CHAPTER I

IDEOLOGICAL BASE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT IN INDIA PRIOR TO THE OCTOBER SOCIALIST REVOLUTION
CHAPTER I

IDEOLOGICAL BASE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT IN INDIA PRIOR TO THE OCTOBER SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

The history of resistance to British colonialism dates back to the time when the European capital tried to penetrate the traditional Indian feudal socio-economic order in the garb of a trading company. Although, at first, the Mughal rulers granted them necessary permission, later, the Indian feudal rulers understood the danger of industrial capitalism engulfing their moribund social order and resisted British colonialism with their unequal military prowess. There are plenty of examples of such anti-British feudal resistance as the battles of Plassey and Buxar, Anglo-Maratha wars, etc., finally culminating in the famous 'First Indian War of Independence' in 1857. Though Marx glorified the upsurge of 1857 by the said name and spoke of popular support of the masses to oust the British, yet it cannot be denied that the 1857 upheaval was led by dispossessed chiefs of princely states with a restorative aim. But such types of feudal opposition to British declined towards the close of the 19th century mainly because of the increasing control of the colonialists over the Indian princes and zamindars.

From 1857 starts the historic century of Indian national liberation movement. The earlier feudal-led popular resistance gave way to disorganised, spontaneous popular outbursts in socio-economic and religious forms like the Indigo Riots of Pabna, the
Shegrut movement of the Santhals, Korka and Mahabi movements, to name only a few.¹ British anthropologist Kathleen Gough has recently compiled a list of 77 armed peasant uprisings during the entire British period, and classified them under five types - 'restorative', religious, social banditry, terrorist vengeance, and mass insurrections.²

**Indian Revolutionary Movement at Home:**

The mid-nineteenth century witnessed the rise of Indian renaissance. A new generation of English educated intelligentsia, middle class employees, educated businessmen and professionals like doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc., came up on the national scene. This led to the birth of the national bourgeoisie in India. Naturally the native bourgeoisie wanted its own share in the socio-economic-political life of the country, that the colonialists were not prepared to concede. So the national bourgeoisie now had to struggle for these rights against the imperialists through various paths, methods and programmes to suit the necessity of time and its class interests. In other words, the national bourgeoisie wanted to maintain its overall hegemony on the national liberation struggle of the country.

---


² See: Kathleen Gough, "Indian Peasant Uprising", in A.R. Desai, ed., *Peasant Struggles in India* (Delhi, 1979), p.94.
The national bourgeoisie formed its organisation, the Indian National Congress, in 1885 to lead the national liberation struggle. After its inception, it followed a moderate, non-revolutionary path of prayer, petition and protest. This policy was not considered enough by another section of the national bourgeoisie, which styled itself as 'extremists' favouring a little more radical programme to keep pace with the mass temper, but within the bourgeois framework. In fact, both 'moderates' and 'extremists' failed either to rouse the masses or acquire a solid base among the masses. Their hope of getting some reforms and concessions from British imperialism without any serious revolutionary struggle was shattered in the face of British refusal for any concession and resort to persecution and strong-handed methods. This frustrated the hopes of the national bourgeoisie, resulting in a feeling of bitterness and helplessness. Moreover, "it further intensified disaffection, strengthened patriotic impulses and bred a spirit of revolt". Out of this spirit of revolt, emerged a group of radical bourgeois leaders who founded a number of secret societies, as an alternative to earlier methods and started the revolutionary movement in India as an important and integral part of the national liberation struggle.

3 Bisheshwar Prasad, Changing Modes of Indian National Movement (New Delhi, 1966), p.56.
Colonial subjugation led to uneven socio-economic development in colonial India, which in its turn led to different levels of political consciousness of the masses and resultant uneven development of national liberation struggle. That was the reason why Bengal, Maharashtra, Punjab and some regions of Madras were far ahead of other provinces and regions in the country, and centres of revolutionary movement sprang up first in these regions.

The credit for organising the first secret revolutionary society in the post-mutiny period, with the avowed object of overthrowing the British rule in India belongs to Vasudeo Balwant Phadke of Maharashtra. In this uprising, a short-lived concord, all but unique in its time, was achieved between conscious intelligentsia nationalism and plebian militancy. Dream of establishing a Hindu Raj was the sign of emergence of a new mood of Hindu revivalism dominating the closing years of the 19th and early 20th century. Proclaiming the republican ideal did not prevent Phadke to pose as a Raja or to sign his proclamations as a minister of a Maratha prince, Shivaji, the second. Even in his autobiography while contemplating an end to his life, he told his fellow countrymen that he was going

5 Sumit Sarker, n.i, p.48.
to the heaven as a vakeel for them. This is how religious ideas of divine justice, a survival of medieval ideology gripped the minds of an advanced fighter for national liberation. The movement led by Vasudeo Phadke like other movements which took place in various parts of India in the 1870's, was politically immature and could not surmount the national and caste barriers that divide the masses. Following the traits of Russian Narodniki, but not matching their consciousness because of socio-economic development of India, his affinity to Narodism lay in something else, namely, in that he, an Indian republican, in fact sought to deliver the Maharastri peasants from the moneylenders and landlords, and to him the idea of national liberation was related to the idea of a peasant uprising. Interestingly, a Russian scholar-traveller Mineyev, who happened to be in India a few weeks after the trial of Phadke made a detailed study of the revolutionary and collected all possible data and facts about him, which he carried with him to Russia. Mineyev's was perhaps the earliest study on this Indian revolutionary. Though the single-handed,

6  N.M. Goldberg, "Leader of the Democratic Wing in Maharastri", in Reisner and Goldberg, eds., Tilak and the Struggle for Indian Freedom (Bombay, 1955), p.23.
7  Ibid., p.24.
8  Ibid., p.29.
unequal fight of Phadke against British imperialism ended in failure, its legacy was carried forward by the chapekar brothers in Maharashtra and ultimately it passed on to Bengal revolutionaries and their counterparts elsewhere in the country.

Secret societies came into existence earlier in the 19th century. Rabindranath Tagore and his elder brothers were members of one such society. As early as 1891, Aurobindo Ghosh (later Shri Aurobindo) formed a secret society at London named "Lotus and Dagger" and came into contact with Irish revolutionaries. However, the Anushilan Samiti founded in 1902 in Bengal was the first well-organised broad-based secret revolutionary organisation.

The novel 'Anand Math' written by Bankim Chandra created an emotional climate for an upsurge of revolutionary activities in Bengal. Influenced by Western thinkers like Comte, Mill and Rousseau, he sought a fusion of divergent ideologies and presented a blending of Comte's positivism and Bhagwat Gita's spiritualism. The 'Anand Math' stirred patriotic feelings and advanced the idea of freedom struggle through secret societies.

10 Rabindranath Tagore's biography quoted in R.C. Majumdar, Vol.4, p.449.
became the Bible for the Bengal revolutionaries. The Bengal revolutionary movement under the aegis of the Anushilan Samiti turned to religion soon after its formation. Lack of any mass support and the consequent failure to rouse the masses, led it to a new stage of petty-bourgeois revolutionism marked by an appeal to the religious sentiment of the masses. The Bengal revolutionaries put forward the motto of liberating the motherland through religion, equating India with Hinduism. For them - when ignorance was the only knowledge - religion was the common bond to unite the masses.

These secret societies appealed in the name of religion to patriotic youth, imparted them religious training, taking their oath with Gita on their hands before Goddess Kali or Durga, the image of Sakti. Reminiscences of various revolutionaries, Sedition Committee Report and other documents amply bear out this process of religionising nationalism. Even a western educated man like Aurobindo did the same when he entered the political scene of India. He also tried to invoke

14 12 such societies are named in Ahluwalia, n.1, p.337.
15 Statements of Jadu Gopal Mukherjee, H.F.M.U., R.I., S.1/2, p.9, National Archives of India (NAI); Bhupendra Kumar Dutta, Oral History Transcript, Acc. No.390, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.
religious images to elevate the significance of the struggle for independence by imbuing it with the sanctity of religion. He said in 1908:

Nationalism cannot die, because it is God who is working in Bengal. God cannot be killed, God cannot be sent to jail. 17

Even Aurobindo's younger brother Sarindra, who was a revolutionary in his own right and later convicted for his leading role in Alipore bomb case, acknowledged before the magistrate on 22 May 1908:

I then returned to Bengal, convinced that a purely political propaganda would not do for the country and people must be trained up spiritually to face dangers... 18

The same spirit was manifested by Upendra Banerjee, an associate of Sarindra. 19

The revolutionaries published Aurobindo's novel 'Bhavani Mandir' in 1905. It contained the detailed plan of carrying on underground activities from a temple of Goddess Bhavani. Apart from stressing spiritualism, Aurobindo laid emphasis on physical strength and force. In this process of adding

17 Quoted from E.N. Romanov, "Social Thought in Bengal in late 19th and early 20th Century" in Goldberg and Raisner, eds., n.5, p.253.
18 Hemanta Kumar Sarkar, Revolutionaries of Bengal: Their Methods and Ideals (Calcutta, 1923), p.8.
spiritualism to Indian nationalism, Aurobindo compared ancient
glory and spiritualism of India to that of modern development
and material prosperity of the West and advocated the former.
He observed: "We are more desirous to replace our prosperous
serfdom, if it be so, by our ancient greatness and glory with
its alleged accompaniment of chaos and confusion."20 Arguing
further, Aurobindo predicted a high destiny for India in a
spiritual way. "It is she who must send forth from herself
the future religion of the entire world, the eternal religion
which is to harmonise all religion, science and philosophies
and make mankind one soul."21 This so-called superiority of
India led him to placing of spiritualism on a plane higher
than materialism, when he asserted that "no nation or community
can any longer remain apart", and that "the most vital issue
of the age is whether future progress in humanity is to be
governed by the modern economic and materialistic mind of the
West or by a nobler pragmatosis, guided, uplifted and enlightened
by spiritual culture and knowledge."22

In the Western part of India Tilak started Ganapati
and Shivaji festivals in September 1893 and May 1895 respectively.23

20 *Banda Matram*, 24 October 1907, quoted in Shaileshwar Nath,
*Terrorism in India* (Delhi, 1980), p.4.

21 Aurobindo cited in G.H. Langley, *Sri Aurobindo, Indian
Poet, Philosopher and Mystic*, p.3, in File No.B-3/2,
H.F.M.U., NAI.


These festivals were organised also in Bengal. When Abhina
Bharat Society was later formed at Nasik in 1906, it followed
the same path of religion-oriented national liberation. In
far off South, religiosity was expressed in 1911, when Asko,
Collector of Tinnevelly district in Madras Presidency was shot
dead by a revolutionary who carried a note in his pocket about
his religious mission in killing a nishaba (foreigner).24 The
revolutionaries did not hesitate to seek the help of even the
Indian feudal lords in their struggle against British coloni-
alists and thought of making victor Ineemanuel II of the Italian
unification fame out of these reactionary British boot-lickers.25
So while fighting against the past and striving for the new,
their efforts often bore the influence of the past. Due to
their lack of proper understanding of the social development,
they passed through an ideological crisis - resultant of
contradiction between objective reality and subjective dreams
and desires. Due to this crisis, they took refuge in absolutenist
religious ideas. They were thus pursuing a right goal through
orthodox sectarian means. This aspect of revolutionary movement
seemed in many ways like the romantic movement which marked the
eyear part of 19th century Europe and which emanated from
eighteenth century nationalism and enlightenment. Lenin tried

---

24 See V. Sankaran Nair, "An Episode of Terrorism in
South India", Journal of Konkan Studies, vol.6, nos.3-4,
1978, p.313.

25 Statement of Jada Gopal Mukherjee, n.15, p.15.
to evaluate this tendency of inter-mixing of religion and national liberation movement in the East in its true perspective. Speaking of the national liberation movement in Indonesia, he wrote in 1913 that "this democratic movement is being carried forward ... by the popular masses of Java, among whom there has arisen nationalist movement under the banner of Islam".26 In Indian context, too, because of the socio-economic backwardness, the national liberation struggle developed with the religious banner of Hindu revivalism as an instrument of anti-imperialist struggle in the country. In the then prevailing atmosphere religious appeal played a progressive role in rousing the anti-colonial feeling of Indian masses, which was not otherwise possible. Yet this religious orientation of the national revolutionary movement, the proclamation of the supposed spiritual superiority of the ancient Hindu civilisation over modern industrial revolution retarded and weakened the advance of the national liberation movement to a higher political consciousness embracing the non-Hindu masses as well. Though the "Sanities and associations formed later than 1908 gradually dropped the religious ideas",27 and then the old revolutionary societies did not insist on Hindu religious rites, yet the Hindu bias of the national liberation movement remained predominant during the first two decades of the 20th century.


The international scenario in the early years of the 20th century was an eye-opener for the Indian revolutionaries. Though the revolutionary movement was basically a product of different indigenous forces and factors, yet in the modern age, the influence and inspiration of important contemporary events and ideas cannot be ruled out. The Indian revolutionaries were keenly watching the rise of Sinn Fein movement in Ireland, the Egyptian struggle for freedom, the Young Turk revolt, the adoption of a constitution in Persia, the introduction of representative institution in the Philippines, and the grant of responsible government in the Transvaal and the Orange River colony; These developments undoubtedly spurred them into action. Three events - one internal and two external - moulded to some extent the future political programme and tactical course of the Indian revolutionary movement. They were - the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05, the Russian Revolution of 1905-07 and the Swadeshi movement of 1905-08.

Prior to 1905 and to some extent even later, the political ideology of the national revolutionaries was moulded by the examples of the carbonaries and Mazzini of Italy, ideas of French Revolution and the course of the Irish struggle for independence. When in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05, a tiny Asiatic power defeated a gigantic European power, the myths of invincibility of European military prowess as also the supposed racial superiority at the Europeans over the Asians was exploded. The victory of Japan was also
attributed to the strength drawn from religion, and the revolutionaries began to emphasise upon the worship of Shakti (or Bhawani manifested as the mother of strength) as a pre-condition of success.26 This pan-Asian feeling was, however, detrimental to a true evaluation of the nature of imperialist conflict and contradictions resulting in failure to assess the real nature of the upcoming Japanese imperialism. Rejoicing over its victory, they wrongly thought that Japan would lead the liberation struggle in Asia.

The Russian Revolution of 1905 and the Indian Revolutionary Movement:

In 1905, a wave of revolutionary fervour swept across Russia and the keenly observing Indian revolutionaries were thrilled at its magnitude. On 22 January 1905, the Tsarist Government opened fire on a peaceful demonstration of workers demanding elementary human rights. The 'Bloody Sunday' as it was called, sparked off the Russian Revolution of 1905-07. Workers all over Russia went on strike and received support from the popular masses including the peasantry at many places. The general strike paralysed the entire economic life of the country. This mighty movement of the workers and peasants compelled the tsar to succumb to their pressure and summon the

26 Hemanta Kumar Sarkar, n.10, p.16.
parliament (the Duma) to inaugurate an era of constitutional reforms in Russia. The Revolution of 1905, "which emphasized political freedom and constitutional government for Russia ... contributed substantially to the awakening of nationalism and the development of constitutional government in Asia". 29 The summoning of Duma after a great struggle was considered as a great victory of the Russian people over the autocratic and despotic regime. Of course different streams in the Indian national movement drew their own conclusion from this revolutionary upheaval in Russia depending on their own understanding and level of consciousness.

Gandhi, who was away from Indian scene and active in South Africa registered his reaction from there. To him, in the Revolution of 1905, the Russian people "found more remedy which, though very simple, is more powerful than rebellion and murder. The Russian workers and all other servants declared a general strike and stopped all work. They left their jobs and informed the Czar that, unless justice was done, they would not resume work". 30 Thus Gandhi lauded the Russian example of general strike as a method of mass political action against injustice and oppression.


The liberal democrats or the so-called moderates were impressed by the institution of 'Duma' because they were striving for something like it in India. They looked towards constitutional reforms as the only solution of the national ills.

Shortly after the 1905 Russian Revolution, the repressive measures of the British imperialists culminated in the partitioning of Bengal. A fresh wave of struggle swept across the country known as the Swadeshi movement of 1905-09. The national movement was now led by a radical section of the national bourgeoisie known as the 'extremists'. Their leaders were Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and Bipin Chandra Pal. Though the imperialist press dubbed the Russian Revolution as a series of terrorist acts, the radicals tried to assess its real significance. They talked of 'Russian method' of struggle against the British rule by which they meant a broadening of the base of the struggle. In an article in Kekri dated 28 November 1905, Tilak referred to the determined efforts of all the Russian people to pressurise the tsar to yield. Tilak wrote:

People's resistance and strikes ... are no mean forces. It is well known that in comparison to the officers of the British Government, the Russian Tsar and his officers are (or as it should now be said - were) more tyrannical and barbarous. But, when in Russia people of lower as well as upper classes, professors and students, workers and factory owners, editors and shop keepers, organised
strikes everywhere and, without caring for anything persistingly and courageously put forward their demands before the Tsar, the mightiest of all the kings and commanders of a strong army of 20-22 lacs, the 'Tsar of all the Russias' had to concede most of the demands of the subjects. 31

Tilak did refer to terrorism as a method of struggle in Russia, but he never propagated it as a weapon to be adopted by the Indians in their fight against British imperialism, rather he considered it something negative. Another leader of the 'extremists', B.C. Pal, took the Russian methods not as terrorist acts but as organisation of large-scale strikes which he took as something nearer to his idea of passive resistance. In New India, the paper edited by Pal himself, he wrote:

If the Government stoops to Russian methods, people have no alternative but to imitate those plans and scheme of self-development which have created an impassivity in Russia. They can organise strikes and by mere passiveness bring the administration to standstill. 32

This was how the 'extremists' evaluated the lessons of 1905 Russian Revolution, not as the terrorist acts but the mass participation of workers, peasants and democratic masses in the general strike, etc.


The national revolutionaries were greatly influenced by the Russian Revolution of 1905. Their perception of the Russian methods of struggle were quite different from those of the moderates and extremists. The revolutionaries had no independent source of information except the pro-imperialist and British press. Some underground Russian Nihilist revolutionary literature also found its way to their circles. They were led to believe that the 1905 Russian Revolution was mainly based on acts of terrorism. Isolated from the masses and labouring under the mistaken notion that history is not created by millions of ordinary people, but by a few persons, who, by their death-defying example, set the 'propaganda by action'. They expected to mobilise millions of their fellow countrymen on the path of national liberation and regeneration through their courageous example.

The democratic content in their political consciousness was relatively weak and of course it was alien to their methods of organisation which were intended to be military and secret. Given the low level of political consciousness and organisational weakness, it was not surprising that they chose the only alternative of the desperate road to individual terror. Hence, for them the example of many of the Social Revolutionaries of Russia

who took to terror in the traditions of the Pluralists or the Narodniki of the late nineteenth century became worthy of emulation. As Hem Chandra Kamungo, a noted Bengali revolutionary wrote later, they (the terrorists) thought that through terror it would be "easy to bring the ideas of revolution home to the common people."34 In a similar vein, Barindranath Ghosh stated during his trial in 1908: "We never believed that political murder will bring independence. We do it because we believe the people want it."35

Revolutionary literature relating to the activities and organisational principles of the Russian revolutionaries were found in many revolutionary centres. In 1908, sister Nivedita, the Irish follower of Swami Vivekananda presented to Shupendranath Dutta, just before his imprisonment, some five volumes of Mazzini's Autobiography together with two books of Peter Kropotkin, a Russian Social Revolutionary viz, (1) Memoirs of a revolutionist, and (2) In Russian and French prisons. She asked Shupendra to read the two books of Kropotkin before going to jail and explained to him the real nature of the Russian revolution as a war of the poor against the rich.36

36 R.C. Majumdar, n.4, p.466.
In Punjab, Madras and even in Maharashtra there is plenty of evidence of acquisition by Indian revolutionaries of some literature about the Indian revolutionary movement. In 1909, the police recovered underground documents - 'General Principles' and 'An Exposition of Russian Revolutionary Methods', which taking their cue from the Russian revolutionary movement formulated some principles for the guidance of Indian revolutionaries. J.C. Ker has given further details to prove how in practice the Indian terrorists were following the path of Russian revolutionaries.

In 1905, the Bengal revolutionaries decided to introduce the cult of the bomb on the Indian scene. The following year they sent Har Chandra Das (Kanungo) and P.M. Bapat to Paris to learn the technique of making bombs. There they came across a Russian revolutionary named Safranski, from whom they procured a manual on the manufacture and use of explosives, generally known as the bomb manual. It was secretly circulated

---

37 See: M.M. Ahluwalia, n.1, p.353.
38 See: Sedition Committee Report, p.163.
41 See: J.C. Ker, Political Trouble in India, 1907-1917 (Calcutta, 1973), reprint, p.84; also see: Iver Spector, n.29, p.107.
42 See: J.C. Ker, Ibid., p.130
even among the revolutionary groups outside Bengal. The advent of the bomb inaugurated a new era in the revolutionary movement in India. As the first contacts of Indian revolutionaries with the Russian revolutionaries living in exile were with the Russian Social Revolutionaries, 43 it prevented them from thoroughly studying the real revolutionary forces and factors behind 1905 Revolution. Even they did not know correctly the ideological position of Social Revolutionaries - their relations with the peasantry and approach to socialism. What they followed was their terrorist activities and organisations, methods and tactics. A correct understanding of the 1905 Revolution could have been acquired only through contact with the Social Democratic Party. This explains why in spite of some acquaintance with the revolutionary movement in Russia and contact with some Russian revolutionaries, the Indian revolutionaries failed to come closer to an understanding of socialism. 44 The passage of various acts like the 1907 Prevention of Seditious Meeting Act, 1908 Explosive Substance Act, the Criminal Law Amendment Act, only goaded the


revolutionaries to further commit terrorist acts. There were 140 terrorist incidents between 1907 and May 1915.45

In 1905 the Swadeshi movement created a popular stir in the entire Bengal, providing an opportunity to the revolutionaries to broaden their organisational base among the masses. But unfortunately they failed to utilise this opportunity. There were workers' strikes in the Bengal section of the East Indian Railway, Calcutta jute mills, textile mills, printing presses and even of Calcutta coolies and scavengers between 1906 to 1908.46 In July 1908, about a lakh of Bombay workers went on a six-day general strike against the conviction of Tilak, which was the largest anti-colonial political action of the working class in those years. Even from far off Russia, Lenin watched the rise of this workers' movement against Tilak's deportation.47 But the Indian revolutionaries neither participated nor learnt any lesson from these class actions. For them the workers had no pivotal role to play in the national liberation struggle.

46 E.H. Komarov, n.17, pp.275-279.
As Gopal Halder has aptly commented:

Socially and economically they belonged to the semi-feudal middle classes in Bengal; they thrived on the zamindari system which has created a chain of middle interests. In spite of the idealism that the French Revolution imparted to them, they could not be identified with the forces of social revolution in the country and accept the anti-feudal struggle of the peasantry as their own. 48

Though the examples of 1905 Russian Revolution fostered the ideas of mass struggle against colonial oppression, the revolutionaries neither set up any class organisation nor drew upon the useful experience of workers' and peasants' mass struggle in Russia. To them political liberation was not a part of social emancipation. Concentrating wholly on the former, their non-class and non-mass approach took them away from the basic masses who were the real motive force in a successful revolution. This "inability of the revolutionaries to enlist support of the masses ... kept their movement always underground and as such ineffective", 49

Their failure to rouse the masses for an upheaval ultimately led them to conspiratorial and terrorist methods and later on since 1908 to look upon the soldiers of the British

48 Gopal Halder, n. 33, p. 229.
Indian army as the main catalyst of Indian liberation struggle. The *Yugantar*, the mouthpiece of the Bengal revolutionaries on 12 August 1907 argued to spread organisation among the army so that at the time of practical collision with the ruling power, they could be with the revolutionaries with their arms and fight with the British.50

The national revolutionaries at home were subjected to various obscurantist ideas and were influenced only by the terrorist aspect of the Russian Social Revolutionaries. They had not yet grasped even the real character of the 1905 Russian Revolution and an understanding of Marxism was out of question. Indian revolutionaries were a part of the radical nationalists. They suffered from the same deviations and class contradictions as the bourgeoisie or the petty-bourgeoisie. Their failure to find a correct way out of the Indian contradictions - on one hand, having to fight national and social oppression and, on the other, being yet unprepared to do so they took shelter behind the obsolete ideological garb of Hindu revivalism, which kept a large segment of toiling Muslim masses - constituting agricultural labour, especially in Bengal - out of the purview of national liberation struggle for quite a long time. Even though they were supposedly following the path of Russian

---

Narodniki, they failed to appreciate the latter’s approaches to the peasantry. They did not explain to the peasants that they were to be freed from exploitation, not only political but social and economic also. That was why they failed to transform the appreciation and sympathy of the people for their martyrdom into active support for and participation in the revolutionary struggle by the large masses of people.

However, some of the revolutionaries were trying to grasp correctly the lessons of 1905 Revolution in Russia. Hem Chandra Das on his return from Europe to Bengal in 1908 advocated the broadening of mass organisation as a real key to revolution.\(^51\) Strangely, in spite of this correct theoretical approach, Hem Chandra Das continued in practice to be a bomb maker for the Maniktola Garden Secret Society. Another veteran revolutionary Jada Gopal Mukherjee raised his voice against political assassination. He said:

> Isolated outrages would not lead us much further. In Russia the nihilists killed the Czar Alexander II, but the future czars were more secure and ran their race of oppression and suppression. What I wanted them to understand was that revolution was a four-prolonged effort. The youth, labour, peasant and army were its constituents. If we do not work among them and bring them to our way of thinking the whole programme will fissile out. \(^52\)

\(^{51}\) Komarov, n.17, p.307.

\(^{52}\) Jada Gopal Mukherjee, n.15, p.12, NAI.
But the numbers of such right-thinking revolutionaries were few and their opinion was in no way decisive even inside their own organisations.

Yet their positive contribution cannot be belittled. The Indian revolutionaries were working in a colony that was more backward than Russia. The class composition in India was in a formative stage. The proletariat was yet in its infancy and the peasant masses had not yet awakened to political life. The weak national bourgeoisie stood on moderate position. Hence there was no question of a link between the revolutionary classes and the revolutionary vanguard. Thus their contribution was remarkable. Already by the beginning of 20th century, they propagated the democratic ideals, for example, right to popular insurrection against oppression, popular rule and democratic freedom, social justice and international brotherhood of people. Their activity provided revolutionary upbringing to Indian people. Despite its obscurantist overtones their appeal to national traditions, national pride, centuries-old culture and historic past, cultivated a patriotic feeling and led to the national awakening of the Indian people. It prepared albeit on a limited scale, the background of mass movements, creating an atmosphere of protest and soil for organising the masses. Herein lay the positive contribution of these early Indian revolutionaries.
When the domestic scene was filled with self-sacrificing terrorist acts of a section of radical nationalists, another section of the revolutionaries was taking the course of emigrating to other countries to carry on their activities from abroad. Revolutionary centres already existed in London founded by cama and Krishnavarma. But particularly after 1908 a number of Indian revolutionaries were forced to go abroad setting up revolutionary centres in England, France, America and several Asian countries on account of their increasing persecution at home following the passage of a host of repressive acts. But when the British authorities began to ruthlessly suppress the patriotic movement in India, and initiated a drive to curb the activities of the revolutionaries as could be seen in the deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh and instituted a trial against Tilak in 1908, centre of Indian revolutionary movement was shifted from London to Paris. Another such centre was set up in America by Tarak Nath Das and others.

Being away from the real scene of domestic happenings these Indian revolutionaries could only take the issue of Indian independence to international forums by their propaganda abroad. They imparted training to native revolutionaries in the art of manufacture of explosives and maintained contact with revolutionaries of other countries. They tried to imbibe
their experience either by personal contact or through a study of their literature. Their ultimate goal was to start a war of liberation with the help of certain foreign governments. In their stay abroad, they were exposed to a variety of ideas and influences. Working under greater liberty and relative safety, they could communicate among themselves freely to formulate a stand on important issues. The ideological orientation of the emigre Indian revolutionaries was influenced among others by their close contact with national liberation movement of different countries, working class and socialist movement in Europe and America and the emigre Russian revolutionaries.

The influence of progressive ideas and socialist thought on the programmes of different revolutionary groups was not uniformly even. It could not be so because of many hurdles - "the inadequate level of the socio-economic and political development, the predominance of pre-capitalist relations of production and based on this the general existence of traditional mentalities and modes of acting, the general backwardness of the masses, the resistance of the indigenous exploiting classes, and, last but not least, the imperialist colonial powers."53 That is why "when we talk of the leftwing socialist

trend among Indian revolutionaries, it contains both the Marxist-socialist and the anarchist-socialist trends, which took a clearly scientific socialist position after the October Revolution only.

Great Britain, France and the United States had a strong socialist working class movement at the end of the 19th century, containing both scientific socialist and revisionist or reformist trends in it. As Indian revolutionaries were primarily interested only in the national emancipation of their motherland, their contact with the western socialist or working class movement and subsequent ideological interaction revolved around the vital colonial question. The working class socialist movement's stand was not based on any ad hoc policy of reformism or revisionism like the Social Democrats. For it "the struggle against colonialism was an essential part of the more comprehensive movement for the downfall of the capitalist system of exploitation and was, therefore, subordinated to the revolutionary global strategy." This provided a firm basis for their lasting interaction, But the process of diffusion of socialist ideas was slow because of the colonial society in India, of which the revolutionary emigrants were only a part.

---


Contacts of Indian Nationalists with Socialist Ideas

Raja Rammohun Roy during his stay in England (1832-33) had an opportunity to exchange ideas with British socialist thinker Robert Owen, which was however confined to a mere academic interest of a casual nature. Although three Indian nationalists, Ramkrishna Chandra Dutt, Surendra Nath Banerjee and Beharilal Gupta, on their way back from London after appearing at the Indian Civil Service examination saw during their brief sojourn in Paris the aftermath of the uprising of the Paris Commune in 1871, there is no evidence of their taking a serious note of the event. 56

In India, Bankim Chandra wrote three instalments of an article “Samya” (socialism) which was published in his monthly journal, Banga Darshan, between 1874 and 1876. The article even used the terms “communism” and “the International”, yet the main sources of his inspiration were the writings of pre-Marxian philosophers like Owen, Simon and Mill, the last being his favourite. 57 Even Aurobindo after his return from Europe, published an article in Indu Prakash on 7 August 1893 giving a call to wage a fierce tirade against the ‘unnational Congress’ and declaring that “the proletariat is the real key”. 58

57 Ibid., p. 23.
58 Sri Aurobindo, Indu Prakash, 5 March 1894, quoted in Gopal Haldar, n. 33, p. 232.
But he failed to unlock the doors of a free India using this key and turned to his own middle class for leading the country along the path of revolutionary terror.

The first personal contact between Indian nationalists and Russian revolutionaries took place in Paris in 1900.\(^5^9\) Swami Vivekananda had a meeting with Peter Kropotkin, a Russian revolutionary in Paris. The details of their meeting are still unknown, but it is significant that Vivekananda subsequently observed that the kingdom of the Sudras (i.e., the toilers) will be set up in society in all countries of the world and shortly before his premature death, he pointed to Russia as the country from which, according to him, there will come the 'future revolution which will open a new era',\(^6^0\) in the history of humanity. But these Indian nationalists did not yet clearly know the ideas of scientific socialism.

The first appearance of an Indian nationalist in any international socialist or working-class gathering was that of the moderate nationalist Dadabhai Naoroji, who attended the

---


International Socialist Congress at Amsterdam in 1904.

The friendly relations between Dadabhai Naroji with Henry Meyers Hyndman, co-founder and leader of the Social Democratic Federation is well-known. Yet from the point of view of practical results, it had little or no ideological impact on the great moderate Congress leader.

Activities of Emigré Indian Revolutionaries in England:

By 1905, Shyamaji Krishnavarman had entered the political scene of London by publishing his journal 'Indian Socialist' in January 1905 and by forming his Indian Home Rule Society there. But his personal ideas were influenced by British liberal thinker Herbert Spencer, whom he quoted at the top of his journal. Spencer's principle of individual liberty and sociological reconstruction appealed to him far more than the nascent socialism of Bentham and Mill. It was natural for Krishnavarman, a representative of the rising Indian bourgeoisie to get a true teacher in Spencer. Horst Kruger, the famous German scholar on Indian revolutionary movement

---


62 The Indian Sociologist (London), June 1905 and few other issues thereafter.

63 Indulal Yajnik, n.61, p.105.
aptly observed:

Spencer has advocated as an ideologist of British capitalism during his heydays the principle of laissez faire. Linked up with this was the view that the freedom of individual actions, the competition and the survival of the fittest were things necessary for the society. At the same time he criticised the British colonial policy in India. These two aspects of Spencer's teachings formed the starting point for Krishnaverma's opinions. 64

In the domestic scene, he still remained with Congress platform and sided with Tilak, Pal and so-called extremists over the moderates. 65 So his position was that of a radical nationalist and his programmatic approach to the Indian question remained within the fourwalls of bourgeois democracy. As opposed to violent revolution, he preferred passive resistance to throw-off the British rule. In October 1905, in an article he wrote: "It is therefore plain that India can obtain emancipation by simply refusing help their foreign master without incurring the evils of violent revolution." 66 Even later in January 1909 at Paris, in course of an interview that he gave to a Paris newspaper

64 Horst Kruger, n.53, p.401. (in foot notes).
65 See: History of the Freedom Movement Unit (HFMU), Region IV and V, No.49/2, Shyamaji Krishnaverma, p.6, NAI.
66 Indian Sociologist, October 1905, quoted in Yajnik, n.61, p.XII (Preface).
L'Eclaire he advocated some sort of non-cooperation with the British like the one which Gandhi advocated in the twenties. He said:

I do not think there is need of resorting to force for securing their independence ... our chief mode of action is nothing bloody, but is boycott; not the simple and childish commercial boycott, but that of all classes of that nation ... i.e., the day on which the English official does not find an Indian servant, the Government no more police, the army no more recruits, on the day when at least India ceases to contribute to her own enslavement, then British rule will be a thing of the past. 67

His programme from the beginning was more a reformatory than a revolutionary one. He started his "Indian Home Rule Society" and in the initial stage it was more for debate than for any actual revolutionary activities. His Home Rule Society had instituted three fellowships for Indian students to study abroad with the financial assistance from S.R. Rana, a Paris based Indian revolutionary and Vice-President of the "Indian Home Rule Society". The sponsor wished to name the fellowships with religious symbol, of course not in a communalistic way of glorifying Hinduism, by naming them after Rana Pratap, Shivaji, leaving the third to be named after some distinguished Mohammedan ruler, thinker or benefactor of India. 68 Simultaneously he had great faith, though misplaced,

67 Yajnik, n.61, p.XIV.
68 Indian Sociologist, December 1905, quoted in Yajnik, n.61, p.152.
in Indian rulers, who he thought could play the role of Victor Emanuel II of Sardinia in the Italian unification.

He said:

It is necessary that from time to time an Indian prince of light and leading like His Highness the Maharaja of Gakwar of Baroda should be elected President of the Indian National Congress.... 69

And this suggestion does not look strange, if we observe the attitude of extremists back in India. B.C. Pal, the extremist from Bengal began publishing a monthly journal The Indian Student with financial assistance from Gakwar of Baroda. 70

Krishnavarma developed contact with European working class movement after reaching Paris in 1907 and coming in contact with Madame Cama and some Russian revolutionaries. It seems that he modified some of his earlier views though he could never abandon them fully. He was in correspondence with the famous Russian writer Maxim Gorky 71 and also friendly with a Russian revolutionary, Marxist Ideologist and member of Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, M. Pavlovich, who later published a book in 1925, 

Revolutionary Silhouettes, in Russian language which contains

---

69 Indian Sociologist, February 1907, quoted in Yajnik, n.61, pp.204-5.

70 A.C. Bose, n.23, p.32.

some personal reference to Krishnavarma.\textsuperscript{72} These contexts brought about some changes in the pronouncement and writings of Krishnavarma.

Soon after the Muzaffarpur Bomb incident involving Khudiram and Prasulla Chaki in 1908, Krishnavarma published in his journal an article entitled "Terrorist" by an American journalist Leroy Scott in support of his opinion that if Governmental repression continued, such armed actions were inevitable by way of reaction. In that article Scott had given a report of his interview with a Russian 'Social Revolutionary' who happened to be a chaman.\textsuperscript{73} In the same issue, after Leroy Scott's article, Krishnavarma published his own article - "Ethics of Dynamite and the British Despotism in India".\textsuperscript{74} In several issues after the Muzaffarpur incident, Shyanaji published some interviews of the Russian revolutionaries in America and also articles about the Irish Sinn Fien doctrine.\textsuperscript{75} Surprisingly, the April 1909 issue of the \textit{Indian Sociologist} reproduced from the \textit{Everybody's Magazine} an article entitled the "Constitution of the Russian Secret Societies".\textsuperscript{76} After coming in contact with Russian revolutionaries, he observed in the issue of his

\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Ibid.}, p.22.
\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Ibid.}, p.20.
\textsuperscript{74} \textit{Ibid.}, p.21.
\textsuperscript{75} Indialal Yajnik, n.61, pp.254-255.
\textsuperscript{76} Cited in A.C.Bose, n.23, p.22.
journal in December 1907:

It seems that any agitation in India now must be carried on secretely, and that the only methods which can bring the English Government to its senses are the Russian methods vigorously and incessantly applied until the English relax their tyranny and are driven out of the country. No one can foresee what rule will be laid down or line of action defined for any particular course. That will probably depend on local conditions and circumstances, but it is likely that as a general principle the Russian methods will begin with Indian officials rather than with Europeans. 77

That was how Krishnavarma hinted at Russian methods, which to him were political terrorism and assassination.

On the issue of violence, B.C. Pal, the 'Extremist' leader of Congress had a sharp difference with Krishnavarma and speaking at India House, set up by Krishnavarma at London, on the day of his arrival, 26 September 1909, he condemned the use of violence. 78

But due to his contacts with the Russian socialist revolutionaries Shyamaji was not averse to armed struggle, though he continued to vacillate between armed and peaceful methods of struggle.

He confessed in 1907 of his faith:

We are not aware of having advocated 'armed rebellion' in any number of this journal... But at the same time we may say that we are not opposed on principle to an armed rebellion like some who denounce all revolutions wrought out by

77 The Indian Sociologist, December 1907, quoted in J.C. Ker, n.61, p.97.

78 Quoted in Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, Bipin Chandra Pal (Calcutta, 1958), p.117.
force of arms, holding as we do that "resistance to aggression is not simply justifiable but imperative" (Herbert Spencer). Such case must be judged on its own merit, and we think that Indians need not resort to arms in order to throw off the alien yoke. 79

Indian revolutionaries abroad were the first to make the issue of Indian independence an international question. They also linked the Indian question with the liberation struggle of other peoples. Although they were far away from proletarian internationalism, they fraternised with revolutionaries of other countries and thought of co-ordinating their fight against Imperialism. Krishnavarma pleaded for coordinated joint moves against British imperialism by the Indian Home Rule Society, the Young Egypt movement, the discontented South Africa and the powerful organisation of the Sinn Fein Party in Ireland. 80 The fact that Krishnavarma limited this joint struggle only to the colonies of the British Empire showed that he had not yet fully grasped the global character of the phenomenon of imperialism as such.

One positive aspect of the evolution of Krishnavarma's views as a result of his interaction with the European working class and socialist movement was the recognition that the English proletariat was not responsible for the miseries and

79 Yajnik, n.61, p.225.
80 Ibid., p.233.
slavery of Indian people and that the British capitalist class, which tyrannised Indians, also exploited their own proletariat. The socialist influence can also be seen in his approach to mass work. In an article "The Indian Liberation Movement", published in 1909 in the Indian Sociologist, he set before the national revolutionary intelligentsia very pointedly the task "to work among the masses and make converts from among them to the Revolution" and to "agituate them in connection with agrarian question" and "work among workmen and mill hand, organise strikes among them, at present for higher wages and shorter hours, so that they may strike for liberty when necessary".81

Speaking of international solidarity movement of Indians with other enslaved people, the revolutionaries abroad were far ahead of their counterparts at home. While Krishnavarma was writing articles in the Indian Sociologist and speaking at meetings to extend Indian support for other national liberation movements, some other Indian revolutionaries went a step ahead by physically offering Indian revolutionary assistance to them in their actual struggle. Thus Abdul Karim's Riff rebellion provided the Indian revolutionaries in London an opportunity to send some of their

representatives to go to Morocco and join the rebels. Apart from the gesture of international solidarity, it could provide them a first hand experience in the use of arms and guerrilla warfare. On 17 August 1909, Tirumal Achari and S.S. Datta left for Gibraltar on route to Malilla as their advance party. But due to the lack of local knowledge and necessary travel documents, they had soon to return from Tangier. 82

On the other hand there was also another trend, quite similar to that at home, least influenced by the socialist or working class movement. After the departure of Krishnavarma for Paris in August 1907, the revolutionaries in London were headed by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, who was the founder of Abhinev Bharat Society in Maharashtra. He was more influenced by Mazzini, whose biography he wrote perhaps to highlight the great potentiality of secret societies in the freedom struggle. Later he also wrote a book on the 1857 uprising under the title 'First War of Indian Independence' -- the term showed the influence of Karl Marx's writings. The whole scheme of Savarkar was based on an armed revolution to be prepared by despatching patriotic youngmen to various countries to receive military

82 Tirumal Achari's statement contained in the letter of the British Minister, Lisbon to Foreign Office, London on 28-9-1909, Home-Political, 1909 December, No.37 B, NAL.
training and learn manufacture of explosives, by disseminating
the message of revolution among the soldiers through circulation
of revolutionary literature and enlisting them as members of
secret societies to be established in every province and every
village in India. Savarkar expected these preparations to
take 15 years.83 He obtained a manual of bomb-making from
Russian revolutionaries through Hem Chandra Das and distributed
its cyclostyled copies among his followers, and sent some of
them to his brother Ganesha in India. 84

However, in other respects his programme displayed a
clearly communal approach. Hem Chandra Das (Kanungo) who
knew him in exile, described his (Savarkar’s) ideological
orientation in his book Bangalava Biplob Prachanta (in Bengali
language). Savarkar, according to him, wanted free India
to be a Hindu state in which the Muslims were to have only
a subordinate status. He talked of taking back the country
to Aryan i.e., Brahmanic civilisation with Hindi language in
Devanagri script as the official language. He even went to
the extent of calling upon reactionary Indian princes to help
in the liberation, after which they would be allowed to retain

83 Statement of H.K. Koropaonkar, a London associate
of Savarkar, in Judicial and Public Department P.No.
1032/1910, Public Record Office, London, quoted in
T.R. Sreen, Indian Revolutionary Movement Abroad
(Delhi, 1979), p.15.

84 Yajnik, n,76, p.262; Dharamvira, Lala Hardaval and
Revolutionary Movement of His Times (Delhi, 1970),
P.59.
their monarchical status. But strangely enough, when Savarkar was sought to be extradited from France by the British, it were the French socialists under the leadership of Jean Longuet who raised a public debate on the issue and even took it to the Hague tribunal. Earlier when Madanlal Dhinra was hanged in London for murdering a Britisher, Vorwaerts, a journal run by the well-known leader of German working class, August Bebel and L'Humaite (organ of the French Socialist Party) published an obituary of the "Indian martyr, Madanlal Dhinra" in which they severely criticised the vile mentality of the British Foreign Secretary. This gesture of the European socialist movement opened up a new vista before the Indian emigre revolutionary movement, paving the way for closer relations between the Paris group of Indian revolutionaries and the international working-class movement and the Russian revolutionaries.

Indian Revolutionaries in France

Indian revolutionaries in Paris led by Madame Bhikaiji Rustom K.R. Cama and S.R. Rana were more progressive in their outlook and well-connected with socialist movement than their

87 Ibid., p.23.
counterparts in England. Though S.R. Rana started his emigre revolutionary career through Krishnavarma’s Home Rule Society of London as its Vice-President and later in Paris instituted scholarships like the former in the name of different Indian personalities, he travelled further than his mentor in the company of Cama.

In Paris, there already existed a strong socialist movement. A number of Russian revolutionaries were residing in Paris in exile. Cama and her other Indian revolutionary friends were in close contact with them. Vireandra Nath Chattopadhyaya later said that the "Indian group in France was in close contact with socialist circles around the newspaper L’Humanite”88 (the organ of the French Socialist Party) and its editor Languet, who himself was a left-socialist. It was at the request of Cama and her Paris group of Indian revolutionaries that Languet took up the case of Savarkar at the Hague Tribunal. Hem Chandra Kenungo, who was in Paris to learn the manufacture of explosives was introduced to a Russian revolutionary by the Paris group.89 He got his membership of the socialist club at the recommendation of

88 Speech of Virendrenath Chattopadhyaya et Academy of Sciences, USSR, Leningrad on 18.3.1934 quoted in Adhikari, n.54, p.86.
Rena and Cama, which indicated that already by that time Cama had become a member of the French Socialist Party. She was perhaps the first Indian to join the Socialist Party of any country in the world. Cama's association with the Socialist Party of France is also confirmed by the British secret police in August 1910. Cama was reported to have participated in the conference of Socialist Federation of Seine as an Indian socialist. Her younger colleague, Virendranath Chattopadhyya and M.P.T. Acharya, too became members of the Socialist Party of France in September 1910 under her influence.

Indian revolutionaries were close with exiled Russian revolutionaries especially with Vera Figner, Francisco Ferrer and Vladimir Bauntkev and it was through their mediation that Sarfranski taught Indians the art of making bombs. The first batch of three students Hem Chandra Das, P.M. Bapat and Mirza Abbas were sent back to India after the completion of their training. The Russian revolutionaries had also arranged for imparting political lessons to their

90 Ibid., p.205.
91 Home-Political, 8, September 1910, nos.51-59, NAI.
92 Speech of Chattopadhyaya, n.88, p.85.
Indian counterparts. They studied "all kinds of subjects starting from geography, history, sociology, politics and religion and ending with socialism and communism". They taught them the importance of the industrial development of India, which was to create the objective pre-condition for the revolution. The Russian revolutionaries in Paris also cautioned the Indian friends not to pin too much faith on the bombs and revolvers and on the instant rising of the Indian masses in revolt. But the latter failed to assimilate the counsel of wisdom by their Russian mentors. The Indian revolutionaries were further drawn to the Russian revolutionaries in the face of the reformist Social Democrats in the Second International opposing the cause of freedom for the colonial peoples and the steadfast support of the left-wing working class movement for their independence. At the Stuttgart Congress of the Socialist International held in August 1907, Madame Cama and Rana participated amidst loud protest and subsequent walk out by British labour leader Ramsey Macdonald. Von Col, a Dutch socialist, attempted to justify the colonial plunder and oppression in the name of the civilising mission of the Europeans. Cama succeeded "with the

95 Ibid., pp.210-12.
support of Hyndman, Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg and Jean Jaures in moving a resolution in favour of India's freedom.显著

Significantly she made a sympathetic reference to the struggle of the Russian people and conveyed her greetings to the Russian revolutionaries. She said:

India can send no delegates to the International Congress. She is too poor for that. Russia is certainly to be pitied and we send our brotherly greetings to our Russian comrades fighting for freedom.

Lenin was also present at that Stuttgart conference. According to the testimony of Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, returning from the conference, Cama reported to other Indian revolutionaries in Paris "about Lenin, the Russian socialists and about their attitude towards the war and of the right of self-determination of nations. But none of us understood at that time the enormous significance of the split in the socialist-Democratic Party and the role of Lenin."

Cama's participation in the Stuttgart Conference of the Second International in 1907 brought about a radical change in her approach to the methods of struggle for India's independence.

96 A.C. Bose, n.23, p.20.
97 Cited in P.B. Sinha, n.31, p.239.
98 Speech of Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, n.56, pp.85-86.
She is reported to have said that every Indian must be convinced if Russian methods were carried on in our country rigorously by our oppressors, the British rulers, then it was time that the Indians should meet it with measure for measure. 99

The Parsi group, particularly Cama, was ahead of others in keeping touch with the Russian revolutionaries and the international socialist movement. M. Pavlovich, who himself was an exile Russian revolutionary and was in close contact with Krishnavarman and Cama later wrote:

Cama was much interested in Russian revolutionary events particularly the Revolution of 1905, the role of the working class in the movement, and also read something about the theory of Marxism. 100

At Stuttgart, Cama accused British capitalism of exploiting India recklessly. By 1912, Bande Materam brought out a long article by her under the title "What Shall We Do Then?" in which she said:

The Hindustani revolutionists see the vision clearly that the situation can be changed by the overthrow of the British rule and by establishing a system of government which will mean a final death-blow to any kind of robbery and exploitation by any class under whatever pretext. 101

99 Indian Agitator Abroad (Simla, 1911), compilation of the Home Department, Government of India, p.27, NAI.

100 M.Pavlovich, Revolutionsvnie Silyetvi-Indusskaya emigratsiya v Fariche 1902-1914, Noviy Vostok (Moscow, 1925), No.1, p.157.

101 Home-Political, July 1913, Anos.1-3, NAI.
Compared to her 1907 Stuttgart statement which condemned British capitalism in general terms, her 1912 article marked a definite advance in her ideological orientation as she now talked of a new society free from class exploitation. This notion of a new society though not as fully spelled out as was to be done later by Shagat Singh - the martyr of 1930 - was nevertheless a step forward in the period before the October Socialist Revolution in Russia.

So gradually a relatively clear and correct picture of the revolutionary movement in Russia began to unfold itself before the erstwhile Indian revolutionaries. They were beginning to understand that the revolutionary struggle of the Russian people was not just a set of terrorist act of fanatic and desperate youth, but rather a popular struggle based on mass consciousness. However this realisation had not been fully assimilated by then and the sympathy for socialist ideals remained subjective. When the war started, Cane and Rana moved to Marseilles to win over Indian soldiers disembarking there, only to be interned by the French Government in different cities of France till the end of war. Interestingly, Madame Cane's journal *Dange Materen* was the first to preach the doctrine - "enemy of England is the friend of India", pointing to the German imperialism as their ally. As early as 1910, it wrote: "... the cultivation of friendly relations
with powerful German nation will be of great advantage to the cause of Indian independence."102 By the beginning of the war the Paris centre became almost defunct with many of the Indian revolutionaries moving to Berlin.

The Activities of Indian Revolutionaries in the U.S.A.

In early years of the 20th century, another centre of Indian revolutionaries was coming up in America. Thinking America to be a neutral democratic country and harbouring hopes on its past antecedents of independence struggle against British colonialism, the Indian revolutionaries expected support or at least no hindrance from the American authorities in their anti-British activities. Foremost among those Indians who made the United States a base of their revolutionary activities against the British rule in India was Tarek Nath Das, an ex-Anushilanite from Bengal. He edited a paper called Ezra Hindustan. Under Das's guidance the 'Hindustan Association' revised its constitution and called upon all its members to give up prejudices of caste, colour and creed.103 Observing the revolutionary movement in Russia and some other countries in the East, the Ezra Hindustan (October 1908)


103 Home-Political, June 1911, no.103 B, NAL.
significantly remarked:

People must fight stubbornly and persistently before they will secure their rights. . . . The thought about a difficult struggle strikes us when we see today the struggling masses of Russia, Persia, Turkey, Egypt and China. 104

In some of his views, however, Tarak Nath Das showed a departure from the terrorist line of thought of his Indian counterparts. In its July-August number of 1909, the Free Hindustan said: "India will never achieve her freedom by mere political assassination." 105 This realisation was an important landmark in the evolution of the strategy for struggle which the group of Indian revolutionaries in America developed possibly through their contacts with the Bolsheviks. It was revealed at the time of trial of the Ghadarites in San Francisco in 1917-18 that Tarak Nath Das and Sailendra Ghosh had established contacts with two Bolsheviks named Bluma Zaleshek and Wotherspoon who were founders of the People's Council at San Francisco. 106

Another Indian revolutionary in America Dr. Narayan Krishna became a member of the Socialist Party there in 1906. In his interview in the L'Humanité (Paris), in December 1909

105 Cited in A.C. Bose, n.23, p.51.
he declared: "I became a socialist about 1903 by reading the
works of Marx and Engels whose eager student I am."107
Dr. Krishna along with his another colleague Aiyer attended
the International Socialist Congress held on 27 August 1910
at Copenhagen where once again like Madame Cama at Stuttgart
they had to face opposition from the British Social Democrats.
Thus contacts were being forged between the Indian revolu-
tionaries and European and American socialist movement and the
emigre Russian revolutionaries. These contacts were to yield
positive results later.

On the eve of the First World War, a well-organised
revolutionary organisation of Indians came up in America by
1913 under the name of the Gadar Party. Among the Indian
revolutionary organisations of the period before the October
Socialist Revolution the Gadar Party with some of its speci-
fically radical features occupied a unique position. The
emigre peasantry of the Punjab turned labourer in America
constituted main base of the Gadar Party. Leading radical
intellectuals like Maulvi Barkatullah and Lala Hardayal were
among its prominent leaders. The Gadar Party’s ideological
platform was centred on radical nationalism and anti-
imperialism with some rudimentary idea of socialism. Hardayal
was acquainted with scientific socialism through his association

107 Cited in Horst Kruger, n.53, p.397.
with the socialist leaders in Europe. He had the unique
distinction of writing from USA, the first biographical
article about Karl Marx by an Indian author which was
published in a Calcutta journal *Modern Review* in 1912.108
But a close study of his ideological position reveals that
he adhered to anarchism as he himself admitted in one of his
speeches in America.109 He became the Secretary of the San
Francisco Radical Club and also the founder of the Bakunin
Institute of California. In the Radical Club "Russians,
Poles and Socialists came together frequently",110 bringing
the Indian revolutionaries in America in close touch with
several Russian revolutionaries. Hardayal even spoke from
the platform of the Russian Revolutionary Society in San
Francisco to commemorate the "Bloody Sunday".111 He worked
closely with the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.),
an anarchist trade union. In his speech he expressed the view
that he believed in revolution not only in India, but everywhere.
He was also to affirm: "Only the Socialists are really
interested in freedom. All other parties don't care about
Asia and Asians."112 Perhaps during this short stay in

108 Hardayal, "Karl Marx - A Modern Rishi", *Modern Review*,


110 Home-Political, June 1913, Nos.5-17, NAI.

111 M.N. Gupta, n.109, p.55.

112 Ibid., p.57.
Europe before moving over to America, he had not found sufficient time to study the revolutionary movement in Russia and scientific socialism properly. In France "he made friends with Egyptian Nationalists and Russian revolutionists" 113 and these Russian revolutionists were most probably anarchists, whose influence lingered on him for a long time. Though he himself failed to understand scientific socialism and Marxist theory correctly, yet he never failed to impart some nascent ideas on socialism to his fellow countrymen in the Gadar Party. Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna, the first President of the Gadar Party, later recalled how they all became enthusiastic when Hardayal was speaking to them about the founder of scientific socialism in a meeting held in the Jugantar Ashram, the headquarter of the party where the leading members lived in a commune. 114

Unlike other revolutionary groups, confined to a small number of people, the Gadar Party had a broad mass base and a large following abroad and in India, and its class base was mainly toiling masses. In an article published in 1914 in Switzerland Hardayal observed:


114 P.C. Joshi and K. Damodaran, ed., Marx Comes to India (New Delhi, 1975), p.44.
The movement is entirely one of the people. The members of the party are peasants and working men. There are only about half a dozen educated men to edit the paper, carry on correspondence, deliver letters and think of plans. 115

This composition made its base a broad one and helped it to evolve a more radical programme than hitherto adopted by any Indian revolutionary group at home or abroad. In their programme and activities, they were not for anarchism, but from the very beginning made their aim clear to establish a republican state. Their methods were not terrorist acts of a few people but a mass armed uprising with the support of Indian army. Their aim of revolution was confirmed in the police report which said that they were preaching after their return to India "the doctrines of revolution that they had learned from the Ghadar and the crude socialism that they had picked up in the towns of Western Canada and the United States," 116 Of course, their socialist ideas were crude, but they tried to reach the toiling masses, not the upper classes. Hardayal said:

The paper "Mandustan Ghadar" reaches the masses, men poor in wealth but rich in courage; it does not appeal merely to the educated men and aristocrats.

115 Home-Political, December 1914, nos.218-222 8, NAI.

whose heart is in their bank accounts while their
lips protest of liberty and sacrifice. When the
common people understand something they want to
risk life in order to realize the idea. They
have no property to make them coward. 117

This is how the Marxist idea of private property acting as
a barrier to mass action was just reaching them. In fact,
as the police report confirms, when they returned to India
to make a revolution "among the lower orders ... they met
with a certain amount of success".118

The contact of the Gadar Party with the proletarian
movement in a developed capitalist state and also with the
revolutionary socialist emigres of different countries played
a positive role in shaping its progressive ideology. This
helped the Gadar Party to get rid of narrow nationalism and
religiosity. Later Sohan Singh Bhakna indicated that the
source of Gadar member's non-communal approach was their
contact, through the trade union movement, with workers of
different nationalities and religious beliefs which greatly
broadened their outlook. He also pointed out the importance
of contacts with representatives of the liberation movement
in other Asian countries and in Ireland.119 Russian and Irish

117 Home-Political, December 1914, nos.218-228.
revolutionaries used to speak at Gadar Party meetings and Hardayal "incurred the wrath of the American police for speaking against the tyranny of Tsar at a meeting."120

The Gadarites contacts with the Russian Social Democrats deserve a special mention. According to G. S. Sainiara, who had written the history of the Gadar Party in Punjabi, "the proletarian basis of the Gadar Party impelled the leaders to establish relations with the Russian socialist emigrants living in the USA".121 A Russian revolutionary lady Rugo Kuhr not only assisted the Gadar Party abroad but also accompanied the Gadar members, Ganda Singh and Kartar Singh Bukki to India where she helped them in distributing the newspaper Hindustan Gadar.122 Gadar Party also expressed much interest in the revolutionary movement in Russia. The Hindustan Gadar office in San Francisco published a pamphlet in Urdu, entitled 'Stories of Russian Revolutionaries', which was promptly proscribed by the colonial authorities at home. In the first issue of the paper Hindustan Gadar, the editor wrote about the prolonged struggle between the crown and the people of Russia. Calling all aspirants for freedom as brothers, he

120 M. M. Gupta, n. 109, p. 42.


122 Ibid.
appealed to Indians to take interest in the rising of the Russian people.\textsuperscript{123} Contacts with the Russian revolutionaries became important in shaping the ideological evolution of Gadar members who had an opportunity to assimilate properly the lessons of the 1905 Russian Revolution and draw for their movement a more or less correct socio-economic programme based on methods of mass struggle. The Gadarites set on a voyage which was to take them from "vague reference to socialist principles" to "developed ... communist ideas".\textsuperscript{124}

In 1914 the new immigration policy of the USA created a feeling of indignation among the Indians. The Gadar Party took up the cause of the Indian immigrants. The American authorities were bent upon a crack-down on Indian immigrants, which was strongly resented by Indian revolutionaries. The First World War was looked upon by all the revolutionaries as an excellent opportunity to start a liberation struggle in India. They began to return home to start an armed uprising at the call of the Gadar Party which resulted in the Komagata Maru incident and later the Budge massacre of innocent Gadarites by the colonial authorities. The first Lahore conspiracy case and other cases were framed against them and they were given severe punishments including death sentences.

\textsuperscript{123} Cited in L.P. Mathur, n.106, p.44.

and transportation for life for many of them. Towards its end, America also entered the World War I on the side of Britain. At the instigation of the British authorities a conspiracy case was instituted against Indian patriots in 1917-18 at San Francisco in America. This case, its trial and subsequent punishment ended the illusion of Indian revolutionaries about the so-called democracy and neutrality of America. No more they could count on its friendly assistance, not even on a benevolent neutrality in favour of Indian independence. Even Japan, which was considered by many revolutionaries to be the torch-bearer of an insurgent Asia against imperialist Europe proved unworthy of their trust, when it, not only entered into a treaty relationship with Britain, but also suppressed the Indian soldiers' revolt in Singapore in February 1915. Gradually the Indian revolutionaries were approaching the central theme of capitalistic exploitation as the common aim of all imperialist countries, notwithstanding the democratic facade.

The Gadarites and other emigre revolutionaries were too close to watch the socio-economic and political system of the developed capitalist countries of the West. Here they saw enough of social inequality and oppression, though different from their own colonial exploitation, yet a class oppression in its essence nevertheless. Hardayal wrote:
The educated men in India ... have no idea of the appalling poverty of the masses in Europe. As I was wandering through the slums of Paris and New York, old recollections came to my mind in a changed form: 'If there is a hell in earth, it is here, it is here, it is here'. Let young people in India answer why people like Andrew Carnegie can donate 36 million pounds sterling for charity, while the 44 tramps once arrested in New York had only five dollars .... How it is that in Britain, the richest country in the world, a good one-third of the British people live from year to year on the verge of starvation....

Their failure to stir up uprising in India compelled them to review their course of action. They were naturally attracted towards the successful example of a revolution in Russia to which they increasingly began to look for inspiration.

Indian Revolutionaries During the World War I:

When the First World War began in August 1914, the Indian revolutionaries viewed it as a great opportunity for them. Starting from a somewhat simplistic theory "Enemy's enemy is our friend", the revolutionaries turned to the enemy of England, Germany, for assistance to their cause. During the war years, there existed two prominent revolutionary organisations, acting in cooperation with each other and approaching various anti-British foreign powers to enlist

their support, both moral and material for India's independence. These organisations were the 'Indian Independence Committee' at Berlin, commonly known as 'Berlin Committee' headed by Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, an old close associate of Madame Cama and the 'Provisional Government of Independent India' headed by Raja Mahendra Pratap. Though they were both depending on external help, their aims, objectives and activities varied greatly and they also differed widely in their ideological orientation.

In side India, also, the revolutionaries were getting ready to start an uprising against the British. The Gadar Party had established contact with the Bengal revolutionaries including Rashbehari Bose. They planned to start the uprising from Punjab and carry it gradually to other parts in northern India. The revolutionary leaders had established contact with the Indian army and penetrated into several army garrisons. Their plan of starting the uprising was fixed for 21st February 1915 which was to be spread to even Singapore. But the plan was discovered and Rashbehari left India for Japan. From Bengal the Jugantar group of revolutionaries had established contacts with the Germans to get financial assistance to purchase arms and ammunition from America. The leader of the group, Jatindranath Mukherji (Sagha Jatin or Tiger Jatin) had sent Narendranath Bhattecharaya (later to become famous as
M.N. Roy) to obtain the German arms. Later the group fought a pitched battle at a place near Balasore in Orissa with the British forces with three of them becoming martyrs including their leader Jatindranath Mukherji.

Indian Revolutionaries in Germany During the War Years:

After the beginning of the war, Champakraman Pillai established in Berlin in October 1914 the Indian National Party. It was attached to the German General Staff and among its members were Hardayal, Taraknath Das, Barkatullah, Chandra K., Chakravarti and Herembalal Gupta. The eagerness of the Indian revolutionaries to obtain help from Germany, the adversary of England in war, was matched by German efforts to contact them through diplomatic channels in the various countries as part of the latter's efforts to undermine the British war efforts in a strategically and economically important British colony like India. The Imperial Germany wanted to exploit Fan-Islamism and the Indian revolutionaries to its own advantage.

The broad policy pattern that emerged out of the discussions between the German authorities and the Indian revolutionaries was commonly known as the Zimmermann Plan.

So now the Indian effort was to get military support from the German government.

The Berlin Committee was motivated by the central idea of liberating India by an armed struggle, for which it organised the Indians and deserting soldiers into a "National Corps". It tried to organise Indian soldiers, who surrendered at Kut-el-Amora in Turkey into a revolutionary army to be marched to India.\textsuperscript{127} Indian revolutionaries in Turkey formed an armed detachment and set out for Baghdad. In Iran also it tried to rouse the Indians serving in the British colonial army. The revolutionary detachment had an unequal battle with the regular British army under the command of British General O'Dyer and later it was smashed in Sar-i-Dagar desert,\textsuperscript{128} after which one of their leaders Khankhoje went over to Germany.

Despite their insistence on armed struggle against the British, the Indian revolutionaries in Germany organised under the Berlin Committee showed some influence of the European Socialist and working class movement in whose context they had come during their stay in Europe. Dr. Abinash Chandra Bhattacharya in his book, \textit{Europe Bharatiya Bipalab Bashana}.

\textsuperscript{127} See: Speech of Dr. Shupendranath Dutta, \textit{An Indian Old Revolutionaries Conference} (New Delhi, 1998), p.7.

published in Bengali language, reproduced the draft document which Chattopadhyaya presented to the German government. In this draft the Indian revolutionaries demanded among others that the responsibility of "conducting revolution in India" must be placed on the Indo-German Committee acceptable to them, the Austro-German powers must not help the Indian princes to set up a monarchy there and help the Indian revolutionaries set up a "socialist republican state in India".\textsuperscript{129} While a swing towards the left-wing socialist ideology is thus clearly visible in the thinking of the Indian revolutionaries in Germany, their ideological immaturity is also revealed in as much as they hoped to establish a socialist republican India with the help of the Imperial power of Germany. However, their urge for functioning independently was noteworthy, for they sought financial aid from the Germans, as a national loan to be repaid after independence.\textsuperscript{130} This sort of independent status of Indian revolutionaries was also referred to by the Americans in the

\textsuperscript{129} Abinash Chandra Bhattacharya, \textit{Europe Bharatiya Bisrabar Sadhana} (Calcutta, 1958), pp.146-147 (in Bengali).

\textsuperscript{130} See: Anil Boren Ganguly, \textit{Ghadar Revolution in America} (New Delhi, 1980), p.52; \textit{Weekly Report, Director Criminal Intelligence, 26 February 1919}; \textit{Homo-Political, February 1919}, nos.181-184B, NAI; Also in the Records of the US Attorney and Marshal, Department of Justice, USA (in microfilm), roll no.6 it is mentioned that the Indian National Party was granted a loan of $60,000.00 by the German government.
San Francisco trial which was categorical that "the Indian revolutionists had in the beginning an independent status of their own and they were specific in respect of their relationship with the German aiders". 131

With assurance of military and other help from Germany, the Indian revolutionaries wanted a base on Indian border to operate. So a mission was sent from Germany to Afghanistan with Raja Meherendra Pratap to enlist the support of the Amir for Indian invasion and facilities for Indian revolutionaries to use his country as a base of operation.

While taking up the question of independence, Berlin Committee tried to enlist the support of the Second International but their experience was a bitter one. In September 1917, the socialist parties of Holland and Sweden convened an International Socialist Congress at Stockholm with the aim of 'achieving peace'. They were not allowed to represent India at the Stockholm Conference. They were told that India could not be represented as there was no socialist party there and if Indians were allowed to speak at the previous International Socialist Congress, it was "as private people who had been introduced to the Congress by the English socialists". 132

131 Cited in Anil Baran Ganguly, n.130, p.52.
132 Weekly Report, Director Criminal Intelligence, 21 July 1917, Home-Political, July 1917, nos.626-30B, NAI.
This conference of Social Democrats forced Indian revolutionaries to revise their opinion about the Social Democrats. Dr. Bhupendranath Dutta, Secretary of the Berlin Committee, records that this Conference was dominated by pro-Western reformist socialists who were not prepared to take note of the cause of the peoples oppressed by the "allied nations". There at Stockholm Conference, the Indian delegates met Karl Radek, the first General Secretary of the Comintern and Angelica Balovanova, another Russian Bolshevik. They also became particularly friendly with K.J. Troianovsky. Chattopadhyaya had by now realised that the question of subject nationalities was being deliberately ignored or put off by the socialists and there was no sympathy for India or for its people.

The Indian revolutionaries were watching the developments of the First World War. By 1917 Imperial Germany was already not on the rising tide but on receding ebb. They realised that in view of its impending defeat, Imperial Germany had little interest in them. The events in Russia had taken a new turn with the overthrow of tsarism and establishment of a Provisional government. Russia now began


134 Ibid., pp.240-241.

135 "Chattupadhyaya to Berlin Committee, 30 May 1917", German Foreign Office Records, Roll No.399, NAI.
to attract the attention of the Indian revolutionaries who were cut to get help from any quarter. That by this time they had become disillusioned with the German authorities is evident from one of the letters of Chattopadhyaya to Berlin Committee in which he spoke of the German efforts to use them as pawns and made it clear that the Indian revolutionaries were opposed to every form of imperialism whether German or English. To get a free hand in their activities, a branch of Berlin Committee was established at Stockholm in Sweden on neutral soil. It functioned under Chattopadhyaya and Acharya as Propaganda Bureau quite independent of the control of the German foreign office. From Stockholm, Chattopadhyaya tried to contact Lenin while he was enroute to Russia but was disappointed as Lenin had passed a few days earlier.

At Stockholm the Indian revolutionaries came in increased contacts with the Russian Bolsheviks. As Chattopadhyaya acknowledged by September 1917, the Indian branch office had forged contact with some members of the Russian Bolshevik Party. From this time onwards the increasing political

136 "Berlin Committee to German Foreign Office, 1 November 1917", German Foreign Office Records, Roll No.400, NAI.
138 Speech of Chattopadhyaya, n.88, p.86.
138 See: Speech of Chattopadhyaya, n.88, p.86.
and ideological influence of the Bolsheviks can be traced in the declarations and reports issued by the Stockholm office. The Stockholm Bureau hailed the national programme of the Russian Bolsheviks. In the preface of the pamphlet *Indian Patriot* it contrasted opportunists *viz. Social Democrats of other European countries* with the Russian revolutionaries, who 'in their programme of peace had developed the principle of nationality to the highest theoretical level'. 139 So the national revolutionaries took cognizance of the Bolshevik approach to the national and colonial question which was objectively to affect India's liberation from British imperialism. They developed their contact through K.M. Trofimovsky, who was one of the secretaries of the Soviets at Petrograd and later published the famous 'Blue Book'.

When in 1917 at Paris, a conference for the allied powers was called to discuss about the aims of the war under new conditions and the instruction to Skobelev, the representative of the bourgeois Provisional Government did not include any provision of support for liquidation of colonial domination of European powers over subject countries, the Stockholm Committee sent a telegram not to the Provisional Government of Kerensky but to the Petrograd Soviet of workers and soldiers.

---

where the Bolsheviks were in majority and sought its assistance for the cause of India's independence.140 It also signifies the correct evaluation of the Bolshevik colonial policy by the Berlin Committee, especially Chattopadhyaya and Dutta, who were heading the organisation at that time. The Indian revolutionaries were keen to establish closer relations with the revolutionary Russia, and on November 1, 1917, Chattopadhyaya sent to Berlin a plan of cooperation with revolutionary movement of Russia drawn up with Troinovsky, a Bolshevik and sent for approval to Petrograd.141 Their contacts were so close that Chattopadhyaya appended to the plan a memorandum entitled "Project of Russian-Indian Rapprochement", which contained important ideas on the necessity of concerted actions on the part of the revolutionary people of Russia and the oppressed people of the East.142 So it seems that the

140 Full telegram is quoted in A.V. Raikov, Probuzhdenie Indii (Moscow, 1968), pp.128-129 and also Adhikari, n.54, p.90.


first friendly relations with them were the Indian revolutionaries in Stockholm. While deeply appreciative of the stand of the Russian Bolsheviks on the question of freedom for the colonial peoples, the Indian revolutionaries were still far from fully embracing their ideological position.

Indian Revolutionaries in Afghanistan

Another important centre of activity during the war was Afghanistan from where a group of Indian revolutionaries led by Raja Mahendra Pratap, Barkatullah and Obedullah Sindhi functioned. The Kabul group represented two currents, one Mahendra Pratap and Barkatullah representing the Indian Independence Committee at Berlin and the other, Obedullah Sindhi, who had links with the Muslim nationalists in India. It was an interesting conglomeration of divergent forces. Barkatullah who started as a Pan-Islamist editing a Pan-Islamic journal 'Islamic Fraternity' from Japan, travelled through the Cadar Party and Berlin Committee to Kabul. The same was true of Obedullah Sindhi, who left the Deoband School of Muslim devotes to rouse the border tribes to drive out Britishers, who was also a Pan-Islamist. Mahendra Pratap, an idealist ruler of a small Indian princely state wanted to drive out the British from India with German help.

Mahendra Pratap met the Kaiser when the war began and the German emperor decorated him with the Order of Eagle (second class). Earlier he had attended the Congress session
in India and donated a part of his property for extension of technical education in India. He left the country to live in exile for a long time undergoing vast sufferings. As a representative of the feudal class, who had little mess contact and no faith in a mess uprising. In finalising the plan for Indian liberation he laid stress on the importance of Germany negotiating with the Indian princes and nationalist leaders, and suggested that the German Foreign Office should write to them emphasising the existing "community of interest between Germany and India".\textsuperscript{143} The Indo-German mission to Afghanistan started from Berlin on 10 April 1915, known as Hunting Mission named after its leader Lieutenant Werner Otto Von Hunting. It included Mahendra Pratap, Barketullah, Dr. Karl Becker, and Lieutenant Walter Rohr. Mahendra Pratap took with him 27 letters to Indian Rajas, Maharajas and Nawabs addressed by the German Reich Chancellor. He also carried 27 letters from the Sultan of Turkey. Besides these letters, he had two more important letters, one for the Amir of Afghanistan signed by the Kaiser himself and the other for the Maharaja of Nepal signed by the Reich-Chancellor. The hope built by Mahendra Pratap on the Indian ruling chiefs was belied as they handed over these letters to their British

\textsuperscript{143} Memorandum by Mahendra Pratap, 17 February 1915, German Foreign Office Records (Microfilm), Roll No.397, NAI.
imperial masters. Mahendra Pratap and other Indian revolutionaries at Kabul formed a Provisional Government of India on 1st December, 1915, with Mahendra Pratap as President, Barkatullah as Prime Minister and Obeidullah Singhi as Home Minister.

From the very inception, the 'Provisional Government' tried desperately to instigate the Amir to declare war against England. But it could not succeed in this effort. Even their bait of acknowledging the Amir as the permanent ruler of India could not induce him to declare war upon the British. 146

The 'Provisional Government tried to rouse the religious sentiments especially of the Muslims with the help of anti-British Muslim powers like Turkey. Obeidullah made efforts to involve various Arab states in the anti-British struggle. He sent his friend Maulana Mahmud-ul Hasan to Arabia to secure a holy writ from a religious head calling upon Indian Muslims to rise in revolt against the British. The 'Provisional Government of Free India' at Kabul itself issued three proclamations to Indians - one specially to the Muslims, one specially to the Hindus and one to all the Indians. Mahendra Pratap thus said:

146 'Viceroy to Secretary of State', 15 September 1916, Foreign Department Frontier Confidential h, 1916, nos.241-430, NAI.
We are doing our best to push forward our cause in the tribal area on the frontier. Maulvi Barkatullah's proclamations to the Muslims proved very useful and inspiring. While I hope my proclamations to the Hindus and the proclamation of the Provisional Government to all Indians must have proved of great benefit to our holy cause... 145

Meanwhile Mahmud-ul-Hasan had secured a declaration of Jehad from Chalib Pasha, the then Turkish military governor of Hadjan. This document, known later as Chalibnama, was distributed by thousands among frontier tribes on the Indo-Afghan border and inside India among the Muslims. A scheme of Pan-Islamic army, to be formed under the active guidance of the Turkish government and the Sheriff of Mecca with its headquarter at Medina and subordinate commands at Constantinople, Tehran and Kabul was chalked out by Obeidullah, who wrote a series of letters to different influential Muslims in India on 9th July 1916. These letters were intercepted by the British and their discovery led to the famous silk letters case. Thus no concrete results could be achieved out of the efforts of the 'Provisional Government' to exploit the religious sentiments against the British.

The attention of the Provisional Government at Kabul was now turned towards the Tsarist Russia. Though Russia was an ally of England in the World War, the Provisional Government...
still wanted to exploit the old Anglo-Russian rivalry in the Central Asian region to their advantage and add Russia to Germany and Afghanistan to forge a grand anti-British coalition. In March 1916, Mahendra Pratap sent a mission consisting of Shamsheer Singh and Mohammad Ali with letters to the Governor of Russian Turkestan and the tsar of Russia.  

Mahendra Pratap had written the letter himself to the tsar on a gold plate. In the letter to the Governor of Turkestan Mahendra Pratap wrote: "We nourish deep respect for our great neighbour and brother in Asia. That is why we, naturally count on the friendly help of Russia. Cunning England, your natural rival in Asia, will not remain your friend for long, and we may sometime extend to you great help, political as well as economic." In the letter to the tsar, he "expressed regret that India's two powerful neighbours should be fighting each other, and hoped that they would soon unite to crush England, the tyrant of the world, and set free the people whom she had enslaved." Even Mahendra Pratap mentioned the unique opportunity which the war had offered to Russia for joining hands with Afghanistan and "by so doing establish her influence in Asia on a permanent...

146 Mahendra Pratap, My Life Story of Fifty-Five Years (Dehra drug, 1947), p.55; also J.C. Ker, n.41, p.279.  
147 Cited in Reikov, n.140, p.103.  
148 "Mahendra Pratap to the Governor of Turkestan, 21 February 1916', Foreign Department, Frontier Confidential A, 1919, nos.241-439, NA.
basis.149 But the mission was a failure and it returned back to Kabul. Another attempt was made in August 1916 to contact the tsar of Russia which was also unsuccessful.150 The despatch of these missions to Tsarist Russia only showed the inability of the Indian revolutionaries to understand the real character of imperialism as a global phenomenon. Russia as a part of the imperialist system could hardly have helped India achieve its independence. They failed to realise that however antagonistic the imperialist interests of England and Russia might have been, they were also identical at least in one respect, i.e., exploitation of different nationalities under their domination, never allowing them to be free and independent enough to challenge the imperialist system as a whole. Thus the attempt of the 'Provisional Government' to win over the Amir of Afghanistan to declare war against England, to use the religious fanaticism of the border tribes and other Indian Muslims with the help of outside Muslim powers, to instigate the Indian rulers to rise in revolt and ultimately to bring about a Kaiser-Teer-Amir confederacy to oust the British from India, all proved fruitless. Naturally the efforts of the 'Provisional Government' to achieve the liberation of India from abroad without sufficient home-work was doomed to be a failure.

149 Ibid.
150 Mahendra Pratap, n.146, p.36.
Meanwhile the February Revolution took place in Russia and once again Mahendra Pratap tried to explore the possibility of getting assistance from the Kerensky government there. But in reply to his query he was informed that there would be no change in the Russian foreign policy under the new regime, and that the Indian revolutionaries should not expect any help from Russia. With the turning of the tide in war in favour of Britain and the impending defeat of Germany and Afghan reluctance to help the Indian revolutionaries led them to look elsewhere for aid and assistance.

The news of the October Socialist Revolution in Russia cheered the emigre Indian revolutionaries who were at that time somewhat depressed due to mounting British repression at home and the rebuff to their plan to liberate India with the external aid of the German-Afghan-Turkish axis. This event, which marked the beginning of a new phase in the world revolutionary process was instantly welcomed by Indian revolutionaries as a new possible source of assistance to their cause. Of course, it took them several years to understand the real meaning of the October Revolution and perceive that event in its true ideological perspective. Yet they hailed it along with progressive mankind as an event of great historic significance for the struggling colonial and oppressed peoples.

151 Ibid., p.57.
To sum up, by the time October Revolution took place in Russia, the Indian revolutionary movement both at home and abroad had travelled a long way from its early stage of spontaneous and largely unorganized beginnings under religious inspiration. The emigre Indian revolutionaries had, unlike their counterparts inside the country, abandoned the path of individual terror in favour of the idea of liberating the motherland through a liberation army raised with the help of friendly outside powers. Under the influence of the Western socialist and working class movement particularly the emigre Russian Social Democrats, a section of the Indian revolutionaries abroad, especially the Paris and Berlin group and the Oddarites in America, had picked up albeit somewhat vaguely, the idea of involving the masses in the struggle for Indian independence. While the anti-imperialist aspect of the struggle was still uppermost in their mind, as shown above, they had at the same time begun to realize the revolutionary potentialities of the workers' and peasants' struggles. They had also dimly begun to perceive that capitalist exploitation lay at the root of national oppression and enslavement. With the exception of the Kabul group of Raja Mahendra Pratap and the London group of Vir Savarkar, other Indian emigre revolutionaries did not try to exploit religious sentiments as a means of furthering their revolutionary activities. Even Raja Mahendra Pratap whose group was not averse to the idea of harnessing religion to promote the cause of national liberation had a progressive aspect of uniting both
the Hindus and Muslims on a common revolutionary platform. However, the Indian revolutionaries, in spite of their casually referring to the goal of establishing a 'Socialist republican state' and their participation in the various international socialist gatherings could not have a proper assessment of the 1905 Russian Revolution which to many of them remained just a bunch of heroic terrorist actions by the Russian narodniki and not a mass uprising of the workers. Coming as they did from the educated upper middle classes and the land-owning aristocracy divorced from the masses they were not inclined to take up the organisation of workers and peasants as the basis of the national liberation struggle. Some of them still laboured under the influence of the 'Mazzinian model' of Indian liberation under the leadership of a patriotic Indian monarch.

The October Revolution, however, started a new thinking among the Indian revolutionaries both at home and abroad. Some of them were attracted towards its ideological message and in the post-October days the policy and programme of the various Indian revolutionary groups bore an impression of the new found ideology. But this process was slow and gradual.