Chapter Three

THE SALT SATYAGRAHA: THE OFFICIAL VIEW
After the midnight of 31 December 1929, Jawaharlal Nehru, the idol of young India and the President of the Indian National Congress, hoisted the flag of independence before a mammoth gathering in the city of Lahore and, thus, heralded a new phase of the freedom struggle. "Complete Independence" and not mere "Dominion Status" became the slogan of the national movement. A clarion call was given to the country to fight for this. But what was the programme of the future action? The people did not know yet. "The wheels had been set moving, but we were still in darkness as to how and when we were to begin", wrote Nehru later. (1) The All-India Congress Committee had been authorized by the Lahore Congress to chalk out a plan of action but everybody knew that the real decision lay with Gandhi. All eyes were turned towards him and the new Congress Working Committee.

The Two Declarations of Independence: Indian and American

The new Working Committee of the Congress met on 2 January 1930 and, after taking steps to implement the Lahore resolution on the boycott of Legislative Councils, fixed 26 January 1930 to be observed as "Purna Swaraj" (Complete Independence) Day all over India.

India. On this day people were to assemble in the villages and towns all over the country to adopt a Declaration framed and issued by the Working Committee. (2) The text of this Declaration has striking resemblances to the Declaration of Independence passed by the Congress of the Thirteen Colonies of America on 4 July 1776. There are, of course, some basic differences between the two Declarations. First, the India document did not declare that India was an INDEPENDENT STATE from 26 January whereas the American Declaration did announce to the world on 4 July 1776 that "these United Colonies are ... FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES; that they are absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown...." (3) Secondly, the Indian Declaration recognized that "the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence", whereas the American Declaration did not debar violent method; on the other hand, pledging themselves to the Declaration, the American people fought for the retention of their newly announced independence with arms.

Nevertheless, a comparison of the two texts suggests that the writer of the Indian Declaration, widely believed to be Gandhi himself, might have been impressed by the text of the American Declaration. (4) The Indian draft followed, mutatis mutandis, almost the same pattern and at places almost the same phraseology

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4 According to Subhas Chandra Bose, this Declaration was prepared by Gandhi himself. See Subhas Chandra Bose, The Indian Struggle 1920-1942 (Bombay, 1964), p. 176.
as of the American Declaration. Reminiscent of the latter, the former declared "freedom" to be the "inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people" and that "if any Government deprives a people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or to abolish it." Reminiscent of the American Declaration again, the Indian Declaration charged that the British Government had deprived the Indian people of their freedom and "ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually". The final paragraph of the Indian Declaration also indicates the influence of the American Declaration. Invoking the "Protection of the divine Providence", the representatives of the United Colonies had mutually pledged themselves to each other "our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor" in the support of their Declaration. The Indian Declaration also proclaimed: "We hold it to be a crime against man and God to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this four-fold disaster to our country."

The Viceroy's Speech: 25 January 1930

Wide publicity given to the Complete Independence Resolution of the Lahore Congress and the preparations afoot for the celebration of the Independence Day throughout the country, along with the resignations of 27 members of the Legislative Assembly in response to the call of the Congress, warmed the political atmosphere in India and the Viceroy chose to deliver an important statement in the Legislative Assembly on 25 January 1930. In his speech, the Viceroy tried to dispel all doubts about the meaning of his statement given on 31 October 1929 and said that what he had purported to do in that speech was to define the goal of the Indian constitutional development which should not be confused
with the attainment of the goal. "The assertion of a goal, however precise its terms, is of necessity a different thing from the goal's attainment", he said. He explained that although his statement had restated in unequivocal terms the goal to which British policy in regard to India was directed, "... obviously no British Government could prejudge the policy which it would recommend to Parliament after the report of the Statutory Commission ["Simon Commission"] had been considered...." Later, referring to the decisions of the Lahore Congress and the subsequent developments, he firmly stated that it remained his "firm desire" to do everything possible for conciliation in order that Great Britain and India may collaborate together in finding a solution of the present difficulties. Then he warned:

But it is no less incumbent upon me to make it plain that I shall discharge to the full the responsibility resting upon myself and upon my Government for the effective maintenance of law's authority and for the preservation of peace and order. And in fulfilment of this duty I do not doubt that I should have the full support of all sober citizens. (5)

Indian Reaction to the Speech

When this statement of the Viceroy came before the public eye, the country was already celebrating the Independence Day on 26 January. So, while on the one hand the country was vibrating with enthusiasm giving the impression that it was anxious to feel its strength, the Viceroy, on the other hand, by his 25th January speech, dampened the hopes of even the optimistic and credulous

5 Text of the Viceroy's speech in Government of India Press, Speeches by Lord Irwin (Simla, 1931), vol. 2, pp. 94-104.
sections of the Indian politicians. (6)

Gandhi reacted to this speech sharply. Writing in *Young India* on 30 January 1930, he thanked the Viceroy "for having cleared the atmosphere" and for letting the nationalists know where they and the Viceroy stood. Gandhi was for the substance rather than the outward firm of independence. He once again wanted to test the intentions of the Government. He, therefore, set down eleven points and asked the Viceroy to satisfy the Indians with regard to these "very simple but vital needs of India." (7) If the Viceroy did, Gandhi assured him:

He will then hear no talk of Civil Disobedience; and the Congress will heartily participate in any Conference where there is a perfect freedom of expression and demand. (8)

**Differing Views of the American Officials**

The American diplomatic officials both in England and India were closely following the situation in India as it unfolded.

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7. The eleven points enumerated by Gandhi were: (1) Total prohibition; (2) reduction of the rupee ratio to 1s. 4d; (3) reduction of land revenue by at least 50 per cent and making it subject to legislative control; (4) abolition of the salt-tax; (5) reduction of the Military expenditure by at least 50 per cent; (6) reduction of the salaries of the highest grade service to one half or less so as to suit the reduced revenue; (7) protective tariff for foreign cloth; (8) passage of the Coastal Tariff Reservation Bill; (9) discharge of all political prisoners save those condemned for murder, withdrawal of all political prosecutions and abrogation of Section 124-A, Regulation III of 1818 and the like and permission to all Indian exiles to return; (10) abolition of the C.I.D. or its popular control; (11) issue of licenses to use fire-arms for self-defence, subject to popular control. See Nripendra Nath Mitra, ed., *The Indian Annual Register 1930* (Calcutta, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 24.

8. Ibid.
itself during these times. Ray Atherton, Counsellor of the US Embassy in London, transmitted the text of the Viceroy's speech of 25 January to the Secretary of State in Washington. Referring warmly to the lucidity and the sincerity of the speech, he commented that this would "rank well in the forefront of his many able declarations, and merits being read in full by those who are closely following the Indian political situation." He expressed his opinion that this was occasioned by the political unrest in India "greatly aggravated" by the resolution passed by the Indian National Congress at its meeting in Lahore and that it may have been calculated "to forestall further resignations of Congress members from the Central and Provincial Legislatures, thereby partially offsetting the effect of the Congress resolution". He further stated that the speech made it apparent that the Government of India was not oblivious of the threats directed against it by the Congress and that the Government was prepared to cope with any disturbances which might occur. (9)

Robert Frazer, the US Consul General in Calcutta, also sent a copy of this speech to the Secretary of State and said that the Viceroy's principal object in making it was to clarify and emphasize important points in his announcement of 31 October 1929. His assessment of the Indian reaction to the Viceroy's speech differed

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9 Counsellor of the US Embassy in London (Ray Atherton) to Secretary of State, 27 January 1930, 845.00/654, Records of the Department of State. This assessment very strikingly tallies with what Lord Irwin himself wrote to his father: "I propose to take an early opportunity of making it plain that, if and when the extremists try any policy of what they call Civil Disobedience, we shall lose no time in jumping on their heads." The Earl of Birkenhead, Halifax: The Life of Lord Halifax (London, 1965), p. 277,
from that of Atherton who had reported that the speech had been "generally well received" and that there had been "no unfavourable criticisms of it". (10) Frazer, being on the spot, appears to have had a closer and better understanding of the Indian reaction. He noted:

While the British and ultra pro-British Indian faction in the country heartily approved of this speech, it scarcely satisfied any other shade of Indian opinion. (11)

**Speedy Change of Political Milieu**

On 26 January, the Independence Day was celebrated throughout India in an atmosphere of solemnity and enthusiasm. Gandhi was calmly watching the response of the people and all political parties were taking stock of the situation and formulating their policies. "Complete Independence" or "Dominion Status" was the issue posed before them. Consul General Frazer did not fail to note the change in the disposition of political forces in the country. He wrote:

The most striking aspect of the situation is the speed at which events are marching and the great change in the general Indian attitude during the past two years, or even eleven months. Views which were held to be extreme a year ago are considered moderate today, while the tenets of the extremists today were held by practically no one last year; at any rate they were not held as the definite program of any political party and probably were deemed possible of fulfilment by only a few individual visionaries.

Explaining further, Frazer said that at present the "largest and best organized single political organization in India," i.e.

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10 Atherton to Secretary of State, 27 January 1930, n. 9.

11 Consul General in Calcutta (Robert Frazer) to Secretary of State, 21 February 1930, 845.00/657, Records of the Department of State.
the Indian National Congress, was definitely for "the out-and-out independence of India" and every other political party in the country but one advocated "practically immediate Dominion Status". Leaving no room for doubt as to who constituted this exception, he added:

... only the British and the Indians most loyal to the British stand for a continuance of the present status quo for the time being, with Dominion status to follow at an indeterminate but long distant date. (12)

Frazer, then, listed the National Liberal Federation, the All-India Muslim League, the All-India Hindu Mahasabha, and the Nationalist Party led by Madan Mohan Malaviya, to be those who were moderate and had taken a middle ground in their views by strongly advocating the attainment of Dominion Status in the definitely near future. Of these, he singled out the National Liberal Federation as a party which ranked next in importance and public influence to the Congress alone and which was "rapidly increasing in prominence". Of the prospective role of this party he optimistically wrote:

It is believed that the most sensible and moderate middle-ground politicians in the country are now members of or have promised their cooperation with this party and its program holds forth the greatest hope of a satisfactory ... settlement of the future status of the country which has yet been put forth.

As regards the Muslims, Frazer was of the opinion that they, as represented by the All-India Muslim Conference, declared themselves in favour of Dominion Status with proper safeguards for their own interests. (13)
Gandhi's Position

The moot question was: what was the position of Gandhi in this political milieu? Gandhi had moved the "Complete Independence" resolution in the Lahore Congress. Yet he came out with his "Eleven Points". "What was the point of making a list of some political and social reforms — good in themselves, no doubt — when we were talking in terms of independence," was the question-mark in the mind of no less a person than Nehru himself, the President of the Congress. (14) Frazer noted the subtlety of Gandhi's position. Gandhi was certainly the "central moving force of the Congress Party". He was busy throughout the period planning how best to begin his non-violent civil disobedience campaign. But what was his basic stand? Frazer addressed himself to this question and found;

Facts which are not universally understood are that Gandhi was completely in favor of Dominion Status in the full meaning of that term, as it is applied to Canada and Australia, if it were definitely guaranteed to India in the near future. (15)

Frazer also explained the apparent change in Gandhi's stand. Gandhi's present position was due to his belief, Frazer noted, that the British interpreted the term 'Dominion Status' in a very narrow sense when they applied it to India and that unless forced they would not concede even that limited status in the immediate or even reasonably near future. (16)

A little later, Frazer reverted to the discussion of who wanted what in India. This time he was sharper in his presentation;

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15 Frazer to Secretary of State, 21 February 1930, n. 11.

16 Ibid.
there was some change in his assessment also. Gandhi now represented only a minority of the politically conscious in India. Moreover, he now stood for immediate and complete separation of India from Great Britain whereas others, who constituted majority, wanted Dominion Status of the Canadian type. Frazer reported:

... a minority of the politically conscious inhabitants of the country, who are represented by Mr. Gandhi and the other Party leaders, advocate immediate and complete separation from Great Britain; another minority, comprising the ultra loyal pro-British Indians, desire a continuance of the present status quo with slow advance by easy stages toward Dominion status as the ultimate goal; and the great majority in between who are anxious for complete Dominion status, such as is enjoyed by Canada and Australia, in the definitely near future. (17)

Should Gandhi Be Arrested?

Meanwhile, a section of the British Press both in England and India was clamouring for Gandhi's arrest. Frazer felt that although Gandhi's arrest was inevitable when he actually began his campaign of civil disobedience, the Government of India was "very fully justified" in not taking that step until unavoidably forced to do so. He pointed out:

Gandhi's vast influence with the country on the side of non-violence is a strong reason for the Government leaving him at liberty as long as it possibly can; while the unforeseen, but surely precarious effect of arresting him is obviously one of such potential danger that Lord Irwin must postpone taking it until it is the only course remaining open to him. (18)

Frazer was critical of the speeches of such British diehards as Lord Russell, Lord Winterton, and Lord Birkenhead on the Indian

17 Consul General in Calcutta (Frazer) to Secretary of State, 13 March 1930, 845.00/658, Records of the Department of State.
18 Frazer to Secretary of State, 21 February 1930, n. 11.
question. He specially referred to Lord Birkenhead's speech in which he had characterized the Indian leaders as "inferior Kerenskys" and "neurotic lawyers" and had reiterated that "no honest Englishman can be found to say that Dominion Status is possible in near future." (19) He felt that "Effusions such as the foregoing cannot but do great harm to a peaceful solution of difficulties in India. (20)

Gandhi Broods and Decides

Gandhi was brooding in silence trying to find out the most practical and yet the most effective way of starting the civil disobedience movement. The possibility of breaking out of violence as in Chauri Chaura in 1922 was exercising his mind. Other nationalist leaders, such as the Congress President Jawaharlal Nehru, were also worried lest such incidents happened and Gandhi again stopped the movement when it was at its height. This time, however, Gandhi gave the impression that "there was a slightly different orientation to his thinking, and the Civil Disobedience, when it came need not be stopped because of a sporadic act of violence." (21)

Finally, towards the end of February, Gandhi made up his mind with regard to the particular issue on which he would start his civil disobedience campaign. He chose the Salt Laws. Under the Salt Laws, manufacture of salt was a Government monopoly,

19 See The Bengalee, 2 February 1930.
20 Frazer to Secretary of State, 21 February 1930, n. 11.
although this commodity was easily available from sea water or other natural sources in India. Moreover, these laws also imposed a duty on salt adding to the burden of the people for whom salt was not only an essential article for human consumption but also for their cattle and agriculture. Even the Taxation Inquiry Committee of the Government of India had admitted that "the bulk of it [Salt Tax] is paid by those who were least able to contribute anything towards the State expenditure." (22) Gandhi regarded this tax as "the most iniquitous of all from the poor man's standpoint." "As the independence movement is essentially for the poorest in the land, the beginning will be made with this evil", he decided. (23) He would start his campaign by violating these laws at the sea-shore of Dandi. This, according to some historians, showed Gandhi's "political instincts at their highest". (24)


23 See D. G. Tendulkar, Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Bombay, 1952), vol. 3, p. 23. According to Gandhi, the incidence of the salt-tax was undoubtedly at least 9 annas per head per year, whereas according to the Government, it was just over 3 annas per head per year. See Sitaramayya, n. 6, p. 393, and India, Legislative Assembly Debates, vol. 2, session 6, 1930, p. 1586 respectively. According to the New York Times, annual tax on salt averaged 10 cents per capita or 50 cents per family. See "Indian Salt and Indian Taxes", ed., New York Times, 16 April 1930, p. 28. For a general discussion of the British policy with regard to Salt in India, see C. S. Srinivasachari, "The Salt Tax under British Rule", Indian Review, 31 (June 1930), pp. 377-9; and G. D. Mohun, "The Salt Monopoly in India", Modern Review, 47 (May 1930), pp. 612-14.

Before embarking on civil disobedience, Gandhi made a final bid for finding a way out by discussing the matter again with the British authorities. He, therefore, wrote a long letter to the Viceroy on 2 March in which he set out his reasons why he considered the British Government in India to be a curse. He also told him that the independence resolution of the Congress should have caused no alarm if the word "dominion status" mentioned in his announcement of 31 October 1929 had been used in its accepted sense. He informed him that if he could not see his way to deal with the evils of the British rule he had outlined, on 11 March, he would proceed with the co-workers of his Ashram to disregard the provisions of the Salt Laws. In case the Viceroy still cared to discuss these matters with him and wanted him to postpone publication of this letter, he would refrain from doing so on receipt of a telegram to that effect. (25)

The Viceroy's reply to this was very brief and curt. He only expressed his regret that Gandhi should have been contemplating a course of action which was "clearly bound to involve violation of the law or danger to the public peace." (26) This was no surprise to Gandhi. And so expressing his agony at the British attitude and his determination to go on with his plan, he wrote on 12 March:

On bended knees I asked for bread and received stone instead.... I repudiate this law and regard it as my sacred duty to break the mournful monotony of compulsory peace that is choking the heart of the Nation for want of free vent. (27)

25 Text of the letter in Tendulkar, n. 23, pp. 18-23. This letter was sent to the Viceroy through a young British Quaker, Reginald Reynolds.

26 Ibid., p. 23.

27 Ibid., pp. 23-24.
The Dandi March

Meanwhile, the country was heaving with excitement and awaiting with curiosity the final decision of Gandhi. A Revolutionary gave "Comrade Gandhi" only three years' time to try his non-violent method. On the other hand, came a wire from New York which brought the message "Good Guard you" from Rev. John Haynes Holmes. (28) Gandhi calmly, in the midst of rumours that he was going to be arrested and deported, selected seventy-nine members of his Ashram to join his 241-mile march to Dandi. One of them was Haridas Thakoredas Muzumdar, who had long resided in the United States advocating the cause of India but had returned to the country on the eve of the Lahore Congress.

Having said his morning prayers in a solemn atmosphere on 12 March, Gandhi embarked upon his historic journey to Dandi to win the independence of India. Villagers watered the roads for miles, carpeted them with flowers, and cheered up the satyagrahis (non-violent civil resisters) as they trekked along. Enthusiasm in the country was remarkable. Wrote Jawaharlal Nehru: "As people followed the fortunes of the marching column of pilgrims from day to day, the temperature of the country went up." (29)

Consul General Frazer was observing the political situation in India with interest. He felt that while the British papers were underestimating the response that Gandhi had evoked, the anti-British press was exaggerating it. The truth, according to him,

28 Ibid., p. 28.
29 Nehru, n. 1, p. 210. Subhas Chandra Bose compared this march with Napoleon's march to Paris on his return from Elba or Mussolini's march to Rome when he wanted to seize political power. Subhas Chandra Bose, n. 4, p. 182.
lay midway between the two extremes. Elaborating this point further and with an edge slightly against the British press, he wrote:

On the one hand there has been no general uprising of Congressists throughout the country to engage in civil disobedience, but on the other, Mr. Gandhi, the supreme dictator of the party, has not called for any such movement, but on the contrary has decreed that only the demonstration of which he is personally at the head shall for the moment be made.

Frazer took note of the enormous influence Gandhi had on the masses. He also noted the determined mood of Gandhi to carry out his plan of civil disobedience. He told the Secretary of State:

Whether this particular demonstration will be a success or a failure cannot be foreseen, but Gandhi's influence with the masses is unquestionably enormous and his determination to carry through the campaign planned inflexible. This is, he has said, to be the great and final effort of his life, and no one who lives in India has any doubt of either his influence or his sincerity. It is certainly too soon to be able to assert with any confidence that his campaign is already "doomed to failure". (30)

Frazer forecast the probability that when the authorities would intervene with wholesale arrests of important leaders a "very widespread agitation, probably with serious disturbances and riots in some cases, will ensue." He enclosed quite a large number of clippings and editorials on this subject, taken from papers of the most diverse political sympathies in India. But only one of them happened to be editorial from a British paper \"The Pioneer (Allahabad), 13 March 1930\". Seeing through the British tactics in the matter, he wrote:

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30 Consul General in Calcutta (Frazer) to Secretary of State, 20 March 1930, 845.00/659, Records of the Department of State. This "doomed to failure" assessment was being made by the British press at the time.
Only this one on Gandhi has appeared in the British press during the past week, which would be thought odd were it not surmised that the Government has probably intimated to the papers with which it has influence that the less they say about Gandhi, and the less publicity they give him at this time, the better. (31)

THE SALT SATYAGRAHA

Gandhi, with his band of satyagrahis, reached Dandi on 5 April. Next day, after his morning prayers, he took bath in the sea and picked up a lump of natural salt thus breaking the Salt Law of the Government of India. "Hail, Deliverer," was the cry of Sarojini Naidu who was standing nearby. Immediately after this, Gandhi issued a statement to the Press in which he announced that it was now open to any one who would take the risk of prosecution under the Salt Law to manufacture salt wherever he wished and wherever it was convenient. He designated the week ending on 13 April as the National Week and called on the people to continue this "war against the Salt Tax". This is how the Salt Satyagraha, at times called "the kindergarten stage of revolution," (32) was inaugurated in India. "The next act was an insurrection without arms." (33) Villagers on the seashore picked up water from the sea and manufactured salt; in cities huge public meetings were held where contraband salt was sold; and picketing of liquor shops and shops selling foreign clothes was

31 Ibid.
launched throughout the country. According to Sitaramayya, "The whole country was ablaze from end to end...." (34)

**Situation More Dangerous than in 1857**

Consul General Frazer surveyed the turbulent situation existing in India and reported to the Secretary of State that the Salt Act was being broken in a great number of places throughout the country. He referred to the buffalo carters' demonstration in Calcutta and the railway strike in Bombay resulting into some disorders and bloodshed but opined that "there has been no bloodshed which can definitely be attributed to the civil disobedience...." He, however, believed that the whole atmosphere was charged with excitement and unrest and provided a milieu highly favourable to the development of strikes and disorders and to the spread of communistic ideas. (35)

Frazer found it impossible to say, at this stage, whether or not the civil disobedience campaign had been a success from Gandhi's point of view. He alluded to the assessment made by the British-edited newspapers that it had already proved a failure and to that of the pro-Indian newspapers that it was a great success and said:

> It is certain that there has been no great enthusiastic uprising such as that which Mr. Gandhi evoked in 1922, but, whether, as Indian partisans of the movement declare, there is a firmer and stronger underlying determination among the people than there was in 1922, remains to be seen. (36)

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34 Sitaramayya, n. 6, p. 389.

35 Consul General in Calcutta (Frazer) to Secretary of State, 10 April 1930, 845.00/664, Records of the Department of State.

36 Ibid.
The situation in India was getting more and more serious. Following the arrest of the Mayor of Calcutta and the Congress leader, J. M. Sen Gupta, there was a strike in Calcutta on 15 April and in the riot that followed some persons including Europeans and two Americans were injured. The condition of the Americans was not serious. Frazer sent a telegram to the Department of State conveying this information and predicting that a worse situation might well develop shortly. (37)

In a detailed report later Frazer enumerated a considerable number of incidents of riots and disorders taking place in the wake of the civil disobedience movement and stated that the civil disobedience movement had doubtless gathered strength during the recent weeks and that all the incidents, taken together, "indicate conclusively ... that Great Britain is confronted potentially with a more serious and dangerous situation in India than has arisen since 1857 (the year of the Mutiny)." (38)

Dominion Status Brought Nearer:
Justification of the Indian Agitation

Frazer also expressed himself on the probable effect of the civil disobedience agitation on the future of India. Becoming a little clearer and more positive than before, he wrote:

It is idle to attempt to prophesy the course that events will take, but I believe that the result will be, as anti-British Indians have hoped, a much earlier attainment of Dominion Status than would have been the case if the civil disobedience campaign had not been undertaken.

37 Consul General in Calcutta (Frazer) to Secretary of State, 16 April 1930, 845.00/660, Records of the Department of State.

38 Consul General in Calcutta (Frazer) to Secretary of State, 24 April 1930, 845.00/671, Records of the Department of State.
Frazer argued his point very closely. If Gandhi's party won, it would mean immediate Dominion Status, and he did not believe that either Gandhi or the other leading Indians in the movement sincerely desired more than that at this time. If Gandhi's movement failed, so he argued, its failure would have been preceded by so much agitation and so great a disorganization and dislocation in India as to force the conviction upon the British Parliament that the only way to prevent a similar but probably a far worse outbreak a few years hence would be to confer Dominion Status on India at the earliest possible date. He analysed the situation further and said that since England's economy was in bad shape and India happened to be its largest customer, England could afford neither a long expensive campaign of military repression in India nor the loss India, its greatest market and outlet for goods. He also listed "the international sympathy sure to be felt for a subject people anxious to obtain its freedom" as a contributing factor in the likely British considerations. (39)

Frazer reverted to the discussion of the effect of the civil disobedience upon the prospect of Dominion Status early in May when the Government of India had launched upon a severe repressive policy. He now felt that the British would succeed in suppressing the movement. Yet his belief in the civil disobedience movement having brought the Dominion Status nearer realization than before was not dislodged. He conceded that the British cannot, except in the last extremity, grant Dominion Status to

39 Ibid.
India under fire. But his reading of the situation had reinforced his belief that after the British have finally succeeded in calming down the situation, the idea cannot fail to loom very large that if India was not granted Dominion Status "very promptly afterward", there will be another and, probably, a worse uprising to be faced in another year or so. He now saw some justification in the Indian agitation:

The Indians are right in holding that they will not get more from Great Britain than they insist on having and agitating until they get. As one of them put it to me, there is small hope for them in the British idea of advancing step by step towards Dominion Status, up a Jacob's ladder to which there is no end. Whether the present campaign succeeds or not, and I think it will not, it will bring Dominion Status nearer and not still further postpone it. (40)

Gandhi and His Sincerity

Even after breaking the Salt Law on 6 April, Gandhi was going about preaching "sedition" without interference from the Government of India much to the resentment of a section of the Press and British statesmen. The onslaughts by Winston Churchill, "superb in eloquence, biting in scorn and containing charges of Viceroy's weakness and irresolution", were, according to a British authority, "unforgettable." (41) The Viceroy knew that the time was coming when he must arrest Gandhi. Still he desisted from taking this action because apart from other considerations, he did not want to make a martyr of Gandhi. The British officials in

40 Consul General in Calcutta (Frazer) to Secretary of State, 8 May 1930, 845.00/677, Records of the Department of State.

41 Birkenhead, n. 9, p. 282.
India believed that Gandhi was "dreadfully anxious to be arrested" (42) and that "the waiting policy of Lord Irwin and his Government embarrassed him." (43) Consul General Frazer, however, was wary in accepting the British assessment of Gandhi's motives and desires. He wrote:

It is widely thought among the British that he definitely desires arrest, but no evidence of such a desire has been observed. If he is sincere in his wish that his campaign be conducted without violence, as most people, but not everyone, believe, he must prefer to be left at liberty, as his arrest would certainly mean the instant outbreak of mob violence,... It is naturally to be supposed also, that he realizes that his active leadership means more to his cause than the psychological effect, great though that would be on the masses, of his incarceration. (44)

But Frazer was finding it "exceedingly difficult" to appraise the true measure of Gandhi's character and especially his sincerity. He referred both to the Indian declamation of Gandhi's "sincerity" and to the British denunciation of Gandhi's "shrewdness" and contended himself with the remark that whatever be the opinions of Gandhi's "detractors", it was true that the vast majority of Indians believed in him implicitly and that his influence with the masses was literally enormous. He realized that if the non-violent campaign could be kept non-violent and still succeed, it would be unique in the history of the world. He knew that few Europeans living in India believed that it could

42 Ibid., p. 281.
44 Consul General in Calcutta (Frazer) to Secretary of State, 17 April 1930, 845.00/666, Records of the Department of State.
be so. But he noted that there existed optimists outside of India who believed that it could be both non-violent and successful. (45)

**Government's Attitude Stiffens**

The situation in India was gradually assuming a disturbing posture for the Government of India. Among several incidents of civil disorder, one very important was the daring raid by a group of young men on the Chittagong Armoury on 18 April in which the raiders, after killing a few sentries, made away with a number of guns and ammunition. Another very grave and more disturbing incident was the refusal of two platoons of the 39th Garhwal Rifles regarded as one of the finest units in the Indian Army, to fire on the crowds which had collected in Peshawar on 23 April as a sequel of the arrest of Abdul Gaffar Khan, the North-Frontier leader and a disciple of Gandhi. This indicated that even the military might not be immune from the influence of the agitators and the Viceroy wrote to the King that "the episode was a very uncomfortable one that inevitably sets one thinking...." (46)

Consul General Frazer noted a stiffening of the attitude of the Government after these incidents and reported to the Secretary of State that an "interesting recent development is the apparent abandonment of what many thought the too conciliatory and long-suffering attitude of the Government of India" as shown by the repromulgation of the Bengal Criminal Act and the Press Ordinance

45 Ibid.

46 Birkenhead, n. 9, p. 283. The Soviet historians have characterized some of the events during April-May 1930 such as happened in Chittagong, Peshawar, and Sholapur as "anti-British uprising" of the working people. See V. V. Balabushevich and A. M. Dyakov, eds., *A Contemporary History of India* (Bombay, 1964), pp. 232-40.
as also by the Viceroy's uncompromising reply to V. J. Patel's resignation from the presidency of the Legislative Assembly. He characterized the repromulgation of the Press Ordinance as a "complete muzzling of the anti-British press" and as "no doubt a very extreme and high-handed measure". But, here, again, he did the tight-rope walking. He wrote:

... but in view of not only the seditious matter but of the vast number of utterly false reports and statements which the less reputable sheets have been circulating, most reasonable impartial observers here are very much inclined to sympathize with the feelings which led to its imposition. (47)

Under the impact of the repressive measures of the Government, the situation had become quieter. But Frazer immediately added that there was no sign of the civil disobedience movement being less active. On the other hand, the boycott of the British goods, particularly of cotton piece-goods, drugs and medicines, and cigarettes had become stronger and more widespread, he reported. A considerable number of important trade organizations had also associated themselves with the boycott movement. He concluded:

While the Press Ordinance, the Bengal Criminal Act, and the generally increased severity of the Government in imprisoning violators of the laws may result finally in quelling the civil disobedience movement, there is not at present any indication whatever of its weakening. (48)

47 Consul General in Calcutta (Frazer) to Secretary of State, 1 May 1930, 845.00/676, Records of the Department of State.

48 Ibid.
Gandhi Arrested

After the Chittagong and Peshawar incidents the Government of India appears to have felt that further delay in arresting Gandhi would be taking too much of risk in view of the temper of the country. On 29 April, the Government of India decided to arrest Gandhi early. (49)

On 1 May, Gandhi, writing under the caption, "Goonda Raj," referred to the repressive policy of the Government before which, he said, "Even Dyerism pales into insignificance". He exhorted the people to answer the "organized hooliganism with greater suffering." He at the same time announced his intention to set out for the Dharsana salt depot to demand possession of the Salt Works there. Earlier, i.e., on 8 April, while addressing a meeting in the village Aat, he had also advised the volunteers to resist the police if they tried to snatch away the salt picked up by them (the volunteers) until blood (of the volunteers) was spilt. (50) He, as usual, intimated to the Viceroy his new programme of proceeding towards the Dharsana salt depot in the form of a letter, in which, while setting out his reasons for doing so, he enumerated the repressive actions of the Government. (51)

The British Press, however, played up the words "raids" and "bloodshed" in Gandhi's statement giving the impression that Gandhi now himself was calling on the people to take to the path of

49 Gopal, n. 24, p. 70.


51 Tendulkar, n. 23, pp. 45-47.
violence. (52) On 4 May, the Bombay Branch of the European Association urged the Governor of Bombay for "greater firmness" in the maintenance of law and order. It advised that the Government should arrest those who were inciting breach of law. (53) The Government of India also was quick to recognize the opportunity. And so in the early hours of 5 May Gandhi was arrested at Karadi, a village near Dandi, under the orders of the Government of Bombay under Regulation XXV of 1827 which authorized detention without trial and was quietly and secretly taken to Yeravda jail near Poona. (54)

William H. Bench, American Consul in Bombay, noted that the British Press had played up the two words Gandhi had uttered: "raid" and "bloodshed". He did not agree with the interpretation given to it by the British Press and felt that these two words were "undoubtedly too strong" to express what Gandhi had actually meant. Explaining this, he wrote:

He apparently meant by 'raid' that he would surround the depot and allow his followers to pick up bits of salt which were in the custody of Government, and they more defiantly break the salt laws than had been done before. By 'blood' he meant that those who

52 See, for example, how the special correspondent of The Times reported Gandhi's speech in the village Aat on 8 April and, again, his speech in a village near Surat on 9 April. The Times, 9 April 1930, p. 16 and 10 April 1930, p. 16.


54 For a brief but graphic description of the manner and the scene in which Gandhi was arrested, see Fischer, n. 33, pp. 271-2. One of the captions in the New York Times giving details of Gandhi's arrest was: THE MAHATMA IS ARRESTED AND SPIRITED AWAY TO JAIL AS STAFF SLEEPS. New York Times, 5 May 1930, p. 1. Emphasis added.
picked up the salt should hold it in their hands against the police until the blood of the satya-grahis was spilt, and had no intention of conveying the impression that there would be an organized battle resulting in bloodshed. He was nevertheless arrested. (55)

Reaction to Gandhi's Arrest

Gandhi's arrest was followed by demonstrations, strikes, and huge meetings all over the country. The Consul in Bombay graphically described the hartals (suspension of work) and the processions that took place in Bombay on 6 May in response to the call of the local Congress Committee. The appeal for hartal was "complied with almost universally, paralyzing all bazar business for several days", he wrote. Small groups began to collect gradually to march in procession; by the time the procession reached the Fort about six in the evening, it consisted of about 200,000 people. The police made no attempt to regulate the traffic which was paralysed for several hours. The leaders, stationed at intervals, exhorted the crowd not to resort to violence and the Congress volunteers kept the crowd under control. At places these volunteers could be seen protecting the cars of Europeans, aiding them to pass through the procession without being unduly molested. Clearly the Consul was impressed by the discipline and spirit displayed by the processionists. He wrote:

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55 Consul in Bombay (William H. Bench) to Consul General in Calcutta (Frazer), 30 May 1930, 845.00/686, Records of the Department of State. Frazer sent this report to the Department of State where it received the rating: Excellent. In his letter to the Viceroy, dated 1 May, Gandhi had also written at one place: "It is possible for you to prevent the raid, as it has been playfully and mischievously called, in three ways...." See Tendulkar, n. 23, p. 45. Emphasis added.
No casualties or injuries were reported during the day, and the peaceful manner with which it was carried out is a worthy commendation of Mr. Gandhi's policy of non-violence and the respect with which followers treated his teachings on the occasion of his arrest. (56)

After Gandhi's arrest, the Congress Working Committee decided to expand the scope of the Civil Disobedience and called upon the entire nation to make all sacrifices they were capable of towards the success of the fight for freedom. It declared that Dharsana should thenceforth be treated as an all-India centre for salt raids.

In line with this decision, raids took place at Dharsana culminating in the mass raid on 21 May under the leadership of Sarojini Naidu. More than 2,500 volunteers participated in the raid. The non-violent heroism displayed by the volunteers in the face of brutal charges from the police astonished Webb Miller, the American press correspondent who was an eye-witness to the scene. (57)

The Consul in Bombay also described how the raids on the Dharsana salt depot were conducted by the Congress volunteers led by Sarojini Naidu. Testifying to the non-violent methods of the satyagrahis, he wrote:

At Dharsana, where the breaking of the salt laws reached its climax and where the number of "satyagrahis" was much greater than at any other place, Gandhi's teachings were carried out by the volunteers to remarkable degree although the situation became exceedingly tense at times. (58)

56 Bench to Consul General in Calcutta, 30 May 1930, n. 55.
57 See Chapter IV, pp. 163-4.
58 Bench to Consul General in Calcutta, 30 May 1930, n. 55.
The arrest of Sarojini Naidu at Dharsana on 21 May and the treatment meted out to the satyagrahis by the police there occasioned a huge procession in Bombay on 23 May. The Consul in Bombay gave a description of this large parade which, he thought, consisted of 100,000 Congress volunteers. He, again, was full of praise for these volunteers for the ability they showed in regulating the traffic and controlling the situation. Pointing out that this had been the feature of all the parades held in Bombay recently, he wrote:

It is remarkable that they have all been conducted on peaceful lines and, considering the number of participants, it is a notable feature that there have been practically no acts of violence committed. Congress volunteers especially chosen to keep order are scattered throughout the crowd and, in a number of cases, have intervened to prevent what might become a serious situation. Europeans are jeered at and evidences of hostilities are not wanting, but there have been practically no cases of actual attack and whenever there have been any semblance of such, the Congress volunteers have intervened and restored order. The City Police, aside from holding up one of the parades, have not been in evidence at all, leaving the maintenance of order to the Congress volunteers. (59)

The Consul made a separate mention of the effect of Gandhi's campaign in Gujarat where the weapon of social boycott of the officials who had not resigned appeared to have been "most effective". In the Bardoli district, on account of the large number of resignations, the farmers, he noted, actually thought that the Gandhi Rule had been established and the British India Government no longer existed. Speaking further of the success of Gandhi's campaign there, he wrote:

It appears that the Mohammedan population also joined in with the Gandhi followers in the district and that spirit of civil disobedience pervaded all classes,

59 Ibid.
young and old. On the other hand there does not appear to have been any cases of violence committed and only one volunteer has died as a result of encounters with the police. (60)

Thus the American Consul came very close to the British publicist, Brailsford, who, while describing the situation in the wake of civil disobedience in 1930, later said that Bombay had two governments: the British and the Congress. To the British, there still were loyal the Europeans, the Indian sepoys and the elder generation of the Moslem community. The rest were loyal to the Congress which ruled in Gandhi's name. (61)

The Response of the Muslims

One issue that was of considerable interest to the observers of these developments was the attitude of the Muslims. Were the Bombay demonstrations, for instance, a purely Hindu show? If so, would they bring in their wake communal disturbances? The Consul in Bombay reported that although it could hardly be said that the Muslims in the city wholeheartedly participated in this demonstration, yet they showed no feeling of hostility on this occasion. On the other hand, a large number of them observed hartal in sympathy with the others. It appeared "significant" to the Consul that three days after Gandhi's arrest, the most important Muslim holiday of the year (Bakr-Id) passed off without the occurrence of a single case of communal skirmishes. (62)

60 Ibid.
61 Brailsford, n. 32, pp. 13-14.
62 Bench to Consul General in Calcutta, 30 May 1930, n. 55.
The Consul again referred to the attitude of the Muslims when he described the incident which took place in Bombay on 26 May occasioned by an Englishman striking a Mohammedan for his having kicked his (the Englishman's) dog. A mass of Mohammedans had assembled following the incident and the situation became such that the military had to be called in and firing resorted to. The Consul was not clear what significance to attach to this incident, but he presented two possibilities: either the Mohammedans had sided with the Congress in an anti-British attitude or the incident was no more than a trivial happening which developed into a serious trouble due to the tension which pervaded the city at that time. (63)

As already mentioned, the Consul took note of the fact that the Mohammedans had joined hands with the followers of Gandhi in the district of Bardoli where the spirit of civil disobedience had, according to him, pervaded "all classes, young and old."

Government Resorts to the Policy of Big Stick

In the meantime, the Viceroy had decided to suppress the civil disobedience movement vigorously. "Even Mr. Winston Churchill must have smiled with approval," wrote the sympathetic biographer of Lord Irwin, "when the Viceroy proceeded to arrest Jawaharlal Nehru, muzzle the vernacular Press by Ordinance, stamp on unlawful gatherings of people and fill the jails of India to bursting point." (64)

Consul General Frazer took note of the changed attitude of the Viceroy. He reported that after Gandhi's arrest "serious

63 Ibid.
64 Birkenhead, n. 9, p. 284.
disorders" had occurred in the various parts of the country, especially in Calcutta and Delhi, the hartal in Calcutta being "very complete." The Government too had launched upon a severe repressive policy.

"The promulgation of the Press Ordinance would have so tightly muzzled the pro-Indian newspapers that very nearly all of them have refused to put up the required bonds called for and have ceased their publication," reported Frazer. In the Calcutta consular district, the only English language Indian newspaper which continued to be published was The Bengalee, "a definitely pro-British sheet."

Frazer gave a list of the various repressive actions of the Government, such as a great number of arrests of the agitators; prohibition of public processions and meetings, declaration of the Congress Party and the Youth League at Peshawar to be illegal, promulgation of the Press Ordinance and the Bengal Criminal Act; promulgation of the Lahore Conspiracy Case Ordinance "placing the trial of the accused in this long drawn out matter in the hands of a special tribunal of three Judges with special powers"; and the invocation in the case of Gandhi of the "anachronistic Bombay Regulation of 1827 which permits arrest without any charge being preferred". He characterised these as illustrations of "a radical change, from what may be regarded its [Government of India's] formerly too patient, or even conciliatory attitude toward Indian agitators, to a distinct policy of repression and the 'big stick'." (65)

65 Consul General in Calcutta (Frazer) to Secretary of State, 8 May 1930, n. 40.
But the repressive action had failed to achieve its objective. Frazer believed that notwithstanding the strong repressive measures of the Government, the campaign was so far continuing "with certainly unabated strength, and in some respects, as in the boycott movement, with even increased vigor." (66) A little later, he, again, said that the boycott of British goods continued "unabated or even intensified" and that there was marked and widespread increase of civil disorder throughout the country. At the same time, the Government of India was also continuing its vigorous repressive policy. The result of this, in his opinion, was that the more the Government's policy became repressive and the longer it lasted, the more violent and widespread the riots and disorders also became. He added that perhaps the latter would have occurred even if the Government had maintained its former conciliatory attitude and perhaps not, but the fact was that increasing repression had been everywhere, so far, accompanied by increasing disorder. (67)

**The Sholapur Incident and the American Concern**

On 8 May a serious incident happened in Sholapur in which about 25 persons were reported to have been killed as a result of police firing on an insurgent mob. Subsequently, the city was placed under martial law. This as well as other such incidents elsewhere in India were being given considerable publicity in the United States. The *New York Times* gave the following alarming headlines to the Sholapur occurrence on its first page bringing

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66 Ibid.
67 Consul General in Calcutta (Frazer) to Secretary of State, 29 May 1930, 845.00/680, Records of the Department of State.
to the mind the scenes of a War, a War of Independence.

GANDHI FORCES SEIZE CITY IN FIERCE FIGHT
25 KILLED; BRITISH RUSH MORE TROOPS
* * * *
RIOTERS DRIVE DEFENDERS TO RAILROAD STATION
BRITISH FAMILIES FLEE (68)

These reports caught the attention of the Department of State. The Department thought it fit to send a confidential telegram to the Consulate General in Calcutta. It said:

Press reports indicate increasing seriousness of the situation generally throughout India. Please cable brief summary. (69)

To this, Robert Frazer, the Consul General in Calcutta, telegraphically replied on 13 May in which he stated that following extremely repressive measures by the Government such as "complete muzzling of the press," "forbidding dance gatherings and processions" and "wholesale arrests," situation throughout India was much quieter externally during the last few days. It was, he added, impossible to predict the course of events as "although comparative surface quietness now exists there is widespread serious unrest underneath and disorders may recur at any moment." He also noted that the boycott movement, which was strengthening, was causing increased demand for certain American commodities. But, otherwise, Americans or American interests

69 Telegram from Department of State to Consulate General in Calcutta, 9 May 1930, 845.00/664a, Records of the Department of State.
were so far unaffected. (70)

Earlier the Consul General had called on appropriate authorities in Calcutta to ascertain as specifically as possible the opinion of the Government in regard to the degree of the seriousness of the situation and also to enquire what plans had been made to secure the physical safety, with other white people, of American residents in India. These officials had admitted to him frankly that they regarded the situation as "serious". From this characterization, Frazer had gathered the impression that there was probability of "at least a certain amount of sporadic rioting and civil disorder" in the not distant future. The officials had assured him that satisfactory arrangements for the security of the white people had been made. He himself knew that the utmost vigilance was being maintained by all District Magistrates and that immediately there was the slightest danger, word would be sent to every individual white man to assemble to the "rallying points." Frazer had sent this report to the Secretary of State. (71)

The alarming reports appearing in the press, however, were causing anxieties in some circles in the USA. This was more so because a number of American missionaries were working in India and their friends and relations in the USA became worried about their welfare in the troubled situation existing in India.

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70 Telegram from Consul General in Calcutta (Frazer) to Secretary of State, 13 May 1930, 845.00/667, Records of the Department of State.

71 Consul General in Calcutta (Frazer) to Secretary of State, 25 April 1930, 845.00/675, Records of the Department of State.
Frank L. Bowman, Member of the US House of Representatives, who had a close relative, a Presbyterian missionary, working in India, wrote to the Secretary of State drawing his attention to the situation in India. The Congressman was fearful that the "activities of the followers of Gandhi may result in an uprising of the Moslem world against the British government." In that event, India would find itself in "the throes of a religious war", and the lives of many Christian missionaries and teachers would be jeopardized. He inquired what, if any, provision had been made by the State Department to protect the lives of the American missionaries in the event of a religious war in India. A politician as he was, he guessed that Great Britain might have obligated itself by treaty or agreement to protect these missionaries and teachers. But his troubled soul and his awakened foresight would not leave him at that. He put forward a concrete suggestion: "a small American fleet at one of the ports of entry of India might guarantee the safety of our missionaries and teachers and allay the fears of their many friends and relatives in the United States." (72)

The Secretary of State Stimson, however, retained the equanimity of his mind. He calmly replied that the reports received from Consular Office in Calcutta did not indicate American lives to be in danger at this time. He also mildly reminded the Congressman of the intricacies of international law involved in the matter. The safety of life and property in India was a

72 Frank L. Bowman to Secretary of State (Henry L. Stimson), 13 May 1930, 845.00/667½, Records of the Department of State.
British responsibility and the State Department had no present reason to believe that adequate measures were not being taken by them in defence of foreign interests. But he did not fail to assure the Congressman that the Department was closely following the general situation in India and would give immediate attention to ensuring the safety of American citizens should future developments make it advisable to take up this matter with the British Government. (73)

Sholapur Incident an Exception rather than a Rule

The Sholapur incident was made much of by the British. It was played up as a clear proof of their contention that the civil disobedience movement was not non-violent. In their telegram to London, dated 11 May 1930, the Government of India made a survey of the "languishing" salt campaign and stated that the sporadic riots following Gandhi's arrest were serious only in Calcutta, Delhi, and Sholapur. Then they said: "The hollowness of claiming that the movement is non-violent is becoming increasingly apparent." (74)

The American Consul in Bombay, however, does not appear to agree fully with this assessment. In his report of 30 May he dealt with the Sholapur incident also. He felt that the Govern-

73 Secretary of State (Stimson) to Frank L. Bowman, 19 May 1930, 845.00/667, Records of the Department of State.

74 Telegram of the Government of India to London, dated 11 May 1930, reproduced in Consul General in Calcutta (Frazer) to Secretary of State, 15 May 1930, 845.00/678, Records of the Department of State. The correspondent of The Times thought that it was too much to hope that Gandhi or the other Congress leaders would recognise the Sholapur incident as a "fresh evidence of the hopeless hypocrisy of the non-violent creed". The Times, 12 May 1930, p. 16.
ment was "fully justified in declaring martial law." But he thought it was "unfortunate" that the civil authorities had to seek the military aid, since as soon as the latter assumed the control of the city, they, reportedly, prohibited the flying of the Congress flag and prevented the wearing of the Gandhi cap "which greatly incensed the Gandhi followers." The Sholapur incident, in his opinion, was an exception to the non-violent spirit in which the campaign had been conducted in his Consular District of Bombay. He wrote:

The Sholapur riot is the only incident of importance which has happened in this district since the beginning of the civil disobedience campaign that would show that the movement has not been conducted along non-violent lines and it is believed that its importance lies in the fact that it is an exception to the spirit in which the campaign has so far been conducted, rather than it was flagrant demonstration of mob rule and that, under certain conditions, violence will almost inevitably be committed by certain hooligans who have been carried away by the spirit of disrespect for order contrary to Gandhi's teaching. (75)

The Consul implied that it was the interference by the police and the military that complicated the situation. He said:

Both Bombay and Poona, where there have been numerous parades and where all manner of rumors have been floating around, have demonstrated that the policy of non-interference by the police and more especially by the Military, has produced excellent results. In the recent disturbances of Bombay the Congress volunteers have not only helped to maintain order, but have shown excellent spirit in helping the wounded Mohammedans who were not Congress volunteers. (76)

75 Consul in Bombay (Bench) to Consul General in Calcutta (Frazer), 30 May 1930, n. 55. Emphasis added.

76 Ibid.
The Boycott of British Goods and
the American Opportunity

One feature of the civil disobedience movement which attracted the attention of the American officials in an interesting way and posed a dilemma before them was the campaign for the boycott of British goods and its likely effect on American trade. The Consul General in Calcutta had been referring to the intensity of the boycott movement in his reports. But a pointed report on this subject was prepared by Winfield H. Minor, Vice Consul in the Bombay Consular Office, in June 1930 and sent to Calcutta and Washington D.C. In this report, the Vice Consul attested to the serious interference which the boycott movement had made with the foreign trade of India. (77) He pointed out that although the boycott was directed more or less against all foreign goods, it appeared, "for political reasons, to be almost wholly confined to British goods at present." This had created an atmosphere considerably favourable for American, German, and other foreign manufacturers to enter the Indian market.

The Vice Consul went into the matter of British attitude towards American trade in India and wrote that "a definite feeling is prevalent amongst the English trades people established in India against American policies and business, and it is not unusual to observe a manifestation of that attitude which, unfortunately, usually takes the form of editorials and articles appearing in the press, which are obviously designed to hinder

77 "Effects of Boycott Movement upon General Trade in Bombay", 19/21 June 1930, enclosed with 645.4112/4, Records of the Department of State.
the expansion of our trade with these people." An indication of this attitude was reflected in the reception which the more important British firms accorded to the representatives of the American manufacturers who, from time to time, approached them with a view to placing of American agencies. These attitudes, the Vice-Consul said, were "defiant." Striking a note of hope, however, he wrote:

There is nevertheless, and in spite of the adverse propaganda which is disseminated against American products, a growing market in India for American manufacturers and, while the gesture of the Indian people to favor American products in preference to those of British manufacture at the present time does not necessarily imply that the Indian people hold any affection for us, it indicates that American manufacturers, if they so desire, can increase the share of the available business in India through availing themselves of the advantages which offer themselves at present and which, probably, will continue for some time to come.

The Vice Consul also pointed out the difficulties in the situation: general trade depression; the uncertainty of the present political situation; and, above all, the "demonstrable disfavor" with which the British business interests in India would view any attempt of American manufacturers to take advantage of the present situation to enhance American trade at their expense.

The Consul in Bombay endorsed this report but, in a covering note addressed to the Secretary of State, strongly advised against giving any publicity to this. He felt that any publicity given to this report in the USA was bound to reach India which "would lend considerable color to the suspicions which already exist among British trade interests concerning the activities of American trade agents in India and it might give the appearance of a
sympathetic gesture by our Government toward the boycott movement which, at present, portends serious consequence to British trade in the country." (78)

This report was found "extremely interesting" by the Division of Western European Affairs in the State Department. The Division, however, did not feel that "it would be advisable to transmit this to Commerce, as the opportunities ought to be obvious to American business interests and any official attempt to turn British embarrassment to our immediate advantage would be dangerous." They advised that the matter might be mentioned conversationally if an occasion arose. The Assistant Secretary of State concurred with this. (79)

The files of Commerce Department of the United States of this period show that even before the Bombay report was prepared, the officials of this Department were conscious of the possibilities created by the Indian boycott movement for the American trade there. But they too were very cautious against any precipitate action. (80)

A little later the American Trade Commissioner in India, Charles B. Spofford, Jr., appears to have become exasperated at the hostile attitude of the British officials towards American business in India. He received a letter from the Secretary of

78 Confidential note attached to the Vice Consul's report, n. 77.
79 Note of JFC of the Division of Western European Affairs, 24 July 1930, attached to the Vice Consul's report, n. 77. Emphasis added.
80 See Memorandum by C. K. Moser to the Director of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, 9 July 1930, File No. 495, Records of the Department of Commerce.
the Indian Chamber of Commerce, Calcutta, enclosing a copy of Memo No. F215-9-30, dated 12 September 1930, sent by the District Magistrate of 24-Paraganas of the then Province of Bengal to all Government officers in that district, which read as follows:

In future in making purchase preference is to be given to British goods. Except for special reasons, no American goods are to be purchased, for example, the Imperial Typewriter which is a British machine is to be given preference. (81)

Spofford sent this letter to the Director of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce in the USA and, in a covering letter, alluded to the hostile attitude of the British and gave vent to his own feelings:

Whatever our personal views may be on the Indian political situation, I believe that standing orders of this nature /District Magistrate's Memo/ entitle us to hold some sympathies for the Indian cause or at least the Indian taxpayer. (82)

The Departmental notes on this letter indicate the feeling of helplessness of the American officers in the situation. An officer remarked: "Well, what about it?" Another officer commented: "I do not see that anything more can be done." (83)

American Officer Meets Malaviya:
Malaviya Appeals for Sympathy

After the Lahore Congress, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya had come to occupy a strategic position in Indian politics. He had

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81 Enclosure with the letter of Charles B. Spofford, Jr., to Director of Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, 13 November 1930, File No. 804.1-India, Records of the Department of Commerce.

82 Spofford to Director, 13 November 1930, n. 81. Emphasis added.

83 Ibid.
not endorsed the resolution on Complete Independence. He had neither resigned from the Legislative Assembly at the call of the Congress following the Lahore resolution. The Government of India was keen on preventing the resignation of Malaviya and the members of his Nationalist Party from the Legislative Assembly since this would have only strengthened the hands of Gandhi. But its desire to give as much advantages to the British commercial circles in the Indian market as possible had the upper hand. It proposed a Cotton Textile Industry (Protection) Bill in the Assembly which purported to impose 20 per cent duty on import of cotton piece-goods from all countries except England which was to be charged only 15 per cent, giving it, in effect, 5 per cent Imperial Preference. Malaviya was totally opposed to this Imperial Preference and this led to his resignation from the Legislative Assembly on 2 April. This was a great discomfiture for the Government of India. (84) On the other hand, it was a providential help to the Congress movement from unexpected quarters. (85) Malaviya's importance shot up.

The American Vice Consul in Calcutta, G. M. Abbott, chose this time to interview Malaviya. The interview was arranged through Gajanan Birla on 2 May at Birla House in Calcutta. (86)

84 For the crucial role Malaviya played in Indian politics at this time, see Coatman, n. 43, pp. 279-81.
85 Sitarsmayya, n. 6, pp. 366-7.
86 Gajanan Birla was a relative of Ghanshyam Das Birla who, despite some differences with regard to economic reconstruction of India, helped "without reservation" every cause sponsored by Gandhi. For the close contacts Birla had with Gandhi, see G. D. Birla, In the Shadow of the Mahatma: A Personal Memoir (Bombay, 1968). For his support to Gandhi, see Rajendra Prasad's "Foreword" in this book.
L. Brooke Edwards, another American, accompanied the Vice Consul. At the very outset these Americans told Malaviya that they both were "keenly interested in Indian affairs" and would, therefore, appreciate hearing his views on the present political situation. The interview lasted for an hour and three-quarters during which Malaviya presented various aspects of the Indian situation before them "almost continuously and without effort". Abbott summarised, from his point of view, the salient features of the interview as follows:

1. The sincere belief of this intelligent and well-informed man that Great Britain has oppressed and misruled India, and that under Swaraj all ills and troubles would disappear.

2. His tolerant attitude towards recent violent outbreaks, and fairly open threats that a violent revolution will be the final step in the present independence campaign.

3. His categorical statement that Gandhi and other leaders would accept Dominion Status if offered.

4. His defence of Gandhi's policy and actions during the present campaign for Independence. (87)

In his remarks, Abbott added that generally classed as a moderate, Malaviya now advocated immediate and complete Dominion Status which would have classed him as an advanced radical two years ago. Abbott, in fact, was "extremely astonished" at Malaviya's attitude towards the Chittagong and Peshawar incidents. Both he and Edwards got the impression that Malaviya was quite proud of the spirit shown by the men concerned in the above incidents and condemned their action more because it was foolhardy

87 Memorandum by Vice Consul (G. M. Abbott) with Consul General in Calcutta (Frazer) to Secretary of State, 8 May 1930, n. 40.
and untimely than because it was reprehensible.

Malaviya took this opportunity to appeal to the Vice Consul and his companion to use their efforts to see that the American public was accurately informed about the situation in India and that the Swarajist side of the case was put before them. He referred to the sympathy displayed in the United States for the Irish freedom struggle and told them that India counted highly on the moral effect of American public opinion. (88)

Abbott was impressed with the sincerity of Malaviya, although he added that in common with most Indians, "he weakened his case by occasional exaggerations, mis-statements and half-truths, and extremely idealistic point of view." He also did not allow himself to be completely persuaded by Malaviya which is indicated by his comment that "India's case as presented by him [Malaviya] was logical and convincing to one not thoroughly informed on the subject." (89)

State Department's Mediation Sought

In the United States also there were some attempts to prevail upon the Government to take positive interest in the Indian developments towards the solution of the issue between Great Britain on the one hand and the Indian nationalists on the other. Benjamin C. Marsh, Executive Secretary of the People's Lobby, wrote to the Secretary of State on 15 July drawing his

88 Ibid.

89 Ibid. Consul General Frazer informed the Secretary of State in his accompanying report that he had also interviewed Malaviya and that the latter expressed to him the views similar to those stated before Abbott.
attention to the situation in India. (90) He believed that the Indian situation was "extremely delicate", yet it was so fraught with danger to the entire world that it merited the attention of the United States or the League of Nations and either of them might offer its good services to help Britain out of this predicament. Although Great Britain preferred to regard this situation as a matter of its domestic concern, Marsh believed that, in the context of the existing world situation, no such matter could be regarded solely a domestic concern. He, therefore, enquired to know whether the State Department had considered offering its services to Great Britain "as a mediator, conciliator, or arbitrator" between the people of India and Great Britain. He reminded the Secretary that the Indian people were aspiring for political freedom and were objecting to certain forms of taxes which Americans themselves had objected to in 1776. (91)

The Department of State, however, refused to intervene. The Chief of the Division of Western European Affairs writing on behalf of the Secretary of State replied to Marsh:

90 The People's Lobby was a "voluntary organization formed for the purpose of combating, in the interests of the general public, the activities of special interest groups", New Dictionary of American Politics (New York, 1951), p. 285. The objective of the People's Lobby, according to its own declaration, was to get and give the facts to fight for the people. Prof. John Dewey, one of the American liberals and a sympathiser of the Indian cause, was its President. Roger N. Baldwin, who was a radical and a friend of Jawaharlal Nehru, and Oswald Garrison Vaillard, the editor of The Nation and a great admirer of Gandhi, were on the Advisory Committee of this organization. For Baldwin's contacts with Nehru, see Jawaharlal Nehru, comp., A Bunch of Old Letters (Bombay, 1958), pp. 95-97.

91 Benjamin C. Marsh, Executive Secretary, The People's Lobby, to Secretary of State, 15 July 1930, 845.00/683, Records of the Department of State.
The Department is not aware of any circumstances which would render the action which you suggest advisable. (92)

Plea in the Senate to Mediate

In the US Senate, the question of Indian independence was raised, once again, by Senator John J. Blaine on 17 July. (93) The Senate was deliberating on the proposal to ratify the London Naval Treaty and Senator Hiram W. Johnson was presenting his reservations to the Treaty. Senator Blaine intervened and asked the Speaker to have printed in the Congressional Record a number of articles, news stories, and editorials published in the American newspapers on the situation in India and the repressive policy of the Government to deal with the matter. (94) He did this to show that Great Britain which had "so long contended" for the rights of the individuals "now denies and damns all its history and traditions and condemns these principles of liberty in applying the most atrocious repression and the most inhuman conduct in its endeavor to suppress the right of India to be free." (95)

92 Chief of the Division of Western European Affairs (J. Theodore Marriner) to Benjamin C. Marsh, 23 July 1930, ibid.

93 Senator Blaine had raised the matter of Indian independence in the Senate previously on 6 January 1930. See Chapter II, p. 78.

94 These were printed in the Congressional Record. See US, Congressional Record, vol. 73, 71st Congress, Special Session (7 July 1930 - 21 July 1930), pp. 214-19. This included such items as Webb Miller's report on the incidents relating to Congress volunteers' raid on the Dharsana Salt Depot published in the New York Telegram, 21 May 1930; Negley Farsont's report on British repressive policy in India published in The New York World, 7 July 1930; and the editorial of the Chicago Tribune, 28 June 1930, on conflict in India. For details see Chapter IV, pp. 143-9.

95 Congressional Record, n. 94, p. 214.
Blaine then offered a resolution on India. The resolution (S. Res. 326) first of all referred to the joint statement of the US President and the British Prime Minister on 10 October 1929 proposing the London Naval Conference in which they said that their governments had accepted the Paris Peace Pact not only as a declaration of good intentions but as a positive obligation to direct their national policy in accordance with this policy. He then referred to the non-violent disobedience movement in India led by Gandhi to attain national independence and to the various repressive and inhuman measures adopted and vigorously pursued by the British Government of India, including bombing of civil population and refusal to give medical aid to those "maimed and slain by its atrocities", to suppress this movement. The resolution, thereafter, read:

... Be it therefore Resolved, that the Senate of the United States deprecates such acts of violence, infamy, and inhumanity committed by one signatory of the Kellogg pact against another signatory of the peace pact; and be it further

Resolved, that as India is an original signatory of the Kellogg Briand peace pact the United States Senate instructs the State Department to use its best offices to insure peaceful settlement of the Indian struggle, with no abridgment of the just rights of the people of India, who are seeking to emulate our own national independence. (96).

The resolution was read in the Senate and allowed to lie on its table. Although on the question of Irish Independence, the Senate had, on 6 June 1919, passed a resolution expressing its sympathy with the Irish people, it chose to do nothing of the kind on the question of Indian Independence, despite the well-

96 Ibid., pp. 219-20.
meaning efforts of Senator Blaine. Of course, Senator Blaine again succeeded in incurring the displeasure of the British press. (97)

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In the above account of the views of the American officials with regard to political developments in India during the turbulent days of the first half of 1930, some features appear to be noteworthy.

American officials were very appreciative of Lord Irwin, the Viceroy in India. They underlined his clear headedness and sincerity. They also approved of his policy of forebearance in dealing with the nationalists until about the end of April. As a corollary, they were critical of the attitudes of the British die-hards on the Indian question. They, however, did not fail to note that the policy of the Government of India itself became a policy of "big stick" and "high-handed measures" in the wake of some violent occurrences.

The American officials found it difficult to appraise Gandhi's character in precise terms. Yet they did not wholly agree with the British appraisal of Gandhi and his movement. They recognized Gandhi's vast influence on the Indian masses and disputed the British theory that he "desired" to be arrested. The Consul in Bombay was particularly impressed by the way civil disobedience movement had been conducted in the Bombay Consular District.

97 See Chapter IV, pp. 199-200.
The American officials felt that the civil disobedience movement was creating an atmosphere in which violence was likely to occur enabling the British Government to adopt and pursue a policy of repression which would finally lead to the suppression of the movement. Yet the movement would not go in vain. In the opinion of the American Consul General in India, the movement would ultimately prove to be fruitful for it had brought Dominion Status nearer. The Consul General also believed that the British would not grant the Indians more than what they agitated for and continued to agitate until they got it. Thus he, in a way, justified the Indian agitation.

The Government of the United States followed the development of situation in India closely. Suggestions were put forward both in the Senate and before the State Department that the US Government should, in one form or another, mediate between Great Britain and India. The Senate did not pursue the matter and the State Department declined to offer its good offices. However, it is noteworthy that the State Department, while rejecting the suggestion of mediation, did not take the position that India, being part of the British Empire, was out of its sphere of consideration. The Department only said that it was not "aware" of any circumstances which would render the action proposed "advisable."