CHAPTER - VIII
THE NON-COOPERATION AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

The year 1921 was a year of political renaissance for Assam. On the 24th August 1921 Mahatma Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi visited Jorhat. From that day onwards the strong wind of non-cooperation began to blow.

At that time Assam was virtually under Planter Raj. Even Government laws and orders could hardly touch them. These sahibs were very much aware of the fact, how Gandhiji could smash the pride of the British in South Africa and hence were conscious and alert on his august visit. The tea planters, therefore did not allow any one to attend the meeting of Gandhiji held in the court field. Yet hundreds and thousands of officials and labourers went to see him. Men from all the three sub-divisions of Sibsagar district (excluding women) thronged to Jorhat, to offer him warm ovation and listen to his words.

In 1920 a special session of the Congress was held at Calcutta from 4 to 9 September. Gandhiji moved the following resolution in that session. 'This congress is further of opinion that there is no course left for the people of India but to approve of and adopt the policy of non-violent non-cooperation ... ... ... until the Said wrongs are
righted and Swarajya is established. The resolution was carried by 1886 to 884 votes in spite of strong opposition from C.R. Das, B.C. Pal, Annie Besant, Madam Mohan Malavya, Mohammed Ali Jinnah and others. The Assam association, comprising Nabin Chandra Bordoloi, Chandra Nath Sarma, Faizaur Ali and others were not unanimous on the issue of non-cooperation. Nabin Chandra Bordoloi supported the dissident group and conveyed to Gandhiji's supporters that he would not be able to commit at that moment without having consultation with the main body. Dalim Chandra Borah and Chandra Nath Sarma remained neutral. The members of the Sylhet delegation also opposed Gandhiji's resolution. But the members of the Khilafat delegation of the Surma Valley namely Mahendra Kumar Das, Muhammad Abdulla and others extended support to Gandhiji.

The resolution on non-cooperation passed at the Calcutta session had a very sharp effect in the Surma Valley. The fifth Surma Valley political conference was held at Sylhet on 19 and 20 September 1920 under the Presidentship of Abdul Karim. Eminent all India leaders like Bipin Chandra Pal, Sundarimohan Das and Akram Khan attended the conference. Bipin Chandra Pal strongly advocated the Khilafat movement and fervently appealed to the students community to boycott schools and colleges to participate in the movement.

2. APAI, 9 October 1920.
Khirade Chandra Deb vehemently criticised the role of the European merchants and planters and charged that this community had a strong hand in the administration of Assam. He moved a resolution to launch a non-violent non-cooperation with the European merchants and planters and it was passed.

The European tea planters of Upper Assam were also so much oppressive and tyrannical on the Indian employees that as if the Government also had little control over them. In other words they could be identified with the government.

It was so much that any Indian who came across those white sahibs on the street had to shut their umbrellas or get down from the bicycle. No native was allowed to ride a bicycle or a horse through the garden road. These planters were rather more conscious in keeping the British prestige high than the administrators.

In the Surma valley a good number of meetings were held in November 1920 in different places like Jakiganj Bazar, Birasri, Karimganj, Godar Bazar, Lauta, Cherragi Idgah, Kurua, Patisala and Habiganj. In Habiganj, a Khilafat Committee supported boycott of election and the Council. The Government was of the opinion that the Khilafat movement had dangerously infused a feeling of hatred against Europeans and the Government.

The Khilafat movement in the Brahmaputra valley could not gain so much momentum as it did in the Surma valley.

5. APAI.
Muslims were not of one mind on the non-cooperation issue. To arrive at a compromise a meeting of the Assam Valley Muslim Association was convened at Jorhat on 26 October 1920. This was attended by delegates from Dhubri, Gauhati, Nowgong, North Lakhimpur and Dibrugarh. Due to some differences the president elect Tafazal Hussain Hazarika walked out of the meeting in protest. Members proposed Debeswar Chaliha to the Chair. The meeting adopted the non-cooperation resolution after long deliberations. In Dhubri a Khilafat meeting was held on 14 November 1920. This meeting urged upon the audience to boycott foreign goods. A Khilafat Committee was also formed with Matlib Hussain as the president and Abdul Mazid Ziaosshams as the Secretary. At Mankhchar another meeting was held in December 1920 and a local Khilafat Committee was formed. The meeting passed various resolutions, such as adoption of Madrassa system of education, revival of national industries, much use of Swadeshi and boycott of foreign goods, strengthening of Hindu Muslim ties and collection of Khilafat funds at the rate of one anna per house per month. For further promotion of national harmony, the meeting appealed to the Muslims to abstain from killing cows.

Nabin Chandra Bordoloi was the Secretary of the Assam Association when the non-cooperation became a burning issue. After his return from Calcutta Session Bordoloi took

7. APAI, 27 March 1920.
8. APAI, 27 March 1920.
up the non-cooperation issue seriously and started a 
vigorous propaganda with Chandra Nath Sarma the Assistant 
Secretary of the association and Tarun Ram Phookan to 
mobilize public opinion, moved from corner to corner of 
Assam. An extra ordinary session of the Assam Association 
was also convened on the 3 October 1920 at Nowgong to 
discuss this issue. District level meetings of the asso­ 
ciation were also held at Sibsagar, Jorhat, Dibrugarh and 
Nowgong to discuss this issue. The moderate leaders like 
Ghanashyam Barua, Gangagowinda Phookan, Chandra Barua and 
Tara Prasad Chaliha opposed very idea of participating in 
mass politics. Owing to the divergence of opinion no re­ 
solution could be passed in Sibsagar meeting. The Jorhat 
meeting passed the resolution by 91 to 4 votes. 

The non-cooperation issue aroused so much of con­ 
troversy that a special session of the Assam Association 
was convened at Gauhati on 11 and 12 October 1920 to arrive 
at a decision. This was attended by twenty five delegates 
from Assam Valley districts also it was attended by the 
students of Earle Law College and Cotton College as obser­ 
vers. The Gauhati Session was presided over by Faiznur 
Ali though at first Ghanashyam Barua was elected but 
he refused to preside. Many eminent persons of the Asso­ 
ciation including T.R. Phookan, Nabin Chandra Bordoloi and 
Chandra Nath Sarma debated and strongly advocated for non-

cooperation and to follow the line of action laid down by Gandhiji since they felt that the Act of 1919, was a farce and it was mainly to hoodwink the people of India and thereby depriving them from the political emancipation. Moreover it was felt that Assam must not remain aloof from the main stream of Indian Politics. In view of these facts the meeting also discussed the directives of Gandhiji like boycott of courts and council elections and withdrawal of students from government institutions. Chandra Nath Sarma, Ambikagiri Roy Choudhary and Triguna Charan Barua wanted the immediate withdrawal of students from schools and colleges. They were of the opinion that the Government administrative machinery can be totally paralysed by following Gandhiji's programme of action; and this would finally lead to the attainment of Swaraj within a short time. Tarunram Phookan on the contrary, wanted the action to be done in a 'gradual process'; As regards the relinquishment of titles, honours and honorary posts, moderates like Chandradhar Barua showed apathy but favoured strongly the boycott of Council elections. Interestingly Chandra Nath Sarma and Kamakhyaram Barua favoured Council entry just to block the Council proceedings. However, majority favoured boycott of council and council elections. Tarun Ram Phookan, Nabin Chandra Bordoloi, and Chandra Nath Sarma and Faiznur Ali made open declaration that they would not contest in the coming elections. The meeting directed its various branches to form subcommittees to prepare draft
instruments for the implementation of Congress programme.  

While the issue of non-cooperation was hotly debated Nabin Chandra Bordoloi the General Secretary of the Assam Association Chandra Nath Sarma the Assistant Secretary and Tarun Ram Phookan moved from one corner of the province to the other to mobilize public opinion in favour of the Khilafat movement and the non-cooperation programme. Phookan and Bordoloi urged the people of Gauhati to boycott the fourth coming visit of Viceroy to Assam. Phookan succeeded in persuading the majority of the Commissioners and rate payers of Gauhati Municipality not to present an address of welcome to the Viceroy. At the instance of Bordoloi, a petition signed by Bordoloi, Phookan, Saadulla, Bishnuram Medhi, Kamakhayaram Barua and a host of other ratepayers was presented to the Chairman, Gauhati Municipality expressing their total disapproval of the proposal for presenting an address of welcome to the Viceroy. Facing stiff opposition, the Municipality had no alternative but to drop the idea. The Gauhati Bar Association at the initiative of young lawyers decided to boycott the Viceroy's visit. Gauhati's example was followed by Dibrugarh and Jorhat Bar Association's. The Jorhat public, in a meeting on October 2, 1920, expressed regret at the move of the Gossains of Majuli to present an address of welcome to the Viceroy. In a resolution it observed "the money given by disciples for religious observance was being wasted" and appealed to the Gossains to  

10. Assam Association Papers, HFM Records.
refrain from doing so. The same meeting passed a resolution offering thanks to the people of Barpeta and Mangaldoi for taking the decision to boycott election. Krishnakanta Bhattacharjee, editor of Assam Bilasani, Kuladhar Chaliha, Derajuddin Ahmed and many others took part in the deliberations.\textsuperscript{11}

Nabin Chandra Bordoloi delivered his first speech on non-cooperation at Belsor on 13 November 1920. Tarunram Phookan also addressed a gathering at Parghat, North Guwahati on 14 November 1920, exhorting people to use Swadeshi. Nabin Chandra Bordoloi, Debendra Nath Uzir, Admika Giri Roy Choudhary also addressed a meeting of the Kamrup Jatiya Unnati Bisoini Sabha at Bako, Nalbari, where the non-cooperation programme was explained and the people were asked to participate in the temperence movement.\textsuperscript{12}

In a meeting held at Dibrugarh in October 1920 Nabin Chandra Bordoloi urged pleaders and Mukhtears to go on strike immediately as a part of the measures taken for attaining Swaraj within six months. He also suggested that the lawyers should go to the rural areas to establish village arbitration courts the Government and police personnel should resign and that an intensive state-wide prohibition campaign should be launched against consumption of opium, liquor and ganja.\textsuperscript{13} Some Assam Association leaders during this time visited Sibsagar and spoke to the same effect. This had

\textsuperscript{11} APAI, 1920.
\textsuperscript{12} APAI, 1920 and see N.C. Bordoloi statement Assam Enquiry Committee report 1925 p.25.
\textsuperscript{13} APAI, 1920.
an immediate impact on a group of school going students of Sibsagar, who refused to pay their fees. The spirit of defiance of authority spread among the students of Mangaldoi, who initiated a boycott campaign against the local government High School, by abstaining from classes.

There was hardly any scope for doubt that non-cooperation had already become a popular political concept. The very word non-cooperation had already become a household word even in the illiterate homes in Assam owing to the proceedings of an energetic band of workers in Assam.  

The seventeenth annual plenary session of the Assam Association met at Tezpur from 26 to 28 December 1920, under the Presidentship of Prasanna Kumar Barua. The reception Committee erected four welcome gates in commemoration of Tilak, Gandhiji, Shaukat Ali and Swaraj. Commenting on the significance of the gates and their messages, Tarunram Phookan said that the path shown by the leaders like Tilak Gandhiji and Shankat Ali would lead India to the goal of Swaraj.

Dalimchandra Bora, the President of the reception committee in his welcome speech demanded immediate repeal of the press Act which he termed as an insult to the profession of journalism. He also criticised the opium policy of the Government and the grazing tax. He condemned the

official highhandedness shown in the case of evicting settlers from the Kaziranga Forest reserve. He demanded an enquiry on this issue. He also mentioned the Punjab tragedy and Khilafat wrongs. Participating in the deliberations Phoolasing Chettri vividly described the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy which brought tears to the listeners. Tarunram Phookan in his speech condemned the Esthar Committee recommendations, because, he felt, it would impose a further burden of taxation on the already over burdened people of India.\(^\text{15}\)

The conference endorsed the resolution on non-cooperation, which said "the object of the Assam Association is to work for the attainment of Swaraj by all legitimate means and to educate the people towards this object. The association decided to follow the lead of the Indian National Congress so far as the implementation of the constructive programme was concerned. The association decided to set up various enquiry committees. One Committee was formed with Kuladhar Chaliha as President and Chandranath Sarma as Secretary to enquire into the alleged eviction of Nepali settlers from Kaziranga forest reserve. Another Committee was set up to make a probe into official highhandedness at Mangaldoi where some school student were penalised for boycotting the Government High School. Another Committee was set up to enquire into the grievances of the ryots of Bijni Raj resulting from the exploitation of peasants in Bijni Raj."

\(^{15}\) Ararit Bazar Patrika, Calcutta 12 January 1921.
estate by the court of wards.  

The Gauhati session of the Assam Association was a congress affair out and out. The Assam Association to a great extent, lost its separate identity. Gandhiji's image was over imposed on the conference Hall. Moderates were conspicuous by their absence. According to participants: "It was a death-knell to the Assam Association and it ceased to function thereafter."  

Role of the students:

Political awakening had gradually infiltrated into the student community of Assam since the early part of the century. The student had their own body, Assam Chatra Sammilan, through which they used to express their views and exert their influence. It was obvious that the Gandhian politics with action packed programme easily appealed to the young minds.  

Chandra Nath Sarma who had already suspended his legal practice in support of Gandhiji's call, came over to Gauhati and tried to organise the students community. He along with some college students attended the All India College Students conference at Nagpur on 25th and 26 December 1920 which was presided by Lala Rajpat Rai. Supporting the non-cooperation decision of the Congress, the conference called for "the immediate and unconditional boycott of Government and Government aided Colleges" and advised the college students of India to respond to it.  

17. Ibid  
The Nagpur resolution had its immediate effect in the Cotton College campus. Students were being encouraged by Chandra Nath Sarma, Ambikagiri Ray Choudhary, Triguna Charan Barua and Muhibuddin Ahmed to implement the boycott proposal to the fullest extent possible. Soon the boycott call became a topic of hot discussion among the students. In fact, a group of students asked for a gradual withdrawal and demanded a national college as a substitute for continuing their studies uninterrupted. In a students meeting at Gauhati presided over by Ganjanan Barua, a fourth year student, the whole issue was discussed thoroughly. Some leaders also took part in the discussions. T.R. Phookan, K. Chaliha and N.C. Bordoloi did not favour abrupt withdrawal. Rather they advised them to "wait and see". On the contrary, Chandranath Sarma, Bishnuram Medhi, Rohini Kumar Chaudhary and Kamakhyan Barua pleaded for immediate withdrawal. The boycott motion when put to vote, failed to carry the majority. Whatever it might be, the whole atmosphere was changed with burning patriotic emotions, "a little stirring up might change" the whole course at any moment. According to an official report, "political atmosphere of Gauhati has become infected with non-cooperation agitation these days."

The boycott upsurge among the students rocked Cotton College in the last part of January 1921. Leaders partook in discussions with students and tried their best to exert

a sobre and moderate influence. Nevertheless, by this time the majority of the students veered round the boycott move. On 17 January 1921, students met and decided to raise a national fund to provide for the maintenance and educational expenses of the striking students. Gopinath Bordoloi promised a donation of Rs.250/- and Chandra Nath Sarma offered all his valuables for the fund. It was also decided to acquire the Assam club and the residence of Manik Chandra Barua at Uzan Bazar for accommodating the boycotting students. Students resolved to strike on 9 January. Meanwhile the principal of Cotton College called a meeting of the students on 18 January, explained to them the futility of their stand and tried to disuade them from striking. But it had little effect. As dedided earlier all the students except a very few were on strike on 19 January.

The non-cooperation welcomed the striking students and took them into their fold.

A rumour that Gandhiji and Bipin Chandra Pal would soon pay a visit to Assam caused jubilation among the students. Eager students paid regular visits to the Gauhati railway station with a view to welcoming their beloved leaders. The students were thrilled, but the Government was unnerved at the prospect of the visit of the two leaders. The Government felt that the proposed visit would further hardened the intransigent attitude of the students. To avoid that situation the Government advised the principal of Cotton

20. Ibid, 29 January 1921.
College to close down the institution as well as order immediate vacation of the hostels by the students.\textsuperscript{21}

A group of Assamese students studying at Calcutta during this time were equally stirred by the boycott call. As instructed by Chandranath Sarma, they left Calcutta and took up organisation and propaganda work in the Darrang district of Assam.

The boycott call had equally appealed to the students of Surma Valley. In the last part of January 1921, many students came out from the Murarichand College Sylhet.\textsuperscript{22} Some students of Sylhet Madrassa also gave up studies and joined the Khilafat movement.\textsuperscript{23} The students resolved to boycott government educational institution with immediate effect. They decided that the students would continue their studies and would appear in the examinations form a national University. On 25 January 1921 in persuance of their demand the students, Maulavis and others took out a procession and paraded the main streets of Sylhet.\textsuperscript{24} Besides the college students, eighteen School students left the government High School at Sylhet. The striking students had a meeting where they declared that they would never return to Government educational institutions. It was also resolved that a national school was to be opened in a private residence.\textsuperscript{25}

After sometime when the initial enthusiasm petered

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21. APAI - January 1921. \\
22. Gupta n.15 pp.54-6. \\
23. Reactions of different National Movements at Sylhet HFM Records. \\
24. APAI - 1921. \\
25. Ibid. \\
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out most of the students joined their parent institution except a few. 26

According to an official report, the boycott of schools and colleges in Assam attained a certain measure of success in January, but the effect rapidly wore off and at most institutions the attendance was temporarily affected. 27 In 1921-22 enrolment in schools fell by 6.93 percent during the peak period, 9 to 10 percent students of colleges and High Schools boycotted the institutions, one third of them rejoined within three weeks. The Government allowed students to rejoin their respective parent institutions by 15 February 1921. After the expiry of the date 38 students found continuing the strike.

The non-cooperation movement succeeded in making its impact felt even in the tea garden areas of Assam. The garden labourers for a long time were the worst victims of racial hatred and downright economic depression, perpetrated by the European tea planters. The news of Gandhiji's emergence failed them with hope of expectations. The simple folk believed that Gandhiji was an 'Avatar' (incarnation) and that he had come to deliver the people from their insufferable bondage. Their misery ultimately drove them to follow the line of Mahatma, 'go back to their land, spin Charkha, abjure western sin and lead simple and pure life'. The message of non-cooperation had emboldened them

27. Administrative Report for the year 1928-29
28. Ibid.
considerably. The accumulated grievances of the labourers had been crying for redress for a long time. Suddenly in May 1921, the situation became explosive, particularly in Surma valley gardens where the labourers of thirteen tea gardens belonging the Chargola and Longai Valley of Karimganj subdivision went on strike on May 2, 1921. Shouting 'Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai' the labourers in thousands (total 8,799) left their gardens assembled at the Chandrapur Railway terminus of the Assam Bengal Railways with the intention of crossing Padma by a steamer to Gualundo to leave for their respective homes. This mass action of the labourers was termed 'an exodus' by the officials.

The official report suggest that the labourers were indoctrinated by the non-cooperators. A labour meeting was held at Ratabari just prior to the strike where they demanded an enhancement in their daily wages. Muslin were held in the neighbourhood of tea garden areas, where non-cooperation was preached. Holding of these meetings was prohibited by the government by promulgating Sec.144. According to the Intelligence Bureau report the labour unrest was fomented and exploited by the non-cooperators. An official handout

30. Ibid. According to an official source there were 319 gardens in the Surma valley (19 in Chargola valley) with labour population of 202,820 adults and 157,412 children. W.J. Reid Speech in the Legislative Council ALCP Vol. I, 19 Sept. 1921, pp. 885-94.
issued at that time stated that outsiders made efforts to foment discontent among the labourers with the intention of creating ill will against the Europeans and the Government.33

The planters and the district authorities on the other hand exerted pressure on the labourers to go back to their respective gardens. Mr. Macpherson a representative of the European tea association of Assam came to Chandrapur and with the help of the sub-divisional officer tried to induce the coolies to return to the garden. This alarmed the labourers more. They were determined not to go back. Hundreds boarded a waiting steamer. To stop them, the authority ordered immediate removal of the gangway in the process, some were even drowned.34 Meanwhile C.F. Andrews arrived on the scene. He was personally pressed by the agents of European planters to use his influence to prevent the refugees from going onward. The district authority on 21 May 1921, along with some European planters and armed police decided to clear up the assembled labourers from the station of Chandrapur, where they huddled with the hope of boarding a steamer. The armed police and officials went into action at midnight by driving men, women and children out of the railway platform. It is not exactly known how many people lost their lives. Many were injured and some were drowned. According to an official source, three hundred people died owing perhaps to police action and cholera.35

33. Ibid.
34. Majumder, n.2, p.203.
35. Bamford, n.86, pp 60-62.
The Chandrapur tragedy caused a stir all over Assam. At Gauhati, the pleaders met on 3 June 1921 and decided to suspend practice for three days as a mark of protest. The Gauhati people met on 28 May, 1921 expressed sorrow and condemned the heinous crime and apathetic attitude of the Government.

The beginning of non-co-operation and the formation of Assam Provincial Congress:

The leading non-cooperators of Assam began to spread throughout the length and breadth of the province the message of non-cooperation among the masses. In response to the Gandhiji's call for boycott of law courts Chandra Nath Sarma, Nabin Chandra Bordoloi, Krishnanath Sarma, Kuladhar Chaliha, Gopinath Bordoloi and Tarunram Phookan suspended their legal practice.

The non-cooperating pleaders took up fulltime political propaganda work. They helped in the establishment of village level Congress Committees at numerous places. They provided leadership and utilised at the same time the services of the striking students. Along with the striking student of Cotton College, Nabinchandra Bordoloi addressed a meeting at Palasbari on 26 January 1921. During January, February 1921, non-cooperation meetings were held at numerous places of the Kamrup district. Like Bordoloi, Tarunram Phookan also took a leading part in organising the boycott of the visit of viceroy (Nov. 1920) and the Governor (April 1921) to Gauhati.

The Assam Association had virtually ceased to exist.

as a separate body since December 1920. The Association after three months met at Sibsagar (16 & 17 April 1921) under the Presidentship of Nabinchandra Bordoloi to review the past Nagpur Political situation. The meeting endorsed the Nagpur result to carry out the constructive programme accordingly. However, the association formulated its guidelines as follows: (a) Withdrawal of lawyers from court was advisory not mandatory (b) only students above sixteen year should withdraw from schools and colleges (c) fund collectors should move to the villages for collection of subscriptions for Tilak Memorial Swarayya fund. The Assam association had another meeting at Jorhat on 18 April 1921 with Chabbilal Upadhya in the chair. This meeting too, discussed the non-cooperation and organisational matters.

With the progress of the movement the demand for the formation of Assam provincial congress for the Assam valley on the basis of the Nagpur proposals was gaining popular support. Assam till then was under the jurisdiction of the Bengal provincial congress committee. In the All India Congress, Assam had no locus standi of its own. The leaders of the Assam Association who also happened to be the leading non-cooperators, took the initiative in this regard. The idea assumed a concrete shape, when some of them at the invitation of Nobin Chandra Bordoloi met at Gauhati in his private residence 'Santi Bhaban' on 5 June 1921. Bordoloi himself however could not attend the meeting.
owing to pre-occupations elsewhere. In his absence Krishnakanta Bhattacharjee editor, 'Assam Bilasini' took the Chair. The first Assam Provincial Congress Committee was formed with six Brahmaputra valley districts under its jurisdiction. Cachar and Sylhet the two Surma Valley districts remained under the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. The headquarters of the Assam Provincial Congress was set up at Gauhati and an executive committee was formed with the following office bearers:

Kuladhar Chaliha - President,
Badrinarayan Agarwala - Vice-President,
Nabin Chandra Bordoloi - General Secretary
Kaliprasad Barua - Assistant Secretaries
Muhubuddin Ahmed
Jogendra Nath Barua - Treasurer
Durganath Barua - Auditor.

The APOC decided to set up district Congress Committee in each sub-division with village committee and Mauza Committee at lower level. Meanwhile the Kamrup and Barpeta DOCS were formed and the Kamrup District as a whole was divided into 23 or 24 centres and each centre was placed under one or more leading non-cooperators.

Gandhiji's visit to Assam gave additional impetus to Congress workers to carry out the non-cooperation movement in a more vigorous way. Personally Phookan was influenced much.

37. APAI Kamrup 16.6.21, Nalinibala Devi, Smriti Tirtha.
40. APAI, Kamrup, 21.5.21.
by Gandhiji visit. He was a constant companion of Gandhiji during his Assam tour. He had some doubt initially about the success of the movement but that disappeared totally and became a determined non-cooperator. Not Phookan alone, but many other young lawyers too jumped into the whirlpool of the movement. By 1st September 1921, about nineteen lawyers of Gauhati resolved to boycott courts by suspending their practice. A monthly subsistence allowance of Rs.50/- was granted to each non-practising lawyers from Tilok memorial Swarajya Fund. However, all the non-practising lawyers did not receive financial help. They devoted themselves full time to the advancement of boycott campaign. In the rural areas they helped in forming panchayats to settle disputes.

In response to the boycott call some lawyers suspended their practice in the Surma valley also and took up organisational work on a full time basis, some of them also received maintenance allowance from the Swarajya Fund.

Like students and lawyers, many government officials, too responded to Gandhiji's call. Their resignations from jobs under the Government or dissociation with the Government took place in a gradual process. At the very outset of the movement many school teachers resigned their posts to devote full time to organisational work.

41. APAI and History Sheet of T.R. Phookan.
42. APAI and Home Poll File No. 18
44. HFM Records and Gupta n. 15 p.55.
Lawyers, students, teacher and others took up organisational work at various levels. The District Congress Committees became active and under each Committee Panchayats were instituted at the village level to settle disputes mainly relating to non-cognizable offences, leaving civil criminal cases of outside their jurisdiction. The Congress workers were particularly busy in propaganda work in the interior of Upper Assam.

THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT:
A new phase of National Struggle

The spontaneous manifestation of Indian nationalism and patriotic zeal during non-cooperation movement (1921) virtually ceased to exist in India after the Chauri Chaura incident (5 February 1922). However, the appointment of the all white Simon Commission by a Royal warrant in 1927 to examine the working of the Act of 1919 stirred up dormant passions which subsequently assumed vigorous contour during the civil Disobedience movement.

Along with the resolution declaring complete independence for India as its goal, the Lahore Congress also passed a resolution calling upon all Congress members to resign their seats in the various legislatures in the country. The Council front created by Deshabandhudas in 1923 was

45. APAI.
thus demolished. The Congress could carry on the struggle on one front only at a time. Along with the campaign of Civil Disobedience there could be no place for congressman in the Legislatures. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the President of the Lahore session unfurled the flag of Independence on the December 31 on the bank of Ravi in biting cold but in the midst of an enthusiastic and excited mammoth gathering.46

The next step in the struggle was the celebration of January 26, 1930, as the Independence day. On this day meetings were held in almost every town and village, where the Independence pledge, approved by the working Committee, was read and taken by millions of persons. The first para of the manifesto runs as follows:

"We believe it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any Government deprives the people of these rights and oppress them the people have a further right to alter it or to abolish it. The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe therefore, that India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or complete independence."

and concluded with the following paragraphs:

"We hold it to be a crime against man and God to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this fourfold disaster to our country. We recognise, however, that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence. We will therefore prepare ourselves by withdrawing so far as we can all voluntary association from the British Government and will

46. J.P. Suda; Indian constitutional Development, p.250.
prepare for Civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes. We are convinced that if we can but withdraw our voluntary help and stop payment of taxes without doing violence even under provocation, the end of this inhuman rule is assured. We, therefore, hereby solemnly resolve to carry out the Congress instructions issued from time to time for the purpose of establishing Purna Swaraj. 42

The reports from various parts of the country showed that the Independence Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm. The members of the various legislatures in the country had also tendered their resignation in obedience to the resolution passed at the Lahore session. The Working Committee had also vested Mahatma Gandhi with full powers to conduct the Civil Disobedience campaign. The stage was thus set for the great and heroic struggle of 1930.

Breaking of Salt Law:

The next step was the despatch of a long letter by Mahatma to Lord Irwin. The step was demanded by the ethical code of Satyagrah. In the course of it Mahatma explained why he was forced to resort to the extreme step of starting Civil Disobedience and informed Lord Irwin that he would start it by breaking the Salt Law with a few of his associates from the Sabarmati Ashram, unless the Governor General promised redress of the evil mentioned in it. The letter was carried by an English friend of Mahatma, named Reginald Raynolds, on the 11 March 1930. The Viceroy's reply was disappointing and so Mahatma announced his decision to start Civil Disobedience. He left the Ashram.

for Dandi on the 12 March 1930 at the head of 79 members of his Ashram and students of the Vidya Pith to challenge and defy the might of the greatest empire the world has ever seen. At Dandi the Salt law was to be broken by picking up salt on the sea shore. The way to Dandi was to be covered on foot. This Dandi march has become historic; Shri Subhash Chandra Bose compares it to Napoleon's march on Paris on his return from Elba and to Mussolini's march on Rome with a view to seize political power. The press gave the widest publicity to this epic march. The scenes that preceded, accompanied and followed it were so enthusiastic, magnificent and soul-stirring that they beggar description. Never was the wave of patriotism so powerful in the hearts of mankind as it was on this occasion which is bound to go down to history of India's national freedom as the great beginning of a great movement. Thus wrote the 'Bombay Chronicle' about the Dandi march.

The Government of India at first did not take the movement very seriously; they did not expect the march to lead to any serious developments. The Anglo-Indian papers ridiculed the idea of Salt Satyagrah; 'the Statesman' wrote in an editorial that Mahatma Gandhi could go on boiling sea water till Dominion status was attained. Mr. Brailsford, an English journalist, described the Dandi march as "the Kindergarten stage of revolution". He smiled at 'the notion that the king Emperor can be unseated by boiling sea water in a kettle'; much persons could not look at the moral aspect of the technical breach of Salt Law by Mahatma Gandhi on
April 6, which happened to be the first day of the national week celebrated annually to commemorate the Jalianwala Bagh tragedy. It was a signal for the breach of the Salt Law all over the country in which hundreds of thousands of persons participated in thousands of towns and villages. At places where Salt Law could not be violated because of absence of saline water or earth from which to prepare contraband salt, other laws were violated for example at Calcutta the Sedition Law was broken by publicly reading seditious literature. In the C.P., forest laws were violated. Boycott of foreign cloth, boycott of British goods and picketing of liquor shops began on an extensive scale all over the country as parts of the campaign of Civil Disobedience. Mahatmaji gave permission to women also to participate in the struggle and advised them to resort to liquor and foreign cloth shop picketing. This had a magic effect, even women of orthodox and aristocratic families came forward and participated in the campaign. The way in which Indian women conducted themselves in struggle was marvellous. It exacted praise from all. Their energy and enthusiasm seemed to be greater than those of men even. Their emancipation began from the day they came out of the privacy of their homes to join the struggle. This was a very happy result of the Civil Disobedience campaign.

Repressive measures by the Government:

The movement seemed to be spreading like a regular prairie fire; it set the whole country ablaze. The Government
realised the seriousness of the situation and adopted highly repressive measure to put it down. About half a dozen Ordinances were issued by Lord Irwin in order to cope with the situation. Arrest of leaders, workers and volunteers took place everywhere, and the Congress organisation was declared unlawful. Heavy fines and sentences of imprisonment became the order of the day. It is estimated that about sixty thousand men and women were placed behind the prison bars. The police resorted to free use of the lathi and at places firing was resorted to disperse crowds and processions, as a result of which hundreds lost their lives and a large number were wounded. The use of brute force did not cowed the new India that had arisen. The greater the violence used by the Government to crush the movement, the more momentum did it gain. Each province had its tale of woe to tell as a result of ruthless repression on the part of the Government. Inspite of all these, the people revealed remarkable powers of organisation and initiative and resourcefulness. When the Government made it impossible for the press to give publicity to the Congress activities, the people started distributing cyclostyled copies of news bulletins and at places began to broadcast news. The way in which the Indian women helped the movement by organising the picketing of liquor and foreign cloth shops was the most remarkable phenomena of the movement. Their contribution was tremendous. Their participation lent a moral force to the boycott movement.

Even small children below seven years of age played their own role as members of the news-sheet distributing squads and Prabhat Pheris.

Reaction in Assam:

The decision of the Lahore Congress was viewed with mixed feelings by the leaders of Assam. Some assented to the programme, others differed. On the return of eight Assam delegates from the Lahore Congress, T.R. Phookan individually and G.N. Bordoloi and Rohinikumar Chaudhory jointly issued two press statements against the congress programme of resignation and council boycott. They concluded that council boycott was meaningless and would not serve any constructive purpose. On the contrary they stressed the necessity of the presence of a strong national opposition in the Councils to still the Government's repressive measures, particularly within the context of the nation's resolve to fight for complete independence. This difference of opinion at this crucial moment among the leaders created a good deal of confusion in the Nationalists circle. Phookan, however, agreed to honour other decisions of the National Congress. On the other hand, despite a rift among the Congress leaders in Sylhet district, it was agreed upon to implement the Congress decisions but from two different camps. In the beginning of 1930 certain controversial issues developed between the Sylhet District Congress Committee and the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee to which the former was affiliated. It was due to this controversy that the second camp

4. Asamiya, Gauhati, 27 April 1930.
came into existence when a sizeable section of active congress workers withdrew from the Sylhet District Congress Committee and formed, under the leadership of Dr. Rajendra-narayan Chaudhary though without the approval of any national political party, the Congress League.\footnote{Home Poll File No. 254 of 1930, F.R. first half of April 1930, Assam Sectt.(Poll).}

Inspite of the differences on the issue of boycott, Assam decided to observe the decision to celebrate 26 January 1930 as the first Independence Day. Meetings were held at different places in both the valleys and resolutions passed.

At Gauhati the District Congress Committee along with the local Yuva Sangha hoisted and saluted the national tri-colours in the jubilee garden amidst a big gathering, defying the official obstruction.\footnote{Nirode Kumar Gupta, Swadhinata Sangramar Smriti (Bengali) Silchar, 1974, p.117.}

A similar sense of enthusiasm was evident in Sylhet town. The national tri-colour fluttered not only on private houses and mercantile firms of the town, but also on motor vans. At a meeting presided over by Dr. Rajendra Narayan Choudhary the independence manifesto was read, while in the evening a procession was organised, without the prior permission of the authorities that paraded all the main roads of the town.\footnote{Political History of Assam, Vol. 2 p.142.} Finally when the day wore out and night descended houses were illuminated as if to indicate in these external manifestation the inner luminosity and the passion of a nation demanding its freedom.
In Silchar, also the Independence Day was observed. Fuller details of other districts are not available. But official and non-official reports indicate that the Independence Day celebrations were successfully organised in Assam amidst great popular enthusiasm.\(^53\)

With all the seriousness and exaltation that characterised the Independence Day celebrations, the shadow of disagreement prevailed in Assam regarding the issue of resignation and Council boycott. The mood of the senior leaders of the valley was reticent and politics entered a critical ebb.

In the last part of January 1930 Phookan and his followers held a meeting of the Congress members and decided to resign from the legislature in adherence to the National Congress resolution. Having complied with the wishes of the National Congress phookan and his followers resolved at the same time to form a new party with the aims and ideals of C.R. Das Swarajya party.\(^54\) A few day later, on 8 February 1930 the APCC expressed that Assam was not fully prepared to participate in Civil disobedience movement and possibly on the next day (9 February) Phookan formed the Assam Swarajya party. This comprised 21 members and a 9 member Working Committee.\(^55\) These events naturally evoked a great deal of frustration and concern in the congress camp.

Despite this controversial and retreating policy of...

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the senior leaders since the beginning of January, 12 Congress members, some of whom did not seem to have any reservations earlier regarding the resolutions of the National Congress resigned from the legislature before the observance of the first Independence Day in Assam. Their resignation necessitated a by-election. The divisive attitude of the National Congress resolutions became obvious at the time of the by-elections. Now even councillors who had earlier resigned sought re-election. To counteract this the Congress had to put up important persons, especially in Dibrugarh and Sylhet, to contest against those rebel candidates. T.R. Phookan was one of those who sought to be re-elected and was successfully returned to the Central Legislative Assembly. Besides him and out of three other Congressmen in Assam proper, who sought re-elections, two were returned to the provincial legislature. The APOC retaliated by asking them to resign their membership from the All India and Provincial Congress Executive Committee. T.R. Phookan complied by resigning the Presidency of APOC on 27 February 1930, while G.N. Bordoloi resigned the Presidency of DCC, Gauhati. Thereafter T.R. Phookan, G.N. Bordoloi and Rohini Kumar Chaudhary, went a step further by resigning from the Indian National Congress. When these leaders departed and decided to shirk off the responsibility of the Civil Disobedience movement, their followers felt that Assam should abstain

from the movement. At this time Nabin Chandra Bordoloi made a fiery speech and said "Think Phookan or Bordoloi are dead; do you want Assam should stop the struggle for freedom?" Being encouraged by his speech, Bishnuram Medhi and Hemchandra Barua came forward to shoulder the responsibility of the Presidentship and Secretaryship of APCC, respectively.

With the commencement of Gandhiji's historic march to Dandi on 12 March 1930, a new phase in the national struggle was inaugurated. In a circular the President of the Indian National Congress directed every Provincial Congress Committee to speed up preparatory works for the launching of the Civil Disobedience movement. He laid down guidelines for thorough organisation which included the enrolment of volunteers for satyagraha and arrangement for their training, selection of areas for concentration of the movement, as well as propaganda works on behalf of the movement. The purpose of all this was to propel an efficient, organised, mass movement. However, the Provincial Congress Committee was asked to wait for the green signal from the parent body before launching the Civil Disobedience movement.

On the receipt of Nehru's instructions the significance of Gandhiji's Dandi march was highlighted in public meetings in Assam. All the meetings of the nationalists usually commenced with the singing of national songs and

60. AICC Papers, circular No.31 (p.1/1371).
concluded with cries of 'Mahatma Gandhi-ki-jai', 'Bharat Mata Ki-jai' and the like. Nationalist paper like the 'Assamiya' 'Amrit Bazar Patrika' and 'Sylhet Chronicle' also contributed a lot in arousing the people to the cause of the nation. These activities naturally helped in regenerating a consciousness amongst the people of both the valleys.

Assam, however, was badly in need of a leader to guide the enthusiasm of the masses at this critical hour. Since his resignation from the Presidentship of the APCC, T.R. Phookan took little interest in Congress affairs. Thus under the circumstances, and with the stalwarts like Phookan and Bordoloi remaining on the fringes, Assam had to organise the movement under leadership which failed to get any active assistance from senior counterparts.

On 12 March 1930, the date on which Gandhiji commenced his Dandi March, a galaxy of Assam leaders, which included persons like Bishnuram Medhi, Hem Chandra Barua, Siddhinath Sarma, M. Tayebulla and Ambikagiri Ray Choudhory assembled at Gauhati in the Jubilee garden. They all saw the challenge ahead of them but had to admit that Assam was not yet prepared for the mass movement. The local press expressed great disappointment at the reticent attitude of the Congress leaders and called for effective leadership. But certain problems made the task of organising a mass movement...
in Assam rather difficult. In a meeting of the APCC held in March 1930 out of two hundred and seven members only thirteen from Gauhati and one from Nowgong participated. In a subsequent meeting held on 19 April, Tayebulla apprised members of the situation and castigated the indifferent attitude of the District Congress Committee which never even answered letters of the APCC on the question of implementing Congress decision. The only exception to this pitiable state of affairs was the Nowgong DCC which was not only re-organised on 28 April 1930 under the Presidentship of Kanakchandra Sarma and the secretariship of Haladhar Bhuyan, but had also enrolled one thousand volunteers and arranged training for them. In fact, Nowgong was forging ahead by implementing action-oriented programmes and Haladhar Bhuyan was arrested on 18 May 1930. One reason why Gauhati could not take up any radical programme was due to acute financial problem of the Congress organisation. Tayebulla, the General Secretary of the APCC made earnest appeals for funds every now and then. In the public meetings as well, requests for funds were made to clear the old debts of Phookan and Bordoloi. For want of funds volunteers could not be trained in sufficient numbers to work for the Congress. Besides these reasons there were also certain other problems in the Province that hampered the implementation of National programme. For instance, the state had no suitable salt mine and no Salt Law was in force which could be violated, even the Chowkidari tax was realised only in Goalpara and its violation was

67. Ibid, p.32.
68. APAI, Kamrup, No.387, 19 March 1930.
possible only in that district.\(^{69}\)

In the midst of such odds, Bishnuram Medhi was made the president of the APOC.\(^{70}\) The new Working Committee included eminent leaders like G.N. Bordoloi, Siddhinath Sarmah, M. Tayebulla and Ambikagiri Roy Choudhary. Medhi brought into existence five Congress Circles at Gauhati Chaigaon, Nalbari, Tihu and Rangiya. Numerous committees on prohibition, boycott of foreign cloths and British goods, doing away with untouchability, enlisting of Congress volunteers, were formed and persons like Bhubaneswar Barua, Debendranath Sarma, Harekrishna Das, Rajanikanta Goswami, Payodhar Barua and Narendra Nath Sarma were entrusted with the responsibilities of implementing the programme.\(^{71}\) The new leaders held several public meetings in different parts of Assam and they received spontaneous response from the people. The Congress by means of subsidiary organisation in different district known as rayot sabha, Krishi Samities, Sramik Samities attempted to demonstrate to the villagers that it was essentially an intermediary between them and the Government.\(^{72}\)

Passion rose in Assam after 14 April 1930 with the arrest of Jawaharlal Nehru. School children on that day observed a hartal and organised public meetings in different parts of the Assam valley.\(^{73}\) Popular excitement was further intensified with the arrest and internment of Gandhiji.

\(^{69}\) Dutta, n. 26, pp. 72-3.
\(^{70}\) Ibid.
\(^{72}\) Home Poll, File No.254 of 1930.
Even villagers in the remote villages of the Province abandoned their farming on 6 May 1930 to voice their protest. The arrest of the national leaders inculcated a spirit of fearlessness amongst the general mass. In May 1930 the authorities clamped section 144 in Nowgong, Tezpur and Bhubri to suppress the movement. But this only encouraged the people to participate in the protest demonstrations. They violated section 144 in all these places boldly. In Dhubri the police attacked the crowd with lathi and batons and as many as 29 persons were wounded by the charge of the police and two of them badly. Again after sixteen days on 31 May, police made two lathi charges at two different places in Tezpur town. In one case the Deputy Commissioner declared a students procession unlawful and asked the boys to disperse. The Processionists refused to oblige. Thereafter, an indiscriminate lathi charge was made on them and twenty boys were wounded.

In the Surma valley, Brojendranarayan Choudhuary, the president of the Congress League held frequent meetings in Sylhet district and roused public enthusiasm. This encouraged and intensified the violation of Salt Law and prohibition on private salt making. On 6 April 1930 under Dhirendranath Das Gupta, a group of about seventeen to eighteen persons started for Noakhali to make salt out of the saline water of the Bay of Bengal and this was afterward followed by a few batches. Brojendranarayan Chowdhury proposed non-payment of

74. Ibid p.151.
75. Ibid.
Chowkidari Tax in Sunamganj and Habiganj subdivision. This brought about confrontation between him and the local authorities when the Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet instructed his subdivisional officer to see that Chowkidari tax was fully realised. All this created political tensions in the Surma valley. The students also increasingly participated in the movement and to prevent it, Government of Assam instructed Principals of Murarichand and Cotton Colleges to inform their students that their active participation in political agitations in future would disqualify them from appearing before the Selection Board for any government appointment.77

Despite this a call for hartal was given on 15 April by the students of M.C. College to protest against the arrest of Jawaharlal Nehru. Situation gradually went beyond control and the D.P.I. on 24 April 1930 informed the Government of Assam that owing to increasing strikes and hartals it had become extremely difficult to maintain discipline and requested the Government to issue necessary instructions to help in maintaining peace in the academic institutions.78

Two days later, on 26 April 1930, on the ground of certain students misconduct the Government issued orders to the respective authorities through the DPI and directed them to take disciplinary action. On May 1930, the D.P.I. received further instruction from the Government to the effect that "punishment for participation on strikes, hartals and other demonstrations of political nature or the defiance of school

authority must automatically involve the loss of all special privileges, such as scholarships given by the department, free studentship awarded under the rules and orders and seats at hostels." The Government also directed that a minimum fine for a particular offence should not be less than a rupee. 79 In consequence the D.P.I. first issued a circular on 3 May 1930 to all academic heads of the province and again when the Surma Valley Schools were closed for summer vacation from 10 May he issued a fresh memorandum on 19 May which stated that guardians might withdraw their wards or children if they wanted to participate in politics. Expelled students would be readmitted only after giving a written assurance in a tabulated form that they would not take part in political activities or demonstrations of any kind in future. Fresh students would be enrolled on assurance from their guardians that their wards or children would refrain from participating in political activities in any form. Moreover, pupils studying in higher classes from VIII to X were required to sign individually a bond stating that they would abide by the undertakings given by their guardians on their behalf. 80 This was popularly known as Cunningham Circular. When it was enforced in the province it provoked sharp reactions immediately. The Cotton College was reopened on 10 July 1930 and immediately picketing started at Gauhati. 81 The fear that police might resort to

79. Ibid.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid.
lathi charge did not deter even the enthusiastic ladies from participating in the picketing along with the students. Similar drama was staged in Sylhet with the reopening of M.C. College. Picketing by women from respectable families along with male volunteers continued.

As a measure against the cunninghum circular nationalists in both the valleys, and specially some of the Municipalities took active interest in starting national schools without seeking any Government assistance, financial or otherwise. On 15 July 1930 Kamrup Academy was established at Gauhati with those students whose guardians refused to sign the bonds. Similarly Barpeta Vidyapith, Tezpur Academy, Sibsagar Vidyapith, Public High School at Dibrugarh, Karimganj and Cachar High School at Silchar, as well as national High School at Maulavi Bazar and Habiganj came into being with the help of public charity and philanthropic contributions. The birth of these schools was generated by the repressive measures adopted by the Government. Some of these institutions are thriving to-day.

People could not be cowed down by the various repressive measures of the Government. Rather they added fuel to the fire of patriotism in the heart of the people. In an atmosphere of mounting political tension they actively associated themselves with the Civil Disobedience movement from July to December, 1930. On the eve of the Durga Puja in October, intensive picketing started in the Assam valley. At first the targets of pickets were the shops dealing with
foreign cloth. Earnest appeals were made by Congress volunteers to the merchants to bringing Swadeshi cloth and to discontinue the sale of foreign cloth. On the other hand picketing before the shops where liquor, ganja, opium and tobacco, were sold was continued. Despite arrests in large number, picketing in such shops was intensified. This intensive satyagraha caused a loss to Government revenue worth rupees 14 lakhs in 1930.

The Congress leaders of Assam also considered the possibility of paralysing other sources of Government revenue by violating Forest Laws in the province. This was first sounded on 12 March 1930 by Ambikagiri Raychaudhary in the Jubilee garden meeting. Since then campaigns for violating Forest Laws were made in certain parts.

Thus despite the dissociation of the senior leaders of Assam at this point of time from the mainstream of political activity, the people in the valley did not carry in implementing national programmes. The new leaders of the APOC that arrived on the scene, applied themselves to the needs of the movement with seriousness and devotion. Their fortitude in dealing with the situation was heroic. In one of his meetings at Nalbari, held on 1 August 1930 Bishnuram Medhi asked the people to paralyse the Government machinery by a prolonged boycott. On 10 August 1930, a thorough

82. Home Poll File No. 18/9 of August 1930.
84. APAI, Kamrup No. 387, 19 March 1930.
police search was made of the houses of Bishnuram Medhi, H.C. Barua, M. Tayebulla, Omeo Kumar Das and Siddhinath Sarma in Gauhati. Bishnuram Medhi was arrested on 21 August 1930 and awarded six months imprisonment with a fine of Rs.200/-. The arrest of Bishnuram Medhi and other leaders caused a stir in the Congress camp in Assam. On 20 September 1930, H.C. Barua and Siddhinath Sarma were arrested at Tihu. After these arrests the movement was ably directed by Bhubaneswar Barua, Jadavprasad Chaliha and Debeswar Sarma. The indiscriminate arrests of leaders and the repressive measures adopted by the Government caused a stalemate of the agitation but these escalated the anti-British feeling in the minds of the people of Assam.

When Gandhiji returned from London on 29 August, 1931 he found that repressive measures were already introduced by the Government in certain parts of India contrary to the spirit of the pact with Lord Irwin. He took up the matter immediately with Lord Willingdon who succeeded Lord Irwin as the Viceroy on 17 April 1931 and wanted to know from him whether the pact he made with Irwin had any value in the context of such violations. Gandhiji made it clear that in the event of his failure to get redress of grievances at the Viceregal level, the Civil Disobedience would be renewed. The Congress Working Committee also adopted a similar stand. Willingdon, however, preferred confrontation to conciliation and in 3 January 1932, arrested Gandhiji and

Patel. On the next day four ordinances were promulgated to cripple Gandhi's efforts to renew the Civil Disobedience movement. From that day onwards the second phase of Gandhi's Civil Disobedience movement began all over India.\footnote{Ibid, p.409}

The Government of Assam struck the first blow by promulgating ordinance V (Molestation and Boycott) all over Assam on 9 January 1932.\footnote{Administration report for the year 1931-2, Govt. of Assam, Shillong.} It enabled them to combat picketing activities of any kind. With the promulgation of four ordinances by the Government of India on 4 January 1932, the Working Committee of the Assam provincial Congress suspended its constitution and empowered its president to run the movement in future even in the absence of any Congress Committee. Thereafter all the local Congress Committee did the same thing and a great political excitement prevailed all over the province.\footnote{Political History of Assam, vol.II pp.186-7}

With the observance of hartal in the first week of January 1932, in protest against the national leaders, the second phase of the Civil Disobedience movement was inaugurated in Assam. The first clash with the Government took place when the third Independence Day was observed in the province. In Dhubri and Nowgong public processions came out in defiance of Section 144 and 28 persons courted arrest.\footnote{Ibid, p.187.} In Sylhet town a public procession intending to march past the courts shouting patriotic slogans was stopped by the police and asked to take an alternative route. On the refusal of the

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87. Ibid. p.409  
88. Administration report for the year 1931-2, Govt. of Assam, Shillong.  
89. Political History of Assam, vol.II pp.186-7  
90. Ibid. p.187.
leaders the Magistrate issued orders to disperse them by force. Twenty four persons were arrested.

After the observance of Independence Day the leaders in Assam began to resume the picketing programme but this time they excluded academic institutions from their targets. The leaders now gave more emphasis on boycott and wanted to strike at the source of Government revenue. Vigorous propaganda was made for the eradication of the drink and drug evils. Boycott particularly of British goods, was preached everywhere. Publication of bulletins and leaflets and posters helped to promote the picketing work. A no-rent campaign was taken up in certain places of Assam. In Goalpara non-payment of taxes was propagatated.

Ever since the beginning of the movement in 1923 all possible repressive measures were adopted by the Government of Assam to frustrate the efforts of the nationalists to implement the Civil Disobedience programme. To cripple the movement the Government adopted the policy of convicting after arrest, most of the active members of the Civil Disobedience movement.

The momentum of the Civil Disobedience movement was restarted after the declaration of Communal Award by Ramsay Mac Donald on 17 August 1923. Instead of the ideals of Purna Swaraj heading the list of priorities, the Harijan issue suddenly gained prominence. In fact, after the Poona pact the upliftment of the Harijans and the removal of untouchability was taken up by the Congress leaders in Assam
with immense fervour. Further the acute economic distress of the rayots pushed the Civil Disobedience movement into background.

Consequently the fourth Independence Day was celebrated on 26 January 1933 only in Nowgong and Sylhet but without the lustre of the previous occasions. The leaders of both the valleys were now busy working for economic redress. Numerous meetings were held at different places. The economic and social improvement of the people thus became the main objective of these meetings. In the process, the emphasis on the political issues got milder. Even the Congress movement in Assam was geared towards the implementation of constructive socio economic programme and the spirited political aspect of the Civil Disobedience movement, was ignored. These events eased the tension of the Government and they did not even consider it imperative to put up any serious resistance to this latest stand of Gandhiji and the Congressman of Assam. By December 1933 almost all the leaders of Assam were released from jail on the expiry of their terms. In Sylhet, the leaders formed an association named "The Sylhet Congress Social and Economic Improvement Samiti." Many of the leaders who were released did not take any interest in the individual Satyagraha programme. To others the Civil Disobedience programme appeared monotonous and dull. On 31 March 1934 in a meeting under the Presidentship of M.A.A. Ansari the Congressmen in Delhi decided to revive the Swarajya Party and subsequently Gandhiji also agreed to this proposal.

92. Ibid.
93. Ibid.
By then the force behind the Civil Disobedience movement disappeared even in the national level and the Indian National Congress had to officially terminate it on 20 May 1934. 95