CHAPTER V
LAJPAT RAI AND THE INDIAN NATIONALIST STRUGGLE
1920-28

The period from 1920 to 1928 is of momentous importance in
the history of modern India. Under the dynamic leadership of
Mahatma Gandhi the Indian nationalist movement assumed an
unprecedented force and appeal; in reality it becomes for the
first time a mass movement. Lajpat Rai on his return to India
threw himself heart and soul into this movement. He strived hard
to make the non-cooperation movement a success in the country
particularly in the Punjab. During this period he also joined
the newly formed Swaraj Party to carry on the political struggle
in the legislative bodies. The communal question which had
become complex and had assumed explosive proportions too attracted
the attention of Lajpat Rai.

On February 20, 1920, Lajpat Rai landed on the Indian soil
after an absence of nearly six years. Soon after his arrival
Indian leaders such as Tilak and Vallabhbhai, Jhaverbhai Patel, were keen to know his future plans. As Lajpat Rai agreed with
many of Gandhi's ideas and had great regard for him as a man, he
decided to meet him before taking any decision. Lajpat Rai made
clear to Tilak that: "he must be given some time to study the
position of different parties in India and he will go to Delhi
for a day (say February 24, 1920) to meet Gandhi there." From

1. B. 1875; close to Gandhi; participated in Satyagraha Movement
(1918) and Non-cooperation Movement; President I.N.C. March
1931; arrested in connection with individual civil disobedience
and Quit India Movement in 1940 and 1942 respectively; d. 1950.
Delhi "he will go direct to Punjab and thereafter make a tour throughout India." He was very anxious to visit Punjab as early as possible. He was acclaimed a hero when he reached Lahore five days later.

Lajpat Rai studied the situation and discussed it with numerous friends. India of 1920 was radically different from India which Lajpat Rai had left in 1914. "It is an entirely new India to which I have come back; it is an awakened, self-conscious and defiant India." Thus wrote Lajpat Rai to his friend, Wedgwood, shortly after his return to India. The war exploded the myth of British superiority and generated among the Indian a new feeling of self-confidence and dignity. The country underwent a mental revolution as a result of the war which, though fought far away from its borders, affected deeply its economic life and its politics. The Bolshevik Revolution and President Wilson's declarations of war aims of the Allies spurred the urge among the Indians for self-government. India now demanded self-government as their fundamental right on the basis of the principle of self-determination proclaimed loudly by the Allied leaders during the War. They had expected a generous gesture from the Government for all that India had suffered for the Empire during the War. On the contrary the Government adopted a policy of stark repression. The post-war repressive legislation (the Rowlatt Acts), the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy and the inadequate reforms all combined

3. Ibid.
to result in widespread indignation against the British rule.
The Mohammadans, too, were restive. Firstly, the reform proposals
had not given them extra communal weightage they had hoped for,
and secondly they anticipated the disruption of Turkey which
aroused intense feeling among them. A sense of common danger
brought the two communities together, and Hindu and Muslim
fraternized on a scale never witnessed before in India. The
leadership passed into new hands and a new technique of agitation
came into vogue. It was a new vista. The new technique, Satyagraha,
launched with protest meetings and hartals by Mahatma Gandhi,
received a massive support of the masses, Hindu and Muslim alike.
The Punjab was seething with discontent and violent anti-British
sentiment on account of Jallianwala Bagh tragedy and the repressive
policy of the Government. Lajpat Rai's old friends faced inquiries
and transportation. This act of unrestrained brutality and the
horrors of the martial law regime in the Punjab roused the country
to a bitter determination to fight the alien rule. In the light
of these events the British offer of constitutional reforms sounded
empty and hollow. Though the country was tense with emotion at the
end of 1919, the Congress still did not want to widen the breach.
At its Amritsar session in December 1919 it decided, under the
influence of Mahatma Gandhi, to work the reforms though declaring
the Reform Act as "inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing."

Lajpat Rai thus found India in the throes of a militant
national struggle. What gave him hope was the political awakening
of the masses and the new born sentiment of unity among the Hindus

5. Letter, August 16, 1919, Motilal Nehru to the Superintendent
of Lahore Jail, J.L. Nehru Papers.
and Muslims. Though he was not satisfied with the Reform Act but he was "in favour of working the Reforms in a genuine spirit of cooperation", provided that that was made possible by the Government. He, however, doubted the intentions of the bureaucracy since it had excluded the nationalists from any participation in the framing of the Rules under the Act.

The turning point came in the spring of 1920. The Hunter Committee Report issued on May 26, 1920 and the steps which the Government of India and the Secretary of State took thereupon eroded whatever faith was left in Indian minds regarding British professions of justice. The Committee was divided on racial lines and the Government accepted the views of the European majority. Far from condemning the ghastly act of cruelty, the Anglo-Indians and the British public expressed sympathy for Dyer. The resolution of the House of Lords in his support further embittered feelings in India. Then the treaty of Sevres on Turkey's future kindled the fire of discontent among Indian Muslims. They formed a Khilafat Committee to carry on the struggle against injustice done to Turkey. Anti-British feeling was at its height in the country.

Lajpat Rai was perceptive enough to gauge the depth of feeling of his countrymen and visualized the possibilities of political disturbances in the days to come. In a letter to Wedgwood, he expressed his reaction candidly: "I sincerely believe that I cannot afford to have chaos and disorder in our country at this stage of our evolution. There are elements in India who may rise equal

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to the occasion if any disorder does appear but still I would
prefer ordered progress with the certainty of our getting complete
responsible government in India, as integral part of the British
Commonwealth in the near future than run the risk of being thrown
into a whirlpool of opposing and contending forces." 7

The All India Congress Committee met at Benares on May 31,
1920 to take a decision on Hunter Committee Report. At the special
invitation of the President, Lajpat Rai was also present. Before
this Lajpat Rai made it clear that he would "accept the Congress
programme on the whole." 8 The Committee was the only authority
qualified to summon an extraordinary session of the Congress
wherever it might deem it advisable to hold such session, and it
could also change the venue of the Congress to some other town when
such change was deemed by it to be necessary or desirable owing to
serious or unforeseen difficulties or other contingencies of the
like nature. 9 This Committee appointed Lajpat Rai and six others to
draft a petition which was to be presented to the British Parliament
expressing A.I.C.C.'s "indignant protest against the general policy
and attitude of the Secretary of State for India on the Punjab
affairs as disclosed in the Despatch on the Hunter Committee's
report and against the acceptance of its recommendation." 10 Here
Lajpat Rai was appointed a member of the Sub-Committee
along with twenty-two others to collect funds for propaganda and
other work in connection with the wrongs of the Punjab. 11 It

7. Letter to Josiah Wedgwood, quoted from Wedgwood Josiah, The
10. A.I.C.C. Report, File No. 18/1920 (Supplementary).
11. Ibid.
also passed a resolution that the special session of the Indian National Congress would be held at Calcutta in September 1920.12

In this A.I.C.C. meeting Lajpat Rai made a special effort to redress the grievances of the Punjab people. He emphatically urged the Congress leaders that a "special reference to the Punjab should be made."13 This was accepted.

Lajpat Rai was elected in July 1920 to preside over the special session of the Indian National Congress scheduled to meet at Calcutta. The session had been called to devise measures for the redress of the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs and to decide on the Congress attitude towards the reforms. Before the special Congress met, and even before Gandhi announced his programme of non-cooperation, Lajpat Rai repudiated the Reforms and proposed the boycott of the new councils. For himself, he declared in unequivocal terms that he would not stand for election. The acceptance of the majority report of the Hunter Committee by the Government of India and the Secretary of State was regarded by Lajpat Rai as the virtual denial of the principles on which the Reforms scheme was based. The officers who were responsible for committing horrid atrocities in the Punjab continued to hold offices and this confirmed his belief that no change in the old regime was contemplated.14

Gandhi's announcement of his programme of non-cooperation in July 1920 caused shivers among many old Moderate Congress leaders.

12. Ibid.
They shrank from such a revolutionary course. This nearly created a schism in the Congress camp. Anxious to avoid such a possibility, Lajpat Rai issued an appeal to the Moderates urging for unity and asking them to attend the special session at Calcutta. Surendra Nath Bannerjea turned down the invitation in the following letter to Lajpat Rai:

"You are a convinced non-cooperationist, most of the Provincial Congress Committees declared themselves in favour of non-cooperation. Under the circumstances I feel that my presence at the Congress can serve no useful purpose since mine will be a voice crying in this wilderness."

Surendra Nath Bannerjea and other Moderate leaders such as Srinivasa Sastri, Narayan G. Chandavarkar, D.E. Wacha, C.Y. Chintamani etc. did not respond to Lajpat Rai's appeal. They boycotted the special session of the Congress held at Calcutta (September 1920).

In view of these political developments in the Congress the Government of India prescribed "non-interference" as the "wisest policy". A Government circular dated September 4, 1920 said:

"The non-cooperation scheme is so intrinsically foolish that Government have every confidence that the common sense of India will reject it.... For the time being the policy of non-interference is the wisest policy. They (The Government of India) think that it would be a mistake at the present juncture either to adopt repressive measures of an executive nature under special or emergency laws against the leaders of the movement or even to institute immediate proceedings against them under the ordinary criminal law because

15. Telegram, September 3, 1920, Viceroy to Secretary of State, Chelmsford Papers.
16. Letter, August 30, Surendra Nath Bannerjea to Lajpat Rai vide The Tribune (Lahore), September 1, 1920.
any such action would only result in making martyrs of them, and gaining for them a large number of adherents who would otherwise hold aloof. But the Government were watching the political situation very closely. Lajpat Rai's election as the President of the special Congress perturbed the British. In a cable to the Secretary of State the Viceroy wrote: "Lajpat Rai has now been declared the elected President of the Special Session. His election will no doubt give support to the non-cooperation movement."

The key note of the special session of the Congress, which was attended by about 25,000 delegates, visitors and spectators, was Gandhi's resolution for complete non-cooperation including surrender of titles and honorary offices and resignation from nominated seats in local bodies; refusal to attend Government Levees, Durbars, and other official and semi-official functions held by Government officials in their honour. Gandhi promised independence in one year provided complete non-cooperation was adopted.

The presidential address of Lajpat Rai was a marvellous performance and it elicited admiration from one and all for its frankness, boldness and elegance. It was an impressive, well reasoned and bitter indictment of Sir Michael O'Dyer and his regime. He charged Sir Michael O'Dyer for all the atrocities and brutalities that had been inflicted on the Punjab. In a very forceful language

18. Telegram, July 20, 1920, Viceroy to Secretary of State, Chelmsford Papers.
19. A.I.C.C*, File No. 18/1920 (Supplementary).
Lajpat Rai strongly condemned his and his subordinates' cruel and humiliating misdeeds which had transgressed all bounds of decency. The bulk of his speech, extending to 56 pages of printed foolscap, was devoted to an exposure of what he called the Punjab atrocities.

Lajpat Rai did not completely agree with Gandhi's programme of non-cooperation movement for he had his own "personal opinion on the question." The Fundamental difference between Lajpat Rai and Gandhi appeared on the execution of the programme of non-cooperation. Though endorsing Gandhi's method of non-violent struggle for attaining Swaraj, Lajpat Rai was not in favour of launching the whole programme of non-cooperation immediately as framed by Gandhi. He held that the programme of non-cooperation should be implemented in phases, slowly and gradually for, according to him, the masses in India at that time were not trained fully for such a radical programme. Further, he could not endorse Gandhi's programme of indiscriminate withdrawal of children from private or government-aided schools and colleges. He said "that the withdrawal of children of tender age from their schools would effect their sense of discipline and do more harm than good; that the withdrawal of students from the medical, engineering and similar other institutions was not desirable, and that appeal should not be made to the emotions of the students but to their judgement and reason and they should be asked to rely on the voice of their own conscience."20 Initially, he favoured the withdrawal of students from Arts and Law Colleges only.21 Lajpat Rai was also sceptical

20. The Tribune (Lahore), January 12, 1921.
about the efficacy of other forms of non-cooperation i.e. the giving up of the titles, boycott of law courts and foreign goods. As regards the giving up of titles, he said that even the Muslims were not unanimous on this aspect of non-cooperation; only two persons from the Punjab had denounced titles and they were Hindus. He urged Gandhi that he should not impose his resolution on the Congress in present form. However, Gandhi's resolution of non-cooperation was approved by a majority vote, though Lajpat Rai later expressed doubts with regard to its successful implementation in the present form.

It is clear that Lajpat Rai was not in agreement with Gandhi's programme on certain vital issues. As a matter of fact the Calcutta Congress vaguely endorsed Gandhi's broad policy of non-cooperation without working out its details of implementation. After the special session which ended on September 7, 1920, Lajpat Rai reiterated that Gandhi's resolution on complete non-cooperation was not binding. He urged its application only in a gradual form, and expressed his disapproval of the clause to withdraw children and students from the Government sponsored schools.  

The non-cooperation resolution passed by the special Congress at Calcutta was a significant event. It was the outcome of the accumulated resentment which the people undoubtedly entertained on account of the wrongs inflicted on them, and which the approaching introduction of constitutional reforms did not help to lessen. It dilated on the perversity of Government in its failure to give redress in respect to the Khilafat and the official misdeeds in the

Punjab. It declared that the sole remedy available to the people was the immediate attainment of Swaraj, and that this could only be acquired by progressive non-violent non-cooperation. The adoption of the programme of non-cooperation was a momentous development in India's struggle for freedom. This marks the beginning of the participation of the large mass of India's population - students, lawyers, peasants and workers.

Meanwhile, the first election under the new reform constitution was about to be held in October and November, 1920. As a matter of fact, Lajpat Rai's enthusiasm for the reforms had completely waned. He criticised the British policy of not associating Indians in the framing of the rules under the reforms.23 He described his own reaction to the reform scheme in one sentence: "It was one of partial elation in 1913, it sank into one of depression in 1919, it changed almost into one of despair in 1920."24 This attitude was shared by many. One of the items in non-cooperation programme was the boycott of legislative councils. Lajpat Rai was convinced that the existing Indian members in the councils rather strengthened the hands of the Government because their presence gave the councils a semblance of representative bodies, which they were not. They would not do good to the country. Lajpat Rai


"I have always been of opinion that the presence of Indian members in the Legislative Councils had done more harm to the country than good. Mr. Gokhale cooperated in passing the Press Act, Pandit Malaviya co-operated in passing the Defence of India Act, the Nationalist members co-operated in sanctioning the gift of 100 million pounds towards the expenses of the Great War. These and other similar measures have in my opinion done great harm to the country than the combined services of the Indian members of the Legislative Councils for the last twelve years. So far the Indian members have failed to influence the legislatures of the country in the fundamentals of Government Policy. The finance and the military are the two pivots of the Government. Under both heads the Indian members have egregiously failed to influence Government Policy. Their cooperation has been more harmful than their absence from the Councils could have been. The attitude of the Government in the matter of the Rowlatt Act shows what value Government has attached to their cooperation in spite of the pronouncement of August, 1917."  

Consequently, Lajpat Rai published in his paper *Bande Mataram*, an appeal on September 19, 1920 in which he vigorously advocated the boycott of the councils. He attached the greatest importance to this aspect of the programme of non-cooperation. Hence he worked hard for its success. In obedience to the call to boycott the councils many prominent Congress leaders did not stand for elections and many withdrew their candidatures. The sitting members of the councils resigned their seats. From Delhi four candidates withdrew their candidatures. Men like Lajpat Rai from the Punjab and Madan Mohan Malaviya from U.P. did not even file their nomination papers. In pursuance of the call given by Lajpat Rai in the Punjab, Professor Ruchi Ram Sahni, Saiffuddin Kitchlew, 

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29. B. 1863; social reformer; member of the Punjab Legislative Council 1923-26; d. 1949.
30. B. 1888; arrested in 1921; President of the All India Khilafat Committee, Chairman of the Reception Committee of the 44th
Bakshi Tek Chand withdrew their candidatures. The extent of popular enthusiasm in the province in connection with the council's boycott can be assessed by the fact that the Commissioner of Lahore is reported to have experienced difficulty in finding sufficient number of candidates to contest elections. The actual number of the candidates who withdrew from the election in the Punjab and other parts of India is not known, but it was estimated at a few hundred.

During the Calcutta session a Sub-Committee consisting of Gandhi, Motilal Nehru and Vithalbhai Patel was appointed to prepare draft instructions on the non-cooperation resolution. The Sub-Committee published its report on September 26, 1920 with Gandhi and Nehru on one side and Vithalbhai Patel dissenting. The Sub-Committee said in its report that "the Congress had approved of Mr. Gandhi's full programme of progressive non-violent non-cooperation." But Patel regretted that "he could not see his way to accept the suggestion contained in the report that the Congress has approved of Mr. Gandhi's full programme of non-cooperation." Along with B.C. Pal and Patel, Lajpat Rai also criticised the Sub-Committee's report. He took strong exception to the statement that the Congress had approved of the whole of Gandhi's programme although he said that he agreed with the general policy of non-cooperation.

To consider the report the All India Congress Committee held a meeting on October 2, 1920. Here Motilal very vehemently

31. Home Department, G.O.I. (Political), No. 102, September 1920.
33. Ibid.
advocated that the boycott of foreign goods should be taken up immediately. Lajpat Rai did not concur with this thinking; he believed that the programme of the boycott of the foreign goods should be deferred until such times the people are prepared politically and the country has sufficient indigenous industries. The inner differences among the Congress leaders on the scope and extent of non-cooperation were coming to the surface.

Lajpat Rai still did not agree with all the provisions of Gandhi's non-cooperation programme. When Gandhi visited Punjab in the middle of October 1920, Lajpat Rai took no part in what took place at Lahore. He shut himself up in his room on the plea of indisposition. His paper Bande Mataram ceased publication temporarily on the pretext of something having gone wrong with the printing machinery. He sent a letter of excuse, sympathy and apology to Gandhi. Lajpat Rai agreed that non-cooperation was the only constitutional weapon left with the people in their struggle for Swaraj. However, he criticised some of the details of Gandhi's plan as purely negative, particularly the proposal of boycott of schools and courts. He acknowledged that the educational system needed a radical overhaul to foster a sense of nationality and patriotism but until adequate alternative facilities were available, he opposed the wholesale withdrawal of students. Further Lajpat Rai wanted structural changes in the Congress organisation. He wanted an efficient net work of district organisations so that Congress programme and ideology could reach the masses. Lajpat Rai clearly realised that the days were over when elitist politics were viable.

35. A.I.C.C. Files 1920, no. 2.
On December 26, 1920 Lajpat Rai arrived at Nagpur to attend the thirty-sixth Indian National Congress under the presidency of C. Vijaya Raghavachariar which was to ratify Gandhi's non-cooperation resolution of the special Calcutta Congress. On his arrival he met Gandhi who removed "all the objections,"\(^{36}\) which Lajpat Rai had in regard to the non-cooperation resolution passed earlier at the special session. Firstly, the students below the age of sixteen years were excluded from participation in the movement. As regards school and college children over sixteen years of age, Lajpat Rai was informed that "he (Gandhi) does not want them to come out simply because he asks them to come out, but he wanted them to consult their own conscience and see if the voice of conscience, the call of duty to the motherland, asked them to come out and that they should come out only in that case."\(^{37}\) Secondly, Lajpat Rai's demand to implement the non-cooperation programme in phases and slowly was also accepted. Under the new resolution the non-cooperation programme would not be brought into effect all at once but after due preparations. These preparations were to consist of - "Endeavours to nationalise aided schools; establishment of 'arbitration', i.e.; un-official courts; appointment of a committee to consider schemes for introducing boycott of foreign trade and encourage hand spinning and weaving accompanied by the appointment of a separate committee to organise the immediate boycott of existing contracts with British Firms; institution of an Indian National Service; raising a 'National Fund' to finance the

\(^{36}\) Lala Lajpat Rai: Writings and Speeches, Vol. II, p. 68.

\(^{37}\) Ibid.
Indian National Service; the organisation of labour with a view to prevent exploitation of Indian Labour and of Indian Resources by foreign agencies." Thirdly, some authors suggest that Lajpat Rai was hard pressed by the Punjabi leaders to favour Gandhi's programme. But the fact was that Gandhi's new resolution, as Lajpat Rai writes, "Practically removes all the possible objections, at least so far as I am concerned, which I had to the old resolution." It appears that Gandhi in presenting his resolution was keen to carry a leader of Lajpat Rai's eminence and stature with him and to offer a completely united front to the British. Shrewed tactician as he was, he accepted Lajpat Rai's conditions. In view of this development the Punjab leader changed his previous stand, and now Lajpat Rai was ready to cooperate with Gandhi in the Nagpur Congress.

In the Nagpur Congress Lajpat Rai seconded Gandhi's programme and extended his full support to the non-cooperation resolution which was accepted with virtual unanimity. Gandhi enunciated the new creed for the Congress: "the object of the Indian National Congress is the attainment of Swaraj by the people of India by all legitimate and peaceful means." The existing Congress aim laid emphasis on the attainment of Swaraj or self rule within the Empire.

40. Lajpat Rai: Writings and Speeches, p. 69.
Now in 1920 the words within the Empire were deleted. Supporting this resolution Lajpat Rai pointed out that in view of the changes and new developments which had taken place in the country the Congress could not exclude from its ranks those patriots who had conscientious objection to signing the existing creed or those who believed in complete independence outside the British Empire. He did not think that the majority of Congressmen or of thinking people in the country were prepared to say that they would at once go in for complete independence or that they would not remain in the British Commonwealth. The change in the creed was, he remarked, "a notice to the British public and the British Government that although we do not at the present aim, directly aim, to get out of this British Empire, or, what we may call the British Commonwealth, we shall not remain at the dictation of anybody or by fear. We shall remain there by our own free choice and free will..." 42 India, Lajpat Rai said, would decide when the time come whether to remain a member of the British Commonwealth or not. "As to the British Empire, I would rather be a slave than willingly consent to be a part of an empire which enslaves so many millions of human beings." 43 Lajpat Rai emphasised that the word Swaraj had been left unqualified deliberately for the purpose of enabling them to remain within the Commonwealth if they chose to do so when a real Commonwealth had been established, or to go out if they so desired. He regretted that at that time there was no British Commonwealth in "real sense". 44

42. Ibid., p. 50.
43. Ibid., p. 52.
44. Ibid.
The Nagpur Congress was a turning point in Lajpat Rai's political life. His forceful speech and strong unflinching support to Gandhi and his resolution made him an outstanding leader. He was appointed a permanent member of the All India Congress Committee. The Nagpur Congress also appointed him the President of the All India Trades Union Congress to make the non-cooperation movement popular in labour organisations. He was asked to lead the non-cooperation movement in the Punjab.

The response of the country to Gandhi's call for non-violent non-cooperation was enthusiastic and widespread. India witnessed one of the most powerful movements in modern times. Having accepted the programme of non-cooperation Lajpat Rai plunged into the struggle with complete dedication. He replaced Harkishan Lal as the President of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee, and directed the movement in the Punjab. He also undertook all India tours to spread the message of non-cooperation. In Punjab he undertook extensive tours and addressed numerous meetings. In January and February 1921 Lajpat Rai visited Rawalpindi, Hoshiarpur, Gujranwala and Lyallpur. To make the movement popular in rural areas a committee was formed with Lajpat Rai as President. Many District Congress Committees were formed. A large number of Panchayats were set up in the villages. The message of non-cooperation reached many villages. The movement was becoming mass based. According to official reports: "the rural classes are, however, being gradually inculcated with political ideas and in

46. Home Department, G.C.I. (Political) Deposit, No. 42, April 1921.
47. Home Department, G.C.I. (Political) File No. 18, 1922.
many parts of the province definite steps have been taken towards the establishment of Panchayats to settle disputes and to dispose of petty cases without resort to the courts."

Lajpat Rai started a campaign to make the boycott of schools and colleges a complete success. Students' meetings were held in the province to awaken and arouse them to activity. On January 24, 1921 most of the students of the D.A.V. College, Lahore, refused to attend their classes. Two days earlier about 400 students of the college had sent an application to the Principal requesting him to invite Lajpat Rai to address the students in the college premises on the subject of non-cooperation. The Managing Committee of the college held its emergency meeting and it decided that this could not be done because Seditious Meetings Act was in force. The students went on strike. Next day about 500 students of D.A.V. College, Lahore, joined by students from other colleges marched all the way from Lahore to Gujranwala to meet the non-cooperation leaders. Here a large number of students of local Khalsa College and schools attended a rally which was addressed by Lajpat Rai. In his address he said:

"They had come all the way from Lahore to Gujranwala because the Punjab Government would not allow him and others to address them in Lahore owing to the Seditious Meetings Act. Their faith in co-operation with the Government was gone for ever. They had tried all methods of co-operation, but had failed and had been compelled at last to adopt the weapon of Non-cooperation. Their grievances would not be redressed

48. Home Department, (Political), Deposit, No. 41, April 1921.
49. Telegram, January 29, 1921, Viceroy to Secretary of State, vide Home Department, G.O.I. (Political) Deposit, No. 41, April 1921.
until they became free in their own land as Englishmen were free in their own... He would boldly and unhesitatingly ask the students to leave their colleges at once and join the Non-cooperation movement whole-heartedly... So long as they would be inside the College, the authorities would do nothing to give them true national and technical education.

Lajpat Rai's forceful appeal to students resulted in a strike in Lahore Colleges - D.A.V. College, Forman Christian College, Dayal Singh College and Snatan Dharam College. The students demanded the disaffiliation of their colleges. They struck completely on January 27, 1921 and passed a resolution for boycott of the existing institutions. In pursuance of the call given by Lajpat Rai, Sardar Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Bhagwati Charan, Yashpal and many other young students left D.A.V. College and other colleges. At some places attempts were made by the nationalist leaders to convert existing educational institutions into national schools and colleges. Lajpat Rai made efforts to convert D.A.V. College, Lahore into a National College. 'Tilal School of Politics' was transferred to National University, Lahore, as a National College. A School department was also established which started an industrial school at Lahore. The Radha Krishan High School at Jagraon in Ludhiana district named after the father of Lajpat Rai and which was managed by Dhanpat Rai, his brother, was got disaffiliated. It was turned into a National School. At Lahore a few Night Schools

50. *Indian Annual Register*, 1921-22, Calcutta, pp.153-54. See also *Telegram, January 29, 1921, Viceroy to Secretary of State, Chelmsford Papers.*

51. *Telegram, February 21, 1921, Viceroy to Secretary of State, Chelmsford Papers.*

52. *Home Department, G.O.I. (Political) Deposit, No. 42, April 1921.*

53. *B. 1907, Secretary of Hindustan Socialist Republic Association; killed Saunders; threw a bomb in the Central Assembly; hanged on March 23, 1931.*

54. *B. at Layallpur; active revolutionary; hanged 1931.*

55. *B. at Lahore; active revolutionary; d. 1930.*
(Adult Centres) and schools for backward and Harijan children also started functioning. According to a Government report:

"Practically all the masters and the majority of the boys are leaving the schools in consequence, and endeavours are being made by the local authorities to find places for them elsewhere. It is reported that no less than 1,100 students are attending the new national school at Gujarat. On the other hand, an attempt is being made to get the recently nationalised Jat High School at Rohtak returned to its old status."56

Accompanied by Gandhi on February 12, 1921 Lajpat Rai came to Delhi to perform the opening ceremony of the Hakim Ajmal Khan's Tibbia College. C.R. Das and B.C. Pal were following the lead given by Lajpat Rai in Punjab in their own province.58

The programme of boycott of courts initially received a modest success in the home province of Lajpat Rai. Notable leaders of the Congress such as Lajpat Rai, Duni Chand59 of Lahore, Kitchlew, a gosurdar60 of Sialkot and many others renounced their practice. By April 1921 forty-one lawyers had suspended their practice in Punjab, of whom hardly thirteen depended upon the Congress Provincial Committee for subsistence allowance.61 The Government, of course, contended that only seventeen had abandoned their practice by February 1921.62 This was not a mean achievement at the commencement of the movement. But the initial enthusiasm in this sphere could not be sustained.

57. Telegram, February 21, 1921, Viceroy to Secretary of State, Chelmsford Papers.
59. B. 1870; President of the Punjab Provincial Congress, 1918,d.194
60. Lawyer.
The rapid progress of non-cooperation movement under the leadership of Lajpat Rai caught the attention of the Government. On receiving a confidential report about the political developments in Punjab the Home Secretary, S.P.O. 'Donell, was very much perturbed. He wrote a long letter to L. French, Chief Secretary to the Government of Punjab, expressing his anxiety. He believed that the speeches delivered by Lajpat Rai in various Conference "exceeded all bounds of decency." He described the speeches of Lajpat Rai "immensely harmful" to the prestige and authority of the Government. "If", he added "the example of Lajpat Rai was going to be followed by the men whom he was sending in the villages the result would be nothing short of disastrous." Sir William Vincent, Home Member, also drew attention of the Punjab Government to the desirability of instituting prosecution against Lajpat. It was becoming "increasingly difficult" for the Government to deal with the situation.

In view of Lajpat Rai's activities to popularize and spread non-cooperation the Punjab Government prohibited him from undertaking his proposed tour of North West Frontier Province. The Government considered his contemplated visit to Peshwar as a "signal for political meetings in Peshawar." The ban on the entry of Punjab leader into North West Frontier Province, however,

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63. Home Department, G.O.I. (Political) Deposit, File No. 5, March 1921, pp. 4-11.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. Telegram, February 17, 1921, Viceroy to Secretary of State, Chelmsford Papers.
disappointed the hopes entertained by the local non-cooperationists. On January 10, a meeting of protest against the action of the Local Government was convened at Peshawar where many anti-British speeches were made. They decided to form a Provincial Congress Committee at Lajpat Rai's instance. District Committees had already been established in Peshawar and Dera Ismail Khan.67

On March 31, 1921 Lajpat Rai went to Bezwada in Andhra to attend the All India Congress Committee meeting. The members of the A.I.C.C. who attended the meeting were only fifty, but more than a lakh of villagers from a radius of 40 miles had come on foot to have a glimpse of national leaders. In the A.I.C.C. meeting Lajpat Rai reiterated that Gandhi's aim that the nation should collect one crore members on the Congress registers and introduce twenty lakhs of spinning wheels was not yet fulfilled.68 At this session the strength of the Punjab members in the All India Congress Committee was raised to 33.69

On his return in the first week of April 1921, Lajpat Rai went to Dehra Dun to attend a political conference, where he made it clear that the only way to solve the political problem of India was the grant of Swaraj.70

68. Total recruitment and fund claimed by Congress organisations upto May 1921 were: Bombay 20,000 members, Gujrat 41,000 members and Rs. 199,000 for the Tilak Swaraj Fund, and the Punjab 22,000 members and Rs. 209,000; vide Home Department, G.O.I. (Political) Deposit, Nos. 287, June 1921.
70. Home Department, G.O.I. (Political) Deposit, No. 51, June 1921.
In his home province Lajpat Rai's appeal to the Sikh community to plunge themselves in non-cooperation movement was warmly reciprocated. In a speech in May 1921, Lajpat Rai reminded the Sikhs that "their Guru had taught them to be without fear, nor should they do anything to frighten others. It was against the spirit of the Khalsa and did not become the Sikhs to don the uniform of others." He also contended that non-cooperation was taught by the Vedas and that it should be practised by the Arys. Consequently, the Working Committee of the Central Gurdwara Committee in its meeting on May 19, 1921 adopted resolutions for forming village and district non-cooperation committees. At that time the Sikhs were struggling to obtain control of their holy shrines (Gurudwaras) from the possession of corrupt 'mahants' who had the support of the British Government. The Sikhs adopted non-violent methods and passive resistance for the liberation of gurdwaras. The British authorities adopted strong and repressive measures to put an end to this agitation. Thousands of Sikhs underwent imprisonment and sufferings. Later Lajpat Rai in his letter to Gandhi praised the heroic sufferings of the Sikh community. "The Sikh community has so far kept its temper admirably well in spite of the provocations given. Most of the arrests have been made in the presence of hundreds and thousands... Our Sikh friends deserve all the praise one can bestow on brave, noble, sufferers in the cause of truth."72

Some leaders like Motilal, V.J. Patel and Mohammad Ali73 were

73. B. 1870; Chief Educational Officer, Baroda 1904-10; editor of the Comrade 1911-14; a prominent Khilafat leader; President of the I.N.U. 1923; d. 1931.
thinking in terms of extending non-cooperation propaganda in foreign countries. But Lajpat Rai was strongly opposed to this attempt. In May 1921 he said: "We have no money to spare for being squandered in foreign countries." "It is out of the question," he added, "to send any competent man from here." On the contrary he asked the Indian patriots abroad that "under the circumstances your place is in India. Come and join us." In a letter to Hardikar who was in America Lajpat Rai wrote: "You and Rao should both return and take your part in the great struggle that is going on. This is the time for every Indian to be at home and be doing." He also asked his son, Anrit Rai, to return from America.

Assessing the political progress in May 1921, he said: "We feel that in the next twelve months we all shall either gain something substantial or be most of us in jail. We do not mind the latter, but we are determined to put forth every iota of our energy and every pie of our money into this struggle, come what may." Lajpat Rai was thus determined to achieve the aims of non-cooperation set in the Nagpur Congress.

In April 1921 Lord Reading succeeded Lord Chelmsford as the Viceroy of India. At the end of the month, the new Viceroy wrote about his impression of India: "When in England, I was not unduly depressed... by the report of serious conditions in India... I am reluctantly compelled since my investigations here to take a more

74. Home Department, G.O.I. (Poll.) Deposit, No.55, June 1921.
75. Letter, undated, Lajpat Rai to Hardikar, Hardikar Papers.
76. Home Department, G.O.I. (Poll.) Deposit, No.55, June 1921.
serious view." Considering the non-cooperation movement as widespread and dangerous, the new Viceroy began to think in terms of launching a massive assault on it in order to crush it.

In the later half of May Lord Reading met Gandhi. The meeting had been arranged through the efforts of Madan Mohan Malaviya who favoured a policy of negotiations with the Government. He had not taken any part in the non-cooperation movement. The Viceroy's decision to meet Gandhi was with a view to weaken the nationalist struggle by winning over a section of Congress leadership. These leaders, tired of a long and weary campaign, wanted some negotiated settlement with the Government. Gandhi on his part wanted to discuss, in addition to other political questions, the activities of the two Khilafat leaders - Mohammad Ali and Shaukat Ali. Their strong speeches condemning the British rule and inviting the Amir of Afghanistan were not liked by the authorities.

Lajpat Rai reacted sharply to this move. He was not in favour of Gandhi meeting the Viceroy without conditions. He feared that the proposed meeting might dampen the newly aroused enthusiasm and zeal among the masses. He also went to Simla to talk to Gandhi in this connection. After meeting him Lajpat Rai declared that no compromise would be acceptable unless the principles of non-cooperation were conceded. The details of these principles could be worked out later. He said that even Gandhi would not retain his leadership if he compromised on the vital points of non-cooperation. He also wrote articles in the newspapers against this meeting.77 Mohammad Ali agreed with him.

77. Home Department, G.C.I. (Political) Deposit, No. 55, June 1921.
Inspite of Lajpat Rai's bitter opposition the meeting between the Viceroy and Gandhi was held. There were in all six meetings between Gandhi and Reading; their discussion ranged over a wide field - the Punjab disturbances of 1919, the Khilafat movement, the meaning of Swaraj. Later, Mohammad Ali on the advice of Gandhi tendered a written apology for his stirring speeches. But the meeting between Gandhi and Reading did not affect the course of non-cooperation movement.

Between June and August 1921 Lajpat Rai confined his political activities to Punjab. He directed the movement from Lahore. He also visited Amritsar and Rawalpindi. He addressed meetings where he asked the audiences to pick up boycott of foreign clothes to a high pitch. In his view destruction was the best method of dealing with foreign clothes. In August 1921, at Lahore, he appealed to the people to send their foreign clothes to Lala Amir Chand, General Secretary, City Congress Committee, because the Congress had decided to burn foreign clothes throughout the Punjab on August 28. He also visited Amritsar accompanied by S.E. Stokes and delivered a speech at Jallianwala Bagh where he appealed to the ladies who were also present to wear home-spun cloth as long as Swaraj was not secured. He also said that the only weapon in their hands was the use of Swadeshi and the complete boycott of the foreign clothes.

To give impetus to the boycott of foreign cloth in Bihar, the provincial Congress Committee of Bihar, invited Lajpat Rai to

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73. The Tribune (Lahore), August 17, 1921.
79. An American Missionary; became naturalized Indian and accepted Hinduism; imprisoned during non-cooperation movement in 1921; settled in Simla Hills.
80. The Tribune (Lahore), August 17, 1921.
deliver lectures. He visited Bhagalpur on September 10, 1921 and appealed to the people to carry on boycott with vigour.81

When on September 14, 1921 the Ali brothers were arrested and the Government of Bombay explained in a communique that the charge against them was that of tempering with the loyalty of the Indian soldier, Lajpat Rai reacted sharply. Several meetings were held at Lahore which were attended by twenty to twenty-five thousand persons. Some such protest meetings were presided by Lajpat Rai.82 On October 4, Lajpat Rai went to Bombay and there he met a number of prominent Indian leaders. Next day he and forty-seven others issued a manifesto condemning Ali brother's arrest. The manifesto advised every Indian soldier and civilian to "sever" his connection with the Government. It runs:

"In view of the prosecution of the Ali Brothers and others for reasons stated in the Government of Bombay communique, dated the 15th September 1921, the undermentioned, speaking in our individual capacity, desire to state that it is the inherent right of every one to express his opinion without restraint about the propriety of citizens offering their services to, or remaining in the employ of the Government whether in Civil or the Military Department.

"We the undersigned state it as our opinion that it is contrary to national dignity for any Indian to serve as a civilian and more especially as a soldier under a system of Government which has used the soldiery and the police for repressing national aspirations, as for instance at the time of the Rowlatt Act agitation, and which has used the soldiers for crushing the liberty of the Arabs, the Egyptians, the Turks, and other nations who have done no harm to India.

"We are also of opinion that it is the duty of every Indian soldier and civilian to sever his connection with the Government and find some other means of livelihood."

Gandhi
Lajpat Rai
46 others."83

81. Home Department, G.O.I.(Political)No. 18, September 1921.
82. Ibid.
Next day Lajpat Rai attended the meeting of All India Congress Committee which urged the Indians to withdraw from Government services and to boycott foreign clothes, but it postponed the civil disobedience movement. The confidence in the Karachi resolutions of the Khilafat Committee was reaffirmed.  

When the country was thus engaged in implementing the Nagpur recommendations and non-cooperation was in full swing, the Government of India announced that the Prince of Wales would arrive in Bombay on November 17, 1921. The Government sought to exploit the traditional loyalty of Indian masses to its advantage, and thus arrest the growth of non-cooperation movement. Lord Curzon, speaking in the House of Lords, said that the presence of the Prince of Wales would make a good impression not only on the Princes of India but also on the masses. He described the tour as "fraught with great possibilities." At the same time the Viceroy assured the people of India that neither he nor his Government ever had "the faintest intention of using His Royal Highness visit for political purposes," and that he was going to India as "heir to the throne and the future Emperor of India." The Congress resolved to boycott his visit. Lajpat Rai's opposition to the visit of the Prince was not on account of any personal hostility towards him, but it was motivated by political considerations. Seeing through the clever device of the British to cripple the movement he made every effort to make the Prince of Wales'  

84. Ibid.  
boycott a success. He appealed to his countrymen that "When the Prince comes let no man have the slightest decoration anywhere. During his visit let no man stir out of his house and let not the Government employees or the college students be coerced by the departmental heads into joining any official made reception. Let it be cleverly shown to the Prince that the only people who will receive him are the police and the military. Give no occasion for any official high handedness. This is the only way in which you can demonstrate your firm resolve to attain Swaraj by non-violent non-cooperation." He condemned the Lahore Municipality which had passed a resolution of welcome to Prince due to official majority.

The demand in favour of civil disobedience was gathering strength in the country, but the Congress had been postponing it on account of fear that peace and non-violent atmosphere which were indispensable for starting such a movement might not be preserved. However, the demand was becoming almost irresistible. The All India Congress Committee met on the 4th November in Delhi. It was presided by Lajpat Rai and it adopted Gandhi's resolution on individual and mass civil disobedience. The Committee gave reasons for launching the civil disobedience thus: "Whereas there is not much over one month for the fulfilment of the national determination to establish Swaraj before the end of the year, and whereas the nation has demonstrated its capacity for exemplary self-restraint by observing perfect non-violence over the arrest

37. The Tribune (Lahore), November 29, 1921.
38. Telegram, August 25, 1921, Viceroy to Secretary of State, Reading Papers.
and imprisonment of the Ali Brothers and the other leaders, and whereas it is desirable for the nation to demonstrate its capacity for further suffering and discipline sufficient for the attainment of Swaraj...." The A.I.C.C. also reaffirmed its faith in Karachi resolution passed by the Khilafat Committee. Although Lajpat Rai supported the civil-disobedience and Karachi resolution but he warned the Congressmen that the programme of civil-disobedience should be enforced slowly and in phases. Undoubtedly, the launching of the civil disobedience was a significant decision. It was aimed to accelerate the national struggle. The signal was given and the Government was challenged.

So far the Government had adopted the policy of non-interference coupled with keen watchfulness towards the non-cooperation movement. It hesitated to resort to strong arm tactics though it was on the alert. But the recent developments compelled the Government to abandon it. The Government was bewildered at the growing strength of the new movement. The Secretary of State felt concerned on account of popular demonstrations against the Prince of Wales. He informed the Viceroy that as head of the Indian Government it was his responsibility to prevent such an open defiance of authority and show of disrespect to the

89. Resolution No. 11, Indian National Congress 1920-23, (Place and date not mentioned) 72.
Prince. The successful boycott of the Prince had unnerved the Government of India and various Provincial Governments too. The Government of India, therefore, issued a policy letter to all Provincial Governments on November 24, 1921. It instructed them to pursue a vigorous policy in dealing with the non-cooperationists.

The reason given for the initiation of the new policy was that the recent developments "have satisfied the Government of India that a stage had been reached at which action on more drastic and comprehensive scale than hitherto been attempted is required." According to the Government the new policy had been forced due to the disturbances that occurred in different parts of India, the attempts to seduce policemen, formation of volunteer corps, the happenings in Bombay on November 17 at the time of Prince's visit and the preparations to start civil disobedience. So, in the first week of December 1921 the Viceroy girded his loins and launched an offensive against the non-cooperation movement.

The Punjab Government had already surpassed all other governments in suppressing the non-cooperation movement with a strong hand. For instance Sardul Singh Caveeshar and Kitchlew were arrested on May 27 and September 17 respectively. At Sialkot several Congressmen were lodged behind the bars. Six Akali leaders

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91. Telegram, December 9, 1921, Secretary of State to Viceroy, Reading Papers.
92. Home Department, G.O.I. (Political), No. 303, 1921.
93. Ibid.
94. Ibid.
95. According to official figures the arrested non-cooperators in India in 1921 were 2,176 in 1922, 15,015. The figures in Punjab of arrested persons from November to December 1920 were 200; in 1921, 273; between January to March 1922, 1,737; April to June 1922, 1,833; and July 1922, 137. Home Department, G.O.I. (Political), F.No. 28/III, 1922 (Confidential).
96. B. 1886; started Sikh Review 1913; President of the All India Sikh League 1919; Secretary of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee; d. 1963.
were arrested in the Province for violating the Seditious Meetings Act. Batchittar Singh and Maulavi Ala Ullah Shah were sentenced to three years rigorous imprisonment under Seditious Act. At Ferozepore, Lahore, Ambala and Jullundur the Government arrested some Lambardars and Zamindars for not collecting land revenue. The other Provincial Governments too adopted more or less similar policy.

Then there was suppression of press. Bande Mataram (Lahore), Lajpat Rai’s paper, was warned to stop printing the news of non-cooperation. Itifaq (Lahore), Akali (Lahore) and Zamindar (Lahore) had to furnish security to the amount of Rs.2,000 and 1,000 respectively on the charge of expressing sympathy with the non-cooperators. Later, the editor and the publisher of Zamindar were sentenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment. Zakhmi Punjab (Lahore) which published the incident of the Jallianwala Bagh was prohibited under the Dramatic Performance Act. The Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar destroyed 850 copies of Quissa Hakamama Gulza Begum (Lahore) on the charge of obscene publication. The Government report of 1921 admitted that “several Punjab newspapers, which definitely advocated non-cooperation, have been blacklisted at the instance of the Government of India”.

When the freedom of press was thus gagged in Punjab, Lajpat Rai sent

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98. B. 1876; joined Shahidi Jatha to Nankana Sahib; d. 1921.
100. Home Department, G.O.I. (Political) Deposit, No.1, September 1921.
an emissary to Kashmir with the intention of starting a newspaper there. But such permission was not granted by the Government.\footnote{103}

Lajpat Rai knew that his arrest too was imminent. He wrote a letter to Gandhi on December 3, 1921 saying that he would reply to him if he was not arrested. The Punjab Government had prohibited all public meetings or conferences under the Seditious Meetings Act. Lajpat Rai wrote thus: "He (Magistrate of Lahore) has also served us with a notice calling ward meetings of ward Congress Committee also public. This means an entire stoppage of work. His orders are illegal." The day Lajpat Rai wrote this letter to Gandhi he had organised a meeting of the Punjab Congress Committee at Lahore and he was determined to defy Government ban. Expressing his regard for Gandhi's movement and making his stand clear Lajpat Rai added: "Under the circumstances it is impossible for me to keep away from the meeting. It will be sheer cowardice. Please pardon me if my action does not meet with your movement.... Rest assured I will not bring disgrace on your movement. Pardon me if I have ever seemed to be critical and disrespectful. In all my actions only one motive has been uppermost in my thought, viz. that of loyalty to my country and my people. If I have erred, I have erred in good faith; even in my criticism of my Moderate friends I have no other motive...."\footnote{104} The meeting of the Punjab Congress Congress Committee opened at 2 P.M. on December 3, 1921.

\footnote{103} Home Department, G.O.I. (Political) Deposit, No. 55, June 1921.
\footnote{104} Letter, December 3, 1921, Lajpat Rai to Gandhi, L. No. 7686, Gandhi Papers.
The Tribune gives an account of Lajpat Rai's arrest:

"Lalaji, Santhanam and other members of the Committee were fully prepared. The meeting was a Committee meeting, attendance being confined only to members of whom less than 40 were present. Col. Gregson and armed police surrounded the house and standing at the door, read out the Magistrate's order declaring the meeting unlawful. Thereupon Lala Lajpat Rai asked those who wanted to leave and go away. None stirred from his seat. Even before the commencement of the meeting Lala Lajpat Rai had tried to dissuade certain people from attending the meeting in view of the fact that probably all would be arrested and no responsible men left to carry on the work. Those asked to desist included Lala Hans Raj and Syed Ala Ullah Shah (both of Jullundur) and Mr. Abur-Rashid. Lala Hans Raj and Syed Ala Ullah Shah requested to be allowed to attend for the sake of the honour of their town. Immediately after Major Ferrar, District Magistrate, and Colonel Gregson, the Senior Superintendent of Police, entered the room while the Committee was sitting. The District Magistrate said that he declared the meeting an unlawful assembly and ordered it to disperse. Lala Lajpat Rai, who was in the Chair, thereupon replied that he considered the meeting lawful and as president refused to disperse it. Major Ferrar addressing Pandit Ramchand Dutt asked who the speaker was. He was informed by Panditji that it was Lala Lajpat Rai who spoke. Lala Lajpat Rai himself said, "I am Lajpat Rai." Thereupon Major Ferrar said "I arrest you". Lalaji gladly surrendered himself."105

The action of the Punjab Provincial Committee received Gandhi's full approval. He was all admiration for Lalaji's wisdom, courage and sense of duty. Gandhi wrote: "Lajpat Rai could not have acted otherwise than he did. I was anxious for him, if it was naturally possible, not to seek arrest till after the Congress (which was to be held at Ahmedabad towards the end of December 1921). But in the circumstances that faced him, he could not avoid attending the meeting without hurting the cause... In every action of Lalaji I see nothing but thoughtfulness and calm courage."106 Lajpat Rai refused to appeal in the court because he had no confidence in court decision.107 Meanwhile Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru108 and

105. The Indian Annual Register, 1922 (Calcutta), p. 320 (ed.)
108. B. 1889; President of the I.N.C. 1929, 1936, 1937, 1946 and 1951-54, Prime Minister of India from 1947 till his death in 1964.
C.R. Das, President-elect of the Congress, were also arrested in December 1921. Later in March 1922 Rajagopalachariar and Gandhi were arrested.

Lajpat Rai's sudden and "illegal" arrest caused strong feeling in Punjab as also in the country. His friends in British Parliament raised the question of his arrest. It became difficult for Montagu, the Secretary of State, to give any satisfactory reply. On his instructions the Indian Government went through the legal aspect of Lajpat Rai's arrest. It was soon declared by the legal officer that Punjab Provincial Congress Committee meeting "was not a public meeting." Consequently, the Punjab Government was forced to release Lajpat Rai. Before his release, however, it was planned to re-arrest him. On January 30, 1922 he was released, but was re-arrested on the charge that as "President of the Provincial Congress Committee he had signed a manifesto published in the Lahore papers inviting persons to enroll themselves in the National Volunteer Association, which had been proclaimed an unlawful association." He was sentenced to two years' imprisonment and a fine of Rs.500/-.

Lajpat Rai's imprisonment gave a new impetus to non-cooperation movement in the province. Numerous protest meetings were held condemning his arrest. The official reports from the various parts of the province indicated that the resignations of the government

110. Ibid.
111. Ibid.
112. Ibid.
servants gained momentum. Thirteen officials and Lambardars resigned in the Punjab during the first half of January 1922.\footnote{113} Dr. Satya Pal,\footnote{114} S. E. Stokes, Gokul Chand Narang,\footnote{115} Lala Feroze Chand and many others were arrested. They were active associates of Lajpat Rai; they were in the forefront of non-cooperation movement.

As described earlier the British Government had unleashed reign of repression in order to crush the non-cooperation movement in the country. The Congress faced this challenge boldly and courageously. The leaders adopted the programme of organising individual and mass civil disobedience and passed at Allahabad session of the Congress in December 1921.\footnote{116} When the mediation efforts of Malaviya and others failed to bear fruit Gandhi, the undisputed leader of the movement, decided to launch mass civil disobedience in Bardoli taluka of Gujarat. The impending struggle created a great stir in the country and the public gaze was focussed on Bardoli. When all was set for a heroic struggle Gandhi decided to suspend the movement on hearing of the violence of the mob at Chauri Chaura in Gorakhpur district. The Congress Working Committee met at Bardoli on February 11, 1922 under the shadow of this national disaster, and on the initiative of Gandhi it decided to withdraw the non-cooperation movement.

The sudden withdrawal of non-cooperation movement was not approved of by many leaders like Lajpat Rai, Motilal Nehru, Asaf

\footnote{113} Ibid.
\footnote{114} B. 1885; Secretary of the Punjab Provincial Congress; Speaker of Punjab Legislative Council; d. 1954.
\footnote{115} B. 1878; President, Punjab Provincial Hindu Sabha (1923-30); Minister for Local Self-Government, Punjab; d. 1969.
\footnote{116} Home Department. G.O.I. (Political), No. 18, January 1922.
Ali, Subhash Chandra Bose and C.R. Das. The decision, in the words of Lajpat Rai, "burst upon a confiding, expectant and hopeful country like a bombshell. The shock was too sudden, catalyptic and unexpected. It bewildered and to a certain extent surprised and angered the people." The sudden retreat looked like a betrayal. None could understand why Gandhi chose to withdraw the entire movement for the mistake of a mob in an isolated village on the northern borders of U.P. The leaders in prison were highly indignant and they sent their angry protests from behind the bars. Lajpat Rai's anger, shock and bitter feeling against Gandhi at the unexpected withdrawal of the movement is evident from the following letter which he wrote from the jail:

"... Spiritually, socially and even politically the country certainly stands much higher than it did before March, 1919. Never before in the experience of living men did a leader so successfully and unfailingly appreciate the genius of his people and felt their pulse as Mahatma Gandhi has done in the course of the last three years... I have no hesitation in saying not only that he is the greatest Indian living but that he is one of the greatest of men of all ages, all times and all countries. Yet that is exactly the reason why we have to swallow bitter pill of a ignominious defeat today, because, say what we may, we have been defeated and that too very badly. Our defeat is in proportion to the greatness of our leader. Several times and in several matters, in the course of the last eighteen months, we surrendered our better judgements to his decision... A political leader is like a general, and no general can afford to be chicken-hearted. A general can denounce, degrade, even shoot such of his soldiers and subordinates as do not follow his directions and obey his orders, but he has no right to throw down arms and

117. B. 1888; member of the Congress Working Committee; member of the Central Legislative Assembly 1933-47; first Indian Ambassador to U.S.A. 1947-48; and Governor of Orissa; d. 1953.
118. B. 1897; President of the I.N.C. 1938 and 1939; escaped to Germany 1942; formed the Indian National Army 1943; d. 1945.
119. The Tribune (Lahore), November 18, 1923.
admit his defeat involving the capture of his army by the enemy, simply because a few out of millions have disregarded his wishes. Leaders of political campaign for freedom cannot afford to wear their hearts on their sleeves.... Bardoli resolutions are a proof of his bravery, not of his cowardice, but they have conclusively established that there can be no campaign of Civil Disobedience under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership....

It is a bold, vigorous and fearless analysis of the situation as it appeared to Lajpat Rai then. He roundly attacked Gandhi for his misjudgement and "cowardice."

Much has been said against the abrupt suspension of non-cooperation movement. The Communists attribute the suspension of the movement to Gandhi's leadership. They believe that when the movement began to show signs of becoming a really mass movement the 'bourgeois' leadership felt frightened and they decided to halt it. The secret service of the Government suggested that the movement was suspended because Bardoli was not yet ready for launching Civil Disobedience movement.

It is very difficult to agree with any of these explanations for the suspension of the non-cooperation movement. Dr. Prafull Chandra Ghosh has quite correctly analysed the situation at it then stood. According to him "the sudden outburst of violence at Chauri Chaura put him (Gandhi) off the gear. He considered himself unfit under the circumstances to control the spirit of indiscipline and the forces of violence prevalent in the Congress.

rank and was let to believe that if mass civil disobedience was started in Bardoli there might be anarchy. Believing as he did he had no other alternative but to suspend the Bardoli campaign.  

Lajpat Rai's letter to Gandhi from jail on the suspension of civil disobedience was largely due to his ignorance of political developments in the country. In the same letter Lajpat Rai had also written that it was for the Mahatma (Gandhi) to decide whether his letter should be shown to others or not. Gandhi read out his letter before the members of the Congress Working Committee. He observed that Lajpat Rai was in jail, so he was not in possession of all the facts. If he was probably he would have expressed a different opinion. On his release from jail in August 1923, Lajpat Rai's views changed when he examined the circumstances which had compelled Gandhi to suspend the civil disobedience movement. He admitted the wisdom of Gandhi's action thus: "According to my ideas of non-violence, he should not have abandoned the original Bardoli programme on account of Chauri Chaura, but having read his views on the question I am sure that was the only thing to do for him according to his principles."  

R.C. Roy Chaudhury wrongly assessed that "Lajpat Rai never recovered from the shock of this move which he thought had let then down badly. He lost much of his confidence in Gandhiji's leadership and never made a secret of it." The fact is that Lajpat Rai

125. Lajpat Rai to Members of the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress (undated) S.No. 7917, Gandhi Papers.  
127. The Tribune (Lahore), December 22, 1923.  
had great regard for Gandhi as a national leader. He writes in this connection: "I see no reason to despair or even to be very much disappointed... A great movement for civil disobedience to be successfully piloted through requires the leadership of a great magnetic personality like that of Mahatma Gandhi Ji.... If Mahatma Gandhi has done nothing else for us, he has at least been an example of combining independence of spirit and courage with sweetness, forbearance, charity and good-will for all." 129

On December 22, 1923 Lajpat Rai openly admitted, "I am in full agreement with him (Gandhi) on the point that having abandoned the original programme there was nothing else to do but to take up the Constructive Programme planned by him at Bardoli." 130 Thus after his release he changed his previous stand on Bardoli resolution. Lajpat Rai realised the wisdom of Gandhi's action.

As mentioned earlier Lajpat Rai was sentenced to two years' imprisonment in January 1922. His friends made many efforts for his release. But the Government was not in favour of Lajpat Rai's early release. Questions were also raised in the British Parliament. On April 14, 1922 Madan Mohan Malaviya was allowed to meet Lajpat Rai in the Lahore jail. According to the official reports his (Malaviya's) principal aim was to secure the release of Lajpat Rai, and so he was allowed to have two interviews with him. 131 But he was not permitted to have further meetings with

129. The Tribune (Lahore), August 29, 1923.
130. Ibid., December 22, 1923.

Lajpat Rai. Malaviya was bitter at the prohibition of the meeting which he attempted to hold again.\textsuperscript{132} Meanwhile, Lajpat Rai was feeling uneasy on account of his weak health. In a letter addressed to the Secretary of State on August 14, 1923, Wedgwood, expressed his concern at "the state of health of Lajpat Rai."\textsuperscript{133} He also asked the Government to hold an enquiry about his health. This was turned down by the Government on the ground that an enquiry "would involve a burden on the public fund."\textsuperscript{134} On the pressure of Parliament Members, the Secretary of State was impressing upon the Viceroy for his early release.\textsuperscript{135} The Government were thus more or less forced to release Lajpat Rai much against their desire.

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{133} Letter, August 14, 1923, Secretary of State to Viceroy, \textit{Reading Papers}.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.