CHAPTER - II

OUT BREAK OF THE WAR TO THE QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT 1939-1942

- Congress in Quandary
- Lull before the storm
- Getting ready for showdown
Chapter-II
Outbreak of the war to the Quit India Movement, 1939-1942

CONGRESS IN QUANDARY

The Second World War broke out on 1 September 1939 when Nazi Germany invaded Poland. Britain and France who had been following a policy of appeasement towards Hitler, were forced to go to Poland's aid and declare war on Germany. This they did on 3 September 1939. The Viceroy unilaterally associated India with Britain's declaration of war on Germany without bothering to consult the provincial ministries or Congress or even the elected members of the Central Legislature.

Congress's hostility to Fascist aggression had been incomparably more forthright and consistent than Britain's own record so far. Yet Linlithgow rejected numerous offers of full cooperation in the war effort provided some minimum conditions were accepted: a promise of a post war constituent assembly to determine political future of a free India, and the immediate formation of something like a genuine responsible government in the centre. If Britain was fighting for democracy and freedom, the Congress argued with considerable justice, she should prove this by ending imperialism in the colonies and by establishing full democracy in India. Otherwise, Britain's war aims seemed extremely hollow.

Linlithgow's response was entirely negative. His statement of 17th October 1939 merely repeated old offers of Dominion Status in an indefinite and distant future, promised post-war "consultations with several communities" to modify the 1935 Act and the setting up for the present of a purely consultative group of Indian politicians and princely representatives with no real executive power whatsoever.

The reaction of the Indian people and the national leadership was sharp. The Congress Working Committee meeting on 23 October rejected the Viceregal statement as a reiteration of the old imperialist policy, decided not to support the
war and called upon the Congress ministers to resign in protest. In accordance with the decision of the Congress Working Committee, the ministry in Orissa submitted its resignation on 4 November, 1939. The assembly was suspended and the Governor took over the administration under Article 93 of the Government of India Act, 1935.

While most of the Congressmen agreed on the question of their attitude towards the war and the resignation of the ministries, sharp differences developed over the question of the future course of action. Gandhi and the dominant leadership in the Congress were very critical of the Fascist powers. But, then also, they did not approve of embarrassing Britain in its war effort by starting a mass movement. The Left wing group comprising of Bose's Forward Bloc, the Congress Socialist Party, the Communist Party, the Royists were all convinced that the Indian masses were fully ready for action and the war crisis provided an excellent opportunity to achieve freedom through an all out struggle against British imperialism. However, more than anything else, Gandhi was not in favour of any hasty action because the Congress was organizationally not in a position to launch a mass struggle.

The Congress organisation had become weak and had been corrupted during 1938-39. There was indiscipline and lack of cohesion within the Congress ranks. In such circumstances, the congress would not have been able to withstand severe repressive measures by the government. It was, therefore, necessary to carry on intense political work among the people, to prepare them for struggle, to tone up the congress organization and to purge it of weaknesses ...

The forgoing paragraph is applicable to most of the states of India including that of Orissa of 1938-39. Congress, which had performed exceedingly well in the elections of 1937, had become so much discredited in the eyes of the public in these two years that many Congress leaders (including Gandhi) heaved a sigh of relief when the decision for the resignation of the ministries was taken. Whatever ground the British Government and bureaucracy had lost to the
Congress due to the formation of Ministries in 1937 was soon regained because of the intense inner bickerings of the various factions in the Congress. The Hindu-Muslims equation was also on such a plane that Jinnah initiated moves to celebrate the "day of deliverance" by the Muslims, thus widening the gulf between the two communities.¹

Whatever semblence of unity that was there within the congress ranks dissolved once the ministries resigned and rival groups came out abusing each other openly. Power politics had exercised an adverse impact on the more senior leaders and congress in Orissa was polarized in to many camps like never before. Vilification campaigns had been undertaken by the various groups before the outbreak of the war. They intensified once the ministries resigned in November 1939.

The crux of the problem, it seems was that Pundit Nilakantha Das, who had been a member of the Central Legislature in 1937 and who had contested and lost PCC presidency to Harekrusna Mahatab in 1937, did not take his defeat sportively and he and his followers tried to use whatever platforms they could to create indiscipline and to break the morale of the congress workers.²

Harekrusna Mahatab had influenced two of Nilakanrha Das's close supporters and had won the PCC presidency election by 13 votes to 12. He did not stop at that. Mahatab even took steps to discredit Pt. Nilakantha Das in the public by asking him to give an account of the money spent during the election of 1937.²

Orgaanisationally, the PCC was passing through one of the worst phases in its history. It was a curious mixture of many shades of opinion.

1. FNR, First half of December, 1939, File No. 18/12/1939, Home Dept. (Pol), National Archives of India, New Delhi.
Gopabandhu Choudhury and Rama Devi, the more prominent Congress leaders had literally dissociated themselves from the Congress. They were looking after the affairs of the Gandhi Seva Sangha. While Nabakrusna Chaudhury, Malati Devi and Surendra Nath Dwivedi belonged to the socialist group, Pundit Nilakantha Das, Pandit Godabarisa Mishra belonged to another group. Hare krusna Mahatab, Nityananda kannungo and Bichitranaanda Das belonged to yet another group.

In such a kind of political grouping, the election for the leadership of the provincial legislature was bound to evoke mixed reactions and controversy. Of the 36 elected members in the assembly 20 were in favour of Pundit Nilakantha Das and it was extremely difficult to defeat him if there was to be election for the leadership of the party. But here again Mahatab and his group outwitted him and succeeded in keeping him out. A Rules Committee was formed under the chairmanship of Bichitranaanda Das and the committee decided that someone who was not an elected member of the assembly could not contest the election for the party leadership. The other question that was raised was that since Pundit Nilakantha Das was a member of the Central Legislature he could not contest for the state assembly without a clearance from the central parliamentary board.  

Unable to find a way out, Pundit Nilakantha Das called a meeting of his supporters and the decision was taken that all his supporters would cast their vote for Biswanatha Das. It was also decided in the meeting that once elected as the leader, Biswanatha Das would alter the decision of the Rules Committee and get Pt. Nilakantha Das elected. Biswanatha Das would then remain as a minister. This, of course, Biswanatha Das did not admit afterwards. It is quite ironical that


the same Biswanatha Das became the chief minister of Orissa in 1971 when he was not the member of Orissa state legislature!. It is also ironical that Biswanatha Das was not a dedicated congress party member till 1936 and before the assembly elections Pundit Nilakantha Das had to convince him for two days before managing to get his signature on the Congress pledge.  

Biswanatha Das had been a very late entrant into the Congress and he did not belong to the inner circle of any of the conflicting groups. It would have been extremely difficult for him to run the Ministry in Orissa had he not been supported by someone like Mahatab, who had a wider acceptance in the Congress ranks. As stated by Mahatab in his autobiography, Nilakantha Das and his supporters expected that Mahatab should withdraw his support to Biswanatha Das and let his Ministry fall. Then he should let Nilakantha Das come to the Provincial Congress from the center and become the leader of the legislature party by getting himself (Das) elected in place of one of the serving legislators. Since Mahatab did not act up to their expectations, there was a rift between the group in office and the disgruntled group which could not taste the fruits of power. All through 1939 and 1940 one comes across frequent reports of mud slinging and character assassination resorted to by these two rival groupings.

However, all these Fortnightly Reports of the Governor and statements of Mahatab in "Sadhanara Pathe" can not be taken at their face value. As mentioned earlier, the Congress organization was a curious mixture of various camps and the power equation between them can not be assumed to have been very simple or straightforward. In his Oral History Transcripts, Mahatab himself has admitted that in the 1930's the Provincial Congress was divided into four groups,

7. FNRS throughout 1939 and 1940.
the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) led by Nabakrusrna Choudhury, the Gandhian group led by Gopabandhu Choudhury, the center group led by Mahatab and the fourth group led by Nilakantha Das. In case of a possible clash, the CSP, Gandhian and Manhatab's groups combined together against Nilakantha Das's group.8

Mahatab's views in his oral history transcripts and his remarks in his autobiography "sadhanara Pathe", however, seem to be baffling and rather contradictory. In sadhanara Pathe, he writes, 'It was extremely difficult to run the Ministry (Government) in Orissa because there was a group inside the Congress which felt left out and out of frustration were planting the Provincial Congress Committee against the Congress Ministry.9 Mahatab tries to project the group led by Nilakantha Das and Godabarisa Mishra as sheer opportunists whose ambition for power was insatiable.

Compared to this, his views in his oral history transcripts do not at all compliment the views expressed in his autobiography. "Nilakantha Das and Godabarisa Mishra" he says, "were in the Coalition Ministry because they thought that something should be done in Orissa".10 Regarding Nialakantha Das, he says, "as a matter of strategy, on one hand he supported Bose and on the other hand, he was heading the Publicity Department of the war machinery. They had thought that they would be in office and sabotage war efforts of the British from inside."11 The friendship with the communists, which Mahatab claims came in handy when there was a clash within the rival factions of the Provincial Congress was also a cause of concern many a times. Because of the radicalization of the Congress

during the ministry, the Socialists and the Communists often mobilized the peasants to embarrass the Ministry.  

Nilakantha Das provides an all together new dimension to this infighting in the Provincial Congress in his autobiography. Many provincial leaders were envious of the stature and reputation of the Satyabadi group of leaders. Because of their sacrifice and dedication they (Satyabadi group) were able to strike a chord in the heart of the Oriyas. This was not palatable to many provincial leaders who were jealous and deliberately worked to keep the satyabadi faction away from Orissa politics. In order to keep them away from office, they (Mahatab was a prominent member among them) even went to the extent of poisoning the minds of national leaders like Sardar Patel13 and Dr. Rajendra Prasad.  

The process of villification of the Satyabadi group had started a little before Gopabandhu's death. During the Salt Satyagraha, Gopabandhu choudhury was sent by these leaders to Inchudi in order to prevent the Satyabadi group from giving any lead to the movement. 

At the instigation Krupasindhu Hota, Jagannatha Rath, a student of Satyabadi had poisoned the minds of Mohanlal against Nilakantha Das and others at Satyabadi. Most probably, that was the reason why Nilakantha Das was sidelined and ignored for the editorship of the samaj soon after Gopabandhu's death.  

12. FNR, First half of April, 1939, File No. 18/4/1939. "It is reported that OPCC is intending to depute volunteers to Puri district to preach against socialism." Also FNR, second half of July, 1939, File No. 18/7/1939.  
15. Lala Lajpat Ray had conveyed this to Nilakantha Das in one of their meeting at Simla. Ibid., p. 159.  
16. Ibid.  
17. Ibid.
Nilakantha Das's feelings speak a lot about the state of affairs in Orissa Congress of 1939. "Conspiracy is a part of Orissa politics...Even when I had the support of 21 MLAs, I could not be elected as the party chief. All my supporters out of sheer disgust threw in their lot with Biswanatha Das." 18

Nilakantha Das took up the issue of state premiership with the president of the Congress Parliamentary Committee, Sardar Patel. 19 He also took it up with Pundit Nehru and Dr. Rajendra Prasad at Delhi. But they did not seem to be very supportive of Nilakantha Das's views. 20 That is why it was all the more frustrating for Nilakantha Das and his supporters, who felt deceived and denied of their rightful place in the state power structure and became all the more determined to embarass the ministry at any given opportunity.

Many contemporaries also felt the same way. After the death of Pundit Gopabandhu Das and the gradual decline of the Satyabadi open school, more and more Congressmen became jealous of the Satyabadi group and their reputation. Brilliance is rarely popular. Almost everyone of the Satyabadi group was intellectually sound and good leader of men who had made a mark not only in the province but also outside Orissa. Their fame and intellect dwarfed many Congressmen who could not match their brilliance as speakers, writers or as organizers of men. It is quite natural that they conspired to keep them away from power politics in the state if they could do so. 21

Veteran freedom fighter and a close aide of Pt. Nilakantha Das, Smt. Sarala Devi also expressed a similar kind of an opinion. Talking about the

19. Ibid.
20. Ibid. p.162.
treatment meted out to Pundit Nilakantha Das, she says, "Pundit Nilakantha Das's presence of mind and common sense were of a high order. That is why both inside the Congress and outside there was none who could outwit him through reasoning and argument. They were scared of his principles and could not tolerate him. That is why people like him became victims of conspiracy and were deliberately kept out of power politics." 22

Even though Harekrusna Mahatab played a very significant role in shaping the destiny of Orissa, he has been severely criticized for his dubious role by many of his co-workers. Referring to Mahatab, Surendra Nath Dwibedi writes "Irrespective of what happened, he always wanted to be at the center of all that was going on." 23 "He was quite deceptive and even when he hated people, he never displayed any visible signs of his displeasure either in speech or in action." 24 "...In his long political life he shaped many lives and also destroyed many. That is probably quite natural in the complicated environment of power politics." 25

Biswanatha Das, who became the prime minister of Orissa in 1937 only because of Mahatab's support, also has a similar kind of assessment of Mahatab's personality. When asked as to why he supported Biju Pattnayak instead of Harekrusna Mahatab in the 60's, he said, "I do not say that Biju is a good man. There are two kinds of people. One who strike on the face and in the open, they can be countered. And the other who stab in the back and that can be fatal. While Biju belonged to the first group, Mahatab belonged to the second." 26

24. Ibid.
25. Ibid, p.186
When the tussle for supremacy was going on between the Ministerial party and pundit N.K. Das's faction the Ministerial party wanted to remove Pt. Das from the presidency of the UPCC (Utkal provincial congress committee). The other group directed its attack on the Congress Ministry, which had the support of Mahatab. The Governor in his Fort Nightly reports during 1939, 1940 and 1941 repeatedly refers to this struggle for one upmanship between these two factions in the congress. In as early as May 1939 one such report read "many of them (meetings) appear to have been called at the instance of persons both Congress and others who have been carrying on a campaign of vilification against the Ministry as a whole....(these) consist of rambling discussions mainly about what the present Ministry has failed to accomplish." 27

In order to remove Pundit Nilakantha Das, once in a while, the Ministerial party called requisition meetings and pt. Das had to spend quite an amount for securing a majority in these meetings. After two such meetings he gave up because he realised that he could not match the Ministerial party either in money or in power. 28

In anger Pt. Nilakantha Das retaliated by raising the question as to why the Ministry should not be directed by the dictates of the PCC president. In one of his letters to the prime minister Biswanath Das, on 16.6.1939, Pt. Das as the Congress President (PCC) wrote, "The majority in the Assembly was secured and consequently the government was set up by the Congress and as such primarily by the PCC, who practically gave the pledge, explained its terms and implications to the people and asked them to vote for candidates without any consideration of their personal tendencies and qualifications. Thus, for activities of the Government, PCC is directly responsible to the people. The members of the

Assembly and consequently those of the Government are, in fact, creatures of the PCC to which they are primarily responsible. The PCC should be always at their back and by their side.29

As a result of such campaigns, the gulf between the two factions went on widening as both went to extreme ends to score over the other. However, an interesting part in this scramble for power was that both the factions were almost evenly balanced and even when complaints and accusations went up to the AICC level, nothing much could be done as the AICC did not want to take a stern action against the so-called offenders.

In an apparent bid to oust the PCC President Pt. Das, the Ministerial group wanted to move a no-confidence motion during a meeting on 22 December 1939 at Berhampur. The motion is supposed to have been moved as per the instructions of AIWC (All India Working Committee) and out of 149 members present 76 were in favour of the motion while 73 voted against it. There was a great deal of confusion as the motion was being put up in face of a technical objection (three months had not elapsed since the passing of a similar motion had been considered) and the Ministerial group could not muster a two-third majority, an essential requirement for a no-confidence motion. In desperation, the Ministerial group and their supporters left the original meeting, convened a separate meeting and unanimously decided to eject Pt. Nilakantha Das.30

Both Nilakantha Das and Godabarisha Mishra were of the Satyabadi group, who exercised considerable clout in the provincial political circles. Both had given up lucrative jobs to work with Gopabandhu Das in shaping individuals

29. Ibid.
30. FNR, Second Half of December, 1939, File No. 18/12/1939.
at Satyabadi. Both were learned and had a clear grasp of the socio-political and economic scenario in the colonial set-up. Both were also needy men with families to look after. (Godabarisha Mishra frequently looked for escape routes from Satyabadi and was once involved in financial irregularities):

But at the same time it would be naive to brand them as sheer opportunists, who wanted to grab power (nothing else) and worked towards that end only. The kind of humiliation and ordeal that the Satyabadi group was made to go through obviously was not something that could have improved relations between the various factions in the Congress.

Another very significant issue which probably has not attracted enough attention from the scholars is the caste affiliation and polarisation in the political circles on basis of caste groupings in the province. Irrespective of the educated elites entering politics at the turn of the century prejudices on basis of caste lines can not be altogether ruled out. It might have been a strange coincidence but the fact remains that Satyabadi remained a powerful Brahmanical domain. Gopabandhu, Nilakantha, Harihara, Krupasindhu and Godabarisha were all Brahmins and the emerging non-Brahmin political elite might have deliberately directed its attack against them to counter their hold in the provincial power structure. The Satyabadi group was deridingly referred to as "Nana Company" in the provincial political circles which was obviously related to their being Brahmins.31

There are Many instances of deliberate attempt to marginalize the role of Satyabadi group after the death of pt. Gopabandhu Das. The process had, however, started before his death.32

The ministerial group did not stop at preventing Pt. Nilakantha Das from becoming the prime minister. At the behest of some ministers, the police even arrested a few supporters (19) of Pt. Das and booked them in a false case of rioting.33 All the 19 were set free by the court for lack of any incriminating evidences.

This is the time when Subash Bose had resigned from the Congress (INC) Presidency and formed the Foreward Bloc. He visited Orissa and addressed a meeting of the Utkal Youth Conference (Yuva Sammilani) in 1939, when Pt. Das was the president of the UPCC. Instead of remaining in the Congress, where every other day he countered controversy, Nilakantha left Congress and threw in his lot with Subash Bose.34 He welcomed Subash and accompanied him on the elephant ride around the Cuttack town.

Another leader of national repute and a known critic of Gandhi, Manabendra Nath Roy of the Radical Democratic Party visited Orissa around this time in 1939. Because of Gandhiji’s disapproval, many prominent provincial leaders kept away from these meetings. Pt. Nilakantha Das chaired the meeting which ceremoniously welcomed him and this particular incident was raised by the

---

32. In the 1920's, Gopabandhu Choudhury had unsuccessfully campaigned against pt. Nilakantha Das, in the elections to the Central Legislature. Das had emerged victorious with a huge margin. N.N.Mishra(ed), *op.cit.*, P.118. In 1920's when Gandhi had come to Satyabadi, Nilakantha accompanied him from Puri to Cuttack, There were attempts to poison Gandhi's mind against him. NK Das, *Atmajibani*, op.cit., p.102.


then secretary of INC who had proposed for Pt. Das's removal from Congress. It is because of Dr. Rajendra Prasad's intervention that the proposal could not be tabled.  

The rival group on the other hand, directed its attack on the Congress Ministry which had the tacit support of Mahatab. Nilakantha Das and Godabarisha Mishra prepared a chargsheet against Biswanath Das ministry containing charges of misrule and lapses and submitted it during the fourth annual conference of Gandhi seva Sangha held at Delanga in Puri district from 25th to 31st March 1938. But this was not appreciated by the members of the Congress Parliamentary Board like Sardar Patel and Dr. Rajendra Prasad, who were present there. On examination, they found the charges baseless.  

The Das-Mishra combine then entered into an alliance with Raja of Khallikote, Ramachandra Mardaraja Deva, with the object of harassing the Biswanath Das ministry. The zamindars of south Orissa who bitterly opposed the Madras Estates Land (Orissa Ammendment) Bill were secretly supported by some Congress members belonging to the Das-Mishra faction.  

Events at the national level were showing signs of change. Bose, who had taken on Gandhi and broken away from the Congress, was preaching in an altogether different language and with considerable success. The Congress morale was probably at its lowest ebb. Gandhi did not wish to hamper the British war efforts by launching a mass movement at this critical hour. But at the same

35. Ibid.
37. Ibid, p.262.
time he could not be a silent spectator to all that was going on around him. India had to lodge a protest against the unilateral declaration of war by the British Crown.

The other equally important aspect which Gandhi could not ignore was the public opinion in the Allied countries particularly in the United States of America which displayed an uncommon interest in the Indian affairs. Launching a mass movement would have inevitably alienated public opinion in these countries.

But, probably more than anything else, if Gandhi chose not to launch a mass movement in 1940, it was because organisationally the Congress was in a hapless state and torn into many factions. It would have been almost impossible to sustain a long-drawn mass movement, given the infighting and intra-party rivalry in the Congress. But Gandhi had to act. If not for anything else, at least for preventing any further erosion of the morale of the Congress workers, rank and file.

Had the Government at this time agreed to enter into a deal with the Congress, the crisis, perhaps would not have deepened to prepare for Gandhi’s final call to the British to go. But the viceroy showed no signs of a changed attitude even in September 1940 when Gandhi met him at Simla for a negotiated settlement. Gandhi was forced to finalise his plans for the Individual Civil Disobedience Movement.

**LULL BEFORE THE STORM**

Intending not to embarrass the Government in its war efforts, Gandhi started the Individual Civil Disobedience Movement as a symbolic protest. Many Congressmen had been anticipating such a move since a long time and some of them were disappointed that the movement was so limited in its scope and so restrictive in its nature.
In as early as January 1940, the Governor of Orissa’s report to the Viceroy read, “People are constantly being told to keep themselves in readiness for a fight and ground is being gradually prepared through propaganda and secret meetings for a civil disobedience movement.”

References to an impending struggle were made by the Governor in his report for the month of November 1939. “Pominent leaders are engaged in various propaganda in the interior explaining the Congress attitude and preparing the masses for a struggle which they consider is inevitable in the near future.”

Indian people at large and the Congressmen in particular, were anticipating a movement, but none had any idea about what shape it was going to take. Since Gandhi did not wish to obstruct the British war efforts by creating disturbances, he emphasized on purity and nonviolence as the two catch words during this movement. Vinoba Bhave was selected to be the first Satyagrahi to inaugurate this new movement. On 17 October 1940, Vinoba, under strict discipline of virtuous conduct began the civil Disobedience by raising anti-war slogans in public to demonstrate the Indian feelings and courted arrest on 21st October.

Gandhi next announced Jawaharlal Nehru’s name as the second Satyagrahi. But Nehru was arrested on 31 October before he could play his part, not on charges of what he was about to do, but on charges of having made seditious speeches early in October in the United Provinces. He was sentenced to four years imprisonment. To the Congress, this was a highly provocative action on Government’s Part. But Gandhi did not permit any serious or widespread reaction to it since he stood by his moral conviction that no disturbances should be caused during this novel movement.

38. *FNR*, first half of January, 1940, file no. 18/1/1940.
The Individual Civil Disobedience Movement can be broadly divided into three phases. Initially, the top leaders of the Indian National Congress like Vinoba Bhave and Nehru were selected to raise anti-war slogans and court arrest. Sardar Patel was arrested on 17 November and Maulana Azad on 3 January 1941. Maulana was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment.

In the Second phase, all representative Congressmen down from the village Committees to provincial Committees were called upon to join the movement and court imprisonment. The Government inorder to obstruct the continuing flow of civil resisters into the prisons, resorted to imposing heavy fines on them. This caused great hardship to rural Congressmen who were ready to respond to Gandhi’s call.

In the last phase, even the ordinary members of the Congress (the four anna members) came forward to break law and court imprisonment inspite of the risk of fines or loss of property. This, non-violent movement, Gandhi knew, was not intended for an early conclusion and that is why inorder to widen the base of the campaign, he laid utmost emphasis on the constructive activities during this period.

In Orissa, the decission to launch the Individual Civil Disobedience Movement was taken after Harekrusna Mahatab returned from wardha. He visited all the districts to acquaint the Congress workers with the instructions issued by the High Command with regard to the Individual Satyagraha. Gandhiji had selected twenty seven persons to start the campaign in Orissa in the first batch. Individual Civil Disobedience Movement started in Orissa on 1 December 1940 when Mahatab delivered an anti-war speech at Remuna in Baleswar. He was sentenced to one year simple imprisonment. The same day, Biswanath Das, the ex-premier, offered Satyagraha and courted imprisonment in the Cuttack district.

41. Ibid, pp.221-222
The All India Congress Committee members and M.L.A.s like Nityananda Kanungo, Bodhram Dube, Nabakrusna Choudhury, Prananath Pattanayak, Sadasiba Tripathy, Radhakrusna Biswasray and Surendra Nath Dwibedi, all raised antiwar slogans and courted imprisonment. Sarala Devi was the first woman satyagrahi who offered Satyagraha in the batch. 42

Individual Civil Disobedience Movement was also started at some other places in Orissa. On 4 December 1940, Smt. A. Laxmibai raised anti-war slogans in her speech in a meeting at Berhampur and courted arrest. Similarly, Smt. Champa Devi was arrested by the police at Rasalkonda (Bhanjanagar) for speaking against the Government's war policies. 43 Malati Choudhury had written to Gandhiji to allow her to offer Satyagraha but Gandhiji did not allow her as her daughter was only a year old.

The Individual Civil Disobedience Movement lingered on for some more months after the initial arrests, but owing to its limited scope and restrictive nature it did not succeed in arousing the enthusiasm, excitement or anger of the masses to a great extent. Imposition of fines and realization of fines through the sale of confiscated property were big deterrents for ordinary members of the Congress. There were also reports of cases where Congress workers took care to transfer their assets to somebody else's name before offering satyagraha. 44 Gandhi did not approve of this practice and the instruction was communicated to the intending Satyagrahis through Gopabandhu Choudhury. 45

44. *FNR*, second Half of January, 1941, file no.18/1/1941.
45. *FNR*, first half of February, 1941, file no. 18/2/1941.
A Satyagrahi Consultation camp was opened in Cuttack to acquaint intending Satyagrahis with Gandhi’s instructions and ‘dictators’ were appointed for each district to conduct the Satyagraha activities. To widen the base of the campaign, people of no standing (lesser known people) were allowed to offer Satyagraha. This was a positive aspect of the movement. But this practice also aroused criticism from the Congress members as some of these lesser known satyagrahis had difficulty in reading out the slogans.

The unimportant Satyagrahis were promptly ignored by the Government and the PCC had to devise a new scheme of countering this attitude of the Government. It was decided by the PCC that if a civil resister (Satyagrahi) was not arrested in the first instance, he should give fresh notice to the Government that he would continue to move from his village to the nearest police station, from there to the sub-divisional head quarters and on to the provincial head quarters shouting anti-war slogans and explaining to the people that the government had realized their mistaken policy and were no longer arresting Satyagrahis. Apart from courting arrest in the usual sites like the court compounds, railway stations, crowded streets, the Satyagrahis were also advised to impress upon the people about the anti-war views of the Congress through door-to-door campaigns.

46. *FNR*, second Half of March 1941, file no.18/3/1941
47. *FNR*, first Half of February 1941, file no.18/2/1941.
In order to make the movement more effective, Pranakrusna Padhiary, president of the PCC issued a circular to all the districts. The main points which he stressed were:

(i) Released satyagrahis should continue to offer Satyagraha everytime they come out of the jail and if not arrested, should not return to their homes but move about shouting anti-war slogans,

(ii) Any consideration for Satyagrahis intending to offer Satyagraha in future would be made on basis of their constructive work,

(iii) To popularise the Individual satyagraha Movement, intending satyagrahis should first do constructive work in the areas where they intend to offer Satyagraha,

(iv) The constructive work should include any of the five activities.
   (a) Sale of Khaddar.
   (b) Inducing villagers to take to spinning and teaching them how to spin.
   (c) Teaching harijan boys and opening night schools for adults.
   (d) Enrolment of Congress members.
   (e) Village Sanitation.

The total number of Satyagrahis in jail on 15 February 1941 was 295 and the number on the 15 March 1941 was 355. Thus, the movement was slowly but steadily inching ahead in the province. But the movement was not very spectacular or very appealing and that is why it could not maintain the tempo over a longer period of time. There were instances of people recanting their decision even when they had signed their willingness to offer Satyagraha.

There was also an instance where two low caste Satyagrahis, who after being sentenced to two months imprisonment in Sambalpur district tendered

49. FNR, second Half of April, 1941, file no. 18/4/1941.
50. FNR, first Half of March, 1941, file no. 18/3/1941.
51. FNR, second Half of February, 1941, file no. 18/2/1941.
apologies and prayed for release giving a definite undertaking not to break the law in future. 52

The Strains of maintaining solidarity in the Congress ranks was very much visible as the Movement wearily dragged on for some more time. Meetings were held at the Swaraj Ashram on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th May 1941, where Bhagirathi Mohapatra, the Chairman of the Cuttack municipality along with a section of the members expressed strongly in favour of a compromise between the Congress and the Government. They alleged that the masses were becoming increasingly apathetic and critical of the Satyagraha campaign. Pranakrusna Padhiary, the PCC President, on the other hand maintained, that a compromise attempted at that juncture would be suicidal and would result in a great loss of prestige for the Congress. And irrespective of whether Britain won or lost the War, it would be extremely difficult for the Congress to live up to its image among the masses. 53

It would be naive to claim that the Individual Civil Disobedience Movement was a great success. The total collections for the War Fund in December 1941 stood at Rs. 6,92,965.00. 54 Apart from this, Maharaja of Paralakhimedi, had contributed towards the purchase of a fighter plane as a war gift to the British. 55

52.  _FNR, second Half of February, 1941, file no.18/2/1941._ They petitioned that they were instigated to offer Satyagraha and did not know that they were breaking the law. Since this happens to be the Governments' report, authenticity of the information may be a suspect. Since no names have been given, no cross-checking has been possible. It could have been the Governments' ploy to influence the public opinion through propaganda.

53.  _FNR, First Half of May 1941, file no.18/5/1941._

54.  _FNR, Second Half of December, 1941, file no.18/12/1941._

55.  _FNR, Second Half of March 1941, file no.18/3/1941._
Nor would it be proper to say that the Movement was a total failure. At a very critical juncture of the nation's history, the Individual Civil Disobedience Movement succeeded in increasing political feeling among the Indian masses. It definitely obstructed forcible realization of War funds and new recruitments.\(^{56}\)

Because of the activities of some of the disillusioned Congress workers, the efficacy of the Individual Civil Disobedience Movement suffered in Orissa. Perhaps, the biggest setback to the movement came when Smt. Sarala Devi, a first batch Satyagrahi and a staunch adherant of the orthodox Congress issued a statement advocating the formation of a coalition ministry.\(^{57}\)

While the Individual Civil Disobedience Movement was slowly petering out, other more important provincial, national and international events occupied the political centrestage forcing the movement to take a back seat. At the provincial level, the attempts to form an alternative coalition ministry seemed materialising and at the national level, Bose's escape from India and subsequent visits to Germany and Japan created a flutter in the political circles. At the international level, Japan's entry into the war and the spate of victories she managed with in a very short span of time compelled everyone's attention.

Japan's entry into the War and its sweep through South east Asia brought the War nearer Indian borders and an invasion of India seemed imminent. Compelled by circumstances, Churchill was forced to begin a fresh initiative to solve the Indian political deadlock and Stafford Cripps came to India in March 1942. However, Cripps Mission failed because he was bound by the limits of the Draft Declaration and the promise of a post-war Dominion Status was far short of


\(^{57}\) FNR, Second Half of May, 1941, file no. 18/5/1941.
the demand for complete freedom. Slowly and steadily Congress was edging towards a final confrontation and the AICC passed the famous ‘Quit India’ Resolution on 8 August 1942 at Bombay.

PREPARING FOR THE SHOWDOWN

Japan’s entry into the war and its subsequent sweep through South East Asia in the early months of 1942, brought the war nearer the Indian borders and the two thousand and odd miles of Indian coast line became exposed to the danger of a Japanese invasion. The province of Orissa occupied an important central sector of Indian coastline between Bengal and Madras and it suddenly became a vulnerable zone. It was generally believed in the province and even outside that the Japanese might land somewhere on the unprotected coast of Orissa between Baleswar and Chandipur from where they could make the industrial towns like Jamshedpur and Calcutta their targets.\(^{58}\)

While the danger of an enemy invasion loomed large, lack of sufficient protection caused considerable panic in the countryside. The Governor of Orissa wrote to the viceroy on 26 February 1942, "......Orissa is to an exceptional degree a danger point on the map of north-eastern India. Nevertheless, it is also the only province where no representative of the army command is present with the provincial Government, at the head quarters of the provincial administration......A handful of armed men may force the provincial government to surrender without even the smallest show of resistance."\(^{59}\)

The Collapse of the Allied resistance in Burma, Malaya and Singapore and the subsequent British withdrawal led many to apprehend that faced with similar circumstances, the British might withdraw abandoning the

---

58. *FNR*, Second Half of January, 1942, file no. 18/1/1942
helpless population at mercy of the invading Japanese. Moreover, the British policy of racial evacuation caused much ire and rancour in the minds of the disarmed and defenceless population. The Burmese evacuees narrated harrowing tales of racial discrimination and brought with them the message of the immediate collapse of the British rule.⁶⁰

The evacuees problem also exerted added pressure on the waning public morale and the village economy. Influx of nearly 60,000 evacuees ⁶¹ not only meant more mouths to feed and an added pressure on the agricultural economy, it also meant virtually no money coming in. The evacuees from Burma, Malaya and Ceylon who used to remit 50 lakh rupees annually now found themselves unemployed and dependent on families which were themselves helpless.⁶²

Exaggerated accounts of the casualties in Rangoon by the evacuees led many to believe that the British were not fully prepared to meet the Japanese invasion and the Governments' hasty orders regarding light restrictions and air-raid precautions further added to the growing uneasiness. ⁶³

Just when Cripps was busy negotiating with Indian leaders, six to seven British naval ships were sunk near the Kujang coast in Cuttack district on 6 April, 1942. This caused a shock throughout the province as it was followed by a rumour that the Japanese had already landed. ⁶⁴

---


⁶⁴. Governor of Orissa to the Viceroy, *Linlithgow Papers*, No. 84, dt. 8/4/1942 (apparently some of the survivors were taken for the Japanese).
The immediate reactions to the heavy firings near Kujang on 6 April 1942, was a large-scale exodus of the people from coastal districts into the interior rural areas. One-third of the population of Cuttack district abandoned the coastal areas and moved to safer places in the interior. Most of the Government officials, (mostly subordinates) and the Marwari and the Kachhi communities who had a major share in the local trade and business started winding up their business in order to move into the interior with their families.

The local Government admitted the fact that the air-protection of the area was inadequate. There were no anti-aircraft guns. The whole civil defence machinery was in shambles. The desperation in which the people ran away from Cuttack presented almost the sight of a city being hit by plague.

The Governments' reactions to the firings on 6 April 1942 was imposition of drastic measures for the security of the province. The people were ordered to remove all conveyances twenty miles inland and strict restrictions were imposed on the use of lights in the four coastal districts. These orders were rigorously enforced. But what really annoyed the people more was that these orders were carried out often with the threat that if not removed they will all be destroyed. The secretarial staff and other important Government offices were all removed to far-off Sambalpur which was called the Base headquarters.

67. Governor of Orissa to the Viceroy, Linlithgow Papers, No. 84, dt. 26/2/1942.
69. Governor of Orissa to the Viceroy, Linlithgow Papers, No. 84, dt. 26/2/1942.
However, all these measures carried out under threat, instead of allaying fear only increased the distrust of the people towards the measures of an alien government. The people had started asking, "When the Government can not save its own staff and offices how can it save us from the Japanese?" 71

Further, the mounting prices of essential commodities during the 33 months of the War had caused considerable disquiet in the countryside. The index for whole sale prices (Base : 1939-40 = 100) Jumped from 119 in 1940-41 to 182 in June 1942. 72

The needs of the war monopolised the thought and activities of the Government to such an extent that it seemed to have no time to think of the many factors that upheld the civilian morale- the most important of which was the provision of food and raiment for the people. Distribution of men and goods through normal channels of communication- railways. Motors, lorries, boats, steamers and bullock carts- had broken down so far as the needs of the people were concerned. Two hundred locomotives and twelve thousand wagons were reported to have been sent to the Middle East from India explaining a part of the difficulty of the transport system. 73

The shortage of wagons explained only a part of the disruption of communications and the consequent hardships. Much of the difficulty, however, was man-made, often through ignorant and unimaginative officials who had no knowledge of the local conditions. Drying up of canals to prevent the entry of the enemy through water routes while there were virtually no troops to check them on the land was sheer foolishness. 74

---

73. *Ibid*.
The drying up of canals upset all calculations regarding the working of the land and left stranded temporarily, a number of boats carrying commodities, thereby depriving the agriculturists in the interior of the use of canal as a water way for cheap transport of grain.\textsuperscript{75} Similarly, light restrictions imposed during the night while there were no anti-aircraft guns was also quite unimaginative.\textsuperscript{76}

The drastic measures of the provincial Government combined with the near collapse of the Civil Defence machinery in the province caused much hardship to the people and contributed largely to the prevailing panic and helplessness. The unavailability of the essential commodities like wheat, paper, salt, sugar, kerosene and food grains throughout the province in the months preceding the movement caused much uncertainty and insecurity. This general feeling of insecurity is evident from the heavy withdrawal, from the post office savings banks in those months.\textsuperscript{77}

The War euphoria and the consequent breakdown of social order encouraged the anti-social elements to have their chance and from February to March 1942 the crime rate increased four-fold.\textsuperscript{78} The abnormal behaviour of the market due to hoarding and black marketing also further added to the growing uneasiness.\textsuperscript{79}

The anti-British feelings had become so pronounced in these months that people had begun to express pro-Japanese views openly. Not only

\textsuperscript{75} Governor of Orissa to the Viceroy, \textit{Linlithgow Papers}, No. 84. This report refers to Miraben's article in Harijan, dt. 2/8/1942.
\textsuperscript{76} H. K. Mahatab, \textit{Sadhanar Pathe}, op.cit. p.221.
\textsuperscript{77} \textit{FNR} for March and April 1942, file no. 18/3/1942 and 18/4/1942.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{79} \textit{FNR} for April and May 1942, file Nos. 18/4/1942 and 18/5/1942.
the common man, but a section of the leadership in the provincial Congress had also started expressing pro-Japanese sentiments.80

To fill the cup of misery there was a serious rift in the Congress and some of the dissidents had joined the 'Orissa Congress Swaraj Dal' and the 'Orissa Nationalist Party to form a Coalition Ministry in November 1941. The Congress was thus forced into a very critical situation where it had not only to counter the dissidence in its own ranks but to mobilize the masses for an organised resistance against the Japanese and also to try and organise the struggle for freedom.

The Governor's report of July 1942 indicated the reasons why Orissa was important in Congress strategy at this time: ".....there is reason to think that the Congress themselves may be hoping to give Orissa rather a prominent place in their campaign. Its situation in a potential war zone gives it for their purposes a special attraction; the Gandhi cult of non-violence has always had a marked appeal for the Oriya temperament; the absence of any considerable Muslim element in this exclusively Hindu province gives the Congress hopes of an easier course than elsewhere; but in addition to all this, the coalition Ministry which has been possible only because of the breakaway of former Congress supporters is anathema to the Congress High Command and they have every desire if they can to restore the Congress position and influence in Orissa."81

These factors might have influenced the Central leadership while giving a prominent place to Orissa in their campaign but the overriding consideration of the Congress leadership was undoubtedly to rouse the masses so that they did not surrender to the Japanese in a cowardly manner without even the semblence of a fight.82

The activities of the coalition ministry headed by the parala Raja and a faction of the congress at this juncture provides an interesting reading. Although they have often been dumped as out and out opportunists and betayers of the nationalist cause both Nilkantha Das (Who acted as the leader of National War Front) and Godabarisha mishra Who acted as the finance minister in the coalition Government) acted contrary to the expectations of both the Government and the Congress leaders in the province.

Both of them had started their life of service and sacrifice with Gopabandhu Das at the open school in Satyabadi and it was the force of circumstances that had forced them to join the Coaltion Ministry in 1941. However, they did not waver in their stand against either Fascism or Imperialism. They did not get along well with some prominent Congressmen in the province and felt that they could contribute more by working from within the Government. Both Nilakantha Das and Gopabandhu Mishara were critical of Gandhian methods of struggle.

Nilakantha Das openly sympathised with the Forward Bloc and before Bose's escape, he, along with Jadumani Mangaraj and Godabarisha Mishra had even met him at his house on the Elgin Road. Forward Block's strategy was that the four eastern states Orissa, Bihar, Bengal and Assam should be under the control of the Forward Blocists when the Japanese army reaches the Indian frontiers. In Assam, Bose had arranged for the formation of a ministry with sri Bordoloi and a Muslim leader (Faqr-ud-din) and in Bengal, Sarat Bose and Fazl-ul-Huq were to form a ministry. In Bihar and Orissa similar attempts had been on and that had resulted in the formation of the Coalition Ministry in Orissa.

---

84. N.N.Mishra(ed), *op.cit.*, p.76.
The anti-ministrial faction had close links with the Forward Bloc headquarters in Calcutta and regularly received instruction from Subash Bose. They had even posted men on the Coast to welcome the Japanese if and when they landed.85

Irrespective of being pro-Japanese both of them openly expressed their dislike for both Fascism and British imperialism. Conscious of the ghastly record of the Japanese and the Nazis, Godabarisha Mishra criticised them in no uncertain terms. Speaking to a public gathering on 29 April 1942, he said, "Do you all think that Hitler is shedding so much blood of his countrymen to give us independence?" In the same tone, criticizing the British methods of solving the Indian political deadlock he said, "we have no power and therefore the Britishers have dealt with us in the manner that Sir Cripps did.........if we had hundreds of aeroplanes and machine guns then Sir Cripps would not have followed the methods of solving our problems in the manner he did."86

On one plane they did not differ from the Congress in their objective. "we do not want imperialism. What we want is that the British empire and the Indian empire should be on an equal footing. We donot want Dominion status of the Westminster stamp. We want real independance."87

This coming from a minister who supported the Government's war efforts easily sums up the prevalent spirit. The primary contradiction had subsumed all secondary contradictions and even though the different political parties differed in their methods, they did not differ in their ultimate objective of driving the British away from India. In desperation, they were even ready to welcome support from any quarter. It was in fact their secret dealing with

86. Governor of Orissa to the Viceroy, Linlithgow Papers, no. 84, dt.19/4/1942.
87. Ibid.
The anti-ministrial faction had close links with the Forward Bloc headquarters in Calcutta and regularly received instruction from Subash Bose. They had even posted men on the Coast to welcome the Japanese if and when they landed.85

Irrespective of being pro-Japanese both of them openly expressed their dislike for both Fascism and British imperialism. Conscious of the ghastly record of the Japanese and the Nazis, Godabarisha Mishra criticised them in no uncertain terms. Speaking to a public gathering on 29 April 1942, he said, "Do you all think that Hitler is shedding so much blood of his countrymen to give us independence?" In the same tone, criticizing the British methods of solving the Indian political deadlock he said, "we have no power and therefore the Britishers have dealt with us in the manner that Sir Cripps did............if we had hundreds of aeroplanes and machine guns then Sir Cripps would not have followed the methods of solving our problems in the manner he did.86

On one plane they did not differ from the Congress in their objective. "we do not want imperialism. What we want is that the British empire and the Indian empire should be on an equal footing. We donot want Dominion status of the Westminster stamp. We want real independance."87

This coming from a minister who supported the Government’s war efforts easily sums up the prevalent spirit. The primary contradiction had subsumed all secondary contradictions and even though the different political parties differed in their methods, they did not differ in their ultimate objective of driving the British away from India. In desperation, they were even ready to welcome support from any quarter. It was in fact their secret dealing with

86. Governor of Orissa to the Viceroy, Linlithgow Papers, no. 84, dt.19/4/1942.
87. Ibid.
Bose's Forward Bloc and the Japanese that the Ministry was dissolved when the intelligence sources came to know about the whole thing.  

While speaking on the role of the Coalition Ministry of 1941, Dr. Radhanath Rath once said "The Ministry that was formed by Nilakantha Das and Godabarisha Mishra does not speak of an ordinary love for the nation. The kind of revolutionary activities they patronised under cover of the Ministry, had they been caught they would have been definitely hanged. It was war time and at a great personal risk these patriots took such steps. If we take these activities into account our head bows out of respect to these great men."

Immediately after the British ships were sunk in the Bay of Bengal near the Kujang coast in Orissa, Gandhi deputed Miraben to tour Orissa. But the Congress in the province had started its activities for mobilising the people for the final battle long before. Since its repression in 1934, the Congress had made vigorous campaigns in the countryside to erode the colonial hegemony. A mass contact programme had been started in 1937 and the Congress acceptance of office in 1937 had further contributed to the increasing influence of the congress in the countryside. The Congress membership had been constantly on the rise all through these years and while in office the Ministry had made every effort to bring the Congress nearer to the oppressed masses through ameliorative agrarian legislations. The primary membership of the congress which in 1935 was 47,500 had increased to 86,000 in 1937 and by May 1940, it had reached 1,23,521.

---

89. N.N.Mishra (ed), *op.cit.*, p.129
Deliberate efforts were made to undertake campaigns for bringing in the muslims. AICC was asked to send Urdu literature for the purpose of distribution among the nationalist muslims. The Congress Committee had been restructured on the eve of the Individual Civil Disobedience Movement and added emphasis was being given after its withdrawal on the constructive activities.

The Congress activities in the province received a definite boost with the arrival of Miraben. She toured extensively throughout the province with the prominent Congress leaders and her general plan was to develop the Congress propaganda on the lines that "...if trouble comes here the Government will withdraw, but even if the districts are overrun by invaders the Congress will stay with the people and look after them."

She was deputed to Orissa to form an opinion of the conditions and morale of the people, but she did not confine herself only to collecting information regarding the hardships caused to the people. She also demanded adequate compensation for the people displaced and explained to the congress workers Gandhi’s policy of non-violent resistance against the Japanese aggressor. She pointed out that the congress intended to, "build up a system which would be competent enough to take over administration with a view to protect the people in the event of the invader’s aggression." She stayed in the province for over a month and after going back wrote an article criticizing the Government’s measures regarding the immobilisation of boats, closure of canals and restrictions on the formation of volunteer organisations by the people themselves in Harijan.

95. HFMU Papers, R-1, File No. 31/3,p.69.
96. Governor of Orissa to the Viceroy, Linlithgow Papers, No. 84,dt.2/8/1942.
As the AICC directions implied, the movement was to be decentralised and the central control was to be the minimum. The Freedom Struggle Front, a document containing instructions read, "The detailed application of general principles in concrete acts and manoeuvres should be left to the primary fighting units. The purpose of the machinery was to outline the general policy and direction and provide a loose and flexible co-ordination of the work of already existing parties, groups or individuals to whom the widest discretion was to be left to carry out day-to-day programme."97

Volunteer organisations like the Swavalambi Khadi centres, Youth Leagues, Peace Brigades (Shanti Senas) and a number of 'helping committees' were formed each having four to five villages under its supervision. Village Defence Committees were also set up to defend the villagers against external invasion and to preserve internal security.98

This decentralisation was provided in order to safeguard the movement against Government suppression. One of the underground documents clearly stated, "The 'enemy within' is well entrenched in our cities and towns. It will be best therefore, for all who can do so, to concentrate in rural areas and educate the masses into active co-operation in this supreme effort to live."99

The Congress leadership realised the limitations of the urban-based movements from its past experiences and consequently it emphasized for exclusive preparations in the interior. For example, the AICC document said,

98. PCC to AICC, AICC Papers, file No. P.22(part-1) dt.15/3/1942.
"The most extensive and significant work lies in the countryside where our peasantry offers the biggest reserve of manpower and where the village economy is threatened with imminent breakdown. Let peasant representatives in the villages be approached by our central agents. The agents themselves must be selected from tried workers of existing organisations and parties such as Spinner Associations and Krishak Prajas who have already established connections in the interior. Let them select initial targets for assault in each village or a group of villages.\(^{100}\)

Thus, it is evident that the foci of the Congress preparation were the villages. The Congress policy was obviously to mobilise the people on the basis of their day-to-day problems and to convince them that it will continue so long as colonialism was not overthrown. The strategy was that the objective must be immediately appealing to the common man and clearly defined so that it could be easily grasped by the people. As the AICC document suggested, "Local problems should be encouraged by working up and bringing to a head particular local grievance which is most acute in any area. It may be the shortage of food grains at one place, the exaction of rent collection in another, the refusal of permission to irrigate the land in some other or realization of collective fine in still another. Each such problem is the focal point for the initiation of the movement in that area...."\(^{101}\) The Congress attempted to relate these local issues with wider and bigger issues.

There was a definite change in the Congress policy with regard to the formation of volunteer organisations also. The AICC contemplated broad-based volunteer Organisations. "Our previous volunteer organisations were subject to many rules and a fairly severe disciplinary code and confined to Congressmen. This time we have thrown open the doors of the organisation to all our countrymen irrespective of political affiliations, the only consideration being adherence to

\(^{100}\) Home Dept. (Pol), "The Freedom Struggle Front", op.cit.

\(^{101}\) Ibid.
peaceful methods. One may be a Sanatanist Hindu, or a Musalman, or a Parsee or a Mahasabhaite or a Christian, a Brahmin, or a Harijan, a Congressman or a Muslim Leaguer. It makes no difference on any other consideration. Infact, an English person like Miraben who throws her lot with the oppressed and the downtrodden will be cordially welcomed.’’

Thus, it is evident that any one looking for the country’s freedom was invited to join the struggle. The nationalist sentiment was so dominant that the Government even started suspecting the isolationist stand of the communists vis-a-vis the Congress. The S.P., Special Branch, Orissa, in his weekly report on 7 February 1942 reported, “The view expressed by a prominent Communist and krushak worker of this province on the CPI’s recent declaration should not be taken at its face value.” The secret object of the communists, he opined, “is to enlist in various branches of the army as combatants, war technicians etc. inorder to cause dissention and mutiny among the troops and factory workers by inculcating in their minds doctrines of Communism.”

In the field of Organisation, the element of members, expansion of organisational network, and the restructuring and reshaping of various existing organisations was emphasized by the provincial Congress leadership. The PCC was revitalised and the main thrust of the Congress activities was aimed at concentrating on the maintainance of internal peace and order.

The districts were divided into zones of ten or twenty, each in charge of a mohalla in the city or of a village or a part thereof in rural areas. The units were instructed to confine themselves to the service and protection of their respective localities. The volunteers were to help in organising mohalla meeting and otherwise carrying on the constructive programme. ‘Watch and Ward’

103. *HFMU Papers*, R-1, File no.31/3, p.63.
committees were formed to guard villages during the nights and to help in carefully evacuating the people from coastal areas.  

Seven training camps were conducted in Cuttack where fifty workers were trained. The wholetimers were sent to Bari for expert training to take charge of mofussil Swavalambi Khadi and Volunteer Centres. Twenty Two Swavalambi Khadi centres were opened with each having four to five villages under its supervision. Swavalambi Khadi centres and a number of helping committees were opened in various parts of the province.

The people's Volunteer Brigades were given training in first-aid, evacuation, relief work and air-raid precautionary measures. As the Government had put restrictions on unofficial volunteer organisations to operate individually, the PCC warned the public against associating with the Government Organisation since they lacked popular support. However, the people were instructed not to obstruct the work of such organisations unless they were hostile to the Congress policy regarding maintenance of order.

Special efforts were made by the PCC towards preparing the masses for accepting Congress administration in any area affected by foreign invasion. The S.P., Special Branch, Orissa, in his confidential report of 23 June, 1942 wrote, "From some quarters it is reported that Mr. Gandhi's present policy is directed to so influence the masses that they will readily submit to Congress administration in any area evacuated by the Government at the time of an enemy invasion even if

104. PCC to AICC Regarding volunteer organizations, AICC Papers, File no.P. 22,(Part-1), dt.15/3/1942.
105. Ibid.
106. HFMU Papers, R-1, File No.31/3, p.63.
the period between the removal of the Government and the occupation by the enemy be for a day...”

Regarding the nature of the Movement, no strict guideline was framed by the central Congress leadership and the local leaders were free to take initiative in response to the attitude of the states. Although, a general picture might emerge if one takes into account the hints given by the Congress leaders like Sardar Patel. The provincial leaders were undoubtedly in the dark regarding the nature of the movement.

The provincial Government’s view was that Ramanandan Mishra (the CSP member from Bihar who had visited Cuttack in July 1942) was in possession of the secret Congress programme by some day prior to 27 July 1942 and he passed it on to Nabakrusna Choudhury who purposely did not attend the AICC meeting so that he could be in readiness in Orissa to lead the campaign as soon as the Congress decided to start it.

On the other hand, Mahatab’s views regarding the nature of the


108. *Home Dept.,(Pol)*, FNR from Bombay for June 1942, File No.18/6/1942. Patel had hinted in as early as June 1942 that the proposed movement would include all the items adopted in the previous movements from strikes to boycott and civil resistance. The struggle would be short and swift and would be finished within a week. The provincial leaders were undoubtedly in the dark regarding the nature of the movement.

109. *Home Dept.,(Pol)*, File No.3/31/42. This seems highly improbable because Mahatab and Dwibedi were close aides of Nabakruna Choudhury and any secret programme which the Government claims to have been handed over to him by Ramanandan Mishra would have found a mention in their autobiographies.
movement just prior to his arrest does not seem to go beyond the rehearsal of the old civil disobedience formulas. 110

In the very expectation of naked suppression by the colonial state, the congress leadership made the movement flexible and local leaders were free to take initiative on their own in the absence of Congress leadership, unlike the previous movements. But the movement can not be termed ‘spontaneous’ in the real sense of the term only because of a certain degree of lessened central control. Since the movement proceeded in the name of Gandhi and very much under the Congress banner, the more suitable term would be that it was a decentralised movement.

The colonial state in India was basically a hegemonic state. And, hence the objective of the process of mass mobilisation was to change the balance of social, political and ideological forces in favour of the struggling nation which in turn would facilitate the very process of overthrowing the colonial state by eroding its concentrated hegemony. The ideological, political and organisational preparation for the movement in Orissa obviously formed a part of the Indian National Congress’s preparation of the Quit India Movement at the national level. In its attempt to mobilise the masses the Congress related the local issues with wider and bigger issues.

110. H.K. Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, op.cit., pp.234-235. Even Dwibedi who had met Gandhi towards the end of June does not seem to have brought any concrete programme of action for the movement. Leave aside the secret Congress programme, Ramananda’s visit even doesn’t find a mention in his work (memoirs).