THE ROAD TO FINAL VICTORY (1940-47)

The resignation of Congress ministries in October 1939 was a path breaking step which once again brought to the fore the inherent contradictions that existed between nationalists and the British government. The Second World War had started in October 1939 when Germany invaded Poland and India was made a belligerent participant in this war. The Congress had regularly reiterated its sustained opposition to any involvement of India in any war that did not have the agreement of Indian people.

Jawaharlal Nehru who played a very vital role in determining the Congress policy towards war said, “If this is the final answer of the British government to the people of India then, there is no common ground between the two and our paths diverge completely.” As President of the United Provinces Congress Committee (UPCC), he appealed to Congressmen of the province to “keep ready. And whatever happens do not forget that we may do nothing against our high principles and not in keeping with India’s honour. Keep calm and cool and disciplined. Keep ready.”

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The Congress Working Committee also passed a resolution at its meeting in Allahabad (from November 19-23, 1939) and observed that, “The course of the war and the policy pursued by the British and the

1 Quoted in A.M. Zaidi, Congress, Nehru & The Second World War, Delhi, 1985, p. 15.
French governments and in particular the declarations made on behalf of the British government in regard to India, seem to demonstrate that the present war, like the World War of 1914-18, is being carried on for imperialist ends, and the British imperialism is to remain entrenched in India. With such a war and with this policy the Congress cannot associate itself, and it cannot countenance the exploitation of India’s resources to this end.”

It reiterated its demand that there should be a recognition of India’s independence and of the right of Indians to frame their constitution through a constituent assembly and through constituent assembly only communal problems and other problems can be tackled.

It was again reiterated that it is inherent in every form of satyagraha that no effort is spared to achieve an honourable settlement with the opponent. While a satyagrahi is ever ready for a non-violent fight, if it has to come he never relaxes his effort for peace and always works for its attainment.²

The Ramgarh Session

In these turbulent times the Ramgarh session of the Congress was held on March 19-20, 1940 under the presidency of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. There was a consensus that a battle has to be

waged but of what form and what would be its timing were to be decided by Gandhi.

The differences of opinion were great, Gandhi was in favour of continued cooperation at the provincial level. He would offer the British moral support during the war but on a non-violent basis. Jawaharlal Nehru strongly favoured complete independence as a precondition for support of the Congress to the British war effort. Subhash Chandra Bose adopted a more militant stand that of direct action against the colonial government in order to force it to agree for transfer of power. In a way Subhash’s stand implied that Britain’s difficulty is India’s opportunity.  

However Subhash’s plan lacked support within the top leadership, and Gandhi’s appeared unrealistic. Nehru’s viewpoint was given the green signal and made the basis of CWC’s resolution of 15 September.

Linlithgow held on to the belief that India’s war effort could be effectively mobilized without the co-operation of Congress. When he informed Gandhi of possible concessions- Dominion Status at the earliest possible date, extension of Executive Council by four representative Indians, with probably two from the Congress, one

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4 Ibid.,
from the Muslim League and another one from other groups Gandhi
was not impressed and Congress leadership believed that nothing
tangible was forthcoming from the government.\(^5\)

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad said, “Nothing had happened to
warrant a change in the country’s attitude. We were today exactly where
we were fifteen months ago when the AICC met at Bombay and passed
the resolution on satyagraha. We had not moved an inch forward. Not that
we wanted to move. We wanted control of the government of our country.
We wanted freedom and independence whether in times of peace or war.”\(^6\)

The Congress further declared at the session that nothing short
of complete independence can be accepted by the people of India.
Indian freedom cannot exist within the orbit of imperialism and
dominion or any other status, within the imperial structure is wholly
unacceptable to India, is not in keeping with the dignity of a great
nation, and would bind India in many ways to British policies.

The Congress also believed that it could not support the claim
of rulers of Indian states and other parties with a vested motive to
come in the way of independence. Sovereignty in India must rest

\(^5\) Ibid., p. 355.

with the people, whether in the States or the Provinces, and all other interests must be subordinated to their vital interests.\(^7\)

Following the resolution the Congress Working Committee decided to intensify its activities. There was to be observed a ‘National Week’ (from 7 April- 13 April) in remembrance of the Jallianwala Bagh martyrs. Patriotic songs were played in full swing in Kanpur and a drive for recruitment of the volunteers for the Congress also started. The Gandhian constructive programme of popularizing *khadi* and *charkha* was also started with a new vigour.\(^8\)

The celebration of ‘National Week’ gave a new impetus to the already going freedom struggle in the city. By 29 April, 5400 people had been enlisted in the Congress and about 65 per cent of Congressmen had registered themselves as satyagrahis. Ward Congress Committees also sprang up. They were to work under the City Satyagraha Committee which was to evaluate the progress of satyagraha in Kanpur.\(^9\)

Once again the lore of Jhanda Geet dazzled the masses and a paramilitary training of the satyagrahis was started. In an attempt to mobilize the masses, the city satyagraha committee planned to hold

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\(^7\) A.M. Zaidi, op.cit., pp. 195-196.

\(^8\) Vartman, 9.4.1940.

\(^9\) Ibid.,
192 public meetings in twenty days (1 June- 21 June).\textsuperscript{10} Hamid Khan, secretary of the City Congress Committee who made an announcement about the holding of an Akhand Sutra Yojana on 9 June in Tilak Hall, gave a dramatic turn to the activities of Congress. Ceaseless spinning of five charkhas from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. marked the day.\textsuperscript{11}

The increasing impetus that was being provided to the constructive work of the Congress and that the paramilitary activities of the Seva Dal were going on in full swing were a testimony to the fact that Kanpur was fast gearing up for the upcoming struggle. In spite of the warnings issued by the District Administration, the Congressmen were determined to carry out their programme.\textsuperscript{12}

### A Sense of Uneasiness and Insecurity

The war took a serious turn in the middle of 1940. Germany had successfully invaded the Low Countries (Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg) and Denmark (April and May 1940) and same was in store for Norway. But it was the fall of France in June that added anxiety in Europe and India. It also evoked some sympathy for the allies in the nationalist circles.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 24.5.1940.

\textsuperscript{11} Preeti Trivedi, \textit{Freedom Struggle & Urban Politics (Kanpur during 1939-1945)}, Kanpur, 2004, p. 34.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., pp. 34-35.
The fluctuation of war and initial setback of the allies brought undisguised panic and dismay in all quarters in Kanpur. There was a general feeling of uneasiness and insecurity about the future. It resulted in a serious run on the Post Office savings bank which reached climax at the end of May 1940, when nearly fifteen lakhs of rupees were withdrawn in a single day. Currency notes in many places were at a discount and the Reserve Bank in Kanpur cashed 22 lakhs of notes in the last five days of May.\(^\text{13}\)

**Stage Set for the Individual Satyagraha**

The resignation of Congress ministries had given a hope to many individual Congressmen that something new will be on the minds of the top leadership but there was no immediate prospect of civil disobedience. Although in the Ramgarh session there was talk of civil disobedience but the ongoing war in Europe had undertaken a new turn and the dominant Congress leadership was in a dilemma. Both Gandhi and Nehru were strongly opposed to taking advantage of Britain’s abysmal position.

The Congress did came with a ‘Compromise Offer’ of asking the British government to let it form an interim government during the war period but as always the government was reluctant to do so.

\(^{13}\) Report on the Administration of the United Provinces 1940-41, UPSA, pp. 2-3.
Instead they announced their own proclamation on 8 August 1940 in the form of ‘August Offer’.  

Many satyagraha committees which had been formed at Kanpur were at this juncture busy in making preparations to unleash a new civil disobedience. Balkrishna Sharma was now secretary of the UPPCC which was headed by Krishna Dutt Paliwal. They had enrolled a large number of volunteers for the purpose and they were being trained by stalwarts like Pyarelal Agarwal and Hamid Khan.

The government was not impressed and immediately started a crackdown which included curtailment of the freedom of speech and other civil liberties like prohibition of all public meetings and demonstrations, imprisonment without trial and other draconian measures all in the name of war efforts.

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14 According to this offer the Viceroy would appoint a majority of Indians to his Executive Council (and it was equally well understood that they would be drawn from major political parties) yet there was no consideration that there would be a National Government which Congress was demanding. Moreover the British would continue to keep key portfolios of Finance, Defence and Home affairs. There was an undertaking that after the cessation of war the government would establish a body representative of the principal elements in India’s national life and would also lend its support on all relevant matters but there was nothing in the offer which could foresee the Congress’ demand for independence, D. A. Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism: The Imprint of Ambiguity 1929-1942*, Cambridge, 1997, p. 310.

15 Home Political Department, File No. 384/1940, 1940, UPSA.

16 Interview with Uma Dixit, daughter of Chhail Bihari Dixit ‘Kantak’ on 22.6.2009 in Kanpur.
Defying the government order Balkrishna Sharma delivered a fiery speech in Tilak Hall on 21 August 1940 amidst loud cries of *Vande Mataram* which severely indicted the government for following a repressive and brutal policy that aims to crush the rising national aspirations of the country and by arresting K.D. Paliwal it aims to crush the Congress organization. Balkrishna Sharma asserted that the government doesn’t wish to solve the problems in an amicable manner and by resorting to wanton terror it is provoking the people of Indian to gear up for a violent struggle.\(^\text{17}\)

He also brought to light that the government by arresting nearly 600 Congress workers was trying to install fear in the hearts of the people but they should remain steadfast in their resolve and in fact the arrests were fake as no violent or disruptive activity had been done by Congress workers.\(^\text{18}\)

Balkrishna Sharma also warned of government resorting to its old policy of creating a bad blood between Hindus and Muslims if a non violent struggle again starts under the leadership of Gandhi. He in fact brought to light the fact the government creates this trouble to stem the tide of nationalism and urged the members of both the communities to remain united and see through the game. He also

\(^{17}\) File No. 384/1940, op.cit.,

\(^{18}\) Ibid.,
said that the protection of life and liberty of the minorities (and Muslims being the most numerous and important ones) will be the bounden duty of the Congress.\textsuperscript{19}

Gandhi launched an “Individual Satyagraha” or “Quality Satyagraha” in the middle of September 1940. Under this movement a few selective individuals having designated qualifications were to offer satyagraha and to break laws that hampered the freedom of speech and expression.

The new satyagraha started with great zeal and energy by volunteers in Kanpur. People of the city associated with the Congress and holding high posts in the organization courted arrest. The novel feature was that an individual would first give information to the district authorities that he is going to dissuade the people from giving any help to the government in the war to which it had been made a deliberate party without taking into account the wishes of her people. When this was done the individual would arrange for public meetings. Among those who offered the satyagraha and courted arrest were Pyarelal Agarwal, Chhail Bihari Dixit Kantak, Hamid Khan, Balkrishna Sharma Naveen, Ganga Prasad Chaubey and others. The

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.,
individuals were taken into custody as soon as their receipt was received by the authorities.\textsuperscript{20}

On 29 March 1941 Mohammed Ali Jinnah made his first visit to Kanpur. The resolution of a separate Muslim state of Pakistan had already been passed a year before at Muslim League session (on 23 March) in Lahore. That resolution asserted that “no constitutional plan” put forward by the British for India would be “acceptable” unless those areas in which Muslims were a majority, “as in the north-western and north-eastern zones of British India, should be grouped to constitute independent states in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.”\textsuperscript{21} By this time League’s popularity had greatly increased among the Muslims and Jinnah was hailed as \textit{Quaid-E-Azam} or ‘Great Leader’. He exhorted the people that Pakistan is the ultimate goal and destiny of Indian Muslims. He was there in the city for three days.\textsuperscript{22}

Communal passions had always remained high in Kanpur and so a riot broke out on 28 April 1941. Zealots of both the religions were to be blamed for this. While utterances of Pakistan were a pivotal factor there was also an anger among the Hindus over the

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.,


\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Citizen}, 14.4.1941.
appointment of Mohammed Habibullah as Executive Officer of the Municipal Board which Hindus took as an insult. Local business magnate Padmapat Singhania chairman of the JK group and a fundraiser of both the Hindu Mahasabha and Congress gave an appeal to observe anti-Pakistan Day.\textsuperscript{23}

The anti-Pakistan Day was scheduled to be observed on 28 April 1941. It was decided that Congressmen, Hindus and nationalist Muslims would take out a procession, which would be followed by a public meeting. This was the period when communal conflagrations had erupted in Dacca, Bombay and Ahmedabad and its repercussions were also being felt in Kanpur. Sensing trouble the district authorities refused permission to the procession to pass through the sensitive Moolganj locality site of the horrendous 1931 riot.\textsuperscript{24} As a result Hindus observed hartal marked by anti-Pakistan slogans. The police however promptly controlled the situation but the gulf had already been created between the two communities and an impending danger of communal catastrophe always loomed on the horizon of the city.

\textbf{Role of the Students and Youth}

As is evident that in any major nationalist upheaval or revolution it is the youth which makes it a success and gives it a

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 19.5.1941.
\textsuperscript{24} Vartman, 29.5.1941.
colour so that it can be called a revolution the students of Kanpur again came in the forefront in the Individual Satyagraha. The students of the Sanatan Dharam College decided to boycott their studies in August 1940. While satyagraha was the cause the immediate one was the provocation provided by the school authorities. The students wanted to invite Jawaharlal Nehru to deliver a speech in the college. The principal Lakshman Chandra Tandon however refused to gave permission. The management of the college was in the hands of government loyalists and they were also receiving financial aid from the government. This was resented by the government and students who were on the strike became more vocal.\textsuperscript{25} The management was not impressed and took some severe steps such as rustication of the students and went to the extent of blacklisting the students so that they cannot get admission in any other college. Yet the student community didn’t dither and after about a fortnight the Principal finally gave in to the students’ demand. According to the agreement the students were free to invite any political leader to the college and even the national flag could be hoisted on the college building.\textsuperscript{26} This was indeed a brilliant victory for the students and it reflects that

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 18.8.1940.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 2.9.1940.
great courage and determination had penetrated deep into the hearts of the people and they were no more afraid of the Raj.

But a sudden shock was witnessed the following year in September-October when the national flag which had been hoisting since the previous year for no cogent reason was suddenly removed. This naturally infuriated the students and they went on a 42 day strike. It initially began with six hundred students but soon acquired a large number.27

As was expected the management came down heavily on the students. It withheld the scholarships the students were receiving so as to create a financial pressure on them and compelled them to end their strike. But the students were unfazed. Threatening letters were also issued to them. But as these measures worked to no avail the Principal took the extreme step on the twenty fourth day of the strike and expelled eight students.28 The strike was called off only after the intervention and mediation of Vijay Lakshmi Pandit, T.K. Chaturvedi, Murari Lal Rohatgi and Jawaharlal Nehru who assured the students that their wishes were to be taken care of.29

It was not that the students were only against the colonial government. They were equally vociferous against the high handed

27 Ibid., 18.9.1941.
28 Ibid., 11.10.1941.
29 Ibid., 28.10.1941.
attitude of the management of various schools and colleges. A case in point is of Marwari Inter College. Here on 22 August 1941 the students decided to go for an infinite strike against the attitude meted out to college’s principal Krishna Vinayak Phadke.\textsuperscript{30} Phadke had been pressurized to tender resignation as he did not like the undue interference of the management in college administration. To express their solidarity with the principal about three hundred students decided to take out a peaceful march. The college managements asked the parents of the students that they should not engage themselves in frivolous political activities as this would hamper their studies and will not result in providing them a quality education. They asked parents and guardians that their wards should not pay any heed to the call of the agitating students. But to their wildest shock and dismay the parents and guardians asked their wards to render their full support to the agitating students. Failing in this manoeuvre of pressurizing the parents the Management decided to take help of the local police. But police surveillance on the college couldn’t also dither the students. In fact the police inspector Kazmi told students that police would not interfere in this matter.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 22.8.1941.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 5.9.1941.
The strike went on for fourteen days. Seeing the unrelenting attitude of the students and their grim determination the college Management had no option but to submit itself to the demand of the agitating students. Principal Phadke was reinstated. This was another brilliant episode in the annals of city’s nationalist agitation and remarkable courage and fortitude on the part of the students had been displayed.

The infliction of fines on satyagrahis became a common parlance during this period. It was considered to be one of the two principal penalties recognized by the criminal law, another being punishment. The High Court of Judicature at Allahabad had recently held that the present law does not permit the realization of fine imposed on a member of the joint family by the attachment and sale of property belonging to the joint family. As the joint family was very largely observed in UP, in the vast majority of cases the individual on whom the penalty of fine was imposed either has no saleable property, or none capable of ready proof as such. The result is that fine as a punishment is not capable of enforcement against a large proportion of the inhabitants of UP save by imprisonment in default. It was looked down upon as an unsatisfactory position by the Court and a legislation was passed to make it permissible to proceed

32 Ibid.,
against property held jointly by an offender with another, subject to the condition that the sale proceeds of no more than the offender’s share is applied to the permit of the fine.\textsuperscript{33}

**Deoli Detenus Day**

The Deoli camp in Rajasthan was famous by the name of *Naya Kaala Paani* (*Kaala Paani* implied life imprisonment). The camp had four hundred revolutionaries lodged inside it from all parts of India. Among the revolutionaries who were from Kanpur included brothers Surendra and Virendra Pandey, Mani Sharma, Rajaram Sharma, Jogeshwar Trivedi, Ajay Ghosh, Arjun Arora (son of Narayan Prasad Arora), Aiwaz Ali, Sher Khan, Ramchandra Rusia, Radha Krishna Gupta and others. Radha Krishna Gupta had been almost succumbed to his death because of its pathetic condition yet he was still not freed.\textsuperscript{34}

On 8 November 1941 the students decided to observe ‘Deoli Detenus Day’ in Kanpur. A large procession was taken out but it had to face the lathicharge by the police behind the Sirki Mohaal. Govind Narayan Shukla and his associates got injured and later arrested. One 15 year old Surajbali Nadira in compliance with one

\textsuperscript{33} Home Criminal Department, File No. 801/1941, 1941, UPSA.

\textsuperscript{34} Virendra Nath Dixit (ed.), *Swatantra Sangram aur Kanpur*, Kanpur, 2008, pp. 18-19.
Shivshankar had looted rupees 136,000 from the head police office and was later arrested in an encounter with the police.\textsuperscript{35}

The local Congress committee decided to lend its support to the Deoli Detenus Day observers on 9 November. A resolution was passed which condemned the authorities and the police for the alleged lathi charge on the students a day before and also requested the shopkeepers to hold a general strike in sympathy and support of the students.\textsuperscript{36}

The following day a meeting of the students was organized in Tilak Hall. After the meeting was over a group of students decided to hold demonstration outside the jail. The students attacked the police barrack line premises. The city magistrate asked the students to disperse. On their refusal they were resorted to brutal lathi charge by the police. One of the protesters had been severely injured and later died.\textsuperscript{37}

The District Magistrate L.P. Hancox soon after this tragic incident issued an order under Section 144 Cr.P.C. (Criminal Procedure Code) which prohibited carrying of arms, gathering in

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 19.

\textsuperscript{36} Home Political Dept, File No. 5/21/1941, NAI.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.,
groups of more than five persons and taking out any protest or procession.\textsuperscript{38}

Seeing that the political atmosphere of the city getting tense with each passing day the District authorities decided to impose curfew. But the students were unnerved and carried out their activities as usual. A few of them were also seen persuading the shopkeepers to shut down their shops and many shopkeepers complied.\textsuperscript{39}

**The Coming of the Storm**

During the critical early months of 1942 when the Fascist powers were at their peak and Japan was swiftly advancing through South East Asia, the British government dispatched Sir Stafford Cripps, a Labour member of the Cabinet to India to resolve the political deadlock.\textsuperscript{40}

Stafford Cripps was believed in some Congress circles, as a man who had conscience as he was a friend of Jawaharlal Nehru. On his arrival in Delhi on 23 March 1942 he invited Congress President Maulana Abul Kalam Azad to discuss the package deal. Yet what Cripps offered was paltry. There was an assurance of setting up of

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.,
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.,
\textsuperscript{40} B.R. Nanda, *The Making of a Nation: India’s Road to Independence*, Delhi, 1998, pp. 286-287.
National Government during the war period but the modest demand of the Congress that Defence portfolio be given in Indian hands as the Congress Working Committee (CWC) observed that in the absence of control over Defence by Indians, the degree of independence offered did not even approximate to Dominion Status. There could be no real power without control over the army, particularly during the World War. Japan was swiftly advancing towards North Eastern India and it was inevitable that if Japan gained control over India how will Indians fight against them? There was also a speculation that if Indians in Subhash Chandra Bose’s Indian National Army INA (and there were 50,000 Indian prisoners of war in Japan conquered territories) invaded India, how could Congress ask Indians to oppose them when they were in fact coming only to drive away the British?41

Another contentious issue was the proposal that the British government will respect and implement forthwith the constitution so framed subject only to the right of any province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new constitution to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession if it so decides. This proposal, which gave provinces

freedom of non-accession to the Indian Union, was considered by the Congress as a severe blow to Indian unity.\textsuperscript{42}

Gandhi was keenly watching the events going on and he had realized that the Cripps proposals is a futile exercise and although he had went to Delhi to meet Cripps he had declared that the offer was a ‘post-dated cheque’ to which someone later added the words ‘on a crashing bank’. And Cripps announced at a Press conference that the British Government’s draft proposals were withdrawn.\textsuperscript{43}

It was against this background that the All India Congress Committee (AICC) met at Allahabad towards the end of April. Gandhi although absent did sent a note embodying his views. He made the following points: (1) The Cripps proposals reflected the imperialist character of Britain. (2) Britain was incapable of defending India. (3) Indian and British interests are in mutual conflict. (4) Japan was at loggerheads not with India but with Britain. (5) Britain must leave India alone if a clash with Japan is to be avoided. (6) India is participating in this war only because of the interest of Britain and they don’t care a damn or respect Indian aspirations. (7) India has no enmity with Japan or any other country. In essence these points reflected the total disenchantment of the Indian people with the

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., p. 425.
British government and they must now completely withdraw from Indian soil.\textsuperscript{44}

The resolution thus passed by the AICC was on the whole a reflection of Gandhi’s programme as explained above. The decks were being cleared for launching of another movement which was one of its kind and was to go unsurpassed in enthusiasm and courage it generated among the Indian masses. It was to go down in the annals of modern Indian history by the name of ‘August Revolution.’

**The Storm Breaks Out**

To discuss the prevailing situation and to formulate its stand, the Congress Working Committee (CWC) met at Wardha from 7 to 14 July 1942. Senior and frontline leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Azad, Gobind Vallabh Pant and Asaf Ali were initially not keen about Gandhi’s line of action. They felt that China, America and Russia (all by now were allies of Britain) would misunderstand Congress intentions, and the Congress would be labeled as a Japanese stooge by British propagandists. There was also a feeling that the government will resort to ruthlessness in suppressing the movement. But then it was also true that the dissenting leaders had no alternative plan themselves to meet the external threat. Gandhi told them that if they declined to become a party “to the hazardous plan

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., p. 426.
of action proposed by him” he would go alone. He suggested that the Congress could, however pass a resolution to the effect that such Congressmen and others, who agreed with his plan of action, should help him by joining his satyagraha movement.45

The All India Congress Committee, which met on 8 August at Bombay for its last historic session, put its seal of approval to the ‘Quit India’ resolution. It said: ‘The committee feels that it is no longer justified in holding the nation back from endeavouring to assert its will against an imperialist and authoritarian government which dominates over it and prevents it from functioning in its own interest and in the interest of humanity. The Committee resolves therefore to sanction, for the vindication of India’s inalienable right to freedom and independence, the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines and on the widest possible scale so that the country might utilize all the non-violent strength it had gathered during the last twenty-two years of peaceful struggle. Such a struggle must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji, and the committee requests him to take the lead and guide the nation in the steps to be

taken.’ In the event of arrests of leaders, the Committee authorized ‘every Indian to be his own guide.’

The resolution was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru and seconded by Vallabhbhai Patel. Only thirteen members opposed the resolution twelve of them were communists- the communists had declared their support to Britain as Russia the fatherland of communism had joined the war on Britain’s side.

Finally Gandhi gave his famous mantra and said: ‘Here is a mantra, a short one, I give you. You may imprint it in your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to it. The mantra is: “Do or Die”. We shall either free India or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery.’

After the Quit India resolution was duly accepted and passed in the AICC in August 1942 Gandhi was asked in an interview what would happen if the Muslims did not accept Hindu rule. He said: "I have asked the British to hand over India to the Congress or to the Hindus. Let them entrust India to God or, in modern parlance, to anarchy. Then all the parties will fight one another like dogs, or will,

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46 Quoted in Ram Gopal, op.cit., pp. 427-428.
47 Ibid.,
48 Ibid., pp. 428-429.
when real responsibility faces them, come to a reasonable agreement. I shall expect non-violence to arise out of that chaos.”

And Jawaharlal Nehru too retorted, “So empire must go, not only because it is evil but because it is a hindrance to victory of the progressive forces in the world. That is why the cry of ‘Quit India’ becomes a vital, urgent and essential cry for victory. Only when this is done will there be a real will to win among the Indian people as well as among the people of England and other allied countries. Only then will all strength and energy be tuned in one direction and a sense of urgency seize the people of India and be translated into effective action.”

Enthusiasm was very much there in Kanpur as the news of the passing of the Quit India resolution reached city. Leaders of the city had already geared themselves for the upcoming struggle much in advance. It was abundantly clear to them that ever since the outbreak of the war something new was to come from the top Congress leadership as India had been made an unwilling participant in this imperialist adventure.

Govind Ballabh Pant had already visited the city and addressed a meeting in Tilak Hall on 19 July 1942 which was attended by about 7,000 persons. He talked of the conditions prevailing in the

50 National Herald, 3.7.1942.
51 Home Political Department, File No. 18/7/1942, NAI.
country which had no parallel during the last 150 years. He laid stress and in fact lamented that while we are sitting here lakhs of our men are dying in the battlefields. The point was again brought back that India is anxious to help Russia and China (countries that had been attacked by Fascist powers) and India bears no enmity towards anyone but since she herself is under colonial domination it cannot do anything. Hence the British rule should be ended. He emphasized that the more delay Britain is doing in granting freedom the more bitterness it is generating towards itself in the hearts of millions in the country. Britain was castigated as the number one enemy and he extolled people to gear themselves for the final confrontation and as always Mahatma Gandhi would provide the direction.52

The Quit India movement created and generated new forms of resistance and struggle. People of Kanpur embraced its programme in toto. The movement was not to be confined to just filling up of the jails but also included refusal to pay taxes, refusal to obey orders and refusal to work and these were to be carried out by the entire strata of the population including peasants, workers and other citizens.

Uprooting of the symbols of the British authority was another novel feature of the programme.\(^{53}\)

Chhail Bihari Dixit ‘Kantak’ always longing for a showdown with the British government said, ‘Is sarkar ko tan man dhan se madad dena haraam hai.’ (It is a sin to offer support to this government with either body, heart or money.) He was immediately arrested. Kishori Devi, wife of Kantak was also arrested for preaching his husband’s doctrines. Jawaharlal Rohatgi who had already been arrested on 9 August used to look after the well being of ladies in jail. In fact Kantak had been in jail for a continuous spell of six years from 1939 to 1945. During this period only Kantak wrote: 

\textit{Samay Aa Gaya Kaanp Raha Jag, Nabh Goonja Prasthan Karo; Chalo Veer Bharat Vedi Par, Praano Ka Balidaan Karo.} (The time has arrived and the world is crying, The sky too is thundering and we now have to march, O brave let us now sacrifice ourselves at the altar of our motherland.)\(^{54}\)

Ramesh Dixit, son of Kantak hoisted the national flag on the roof top of his house. The police asked him to bring down the flag

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\(^{53}\) Home Political Department, File No. 3/31/1942, NAI.

\(^{54}\) Interview, Uma Dixit, Also see Kshem Chandra ‘Suman’ (ed.), \textit{Divangat Hindi Sevi}, Vol. II, Delhi, 1983, pp. 265-266.
but he refused and was therefore arrested and remained in jail for three months.\footnote{Interview, Uma Dixit.}

The movement had acquired a great tempo, speed and ferocity in Kanpur. Political consciousness was very strong in the city. Hallett, the Governor had great confidence in the police force stationed in Kanpur, but it miserably failed to handle the situation. In the beginning peaceful demonstrations were staged, hartals were organized and processions were taken out in which thousands of people participated. On 9 August people attacked the city Congress office to re-conquer it because it had already been taken possession of by the police. Post Offices were burnt as also lorries and motor cars plied by Europeans.

By the evening of 10 August the people had acquired such a great confidence and determination in their strength and ability that open attacks were being made on all the police stations and three other outposts were also attacked. Everywhere the police opened fire on unarmed mobs, and to terrorize the people further, a curfew order was promulgated in the city, and fines were imposed on most of the people. This was the manner in which the bureaucracy started suppressing the movement in the city.
For a number of days the people continued attacking government schools and buildings, but very soon the tempo of the movement slackened although small batches of people made stray and sporadic attacks on post offices and other government institutions. Therefore the movement went underground and the leaders of the underground world took to sabotage and dislocation activities. For fifty days all schools and colleges remained closed. The students took a prominent part in the movement, many of them went to the villages and still others took part in underground activities. Even the mill workers participated in the movement and refrained from going to their work for a number of days. There contribution would have turned the tide had they not sticked themselves to the official policy of the Communist Party which was supporting Britain in the war.\(^{56}\)

The heroism displayed by girl students of S.N. Sen College in the city was also exemplary. When girls of the college took to the streets, the police resorted to lathi charge. One, Roop Kumari Khaitan snatched lathi from an officer and seeing this another girl named Savitri Arora started shouting, *Maar bitiya maar* (Beat him). Hearing this the police officer started laughing and why he shouldn’t? After all he was also an Indian, he also would have been son of some

freedom loving person and unlike their bosses these officers possessed feelings of nationalism and had often displayed a soft corner for freedom activists.57

Shiv Kumar Mishra further says that apart from Roop Kumari Khaitan other chivalrous women who participated included Kusum Agarwal (daughter of Pyarelal Agarwal), Sheila Musaddi (daughter of Ramchandra Musaddi), Savitri and Sita Arora (daughters of Narayan Prasad Arora), Atiya and Sayera (later wife of eminent historian, Irfan Habib).58

During those days the office of Students Union was situated in the Tilak hall. Almost all the students of all schools and colleges of the city had started assembling in Tilak hall. Senior students asked the girl students to go and organize hartals in schools and colleges that were left. After this the procession of boys decided to march forward. It was not an ordinary procession. Thousands of civilians too had joined the students. The police too became active and contingents were formed at different areas to stop the procession. A strong contingent was placed in Chowk near Kunjilal temple. Horse troopers were running amok in the city to crush the uprising. When the procession reached the temple it was greatly agitated and angry in

58 Ibid.,
seeing the contingent. Immediately brickbats and stones were hurling
towards the police. After all these were the only weapons they had
been left with in those days. The *lathis* of the police officers had
proved futile and so they resorted to firing. 25 to 30 rounds were
fired. The procession got dispersed and people started running. The
police again started lathi charge. Students were shouting ‘*Galiyon
mein ghus jao*’ (Take shelter in narrow lanes), ‘*Eenton se police ka
muqabla karo*’ (Fight with stones against the police). And so the
struggle started.59

People were on road. All business establishments and markets
in the city were closed. The situation went on for three days.
Imposing of curfew was of no avail nor section 144 of the Criminal
Procedural Code. As soon as the opportunity furnished itself public
used to came down heavily on government institutions. The post
office at Meston road was set on fire. Two rounds of fire also took
place. But the most daring and strongest was the attack on Nayaganj
post office. All the things present in the post office were burnt. To
disperse the mob, police resorted to firing and one person was killed.
A famous freedom fighter Mool Chand Shukla was severely injured
and one doctor V. N. Bhalla secretly operated him. Afterwards the
Sadar Bazaar Congress Committee tried its best to enquire the name

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59 Ibid.,
and identity of the person who was killed. Only this much was ascertained that he was living in the *hata* (a compound inside which are enclosed hundreds of small huts) of Kaithawala. All the members of his family had already left the house to escape the brutalities of police. This storm went on for three days in the city.  

After three days of storm a committee was formed to steer the movement in the district as well as in the city. The members of the committee included Gajpat Rai Saxena, Ram Dulare Trivedi and Captain Ram Singh. Ram Dulare Trivedi had already spent three years in prison in relation with the Kakori Conspiracy Case, Ram Singh had been a member of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) and had been closely associated with late Chandra Shekhar Azad. Gajpat Rai Saxena had not been a member of any revolutionary party but had been intimately associated with the late Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi and so was on cordial terms with many revolutionaries. In this way the movement was once again being led by the old guard.

Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee the famous revolutionary who had a pan Indian appeal was supervising the revolutionary activities during this period in the United Provinces. He was set free on health

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60 Ibid., pp. 21-22.
61 Ibid., p. 23.
grounds (from Deoli camp) and was now supervising the revolutionary activities by going underground.  

The committee had decided to start a secret press of the Congress and this task was fulfilled by Ram Nath Tandon. Satya Narayan Mishra, head of the composing department of Pratap press and Sriram Shukla his close associate took upon themselves the task of managing the affairs of this secret news reporting. This press was established in a house in Etawah bazaar locality. So after ten to fifteen days when that widespread procession had broken out a secret bulletin of the City Congress Committee had started coming out.  

Tara Agarwal too was closely associated with the activities going around in this period. She was also running a women gymnasium at her house which imparted training to women in wrestling and swimming. This gymnasium had in fact became an awareness centre for girls willing to contribute their efforts in the independence struggle. The girls associated with the gymnasium had played a vital part in carrying the secret bulletin to different areas in the city. Later when a devastating famine had wrecked Bengal

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62 Ibid.,
63 Ibid.,
these girls also came to the forefront in providing relief to the affected persons.\textsuperscript{64}

Interesting also here is to mention about an old lady (her name is anonymous) who used to run a \textit{paan} (betel leaf) shop below the press. Spies of the government were trying to enquire about the press like sniffing dogs and this old lady was closely and carefully watching their activities. It was she only on whose information it was immediately decided to transfer the press from there. As a result when police arrived it was frustrated to find nothing over there.\textsuperscript{65}

The contribution of the students of the D.A.V. College in disseminating the secret bulletin was also immense. The copies of the bulletin (of the city and district) were carefully placed beneath a cluster of grass and bamboo near the college. After this the students used to carry their copies in different schools and colleges and to the general public as their bounden duty. The D.A.V. College had always remained in forefront in all the nationalist activities taking place in Kanpur. Six of its students had also been convicted in the famous Lahore Conspiracy Case. In 1942 only a committee had been established by the students of the college and it had connected itself with the students of all other colleges. This committee had also

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.,

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., pp. 23-24.
established a bomb factory in Generalganj locality. Revolutionaries like Ramesh Nigam, Govind Narayan Shukla and Munna Lal Saxena were students of D.A.V. College only.66

The Quit India Movement had embraced the programme of destroying all the symbols of British authority in the country. As a result cutting of telegraph lines and post offices and uprooting of railway tracts was a common feature and it was most marked in UP, Bihar and Central Provinces. This work went on for a longer period in rural areas. In Kanpur city also efforts in this direction were made but police was on strict vigil. Many Congress workers were arrested in this connection. When this programme started losing momentum the brutalities of the police also went on increasing. One Shivnath Pehalwaan was arrested while he was cutting the telegraph wire. As a result Police beat him so harshly that his hearing ability was greatly reduced. Shiv Kumar Mishra says that even now in his old age the injuries he sustained at that time often make him greatly depressed. So was the case with another activist Baijnath Mishra.67

The popular mood and actions which were being carried out during the movement echoed a notion that Mahatma Gandhi will permit the doing of all things the doing of which weakens and

66 Ibid., p. 24.
67 Ibid.,
disorganizes the state organization. Strikes on railways and ports and uprooting of telegraph wires and railway tracks reflected this. Government courts, police stations and other places will be seized. Even there was talk of boycotting of Government promissory notes and coins. In this way the Government will be ended and a parallel government will be formed.68

Arjun Arora gave a call that the Congress and Muslim League should join hands and every intelligent and freedom loving Indian must strive for nation’s liberation from the British rule. He in fact criticized those who were saying that Muslim League is against Hindu-Muslim unity. He also said that Muslim League is prepared to participate in a “Provisional” Government of India in order to mobilize the resources of the country for the purpose of defence of India and successful prosecution of the war.69 But these notions never materialized and a stiffness always remained between Congress and the League.

**The Crackdown**

Seeing the frenzy and that the situation was slipping out of their hands the government resorted to a number of ordinances and they were promulgated. The Penalties (Enhancement) Ordinance, 1942

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69 *Citizen*, 12.9.1942.
provided for the imposition of increased penalties with regard to a wide range of disruptive activities that affected the government, government property, public places and people in general. Anyone found involved was to be immediately arrested and the act was punishable either by whipping or even death.\(^\text{70}\) Kanpur was engrossed in such activities therefore this Ordinance was first applied here only.\(^\text{71}\)

Strict directions were given to the authorities to immediately open fire at the slightest provocation without giving any warning if anyone was found doing any disruptive activity that implied sabotage.\(^\text{72}\) As a consequence police resorted to firing. In Kanpur district 394 convictions and 203 detentions took place. Plus a collective fine amounting to rupees 1,99,250 was collected by the government.\(^\text{73}\) Not satisfied with this much, on 8 August 1942 the Defence of India Rule 41 was enforced which banned the publication and printing of any news in relation to the movement that created excitement among the people. Leading newspapers of the city like Pratap and Vartman were the first to bore the grunt of the act and in response to Gandhi’s advice on 8 August 1942 and also to show

\(^{70}\) Home Political Department, File No. 3/20/1942, NAI.

\(^{71}\) Report on the Administration of the United Provinces, 1942, UPSA, p. 5.

\(^{72}\) Home Political Department, File No. 3/28/1942, NAI.

\(^{73}\) Govind Sahai, op.cit., p. 259.
their protest against the high handedness of the government displayed by passing of the Act decided to stop publication from 16 August to 6 September 1942.74

Such indeed was the wave of discontent and popular sentiment so much against the government during Quit India that the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow wrote to Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister that, “I am engaged here in meeting by far the most serious rebellion since that of 1857, the gravity and extent of which we have so far concealed from the world for reasons of military security.”75

Many stalwarts of Kanpur city like Pyarelal Agarwal, Ganga Sahai Chaubey, Hamid Khan and Chhail Bihari Dixit ‘Kantak’ had all been arrested by the middle of August a case no different from those of the arrests of national leaders. Balkrishna Sharma ‘Naveen’ was put under house arrest for continuous three years from 1942-45.76

On 2 October in Kanpur, 101 students were arrested (37 boys and 64 girls) for distributing pamphlets of Gandhi’s birthday. Pratap Narayan Mishra was arrested in Nariyal bazaar. About 300 students of D.A.V. College took out a procession after saluting the flag at about 10-11 a.m. When the procession reached ice factory near the Home Political Department, File No. 3/37/1942, NAI.

74 Home Political Department, File No. 3/37/1942, NAI.
75 P.N. Chopra, op.cit., p. 1.
Kutcheri Road the police surrounded it and lathicharged the procession. A second year graduation student Bhoop Narayan was injured. The city kotwal reached the spot and 37 students were arrested and taken to kotwali.\(^{77}\)

The girl students of Balika Vidhyalaya too were not behind. After saluting the national flag they also took out a procession and it reached Kiranchi khana via Mall Road. The police soon surrounded them and about 64 girls were arrested. Soon, after this City Magistrate S.M. Yusuf reached jail and 51 of them were released and were also fined 5 rupees each. The remaining 13 were released unconditionally as they were minor.\(^{78}\)

The Principal of D.A.V. College rusticated five students (Rajaram Dixit ‘Neeraj’, Parmeshwar Dayal, Vinod, Jagdish Sharma and another whose name is not known) for taking out procession on Gandhi’s birthday. He also asked the students staying in the hostel to vacate them as soon as possible.\(^{79}\) These things once again brought the picture of students as the most determined and fearless community in Kanpur who were keeping the tempo of the movement going.

\(^{77}\) *Vartman*, 4.10.1942.

\(^{78}\) Ibid.,

\(^{79}\) Ibid., 8.10.1942.
A significant feature of the Quit India Movement was the absence of Hindu-Muslim riots and although Muslims had kept themselves aloof from the movement they also did not incurred hostility either. In fact to display unity a procession of Ramlila was taken out in the city on 16 October and members of both Hindu and Muslim community actively participated. Volunteers belonging to Hindu-Muslim Peace Committee were posted in different localities (through which the procession was to pass) to see that no unwanted incident occurs.\footnote{Ibid., 18.10.1942.}

Congress had already been declared illegal and there was no room for an organized political programme. The government had realized that the Quit India Movement saw an unprecedented enthusiasm and popularity on the part of people for the Congress. Three members of City Congress Committee Shiv Shankar Lal, Mannilal Yadav and Ram Narayan Vishwakarma were arrested on 10 November for preaching love of the country and carrying the nationalist flag.\footnote{Ibid., 12.11.1942.} The City Magistrate S.M. Yusuf pronounced them guilty and were awarded one year imprisonment each.\footnote{Ibid., 23.11.1942.} Similarly on 26 November another nationalist procession was taken out in
Collectorganj area by Chunnilal and Chamanlal and the city magistrate again ordered a years’ imprisonment to these two also.\textsuperscript{83}

**Kanpur Central Station and Nishat Talkies Bomb Explosion Cases**

On 9 February 1943 at about 9.45 p.m. a serious bomb explosion took place at the Cawnpore Central railway station. This bomb explosion beneath the staircase of the over bridge leading from platform no. 1 to the over bridge, when the Delhi train on platform no. one was just to steam out. As a result of the explosion two persons died on the spot after sustaining severe injuries and one injured died in hospital the same night. Fourteen men were badly injured. Several cast iron thick splinters, small cast iron shaft bush pipe pieces, a part (ring) of a time-piece watch, pieces of a red towel, a piece of a white *qaaleen* (carpet) with navy blue stripes and small pieces of wood, the only remains of the bomb-shell were found on the spot.\textsuperscript{84}

Shiv Kumar Mishra says that the revolutionaries\textsuperscript{85} had decided to throw a bomb at Kotwali also but the station bomb explosion

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 27.11.1942.

\textsuperscript{84} Home C.I.D. Department, File No. 21/1/1943, UPSA.

\textsuperscript{85} Shiv Kumar Mishra says that the youth with a revolutionary zeal used to assemble in city’s Gandhi Park and seeing the tempo of the Quit India movement they decided to make bombs to fulfil their mission. The group comprised 13 people in all. They were Shambhu Dayal, Bajrang Singh, Dalpat Singh, Ram Niranjan Singh, Babu Ram Asthana, Parmeshwari Dayal alias Prabhakar, Ram Ghulam Gupta, D.V. Som, G.L.
made great headlines and the city was stunned and so they gave up the idea. The bombs were manufactured at Picric house Anandbagh and were kept in a house in Sisamau. Ram Niranjan and Jagdish Dubey were the ones who had planted the bombs at railway station.\(^8^6\)

Anand Prakash, Har Bhagwan and Jagdish were the masterminds behind the plot. Initially they had decided to celebrate 26 January 1943 as ‘Independence Day’ and also to carry out their programme. But police arrested them on 13 January (Anand Prakash, Har Bhagwan and G.D. Chawla) and the plan was shelved. Anand Prakash sent a letter from jail to his associates to carry out the plan and it was decided that on 9 February at about 8.30 p.m. the blast will be carried out at the railway station and during midnight at Kotwali.\(^8^7\)

Just two days after this incident on 11th night another bomb explosion took place in the Nishat Talkies Kanpur at about 10 p.m. causing some simple injuries to one person and a little damage to the

\(^8^6\) Ibid., pp. 30-31.
\(^8^7\) Ibid., p. 30.
cinema property. Babu Ram and Bajrang Singh had carried the bomb inside the cinema hall and had placed it beneath a seat inside the hall.

On the scene of occurrence of this explosion, some pieces of cast iron shaft bush of the type that were found in the form of missiles at the railway station bomb explosion, and an iron stopper with two holes in the sides were found as the remains of the bomb.\textsuperscript{88}

These incidents took place during the Quit India Movement. During the period between August, 42 and January, 43 there had been a number of coconut shell bomb cases in government buildings etc, post boxes burning cases and robberies and dacoities. The political agitation was in full swing. The C.I.D. report stated that gangs of robbers and dacoits were formed in the form of revolutionary parties. Most of the coconut shell bomb cases were thrown in police quarters.\textsuperscript{89}

The police action was swift. Dalpat Singh was arrested on 13 April 1943 from the house of Ram Niranjan Singh and soon Ram Niranjan too was arrested. Prabhakar was arrested on 26 April. According to the statement of police Prabhakar took them to Sisamau

\textsuperscript{88} C.I.D. Department, File No. 21/1/1943.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.,
to show their bomb making place and police seized a number of chemicals used in bomb making.\(^{90}\)

The police stated that Jagdish too had been arrested from his house and they found a revolver beneath his pillow. The police said that Jagdish also cooperated them in searching the hideouts of revolutionaries in remote areas and soon all the members of the party were arrested. Babu Ram Asthana was arrested in Gwalior and G.L. Khanolkar in Kolhapur. Ram Ghulam and D.V. Som were arrested in the months of July and August respectively. The convicts however refused to accept the police statement that they had helped it in making arrests or in the search of obtaining the material used in bomb-making. The Allahabad High Court exonerated Khanolkar from all the cases. Anand Prakash, Har Bhagwan and G.D. Chawla were awarded seven years rigorous imprisonment. Jagdish was given lifetime imprisonment and was to be deported to the Andaman Islands. Ram Ghulam was awarded a three years rigorous imprisonment. Ram Niranjan who was arrested at the earliest was to remain in jail. Shambhu Dayal, Dalpat, Parmeshwari Dayal alias Prabhakar, Chawla and Har Bhagwan too were given seven years imprisonment. Baburam’s death sentence was converted into life

\(^{90}\) Sri Prakash Gupta & Manoj Kapoor, op.cit., p. 30.
imprisonment. These trials brought to an end the revolutionary activities in the city and a glorious epoch in the annals of freedom struggle had come to close.

Meanwhile with all the top leaders of the city Congress behind bars the party was bereft of any concrete activity. Some local leaders like Gajpat Rai were released in October 1944 and they held a meeting in the city from 10-12 October, 1944. It was decided that a representative assembly of the U.P. Congressmen with an executive committee (to be headed by Purshottam Das Tandon) to be formed so as to revive and carry out the Congress activities in an organized manner in the province. An important outcome of this exercise was the decision to form Representative Congress Assemblies in different towns of UP because the Congress at that time had been declared an illegal organization. Accordingly the Representative Congress Assembly was established in Kanpur with Gajpat Rai as President,

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91 Ibid., pp. 30-31.
92 Home Political Department, File No. 18/10/1944, NAI.
93 Gandhi was released on 6 May 1944 on the grounds of health and political activities again had gained momentum. Constructive work became the main form of Congress activity, with special emphasis on the reorganization of the Congress machinery. Congress committees were revived under different names- Congress Workers assemblies or Representative Assemblies of Congressmen- rendering the ban on congress committees ineffective, Bipan Chandra, Mridula Mukherjee, Aditya Mukherjee, K.N. Panikkar & Sucheta Mahajan, India’s Struggle For Independence 1857-1947, Delhi, 1988, p. 470.
Sri Ram as Secretary and Brahmadutt Dixit as ‘Prachar’ mantri (Propaganda Minister).\textsuperscript{94}

Much in similar fashion was the organizing of Gandhi Ashrams and Khaddar bhandars to carry on the programme of constructive work and it proved to be of great help in Kanpur countryside.\textsuperscript{95} It also imparted training and provided livelihood to numerous Congress workers. A three day meeting was held in Kanpur in January 1945 at which it was decided to open centres in rural areas and to organize village handicrafts.\textsuperscript{96}

In mid June 1945 all the top leaders of the Congress were released. The Second World War was on the verge of coming to a close and the Allies (Britain, the United States and Soviet Union) were making gains. A change of government had taken place in Britain and Labour Party had came to power which wanted immediately to settle the Indian problem. The war had shown its effects. Britain no longer commanded the power and glory it had earlier and had grown much weaker. United States and Soviet Union (now Russia) had emerged as new world powers and they too wanted Britain to permanently settle the political deadlock in India.

\textsuperscript{94} Vartman, 27.6.1945.
\textsuperscript{95} Report on the Administration of the United Provinces 1945, UPSA, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid.,
Lord Wavell, the viceroy called a conference of major political leaders\textsuperscript{97} representing different parties (most prominent ones of course being Congress and Muslim League) in Shimla on 25 June 1945 to arrive at some concord and a new Executive Council could be formed and the pressing communal stumble block be cleared. By noon of that first day it became clear from what each of those leaders demanded that there would be no meeting of minds at this Shimla Conference. Maulana Azad suggested that members of the council should all be appointed on a political, not “a communal basis.” Jinnah reacted sharply and said if necessary “he could deliver a lecture on Pakistan.” Jinnah refused to shake hands with Maulana Azad calling him a “show boy” of the Congress. The immediate cause of winding up of the summit without achieving anything was the refusal of Jinnah to accept a Muslim nominated in the new council by the Congress. He believed Congress is a Hindu body and Muslim League alone had the right to nominate Muslims. This of course the Congress couldn’t accept for it meant castigating of its secular character as an organization.\textsuperscript{98}

\textsuperscript{97} Leaders invited by Lord Wavell included Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Azad (from Congress) Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Liaqat Ali Khan (Muslim League), Master Tara Singh (representing Sikhs) and Siva Raj (who represented “untouchables”)

\textsuperscript{98} For more details on Shimla Conference see Stanley Wolpert, \textit{Shameful Flight: The Last Years of the British Empire in India}, pp. 80-87.
The INA Trials and RIN Mutiny

An event which had captured the imagination of the country this time was the ongoing trial of the officers of the Indian National Army (INA) during the winter of 1945-46. One INA battalion commanded by Major General Shah Nawaz Khan joined the Japanese army on the Indo-Burma front and participated in the Imphal campaign. However the attempt to capture Imphal failed and the fortunes of Japan elsewhere also were on the downslide. The retreat began in mid 1944 and continued till mid-1945 and ended only with the final surrender to the British in South-East Asia. And when the INA officers were brought back home and threatened with serious punishment, there was to be an uproar and mass upsurge in their

When Singapore fell on 15 February 1942, 85,000 men, the remainder of the British forces in Malaya, surrendered to the Japanese forces. Of these 60,000 were Indians. Around 25,000 joined the INA. It would have languished but for the charismatic leadership of Subhash Chandra Bose. He left India in January for Kabul, from where he proceeded to Germany via Moscow. Indians overseas had founded the Indian Independence League which met in a conference in Bangkok in June and adopted a proposal to form the INA, as also to invite Bose. In September 1942 the INA was formed under the leadership of Captain Mohan Singh. It won many recruits from Indian prisoners of war. Soon differences arose between Mohan Singh and the Japanese who believed him to be too independent. The army was disbanded in December and Captain Mohan Singh and Captain Niranjan Singh Gill, the senior most Indian officer to join the INA, were arrested.

defence in India.\textsuperscript{100} The defence of the INA prisoners was taken up by Congress stalwarts who were also eminent lawyers- Bhulabhai Desai, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Kailash Nath Katju, Jawaharlal Nehru and Asaf Ali.

While the trials of the INA officers were going on there broke out another revolt, of the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) on 18 February 1946 when 1100 naval ratings of \textit{HMIS Talwar} struck work in Bombay to protest against the treatment meted out to them that was manifold- racial discrimination, giving of unpalatable food and other abuses.\textsuperscript{101} These soon captured the sentiment of people and violent demonstrations broke out in Bombay, Karachi and Calcutta and were brutally handled by the government in which hundreds of people were killed.

Kanpur was not left untouched by these events. 600 Indian airmen of the RIAF (Royal Indian Air Force) stationed at Kanpur struck work on 23 February in sympathy with the victims of firing by British troops in Bombay and Karachi.\textsuperscript{102} Interviewed by the Associated Press of India that (API), a large number of strikers said

\textsuperscript{100} Bipan Chandra, op.cit., p. 472.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., p. 479.

\textsuperscript{102} During the RIN revolt, ratings were forced to surrender in Karachi and six of them were killed in the process. In Bombay, troops subdued not only the ratings but also the people, who had earlier supported the ratings with food and sympathy and later joined them in bringing Bombay to a standstill, ibid., pp. 482-83.
that they supported the demands of the RIN ratings. They also appealed to the Government for a peaceful settlement of the trouble in Bombay and Karachi and non-victimization of the Indian ranks involved in the incidents.

As it was a sympathetic strike it lasted for only 24 hours and the strikers resumed the work the next day.103 Jai Chand Singh, a member of the Progressive Civic Party in the Municipal Board had given notice of the following resolution to be moved at the meeting of the board to be held on February 21. The resolution stated, “In view of the patriotic and heroic services rendered by the Indian National Army to liberate the motherland under the able lead of Subhash Chandra Bose, the Board resolves to donate rupees 10,000 towards the funds of the INA Relief Committee to be spent on the maintenance of their dependents.”104

At a meeting of the executive committee of the Kanpur Students’ Congress held on February 25 a resolution expressing sympathy with the demands of the RIN ratings of Bombay was unanimously passed. The committee warned the government that any

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103 *National Herald*, 24.2.1946.
104 Ibid., 21.2.1946.
victimization would be resisted with full vigor as the ratings had surrendered on the persuasion of the national leaders.\textsuperscript{105}

Pyarelal Agarwal and Hamid Khan, president and general secretary respectively of the city Congress Committee issued an appeal to the public to contribute towards the purse being collected for the defence of the INA prisoners and it was to be presented to Jawaharlal Nehru who was to shortly visit the city.\textsuperscript{106}

A resolution supporting the demands of RIN ratings and condemning the firing resorted to by the government was unanimously passed at a meeting held in Tilak hall. The meeting which was held under the auspices of the Kanpur Students’ Conference also adopted a resolution protesting against the conviction of Captain Burhanuddin and the release of all INA personnel.\textsuperscript{107}

A “Kavi Sammellan” (gathering of Hindi poets) was also held in aid of the INA Fund under the auspices of the B.N.S.D. College, Old Boys Association. Pt. Vishwambhar Dayal Tripathi, a Congress leader of Unnao, presided. Prominent among the poets present were Harivansh Rai “Bachchan” of Allahabad, ‘Suman’ and ‘Bedharak’ of Benares and ‘Rang’ of Etah.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 26.2.1946.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 2.3.1946.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.,
It was hoped that after deducting the expenses a sum of rupees 1,500 will be donated towards the funds. Uma Shankar Mehrotra and Dr. Chandrakanta Rohatgi (daughter of Jawaharlal Rohatgi) announced donations of rupees 101 each towards the fund.\(^\text{108}\) At a public meeting held on 4 March under the auspices of the city Congress Committee at the Parade ground resolutions were passed expressing resentment on the firing resorted to by the Government on RIN ratings in Karachi, Bombay and Madras, and protesting against the conviction of Captain Abdul Rashid and Captain Burhanuddin. The meeting expressed sympathy with the demands of the postal employees and the factory workers regarding bonus.\(^\text{109}\)

The popular agitation for the INA convicts had reached a crescendo in the country. Before the trials were to end Indian opposition rose to such a fever pitch of patriotic fury that General Claude Auchinleck, the commander-in-chief of the British Indian armed forces feared it would undermine the loyalty of the entire British Indian Army. Though three INA officers (Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon, Shah Nawaz Khan and P.K. Sahgal) were found “guilty” of

\(^{108}\) Ibid., 4.3.1946.

\(^{109}\) Ibid., 5.3.1946.
treason, their sentences were all commuted by the Viceroy at the recommendation of the commander-in-chief.\textsuperscript{110}

Major General Shah Nawaz Khan visited Kanpur by plane on 4 March at 5 p.m. He addressed a public meeting at Phoolbagh under the auspices of the city Congress Committee at 7 p.m.\textsuperscript{111}

Meanwhile Jawaharlal Nehru arrived in Kanpur on 7 March at 10.45 a.m. from Allahabad and was given a warm reception by local Congressmen at the aerodrome. As soon as the plane landed he was greeted with slogans of ‘Jawaharlal Nehru Zindabad’, Inquilab Zindabad and Congress Zindabad’. Pyarelal Agarwal, President of the City Congress Committee (CCC), Beni Singh, President of the District Congress Committee (DCC), Jawaharlal Rohatgi, Tara Agarwal and D.P. Singh, Chairman of the Kanpur Municipal Board were present.

Exactly at 11 a.m. Nehru came to Phoolbagh where he inspected a rally of volunteers of Congress Qaumi Seva Dal and took the salute. Addressing the volunteers he said that time had now come when this organization should be strengthened all over the province.\textsuperscript{112}

\textsuperscript{110} Stanley Wolpert, op.cit., p. 94.

\textsuperscript{111} National Herald, 5.3.1946.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 8.3.1946.
Freedom At Last

A resolution was passed with the instructions of the secretary of the UP Provincial Congress Committee which asked the people to celebrate ‘Political Prisoners’ Day for people still in jails. Accordingly a meeting of the citizens of Kanpur was held at Tilak Hall on 18 February to celebrate the same with Pyarelal Agarwal in the chair.\footnote{Ibid., 19.2.1946.}

The meeting passed a resolution resenting the fact that even after the termination of the war, there were so many political prisoners in UP jails. The resolution asserted that the treatment accorded to these prisoners was ‘inhuman’ and ‘insulting’ and demanded their immediate release.\footnote{Ibid.,}

The meeting requested the authorities to eliminate invidious classification of the prisoners and demanded that all the prisoners convicted of political offences should be treated equally. The resolution was passed by Harihar Nath Shastri and supported by Jawaharlal Rohatgi, Ganga Sahai Chaubey, Rajaram Shastri, Raj Kumar Sinha and Balkrishna Sharma ‘Naveen’.\footnote{Ibid.,}

Raj Kumar Sinha who was released only a few days earlier described in detail the experiences and hardships of a political prisoner. He condemned the Government for the cruel and inhuman

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\begin{itemize}
  \item [113] Ibid., 19.2.1946.
  \item [114] Ibid.,
  \item [115] Ibid.,
\end{itemize}
behavior with political prisoners. Balkrishna Sharma in his speech dwelt on the food crises and said that it was due to the mismanagement, inefficiency and unimaginativeness of the present rulers of the country. Congressmen could not tolerate such a state of affairs for long. A great responsibility rested on Congressmen to extricate the country from this morass. He appealed to all the citizens irrespective of their party or political colour to follow the directions of Gandhi and other leaders of the country for tiding over this grave calamity.\textsuperscript{116}

The British Government appeared to be listening. On 20 February, Gaya Prasad, a convict in the Lahore Conspiracy Case lodged in Kanpur District Jail was released after 17 years of detention. Shiv Verma and Jaidev Kapoor were also released from Hardoi Central Jail.\textsuperscript{117}

The Quit India Movement had galvanized the Indian masses and its impact had been tremendous. The fillip it provided to the freedom struggle and Britain’s own difficulties in the Second World War heralded the process of transfer of power. In this connection a Cabinet Mission was announced by the Labour Party Government of Britain which was to arrive in India to discuss with leaders of Indian

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.,
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 21.2.1946.
Opinion on the framing of an Indian Constitution. The Commission included three members- Lord Pethick Lawrence, Secretary of State, Sir Stafford Cripps, now President of the Board of Trade and Albert Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty. The announcement was made by Pethick Lawrence who said, “The House will recall that in September 1945, on his return to India after discussions with the British Government, the Viceroy made a statement of policy in the course of which he outlined the positive steps to be taken immediately after the central and provincial election to promote in conjunction with leaders of Indian opinion on early realization of full self government in India.”

Maulana Azad, Congress President in a statement issued on February 19 said that if the British government failed to honour the September 1945 declaration in letter and spirit, the Congress will consider the necessary steps for a final and decisive struggle. The Congress decision to wait and watch should not be constructed as unwillingness to fight.

The negotiations carried out with the Cabinet Mission, the failing of coming to terms in settling the political and communal problem amicably, the exit of Wavell and coming of Lord Mountbatten as the new Viceroy and his carrying of partition of the country in a steadfast manner which was devoid of any humane and

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118 Ibid., 20.2.1946.
119 Ibid.,
foresighted vision and as a result millions of people (Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs) lost their lives has constituted a blot on the legacy of the freedom movement. Yet on the midnight of 14 August 1947 India became free and a separate Muslim state of Pakistan was also born.\footnote{Stanley Wolpert’s \textit{Shameful Flight} is perhaps the most lucid and comprehensive work to have covered the most troublesome and crucial period of modern Indian history, from the arrival of the Cripps Mission in 1942 to partition and independence of the country in 1947. It has made a very cogent and comprehensive view of the people involved in all these exercises and how the glorious struggle for freedom had come to an unhappy ending note. Vivekananda Shukla says that the association of the leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League in the same National Government, pledged to the common task of defending India, might have gone far to check the rising tide of communal antagonism. Given a few years of such joint service by Hindu and Muslim politicians, surely the problem of achieving a post-war settlement without disruption would have been greatly eased, Vivekananda Shukla, \textit{Rebellion of 1942: Quit India Movement}, Delhi, 1989, p. 120.}

Meanwhile at Phoolbagh under the presidentship of Ganga Sahai Chaubey a massive public gathering took place on 10 August in which Govind Ballabh Pant also delivered a speech and praised Kanpur as a city which is very lively, has a ‘never say die’ spirit and has always contributed earnestly and handsomely in every facet of freedom struggle.\footnote{Pratap, 12.8.1947.}

As far as the celebrations of independence are concerned massive decorations and fireworks were carried out in the city. In
Kanpur’s Nayaganj Sarrafa area (dominated by jewellers) a huge gate of silver ingots was constructed. Communal disturbances also broke out as was happening elsewhere in north India and a curfew was imposed in the city from 30 September to 5 October. Searches were carried out by the police and a huge stockpile of arms and ammunition were confiscated. By 30 October some 10,000 refugees from western Punjab (which had became a part of Pakistan) arrived in Kanpur. Jawaharlal Nehru visited the city first time as Prime Minister on 17 December 1947 and addressed a large gathering of people in Phoolbagh dwelling on the struggle the pains and joy that all had formed a part of India’s glorious independence movement against the British rule. ¹²²