote: "People began to ask seriously, if, after all, it was worthwhile for Mahatma Gandhi to have staked his life for such an issue, especially when the Communal Award was from start to finish an objectionable document." Gandhi himself was conscious of the existing ill-will against him in Bengal in general. "...I know", he said, "what is happening in Bengal today. There are some Bengalis who blamed me for what they consider my neglect of the woes of Bengal. Some of them repudiate my claim to represent Bengal ..." Later on he admitted "... The Pact has been a kind of bombshell thrown in the midst of Bengalis. They have their own Hindu-Muslim problem which has been rendered difficult by the Yeravda Pact. The original Premier's 'Award' as it was called gave fewer seats to the Harijans than the Pact gives. It is almost an overwhelming number". But he refused to alter a comma in the Pact unless Harijans themselves wanted." And his own justification of the Pact was that "Hinduism looses nothing if all the seats were captured by the Harijans."

346. Liberty, 6 March 1933.
347. The Indian Struggle 1920-1942, n. 32, p. 248.
After withdrawing the Civil Disobedience Movement the Congress, under Gandhi's leadership, decided to contest the election. The politics of struggle was replaced by parliamentary politics. The AICC which met at Patna in May 1934 suspended, on Gandhi's recommendation, the Civil Disobedience Movement finally and accepted the entry into legislature as a part of its programme. The resolution on council entry was moved by Gandhi himself, though he, at the same time, pointed out that the work among the masses was more important than work in the Council. Referring to the Council work he said: "In its own place it will be useful. But the Congress will commit suicide if its attention is solely devoted to its legislative work. Swaraj will never come that way. Swaraj can only come through an all-round consciousness of the masses." Gandhi tried to raise the consciousness of the masses through his constructive work and during that period he devoted himself almost exclusively to the work for the removal of untouchability. The militant nationalists of Bengal who believed that the only way to achieve swaraj was a relentless struggle against the British Government could not raise their voice against this trend in favour of parliamentary politics. Their failure was due mainly to the absence of their leader, Subhas Chandra Bose, from India. He was in Europe for almost the entire period between 1933 and 1937. At the Patna AICC session the opposition to the parliamentary politics come from the newly formed Congress Socialist Party, and Bose's sympathy lay with this group so far as this opposition was concerned. Referring to its role in this session

he wrote: "Though the Congress Socialist Party has, in some respects, been harking back to the ideas and shibboleths that were popular forty or fifty years ago, it does stand for a radical tendency in the Nationalist movement and the formation of such a party is a very hopeful feature of the times."\textsuperscript{351}

The Congress took part in the elections for the legislative assembly held in 1934 under the Government of India Act 1919, and all the general seats in Bengal were secured by the Congress Nationalist Party formed by Madan Mohan Malaviya and M.S. Aney as distinguished from the Congress.\textsuperscript{352} The Congress adopted a non-committal attitude (a policy of neither acceptance nor rejection) towards the Communal Award by which different minority communities were granted separate electorates. Malaviya and Aney who were opposed to this policy and condemned the Communal Award unequivocally formed the Congress Nationalist Party. The Poona Pact followed by this non-committal attitude towards the Communal Award made the Congress of Gandhi extremely unpopular among the Hindus of Bengal. In 1937 provincial elections\textsuperscript{353} were held under Government of India Act 1935 and the Congress emerged with a majority in seven out of eleven provinces in British India,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{351} The Indian Struggle 1920-1942, n. 103, p. 267.
  \item \textsuperscript{353} The Congress did not accept the Federal part of the new constitution mainly because in it the rulers were given the right to nominate the representatives of the native states and the executive as a whole was not made responsible to the legislature.
\end{itemize}
where it formed its own ministries. In the Bengal legislature no party could secure a majority and Fazlul Huq, the leader of Krishak Praja Party, proposed to form a coalition government with the Congress. But the Congress policy was to accept office only in those provinces where it commanded an absolute majority in the legislature, and, therefore, it turned down the offer of Fazlul Huq. Fazlul Huq, thereupon, formed a coalition with the Muslim League. Subhas Chandra Bose later on tried to oust the Muslim League from the ministry and form a coalition with Fazlul Huq's party. He feared that if the Muslim League continued to remain in office, the political atmosphere of Bengal would become more and more communal. Bose sought Gandhi's support in this matter, but Gandhi was opposed to this move. This attitude of Gandhi caused a serious reaction on the mind of the Bengali Hindus which we have referred to in the concluding chapter.

In spite of his critical attitude towards Gandhi, Bose was unanimously chosen Congress President for 1938. It is believed by many scholars that by offering him the Congress presidency, Gandhi tried to win over Bose to the official policy of the Congress just as he won over Jawaharlal Nehru by making him Congress president in 1929 (Lahore Congress). "Perhaps following the same strategy of blunting opposition by incorporating it that had worked

354. L.A. Gordon, n. 316, pp. 283-285. Gordon has discussed the problem with reference to some unpublished letters exchanged between Gandhi and Bose on this problem.
so effectively with Nehru", Gordon wrote, "Gandhi privately offered Subhas Bose the Congress presidency ...". 355 Hugh Toye also observed: "In some places his (Bose's) reputation rivalled that of Gandhi himself, and his nomination as President of the Congress at the early age of fortyone was without doubt an attempt by the Mahatma to consolidate with the orthodox Congress those considerable left-wing elements in Bengal and elsewhere, which actually preferred Bose's leadership". 356 But even as Congress President Bose followed fearlessly his own policy without making any compromise with Gandhi. In 1938 he launched the National Planning Committee for drawing up a comprehensive plan of industrialization and national development which was a direct challenge to the Gandhian economic ideas and caused much annoyance to Gandhi. 357 Instead of coming nearer to Gandhi, Subhas Bose, as Congress President, tried to lead the Congress along a different path.

Gandhi-Bose Controversy : Confrontation of Bengal with Gandhi.

A serious crisis in the relations between Subhas Chandra Bose and Gandhian Congress arose in 1939 on the issue of the choice of the President of the Congress. Three names were proposed: Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Subhas Chandra Bose and Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Azad declined the offer but the other two remained in the

355. Ibid., p.266.
357. These ideas of Bose and Gandhi's reaction to them have been discussed in Chapter-V.
 Followers of Gandhi, supported Sitaramayya and asked Bose to withdraw. Referring to his own views and those of Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Azad, Rajendra Prasad, Acharya Kripalini and Bhulabhai Desai, Vallabhbhai Patel in a statement said: "We were clearly of the opinion that it was unnecessary to re-elect Mr. Subhas Bose". In a joint statement Vallabhbhai Patel and six other members of the Working Committee said: "We feel that it is a sound policy to adhere to the rule of not reelecting the same President, except under very exceptional circumstances". "So far as we know", they added, "hitherto Presidential elections have been unanimous". Subhas Bose, however, justified election of the President on two grounds: it would clarify the political issues before the country and help the Congress to ascertain the public opinion, and, secondly, the country was in need of a leftist President in order to fight the Federal scheme of the Government of India Act 1935. In a statement issued on 21 January 1939 he said: "people are consequently veering round to the opinion that as in other free countries the Presidential election in India should be fought on the basis of definite problems and programmes so that the contest may help the clarification of issues and gave a clear indication of the working of the public mind". "It is widely believed", he said in a subsequent statement, "that there is a prospect of a compromise on the Federal scheme between the right-wing of the Congress and the British Government.

358. For the main features of the Government of India Act 1935, see Sir Maurice Gwyer and A. Appadorai, n.328, p.XLiii-XLiv
during the coming year." Jawaharlal Nehru and other leaders however denied such a possibility.

The election of the President was, however, held on 29 January 1939 and Subhas Chandra Bose was elected. The militant nationalists of Bengal worked tirelessly not only within the province but also outside to ensure the success of Bose. It was actually a fight of the militant nationalists against the Gandhian Congress, and immediately after the election Gandhi said in a statement: "Mr. Subhas Bose has achieved a decisive victory over his opponent Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya. I must confess that from the very beginning I was decidedly against his re-election for reasons into which I need not go. I do not subscribe to his facts or the arguments in his manifesto. I think that his references to his colleagues were unjustified and unworthy. Nevertheless, I am glad of his victory; and since I was instrumental in inducing Dr. Pattabhi not to withdraw his name as a candidate when Maulana Saheb withdrew, the defeat is more mine than his." He concluded his statement thus: "After all Subhas Babu is not an enemy of his country. He has suffered for it. In his opinion his is the most forward and boldest policy and programme. The minority can only wish it all success. If they cannot keep pace with it, they must come out of the Congress ... The minority may not obstruct on any account ... Those, therefore, who feel uncomfortable in being in the Congress, may come

359. The statements of the Congress leaders mentioned in this paragraph are taken from Crossroads, Section on Tripuri Presidential election, pp. 96, 89, 87, 91.

out, not in a spirit of ill will, but with the deliberate purpose of rendering more effective service." Soon after this, thirteen members of the Working Committee resigned leaving Subhas Bose and his elder brother Sarat Bose alone in it.

An overwhelming majority of the people of Bengal particularly the younger section stood behind Subhas Bose and there arose a feeling of intense hostility against Gandhi and his Congress. This feeling was further heightened by the subsequent developments. In the annual session of the Congress which was held at Tripuri (in Madhya Pradesh) in March 1939 a resolution was introduced by Govinda Vallabh Pant by which the authority of the Gandhian group over the Congress was sought to be restored. It asked the Congress President to nominate the members of his Working Committee "in accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji". To the great embarrassment of Bose the Pant resolution was passed by the majority. Though Gandhi was 'decidedly' opposed to his re-election as Congress President, Bose must nominate his Working Committee according to Gandhi's wishes. Bose thus found himself in an extremely awkward position but still he requested Gandhi to suggest names for the formation of a composite Working Committee — a Working Committee with people belonging to both the groups, Gandhian and militant nationalists. "If you can command the confidence of both parties by taking up a truly non-partisan attitude,

361. Harijan, 4 February 1939.
362. For full text of the Pant Resolution see Pattabhi Sitaramayya, n. 56, Vol. II, pp. 110-111. The crucial part of the resolution was as follows:
"In view of the critical situation that may develop during the coming year and in view of the fact that Mahatma Gandhi alone can lead the Congress and the country to victory during such a crisis, the Congress regards it as imperative that the
then you can save the Congress and restore national unity", Bose wrote to Gandhi. Gandhi, however, refused to suggest any name and maintained that "a composite Committee would be harmful". In his letter of 10 April 1939 Gandhi wrote to Bose: "The gulf is too wide, suspicion too deep. I see no way of closing the ranks." Gandhi asked Bose to form his own Working Committee with people who shared his views. He wrote: "Taking all things into consideration, I am of opinion that you should at once form your own Cabinet fully representing your views, formulate your programme definitely and put it before the forthcoming AICC. If the Committee accepts the programme, all will be plain-sailing and you should be enabled to prosecute it unhampered by the minority. If, on the other hand, your programme is not accepted, you should resign and let the Committee choose its President." The atmosphere was extremely tense and in a letter to Gandhi Subhas Bose wrote: "My resignation would mean the beginning of a new phase in Congress politics which I want to avoid till the last. If we come to the parting of the ways, a bitter civil war will commence ..." Under such circumstances he resigned the Presidentship on 29 April 1939 and formed a new party within the Congress called the Forward Bloc with a view to rallying the militant nationalists under its banner. Rajendra Prasad was elected new President of the Congress and in the new Working Committee Dr. B.C. Roy and Prafulla Chandra Ghosh were taken from Bengal.

Congress executive should command his implicit confidence and requests the President to nominate the Working Committee in accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji."

363. For letters exchanged between Gandhi and Bose during this period see Crossroads, Section on Bose-Gandhi Correspondence, pp. 131, 133, 157, 140, 135.
The Pant Resolution and the resignation of Bose created in Bengal a strong feeling against Gandhi, which found a free expression through the press. "It is no use concealing", a leading newspaper of Calcutta wrote in its editorial, "that Bengal has received no attention from the existing leadership of the Congress. She has been uniformly ignored and she has suffered tremendously for it. But perhaps worse days await her and it is time for her to think and act". The monthly journal Bharatvarsa wrote that Subhas Chandra was not allowed to remain President of the Congress for the second term because of the anti-Bengali feeling of its all-India leaders. It held Gandhi solely responsible for the removal of Bose because without his support, it wrote, it would have been impossible for leaders like Patel to oust him. Under the caption "The Tripuri Betrayal", an editorial of the Hindusthan Standard observed: "No explanation, no annotation will convince us that Mr. Govinda Ballav Pant's resolution was not a deliberately mischievous move on the part of the discredited Patel clique to lower the duly elected President of the Congress in the estimation of the country and to re-establish their lost reputation at the cost of the latter". Another leading newspaper of Calcutta commented: "Malice and intolerance can scarcely be passed off as noble virtues. ... Is there any sense, again, in pretending as

Pandit Govinda Ballav Pant has done, that the resolution was in no way directed against Sj. Bose? Is such an attitude consistent with truth? Referring to the circumstances leading to the passing of the Pant Resolution the Hindusthan Standard in its editorial 'Vileness Wins' commented: "It is all a story of inconceivable meanness and selfishness masquerading in the garb of non-violence and truth and patriotism and public interest. Tripuri has pointed out to what depth of degradation the old fossils have sunk, and the only lesson of Tripuri is that there is not a brutal crime which cannot be committed by love or power". "We regret to have to say", it continued, "that Mahatma Gandhi is today a mere ghost of his former self and we are not sure that the days of his usefulness are not over ... and who can truthfully deny that if the much felt and much needed compromise did not come about it was primarily due to him?" After a few days, the same daily wrote against Gandhi in a more bitter language, "In his own way", it stated, "Mahatma is a greatman, but for a democratic organization to declare solemnly that it is the Mahatma who alone can lead the Congress and the country to victory in any crisis that may come and that his philosophy and principle is the only invariable political concept in this ever-changing world is a scandal. It amounts to killing the organization by a deliberate act of violence. Mussolini or Hitler's weapon is the soldier's

368. Hindusthan Standard, 13 March 1939.
bayonet or the poison gas, while the Mahatmic weapon is moral or spiritual coercion. Which is more violent is something more than we can say, for we cannot pretend to be psycho-analysts." 369

In the post-Tripuri period Gandhi appeared to the militant nationalists of Bengal as the embodiment of reaction and a friend of the British. Their journal wrote: "Gandhism with its Charkha, Khadi, Gramodyog, Vidyamandir, Gandhi Seva Sangha, Ahimsa, Fast and the whole family of these ancient beauties stands definitely, consciously and deliberately for reaction. It is idle to characterise Gandhism as reformism. It stands against progress in every sphere of life because progress in any sphere, say, in education or in industry, would make for revolution and the destruction of feudalism and capitalism. To save these, the plan that is intended to be resorted to is: first a show of fight and then a compromise ... To save the princely orders, to save feudalism, to save capitalism the might of British imperialism is necessary to-day. Hence, non-violent Gandhism is, in this sense, admittedly in alliance with the armed strength of British imperialism and intends to remain so if some urge from below does not spoil the game." 370

During that period the radical nationalist forces of Bengal were carried off by the anti-Gandhi wave. A large number of meetings, processions and rallies were held denouncing Gandhi and supporting Subhas Bose. Various District Congress Committees of Bengal began to pass resolutions expressing solidarity with Bose. The political atmosphere of Bengal became extremely uncongenial for the Gandhians to carry on their normal activities. The

369. Ibid., 18 March 1939.
370. Forward, 18 March 1939.
Gandhian journal Rashtravani wrote: "Due to the rise of an unfavourable political atmosphere in 1939 it was difficult to undertake in Bengal any constructive work or to carry on any activity connected with the name of Gandhi." In February 1940 when Gandhi came to Bengal to attend the seven-day session of the Gandhi Seva Sangha which was held at Malikanda, a village on the Padma in East Bengal, there were tremendous demonstrations against him on his way to Malikanda as well as during the time of the Sangh session. Bengal was virtually in revolt against Gandhi during that period.

Before proceeding further it is necessary at this stage to discuss two important questions. Why was the Pant resolution accepted by the majority of the delegates to the Congress session even after they had elected Subhas Chandra Bose as the President? Secondly, why was Bose so much adament to remain Congress President for the second term? The election of Bose as Congress President shows that the majority of the members were in favour of Bose's militant programme of an uncompromising struggle against the British imperialism. But in spite of this support to Bose's programme, they considered Gandhi's leadership essential for the success of the struggle. Gandhi alone was in a position to mobilize the people in a nation-wide movement. The majority of the members wanted Gandhi to accept the programme of Bose. But after the presidential election it became clear that Gandhi was

371. Rashtravani, 25 December 1939, p. 406. It was a weekly journal edited by Satish Dasgupta, the most renowned Gandhian leader of Bengal during that period.

determined not to accept his programme. At that stage the choice was: Gandhi's leadership or Bose's programme. The majority preferred Gandhi's leadership, because, without Gandhi, Bose's programme of struggle could not be actually implemented. Gandhi's strength in the political field lay not in his programme but in his hold over the masses. Explaining the reason why the Congress Socialist Party could not support Bose as against Gandhi, Acharya Narendra Deva, as we have mentioned earlier, said: "It is a hard fact that today no struggle will have nation-wide character and attract the attention of the world unless Gandhiji associates himself with it. This may provide a sad commentary on the state of our political advancement, nevertheless we cannot afford to ignore it. Today we want a powerful mass movement and unless Gandhiji gives the call, the masses and the classes will not be drawn into it in large numbers. So it is no use asking the Congress to start the struggle ignoring Gandhiji." 373

Subhas Chandra Bose tried to remain Congress President for the second term not simply to fight the Federal scheme of the British Government but to take advantage of the world war which, he believed, would break out soon. He was thinking in terms of an international conspiracy to fight the British and was determined to place before the country a militant programme of struggle. In this connection we may refer to an intercepted letter

373. Acharya Narendra Deva, Socialism and National Revolution (Padma Publications, Bombay, 1946), p. 133. We have mentioned it earlier in f.n. 34 of this chapter.
dated 25 January 1938 which was addressed to him and written by Rashbehari Bose, a leading figure in the revolutionary movement of India. In this letter Rashbehari Bose congratulated Subhas Chandra on his being "elected as the President of the next session of the Congress" (it refers to the Haripura session of the Congress held in February 1938), and advised him to revitalize the Congress which had become, in his words, "a constitutional organization ... co-operating with the Government". He asked him to discard the "fetish of non-violence", to give attention to "military preparedness" and to co-operate with Japan in fighting the British. He wrote: "The Congress should support the Pan-Asia movement. It should not condemn Japan without understanding her motive in the Sino-Japanese conflict. Japan is a friend of India and other Asiatic countries. Her chief motive is to destroy British influence in Asia ... We should make friends with Britain's enemies." Subhas Bose's desperate attempt to remain Congress President in 1939 must be understood in the context of

374. A native of French Chandernagore and employed as a clerk in the Imperial Forest Institute at Dehradun, Rashbehari Bose was deeply involved in the revolutionary movement of India during first world war. In order to avoid arrest he escaped to Japan using the name P.N. Thakur, and took a leading part in the Indo-German Conspiracy. He continued his efforts to liberate India with Japanese assistance and ultimately helped Subhas Chandra Bose in organizing the Indian National Army. For a good detail of Rash Behari Bose's life and revolutionary achievements see Madhanath Rath (editor-in-chief), Sabitri Prasanna Chatterjee (editor), Rash Behari Basu: His Struggle for India's Independence (Biplabi Mahansyak Rash Behari Basu Smarak Samity, Calcutta 1963); Uma Mukherjee, Two great Indian Revolutionaries: Rash Behari Bose and Jyotindra Nath Mukerjee (Firma K.L., Calcutta, 1966); S.Sengupta, Our Struggle and Rash Behari Bose (Books of the World, Calcutta, 1951).

375. Government of India, Home Department, Political, File No. 32/2 of 1938.
of the impending world war. He was determined to create a militant anti-imperialist atmosphere in the country and to launch a mass movement during the war to capture political power. Soon after his election as Congress President for the second term, the Bengal Provincial Congress which met at Jalpaiguri in February 1939 passed a resolution under his inspiration stating that a six month notice should be given to Britain and a mass civil disobedience movement should be started at the expiry of that period. In his presidential address at Tripuri he also stated: "The time has come for us to raise the issue of Swaraj and submit our national demand to the British Government in the form of an ultimatum." "What more opportune moment could we find in our national history for a final advance in the direction of swaraj particularly when the international situation is favourable to us?" he added. Gandhi was, however, opposed to any scheme of struggle during that period, because, as he said in his letter to Bose on 2 April 1939, "I smell violence in the air I breathe." It was the opportunity provided by the international situation which urged Bose ultimately to challenge the Gandhian leadership directly. After his escape from India during the second world war, he wrote: "Long before 1939, the writer had been convinced that an international crisis in the form of a war would break out in the near future and that India should make the fullest use of that crisis in order

378. Ibid., p. 141.
to win her freedom. Since the Munich Pact — that is, since September 1938 — he had been trying to bring the Indian public round to this point of view and he had been endeavouing to induce the Congress to shape its own policy in conformity with the march of events abroad. In this task, he had been obstructed by the Gandhi Wing at every step because the latter had no comprehension of coming international developments and was looking forward eagerly to a compromise with Britain without the necessity of a national struggle. Nevertheless, the writer knew that within the Congress and among the people in general, he had a very large measure to support and that all that he needed was an organized and disciplined party behind him. He tried to convert the Congress into such a party by continuing as its President. Failing that he formed the Forward Bloc.

Second World War: Bengal and Gandhi

Subhas Bose's stand during World War II was extremely popular among the Bengalis. He thought in terms of alliance with the enemies of the British. During World War I the nationalists of Bengal made such an alliance, and in spite of its failure it left a legacy which stirred the hearts of many nationalists. Referring to the attitude of the general people of Bengal during World War II Narayan Bandyopadhyay, a leading revolutionary, wrote: "Everywhere the people talked about war. Wherever I went, the first topic of discussion was war. I often told the people that Germany would be defeated. Whoever heard this thought that this man was pro-British

The period covering the years 1935-1942 which is included in this book was written by Bose in Europe during World War-II.
In those days it was unpatriotic to talk anything against Germany. The Governor of Bengal, Casey, also wrote to the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, on 12 June 1944: "The fact of the matter is that the great majority of educated Hindu opinion is against us, and while the terrorist parties are comparatively small there is an undercurrent of general Hindu sympathy with them, and even admiration for them."

Subhas Bose's strategy was quite in keeping with this mentality of Bengal. Gandhi's policy vis-à-vis the war, on the other hand, made no impression on the Bengali mind. His sympathy was with the British and he held Germany responsible for the war. In a statement issued on 5 September 1939 Gandhi, referring to his interview with the Viceroy, said: "Having made my position vis-à-vis the Congress quite clear, I told His Excellency that my own sympathies were with England and France from the purely humanitarian standpoint. I told him that I could not contemplate without being stirred to the very depth the destruction of London which had hitherto been regarded as impregnable. And as I was picturing before him the Houses of Parliament and the Westminster Abbey and their possible destruction, I broke down. Few days later Gandhi wrote: "As a satyagrahi, a votary of ahimsa, I must wish well to England. "I have come to the conclusion", he continued, "that Herr Hitler is responsible for the war. He refused to support war efforts not on the issue of India's
independence but because of his faith in non-violence. When he started individual satyagraha in 1940 it had no impact in Bengal. Referring to this satyagraha in Bengal the Government report stated: "There is very little interest in the movement. ... Should a reconciliation be effected between the Bose faction and the orthodox Congress in the province the movement might take a different and extended form." But as the war extended to East Asia and threatened the frontiers of India, a remarkable change came in the attitude of Gandhi towards the war and the Allied Powers. This was evident in the Quit India resolution adopted by the Congress in August 1942.

This resolution was framed against the background in an acute international crisis — all the Southeast Asian countries were overrun by the Japanese and the invasion of India seemed imminent. For the first time Gandhi began to think in terms of national danger and international situation and he reacted almost like a militant nationalist. This changed state of Gandhi's mind was described by Nehru thus: "In the conflict between that principle of non-violence which had become his very life-blood and meaning of existence, and India's freedom which was a dominating and consuming passion for him, the scale inclined towards the latter ... The practical statesman took

384. "Individual Satyagraha ... did not meet with any enthusiastic reception ... Satyagrahis were ignored ... Mr. Gandhi's hints that he might have to undertake a last fast were not received with much interest; although, they were not received with much interest; although, they were universally deprecated ..." Government of India, Home Department, Poll. File No. 49/1/43-Poll(I) of 1943. Also Narendra Nath Das, n. 124, p.215.

385. Government of India, Home Department, Political, File No. 3/7 of 1940.
precedence over the uncompromising prophet." He believed that the presence of the British in India would tempt the Japanese to invade the country and therefore he asked them to quit India. Undoubtedly Gandhi tried to lead the movement along the non-violent channel but so far as the Quit India demand was concerned there was now no scope for any negotiation. The resolution demanded "immediate ending of British rule in India". "It is the unconditional withdrawal of the British power, without reference to the wishes of any party, that is our demand", said Gandhi. "There is no room left for any negotiation in the proposal for withdrawal. Either they recognize independence, or they do not," he added. "You may take it from me", he asserted, "that I am not going to strike a bargain with the Viceroy for ministries and the like. I am not going to be satisfied with anything short of complete independence." The mantra is: 'Do or Die'. We shall either free India or die in the attempt". It appeared as if Subhas Chandra Bose was now speaking through Gandhi. With reference to this resolution Bose wrote from Europe: "There is no doubt that the Congress resolution came nearest in expressing the wish of the vast majority of the Indian people. It also brought the Congress fundamentally near the stand always taken by the writer."

386. Jawaharlal Nehru, The Discovery of India, n. 31, p. 541.
390. The Indian Struggle 1920-1942, n. 103, p. 350.
Confronted with an immediate international crisis Gandhi tried to find out an immediate solution, and his social utopia and concern for moral values, though they continued to influence his thinking, receded to the background for the time being. As one writer has put it: "It is true that during 1939-41 the prophet in him over-powered the patriot in him. He became obsessed with the idea of non-violence and tried to press it on an unwilling Congress. But ultimately he got over this obsession and gave the famous call of 'do or die' in 1942." 391 "The saint in him perinnially swearing by non-violence", he further wrote, "had taken a back seat and given over the front seat to the patriot, ready to sacrifice all for his country's salvation". 392 Though he did not give up non-violence he undoubtedly changed the character of his movement. Explaining his views about the nature of the impending struggle he told a foreign journalist on 14 July: "The struggle does not involve courting imprisonment. It is too soft a thing. We had, no doubt, made it a business to court imprisonment up to now, but there will be no such thing this time." 393 Hindu-Muslim unity was one of the most vital points of his Constructive Programme, and throughout his life he considered it an essential precondition of Swaraj. But now he said: "Freedom cannot now wait for the realization of communal unity. If that unity is

392. Ibid., p. 252.
not achieved, sacrifices necessary for it will have to be much greater than would have otherwise sufficed.\textsuperscript{394} When he judged the Indian problem against the background of national rivalries and international politics rather than in the context of his social utopia and moral philosophy, he accepted the conventional nationalist view of independence. It was withdrawal of the British rule from India and his own view of Swaraj was not insisted upon.

The August movement of 1942 was not a Gandhian movement. Gandhi and his non-violent followers had little control over it. Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee has aptly pointed out: "The INA had no Gandhian influence and so was 1942 movement inside India."\textsuperscript{395} Historically the August movement was closer to the INA than to the Gandhian movements. Its leadership was provided largely by those left parties which had sympathy for the programme of Subhas Chandra Bose, and they gave the movement a violent turn taking full advantage of Gandhi's call for the struggle. On the national level the leadership came mainly from the Congress Socialist Party, but, as Myron Weiner has pointed out, the CSP could not grow in Bengal because of its failure to give full support to Bose between 1938 and 1940, and, therefore, here the movement fell under the control of the Forward Bloc and other

\textsuperscript{394} Ibid., p. 159.

\textsuperscript{395} Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, n. 140, p. 559. For a detailed account of the August movement see Tarini Sankar Chakravorty (ed.), India in Revolt (Bengal and Assam), (Hindusthan Book Depot, 1946) and Hutchins G. Francis, Spontaneous Revolution (Monohar Book Service, Delhi, 1971).
left parties. Subhas Chandra Bose gave full support to the movement and gave instructions to the people through his broadcasts from abroad. Though Gandhi reiterated his faith in non-violence in unmistakable terms, it appeared to some that he took a softer attitude towards it during this time. "Gandhi", Pendral Moon wrote, "... claimed to attach the same importance as ever to non-violence. But undoubtedly he was less inhibited by it than in earlier days. He accepted outbreaks of violence and disorder as more or less inevitable, was no longer averse to the 'anarchy and red ruin' against which he protested in 1940. He framed no regular programme and made no organized preparations for mass non-violent civil disobedience possibly hoping that ... the response to his call would be so staggering that the government would immediately be paralysed by a spontaneous, universal, strike throughout the country. But it was difficult to believe that he was wholly ignorant of the preparations that


397. For his detailed instructions as given through the broadcast from Azad Hind Radio, Germany, on 31 August 1942 see S.A. Ayer, n. 288, pp. 147-153.

398. Before placing the Quit India resolution at the AICC Meeting on 7 August 1942 Gandhi said: "There are people who ask me whether I am the same man that I was in 1920, or whether there has been any change in me. You are right in asking that question. Let me, however, hasten to assure you that I am the same Gandhi as I was in 1920. I have not changed in any fundamental respect. I attach the same importance to non-violence that I did then. If at all, my emphasis on it has grown stronger". D.G. Tendulkar, n.25, Vol. VI, p. 152.
were being made by others, many of them Congressmen, for mass action very far removed from non-violent satyagraha". Referring to Gandhi's exhortation that "everyone of you should, from this moment onwards, consider yourself a free man or woman, and act as if you are free ...", Robert Pyne wrote that this was some sort of direct incentive to violence.

The Quit India resolution and the August movement did not, however, improve the image of Gandhi and the Gandhian Congress in Bengal. The militant nationalists of Bengal stood behind Bose and though he supported the Quit India resolution and the August movement, Gandhi and his associates continued to condemn Bose for his alliance with the Axis powers. When one journalist drew Gandhi's attention to Bose's support to his Quit India resolution, Gandhi replied: "I am not flattered when Subhas Babu says I am right. I am not right in the sense he means. For, there he is attributing pro-Japanese feeling to me. If I were to discover that by some strange miscalculation I had not realized the fact that I was helping the entry of the Japanese in this country, I should not hesitate to retrace my steps. As regards the Japanese, I am certain that we should lay down our lives in order to resist them as we would resist the British." The Bengali nationalists regarded Subhas Bose


as a great patriot who was fighting for the independence of his motherland with the assistance of Japan and not as a Japanese agent helping their entry into India. In those days they often argued that history provided no example of a country becoming independent without foreign assistance.

The anti-fascist outlook of Nehru led him, however, to adopt a more pronounced anti-Bose attitude, and considering the war as directed against the Fascist powers he could not even whole-heartedly approve of the stand taken by Gandhi during this time. Referring to his attitude towards Gandhi's Quint India demand one of his biographers wrote: "Nor did Nehru entirely approve of the strong nationalist overtones in Gandhi's utterances in the context of a world in flames. It seemed to him that the Mahatma's approach was too narrow, and ignored the larger international considerations which in this time of common peril could not humanly be over-looked." This ideological approach of Nehru antagonized and irritated the Bengal nationalists whose sympathy lay with the enemies of the British. Bose also told them from Berlin through the Azad Hind Radio: "Do not be carried away by ideological considerations; do not bother about the internal politics of other countries, which is no concern of ours. Believe me when I say that the enemies of British Imperialism are our friends and allies." The nationalists in general tuned into listen to Bose over the Azad Hind Radio and were thrilled by his exhortations. They believed

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403. Frank Moraes, Jawaharlal Nehru (Jaico, Bombay, 1959), p. 293.
that their efforts within the country would be aided by their allies outside. The official records stated: "Enemy broadcasts ... are freely listened to everywhere ... Agitators ... are said to have circulated the rumour that aircraft seen coming over ... belonged to the Germans and Japanese and were carrying Indian political leaders." \(^405\) The formation of the Azad Hind Pouz in the subsequent period led the militant nationalists of Bengal to feel that their strategy would ultimately succeed to liberate India after the failure of the movement launched at the call of Gandhi. The feelings among the Bengali youths were one of pride that India was very soon going to be liberated under the leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose, a Bengali, and not by a mero (Gandhi). \(^406\)

Transference of Power: Congress leadership, Gandhi and Militant Nationalism.

In the post-war period the Indian politics began to develop along two different lines: one was the constitutional negotiation for the transference of power and the other was the militant popular upsurge centering around the INA trial. After the war was over the British Government brought charges against the leading officers of the Indian National Army not only for waging a war against the king but also for committing brutal

\(^{405}\) Government of India, Home Department, Political (I), File No. 13/9 of 1942.

\(^{406}\) Government of India, Home Department, Political (I), File No. 33/9 of 1944. Also interview on 26.1.80 with Dr. Dhirendranath Biswas, a noted political figure of Bengal since 1911. 'Mero' which comes from the word Marwaris is a term of abuse, used by the Bengalis to include all people in the Hindusthani areas. This term indicates a sense of regional superiority of the Bengalis.
acts of torture on the members of the INA accused of desertion. Accordingly a Military Tribunal was constituted and the first batch of 3 accused officers — Shah Nawaz, Dhilon and Seghal — were put on public trial in the historic Red Fort in Delhi towards the end of 1945. The Indian people who so long had a superficial idea of the INA now came to know the details of its activities and a wave of sympathy for the INA men swept the whole of India. Wild popular demonstrations were held throughout the country condemning the trial and eulogising the INA. Moreover, on 18 February 1946 in Bombay about three thousand naval ratings of the Royal Indian Navy rose in violent protest against the discriminatory policy followed by the Government towards them. The people of Bombay organized strikes and hartals showing their solidarity with the mutineers and this popular upsurge had to be put down with the help of the military causing death to many. The movement had its repercussions in other parts of India also including Calcutta. The militant nationalists of Bengal identified themselves completely with this popular movement and they believed that the time was ripe for the final struggle against the British. Jogesh Chandra Chatterji wrote: "1946 was one of the most stormy years in the

407. R.C. Majumdar, n. 352, pp. 748-49.


Also see Tarashand, History of the Freedom Movement in India, (Publications Division, Govt. of India, 1972), pp. 458-459.

history of freedom struggle of India ... The edifice of British imperialism seemed to be crumbling down before the eyes of those who had nurtured it. Rift within the bureaucracy and disobedience in the armed forces were such factors which could bring the functioning of the British administrative machinery to a standstill. The second world war gave such a crushing blow to England that her entire economy was shattered into pieces. She was not left with enough resources to suppress growing Indian national discontent. The only probable solution which the White Hall could think was to compromise with Indian wishes and agree to the demand for freedom.409 The militant nationalists of Bengal opposed to the idea of purchasing freedom through negotiations and compromise with the British Government, because they believed that such freedom would never be complete and unconditional. They wanted to intensify the struggle until the foreigners were driven out of the country completely and unconditionally. The leaders of the Congress, however, thought that further struggle against the British was unnecessary and they entered into negotiations with them for the transference of power.

Before we proceed further it should be made clear that in the post war period the Congress politics of India assumed a new complexion. So long the central leadership of the Congress was under the influence of Gandhi, but after the war when it perceived that India's independence would be achieved through negotiations without any mass movement, Gandhi's influence over

it suffered a sharp decline. The response of the militant nationalists of Bengal to the central leadership of the Congress during this period cannot, therefore, be strictly regarded as their response to the Gandhian leadership. But since the central leadership of the Congress remained so long identified with the Gandhian leadership we shall briefly refer to the attitude of the militant nationalists of Bengal towards it keeping in mind that Gandhi kept himself virtually aloof from the Congress politics of negotiation for the transference of power during this period.

The first concrete step towards the process of the transference of power was the announcement by the British Government on 21 August 1945 that the elections to the various provincial legislatures would be held in the coming winter. The Congress leaders, the militant nationalists of Bengal complained, took full advantage of the popular revolutionary upsurge against the INA trial in order to win the election and then they followed the policy of compromise. The Congress at first was not opposed to the INA trial. Referring to the decision to hold the trial Philip Mason wrote: "It met at first with gratified approval even from the Congress leaders." Later on, the Congress changed its policy, championed the cause of the accused, issued statements denouncing the trial and set up a panel of defence lawyers which included Jawaharlal Nehru himself. Referring

410. For a full account of the transference of power see V.P. Menon, n. 407.

to this change of the Congress policy R.C. Majumdar wrote:
"It is difficult to explain their sudden change, for there was no love lost between Subhas Bose and the Congress leaders who were bitterly opposed to his alliance with the Japanese and threatened to fight them if they entered India. It was, therefore, not unnaturally suspected by many at the time that the Congress deliberately used the INA as an election stunt. Whether this is true or not, there is not the least doubt the Congress swept the polls at the crest of the wave of enthusiasm created by the INA trial." 412

The militant nationalists of Bengal believed that the attempt to win independence through negotiations and compromise were responsible for the partition of the country and for the continued association of India with the Commonwealth. The lust for power of the Congress leaders, they maintained, was responsible for such a tragic outcome of the long struggle of the Indian people for independence. "Right from the days of Lahore Congress resolution of 1930", Jogesh Chandra Chatterji observed, "the Congress stood firmly for complete (and unconditional) independence and also against the division of the country on communal basis, but the British plan to transfer power within the Commonwealth and also on the principle of divided India was accepted by the power greedy popular leaders of the Congress." 413

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412. R.C. Majumdar, n. 352, p. 749.
also brought about, according to them, an all round degeneration of the national character which retarded the development of the country after independence. "No patriot, not to speak of a revolutionary, actually wanted this independence", wrote a prominent revolutionary leader of Bengal. According to Jogesh Chatterjee the "transfer of power through compromise demoralised India." Independence through an uncompromising struggle would have, they believed, purified the people, and led to the emergence of a new India, strong and vigorous, undivided and self-confident.

Like the militant nationalists of Bengal, Gandhi was also opposed to independence through partition of the country. Instead of solving the communal problem, the partition, he believed, would accentuate it. Even in the days of worst communal disturbances which preceded independence, Gandhi believed, with passion, that the problem must be solved by rousing the good sense of the people. He carried on that experiment in Noakhali and in Bihar in 1946-47 after they suffered communal blood-bath. In an important conversation with Mountbatten at the viceregal study Gandhi made a frantic appeal to him not to partition India. He even suggested that Jinnah and his Muslim League might be given power over the

whole of India instead of dividing the country. Mountbatten who found no solution except through partition understood that Gandhi was a difficult person to deal with. He, therefore, tried to win over Nehru and Patel by the intimacy of private conversations and personal influences. "By playing on the hopes and ambitions of Nehru and Patel", Mountbatten, as Leonard Mosley has put it, "successfully manoeuvred the Mahatma out of the main stream of Indian politics."\footnote{Leonard Mosley, The Last Days of the British Raj (Jaico Bombay, 1966), p. 142.} In the context of the British willingness to transfer power immediately, Nehru and Patel believed that acceptance of the Muslim demand for partition was the only way to independence. Gandhi, however, did not yield, but he was no longer indispensable to his followers. When India became independent in the midnight of 14 August 1947 Gandhi refused to join the celebrations in New Delhi. He was then in Calcutta fighting desperately for communal unity. And, as the writers of the book, Freedom at Midnight, had put it: "When the clocks had chimed that magic midnight and India had awakened to life and freedom, Mahandas Karamchand Gandhi had been sound asleep."\footnote{Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, Freedom at Midnight (Vikas Publishing House, Delhi, 1976), p. 93.} He had no message to give to the people on the Independence Day. Gandhi's long alliance with the nationalists at last virtually came to an end, and he proposed to form a new organization replacing the old Congress. On 29 January 1948 he prepared a draft resolution

\footnote{Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, Freedom at Midnight, p. 259.}

\footnote{D.G. Tendulkar, n. 25, Vol. VII, p. 80.}
proposing the dissolution of the Congress and formation of the Lok Sevak Sangha which would remain outside the "unhealthy competition with political parties and communal bodies." According to his draft the All India Spinners' Association, All India Village Industries Association, Hindustani Talimi Sangh, Harijan Sevak Sangh and Goseva Sangh would remain affiliated to this proposed Lok Sevak Sangh. After independence Gandhi was now free to carry on his own experiments with social reconstruction outside the influence of nationalist politics. But on 30 January the eventful life of Gandhi came to an end by the bullets of an assassin.

In this long chapter we have tried to explain the response of the militant nationalists of Bengal to the Gandhian leadership over the nationalist movement. Militant nationalism was present in the Congress throughout India but it came into prominence in Bengal because it arose here on an extensive scale much earlier than in any other part of India. "In general", Myron Weiner wrote, "Bengalis did not accept Gandhi's principles although many joined in his movement. It is more than a coincidence that the two greatest challenges which Gandhi faced within Congress were from C.R. Das and Subhas Chandra Bose, both Bengalis." Marcus Franda also pointed out that "unlike most other regions of the sub-continent, the Congress party in Bengal did not accept the leadership of

Gandhi and the central Congress party organization until their independence 423 "The Bengali leadership", he continued, "was constantly prodding Gandhi and the Congress party to move faster and to intensify its activities. They urged complete independence even while the Congress leadership was prepared to accept Dominion Status; and they urged civil disobedience movements when the Congress leadership still hoped that further negotiations would bring concessions from the British rulers. Gandhi's faith in non-violence, negotiation and moderation contrasted sharply with the Bengali belief that terrorism and violence had been successful in revoking the partition of 1905 and in gaining other concessions from the British, a point of view romanticized in Bengali literature." 424 But, in spite of constant pressure, severe criticism and occasional revolt, the militant nationalists of Bengal, in general, remained with Gandhi because of his strong hold over the masses all over India. Gandhi also tried to adjust himself with the demands of the militant nationalist as far as possible without surrendering his basic principles.

But in the context of the second world war the nationalist struggle became bifurcated into two distinct movements - one became military in character and took the form of the INA under the leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose and the other remained under the control of Gandhi. The former was regarded as the culmination of the movement launched by the revolutionaries

424. Ibid., p. 32.
of Bengal. According to the analysis of Nirod Chandra Chaudhuri, "The Bengali revolutionary movement in its ideological inspiration was wholly military. It was at first conceived of as an incipient military uprising. But it soon degenerated into a terroristic movement of political murder which was due to two reasons: first, the impossibility of organizing a military revolt in the existing conditions, and, secondly, the existence of a tradition of private murder for revenge among the Bengali gentry, which necessarily influenced the revolutionary activity. Nevertheless, the military concept remained dormant, and asserted itself from time to time. In none was this more clearly seen than in the Bengali political leader, Subhas Chandra Bose, who was also a figure in the terroristic movements." After the end of the war power was, however, transferred through negotiations to the leaders of the Gandhian Congress, but in this process Gandhi was thoroughly ignored and the militant nationalists of Bengal completely by-passed. The liquidation of the British raj in India", Arnold Toynbee wrote, "like the previous liquidation of Mughal raj, has been followed by a scramble for power, but the winning quality today is neither the Maratha's valour nor the Bengali's penmanship, which made the fortunes of these two peoples in the eighteenth century. The twentieth century winners is the Gujarati with his business sense. The Gujarati industrialist is, in fact, the British sahib's principal heir; and Bengal with her wings broken by partition may resign herself to being eclipsed.
