THE TURBULENT YEARS (1926-29)

In the annual session of the Congress held at Kanpur under the presidency of Sarojini Naidu a resolution was passed outlining the future political programme of the Congress which now, meant of course, also of the Swaraj Party.\(^1\) The programme included the imparting of education to the people in understanding their political rights and to win those rights by carrying out the constructive programme of the Congress with special reference to popularizing the charkha (spinning wheel) and khaddar, promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, ameliorating the condition of the suppressed classes and also to capture the local bodies. Civil Disobedience was again laid stress on as the best way to counter the government but seeing the mood of the masses and they were not yet

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\(^1\) The influence of the Congress had became apparent on 22 September 1925 when the All India Congress Committee (AICC) at its meeting held at Patna, went as far as to resolve that the Congress would take up all such political work as may be necessary in the interest of the country. While it did gave a nod to the proposal of carrying work in the Central and Provincial Legislatures under the programme of the Swaraj Party yet the modifications could be made in it by the Congress as might be found necessary from time to time for the purpose of carrying out the said policy. Lal Bahadur, *Indian Freedom Movement and Thought: Politics of ‘Pro-Change’ Versus ‘No-Change’ (1919-1929)*, Delhi, 1983, p. 118.
fully prepared for the same emphasis was laid on the constructive work. The direction outlined to the Swaraj party was as follows.

‘The party shall wait till the end of February for a decision of the Government on the demands for constitutional reforms set forth in the resolution passed by the assembly on February 18, 1924. If no satisfactory reply be received by that date, the Swarajist members of the legislatures shall walk out, though provision was made for attendance on special occasions.’

Madan Mohan Malaviya moved an amendment to the resolution which sought to omit the clause relating to Civil Disobedience and lay down the following programme. “That the work in the Legislatures shall be so carried on as to utilize them to the best possible advantage for early establishment of full responsible government, cooperation being resorted to when it may be necessary to advancement of the same cause.” He was in fact asking the

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3 On 18 February, Swarajists carried by a majority resolution relating to the act of 1919. It is provided on that the Governor-General in Council should take steps to have the Act of 1919 revised with a view to establishing “Full Responsible Government in India,” that he should summon at an early date “representatives to a Round Table Conference…..to recommend a constitution for India,” and that “he should place the said scheme before a newly elected Indian Legislature and submit the same to the British Parliament to be embodied in a Statute.”
leaders to accept the ministry with no ulterior motives but only to do some constructive work for the people if they can through them.  

M. R. Jayakar who had seconded the amendment to the dismay of many announced at the very outset that he, N. C. Kelkar and B. S. Moonje had resigned their seats in the Legislatures as they could not subscribe to the policy of the Swaraj Party. He said that either they must come out of the Councils altogether, or, being in, “take the last juice out of it by occupying every place of power initiative and responsibility and would give no quarter to the Bureaucracy.”

The amendment was, however, lost and Nehru’s resolution was passed by a large majority.  

The All India Congress Committee met at Delhi on March 6 and 7, 1926. As no satisfactory response was made by the Government to the demands for constitutional reforms the Swarajist members in the assembly were directed to leave their seats on March 8, after moving for the rejection of the first demand for grant.

In the meantime the revolt of the Responsive wing of the Swarajist party was complete. The resignation of Jayakar, Kelkar and

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4 Vartman, 6.1.1926.
6 Ibid.,
7 In the special session of the Congress held at Calcutta in September 1920 under the presidentship of Lala Lajpat Rai a section of major leaders like C.R. Das, Bipin
Moonje was followed by an open declaration of the Swarajist members of the Bombay Council against the programme of the Party, and the Berar members resigned from the Swaraj Party as a whole. The Responsive Cooperators held a conference at Akola on February 14 and 15, under the chairmanship of Jayakar, formed a new party named “The Responsive Cooperation Party”, drew up a manifesto, and adopted a resolution expressing a disagreement from the policy laid down at the Kanpur Congress as it was ineffective either to obstruct the machinery of the Government or to advance the interests of the people.\(^8\)

Madan Mohan Malaviya made a last effort to unite the different sections of the Congress and called a Conference for the purpose at Delhi on 11 September, 1926. Motilal’s party wanted both Responsivists and Independent Congressmen to accept the Congress pledge and thereby enable the forthcoming elections to be run by one united party leaving the question of policy and programme to be adopted in the Legislatures for decision by the next Congress in Assam in December. The Responsivists and Independent Congressmen

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8 R.C. Majumdar, op.cit., pp. 256-257.
did not agree to this; they formed a coalition party known as the Independent Congress Party, formed of those members who did not agree with the Congress policy and programme within the Legislature.\(^9\)

Here it must also be emphasized that immediately after assuming charge of the office of the Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead started secret negotiations with C.R. Das for a political settlement. They came to an abrupt close with the sudden death of Das on 16 June 1925. In August, Lord Reading, who had gone to England for consultations returned to India. In his opening address to the Central assembly on August 20, 1925 he warned that nothing could be achieved through obstruction but if the government was shown goodwill and friendliness, it will not show ‘niggardliness in bargaining’. The conservatives (or Responsivists) who had affiliation with Hindu Mahasabha and who believed in ‘responsive cooperation’ caught the message and stood themselves in revolt against Motilal Nehru who had so far insisted and was an advocate of strict Swarajist policy of non-cooperation. They did not appreciate a Muslim tilt in the attitude of C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru. In order to remove Muslim grievances against the distribution of seats in the Bengal council by the Lucknow Pact of 1916 C.R. Das had made a

\(^9\) Ibid., p. 258.
pact with the Muslim leaders of Bengal according to which they were given a greater share of seats in the council and government jobs. It had been disallowed by the Congress as unauthorized but it served enough to alarm Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lala Lajpat Rai and other leaders of strong Hindu tinge who had yet not reconciled themselves to separate representation and weightage allowed to the Muslims by the Lucknow Pact.\textsuperscript{10}

For the Swaraj party the hour was dark indeed and the position was rendered worse by the communal conflagrations which had started erupting. Suniti Kumar Ghosh says that, “It was the political rivalry between Motilal Nehru who dominated the Swaraj party and Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lala Lajpat Rai who broke away from the Congress and formed the Independent Congress Party to contest the elections to the Central and provincial legislatures, that was responsible to a great extent for the communal tension in United Provinces and Punjab.” It was simply beyond me, wrote Motilal to his son, “to meet the kind of propaganda started against me under the auspices of the Malaviya-Lala gang.\textsuperscript{11}

Lala Lajpat Rai had resigned his membership of the Swaraj Party on 24 August 1926 on account of his differences with Motilal

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Nehru. He explained thus “I joined the Swaraj Party in the hope that I would be able to pull on with them but soon after I found that I was mistaken............ I would have gladly withdrawn from any kind of contest with the Swaraj Party had my sense of duty to the country allowed me to do so. I feel that such a conduct at the present juncture would be cowardly. I owe it to myself and the country to vindicate the principles for what I stand.”

On 5 March 1926, the Congress Committee under the chairmanship of Sarojini Naidu decided to look after the well being of political prisoners and a committee was formed on this to be headed by Naidu and included Purshottam Das Tandon, Lala Lajpat Rai, T.C. Goswami, Maulana Azad and Swami Govindanand were appointed as members. Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi was appointed as the secretary.

On 6 March 1926, a special meeting committee of Congress took place and laid stress and asked that prior to the presentation of the budget the Swarajists should come out of the Councils and Assemblies. The issue had been taken at the Kanpur Congress session also. Provincial Congress Committees should reorganize Congress committees at district, village and city levels. There should be

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13 *Pratap*, 14.3.1926.
propagation of charkha and khaddar and a scheme of national education.\textsuperscript{14}

Meanwhile the council election in 1926 showed some new developments at Kanpur. There was a danger of a split in the Swaraj party rank and file although most of the local Congress leaders were Swarajists. A large majority was for adopting the responsivist programme as was formulated by Tilak. From the Kanpur urban constituency the Independent Congress Party set up Chunni Lal Garg, a commercial and landed magnate in opposition to the official Congress candidate Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi. Vidhyarthi however in the beginning showed some hesitation to contest. In May 1926, through his newspaper, Pratap, he highlighted the need of holding a special session of the Congress with a view to bid good bye to elections and strive to concentrate the entire energy of the country on the constitutional programme.\textsuperscript{15}

The Council elections of 1926, therefore have a special significance in the history of Kanpur. A noticeable feature was that not only were there a large number of aspirants for the seat, but the electoral campaigns and election meetings stand out in sharp contrast with those of 1923. In 1923, the popular wave had been in favour of

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.,

\textsuperscript{15} Renuka Khosla, \textit{Urban Politics with Special Reference to Kanpur}, Delhi, 1992, p. 111.
the Swarajists, but by 1926, there was a growing disillusionment with the Swarajist programme. Congress the only strong political party in Kanpur, had came to be plagued by factions and divisions.\textsuperscript{16}

In September 1926, dissatisfied and discontented elements within the Congress formally constituted the Responsive Cooperative Party at Kanpur. Hasrat Mohani was elected as president and the other office bearers included Chunni Lal Garg, Ajodhia Nath Tiwari and Raja Ram ‘Sabir’. A few days later Hasrat Mohani, R. P. Mishra and Begum Hasrat Mohani formed themselves into the Independent Congress Party and resolved to work with the Responsive Cooperators.\textsuperscript{17}

Leaders like Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi and Murari Lal represented the middle class and they had full support of the business and the professional classes on the one hand and on the other hand they had also emerged as the spokespersons of labour.\textsuperscript{18} Vidhyarthi was also unanimously chosen as President of the UPCC.

The election campaign started in July 1926. A number of meetings were held in the town to support G.S. Vidhyarthi. Murari

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 115.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., pp. 115-116.
\textsuperscript{18} The Kanpur Mazdoor Sabha had started functioning in 1918 and on 17 July 1920 it had become a registered body. Murari Lal was elected its first president while Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi its first secretary. They tried to bring the workers associated with the sabha under the banner of the Congress but with varying degrees of success.
Lal was being believed by some people to have been in favour of Chunnilal Garg as Garg was an old friend of his. But Murari Lal strongly advocated his support for Vidhyarthi and in fact was the one to announce the candidature of Vidhyarthi.\textsuperscript{19} Gradually the election campaign got momentum at Kanpur. Esteemed Congress leaders like Motilal Nehru and Pt. Govind Ballabh Panth visited the city and held series of meetings thereby making the prospects stronger for Vidhyarthi.\textsuperscript{20}

As was expected the election was won by Vidhyarthi with a huge margin. He remained member of the Legislative Council from 1926-29. The Swaraj Party had slid into decline and to recall the memorable words of Subhash Chandra Bose, “The Swaraj party, which owed so much to him (C.R. Das), was paralyzed after his death and dissensions gradually arose within the party. Nevertheless the party at the time of his death was an institution of which anyone would be proud. The Capital of Calcutta, the organ of British commercial interests, writing after his death, compared the Swaraj Party with the Sinn Fein party of Ireland and remarked that during the four years of its existence, it had been nothing like it before. The weakening of the Swaraj party served to strengthen the forces of

\textsuperscript{19} Vartman, 22.7.1926.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 6.10.1926.
reaction in India and in England, while it let loose a flood of communal strife in India which had, up till then, been held back by the superior forces of nationalism.”

Growth of Communalism

As had been mentioned earlier the Arya Samaj had taken strong roots in the city and a growing communal consciousness amongst the Hindus. Consequently Hindu revivalist and reactionary movements like Sangathan and Shuddhi started taking root. According to the fortnightly report the shuddhi movement went on unabated in Kanpur. The political leadership of the city was lukewarm in its response and their ineffectiveness was casting its shadow on the straining of Hindu-Muslim relations. Reactionary Muslim elements of Deoband school were also determined to check

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21 S.R. Bakshi, op.cit., p. 111.

22 Traditionally, Hinduism lacked a conversion ritual. After the introduction of a decennial census in 1871, religious leaders began to focus their attention on the issue of numerical strength. For Hindus the Census reported a picture that their community’s number had declined in proportion to those of other religions like Christianity and Islam and the latter religions’ success in converting the lower and untouchable castes furthered Hindu fears that led to the militant Arya Samajists to develop their own ritual of conversion, shuddhi. Initially shuddhi was employed to purify and re-admit Hindus who had converted to Islam or Christianity. In the wake of the 1891 census that reported a massive increase in the numbers of Christians over the previous decade, the Arya Samajists began to expand the use of shuddhi. Individual conversions gave way to group conversions and inevitably communalism started gaining roots, Kenneth W Jones, The New Cambridge History of India: Socio-religious Reform Movements in British India, Vol.III, Cambridge, 1989, pp. 100-101.
shuddhi and were resorting to Tanzeem and Tableegh movements in retaliation. Soon these religious movements became highly organized and potentially explosive. Whilst in most cities of UP the relationship between Congress and communal organizations were usually denied, in Kanpur there did not appear to be any attempt to conceal such connections.

Another factor responsible for arousing suspicion in Muslim community was the close association of Congress leaders with Arya samaj and Hindu Mahasabha in Kanpur. Murari Lal Rohatgi had joined the Hindu Mahasabha along with some other Congress leaders. Govind Ballabh Pant too had used Hindu card while canvassing for Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi by referring to the elephant god Ganesh.

Muslims were also not behind. Armed Tanzeem volunteers paraded in the city and sang provocative songs like ‘Charkhe ko hila denge, Kafir ko mita denge.’ There was also a distribution of an Urdu pamphlet entitled Jauhar e Islam (the might of Islam) which was overtly provocative. Jauhar e Islam had glorified the rule of Mussalmans as conquerors who had subjugated the infidels and it was high time to establish the rule of Islam over India. Thirty two such

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23 File No. 25/1924, Fortnightly Report For the first half of January 1927, NAI.
25 For more details on the growth of communal consciousness in the city see Chitra Joshi, Lost Worlds: Indian Labour and Its Forgotten Histories, Delhi, 2003, pp. 269-276.
pamphlets were published in Kanpur. The Tanzeem processions grew in number and on Sundays and other holidays larger processions were taken out on the main roads. These type of activities on the part of both the communities vitiated the atmosphere. Riots broke out in the city in August 1927, when a scuffle followed between the members of the two communities while watching a drama at a theatre called Lala Sangam Lal Mandir. On hearing the news of the murder of two Hindus at Ram Narayan Bazar there was now a showdown. The kotwal of the city took no notice of it and riot took a worst turn resulting in the killing of three Muslims and wounding of forty Muslims and thirty Hindus. Great loss of property also took place. A mosque was also burnt. For three days there was a continuous disturbance. Significantly the role of the District Magistrate Munroe was praised as he had divided the city into various circles and had placed each circle under the charge of a Deputy Magistrate with its own police force. And so a Hindu and Muslim Deputy Magistrate was jointly put in charge in each circle so that confidence and reconciliation can take place between the members of both the communities. But it was done after the damage had already been done.

26 Home Police Dept, File No.1263/ 1931, UPSA.
27 Ibid.,
Lala Lajpat Rai although a hardcore Arya Samajist was nevertheless disturbed to see communal conflagration. He stressed for Hindu-Muslim amity and severely criticized the publication of the notorious book ‘Rangila Rasool’ which had castigated the character of the Prophet.\(^{28}\) He also lamented that conversion movements like \textit{shuddhi} and \textit{tableegh} have crossed the threshold.\(^{29}\)

Seven years of severe communal violence in towns of UP as widespread as Saharanpur (1923), Lucknow (1924), Allahabad (1926) and in the city itself in the year 1927 had placed the Hindu-Muslim political alliance that had been achieved under the able leadership of Gandhi during Khilafat days getting disintegrated. This disintegration of secular leaders in Congress had allowed disparate groups seeking political leverage to associate themselves with the Hindu Mahasabha in Allahabad, Kanpur, Banaras, Saharanpur and other towns across western UP. Religion was not only asserting itself strongly in politics but was also shaping the Hindu identity. The elections of 1926 in UP were marked by direct appeal to communal consciousness which

\(^{28}\) \textit{Rangila Rasool} (The Playboy Prophet) was an anonymous tract published in 1924 by a bookseller in Lahore named Rajpal. It noted that whereas the founder of the Arya Samaj, Dayanand Saraswati, preached celibacy, the life and faith of the Prophet of Islam were marked by relationships with women. It was vigorously propogated by a bigoted Punjab press and communal tensions started rising, Cf. Ayesha Jalal, \textit{Partisans of Allah: Jihad In South Asia}, Ranikhet, 2008, p. 243.  

\(^{29}\) \textit{Pratap}, 11.9.1927.
was being headed by a rejuvenated Hindu Mahasabha. Muslim groups were greatly alarmed and increasingly came to see Congress as doing nothing to contain the tide of extreme Hindu groups.  

**Simon Commission and its Boycott**

In November 1927, the Government of India announced the appointment of Indian Statutory Commission to be headed by Sir John Simon. This Commission was to come to India to investigate the functioning of the 1919 Montague-Chelmsford reforms and to report to the British Parliament the measures by which governance of the country could be improved. The Indian Statutory Commission or the Simon Commission as it was popularly called (after the name of its chairman) arrived in India in February 1928 to collect Indian opinion on the question of constitutional reform. The Indian National Congress, Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League along with some other parties decided to boycott the Commission because it did not contain a single Indian representative. It was widely felt that Indians should have a greater voice in determining the shape of their own future constitution.  

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31 It was stated on behalf of the Government that Indians had been excluded from the Commission because it was an exclusively Parliamentary Commission, Subhash Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle 1920-42*, Bombay, 1964, p. 144.
The motive of the colonial regime was apparent to everyone. The life of the British House of Commons would expire in 1929, and there was a growing apprehension that the new election would return the labour party to power. A belief that was gaining ground in England in those days was that a labour government would be more sympathetic to Indian demands, and might concede more reforms which could clash with the vested interests of Britain in India.\textsuperscript{32}

At the Madras session of the Congress, S. Srinivasa Iyengar who had served as President during the previous year, moved a resolution to boycott the Commission. The Congress accepted it and suggested some practical measures to make it effective. These included

1. Mass demonstrations all over India on the day the members of the Commission set foot on this country and similar demonstrations in every city on the day it was visited by them.
2. Refusal of the legislatures to elect their own committees to cooperate with the Commission or helping their enquiry in any way.
3. Rejection of the demand for grant in connection with the Commission.

\textsuperscript{32} R.C. Majumdar, \textit{The History and Culture of the Indian People: Struggle for Freedom}, Bombay, 1969, p. 454.
4. Social boycott of the members of the Commission.\textsuperscript{33}

The visit of the Commission in the city was an informal one and was more by way of sightseeing. The commission was to arrive at the Ganges bridge at 10.30 a.m. in motor cars and to proceed from there to the chamber of Commerce, where members were to be introduced to certain of the European commercial community. They were to visit the Cawnpore Woolen Mills, the Muir Mill and Messrs Cooper Allen leather works in parties. After this they were to lunch at certain private houses, and after lunch they were to visit the Mutiny sight, at the Memorial church, Massacre Ghat and the Memorial Well. From the last named they were to proceed to attend a garden party given by J.P. Srivastava at the Retreat, Nawabganj and, on the way to make a visit to the McRobertgunj settlement belonging to the British Indian Corporation. After the garden party they were to leave by the Bombay mail from Kanpur city station at 5.30 p.m.\textsuperscript{34}

Kanpur never quiet in such tumultuous times had already geared itself for the upcoming struggle. Prior to the arrival of the Commission efforts, as elsewhere were made to organize demonstrations against it. Prior to the eve of the visit, except one or

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p. 456.

\textsuperscript{34} General Administration Department (GAD), File No. 566/1928, UPSA.
two meetings, no demonstrations by way of processions etc were organized. On the evening before the visit, however a procession consisting at the most 600 or 700 persons paraded in the city, and down the Mall area. The procession undoubtedly impeded traffic though it did not really attempted to interfere with it other than endeavoring to making all traffic keeping to the extreme left of the road. Before this procession was taken out the idea of the District authorities was that it would not be necessary to apply for extra assistance. Yet seeing the frenzy and passion of the crowd the authorities decided to apply for assistance from the Inspector General of Police at Lucknow and 150 men were asked for.35

Some senior and respected leaders had also approached the Superintendent of Police (SP) through the kotwal with a view to come to some arrangement for organizing the demonstrations. With the concurrence of the District Magistrate, the SP arranged for demonstrations to be held, in the morning at the time of the arrival, near the Queen’s Park, and in afternoon at the time of the visit to the Nawabganj, at the Ram Lila ground and at the gate of the Agriculture College Gardens. Conditions incident to permission for those demonstrations to be allowed were first that the demonstrators would be in place half an hour before the time of the arrival of the

35 Ibid.,
Commission, secondly that no independent bodies of boycotters would parade in the Civil Lines area and thirdly that no interference should be made with the traffic in any way and that persons attending the Garden Party were not to be interfered with at all; these conditions were observed almost in total by the leaders of the boycotters.\textsuperscript{36}

It was considered advisable, in order to avoid the possibility of bomb-throwing or of the Commission being mobbed by any uncontrolled crowd, to endeavour to keep the demonstrations at a distance of 15 yards from the road; it was at first thought that this object would be best served in the Queen’s Park but on the morning of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} it was found that there were a large number of bricks and other material which could be used as missiles, and therefore it was suggested to the leaders of the demonstrations that they should move across the road to the open space on the opposite side. This request was complied but the demonstrators eventually came close up to the road. Similarly at the Parade in the evening the demonstrators insisted on coming on the very edge of the road. In order to move them back to 15 yards or so from the road it would have been necessary to apply force but this was not considered advisable.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.,

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.,
The demonstrators were about 3000 in the morning and about 2000 in the afternoon. There was no incident at the visit of the mills and similarly the visit to the Mutiny sights was without any incident and the Commission passed to McRobertganj. It had to pass through the second demonstration at Parade. With the exception that the same car with persons carrying black flags came about 200 yards ahead and went ahead of it, nothing occurred and the Commission reached McRobertganj. Half of the demonstrators were led by Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi to a public meeting in the city; the rest decided to join the third demonstration at Nawabganj, as they heard that the Commission had stopped at McRobertganj on the way.  

Meanwhile the Superintendent of Police decided to see the conditions at Nawabganj and was alarmed to see that here crowds had swelled to large numbers and it had became too risky to take the Commission though that way. The Superintendent of Police decided to return to the Commission and was in time to turn it off round a devious route and to bring it up to the Agriculture College gate in time to forestall the arrival of the reinforced demonstrators from the Ram Lila ground. None of the public had made any attempt to get into the garden and the Commission reached the grounds of the Agricultural college. Here at the point where the road to the

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38 Ibid.,
Retreat leaves the College grounds the students had lined either side of the road and as the Commission passed, some of them threw stones.\(^{39}\)

Over 50,000 people, including thousands of students took to the streets waving black flags. 3 December 1928 (the day Commission arrived in Kanpur) had already been observed as the day of complete strike. Well known educational institutions of the city like Dayanand Anglo Vedic College (D.A.V.), Sanatan Dharm College and others remained closed as students decided to boycott their classes. Youth of the city like always was on the boil. Jogeshwar Trivedi, a student of the elite Christchurch College, hoisted the national flag on the roof of his college’s hostel. The Agriculture College at Nawabganj also witnessed disruption and boycott of the studies. The spectacle presented at Phoolbagh was of thousands of people waving black flags and carrying banners criticizing the Commission was awesome. There was a tremendous procession of people on the Mall road, the city’s poshest area. Students were in a state of frenzy. They were so militant that local Congress leaders Jawaharlal Rohatgi and G.S. Vidhyarthi were in no position to control them.\(^{40}\)

\(^{39}\) Ibid.,

Another novel feature of the boycott was the influx of a large number of women in protest against the Commission. Maharani Devi Avasthi, Nishat Begum (wife of Hasrat Mohani) and Ganga Bai were some of the leading women of the city in leading the boycott.\textsuperscript{41}

The death of Lala Lajpat Rai as a result of the lathi blows he suffered while leading the protest against the Commission at Lahore on 30 October 1928 caused an uproar in the country. \textit{Lala Lajpat Rai Divas} (Lala Lajpat Rai Day) was celebrated in Kanpur in remembrance of the departed leader. The youth of the city which largely comprised of students came to the streets and organized demonstrations and protests. Many schools and colleges were declared closed by them as news of Lajpat Rai’s death reached Kanpur. On 29 November students of D. A. V. College, B. N. S. D. (Bishambhar Nath Sanatan Dharam) College and Guru Narayan Khatri High School went on complete strike.\textsuperscript{42}

The Young Muslim League, an organization headed by Maulana Hasrat Mohani was also very active. Maulana had the reputation of a very assertive, straightforward and honest man, and he asked the young Muslims of the city to join common cause with Hindu youths as was witnessed in the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation

\textsuperscript{41} Vartman, 5.12.1928.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 1.12.1928.
Movements. The fervor generated by his speeches was amazing. He was the first nationalist to have demanded the azaadi-e-kamil or complete independence at Congress’ Ahmadabad session in 1921 and there was not a slightest deviation from that position in 1928 also. Hamid Khan once again was in the forefront, led the protestors in Khurd Mahal Park, and challenged the police to shot him. Maulana Hasrat Mohani delivered a fiery speech at city’s Meston Road in which he made an appeal to the people that they should uproot the British government. The Government immediately issued orders for his arrest. Muslim women too had participated in large number and Nishat Begum extolled Muslim women to come out of their seclusion and asked for complete independence from the British.\footnote{Interview with Mr. Shamsul Hasan Mohani, nephew of Maulana Hasrat Mohani on 20.6.2009.}

As had been mentioned of the protest by the students of the Agriculture College against the Commission, one Zainuddin Kermani had been punished and later rusticated by the local government for the summer term from July 1929 to October 1929 on the ground that he had indulged in a rowdy behavior with the college officials and was the principal instigator in leading the students against the
Commission when it was passing through the college to a garden party at the retreat on 3 December 1928.\textsuperscript{44}

Meanwhile the agitation against Simon Commission having not greatly subsided, the announcement of it was an important development to the Indian National Congress. Presiding over the 1927 Madras session of the Congress Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari urged upon the delegates the need for a constitution as the constitutional framework for All India had been a vital matter which had exercised the mind of national leaders.

Prospects for political unity seemed bright towards the end of 1927, as practically all established political groups (except the Justice Party in Madras and Unionists in Punjab) decided to boycott the Simon Commision and began preparing for an All Parties’ Conference to draw a constitution. Muhammad Ali Jinnah had convinced a number of Muslim leaders on a compromise formula. Separate electorates- the main plank in League’s politics since 1906 would be given up in return for joint electorates with reserved seats for minorities, a promise of one third Muslim representation in proportion to population in Punjab and Bengal, and three new Muslim majority provinces (Sind, Baluchistan and North West Frontier Province-N.W.F.P.). The Muslim league repeated its offer in its December

\textsuperscript{44} Agriculture Department, File No. 227/1929, UPSA.
1927 session, though there was a split in the League on this issue, with a small minority under Muhammad Shafi having decided not to give up the plank of separate electorates and also decided to cooperate with the Simon Commission.\(^\text{45}\)

Already at the Madras session of the Indian National Congress the party had directed the CWC to draft a ‘Swaraj’ Constitution in consultation with other parties. Accordingly an All Parties Conference met at Delhi in February 1928 with Dr. Ansari, the Congress president in the Chair and voted for “full responsible government.” It was followed by a meeting in May at Bombay, by appointing a sub-committee to determine the principles of an Indian Constitution.\(^\text{46}\) The sub-committee consisted of such eminent men in the political life of India like- Sir Ali Imam and Shuaib Qureishi (Muslim), M.S. Aney and M.R. Jayakar (Hindu Mahasabha), Mangal Singh (The Sikh League), Tej Bahadur Sapru (Liberal), N.M. Joshi (Labour), G.R. Pradhan (Non-Brahmin). Jawaharlal Nehru who was then General Secretary of the AICC, also acted as the Secretary of the Constitution-making Committee, which came to be known as the


\(^{46}\) Lord Birkenhead, the Secretary of State for India while speaking in the House of Lords in November 1927 (the same month in which commission received royal assent) had challenged Indian politicians to produce an agreed Constitution for India, Subhash Chandra Bose, op.cit., p. 144.
Nehru Committee. Mohammad Ali Jinnah was not on this committee as he had already left for England on the 3rd of April.47

Although the Congress in its 1927 Madras session had accepted the Jinnah offer, the pressure of Hindu communalists from Punjab and Maharashtra tied its hands. The All-Parties Conference which met at Delhi in February 1928, in Bombay in May, and finalized the Report at Lucknow in August, got engaged in brainstorming discussion, (which also saw great squabbles) on the question of communal representation.48

The Congress leaders with strong Hindu Mahasabha links continued to torpedo the discussions. At its Jabalpur session in April 1928, the Hindu Mahasabha under N.C. Kelkar adopted aggressive resolutions calling for conversion of non-Hindus, and the delegates in general bitterly opposed the creation of new Muslim majority provinces and reservation of seats for majorities in Punjab and Bengal (which would also ensure Muslim control over legislatures in both).49

Ultimately the Congress gave in to the Hindu Mahasabha pressure. While there would be joint electorates everywhere, reserved seats were conceded only at the centre and in provinces where

48 Sumit Sarkar, op.cit., p. 262.
49 Ibid.,
Muslims were in a minority (and not in Bengal and Punjab). The question of Sind being made into a separate province was to arise only after the country acquired ‘Dominion Status’ and the political structure would be broadly unitary with the centre keeping residual powers.

Jinnah seeing a virtual rejection of his proposals made a last attempt for unity in the last December 1928 session of the All-Parties Conference in Calcutta. But all this was to no avail. Staunch Hindu leaders were in no mood to relent and Jinnah also stiffened his stand. He rejoined with the breakaway group of the League in March 1929, put forward his famous ‘Fourteen Points’. They were

i) The form of the future Constitution should be federal, with the residuary powers vested in the provinces.

ii) A uniform measure of autonomy shall be granted to all provinces.

iii) All legislatures in the country and other elected bodies shall be constituted on the definite principle of adequate and effective representation of minorities in every province without reducing the majority in any province to a minority or even equality.

iv) In the Central Legislature, Muslim representation shall not be less than one-third.

Dominion Status implied complete independence within the British Commonwealth, much the same as Canada, Australia and New Zealand (erstwhile colonies of Great Britain) had long enjoyed.
v) Representation of communal groups shall continue to be by means of separate electorates as at present, provided it shall be open to any community, at any time, to abandon its separate electorate in favour of joint electorate.

vi) Any territorial re-distribution that might at any time be necessary shall not in any way affect the Muslim majority in the Punjab, Bengal and N.W.F.P.

vii) Full religious liberty i.e., liberty of belief, worship and observance, propaganda, association and education, shall be guaranteed to all communities.

viii) No bill or resolution or any part thereof shall be passed in any legislature or any other elected body if three-fourths of the members of any community in that particular body oppose such a bill, resolution or part thereof on the ground that it would be injurious to the interests of that community or in the alternative, such other method is devised as may be found feasible and practicable to deal with such cases.

ix) Sind should be separated from the Bombay Presidency.

x) Reforms should be introduced in the N.W.F.P. and Baluchistan on the same footing as in other provinces.

xi) Provision should be made in the Constitution, giving Muslims an adequate share along with the other Indians in all the services of
the State and in local self-governing bodies, having due regard to the requirements of efficiency.

xii) The Constitution should embody adequate safeguards for the protection of Muslim culture and for the protection and promotion of Muslim education, language, religion, personal laws and Muslim charitable institutions and for their due share in the grants-in-aid given by the State and by local self-governing bodies.

xiii) No Cabinet, either Central or Provincial, should be formed without there being a proportion of at least one-third Muslim ministers.

xiv) No change shall be made in the Constitution by the Central Legislature except with the concurrence of the States constituting the Indian Federation.51

Even Maulana Hasrat Mohani was not at all satisfied by the Nehru report. In 1928 he brought out an Urdu daily from Kanpur named Mustaqil. He used to express his political views in this paper. On 20th August he gave a detailed statement to a press reporter in which he said: “I support complete independence; so I cannot recommend acceptance of the proposals in which dominion status is recommended. I think that to form a constitution would be a victory

for the cunning moves of Lord Birkenhead. He is insisting upon it, for he wants Indian leaders to announce that they wish to maintain connections with Britain. I also want a federation of fully autonomous provinces to be established in India. The central government should control only those portfolios which would not come under the provinces, for instance communications, the armed forces, foreign affairs etc. The Indian states would send their representatives to a Federal Government easily and quickly, as they would [not] fear interference in their internal affairs. Unless political parties are formed in the country and grew strong, separate electorates and propotional representation should not be dispensed with.”52

**An Appraisal**

Although the Nehru Report failed to unite all shades of the political opinion in the country yet it has its significance. The proposals it made reflected the maturity the nationalist leadership had acquired over the years. It recommended that India would have the same constitutional status in the community of nations known as the British Empire, as the Dominion of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of New Zealand, the Union of South Africa and the Irish Free State, with a Parliament having powers to make law for the peace, order and good government of India, and an

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executive responsible to that Parliament, and shall be styled and known as the Commonwealth of India.\textsuperscript{53}

On the question of fundamental rights it was amply made clear that the powers (all legislative, political and judicial) were derived from the people and government is responsible to them hence the same would be exercised in the Commonwealth of India through the organizations established by or under, and in accord with, this constitution. Individual liberty of the citizen would be respected and he shall also be not deprived of his dwelling or property save in accordance with law. Freedom of conscience and practice of freely following and preaching religion would be granted subject to law and order or public morality. The state shall have no official religion of its own. Freedom of combination and association for the maintenance and improvement of labour and economic conditions was guaranteed. And finally men and women were to have equal rights as citizens.\textsuperscript{54}

The committee had also formulated the structure of the Parliament and powers it would have. The legislative powers of the Commonwealth would be vested in a Parliament which would consist of the King, a Senate and a House of Representatives herein called the Parliament. The Governor-General was to be appointed by the

\textsuperscript{53} S.R. Bakshi, op.cit., p. 166.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p. 167.
king, and would have, and might exercise in the Commonwealth during the King’s pleasure but subject to the constitution.\textsuperscript{55}

The Senate would consist of 200 members to be elected by the provincial councils, with a fixed number of seats being allotted to each province on the basis of population. The election was to be held by the method of propotional representation with the single transferable vote. The House of Representatives would have a life of five years from its first meeting and Senate would have a life of seven years. These chambers could be dissolved or their terms could be extended by the Governor-General under special circumstances. All decisions were to be finalized by the majority of votes.\textsuperscript{56}

The young brigade led by Jawaharlal Nehru and others had different conceptions with the report. The talk of Dominion Status appeared unappealing to them and they could not be reconciled with anything but \textit{Purna Swaraj} or Complete Independence. In December 1928 when the annual session of the Congress was going on in Calcutta, the young brigade of Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose was joined by a large number of delegates who pressed for complete independence as the goal of the Congress. The older lot of Gandhi and Motilal Nehru however felt that the

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.,

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.,
consensus on dominion status having been reached with such hectic and difficult parleys should not be put aside in such haste and a period of two years be given to the Government for accepting this. Under pressure, the grace of period for the government was reduced to one year and, more important it was unanimously agreed that if the government failed to accept the Constitution based on Dominion Status by the end of the year, the Congress would not only adopt *Purna Swaraj* as its goal but would also launch a civil disobedience movement for the attainment of that goal.

The Nehru Report was indeed an answer to the challenge thrown by Lord Birkenhead that whether Indians had the wisdom to draft a constitution for self-governance. That the Report failed to unite the different political spectrums on communal question is a sad note in modern Indian history. Jinnah announced the *‘Parting of Ways’*. And extreme aggressiveness on the part of Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League were to unleash the hydra headed monster of communalism whose culmination was witnessed by Kanpur only in

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57 Jamshed Nusserwanjee says that Jinnah was heartbroken. While boarding on the train on 29 December with tears in his eyes and holding the hand of Nusserwanjee he said, ‘Jamshed, this is the parting of ways.’, Quoted in S.M.Burke & Salim Al din Qureishi, op.cit., p.160.
the horrendous 1931 communal riot\textsuperscript{58}, counted as one of the worst India ever had the misfortune to endure.

**The Revolutionary Fervor**

Notwithstanding the political environment prevailing in the country there had always been a revolutionary group which had the same motto and vision for the nation as the Congress had yet their aims of realizing the same were in sharp contrast to Gandhian ideals. Kanpur had shown itself as a hotbed of such extreme nationalism and even today its residents pride themselves of giving to the country a plethora of such men.

In the year 1927 only a book store named ‘Prakash Pustakalaya’ selling revolutionary literature was set up in city’s Chowk area by Shiv Narayan Mishra and Pandit Jagdish Narayan Shukla was appointed as its caretaker. The book store became very popular as most of the revolutionary literature was distributed in the Hindustani speaking belt by this bookstore only. Well known works of the genre like *Bandi Jivan*, *Anand Math*, *American War of Independence*, *Life of Garibaldi and Mazzini*, Shaukat Usmani’s *My Russian Journey* used to sell like hot cakes. It was through the

\textsuperscript{58} For details see Chapter 4.
efforts of Jagdish Narayan Shukla only that the pamphlet ‘Philosophy of Bomb’ (Bomb ka Darshan) was made available in various towns.59

The Kakori Conspiracy Case convicts were still languishing in the jail and Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi as member of the U.P. legislative Council voiced his concern on their living conditions and said, “They are educated and come from good families. Their humiliation is the humiliation of Indian dignity.” Thus in effect he asked the government to ameliorate their living conditions and must not treat them as ordinary prisoners.60

A galaxy of national leaders like Motilal Nehru, Purshottam Das Tandon, Rafi Ahmad Qidwai along with Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi visited the convicts in jail and arranged a substantial fund for their defence. The government was not impressed. Kanpur had a notable contribution in the formation of the Hindustan Republican Association. Apart from the houses of Suresh Chandra Bhattacharya, Rajkumar Sinha and Ram Dulare Trivedi many other hideouts in the city were also searched. Rajendra Lahiri, Ashfaqullah Khan, Ram Prasad Bismil and Roshan Singh were however hanged (on 17, 18, 19 and 20 December 1927 at Gonda, Faizabad, Gorakhpur and Naini

60 Home C.I.D. Dept. File No. 157/1927, UPSA.
jails respectively). The funeral of Bismil at Gorakhpur was organized by Haldhar Vajpayee.\textsuperscript{61}

In the reorganization of revolutionary groups, Radha Mohan Gokul had played a pivotal role. He acted as a mentor to a whole generation of young revolutionaries like Shiv Verma, Surendra Pandey, Munishwar Awasthi and brothers Raj Kumar Sinha and Vijay Kumar Sinha.

Through Radha Mohan Gokul’s inspiration only these youths had sent Surendra Pandey to Jhansi to bring Chandrashekhar Azad who had an excellent reputation as a strategist and coordinator. The band of these above mentioned young men succeeded in having a gathering of the youths (who were obsessed with revolution) of Punjab, Bihar, U.P. and Kanpur.\textsuperscript{62}

The party thus formed earned the name of Kanpur Revolutionary Party. Members included Vijay Kumar Sinha, Batukeshwar Dutt, Thakur Mahavir Singh, Shiv Verma, Jaidev Kapoor, Surendra Pandey, Brahma Dutt Mishra, A.K. Ganguly, Munishwar Awasthi, Sadguru Dayal Awasthi, Ram Singh, Bir Bhadra, Kailash Dwivedi and Gulzari Lal.

\textsuperscript{61} Shiv Kumar Mishra, op. cit., p. 16.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., p. 21.
At a meeting on 8 May 1928 in Delhi’s Ferozeshah Kotla ground (where the young revolutionaries of the three states had assembled) it was decided that henceforth socialism would be the goal of the association and name was changed to Hindustan Socialist Republican Association.\textsuperscript{63}

Sukhdev was given the charge of Punjab, Shiv Verma of United Provinces (U.P.) and Pharindra Nath Ghosh of Bihar. They were to guide the movement in the areas allotted to them. Chandrashekhar Azad was the oldest and most experienced leader of the organization. He was a convict in the Kakori Conspiracy case and an arrest warrant had been issued against him and the government was going to announce a heavy sum of money as a prize for his information. He became a sort of commander-in-chief of the organization.\textsuperscript{64}

Ever since the boycott of the Simon Commission the Congress rank and file had been studded with a number of revolutionaries. Kanpur had an impressive list in this- Ganga Sahai Chaubey, Captain Ram Singh, Ramchandra Musaddi, Mannilal Pandey and Mahavir Pandey. Chandrashekhar Azad had been taking shelter in the homes of these men when police was desperately trying to nab him. Sridevi

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., pp. 21-22.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.,
Musaddi, wife of Ramchandra Musaddi and Munni Devi, wife of Mannilal Pandy used to take vigil in the night (with guns in their hands) when Azad was hiding in their homes. Mewa Ram Gupta was also a member of the organization who had inbred a galaxy of revolutionaries in the city. Shiv Kumar Mishra also later associated himself with the organization.\(^{65}\)

Vijay Kumar Sinha invited Phanindra Nath Ghosh to join a new party which would be formed by the amalgamation of the provincial parties of Punjab, U.P., Bihar and Bengal respectively. Accordingly meetings were held on 8 and 9 September at Feroz Shah Tughlaq’s fort at Delhi, and an amalgamation did took place with the exception of Bengal.\(^{66}\)

Bhagat Singh too had attended the meeting. Chandrashekhari Azad was however not present in the meeting as Delhi was not a conducive place for him. But he had conveyed his message that whatever comes after the meeting, that decision will be acceptable to him. It must be recalled that it was Bhagat Singh only who had proposed that the word socialist must be added to the organization and its goal should be the establishment of a socialist state. Azad

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\(^{65}\) Ibid., pp. 23-24.

\(^{66}\) Shiv Kumar Mishra says that the Bengal party of revolutionaries was angry with the organization for organizing the Kakori raid without a prior consultation and also for fixing socialism as the goal of the organization.
during his second visit to Kanpur had also accepted his proposals. The new name selected for the party was Hindustan Socialist Republican Army. The chief programme of the organization included the rescue from jail of Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee and Sachindra Nath Sanyal, the Kakori case convicts and action against the Simon Commission. Other resolutions were passed which included the murder of the approvers in the Kakori case and the commission of a dacoity in order to raise funds.\(^\text{67}\)

Moreover this association was divided into two groups. One group was of active workers and another of supporters. Prominent Congress leaders of the city and other nationalists like Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi, Hasrat Mohani, Pyarelal Agarwal, Munshiram Sharma ‘Som’, Mannilal Pandey, Ganga Sahai Chaubey and Hamid Khan were also included in the second group of the Association. Later Vijay Kumar Sinha and Shiv Verma became comrades of Bhagat Singh.\(^\text{68}\)

On 17 December 1928, one and a half months after the death of Lala Lajpat Rai, Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad, Rajguru and Sukhdev out of revenge assassinated Saunders, the assistant police


superintendent (who had brutally assaulted Lajpat Rai) in broad daylight.

After this episode Bhagat Singh (in a different attire) went to Bengal where a factory for making bombs was established. Many revolutionaries from Kanpur had gone there and gave their full support in bomb making. It was at this very time the government was planning to transfer Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee from Agra to Lucknow jail and Bhagat Singh and Sadguru Dayal Awasthi (famous by the name of Panditji in Kanpur) arrived in Kanpur for the purpose of felicitating Jogesh’s release but they couldn’t succeed as the lock up there proved to be too tough to attack.\(^{69}\)

To meet the revolutionary situation that developed between 1927 and 1929, the government adopted, as usual a carrot and stick policy. Two repressive legislations- *The Public Safety Bill* and the *Trade Disputes Bill* were introduced in the Central Legislative Assembly in September 1928. Although the Public Safety Bill failed to be approved by the Assembly, the Viceroy through his special power promulgated it as a *Public Safety Ordinance* in 1929. The Trade Disputes Bill was however passed by Assembly. These laws were brought to check the growth of communists and other left leaning groups and also to oust them from the trade union field.

Bhagat Singh who had declared himself to be a Marxist believed that the passing of these two ordinances was a sinister attempt by the colonial government to check the rising wave of socialist revolutionaries and to allow big industrialists (capitalists) to carry on their exploitative mechanism. Few must be knowing that prior to his daring act of assassinating Saunders, Bhagat Singh was asked to cut off his long hair (as he was a Sikh) and the task was offered to Gaya Prasad Katiyari, a doctor by profession and also a revolutionary who belonged to Kanpur only.

On 8 April 1929, Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt dropped two small bombs and fired some shots from the visitors’ gallery in the Central Legislative Assembly. The motive was not to hurt anyone, not even Lord Simon who was also sitting in the assembly but to register protest against the two ordinances and to make the officials realize that how their rule and their subversive policies have ruined India and had rendered a vast number of people hopeless and hapless. The Red Pamphlet (which was a document of revolutionaries’ socialist programme) dropped by these heroic men on the floor of the house highlighted their fervor that, “from under the seeming sereneness of the sea of humanity a veritable storm is about to broke out.” There was a good chance before them to escape as confusion, chaos and despair was prevailing when the incident took place. But
brave and fearless the men they were threw away their revolvers and waited for the authorities to arrest them. The largest and most novel motive was to rid Indian people of fear and to inculcate a spirit of courage, fearlessness and self-sacrifice. It had also been one of the aims of their organization H.S.R.A. The Red Pamphlet said that, “The sacrifice of individuals at the altar of a great revolution that will bring freedom to all rendering exploitation of man by man impossible is inevitable. Long live Revolution.”

Kanpur was a prominent centre of revolutionary activities in North India, so police resorted to a crackdown in the city in connection with the above mentioned incident. Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi’s house and Pratap press office was raided by the police on 4 May, 1929. The house of Sadguru Sharan Awasthi who was also the Municipal Commissioner was also raided. Some books glorifying revolution and two letters (which were addressed to his brother Sadguru Dayal Awasthi) were seized. Pyarelal Agarwal’s house and house of the warden of D.A.V. College were also searched. Revolutionaries arrested in the case included Surendranath Pandey, T.N. Dasgupta, Mahavir Pandey, S.N. Ganguly, Ram Gopal and Batukeshwar Dutt. Jaidev Kapoor (who also hailed from Kanpur) was

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70 Suniti Kumar Ghosh, op.cit., p. 270.
71 Vartman, 20.5.1929.
arrested at Saharanpur on 13 May 1929. In all twenty four arrests were made. Chandrashekhar Azad again evaded arrest and so others like Sadguru Dayal Awasthi, Bhagwati Charan and Yashpal.72

The crackdown was severe and for the time being the revolutionaries stopped their activities but the Kanpur party was still strong and Azad still at large came back to Kanpur and set up his headquarters there. Azad’s presence kept the movement going strong and for the next two years or so Kanpur became the nerve centre of these activities in India. Earlier Azad had thought of going to the south to set up his headquarters but after a discussion with Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi and poet Balkrishna Sharma ‘Naveen’ he dropped the idea.73

Sometime in October 1928 a book was published by Pratap press entitled, ‘Ireland Ka Swatantra Yudh’ (The Freedom Struggle of Ireland). It had highlighted the role played by Irish youths in the freedom of their motherland from the British. On 1st June 1929 the police arrived at the office of the press and confiscated 166 copies of the book. The book had been written on the pattern of a famous Irish book “My Fight For Irish Freedom” (by Den Brien). The newspaper asked why the government it so afraid of getting the news

72 Ibid., 4.5.1929.
73 Shiv Kumar Mishra, op.cit., p. 150.
of Irish freedom struggle getting highlighted or it is afraid that it can lead to Indian youths planting bombs and manufacturing them. It further said that the British have became the most cowards as they are also scared of people even getting reminded of the names of famous revolutionaries like Mazzini, Garibaldi, Eamonn de Valera (Irish leader) and Robert Bruce (the famous Scottish king).\textsuperscript{74}

On 1\textsuperscript{st} December 1930, while a party of police were on their way to the D. A. V. College to conduct a search, they met a student named Salig Ram Shukla\textsuperscript{75} who had taken a prominent part in political agitation and was wanted under one of the ordinances. A C.I.D. Inspector caught hold of him, whereupon he whipped out a revolver and fired, wounding the Superintendent of Police. In the struggle that followed he also wounded a head constable. The latter died as a result of his injuries. Salig Ram was shot dead by the Assistant Superintendent of Police Mr. Field.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{74} Pratap, 6.6.1929.

\textsuperscript{75} Salig Ram Shukla was a firebrand student filled with a revolutionary vigour. He remained a frontline activist in organizing daring acts like unfurling of tricolor at Christ Church College or of imparting training to youth in the art of firing (for activists enrolled for civil disobedience movement at Narval), S.P. Bhattacharya (ed.), Swatantra Sangram Ke Sainik, Lucknow, 1968, p. 492.

\textsuperscript{76} Home Police Department, File No. 1504/1934, UPSA.
The Nationalist Tide

The AICC meeting was held at Delhi in February 1929 in which Pt. Motilal Nehru, Pt. Malaviya, Maulana Azad, Dr. M.A. Ansari, Shiv Prasad Gupta, Sardar Shrodeo Singh and Jawaharlal Nehru were present. It was decided that Congress organizations in New York, London, Natal (South Africa), Kabul and Goa should be recognized and they should send their representatives to the Indian National Congress’ sessions. It was agreed upon that a programme (latest by 15 April) should be started by PCC’s to gave clear instructions to DCC’s and TCC’s to enroll as many as they can volunteers for the Congress. Hindustan Seva Dal should be strengthened and a body of volunteers to be organized who are willing to work in the programme of boycott of foreign cloth.77

For this purpose secretaries had been made Rajendra Prasad (Bihar), Subhash Chandra Bose (Bengal), Shiv Prasad Gupta (UP), Maulana Azad and Sardar Shrodeo Singh (Punjab), Dr. Ansari (Delhi) and Seth Jamnalal Bajaj (CP).78

It was also declared and again laid stress on that merchants selling foreign cloth must detest from the same (as had been passed in the Calcutta session of the Congress) and if they were getting

77 Pratap, 10.2.1929.
78 Ibid.,
orders for foreign cloth they should cancel them for the nationalist cause. It was also appealed that every member of Congress should give a part of his income to the organization. Merchants of Calcutta, Bombay, Kanpur, Delhi, Amritsar and Karachi were specially reminded to abide by Congress’ declaration or otherwise they will face trouble.\(^{79}\)

In the year 1929 Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi established the Youth League to instill a sense of pride, manhood and patriotism among the youth. It preached that the greatest religion is one that of serving the mankind. Beni Singh Awasthi was appointed as the first secretary of the league. In the provincial Congress session of 1929 the police resorted to lathi charge and the Congress flag was uprooted. As a result of this the famous *Jhanda Satyagraha* (Flag Satyagraha) started in the city which went on for a long time. Gandhi visited Kanpur for the fourth time on 22 September and was there for two days. Kasturba Gandhi and Meera Ben also came with him. He also addressed a gathering of the students of Christchurch College and also of the students of D.A.V. College. His *Achuthoddhar* or the welfare programme for the upliftment of the Harijans (Dalits) was going on in full swing. The Youth league

\(^{79}\) Ibid.,
arranged for a feast for Harijans in which a leading figure and
Congress office bearer of the city Tara Agarwal also participated. 80

Gandhi’s schedule in the city was a very busy one. He
addressed a large public meeting at Phoolbagh in evening. It is said
that some 20,000 men including many Europeans participated in the
meeting. He outlined his constructive programme and laid stress on
the removal of untouchability and prohibition of drinking and
gambling. There was also an appeal for that old hallmark of
Gandhian politics of boycott of foreign goods and asked the people
to gave strength to congress by joining it in large numbers. Many
well known figures of the city presented him mementos and a purse
of rupees twenty thousand. 81

An untoward incident happened in the city on the night of 13
September in city’s Lalkurti bazaar when a British soldier, Gunner
Thompson ran amok and fired some 20 rounds of ammunition
resulting in the death of a sweeper and injuring of some. When this
incident took place a puja (Hindu prayer) was going on in the area
and he apparently under the influence of alcohol (as the medical
team that afterwards examined him had reported) asked why this
thing is going on and perhaps in a state of delirium fired four shots.

81 Vartman, 25.9.1929.
He then ran away and was subsequently found lying down outside the barracks with his rifle, in which was still one loaded round and the other 15 rounds and his bandolier were found on his bed in the barrack. He was immediately arrested and taken to the battery guard room. This incident had greatly angered the residents of the area and seeing the mood of the people immediate action was taken against the Gunner Thompson by the authorities.82

Prior to the meeting of the Indian National Congress at Lahore, many leaders of all India stature visited Kanpur to attend a meeting arranged under the Presidentship of Narayan Prasad Arora on 6 December 1929. Prominent ones included Acharya Narendra Dev, Purshottam Das Tandon, Manzoor Ali and Damodar Swaroop.83

A PCC meeting on 8 December in the city appointed sub-committees for prohibition, the boycott of foreign cloth, khadi and acchutoddhar work, and decided to impose a one per cent levy as a compulsory subscription on the incomes of individual members of the PCC. (The minimum subscription was fixed at two rupees, 50 per cent of which would go to the member’s local Congress committee).84

82 Home Police Dept. File No. 7/X L 11, 1929, NAI.
83 Vartman, 11.12.1929.
The year was coming to a close and there was no sign of the government relenting to the nationalist’ demand of conceding the dominion status. In fact a debate in the House of Lords on 5 November 1929 on the question had already revealed the true colours of the British government and finally, on 23 November Lord Irwin himself told Gandhi and the others that it is impossible for him to gave them an assurance they had demanded. This marked that the stage of negotiations was finally over and battle lines for a confrontation were now to be drawn.85

The role of the press deserves special praise in making the people aware of the damaging effects of British rule. These critical years constituted that phase in the history of national movement when no major struggle was yet on the anvil and people in the city were longing for some direction. That direction and motivation was provided by the local press and papers like Pratap and Vartman covered the reportings in a very lucid manner and in any case made the work of local Congress leaders easy.

The venue chosen for the annual Congress session was Lahore and Jawaharlal Nehru had taken over the president ship from his father and the honour of declaring ‘Purna Swaraj’ as the only

honourable goal Indians could strive for was announced by Nehru junior as he was the man who had popularized the idea. To quote D.A. Low. “On 31 December 1929, at Mahatma Gandhi’s instance and under Jawaharlal Nehru’s presidency, after two years of constant discussion and often heated debate, the Indian National Congress at its Lahore session took two of the most momentous discussions in its history. (Amidst cheers and jubilation the tricolor flag of Independence was unfurled on the banks of river Ravi). It confirmed that henceforward its objective would not be Dominion Status within the British Commonwealth, but purna swaraj or complete independence. It also authorized the AICC, ‘whenever it deems fit, to launch upon a programme of civil disobedience’ under Gandhi’s leadership so as to bring British rule in India to an end. There upon there ensured between 1930 and 1934, with an interval during 1931, the most widespread and prolonged confrontation between the forces of Indian nationalism and the British Raj that ever occurred.”