Chapter Two

LAHORE CONGRESS AND THE COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE RESOLUTION
PRELUDE TO THE LAHORE CONGRESS

Nineteen Twentynine: The Year of Ultimatum

Nineteen twenty-nine was a "fateful" year for India. (1) In December 1928, at its Calcutta session, the Indian National Congress had decided that if the Nehru Report (2) was not accepted in its entirety by the British Parliament on or before 31 December 1929, the Congress would organize "a campaign of non-violent non-cooperation by advising the country to refuse taxation and in such other manner as may be decided upon." (3) In other words, an ultimatum was given to the British Government.

As the year 1929 opened, India began to seethe with unrest. Big industrial centres were hit by militant working class struggles. "The growth of communist propaganda and influence, especially among the industrial classes of certain large towns, caused anxiety to the authorities," recorded the 1928-29 annual annual annual

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1 For a British version of the developments in this year, see J. Coatman, Years of Destiny: India 1926-1932 (London, 1932), pp. 233-74.

2 For the main provisions of the Nehru Report, see Anil Chandra Banerjee, ed., Indian Constitutional Documents (Calcutta, 1946), vol. 2, pp. 292-7. This was a report of a Committee appointed by the All-Parties Conference in May 1928 under the chairmanship of Motilal Nehru to prepare a draft of the Constitution of India. The Constitution drafted by the Committee envisaged India as a Dominion with "full responsible Government" based on joint mixed electorates and guaranteeing fundamental rights to all, especially the minorities.

3 All-India Congress Committee, The Indian National Congress 1928 (Allahabad, 1929), p. 31.
report of the Government of India. (4) In March, a number of trade union leaders, including some communists, were arrested from all over India and brought to a small town, called Meerut, where prosecutions were started against them. According to Gandhi, the motive behind these prosecutions was "not to kill communism but to strike terror." "The Government," he added, "were giving the usual periodical exhibition of its red claws which usually remain under cover." (5) In April, bombs were thrown in the Central Legislative Assembly Hall from the visitors' gallery. In other parts of the country also there were several cases of terroristic activities. The American Consul General Robert Frazer wrote from Calcutta that throughout May "there was almost daily mention in the press of bomb factories, 'red' letters, police raids, the terroristic epidemic, conspiracies to murder officials, the situation of the 31 alleged communists to be tried at Meerut, et cetera,..." (6)

Viceroy's Statement of 31 October 1929

It was in this context that Lord Irwin, the Viceroy of India, left India for England at the end of June 1929 to confer


6 Consul General in Calcutta (Robert Frazer) to Secretary of State, 28 June 1929, 845.00/644, Records of the Department of State. See also Ralston Hayden, "The Revolt in India against the British Rule", Current History, 30 (May 1929), pp. 330-1.
with the Home Government in regard to constitutional advancement in India. By this time, the political situation had changed in England. The Conservatives had been defeated in the General Election held in May and a minority Labour Government was in office with Ramsay MacDonald as the Prime Minister and Wedgwood Benn as the Secretary of State for India. The Government had been received with good cheers by a large section of the British people but, as the British journalist S. K. Ratcliffe noted, the "danger of the near future" was India. (7) Although the Indian experience with the first Labour Government in England in 1924 was disappointing, (8) the change of Government in England in 1929, did not fail to raise some hopes again in some circles in India. The Viceroy, too, according to his biographer, "was now convinced that the moment was ripe for some gesture ... which would stir the imagination of India, regain the contact that had been lost, and restore faith in British purpose." (9)

After about 4 months of consultation in London where the "aristocratic Conservative Viceroy" found himself in "warm alliance with Socialist Ministers," (10) the Viceroy returned to India on

7 S. K. Ratcliffe to Oswald Garrison Villard, 13 June 1929. Papers of Oswald Garrison Villard, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Mass., USA. Hereafter, this source will be cited as Villard Papers. Ratcliffe, a former editor of the Calcutta Statesman and a friend of Villard, often visited the United States to lecture on problems connected with the British Empire and India. He also contributed articles to the American journals.

8 See B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, The History of the Indian National Congress (Bombey, 1945), vol. 1, p. 316.


10 Ibid., p. 269.
25 October. Without losing much time, he made an important statement on 31 October in which he outlined the scheme which the British Government intended to follow in the matter of constitutional reforms in India. On the vexed question of Dominion Status, he declared:

... I am authorized on behalf of His Majesty's Government to state clearly that in their judgment it is implicit in the declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as there contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion Status. (11)

The Viceroy also announced that the British Government proposed to call, after the publication of the Simon Report, a conference of the representatives of the different parties and interests in India to meet the representatives of His Majesty's Government in London "for the purpose of seeking the greatest possible measure of agreement for the final proposals" to be submitted to the British Parliament with regard to the Indian constitutional reforms.

This statement of the Viceroy, whatever its effect in India, created a furore in England and members of the British Parliament, like ex-Viceroy, Lord Reading, and ex-Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead, made "massive" and "savage" onslaughts on the new policy. (12) Their main charge was that the Viceroy's statement anticipated the report of the Simon Commission which was yet to be submitted. They further argued that it was wrong to use such phrases regarding Dominion Status which would convey no clear

11 For the full text of the statement, see Government of India, India in 1929-30 (Calcutta, 1931), pp. 466-8.
12 See Birkenhead, n. 9, p. 274.
meaning especially to India where it might, on the other hand, create false hopes leading to further demands from politicians "for a period of time and for other concessions it would be impossible for the Government to make." (13)

Party Manoeuvres in Britain: US Diplomats' View

The US diplomatic officials in England were closely watching the situation which arose after the publication of Lord Irwin's statement on 31 October. Their reports shed interesting sidelights on the background in which the statement was made and the way the Labour Government tackled the controversy ensuing therefrom. Ray Atherton, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim in London, reported to the Secretary of State that the new Government in England was confronted with a situation in the summer of 1929 in which it found only two courses open before itself: either a firm British control, with more troops, must be exercised in India, or a gradual giving way to the national ambitions of the natives must be contemplated.

The Secretary of State for India had apprehensions about dispatching more troops in India. (14) Atherton further reported that "the Embassy has been informed that dominion status will have been achieved by India by not later than December 31, 1931." This date was tentatively made by a member of the Cabinet in conversation. (15)

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14 Chargé d'Affaires ad interim in London (Ray Atherton) to Secretary of State, 1 November 1929, 841.00/1128, Records of the Department of State.

15 Atherton to Secretary of State, 8 November 1929, 845.00/650, Records of the Department of State.
The debates in the British Parliament, however, failed to contain any repetition of such an intention on the part of the Labour Government. On the other hand, the debates made it clear, Atherton noted, that no definite date for the attainment of Dominion Status had been set. He attributed this change to the fact that coincident with the Viceroy's issuing of his declaration a Labour Member of the Parliament let it be known informally that he favoured the granting of Dominion Status at an early date but as soon as it was realized that a very strong and sound opposition against any such commitment existed, the idea of setting any definite date was apparently abandoned. This weakened the force of the opposition and the general impression was that the Government came out of the debate with flying colours. (16) The Charge had earlier reported that he had been informed by a reliable source that Philip Snowden, a Labour Minister, called on Lloyd George on 4 November 1929 and told him that the Government, if defeated on a question of confidence, would go to the country in General Election. Since neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives wished a General Election at that time for fear of repetition of adverse vote against them, it was expected that although the policy of the Government would be criticized in the Parliament, it would not be challenged by the Opposition. (17)

**Impact of Viceroy's Statement in India**

In India the Viceroy's statement made an immediate impact. A Leaders' Conference was held in New Delhi on 1-2 November 1929

16 Ibid.

17 Charge d'Affaires ad interim in London (Atherton) to Secretary of State, 5 November 1929, 845.00/649, Records of the Department of State.
to consider the statement. In this conference such leading personages as Gandhi, Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, M. A. Ansari, Tej Bahadur Sapru, C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Annie Besant, Shuaib Qureshi, and Maharaja of Mahmudabad, participated. At the end of the conference a statement—later called the Delhi Manifesto—was issued under the signatures of the most important leaders, including Gandhi, Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Tej Bahadur Sapru, and Khaliquzzaman. Jawaharlal Nehru, the President-elect of the coming Lahore Congress, had first stood out as a dissenter but ultimately signed the Manifesto with much reluctance. Later the conviction grew stronger in him that he should resign from the Secretaryship of the All-India Congress Committee. (18). Subhas Chandra Bose, S. Kitchlew, and Abdul Bari issued a separate statement opposing the acceptance of Dominion Status and also participation in the proposed Round Table Conference.

The Delhi Manifesto expressed appreciation of the sincerity underlying the declarations in the Viceroy's statement and expressed the signatories' hope that they would be able to tender their cooperation to His Majesty's Government in their effort to evolve a scheme of a Dominion Constitution suitable for India's needs. But the signatories also expressed their understanding that the Round Table Conference envisaged in the Viceroy's statement would meet not to discuss when Dominion Status was to be established but to frame a scheme of Dominion Constitution for India. Moreover, they considered it vital for the success of the proposed Conference

18 See his letter to Gandhi, 4 November 1929, in Jawaharlal Nehru, comp., A Bunch of Old Letters (Bombay, 1958), pp. 73-75.
that (a) a policy of general conciliation should be definitely adopted to induce a calmer atmosphere, (b) the political prisoners should be granted a general amnesty, and (c) the representation of political organizations should be effectively secured and to this end the Indian National Congress, as the largest among them, should have predominant representations. (19)

American Official's Assessment

Robert Frazer, the American Consul General in Calcutta, reported that it was generally the belief of all in India that "no sincerer, more honest man lives and that India has no truer friend" than Lord Irwin, the Viceroy of India. (20) This view, according to him, was shared in India by political friends and opponents alike. He was also very much impressed by the Viceroy's announcement of 31 October 1929 which, he reported, "was of greater importance and created more stir in the country than anything else that has happened for a long time." (21)

Referring to the criticisms of Lord Reading, Lord Birkenhead, Lloyd George, and other such persons in England, Frazer defended the Viceroy by saying that he had not anticipated the report of the Simon Commission for it was "no part of the duty of that Commission to interpret the Declaration of 1917, which is all that the Viceroy did with the sanction of the Government...." He also refuted Lord

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20 Consul General in Calcutta (Robert Frazer) to Secretary of State, 24 January 1930, 845.00/656, Records of the Department of State.

21 Ibid.
Birkenhead's charge that the language of the statement was vague. In the opinion of the Consul General, the language of the statement was very clear and its interpretation of 1917 Declaration was logical. It presaged no change of policy, hence it was not mischievous. But at the same time a clear reaffirmation and exposition of the Government's policy was required since "Genuine doubts had really arisen in India in regard to the interpretation that was to be put on the 1917 Declaration, largely as a result of speeches made by Sir Malcolm Hailey in the Legislative Assembly in 1924 and it seemed highly desirable that these doubts should be set at rest." Hence, the Viceroy's statement was not superfluous. (22)

Frazer underlined the effect the statement had made in India. He reported that the Viceroy's statement was received "with acclaim by all of the moderate and liberal elements in India." It made a good impression upon and was "sympathetically considered by even the outstanding Swarajist leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Motilal Nehru...", he wrote. He referred to the Delhi Manifesto issued by the Indian leaders and said that they had offered their full co-operation to the Viceroy upon the acceptance of certain conditions by the Government. Becoming more precise, he reported that the conditions laid down in the Manifesto were to the moderates "impolitic" and to the British view "unreasonable". He added:

22 Ibid. For Sir Malcolm Hailey's speech, see India, Legislative Assembly Debates, vol. 4, part I, session 1, 1924, pp. 356-67. Sir Malcolm Hailey was the Home Member of the Government of India at that time. His speech gave the impression that the objective of Dominion Status was not necessarily implied in the 1917 Declaration. See also Sitaramayya, n. 8, p. 268.
nevertheless it may be said that the Swarajist leaders and the Government came nearer to an accord after the Viceroy's declaration had been made. Only a few out-and-out extremists remained altogether unaffected by the declaration. (23)

The Consul General was of the definite opinion that the Viceroy's statement, on the whole, had "most excellent results" in clarifying the situation and the intentions of the British Government and in "very greatly mollifying" all but the most extreme Indian opinion. (24)

American Press Opinion

In the USA, Lord Irwin's statement of 31 October made considerable impression. A cable to the New York Times from Delhi dated 31 October reporting on the Viceroy's statement commented that it revealed no change in the policy pursued by England for the last ten years in the matter of granting India some form of home rule as an ultimate step and that this long-awaited statement "dissipated a good many fantastic hopes and fears". (25) The same day, the newspaper editorially commented that the nationalist sentiment in India had been "singularly credulous and badly informed if it believed that the MacDonald Government was on the eve of bestowing dominion status on the people of Hindustan." It felt that the Viceroy's statement was a formal denial of such rumours which had become so persistent in India. It believed that it was inconceivable that MacDonald would venture on such a step of conferring Dominion Status on India

23 Consul General in Calcutta to Secretary of State, 24 January 1930, n. 20.
24 Ibid.
without consulting the Parliament because the recent General Election had given no mandate to the Labour Party on India and also because the Simon Commission whose aims and methods were heartily supported by MacDonald at the time of its appointment, had been studying the very problem of the constitutional advance in India for nearly two years. (26)

The New York Times reverted to the Indian problem on 9 November 1929 immediately after the House of Commons debate on India. In an editorial, entitled "Fair Labor Weather", it referred to Stanley Baldwin's declaration in the House of Commons in the course of the debate on India that "there is no crisis and there has been no crisis concerning India" (27) and expressed satisfaction that on this happy note — "happy for the MacDonald Government and for the British people as a whole" — terminated this episode. This episode, in its opinion, had proved that the "Labor Government's alleged concession of self-government to India was nothing more than a reaffirmation of the pledge of ultimate dominion rule behind which stand all three British parties." It believed that MacDonald found such a restatement of policy imperative in view of the apparent fear in India that the Simon Commission's report on India would be hostile to the realization of Dominion rule. "It is now made clear that the original pledge to the people of India remains unaffected by anything the Simon Commission may

26 Ibid., 1 November 1929, p. 24.

27 Ibid., 8 November 1929, p. 3. See also, UK, House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates, n. 13, col. 1306.
recommend", it emphatically stated. (28)

The Christian Science Monitor was of the view that the Viceroy's statement represented an attempt on his part to counter the efforts of the extremists for some drastic action which they were already threatening and at which the Viceroy had taken alarm, by declaring that Dominion Status was the ultimate goal of India's constitutional development. It also felt that the Viceroy had made this attempt with the "very best intentions." (29)

The usually pro-nationalist liberal weekly, the New Republic, too, was greatly appreciative of the Viceroy's declaration feeling that through this the British Prime Minister, Ramsey MacDonald, had "obtained an outstanding change of attitude on the part of all but the bitter-end Indian advocates of complete independence." It believed that in the past British spokesmen had talked only of "responsible government" but had never defined the meaning of that term. The Viceroy had now promised that the ultimate objective for India was full Dominion Status. Finding great importance in the Viceroy's proposal for a Round Table Conference, it wrote:

28 New York Times, 9 November 1929, p. 18. Similar views were expressed in Ralston Hayden, "India's Demand for Dominion Status", Current History, 31 (December 1929), pp. 586-7. The episode referred to in the New York Times related to the controversy in England, especially in the Conservative circles, as to in what way and to what extent Baldwin, the leader of the Conservative Party, had concurred with the Prime Minister on the issue of the Viceroy's prospective statement with regard to Dominion Status for India. Baldwin explained in the debates on 7 November that he had given his personal accord to the Prime Minister's proposal only in the event of Simon Commission's approval of the same.

Every realistic friend of India recognizes that there are problems of the greatest difficulty to be solved before even dominion status is practicable; but for the first time, an atmosphere has been created in which Englishmen and Indians can sit down together and try to work out the solution to these problems. (30)

Another important pro-nationalist journal, The Nation, did not comment on the statement but published long excerpts from it along with the Delhi Manifesto of the Indian leaders in its issue of 18 December 1929. (31) It regarded these two statements "particularly interesting" in view of the next session of the All-India Congress to be held in late December at Lahore.

Negotiations Fail

In India, events were moving very fast. Strong criticism of the Viceroy's statement made by the Conservatives and the Liberals in England had strengthened the hands of the Leftists inside the Congress. The Congress Working Committee, meeting on 17-18 November 1929, decided to the effect that the conditions made in the Delhi Manifesto were the sine qua non for any co-operation with the Viceroy in the matters outlined in his statement and further that this offer was operative only up to the date of the Lahore Congress. Subsequently, on 23 December 1929, in his meeting with the Viceroy in New Delhi, Gandhi urged that the Viceroy should give an assurance that the Round Table Conference would proceed on the basis of full Dominion Status. The Viceroy failed to give this assurance. (32) The meeting having thus failed,

31 The Nation, 129 (18 December 1929), pp. 760-1.
32 For a narrative account of this meeting, see Sitaramayya, n. 8, pp. 353-4. For a Liberal's account of the circumstances in which this meeting took place and failed, see Kanji Dwarkadas, India's Fight for Freedom 1913-1937: An Eye-witness Story (Bombay, 1966), pp. 361-4.
all eyes were set towards the Lahore session of the Congress which was just ahead.

THE LAHORE CONGRESS

As the Lahore Congress was drawing nearer, the atmosphere in the country was getting tense. There was great enthusiasm in the nationalist camp but, as Jawaharlal Nehru later recorded, this enthusiasm was also sobered by the thought that the immediate future held out a promise of great strife and suffering for the country and for the participants in the coming struggles. "Our decisions were not going to be mere criticisms or protests or expressions of opinion, but a call to action which was bound to convulse the country and affect the lives of millions," he wrote. (33)

Gravity of the Situation Noted in the USA

The gravity of the Indian situation was noted by many Americans. While making a survey of the deliberations of the Calcutta session (1928) of the Indian National Congress, William I. Hull, Professor of International Relations in Swarthmore College, had predicted that if before 1 January 1930 Dominion Status was not available to India, "the solution of violence, that is civil war, under the banner of complete independence, will probably be tried". It was already being widely prophesied, he pointed out, that the Congress in Lahore might declare for complete and immediate independence with the threat of military action by

its Volunteers. (34) He also recorded that there was "a very strong and perhaps revolutionary 'Youth Movement' in India" and that Jawaharlal Nehru was one of the militant emerging leaders who would not remain satisfied with only Dominion Status and who had little or no faith in non-violent non-cooperation. (35)

Another American publicist Upton Close (pseudonym of Josef Washington Hall) described the gravity of the Indian situation and the increasingly important role of Jawaharlal Nehru in an article published in the New York Times on 22 December 1929. The author had recently been in India where he had met both Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. In an obvious attempt to remind the Americans of their own War of Independence, Close began the article by saying: "It is just possible that December 31, 1929, may go down as the independence day of the Indian revolution." (36)

Close quoted Gandhi as saying that he would be relieved if 1 January 1930 dawned with the Congress ultimatum unaccepted by the British and India rendered free of all moral commitments to the British Empire. It will mean, according to Gandhi, more suffering for the Indians, and they deserved it. In the end, India will be free. Thus Gandhi outlined the future to the author.

34 William I. Hull, India's Political Crisis (Baltimore, 1930), p. XIII. Hull had attended the Calcutta Congress.


36 New York Times, 22 December 1929, Part 9, p. 6. Some parts of Close's article were reproduced in Modern Review (Calcutta), 47 (February 1930), pp. 254-5 with a note that the account the author gave of his conversation with Nehru represented "a very true idea of the spirit which animates Young India at this crucial epoch."
The author closely asked "the proud-faced, alert-eyed, Jawaharlal Nehru, the idol of Young India" as to what would happen if the British did not respond by 31 December. Nehru is reported to have said that either the British must abdicate or bring out machine guns. When further asked what would happen if the British did bring out machine guns, Nehru said: "After they have shot down our saints, violence, if indignation should bring it, will be on their own heads, don't you think?" (37)

Nehru qualified that the British did not want violence any more than the Indian nationalists did. The Indian nationalists did not want it, "because it is the one strategy in which we are the weakest." The British did not want the issue to go to that extreme because they were never sure of the native army. "A hundred and fifty thousand men to 70,000 British you know -- good soldiers, all in their own country. They have arms and know where others are -- and they might resent the shooting down of their saints", Nehru reportedly explained. When the author pointed out that the Indians were disarmed and the British searched every person entering India, Nehru is reported to have held up his arm and said: "There are ways and ways. There are several million more guns in India than our police like to think, and persons who know how to get them." (38)

The author then quoted Gandhi as saying that the proposed London Conference, to gain his interest, would have to be, like Caesar's wife, above reproach. This, according to the author, was a warning that India would no longer tolerate postponement. The

37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
Congress stood by its ultimatum. His information was that the Congress was already circulating a tentative declaration of independence for 31 December for correction or suggestion of its officers. Moreover, the extremists like Subhas Chandra Bose were clamouring that it was too late for compromise. (39)

The New Republic also depicted Nehru as "a dynamic young man opposed to Gandhi's policy of non-resistance." It noted that while he was not labelled as a Communist, he had visited Moscow and was much interested in the Russian experiment. It, however, pointed out that it was by no means sure that the nomination of Nehru will be ratified by the Congress and that the influence of Gandhi was as curtailed as it was being suggested by the Press reports. It did not exclude the possibility of forcible revolution in India but it discounted the alarmist reports in this connection. (40)

The seriousness of the Indian situation was again highlighted in the columns of the New York Times just on the eve of the Lahore Congress. It published a cable from London, dated 25 December, which reported that in the British capital the Indian situation rivalled in interest the coming Five-Power Naval Conference. The British observers in India believed that the pronouncements of the MacDonald Government had weakened the hands of the moderates in India. This was going to be reflected in the deliberations of the Lahore Congress. "It is expected that strength will be given to the youth movement, the head of which is the president-designate

39 Ibid.
of the Lahore meeting", the reporter pointed out. But, in any case, there was general agreement that the next week would be "a momentous one in the history of British rule in India," the reporter noted. (41)

The "Complete Independence" Resolution

It was in such an atmosphere of excitement and enthusiasm with international spotlight directed towards it that a "City of Tents" steadily went up at the bank of the river Ravi in Lahore during the last week of December 1929. A magnificent welcome was accorded to the President-designate, Jawaharlal Nehru, and the American news agencies noted that when the national flag was unfurled, the assembled mass of people cried out: "Long Live the Revolution!" (42)

As recorded by Sitaramayya, the Congress at Lahore was in a "cauldron". Under the shadow of the conspiracy cases launched by the Government against the revolutionaries and the martyrdom of Jatin Das in jail, heated discussions were going on in the delegates' camps as to what should be the attitude of the Congress on these matters as also on the main issue of independence. "Ideas and ideals were boiling on the fires of national patriotism kindled by the ever increasing arrests." (43) The main resolution

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43 Sitaramayya, n. 8, p. 354. In course of a prolonged hunger strike of 64 days against the treatment meted out to the political prisoners in jail, Jatin Das, a young revolutionary, had died on 13 September 1929. This had violently stirred the heart of the whole country.
on Independence, however, was passed almost unanimously. This resolution declared that in pursuance of the resolution passed at the Calcutta session of the Congress (1928), the word "Swaraj" in Article 1 of the Congress Constitution would mean "Complete Independence" and hoped that all Congressmen would thenceforth "devote their exclusive attention to the attainment of Complete Independence for India." It also declared that the entire scheme of the Nehru Report which had demanded only Dominion Status had lapsed.

The Congress directed the Congress members of the Legislatures and Committees to resign their seats and authorized the All-India Congress Committee, "whenever it deems fit, to launch upon a programme of Civil Disobedience Movement including non-payment of taxes, whether in selected areas or otherwise, and under such safeguards as it may consider necessary." (44)

Lahore Congress and the American Press

The Lahore Congress was closely observed by the American Press. The New York Times, for instance, published special cables from Lahore reporting on the day-to-day deliberations of the Congress and its various organs from 26 December 1929 to 1 January 1930. These reports graphically described the tumultuous and picturesque assemblage of numerous and at times mutually hostile crowds and processions and the tense and electified atmosphere at Lahore. (45)

44 For the full text of the resolution, see Mitra, n. 19, p. 300.

45 See especially New York Times, 27 December 1929, p. 6; 30 December 1929, pp. 1, 4; and 1 January 1930, p. 7.
From these reports three main pictures emerge:

(a) That the "extremists" led by Gandhi won complete control of the Congress on the issue of Complete Independence versus Dominion Status; (46)

(b) That the "wild men" of the Congress were defeated by Gandhi on the issue of expressing regret at the bomb attempt on the Viceroy (47) as also on the issues of putting into effect the entire program of non-cooperation immediately; (48) and

(c) That although Jawaharlal Nehru was the idol of the youth, Gandhi was still a "towering figure in the imagination of the peoples." (49)

The New York Times made some shrewd comments on the results of the Congress. Detecting that in the tumult and stress of the Congress the voice of moderation was not altogether lost, it observed:

It is true that MAHATMA GANDHI, once content with Dominion Status for India and now stands up for independence. But it is independence to be gained gradually; and once the gradual approach is admitted, we are not quite at the "revolution"... GANDHI might not inconsistently accept Dominion rule for India as a step toward ultimate independence. (50)

46 Ibid., 27 December 1929, p. 6.
47 Ibid., 29 December 1929, p. 17.
48 Ibid., 30 December 1929, p. 4.
49 Ibid., n. 46.
The New York Times detected a hint of compromise even in the "fiery opening address" of Jawaharlal Nehru, the President of the Congress. Nehru had expressed the possible willingness of India to give up part of its freedom in a larger federated group once its title to independence was accepted. (51) The New York Times interpreted this part of his address to mean that the British Empire, as at the moment constituted, was not that group, but a British Commonwealth reorganized and liberalized might count on India as a member. It, therefore, concluded that the defiant note sounded at the Lahore Congress seemed to be intended in part at least to win for India "not independence but Dominion home rule." (52)

The New York Herald Tribune noted that Gandhi who, a year ago, was pleading for caution, himself was forced to demand independence in the Congress reportedly to forestall the more impetuous leaders who would otherwise take the situation out of his hands. But, it observed:

It is the old difficulty of nationalistic agitation that once it is started it cannot be controlled. However narrow may be its base ... the agitation takes on a reality of its own, and the leaders are hurried down the steep slope of measures which it might be difficult to justify on any rational basis of policy. (53)

51 Nehru had said: "Having attained our freedom I have no doubt that India will welcome all attempts at world cooperation and federation and will even agree to give up part of her own independence to a larger group of which she is an equal member. The British Empire today is not such a group and cannot be so long as it dominates over millions of people and holds large areas of the world's surface despite the will of their inhabitants." See Mitra, n. 19, p. 291.

52 New York Times, n. 50.

53 quoted in Literary Digest, n. 42.
The *Literary Digest* made a survey of the reports of the Associated Press and the United Press from Lahore and concluded that the recent bombing of the railway train carrying Lord Irwin, the Viceroy of India, "was but a feeble explosion in comparison to that set off by Mahatma Gandhi" when he announced at Lahore that he and the Congress would henceforth be satisfied with nothing short of absolute independence for India." (54)

*Christian Century*, the important non-denominational protestant journal generally sympathetic to what Gandhi stood for, was perturbed at the rise of extremism in India. It referred to the attempt to bomb the train carrying the Viceroy of India on 22 December 1929 and to the three minutes by which the life of the Viceroy was saved. It felt that it was hardly too much to say that all southeastern Asia came within three minutes of disaster on that date! The journal felt that there was a race on in India between the liberalizing of the governmental policies and an explosion and that the outcome of that race could not be seen yet. (55)

Subsequently, the journal felt bewildered by the reports appearing in the American Press about the Lahore Congress and its proceedings, it being not clear whether Gandhi had completely abandoned the idea of Dominion Status or was still holding the nationalists to "a conservative course". The journal had very soft corner for the British Labour Government. The Labour Party, according to it, was "by instinct as well as by principle" against any policy that savoured of imperialist exploitation. Moreover,

54 Ibid.

MacDonald had twice visited India and both times had written sympathetically of the Indian aspirations. There were also some pacificist elements in the party. But the journal felt that the civil disobedience programme of the Indian nationalists with complete independence as their objective had posed an unprecedentedly difficult problem before the Labour Government. In view of this, the journal commented:

If the Labor Party remains in power, it will probably show surprising patience, a general liberal spirit, and more than ordinary wisdom in dealing with this problem. But it remains to be seen whether any Western government is wise enough to know how to deal with an eastern people that has made up its mind to be free. (56)

The journal did not fail to remind the Americans how would they feel if the people of the Philippines should undertake to force the issue of their independence by refusing to pay taxes, obey civil officers, and do other such things as the Indian nationalists contemplated to do in India. (57)

A little later, this journal took heart at finding that the outcome of the Lahore Congress represented a victory for Gandhi, "a victory for the principle of non-violence," a victory for the gradual implementation of the Lahore decision rather than an immediate declaration of complete independence of India. It, however, took note of the fact that Gandhi had abandoned his earlier stand and had "swung the nationalists to a demand for complete independence". It pointed out that the incalculable elements in the situation were the illiterate masses. "Give them

56 Ibid., 47 (8 January 1930), pp. 35-36.
57 Ibid., p. 36.
a few months of shouting 'independence' and 'Civil Disobedience' — especially under the influence of the radical young nationalists who come nearest to the masses in their activities — and what will the outcome be?"; it sombrely asked. It pleaded for "tact", "patience", and "wisdom" in dealing with the situation for disaster was looming large on the horizon. (58)

The Nation felt that, in view of the portents in India, 1930 might prove to be a milestone in the history of the East. It referred to the session of the Congress going on in Lahore and said that if it decided on an "immediate declaration of war", it could not be physical war, at least in the beginning, for the Indian people were completely disarmed. If it came to a break, the struggle would begin with non-cooperation. But it expressed grave doubt whether it would be possible to carry on the pacific revolution without eventual bloodshed. It then referred to the effort of Gandhi a year ago in checking the "hot heads in the Congress" from demanding Immediate Dominion Status and pleaded:

We earnestly hope that the patience of the Indian people can be stretched a little further. Sorely tried as they have been, one more delay seems trifling in comparison with the horrors of a long and bloody struggle. (59)

Finally, raising the question what was best for India, this journal said that on this matter no compromise was possible and that it was the Indian people who must have the final say and no one else. "... We are for having the people of India achieve freedom by the peaceful means of Gandhi", it clearly declared. (60)

59 The Nation, 130 (1 January 1930), p. 5.
60 Ibid.
Subsequently, *The Nation* also expressed great anxiety at the situation developing in India. It noted that leftists like Subhas Chandra Bose were defeated at the Lahore Congress by Gandhi but ridiculed the attempt of the British Press to belittle the gravity of the situation by advising that the Congress need not be taken too seriously. Comparing the Indian situation with "dynamite of the most explosive kind", it stated that it was the duty both of the Indian nationalists and of the British Labour Government to prevent an explosion if it was humanly possible. It felt that it was no time for ultimatums on either side. (61)

As regards the outlook for the immediate future of the home-rule movement in India, *The Nation* felt that the picture was not altogether clear. True, Gandhi's influence in India was still predominant which was reflected at the Lahore Congress. The Congress had passed the resolution for complete independence, yet it had given authority to its executive to adopt a programme of non-cooperation when and as it deemed fit. This discretion given to the Committee suggested to the journal that the attainment of independence was not looked for immediately, but it was nevertheless to be held over the heads of the British Government while further negotiations were carried on or preparations for action were being made. It also believed that not all of India's vast population was united behind Gandhi. (62)

*The New Republic* was more forthright. Under a long editorial article entitled "WHAT INDIA WANTS", it referred to the

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61 Ibid., 130 (9 January 1930), p. 29.
resolution of the Lahore Congress for complete independence and also to the bomb attack on the Viceroy's train on 22 December. It was clear to it that extremism had shown itself in India at the very moment when a long step toward conciliation had been taken in London. But it felt that as usual the step toward conciliation had come much too late from the British side. (63)

Countering the argument that India was not fit and ready for Dominion Status, the journal declared that "Many peoples have paid the price for freedom, and if the Indian people are willing to do so, theirs should be the decision." It believed that if the Labour Government, instead of being controlled by fear of "hypothetical dangers" showed "real generosity in making, not promises but actual concessions to the overwhelming demand for Indian home-rule", it might succeed in keeping a self-governing India within the Empire. Reminding its readers of MacDonald's past attitude, it observed:

It was Ramsay MacDonald who coined the phrase 'risks of peace'. Nowhere is it more important, from the standpoint of interracial and international peace, to take a real 'risk' than in the case of India. (64)

Unity, edited by Rev. J. Haynes Holmes, the pastor of the Community Church of New York, recorded that Gandhi was again the supreme leader of the Indian people at Lahore and expressed the opinion that the Lahore Congress "may be destined to take its place in history along with the American Congress in 1776 which declared the independence of the Thirteen Colonies from British

64 Ibid., p. 185. Emphasis added.
Indian Independence in the US Congress

Not before long, the Independence Resolution of the Lahore Congress came up in the US Congress also. Senator John J. Blaine of Wisconsin submitted a resolution in the Senate on 6 January 1930 relating to the independence of India. The resolution reads as follows:

Whereas the people of India are spontaneously moving toward the adoption of self-government, under a constitutional form, with popular approval and seeking national independence: Be it

Resolved, That the Senate of the United States, mindful of the struggle for independence that gave birth to our Republic, participates with the people of the United States in the deep interest that they feel for the success of the people of India in their struggle to establish their liberty and independence, and be it further

Resolved, That the Senate of the United States pledges its constitutional support to the President of the United States whenever he may deem it proper to recognize the sovereignty and the independence of India, and recommends early recognition thereof. (66)

While placing his resolution the Senator announced that at the appropriate time he would direct some remarks to the resolution concerning the struggle of India and the Philippines for their independence and the relationship of these struggles to the Naval Conference about to be convened in London.

Indian Reaction to Senator Blaine's Resolution

The news of the submission of this resolution was flashed

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to India by Reuter. The wording of the Reuter despatch is significant and was apparently designed to convince India that reports of American interest in Indian freedom were without substance. The despatch, after reporting that Senator Blaine had tabled a resolution recommending early recognition of the independence of India, went on to say that "Senator Blaine is without a following in the Senate which regards the resolution as a joke."

Both the British-owned Press and the Indian-owned Press in India published the despatch on 8 January 1930 under interesting captions. The most important British-owned paper, The Statesman, gave the following caption:

U.S. SENATOR'S "JOKE"
Plea for Recognition of India's Independence (67)

Another British-owned newspaper, The Englishman, gave a similar caption. (68)

The Indian-owned but moderate newspaper, The Bengalee, also represented the news clearly as a joke. Its headline was:

SENATE REGARDS BLAINE'S RESOLUTION
AS A JOKE. (69)

Even the vigorously nationalist newspaper, the Amrita Bazar Patrika, headlined the Reuter despatch as:

USA CRUEL JOKE ON INDIA?
INDEPENDENCE RECOGNITION
FARCICAL RESOLUTION IN THE SENATE (70)

67 The Statesman (Calcutta), 8 January 1930, p. 9.
68 The Englishman (Calcutta), 8 January 1930, p. 7.
69 The Bengalee (Calcutta), 8 January 1930, p. 5.
70 Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), 8 January 1930, p. 7.
The British-owned newspapers in India were chagrined at Blaine's resolution. They poured ridicule on the Senator's attempt by pointing out that what the Lahore Congress did was to pass a resolution demanding complete independence and that it did not declare India as an Independent State. The Pioneer referred to a report that Blaine might introduce a resolution when the US Congress was convened again urging recognition of the independence of India. In a satirical vein it commented:

It may be confidently trusted that before the United States Congress meets again Senator Blaine will have been enlightened somewhat on Indian affairs by his more knowledgeable fellow countrymen. (71)

The Statesman, generally regarded to be the most responsible and the influential of the British-owned newspapers in India, commented that Senator Blaine looked like winning for himself the title "egregious". It reminded, presumably, Blaine and such other Americans, that Gladstone had once caused considerable perturbation in America during the Civil War by using words which suggested his support for the recognition of the Confederacy. (72) The paper, however, felt that Blaine "will wring no withers anywhere". It then pitched up its sarcasm by saying: "Nor can we imagine anyone but himself [Senator Blaine] anxious to come out as accredited ambassador to the new Government, whatever it may be." (73)

The Bengalee was not sure whether Senator Blaine should be taken seriously. It referred to the fact that India had not been

71 The Pioneer (Allahabad), 8 January 1930, p. 2.
73 The Statesman, 8 January 1930, p. 8. The Times (London) also ridiculed Blaine's presentation of the resolution in the Senate as a "comic interlude" in the otherwise serious session of the US Congress. See "Congress in Session", ed., The Times, 7 January 1930, p. 15.
declared Independent by the Lahore Congress; on the other hand, an amendment to that effect had actually been defeated in that Congress. (74) It observed:

Under these circumstances, even if the United States were actuated with the best of motives and wanted to recognize our independence, there is no Independent Government of India which they could recognize. If and when India really becomes independent, our Congressmen will gladly requisition Senator Blaine's services to get our independence recognised by the United States. Meanwhile, I am afraid, he and I will have to wait a long, long time before the calamity materialises. (75)

Thus, it appears that the press in India did not take very seriously Senator Blaine's resolution on Indian independence. At least part of it can be attributed to the manner in which the British news agency, Reuter, circulated the news saying that the Senate regarded the resolution "as a joke" which, in fact, was a comment rather than news.

Nevertheless, the very fact that the British organs chose to discuss and denounce Blaine's resolution implied that behind the facade of non-chalance, there was at least some element of concern that no efforts should be spared to nip in the bud any movement in the United States advocating support for Indian aspirations.

The Indians in the United States were happy at Blaine's resolution in the Senate. The American Branch of the Indian National Congress immediately sent a cable to the All-India Congress Committee informing them of Blaine's resolution in the

74 This refers to the amendment moved by Subhas Chandra Bose to the main resolution at Lahore.

75 The Bengalee, 8 January 1930, p. 4.
Senate and telling them that the Senate's debate on this resolution was fixed for 7 January 1930. (76) On the latter point, however, the Indians were in illusion.

Blaine's resolution was referred to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and it was buried there. But it did not fail to attract some notice in the American press. The Washington Post pointed out that on many previous occasions the US Congress had extended its sympathy to foreign peoples struggling for independence. It then added:

Americans believe that world peace must be based upon liberty and justice in order to endure. Mr. Blaine's resolution may fail of adoption, but it unquestionably reflects the sentiments of the American people. (77)

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It is clear from the above that the general question of the solution of the Indian problem had become an important subject for some sections of the American public in 1929. This was causing considerable concern to the British. The British journalist S. K. Ratcliffe warned a meeting of the East India

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76 See Amrita Bazar Patrika, 7 January 1930, p. 5.

77 Washington Post, 7 January 1930. Emphasis added. The Indian nationalists in the USA regarded the views expressed by the Washington Post on Blaine's resolution as the typical attitude of the Americans towards Indian independence. See Taraknath Das, "Representation of Indian Case in USA: American Attitude towards Indian Independence", Liberty (Calcutta daily), 30 April 1930. See also, Suchindra Bose, "India and American Opinion", Indian Affairs (London), 1 (December 1930), pp. 230-3. Bose felt that the idea was "gradually gaining ground in America that the United States Government should exert its influence on behalf of India."
Association in London on 21 October 1929 that the state of public opinion throughout North America on the issue of Indian independence could not be a matter of indifference to Great Britain. (78) Participating in the discussions that followed, Rushbrook Williams testified to what Ratcliffe had said about the growing American interest in India. He recalled that in the spring of 1929 he had been subjected in the United States to "the same kind and degree of questioning about British policy with regard to India as in the year 1920 had been addressed to him in regard to Ireland." (79)

Another aspect of this increased American interest in India was that both the official and the concerned non-official circles in the USA had become worried at the rise of, what they regarded as, forces of violence in India during 1929. When Labour Party came to power in England they expected a comparatively more conciliatory attitude on the part of the British Government towards the Indian nationalists. The Viceroy's statement of 31 October was also appreciated by them, because, they thought, it had clarified the situation.

As the Lahore Congress drew nearer the Americans got concerned at the possibility of extremist sections getting the upper hand in the Indian National Congress. They were, however, relieved when they found that the Congress, despite its "Complete Independence" Resolution, did not decide either to sever

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79 Ibid., p. 86. Williams was a former Director of Public Information of the Government in India.
connections with British Empire immediately or to launch the non-cooperation movement forthwith. It was recognized that the Congress had left some elbow-room for possible negotiations.

Some American observers felt that the Lahore Congress was a landmark in the history of the nationalist movement in India bearing some resemblance to the American Congress of 1776 which finally led to the independence of the thirteen British colonies in North America.