Chapter Seven

ADVANCE THROUGH CONFUSION: THE ACT OF 1935
THE OFFICIAL VIEW

Gandhi Struggles to Retain Leadership

While going on his three-week fast on 8 May 1933, Gandhi had noted the "murky" political atmosphere in the country and the "demoralisation" in the ranks of the Congress. (1) He advised M. S. Aney, the Acting President of the Congress, to suspend the Civil Disobedience for a period of six weeks which the latter did. Gandhi, thereupon, appealed to the Government of India to take advantage of this suspension and discharge all the civil resisters to help normalise the situation. The Government rejected the offer peremptorily. (2) But, in spite of this rebuff from the Government, Gandhi was set on seeking peace. In a long talk with V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, the Liberal leader, on 22 June, Gandhi wished that Sastri should write to Sir Samuel Hoare and Lord Irwin so that they might advise Lord Willingdon, the Viceroy in India, not to turn down his request for an interview summarily. (3) The informal conference of the Congress leaders called in Poona on 12 July, while rejecting a motion for the unconditional withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience,


2 Text of the official Communique rejecting Gandhi's overtures in ibid., pp. 560-1. See also Government of India, India In 1932-1933 (Delhi, 1934), p. 25.

3 See V. S. Srinivasa Sastri to T. R. Venkatarama Sastri, 22 June 1933, T. N. Jagadisan, ed., Letters of the Right Honourable V. S. Srinivasa Sastri (London, 1963), edn 2, p. 255. Sastri wrote to Hoare and Irwin the same day about this expressing the hope that "if the Viceroy and he [Gandhi] talked together fully and freely, a more or less satisfactory settlement might be reached." See ibid., pp. 255-6.
also authorized Gandhi to seek an interview with the Viceroy with a view to exploring the possibilities of peace. But the Viceroy again turned down Gandhi's request. (4) Thereafter, the Congress suspended the mass Civil Disobedience but advised those who were willing and able to offer individual Civil Disobedience. Congress organizations and war councils were also ordered by the Acting President Aney to cease their functions in view of the suspension of the mass Civil Disobedience. "Confusion worse confounded. What were the people to do?", exclaimed Subhas Chandra Bose. (5) A. C. Frost, the US Consul General in Calcutta, watched these developments and reported to the Secretary of State that the Government was as firm as it was the previous year. It regarded the Civil Disobedience as a failure and it had such a control of the situation through the exercise of the Ordinances that it could afford to ignore Gandhi. "Gandhi, on the other hand, has a struggle to maintain himself in control of the Congress Party with the development of divergent views on civil disobedience, and the Viceroy to receive Gandhi would serve to strengthen his leadership", wrote the Consul General. He further explained that the fast had undoubtedly increased Gandhi's hold over the masses but it remained to be seen whether "this hold on the Hindu masses is sufficiently strong for Gandhi to keep the various factions in line". (6) Subsequently, when Gandhi was again arrested on

4 For the text of telegrams exchanged between Gandhi and the Private Secretary to the Viceroy, see All India Congress Committee, The Indian National Congress 1930-1934 (Allahabad, n.d.), Appendix No. 5, pp. 205-7.


6 Consul General in Calcutta (A. C. Frost) to Secretary of State, 20 July 1933, 845.00/825, Records of the Department of State.
1 August on the eve of his march to a village, Ras, in Gujerat, "to convey", as he said, "the message of fearlessness to every village home", the Consul General commented that Gandhi evidently had sought to lead "another dramatic movement" similar to his famous Dandi march in 1930. The Government, by arresting Gandhi, had foiled this attempt. There was bitter condemnation of his arrest in India and individual civil disobedience was offered at many places. From this the Consul General came to believe that despite dissension in the Congress, the fact remained that "the political saint's [Gandhi's] emotional appeal to most of the leaders, as well as to the masses generally, remains almost as great as ever." (7)

In the prison, Gandhi found that the facilities that were granted to him before his release in May to conduct his reform movement from inside the prison were discontinued. This led him to go on another fast against the adamant attitude of the Government. Frost noted that the Government appeared to have been more displeased with Gandhi this time than before owing to the fact that at the recent Poona Conference, when strong sentiment existed among the Congress leaders to discontinue the Civil Disobedience, Gandhi insisted on continuing the movement in a modified form. "Quite obviously", he observed, "Gandhi could not be expected to surrender the only weapon which he considered effective to hold over the Government for any future concessions." (8)

7 Consul General in Calcutta (Frost) to Secretary of State, 10 August 1933, 845.00/826, Records of the Department of State.

8 Consul General in Calcutta (Frost) to Secretary of State, 31 August 1933, 845.00/830, Records of the Department of State.
Gandhi was released on 23 August in the midst of his fast when his condition became very critical. This unexpected development placed him in "a most embarrassing position". He did not wish to be a "willing party to the undignified cat-and-mouse game" of arrest, fast, and release. He, therefore, decided that he would not regard himself as a free man and announced in a statement on 14 September that he would not offer civil disobedience for the unexpired part of the sentence of one year imprisonment which he was undergoing before his release, i.e., up to 3 August 1934. He would not court imprisonment during this period by offering aggressive civil resistance. He also declared that he would direct his energies towards the intensification of the Harijan movement in the intervening period. (9) He, in fact, embarked upon a tour of the whole country in pursuit of this objective in November.

The Consul General found that this statement of 14 September "like most of Gandhi's utterances has saving clauses", yet it was apparent that he had decided to wage no active movement of resistance within the stated period. The Government did not regard it as an offer of an olive branch. So, what was the motive behind his self-imposed restrictions? Sensing a struggle for power within the Congress, the Consul General shrewdly commented:

With the virtual end to civil disobedience the Congress party seems to be drifting for a time without effective leadership. It is surmised that Gandhi's declaration of September 14 was actuated by the desire to remain out of jail long enough to

---

prevent control of the party passing into other hands. While his fasts inspire the masses with religious fervor and add to his saintly reputation, long terms in prison, especially under the restrictions more recently imposed, tend to impair his effective leadership of the party. This is especially the case now that Jawaharlal Nehru has been released and is taking a very active part in urging a vigorous radical policy on the part of the Congress. (10)

**Emergence of Nehru, the Socialist**

Jawaharlal Nehru had been watching the melodrama going on in the country from inside the jail with disenchantedment. He took note of the "emotional upheaval of the country" during Gandhi's fast in May last but "wondered more and more if this was the right method in politics." Gandhi insisted "only on purity and sacrifice" and "did not encourage others to think". He felt that he was "drifting further and further away from him [Gandhi] mentally", in spite of his strong emotional attachment to the latter. The informal conference of the Congress leaders in Poona had suspended the mass civil disobedience and had permitted only individual civil disobedience. These decisions were not inspiring to Nehru. What had surprised him most was "the absence of any real discussion at Poona of the existing situation and of our objectives." (11)

In this mental condition, Nehru was released on 30 August in view of the serious condition of his mother. Soon after there was some improvement in his mother's condition, he rushed to Poona to have talks with Gandhi whom he had not seen since his departure

---

10 Consul General in Calcutta (Frost) to the Secretary of State, 2 November 1933, 845.00/634, Records of the Department of State.

for England in 1931 for the Round Table Conference. Apart from the talks, they had an exchange of letters between them which were published for the guidance of the public at large. As Nehru himself records, both of them agreed, though perhaps for different reasons, that "the time was not yet ripe for a withdrawal of civil disobedience and we must carry on even at a low-ebb." For the rest, Nehru wanted to turn "people's attention to socialistic doctrines and the world situation." (12)

Consul General Frost was observing these developments with keen interest. It was difficult for him to see how these two persons so dissimilar could really have a common outlook:

Gandhi is much more troublesome for the Government, as he is harder to fathom, is exceedingly adroit in manoeuvring issues, and is the idol withal of the Indian masses. While Gandhi is a mystic, Nehru is eminently practical and the Government knows exactly where he stands. Gandhi is deeply religious whereas religion has no part in Nehru's make-up. Gandhi's language is somewhat ambiguous or oracular, while Nehru writes in a very cogent and forceful style. (13)

Frost, thereafter, briefed the Secretary of State about Nehru's career and his ideological convictions. He was an Oxford graduate, travelled in Russia, and "his present program reads like advanced socialism". He believed in "extreme measures" as indicated by his articles "Whither India" which, according to Frost, were "Exceedingly well-written from a radical standpoint". Summing up his evaluation, Frost wrote:

---


13 Consul General in Calcutta (Frost) to Secretary of State, 2 November 1933, 845.00/834, Records of the Department of State.
While his ideas are perhaps not quite communistic enough to meet the Soviet standards, they seem rather advanced for India at the present time. (14)

Frost also informed the Secretary of State that the Government of India was watching Nehru very closely and it was commonly predicted that because of his extreme radical views, he may soon find himself in jail again. If, however, he managed to keep out of jail, "his influence in party councils may become increasingly important", Frost noted. (15)

Frost harked back to the topic in his report in December. He noted that India was experiencing "a tranquillity unequaled for several years past"; that Gandhi had troubles with the Brahmins in Madras in course of his Harijan tour; and that the "high point" of his tour was his conference with Nehru at Delhi. Both of them addressed large gatherings but no disorders followed. Nehru, he reported, continued to attack the capitalistic system and the present regime "but in a somewhat more guarded vein than heretofore." Gandhi had announced that he had given Nehru "power of attorney" and both of them seemed united in insisting that the struggle of resistance must go on. "The two men are so temperamentally different, however," Frost reiterated, "that their respective bids for leadership should furnish an interesting

14 Ibid. For Nehru's articles, see Jawaharlal Nehru, Whither India? (Allahabad, 1937), edn 4.

15 Frost to Secretary of State, 2 November 1933, n. 13. A little later, the Home Department of the Government of India advised the Government of the United Provinces in these words: "The Government of India regard him [Nehru] as by far the most dangerous element at large in India and ... are definitely of the opinion that the opportunity afforded by this speech [in Calcutta in January 1934] should not be lost and that it is desirable to institute a prosecution at once." D.O. No. S-282/34-Poll/19 January 1934, Home Department (Political Section), Government of India, quoted in Michael Brecher, Nehru: A Political Biography (London, 1959), p. 199.
study if they manage to stay out of jail." (16)

Nehru was rearrested on 12 February 1934. This did not surprise Frost. He had already indicated that the Government would not permit him to remain at large for long. This time, he noted, Nehru had severely criticized the Bihar Government for its slowness in taking relief measures after the earthquake which had taken a heavy toll of human life and property in that province on 15 January 1934. "His speeches, however," observed Frost, "are always of a vitriolic type with a strong slant of communism, and, because of his undoubted abilities as a speaker and agitator, the Government has been watching him very closely, doubtless with the resolve to remove him from the political scene at the first adequate opportunity." (17)

A New Turn in Congress Politics

With the arrest of Nehru and the preoccupation of Gandhi with his Harijan work, the Congress, observed the Consul General, remained without direction, the other leaders running about, as a British correspondent commented, like "lost rabbits". (18) In March-April, however, some important events happened which gave a new turn to the Congress politics. On 31 March, Dr. M. A. Ansari, an outstanding Muslim member of the Congress, Dr. B. C. Roy, former Mayor of Calcutta and one of Gandhi's physicians, and some

---

16 Consul General in Calcutta (Frost) to Secretary of State, 28 December 1933, 845.00/838, Records of the Department of State.

17 Consul General in Calcutta (Frost) to Secretary of State, 21 February 1934, 845.00/840, Records of the Department of State.

18 Ibid.
other Congress leaders met in Delhi and agreed that the Swaraj Party should be revived and the forthcoming election to the Legislative Assembly be fought on the plank of repealing the repressive laws of the Government of India and rejecting the constitutional scheme announced by the British Government in a White Paper in March. (19) A deputation of these leaders went to Patna to get the endorsement of their plan by Gandhi which the latter did without hesitation by way of a letter to Dr. Ansari. On 7 April, Gandhi came out with another statement by which he advised all Congressmen to suspend civil resistance for Swaraj as distinguished from specific grievances. He alone would now bear the responsibility of civil disobedience. (20)

Gerald Keith, the US Vice Consul in Calcutta, found Gandhi's own plans obscure. Gandhi's statement, he felt, could not be "easily interpreted". He found Gandhi's approval of the revival of the Swaraj Party and Council-entry as "noteworthy" for it was "so contrary to his previous advocacy of non-cooperation and civil disobedience." He also pointed out the concern of the Government of India at this new development:

There can be no question also but that the Government would prefer to have its Congress's political activities progress as they were going previous to the meeting to renew the Swaraj party which, in its consequences, has brought Gandhi into the political

---

19 Swaraj Party had been formed in 1923 under the leadership of Chittaranjan Das and Motilal Nehru with the objective of entering the Legislative Councils so that the fight for Indian independence could be conducted from inside these institutions. This was in opposition to the official policy of the Congress which stood for non-cooperation with the Government at that time.

20 For the deliberations at Delhi, Gandhi's letter to Dr. Ansari, and Gandhi's statement of 7 April, see Sitaramayya, n. 1, pp. 567-70.
picture from his retirement which, in effect, really existed during the course of his 'harijan' activities.... It is understood that the feeling exists that it can be a very definite handicap to have the Swarajists enter the Assembly at the new elections, because their tactics previously were so obstructive and there can be no certainty at the present time that the same policy will not be pursued. (21)

The All-India Congress Committee approved of the decisions of Gandhi both with regard to suspension of the Civil Disobedience and the revival of the Swaraj Party and the Civil Disobedience was formally terminated by the Congress on 20 May. The Government, thereupon, lifted the ban on the Congress organization on 6 June. Keith conveyed to the Secretary of State the opinion of Sir Harry Haig, the Home Member of the Government of India, and of Sir Maurice G. Hallett, the Home Secretary, both of whom he had interviewed at Simla, with regard to the situation in India. As a result of the events just mentioned, the political situation in India was, according to them, entering upon a new phase which will be "most important in determining the future trend of affairs in India." Three events, according to Hallett, were being awaited by the Government with much interest: 2 August when Gandhi would complete his self-imposed restriction on his political activity against the Government; meeting of the All-India Congress scheduled for October in Bombay; and the report to the British Parliament by the Joint Select Committee on the White Paper containing proposals for constitutional reform in India. (22)

21 Vice Consul in Calcutta (Gerald Keith) to Secretary of State, 10 April 1934, 845.00/846, Records of the Department of State.

22 Vice Consul in Calcutta (Keith) to Secretary of State, 11 June 1934, 845.00/852, Records of the Department of State.
Keith noted that there were factors working for confusion and conflict inside the Congress, "the one and only real party in India". Gandhi, while still "the outstanding Indian leader", was meeting with objections from many quarters. The dissension of many Congressmen over the question of Council entry had forced him to recognize that his policy of civil disobedience could not be continued. His Harijan tour of the country had incurred for him the strong displeasure of the high caste Hindus. Moreover, there were increasing endeavours on the part of some Congressmen to present to the masses the ideas of socialism and the more extreme theories of communism. "In fact, it was remarked by Mr. Hallett," Keith reported, "that present appearances indicate that in India, among the Indians themselves, the situation might possibly develop into a contest between the 'have and have-nots'". This socialist group, Keith pointed out, may be said to have as their outstanding leader Jawaharlal Nehru, "an extreme radical with definitely communistic theories and a man who is described as embittered and intolerant." Keith then cautioned the Secretary of State about Nehru:

His father, Motilal Nehru ... was one of the few most outstanding Congressmen, and he himself has, because of this connection and ability, acquired an influence, the growth of which must be carefully observed. While disagreeing with Mr. Gandhi on certain issues, he is, nevertheless, one of the outstanding Congress leaders, and this, in spite also of his inclination to go toward the extreme left much more than any other conspicuous member of that party. (23)

Keith, however, assured the Secretary of State that as long as Nehru persisted in his ideas, he held, "he will spend more time in jail than out during the next few years."

23 Ibid.
The growth of communist and socialist elements within the ranks of the Congress as also outside continued to engage the attention of Keith. The ban placed on the Communist Party of India by the Government of India in July and allusion in the British papers to the connection between the Indian communists and the communists in California gave another occasion to Keith to report on these matters. (24) "The Congress party is rapidly dividing itself into right and left wings, and it may be anticipated that the predominating influence in the Congress party will eventually become strongly socialistic", he observed. To substantiate his point, he referred to the resolution of the Congress Working Committee passed on 30 July in which it was clarified that allusion to the "loose talk about confiscation of private property" in an earlier resolution of the Committee was not meant to criticize any party or its programme. Keith felt that this "cautious wording" was meant to avoid offence to the Socialist group inside the Congress. Referring again to the sponsorship of the left by Nehru, he wrote:

... as long as Jawaharlal Nehru, now in jail, is regarded as one of the prime Congress leaders, as he is today, the leanings of the Congress left will be increasingly radical, encouraged by his many communistic theories. (25)

24 See "Communist Intrigue in India; Plots Hatched in USA", The Statesman, 25 July 1934; "Communists and Revolt of Peasants", ibid., 26 July 1934; "Congress Fears of Drift to Communism; Action Overdue in India", ibid., 27 July 1934. Keith regarded these articles by the Simla representative of this paper as Government-inspired in order to prepare the British public and the leading Indians for the Government action against the Communist Party.

25 Vice Consul in Calcutta (Keith) to Secretary of State, 2 August 1934, 845:00/346, Records of the Department of State, 845:000/40
Keith also closely observed the split in the Congress on the question of Communal Award which, as affected by the Poona Pact, had been incorporated in the White Paper of the British Government. The number of seats given to the Moslems in Bengal by the Award far exceeded their numerical strength in the total population. This, among others, was being objected to by some Congress elements led by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. The Congress Working Committee, meeting in Bombay in June, neither accepted the Award nor rejected it. This did not satisfy Malaviya and his group and so a separate Party - the Nationalist Party - was formed by them. (26)

This split was regarded as an important development in India by Keith since it meant "political opposition between the two sections of the Hindus." (27) He felt that the Nationalist Party had strong support throughout the country and therefore its formation represented "the first important instance of a real Hindu opposition to Mr. Gandhi, having sufficient confidence to fight him politically and question his final authority." He, however, made it clear that these two groups differed fundamentally in only one respect — the Nationalist Party was outspokenly opposed to the Communal Award while the original Congress was "avoiding the issue as far as possible solely to retain the small elements of Mohammedans within its fold." Complete independence remained the ultimate aim of both the groups and both were entirely agreed in


27 Vice Consul in Calcutta (Keith) to Secretary of State, 23 August 1934, 845.00/862, Records of the Department of State.
their opposition to the Government. (28) He noted that the Nationalist Party, apart from opposing the Communal Award, also took a stand against legislative interference in religious matters. As against this, the old Congress was more inclined towards socialism and liberalism. "The old Congress group, with which Gandhi remains, shows more sympathies towards socialism—in spite of his lukewarmness—and liberalism, the latter to be interpreted as a growing freedom from Hindu orthodoxy and domination by the Brahminical class," he observed, (29)

**Gandhi's Exit from the Congress**

Another "outstanding event" in this period, as Keith called it, was the statement of Gandhi issued on 17 September announcing his intention to sever his connection with the Congress. Of late he had come to feel that a very large body of the Congress intelligentsia were tired of his methods and views and that he was a hindrance rather than a help to the natural growth of the Congress. He would, therefore, restore freedom to the Congress, and himself would concentrate on village uplift and such other reform movements. He, however, stayed his action until the Bombay Session of the Congress in October when, he announced, he would propose certain resolutions incorporating his ideas with a view to testing the feeling of the Congress. (30)

---

28 Vice Consul in Calcutta (Keith) to Secretary of State, 24 September 1934, 845.00/863, Records of the Department of State.

29 Ibid.

30 Full text of Gandhi's statement in All India Congress Committee, n. 26. Long before this statement Gandhi, goaded by Srinivasa Sastri, had started thinking about quitting the Congress. See Letters of the Right Honourable V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, n. 3, pp. 258-62.
Keith felt that the acceptance or non-acceptance of these resolutions will determine Gandhi's association with the Congress. But Gandhi was unpredictable; so the future was uncertain.

As the situation now stands, it is not possible to predict the outcome of the Bombay meeting, and the one factor which may make it difficult at any time to make a statement with certainty about Mr. Gandhi, is the nature of his character, which is impulsive and erratic. If he has, however, the political acumen with which at times he has been so strongly accredited, it may be concluded that he is well aware that his formerly revered leadership has weakened tremendously. There is considerable feeling, however, that the original Congress party will vote to accept his resolutions, knowing full well that they will not be observed, but recognizing that to lose him as their nominal head at this time would be surrendering to Malaviya. (31)

Keith believed that Gandhi had realized that his political prestige had been seriously diminished. Therefore, the one direction in which he could travel was to lead his followers towards social reforms. A man of "strange nature" and "impractical" theories though he was, "he may undoubtedly be given credit," so observed Keith, "for a sincere desire to help those he believes oppressed." (32)

Ray Atherton, the Charge in London, informed the Secretary of State that the British press did not take Gandhi's threat seriously and that "the threat would seem to be largely a test of the sincerity of a number of his professed supporters." (33)

Keith also reported from Calcutta that although the Congress

31 Vice Consul in Calcutta (Keith) to Secretary of State, 24 September 1934, 845.00/863, Records of the Department of State.
32 Ibid.
33 Charge d'Affaires ad interim in London to Secretary of State, 15 October 1934, 841.00 P.R./358 with 845.00/866, Records of the Department of State.
session was on in Bombay, the Government authorities did not have occasion to worry about the actions or decisions of the Congress as had been the case in earlier years. This was attributed to the fact the Moslems stood apart from the Congress and in favour of the Communal Award which the Hindus condemned. Moreover, the defection from and the factional divisions in the Congress and the retirement of Gandhi had shown that the chances of effective opposition to the Government had decreased. Keith had been confidentially told that the Government, as it estimated the situation at the moment, was confident of holding the control of the next Legislative Assembly for which elections were being held. He had also heard the opinion that a session of the Congress might be convened annually for a time, but with Gandhi out of it and Vallabhbhai Patel perhaps remaining as the leader, it would not be strongly influential. The impression about Rajendra Prasad, who was presiding over the Bombay Congress, was that "he will not be a leader of great consequence in future political developments in this country." So, the Congress, Keith reported, "is dead as a political force." He further reported that the extreme left would go to the socialist organization which, although not a cause for too much worry at the moment, could be of much greater strength and seriousness in five years' time. (34)

After the Bombay session, Gandhi retired from the Congress and interested himself in reviving the village industries for which he established the All-India Village Industries Association. Edward M. Groth, the US Consul in Calcutta, noted that in the
Government circles Gandhi's "astuteness" was recognized as much these days as it ever was and, in fact, it was generally believed that his retirement in no way indicated the setting of his star. Well-informed persons had told Groth that the All-India Village Industries Association would later prove to be "another political weapon of great strength and importance, especially if Gandhi is successful in eventually using his social welfare work among the depressed classes for political purposes."

"Such a combination", Groth continued, "would undoubtedly prove to be an element to be reckoned with by the Government." (35)

In fact, the Home Department of the Government of India sent out a confidential circular to the Provincial Governments — which later became famous as the Hallett circular — in which it warned them against giving help and co-operation to the organizers of the All-India Village Industries Association as this organization, in their view, was yet another plank of the "astute" Gandhi to serve his political purpose. They also instructed local officers that they should acquaint the peasants with the benefits derived from various Government agencies. (36) Consul Groth, while reporting about this circular, commented that apparently Gandhi's activities in the establishment of the All-India Village Industries Association and its work among the peasants "had roused the Government, which, through instructions contained in the circular

---

35 Consul in Calcutta (Edward M. Groth) to Secretary of State, 5 January 1935, 845.00/876, Records of the Department of State.

36 For the debate on this circular, see India, The Legislative Assembly Debates, vol. 1, session 1, 1935, pp. 45-74.
endeavored to offset the Mahatma's activities." (37) Later he noted that Gandhi's All-India Village Industries Association had given "considerable impetus" to the rural reconstruction movement and the Government itself took steps towards formulating such schemes of their own. Pointing out that the Government would thus be able to nullify the effect of Gandhi's plans, he wrote:

As these schemes of the Provincial Governments take a more definite form, a portion of the federal government's funds will be allotted to the various provinces; hence it will slowly, but surely, be able to counteract Mr. Gandhi's activities in this regard. The central government undoubtedly has a decided advantage in this particular encounter, for its financial position is good at this moment and it can therefore, without embarrassment or great drain on its exchequer, pour large sums into this work which Mr. Gandhi cannot hope to provide or equal, thus, almost at the outset, taking the wind out of Mahatma's sails. (38)

The Muslim Politics

The deep-rooted hostility between Hindus and Muslims was noted by the American officials in India earlier. During the period under consideration also there were several incidents of bloodshedding between the two communities. This led Consul Groth to sympathize with the British as a peace-maker. While making a review of events in 1935, he wrote that these riots "afforded an insight into the communal problem and clearly indicated the difficult and thankless task which Britain faces as a peace-maker

37 Consul in Calcutta (Groth) to Secretary of State, 13 February 1935, 845.00/880, Records of the Department of State.

38 Consul in Calcutta (Groth) to Secretary of State, 17 April 1935, 845.00/882, Records of the Department of State. Gandhi had announced that he would be glad "if Government were to take the wind out of my sails." See D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi* (Bombay, 1952), vol. 4, p. 18.
The American officials had also come to believe that the Congress did not represent the Muslims. "It must be continually borne in mind that the Congress party is definitely Hindu, and its pretensions to serve the Moslems and to be representative in any way of that religious group has no justification in fact," observed Vice Consul Keith. (40) He treated even the Socialist and Communists movements as ramifications of the Hindu Congress movement. (41)

The American officials noted that the real organizations of the Muslims were the All-India Muslim League and the All-India Muslim Conference. Keith reported that in 1928 the inroads having been made by the nationalist movement among the Muslims, the Aga Khan, the influential Muslim religious leader, was "urgently called back from England to counteract that influence." As a result, the All-India Muslim Conference was formally organized in 1929 "to counteract the nationalist trend and to emphasize the necessity for the Muslims to protect their own interests." (42) The Muslim League, founded in 1906, had, according to Keith, most of its leaders from those in national politics, whereas the Conference stressed obtaining the support of

39 Consul in Calcutta (Groth) to Secretary of State, 6 January 1936, 845.00/900, Records of the Department of State.

40 Vice Consul in Calcutta (Gerald Keith) to Secretary of State, 19 July 1934, 845.00/859, Records of the Department of State. See also Consul in Calcutta (Groth) to Secretary of State, 27 January 1936, 845.00/902, Records of the Department of State.

41 See Keith to Secretary of State, 19 July 1934, n. 40.

42 Vice Consul in Calcutta (Keith) to Secretary of State, 22 March 1934, 845.00/844, Records of the Department of State.
the Provincial Muslim leaders. The objectives of both were compatible with one another and they both vigorously backed the White Paper and the Communal Award. When the All-India Congress Committee neither accepted nor rejected the Communal Award, Keith observed that this was done to appease the Muslim elements. But he noted the hopelessness of the situation.

Communal feeling cannot be eliminated owing to the depth of the antipathy between the Hindu and the Moslem. Furthermore, there should be no mistaking that the Mohammedans have no intention of making any concession. While they may from time to time appear to be displeased with certain features of the Communal Award and the White Paper, there can be no hope of their consenting to any arrangements which would deprive them of their present representation under the Award. (43)

Keith further noted that while the Congress was getting disrupted on the issue of Communal Award, "the Muslims are not idling for they know that the protection of their interests rests in their united action and not being inveigled into any illusionary appeals of Mr. Gandhi and his followers." Keith was emphatic that having lived for some time in India one "must inevitably" arrive at the opinion that:

... the Muslims would like India to have its independence were it not that such freedom, if obtained, would mean no less than subservience to the Hindus, inescapable because of the numerical superiority of the latter, and if the domination of the country must rest in others hand, they prefer the British rule. There is unity among Muslims which extends beyond the borders of India, for which the nature of their religion is responsible. Like solidarity and instinctive cooperation cannot occur among the Hindus from the very nature of the religious divisions consequent, primarily, upon the caste

43 Vice Consul in Calcutta (Keith) to Secretary of State, 11 June 1934, 845.00/852, Records of the Department of State.
system, and secondly, upon widely varying religious practices and customs, collectively termed 'Hinduism'. (44)

The upshot of all this — the devisions within "the Congress or Hindu forces" and the unity of the Muslim forces "in their anxiety to benefit by the Communal Award" — was that the British position in India at this time could well be regarded, observed Keith, as more secure than it had been for many years in the past. Therefore, in offering reforms as included in the White Paper, it could be assumed, Keith continued, that the tendency of the British Government would be "unquestionably to hold strongly to, if not increasing, the safeguards desired." The Indian politicians, of course, will volubly object to them. But this will have no effect as, Keith believed, "the only hope of the Indian receiving any further liberalized political powers beyond those now under consideration and contained in the White Paper will only come about through a possible eventual change in the political character of the British Government itself." (45)

In February 1935, there were renewed attempts to bridge the gulf between the Congress and the League on the question of the Communal Award and, to that end, there were talks between Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Congress, and M. A. Jinnah, the President of the League. They had "heart-to-heart talks"

44 Vice Consul in Calcutta (Keith) to Secretary of State, 23 August 1934, 845.00/862, Records of the Department of State.

45 Vice Consul in Calcutta (Keith) to Secretary of State, 24 September 1934, 845.00/863, Records of the Department of State.
and yet the talks proved abortive. (46) US Consul, Edward M. Groth, did not regard this result as unexpected, "especially in view of the fact that the new Bill [the Government of India Bill, 1935 based upon the recommendation of the Joint Select Committee of the Parliament] embodies the principle of the communal Award." He noted that this very fact made the "Hindu Nationalists" remark that no co-operation or concessions were to have been expected from the Muslims in this regard as they felt that their interests were already well protected. "Undoubtedly, there is considerable truth in this contention", observed Groth. But he added: "On the other hand, if the Hindus had the upperhand, they would be just as unyielding." (47) So the problem continued to be baffling.

The Making of a Constitution

After the Second Round Table Conference in London, the process of constitution-making for India was continued by the British Government. The Third Round Table Conference was held in London during November-December 1932 which mainly reaffirmed the decisions taken earlier by the two conferences, apart from filling in some of the details arising out of the previous decisions. In March 1933, the British Government issued a White Paper containing their proposals with regard to the Indian Constitution which was submitted to Joint Select Committee of both


47 Consul in Calcutta (Edward M. Groth) to Secretary of State, 15 March 1935, 845.00/881, Records of the Department of State.
Houses of the Parliament for their consideration. After a long deliberation, this Committee submitted its report towards the end of 1934 broadly in favour of the Government's proposals. In February 1935, a bill — the Government of India Bill, 1935 — incorporating the recommendations of the Committee was introduced in the Parliament which having been passed by the Parliament received the Royal assent on 2 August 1935.

Thus was born the Government of India Act 1935, after almost six years of labour. The main feature of the Act was that it established a Federation of India comprising both the British India and the Indian (Princely) States and gave autonomy to the Provinces. (48) But the powers of the Ministers responsible to the Legislatures both at the Centre and in the Provinces were so hedged in with "safeguards" and "special responsibilities" of the Governor-General and the Governors at their respective levels that although the British called the Act "a great achievement of constructive political thought," (49) the Indian nationalists regarded it as a framework "designed to facilitate and perpetuate the domination and exploitation of the people of India." (50)

The US officials had been following the process of constitution making with interest. They noted that the Third Round Table Conference was to be held on a smaller scale (51) and

50 See resolution of the 49th Session of the Indian National Congress in All India Congress Committee, n. 26, p. 77.
51 Counsellor of the US Embassy in London (Ray Atherton) to Secretary of State, 1 November 1932, 845.01 Conference/33, Records of the Department of State.
that even Liberals of India protested against their inadequate representation. The Indian Princes were to be represented by their Ministers. Noting the importance of the Princes and the British for one another, the American Consul General in India, A. C. Frost, wrote:

"It is in British interest to have the Princes as counter-weight against the numerically dominant Hindus, and it is to the interest of the Princes to enter a federation voluntarily rather than to be drawn into the orbit of a nationalistic India by force of subsequent events, and to take part in the framing of the organic act when British influence is more than it would be later when the Central Government would be more completely in Indian hands." (52)

Frost also noted that the Third Conference aroused less interest in India than the earlier ones had. Perhaps Indian public opinion was becoming "very impatient for concrete results." (53) But when the White Paper was announced, he observed widespread criticisms in India—as widespread as those which had followed upon the publication of Simon Report in June 1930. (54) Charge Atherton in London, however, was so impressed by the White Paper that he called it a "revolutionary" document. (55)

52 Consul General in Calcutta (A. C. Frost) to Secretary of State, 8 December 1932, 845.00/803, Records of the Department of State.

53 Consul General in Calcutta (Frost) to Secretary of State, 26 January 1933, 845.00/807, Records of the Department of State.

54 Consul General in Calcutta (Frost) to Secretary of State, 12 April 1933, 845.01 Conference/100, Records of the Department of State.

55 Charge d'Affaires ad interim (Ray Atherton) to Secretary of State, 21 March 1933, 845.01 Conference/94, Records of the Department of State.
When the Report of the Joint Select Committee was published, Edward M. Groth, the American Consul in Calcutta noted that there was a "deluge" of criticism in India although it was less "rabid" than expected. He also observed that the condemnation by the Muslims was more reserved than that emanating from the Hindus. (56) "This is not surprising and may be attributed to the fact that the Moslems," he pointed out, "have much more to gain than the Hindus by the operation of the proposed reforms." (57) He reported that it was the feeling of well-informed persons that the "Moslem opposition to the Report is more feigned than real and that the leaders of that community, though reasonably well satisfied, have felt that it would be bad policy to let this become known." (58)

Groth noted that the Government of India Bill drew widespread criticism from the Nationalist press as well as from members of the Legislative Assembly in which the Congress

The All India Muslim Conference noted with satisfaction that the Communal Award had been incorporated in the Report of the Joint Select Committee but criticized the full Report on the ground that it had been conceived "in a spirit of distrust of the Indian people." It, therefore, declared that "the best course for Indians is not to reject the reforms but to make united efforts to attain full responsible Government". Resolution of the Working Committee of the All India Muslim Conference passed on 23 December 1934. See Nripendra Nath Mitra, ed., *The Indian Annual Register 1934* (Calcutta, n.d.), vol. 2, pp. 310-11.

Consul in Calcutta (Edward M. Groth) to Secretary of State, 21 January 1935, 845.00/878, Records of the Department of State.

Consul in Calcutta (Groth) to the Secretary of State, 5 January 1936, 845.00/876, Records of the Department of State.
Party, due to the election held towards the end of 1934, had now a substantial representation and was "in a more or less truculent mood." The Government of India Bill was very bulky since it contained many items which could very well have been the subjects of subsequent legislation. But these were embodied in this basic law because, he felt, the Government knew that it might prove to be difficult, if not impossible, to enact them by ordinary legislative methods. "In view of the great amount of opposition which the White Paper and the Report of the Joint Select Committee aroused, this undoubtedly was a wise proviso," he observed. (59)

Groth did not fail to notice that during this time the attitude of the Princes had hardened over those parts of the Bill which provided for their accession to the Federation. (60) He attributed this to the changed correlations of forces in India. During the time of the First Round Table Conference, the Princes had felt that the Congress with Gandhi as its leader was going to win the political battle in India. It was in their interest to approve any important proposal which came from the Congress. Hence they readily gave their support to the Federation idea which, according to Groth, was "primarily a Congress measure and not one suggested by the British Government as some misinformed

59 Consul in Calcutta (Groth) to Secretary of State, 12 February 1935, 845.00/880, Records of the Department of State.

60 The hardened attitude of the Princes was reflected in the proceedings of the Chamber of Princes which met in New Delhi on 22-23 January 1935. The Chamber declared that the success of the Federal scheme will depend upon "the clear recognition of sovereignty of the States and their rights under treaties and engagements." See Nripendra Nath Mitra, ed., The Indian Annual Register 1935 (Calcutta, n.d.), vol. 1, pp. 429-34.
persons seem to believe." But with the passing of time, the Princes witnessed "the defeat of the obstructionist policies of the Congress and saw the gradual decline of Mr. Gandhi's popularity ... as well as a strengthening of the British Government's position in the administration of this country." In view of this as also the apprehension that once they acceded to the Federation their position would become irrevocable, the Princes were now having second thoughts. So, it appeared to Groth, it was "a case of betting on the wrong horse, and then trying to withdraw when what seem to be the inevitable results of the race become evident." (61) Later, he added that in these changed circumstances the Princes were demanding greater safeguards for their position than provided in the Bill because they felt that in the Federation they would be overwhelmed by British India which, he noted, has had "a taste of democratic institutions restricted though this contact may have been...." He further observed:

This may be likened to capitalists who through circumstances or otherwise, may have decided it would be most expedient to join forces with a socialist organization; but who, as the time for joining approached, felt that the tenets of the organization were, after all, unacceptable to them. (62)

Subsequently, there was a report that the Princes were satisfied that the Bill represented what was originally proposed and accepted by them at the First Round Table Conference. Groth

61 Consul in Calcutta (Groth) to Secretary of State, 15 March 1935, 845.00/881, Records of the Department of State.

62 Consul in Calcutta (Groth) to Secretary of State, 17 April 1935, 845.00/882, Records of the Department of State.
doubted the veracity of this report and felt that it was Government-inspired. "It is felt," he wrote, "that this view is rather optimistic one and probably colored by the Government's desire to create a favorable and optimistic atmosphere so that when the time comes for the India Bill to become law, there will be less opposition than has thus far evidenced itself." (63)

Groth also made a shrewd reading of the attitude of the Congress in this matter. He had been to Delhi a little earlier where, from conversations with "well-informed" persons, he found that the feeling was that the Congress would work the Bill once it became law, "if for no other reason than to secure a substantial slice of patronage which will then become available." He continued:

The Congress Party and other non-Government members of the Assembly were likely to continue their very vocal opposition and their obstructionist tactics to all measures proposed by the Government, so long as they know that they will not have to assume any active responsibility for their resolutions, proposals, or condemnations. (64)

Finally, the Government of India Bill was passed, despite criticisms and controversies. In Groth's opinion, no more important piece of legislation had been enacted since the British Government took over from the East India Company. "It constitutes a long step in the direction of more or less complete self-government, even though that ultimate goal is still comparatively remote", he commented. He was sure that the ideal proclaimed by

63 Consul in Calcutta (Groth) to Secretary of State, 17 May 1935, 845.00/883, Records of the Department of State.

64 Groth to Secretary of State, 15 March 1935, n. 61.
the British Parliament in 1917 of gradual development of self-governing institutions in India with a view to progressive realization of responsible government as an integral part of the British Empire, was now "much nearer realization than at any time in the country's history." (65)

Later, Groth made a review of the political events in India in 1935 and noted that the year was comparatively dull in the sense that there was no Civil Disobedience. But controversies were not lacking and, amidst these, the Government of India Bill was passed. He reiterated that from a constructive point of view, the Constitution was "undoubtedly the outstanding piece of legislation, affecting this country, to be enacted for some time." The year also saw the Federal Reserve Bank coming into operation. (66) Thus 1935, in Groth's opinion, "marked another milestone and possibly a turning point in India's political history." (67)

65 Consul in Calcutta (Groth) to Secretary of State, 7 September 1935, 845.00/890, Records of the Department of State.

66 The Reserve Bank Bill which was introduced in the Legislative Assembly in September 1933 was finally passed in February 1934. The Bank took over the Government account in 1935. While introducing the Bill, Sir George Schuster, the Finance Member, had pointed out that in the view of the Government it was necessary to set up an independent Reserve Bank before the new constitution of India became a reality. See India, The Legislative Assembly Debates, vol. 6, session 6, 1933, pp. 1176-80.

67 Consul in Calcutta (Groth) to Secretary of State, 6 January 1936, 845.00/900, Records of the Department of State.
THE NON-OFFICIAL VIEW

As already indicated, there was lessening of American interest in the political developments in India during 1932. This downward trend continued in 1933 and 1934. This was reflected in the fact that the number of news-items and editorial comments on events concerning India were considerably less not only in the columns of newspapers and journals in general but also in such pro-nationalist journals like The Nation, New Republic and Unity. The Christian Century also devoted less attention to India than it did in 1930 but its readers were kept more informed about India than the other three journals just mentioned because of the fact that in the person of P. O. Philip, it had a capable staff correspondent in India. (68) In the newspapers, whatever the quantum of the reports on India, the topics which figured prominently were: (1) silver, tariffs, currency problem, etc. and (2) the work of the constitution-making in London. (69) News about the general political development in India was very scanty. This led the Christian Science Monitor to remark that India had been "almost without history lately" except for the recent earthquake. (70) The situation improved to some extent in 1935 due

68 P. O. Philip was also the Secretary of the National Christian Council in India. The Christian Century almost regularly published reports from him since 1931.

69 See New York Times, 3 December 1933, Part 4, p. 4.

70 Christian Science Monitor, 6 February 1934, quoted in Walter Charles Mackett, "Some Aspects of the Development of American Opinion on India, 1918-1947", Ph. D. Thesis, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, 1957, p. 218. The reference to the "earthquake" here is to the one which shook eastern parts of India, particularly Bihar, in January 1934. The Literary Digest, which in 1930 and 1931 had given good coverage to Indian political developments, also chose only such topics as Gama, the greatest wrestler; the Nizam, one of the wealthiest in the world; the Maharajas of Alwar and Baroda; Udai Shankar, the dancer; the performers of the rope-tricks; etc. in this period. See Literary Digest, vols 115, 116, 117.
to the deliberations on the Government of India Bill and the results thereof.

**Gandhi a Spent Force?**

Much of this was due to role of Gandhi and the consequent state of politics in India during this time. The "cat-and-mouse game" of arrest, fast, and release played between Gandhi and the Government; the suspension of Civil Disobedience at the instance of Gandhi; and the attack on Gandhi both from the Right and the Left inside the Congress made the American newspapers and journals speculate as to what exactly was the role of Gandhi in India and what was the nature of this role. Amidst this speculation, one thing about which they were sure was that the Congress was no more a united body and therefore the British could face with "equanimity a disrupted opposition lacking the prestige of Gandhi's leadership." (71) This comparatively eased situation had the effect of dampening their interest in India.

Early in August 1933, *Newsweek* found that the "small, spectacled, meek Mahatma Gandhi has been popping in and out of prison like a cuckoo in and out of a clock." It noted that when Gandhi returned to jail in August, few strikes were called and few shops closed in protest. Even the members of the Congress showed that "they were weary of civil disobedience." From this, it concluded that "Gandhi's influence which has waned before, is evidently waning again." It even suggested by its caption that "He May Be India's Forgotten Man." (72)

---


72 *Newsweek* (Dayton), 2 (12 August 1933), p. 11.
Gandhi, again, appeared to the Americans as enigmatic. It was "highly significant," according to the New York Times, that Gandhi's followers should be "tired of passive resistance", but, it felt, it was "not altogether safe to predict what Gandhi will do." Gandhi was insisting that there must be "an honorable settlement" with the Government before the Civil Disobedience was called off. Nevertheless, he was authorized by his Party to negotiate with the Viceroy. "Whether it was a case of being very subtle or very erratic, he [Gandhi] has more than once surprised the world, including his own followers", observed this paper. (73) Current History, too, found Gandhi perplexing. (74)

The New York Times became rather harsh on Gandhi when he was unconditionally released on 23 August. Who won the fast? Since he had been released unconditionally, he could claim a victory. "But the popular response among his countrymen is reported to have been lukewarm, and Gandhi's moral weapon may by overuse have become blunted. It would be true of the way people outside of India now feel about Gandhi", it commented. It continued:

After all, passive resistance, if it is exerted for an unyielding, uncompromising demand, is much the same thing as violence. If Gandhi is out to have things his own way, come what may, he might as well organize a Hindu Shirt movement and prepare to use force. (75)

74 Current History (New York), 38 (September 1933), p. 736.
When Gandhi announced that he would abstain from Civil Disobedience until 3 August 1934 and devote his attention to Harijan movement in the intervening period, one of the writers in the New York Times observed that the year ahead would be "a Franciscan year" of Gandhi. "For just as the ascetic St. Francis, a merchant's son, ministered to the lowly and miserable, so will austere Gandhi, son of a businessman; he will minister to the lowliest and most miserable creatures to be found anywhere." (76)

Editorially, however, the paper attributed astuteness to Gandhi in taking this decision. It noted that Gandhi had not promised to abstain from counselling others to practice passive resistance and that was why the British Government was reported to be "a bit thoughtful about Gandhi's truce". Gandhi was, after all, a politician and non-violence for him, too, was primarily a question of expediency. Moreover, what else he could do in the situation of the declining militancy of his followers? Voicing these sentiments, the paper wrote:

One does not hear so much of Gandhi "the saint" as one used to. The world has come to recognize that the weapons employed by the Mahatma may resemble the spiritual weapons of holiness, but at bottom Gandhi is a very astute political leader; as he has every right to be. He makes use of passive resistance because, primarily, that is the only weapon available to the Hindu people.

Gandhi's tactics have not been the direct and unwavering approach of the mystic and the prophet. His course has been marked by great subtlety and, in the long run, by a wholesome respect for hard facts. His latest truce, for instance, is probably

76 Caroline Singer, "India's Untouchables Await Their Day: The Class to Whom Gandhi is Devoting His Year Are at the Heart of a Profound Social and Political Problem", ibid., 3 December 1933, Part 6, p. 10.
not unrelated to a notable decline in militancy among his followers. (77)

In 1934, the American press noted that the Congress, at the instance of Gandhi, had finally suspended the Civil Disobedience; that Gandhi had blessed the attempts of some Congressmen to resurrect the Swaraj Party; and that Gandhi was encountering mounting criticism on the one side from the conservatives led by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and on the other from the leftists led by Jawaharlal Nehru. "Gandhi Loses Grip on Indian Congress: Party Splits as Hindus Flock to Malaviya in anger at Mahatma's Aims" was the headline of a news item in the New York Times. In the body of the report, it said that, according to news from India, "the gentle, white haired Pandit [Madan Mohan Malaviya], and not Mr. Gandhi, is sweeping everything before him." (78) Editorialy also, it saw the Hindu revolt against Gandhi in an enlarged dimension when it wrote that "a majority of the Indian Congress has turned against Gandhi because of his enlightened stand on rights for the Depressed Classes." (79)

When Gandhi announced his retirement from the Congress and his plan to concentrate his attention on the uplift of the

77 "Gandhi Calls Truce", ed., ibid., 16 September 1933, p. 12.
A year later, commenting on Gandhi's costume [loin cloth], the paper remarked that it had now lost its novelty completely for "Millions of men on the beaches of the seven seas today dress like Gandhi." Further it observed: "There was a time when the Mahatma's admirers were convinced that he had a message not only for his own people but for the world. It is irony that so far his pacifist ideas have made no impress on the nations, but his example in dress may have been a powerful if unrecognized factor in popularizing the sun-tan ideas which have swept the world." Ibid., 21 August 1934, p. 16.

78 Ibid., 26 August 1934, Part 4, pp. 1, 3.

79 Ibid., 1 September 1934, p. 12.
village industries and when his proposals were accepted by the Bombay session of the Congress in October, a section of the American press, again, detected clever politics behind his action. The Christian Science Monitor found Gandhi a manoeuvring politician. "The Mahatma is India's greatest moral leader, but also its most astute politician", it observed. (80) The New York Times regarded Gandhi's action as no retirement from politics, because no other leader had taken his place. It also reminded its readers that Gandhi's "earlier withdrawals from world affairs turned out to be merely strategic retirements." As regards his plan to pay more attention to village industries, it felt that Gandhi had touched a practical problem but probably he attached more importance to the production of home-spun goods as a boycott weapon in the struggle with Britain. (81) The Review of Reviews did not feel that Gandhi was a spent force. Gandhi could wait. "Things move slowly in the Orient, far removed from the frantic strivings of the restless West. But Gandhi, apostle of leisurely non-cooperation, can afford to wait. His Indian Nationalists carry on their campaign in a country of 360 millions, awaiting the conciliatory British Labor Party's return to power which may be expected by 1936", it observed. (82) Current History believed that Gandhi had suffered a loss of prestige because of his theories but, because of his personality, he was still "the most powerful leader in India." Besides, his

80 Christian Science Monitor, 30 October 1934, p. 1, quoted in Mackett, n. 70, p. 222.
82 Review of Reviews, 90 (December 1934), p. 25.
retirement did not by any means indicate that "he has forever run away from the battle." Now that he had removed himself from active politics, he could observe the struggle from a "strategic position". (83)

Gandhi's repeated fasts and pessimistic reports about his future plans had an effect on the American liberal press also. In July 1933, The Nation took note of the fact that Gandhi had refused to call off the Civil Disobedience despite persistent reports that he favoured an end of the movement. It could not see how Gandhi could do it in view of the continuance of the repressive ordinances of the Government, continued imprisonment of thousands of Congressmen, and refusal of Lord Willingdon to have a conference with Gandhi. It felt that honourable settlement with the Government with the grant of self-government and civil liberty to the Indians was far in the future. (84) When Gandhi again went to jail in August, it believed that "not improbably he will never emerge alive" from this. It again was full of praise for Gandhi:

Without any of the adjuncts which we regard as essential to power — without fortune, or family, or office, or armed supporters — this humble Indian is known and reverenced all over the world because almost alone among the so-called great of the day there is not a shadow of a doubt of his utter unselfishness, of his complete devotion to the cause. We may or may not believe in Gandhi's objectives, but unless all of man's supposed progress upward from the cave is fictitious, unless the idea that reason is destined to prevail over brute force is false, then the methods and spirit of the Mahatma are bound to

83 Current History, 41 (December 1934), p. 354; see also Lester Hutchinson, "Gandhi: Politician With a Halo", ibid., pp. 413-18.

84 The Nation, 137 (26 July 1933), p. 86.
survive his weak and ungainly body and become an increasing power on the earth. (85)

But only two weeks after this, The Nation published a letter from S. K. Shah of Bombay in which he contended that India was tired of struggle, that the Labour never supported Gandhi, that the Civil Disobedience was a failure, and that it was a Himalayan blunder on the part of Gandhi to insist that the Congress should not call off the campaign. (86) When Gandhi was released on 23 August prematurely, this journal noted that he had not announced his plans. It rebuked the correspondents of the newspapers for not finding it possible to believe, despite lessons in the past, that Gandhi did not compromise. It expected that the "accustomed round" will probably shortly begin and Gandhi will again be in jail after civil disobedience. (87) But Gandhi soon announced that he would not offer civil disobedience until 3 August 1934 and The Nation had no comment to make. It also did not choose to comment when the Congress finally called off the Civil Disobedience and Gandhi retired from the Party. (88)

The depressed mood of the New Republic can best be surmised from the fact that for almost a year and half from the second half of 1933, it did not comment on Indian affairs at all. Before entering this phase, however, it published an article by

---

85 Ibid., 137 (16 August 1933), p. 170.
86 Ibid., 137 (30 August 1933), p. 242.
87 Ibid., 137 (6 September 1933), p. 255.
88 It may be noted in this connection that Oswald Garrison Villard, who held high opinion about Gandhi's method of conducting the Indian struggle, was no more the editor of The Nation. He remained only the contributing editor of the journal since January 1933.
Jonathan Mitchell, who for several years had been the European Correspondent of the New York World, to the effect that the United States should direct its attention to India, China, and Soviet Russia, because they were potentially good markets for its manufactures. (89) It also published an extract from J. T. Sunderland's letter in which he lamented that the Western world was paying too much attention to what Japan was doing in Manchuria, and not enough to what Great Britain was doing in India, which, he felt, on several counts, was much worse than Japan's actions in Manchuria. (90)

The Christian Century recognized that it was futile for the British Government to try to checkmate Gandhi's influence by imprisoning him. "So little of him is physical, and so little does his influence depend upon his physical presence in any particular place, that Gandhi in prison is worth more to the cause of Indian liberty than Gandhi free", it observed. (91) But, almost echoing Gandhi's own thoughts, it soon came to realize that there appeared to be "no logical end to this alternation of arrest and fast." It hoped that he will find some other method of expressing his devotion to the cause. The fast had lost much of its effectiveness as a method of influencing opinion either British or Indian. Gandhi was released but there was no change in the British policy. His own party also was less stirred by his latest fast than on the earlier occasions. Therefore, the journal came to believe:

91 Christian Century, 50 (9 August 1933), p. 1004. See also Ibid., 50 (30 August 1933), p. 1075.
"The conclusion is inescapable that the force of such a demonstration is weakened by repetition." (92) Gandhi's subsequent declaration that he would not court arrest for one year and that he would concentrate his attention on Harijan work failed to cheer it up. It was possible that a modus vivendi would now be available which would help a free exchange of ideas between Gandhi and the British administration which the British Liberals, in its opinion, so much wanted. "Yet it must be recognized that Gandhi has not added anything to his diminishing political power by this decision", the journal commented. His abandonment of Civil Disobedience in favour of Harijan work was likely to increase the feeling of the "impatient Indian nationalists" that the Mahatma had gone off on a tangent. It might, therefore, give impetus to the movement to transfer political leadership to their hands. Thus, "... the result", in the opinion of this journal, "so far as reaching a peaceful modus vivendi is concerned, may be to increase rather than lessen the difficulties of the English." (93)

Unity retained its faith that Gandhi was creating and directing the spiritual power which in due course would be able to achieve freedom for India. But it also conceded: "Whether this great leader by his action and in his own lifetime is going to secure the emancipation of his people may still be doubtful." It did not matter much, however. Gandhi was transforming the nation by instilling into the tens of millions of its people "a dignity of manhood, a capacity of suffering and sacrifice, an ideal of heroism." He had raised by his efforts and example, the

92 Ibid., 50 (6 September 1933), p. 1099.
93 Ibid., 50 (27 September 1933), p. 1196.
moral level of an entire race and had thereby made Indians worthy of a liberty which now for the first time they had the power to win. Therefore, it asked: "In the face of such a spiritual miracle as this, what matters it whether independence come tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow?" "The end itself is sure", was its confident assertion. (94)

There was no detraction, however, in the faith of the Christian Century and Unity that Gandhi was the greatest representative of the forces of peace in the world. The Christian Century, therefore, nominated Gandhi for the Nobel Peace Prize for 1933. It wrote:

The Nobel Committee could find no worthy recipient for the award for 1933.... Even if Gandhi were all the kinds of an impractical fanatic that his hardest critics think he is, it would still be true that he is the world's foremost representative of the principle of non-violence. If he is not the most logical candidate for the Nobel prize, then the popular idea of the function and purpose of that prize needs to be revised. (95)

Unity endorsed the nomination made by the Christian Century. Obviously, he was the best candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize: "obvious, because the Indian saint is preeminently the greatest man of peace in our time!" But it was also an impossible suggestion for the trustees of the Nobel Prize, the journal felt, were not interested in honouring peace champions of the Gandhian type. (96)

In subsequent months, the Christian Century noted that Gandhi was meeting with stubborn opposition from the Hindu orthodox elements. Surely, in two years time he had almost

94 Unity, 111 (21 August 1933), pp. 327-8.
96 Unity, 113 (2 April 1934), p. 45.
succeeded in "cracking wide open an unjust social order that had defiantly resisted challenge for centuries." But he had done this "at the expense of the unity and the driving power of the national Congress movement." The caste Hindus led by Malaviya were opposing him on the question of communal award and the young elements were charging him of putting premium on an unimportant issue. It was deeply disturbed that neither India nor the outside world was understanding the deep meaning of Gandhi's new posture. Gandhi had striven to achieve India's freedom without resorting to force even before. But now "he penetrates to an even more greatly needed spiritual principle, namely, that the doing of justice must precede the gaining of justice." Will the world face the implication of this new religious crusade? In an elevated mood, the journal observed:

What our generation therefore needs to see in India at this hour is that, as Gandhi appears to the superficial eye to be fading out of the political picture, he is actually offering mankind a revival of prophetic insight. He really is penetrating to the lowest depths of India's basic spiritual problem, and in so doing he is providing food for meditation for those in every land who believed that the crisis in history in which we are now involved requires that religion shall place itself in the forefront of a new struggle for human freedom. Will India follow Gandhi, subjecting herself to the searching examination and agonizing changes which are involved in righting the wrongs of her own untouchables, before she presses on to demand the righting of her national wrongs? It is not likely. But even more important is the question whether those who demand liberation in religion's name in other parts of the world will face the implication of the insight which Gandhi's harijan movement offers. Will they see that a successful onslaught by religion on the injustices of a pagan social order requires a prior dedication of religion itself to the cleansing of its own relations with the system which it sets itself to redeem? (97)

And then came Gandhi's withdrawal from "political command" at the Bombay session of the Congress. The Christian Century appreciated that Gandhi had refused to go on with the sort of leadership which is so familiar in western politics -- "a leadership in which there is no more than approximate agreement on a few issues between the party commander and his followers." But it also noted that the effect of Gandhi's step will be great. A struggle was likely to develop within the Congress between the conservative elements led by Malaviya and the younger elements, led by Jawaharlal Nehru, who believed that India required both a social and political revolution. "Some day Britain will realize that, in the withdrawal of Gandhi from politics, she has lost her best friend", the Christian Century ruefully remarked. (98)

Spotlight on Nehru

Even before 1934, there had been references to Nehru in the American press. In December 1928, the Literary Digest, under the caption, "India's Younger Set Out For Force", had pointed out that Jawaharlal Nehru, the leader of the younger politicians in India, did not believe that Indian freedom was likely to come through the instrumentality of those Indians "who understand English." Nehru, instead, pinned his hopes on the peasants, the industrial workers, and members of other such professions for the success of India's struggle, reported this journal. The journal also reported that Nehru's mind was clearly moving in the direction of Russian Communism. (99)


It has already been seen that on the eve of the Lahore Congress, Upton Close had presented Nehru as "the idol of Young India" through the columns of no less a paper than the New York Times. (100) During the turbulent days of 1930 also, his name used to crop up in the press now and then as the President of the Indian National Congress and, more specifically, as the leader of the rising generation of India who had no belief in the Gandhian method of non-violence as a matter of creed. (101) Subsequently, the Living Age reproduced, in the form of an article, his statement in which he admitted that he had "no other profession, no other business, no other aim than to fight British imperialism and to drive it out from India." (102) In the autumn of 1933, again, his name figured in the press when, after his release from the prison, he had exchange of letters and ideas with Gandhi. The New York Times published extracts from this exchange of letters under the heading: "Vested Interests Assailed in India ... Britain Heads the List ... Princes Next...." The news-item further said that "Pandit Nehru's letter, frankly radical in tone, is regarded by many British in India as an out-and-out Communist document." (103) Current History also reported that a break had taken place in India between Nehru's "radical followers" and the moderates on the issue of divesting the various interests — the British, the

100 See Chapter II, pp. 66-68.
101 See Chapter IV, pp. 142, 146.
102 Jawaharlal Nehru, "Long Live India", Living Age (Boston), 339 (January 1931), pp. 467-9. This was his statement before the trial judge on 24 October 1930 in the Naini Central Prison.
Princes and the millionaires — of their property to secure greater social justice for the common man. (104) P. O. Philip, writing in the Christian Century, gave a more comprehensive view of what transpired between Nehru and Gandhi in the talks. While Nehru expressed his faith in the leadership of Gandhi, his pronounced socialistic views were, Philip reported, reflected in the plea that with the failure of capitalism it had become urgent for the national movement to formulate a clear economic program. Philip emphasized that Nehru was "a great leader of the national movement in India." (105)

But Nehru emerged in more prominent colours and in a more systematic way in 1934 than ever before. The Christian Century pointed out that it was important to look ahead towards the type of leadership which was likely to succeed Gandhi in India if he failed to resume his leadership at the end of his voluntary abstention from civil disobedience in August. "Undoubtedly," it wrote, "the Congress leader most likely to supplant Gandhi in directing the political campaign is Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru." It described him as a "romantic young figure" suspected by the British of "extreme left-wing tendencies." It then quoted him on the question of violence versus non-violence and commented: "A shift of the Indian nationalist movement from Gandhi's non-violence as a philosophy of life to Nehru's non-violence as an expedient might have some far-reaching effects on history." (106) Current History

also drew attention to Nehru's speeches and writings and pointed out to the possibility of his giving a new direction to the Indian politics -- "of a sort in which constitutional arrangements will be secondary." (107) When he was arrested, again, in February, a report in the New York Times cited him as the "fiery All-India Nationalist Congress leader." (108)

A more integrated picture of Nehru was presented by W. A. Visser't Hooft, the Executive Secretary of the World's Christian Student Federation and the Geneva correspondent of the Christian Century, in May 1934. (109) Superficially, he pointed out, India at the moment presented a depressing picture of "innumerable groups engaged in quarrelsome discussions about problems of secondary importance." But if one dug deeper, he would meet another India "which thinks long, long thoughts and which looks beyond the days of communal strife, of discussions about the Poona Pact and White Paper proposals to a coming time when India will emerge from its present impotence and become a nation in its own right." Who shall become the leader of this forward-looking India? Some time ago, the obvious answer would have been Mahatma Gandhi. But the question was not easily answered now, the author observed.

Gandhi, the author pointed out, was still looked upon generally as the greatest living Indian but the reality was that his followers — the ones who would act as he would have them act — constituted "only a small band." This young India must have a leader as modern as its thought-processes were. The one man who answered to this description, the author held, was Jawaharlal Nehru. "Though born of a family of Kashmiri Brahmins, Nehru is altogether a man of the twentieth century, a man who knows as much about the 'acids of modernity' as Walter Lippmann himself, a man thoroughly emancipated from the traditions of his own land and thoroughly converted to that supra-national faith which is secular rationalism." (110) So the title, "Idol of young India", attached to him was "no more eastern rhetoric but full of significance." The author wondered if there was any other "idol" of youth who had so little of the demagogue about him. He also posed the problem whether Gandhi and Nehru would be able to continue their present collaboration. Their present collaboration was a fact. "But," the author observed, "ideas have an inherent force of their own and the gulf between Gandhi, ascetic teacher of old Hindu wisdom, and Nehru, product of Harrow and Cambridge and steeped in Marx and Lenin, is bound to grow."

True, at the moment there was a tragic conflict in the soul of young India as to whom to choose finally: Gandhi or Nehru? "But a day will come when India will have to face the alternative and accept the consequences of its choice", the author confidently

110 Ibid., p. 696.
predicted. (111)

The *Living Age*, through an article by Harold Laski, brought to the fore, in still sharper tones, the qualities of Nehru, apart from his ideological convictions. "Swaraj is in his blood, for his father [Pandit Motilal Nehru] also was a gallant fighter in the cause of Indian freedom. But Mr. Nehru is much more radical person than his father could ever have been. Where his father was gentle, compromising, patient, he is stern, unbending, ardent for immediate action." And more: "On the bare threshold of middle age he has many great qualities. He has courage, ... he has self-confidence of the leader who knows what he wants, he has a winning and decisive personality." Such were the glowing words in which Nehru was presented to the Americans. (112)

111 Ibid., p. 697. This article drew an interesting letter from Mary Leitch of Claremont, California. Now that Nehru was the leader of the nationalists in India who did not believe in non-violence as a matter of creed, she felt that a new situation had arisen in India which portended violence. She got deeply worried about the fate of the 4,000 missionaries in India for "the infuriated natives will not know one white face from another." She, therefore, suggested that the editor of the *Christian Century*, since both he and his journal were "well known" in India, should go there that summer and advise Gandhi and Nehru. She was sure that both of them would welcome advice from "such an American friend as you [the editor]." Moreover, he should take along with him one or two retired American Generals, the ones who had seen service in the World War. They should be "Christian men, of course." She further wrote: "They [the Generals] know war strategy. Their advice would be much appreciated. They know how to use a little poison gas - in self-defence, of course." She believed that the editor of the *Christian Century*, by acting up to her advice, would render such service to the people of India at this time that, "in return, when the storm breaks, the nationalist would grant a place of safety to the 4,000 missionaries." This letter was published in the journal under the caption: "How the Editor Might Spend a Pleasant Summer." See ibid., 51 (13 June 1934), p. 805.

112 Harold Laski, "Persons and Personages: Pundit Nehru", *Living Age*, 346 (June 1934), pp. 317-19. This was a reproduction of an article published in the London *Daily Herald*. 
It is interesting to find that on 10 February 1934, i.e., just two days before he was rearrested, Nehru penned an article which was published in The Nation subsequently. (113) Fresh from his tour of Bihar which had been severely rocked by an earthquake, he referred to the damage done by it and to the noble sentiments aroused in the poorest and the middle class people who, despite their miserable condition, came forward generously to help the sufferers. He immediately switched on to the "other earthquakes" which were not caused by "unthinking nature but by thinking man." "Human masses," he wrote, "when their lot becomes unbearable, rise up and smash the order that enslaves them." Further: "And there are political earthquakes when a government, fearful for its existence, loses all self-control, all sense of perspective, all dignity, and begins to behave as a mob that has no clear purpose except that of destruction and the desire to revenge itself on its adversaries." Such was the Government of India and incomprehensible were the terror and torture to which innocent people were exposed especially in the districts of Bengal. After giving a gruesome picture of this, Nehru concluded: "And is it not a mockery for us to talk of constitutions and all parties conferences and reforms and elections and the like when this grim tragedy faces us?" (114)

This was the grim mood of Nehru which was revealed to the Americans in his own words. But the other sides of his personality —


114 Ibid., p. 411.
a loving father and an intellectual who saw Anglo-Indian relations in an historical perspective — too were exposed to the Americans in his own words. This was done through his "Prison Letters to Indira" serialized in Asia in the form of articles interspersed with beautiful photographs taken from various phases of his nationalist life. (115)

Significantly, V. K. Krishna Menon — the bete noire of many Americans in the post-Independence period — also got introduced to the Americans during this time. He wrote an article in The Nation in which he directed the attention of his readers to the emergence of militant organizations of peasants and workers in India. (116) These, he said, were not troubled about metaphysics but were greatly stirred by the reality of hunger and want. "For fourteen years now," he wrote, "Indian insurgency has allowed itself to be harnessed to Gandhian pacifism and the politics of loving one's enemy. The personality of Mahatma Gandhi transformed the life of India.... But against the armed might and economic power of the empire it availed little in the way of successful resistance. Against the lathi, the folded hands of men and women are hardly a shield." He pointed out that the emergence of the working men's movement under the leadership of young men and women, whose names were not known, had ended this old order. The Government, too, acknowledged this new menace:

115 "Prison Letters to Indira", Asia, 34 (September-December 1934), pp. 544-9; 610-15, 686-9, 756-9,

Its answer was the imprisonment of Jawaharlal Nehru, when all the civil disobedience prisoners were being released. Nehru is 'seditionist'. So are all these young men. Thus Indian nationalism enters the new phase, and the Empire of Britain launches its war on the Indian workers with ruthless force. (117)

Thus Menon not only revealed himself as the sympathizer of the working class movement but also presented Nehru, as one of the harbingers of this new phase of Indian nationalism which was characterized by the militancy of the peasant and working class organizations.

This is how both Nehru and Menon, who were eventually to play so significant roles in Indo-American relations in the post-Independence era, appeared before the Americans as early as 1934.

The New Constitution

Ever since the end of the Second Round Table Conference in 1931, the American press observed that the work of constitution-making was going on both in India and England. Repression was not the only instrument of British policy in India, the work of building the constitution was also carried on, remarked the New York Times when at the end of the second conference, three committees were set up to sit in India and work out the details. It recognized that "in the face of such popular sentiment as GANDHI unquestionably does represent", it was doubtful whether the Constitution, when adopted, would really work. But, the paper felt, the British Government was thinking of presenting the oppositionist with a concrete scheme of a federated India. "Against that visible achievement the impossibilist policy of GANDHI would make a contrast

117 Ibid., p. 294. The Nation editorially took note of Menon's article and pointed out the hardships faced by the working class in India. Ibid., p. 283.
It later noted that "inspite of the Indian worshipping of the lord of the loin-cloth and spinning wheel, preparations for the making of the Federal Constitution of India have gone on steadily through many disheartening circumstances." (119) So, when the White Paper was announced in March 1933, it hailed it as a culmination of this process of inquiry and debate since the appointment of the Simon Commission. "It is obviously not the complete independence for which GANDHI has asked. The proposed scheme is not dominion status." The paper recognized all this. "But," it felt, "it is a long step in the direction of dominion rule. To that extent it redeems the pledge of gradual education to self-government embodied in the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms immediately after the war." The "most important gain" for the people of India, in its opinion, was "the creation of a single political entity for the entire peninsula." However, these proposals, the paper observed, will please neither "brand of extremists," i.e. neither the followers of Churchill in England nor the followers of Gandhi in India. (120)

Subsequently, the Civil Disobedience was suspended and from this New York Times drew the conclusion that the signs of the times pointed to the acceptance by the Nationalists of the scheme of limited self-government in a united India offered by the British. "The people of India," it felt, "can do business with the British moderates on the old half-a-loaf basis. Otherwise

120 "India's Constitution", ed., ibid., 19 March 1933, Part 4, p. 4.
they will be taking chances on the Winston Churchillites and no loaf at all." (121) It continued to disfavour Churchill's die-hard conservative approach as against the comparatively moderate approach of Sir Samuel Hoare and Stanley Baldwin. (122)

When the report of the Joint Select Committee was published towards the end of 1934, it again drew approval from many American newspapers. The Christian Science Monitor felt that when the report would take the shape of law, Indians would have before them "open portals through which they need only to walk worthily in order to arrive at realization of their most fervent hopes. The pace will depend upon the Indians themselves." (123) The New York Times published an article by P. W. Wilson on the suggested Constitution under a loud caption: "India's Vivid Cavalcade: After Clamourous Turbulent Past and Dreary Centuries of Frustration a Troubled Land Tries a New Course." (124) The author believed that in the age-long annals of Asia, the British Parliament was opening a new chapter. He conceded that there were safeguards in the Constitution which retained many powers in the hands of the British. "But," he commented, "it is an endeavor to associate Indians in a much more responsible manner with the government of their great country." The Los Angeles Times, however, struck a sceptical note when it wrote that the question remained whether a

122 See ibid., 3 December 1933, Part 4, p. 4; 6 December 1934, p. 22; 13 February 1935, p. 18.
country "so long accustomed to autocratic rule by the strong hand can develop really democratic institutions...." (125)

The Government of India Bill became law on 2 August 1935. This gave another occasion to the London correspondent of the New York Times to survey the "monumental" task discharged by Britain. (126) Editorially also, the paper wondered: "Who would have thought a few years ago that a Parliament crowded with Conservatives would pass such a measure?" It believed that the Constitution contained the essentials of a limited self-government whose extension must depend upon experience and time. It alluded to the "safeguards" and opined that the control by the Central Government of the army, finance, foreign affairs, and so on, was "necessary, among other reasons, for the security and stability of India." On the question of Dominion Status, it wrote:

If the Indians have not yet acquired dominion status, they have not yet had sufficient opportunity to fit themselves for it. No inferiority is imputed to them. Self-government, like other arts, has to be learned and practiced. (127)

The New York Times hoped that the "sober opinion will prevail over violent rhetoric" and the new Constitution would have a "fair and honest trial". (128) The Christian Science Monitor also expressed similar views. (129) The Literary Digest favourably reported upon the enactment of the Government of India Bill and the appointment of Lord Linlithgow as the new Viceroy of India.

125 Los Angeles Times, 15 December 1934, p. 5, quoted in Mackett, n. 70, p. 223.
128 Ibid.
129 See Mackett, n. 70, p. 225.
under the caption: "New Era Opening for India." (130) The Review of Reviews found a deep meaning in the enactment of the new Constitution as it symbolized the process of elevation of the coloured races towards a position of equality with the white races. It wrote:

With these vast changes in India, the vast political rights in the people themselves and that look toward the ultimate recognition of India as one of the greatest of the world's sovereignties, the colored races of the world (by which we mean those that are not of European origin and of distinctly white complexion) are breathing deeply of the twentieth-century atmosphere of racial equality and political freedom. (131)

Thus, generally speaking, there was an approval of the Government of India Act, 1935. But there were some doubters even among those circles which were not regarded as liberal. Time felt that it was not clear in London "whether India is being reborn or bound and gagged." (132) The comment of Business Week was interesting. It believed that the British, "alarmed" over mounting opposition to their control in India, set out to do something for the Indians "which would keep them in the Empire" and "preserve Britain's huge investments in this rich eastern peninsula." Finally, they struck out this Act. It commented:

It is a constitution for India, but it provides for little self-government, and there is no mention of Dominion Status. No uncontrolled Indian parliament would allow the British their privileged position in India for long. So, 'until India is better prepared for self-government', London retains the final say on all major moves in the peninsula. (133)

130 Literary Digest, 120 (17 August 1935), p. 11.
131 Review of Reviews, 92 (September 1935), p. 16.
133 Business Week (Greenwich), 10 August 1935, p. 32.
Business Week did not see anything special for the world business to cheer up if the Constitution was really inaugurated. It observed: "Whether the constitution is accepted by the Indians and put into operation at once makes little difference to world business. Britain has control of the Indian commercial set up and will keep it functioning much as it has in the past." (134)

The liberal press was critical of the proposed Constitution. The New Republic published an article by the British publicist, H. N. Brailsford, in which the proposed Constitution was described as static. (135) The Constitution, the author maintained, reflected "the will of the armed overlord from beyond the seas" like every other system under which India had been governed from the days of the East India Company onwards. "This Constitution," he further wrote, "holds no promise of any planned reconstruction of the social and economic basis of this Peninsula. It will remain, what it is today, a vast rural slum, to which science offers its aid in vain." This also was the angle of criticism of Harold J. Laski in his article published in The Nation. (136) "Nothing in these proposals deals with what is the central problem of India — the intolerable poverty of the masses", he wrote. The Report of the Joint Select Committee appeared to him to be "a supreme example of the technique of economic imperialism in action." The Indian masses, he believed, were handed over "bound and gagged to the forces of capitalism, British and Indian."

134 Ibid.
Editorially also, The Nation regarded the Report as "even more reactionary than the notorious White Paper" since it went beyond the White Paper in strengthening the "safeguards" and in substituting indirect election of the central legislature by the provincial legislatures for direct election by the voters. It further commented:

The Report might be described as an attempt to strengthen British control in India through minor concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie rather than a step toward actual self-government. The British have not yielded on a single point which might be expected to endanger even remotely their rule in India. (137)

The Nation still cherished some hopes from the Labour Party. Pointing to the opposition to the Report by Churchill, it wrote: "If this faction can delay acceptance of the plan until Labor returns to power, it will have rendered India a real service." (138) This was true of the Christian Century also. After pointing out, while commenting on the Government of India Bill, that "realism compels one to recognize that under the candor and high courtesy of British statesmanship at its best the same ruthless economic interests finally determine the treatment of the Indian people which determine the treatment of peoples in the whole capitalist world", it regretted that "a labor government and a Gandhian congress no longer face each other as protagonists of the coming drama." (139)

When the Bill was finally passed, the liberals continued their criticism. The Nation noted that the die-hard conservatives

137 The Nation, 139 (5 December 1934), p. 632.
138 Ibid.
in Britain had attacked the Bill as an abject surrender of the White man's burden. But the Bill actually strengthened British control in India, the journal observed. It also felt that the Bill was "a crushing blow to the Indian Moderates who had the temerity to believe the ruling class would voluntarily relinquish its power if the people showed themselves to be 'reasonable'." (140)

Subsequently, T. A. Bisson, a member of the Research Staff of the Foreign Policy Association of New York, examined the provisions of the new Constitution and rebuked the American newspapers for speaking of it, following the British lead, as a reform, as an advance towards self-government. "In this mid-depression and pre-war era colonies are not so lightly turned adrift, especially when they are strategically and economically as important as India", he observed. (141) He scrutinized the provisions of the Act, especially those relating to the powers of the Governor General and the Governors and the composition of the Federal Legislature and came to the conclusion that the new constitution cemented the union between "the imperialist overlords" and "the native autocrats [the native Princes]" in the "carefully turned phrases of a legal document." The Act of 1935, in a word, was "a stroke of imperialist genius". (142)

* * * * *

In the period covered by this chapter, many Americans found that there was a decline in Gandhi's political leadership

142 Ibid.
of the national struggle in India. Gandhi's solciude for the Depressed Classes and his concern for the village uplift were noted. However, there was a tendency in many circles to read "politics" behind his new orientation. Consequently, the element of saintliness in the American image of Gandhi received a setback.

As against Gandhi's decline, Jawaharlal Nehru emerged as the new leader of India. It was underlined that he was not communist by the Soviet standard, but was pronouncedly socialist, leaned towards communism, and did not have faith in non-violence as a matter of creed. Various facets of his personality—both grim and genial—were exposed to the Americans in this period.

The British efforts to strike out a Constitution for India were followed in the USA with interest, although the degree of this interest was not the same as during the first two Round Table Conferences. It was recognized that the Princes were being used as a counterweight against the nationalists and the Muslim leaders had more faith in the British than the Hindus. Nevertheless, many Americans—barring the liberals—were impressed that the British Parliament "crowded with Conservatives" had given a Constitution to India which, although short of complete independence or even Dominion Status, was a long way towards that.

The liberals retained their faith in Gandhi as a spiritual force. But they also began to doubt the effectiveness of his political leadership in general and of fast as a political weapon in particular. Nehru became a new centre of attention for them too. He was the "Idol of Young India", it was noted by them.