Chapter - VI

SWARAJYA PARTY POLITICS IN BENGAAL
AND THE MUSLIMS (1923-24)

The abrupt suspension of the civil disobedience campaign set the nationalists to discussing new possibilities for political action. Some had never been too happy with the Gandhian programme. With all the leading nationalists in prison and the non-cooperation movement in ruins, the people were confused. The constructive programme that was prescribed by the Bardoli resolution also failed to evoke much response in the despairing situation. While the devoted followers of Gandhi in Bengal were arguing for the constructive programme, many members of the terrorist samities, who had worked under the Bengal Congress in furtherance of the non-cooperation movement, were now discussing the desirability of renewing revolutionary activity on old lines. As a matter of fact the succeeding months saw the recrudescence of such activities.

C.R. Das formulates Council entry programme:

C.R. Das, who had been imprisoned in the Alipore Central jail with many other Bengal nationalists, offered a third


2. See Bengal Administration Report 1922-23, pp. XVII-XVIII. Also see Intelligence Bureau (Home Department) publication, *Terrorism in India, 1917-1936*, pp. 14-20.
course of political action, that is, to enter the legislative councils and wrecking the Montagu-Chelmsford constitution from within. He first discussed his proposition with his fellow political prisoners and argued that the aim of the non-cooperation movement had been to destroy the system of Government which made possible outrages like Jallianwala Bagh. Despite all its achievements, it had failed to do this. British autocracy had been shaken but had not been broken. Worst of all it was still able to disguise its despotism behind the facade of the institutions created by the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. While his ideas gained support from many nationalist prisoners, there crystallized a strong group of opponents also who expressed scepticism about the efficacy of Das' proposition. These two groups proved to be the nuclei of the 'pro-changers' and 'no-changers' in the national movement during 1922-23. Das also took care to circulate his ideas among the people, and also sought cooperation from leaders outside Bengal. In April 1922, the annual Bengal provincial conference was held at Chittagong in which Basanti Devi, wife of C.R. Das, in her presidential speech, emphasised the need for a change in tactics by the Congress, and suggested, inter alia,


4. When J.M. Sen Gupta was released from imprisonment in early 1922 (he was also in the Alipore Jail), he was charged with the task of talking with Motilal Nehru, who seemed to have held identical views on the Council entry, and of organizing support for the new scheme of Das. cf. Broomfield, op. cit., p. 230.
that the Congressmen should set out to capture the legislative councils in order to practice the policy of non-cooperation from within the legislature.\(^5\) Taking it as a feeler sent out by Das, a storm of controversy at once broke out among the nationalists all over the country.\(^6\)

Meanwhile, at the all-India level things drifted; the Bardoli programme became a dead one for all practical purpose in the absence of Gandhi and other prominent leaders. The Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee, appointed by the Congress, worked and prepared its report in an atmosphere of controversy that was raised on the question of council entry. The members of the Committee were equally divided on the question and they recorded a strong divergence of views on the question of entering the councils.\(^7\) This division accentuated the controversy between the "pro-changers" and "no-changers" resulting in the former gaining strength in the succeeding year. Soon after the receipt of the Report of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee, C.R. Das issued a manifesto in

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5. *The Bengalee*, 16 April, 1922, Also see Subhash Ch. Bose, *op. cit.*, p. 79.


7. See *Report of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee*, pp. 166-68.

8. See Manifesto issued to the press by C.R. Das, appended to the report *op. cit.*, pp. 177-183.
which he strongly argued for council entry: "It should be the
duty of the Congress to boycott the councils more effectively
from within as also from without. The Reformed Councils are
really a mask which the bureaucracy has put on. I conceive
it to be our clear duty to tear this mask from off their face".
From outside the people had no doubt succeeded in diminishing
the prestige of these Councils "and the country knows that the
people who adorn the Council chambers are not the true repre-
sentatives of the people". Nonetheless, the Councils still
existed, and Congress must now enter them and wreck them from
within. "To end these Councils", he added, "is the only eff-
ective boycott". 9

Soon after his release from jail in August 1922 Das
had advocated a change in the details of the Congress programme
particularly on the boycott of councils, before the Bengal
Provincial Congress Committee. But majority in the B.P.C.C.
were disinclined to depart from the path chalked out by Gandhi.
It so happened that during the imprisonment of Das and his
followers the B.P.C.C., had been taken over by the orthodox
followers of Gandhi 10. Most of the nationalist newspapers in
Bengal were also not inclined to support the council entry pro-

p. 84.
gramme of C.R. Das for they were not convinced of the effectiveness of the policy, and to them it resembled too closely the Moderates' policy of cooperation on which they had been pouring their contempt throughout 1921. In the absence of organizational support, Das group had to have newspaper support to promote its cause and to bring public opinion in its favour. The Bengali newspaper, Banglar Katha, which had been forced to cease publication in mid-1922 was therefore revived later in the year, and in the following year arrangements were made to publish a new English-language daily, Forward.

The pro-change group in Bengal led by Das while continuing their endeavours to convert their minority position in the Bengal Congress into a majority, now concentrated their efforts to pursue their cause at the national level, for they knew that the question was not a provincial affair and that only a strong support at the national level could make the Congress to accept the new programme. They had already obtained valuable support from influential leaders like Motilal Nehru, Hakim Ajmal Khan and V.J. Patel. In the succeeding months their endeavours resulted in increasing their adherents so that by the end of the year they were ready to offer an open challenge to the no-changers in the Gaya sessions of the Congress. The opponents of the pro-council party or the 'no

changers" constituted the rank and file of the Congress members, who despite the heart-sickness of hope deferred, clung to their belief in the triumph of non-cooperation programme as enunciated by Gandhi. Among the pro-changers there was, it is true, an attempt to preserve the appearance of consistency with Gandhi's behests, by declaring that entrance to the Councils was to be mere preliminary to wrecking them. Nevertheless, that a split would ultimately occur in the Congress ranks on this very matter became apparent by the end of 1922 and all attention were directed to the Gaya Congress to witness the inevitable.

**Gaya Congress**

Both parties were confident, the pro-changers of ultimate, the non-changers of immediate, victory. Eventually, however, in the Congress the proposition of Motilal Nehru to allow the congressmen to "contest the elections on the issue of the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs and immediate Swaraj" was rejected by a large majority who expressed their determination to support the old programme in opposition to any attempts at modification. The unbending attitude of the majority delegates in the Congress was strengthened to some extent due to the fact that the simultaneous sessions of the Khilafat commi-

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tte at Gaya overwhelmingly declared against any change in the non-cooperation programme. Indeed many of the Khilafat committee members were also active participants at the Gaya Congress.

**Foundation of Khilafat Swarajya Party**

However, the differences which culminated at Gaya between the minority and the majority party were too grave to be glossed over. Matters were somewhat complicated by the fact that both C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru, who were the chief protagonists of Council entry, were high office-bearers in the Congress organization, the former was the President while the latter was one of the General Secretaries. But the plan they advocated had been rejected. Their followers were of course in no mood to submit to the wishes of their opponents. Thereupon, C.R. Das resigned from the Presidentship of the Congress and along with Motilal Nehru, Ajmal Khan and certain other prominent leaders announced on the 1st January 1923 that they had formed a new Congress-Khilafat Swarajya Party, accepting, however, the creed of the Congress but with the difference

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14. See Govt. of India, Home Poll (Dep) January 1923, No. 25; OSD, Home Dept., *India in 1922-23*, p. 290; Also see proceedings of the Gaya Khilafat Conference in A.M. Zaidi, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 562-76. The Khilafat Committee decision was a sequel to the report of the Khilafat Enquiry Committee on Civil Disobedience which had unequivocally declared against council entry. See extracts from the report of the Khilafat Enquiry Committee, appended to the *Report of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee*, pp. 171-75.
that the new party wanted to capture the councils and wreck them from within\textsuperscript{15}. The instant declaration forming the new party showed that the pro-changers had predicted the fate of their proposition at the Gaya Congress and had already made up their mind to have a separate organization to pursue their cause. The differences between the pro-council and the no-change party had passed beyond the stage of any rapprochement and united programme of political action, and a split was inevitable. Though official circles found comfort at this division among the non-cooperators, they were also apprehensive of the declared policy of the new party to wreck the constitution\textsuperscript{16}. Notwithstanding the split, the Swarajya Party had provided a new sense of political involvement when things looked moribund and its decision of council entry with the avowed object of non-cooperation within the councils was undoubtedly a step forward in view of the weakness of the mass movement. Meanwhile, the launching of the Khilafat-Swarajya Party, even though its promoters had declared that it was an integral part of the Congress and was never intended to be a rival organiza-

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\textsuperscript{15} See L.A.R. 1923, supplement, pp. 2-3; \textit{Ibid}, 1924, Vol. I, p. 56; Also see Tara Chand, \textit{op. cit.}, IV, p. 4. For full details of the manifesto issued by the Swarajya Party on 14 October, 1923, See \textit{Indian Quarterly Register} 1924, Vol. I, pp. 87-62
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tion, was the signal for a prolonged and bitter campaign between the two groups censuring each others stand and seeking support for each party. It is out of our purview to dwell upon at length the bitter controversy that ensued. While the Swarajya party was slowly but surely winning recruits from among its opponents, the little success of the no-changers in implementing the Gaya resolution on constructive programme was too evident. Eventually a compromise was arrived at through the good efforts of some prominent leaders and the

17. The majority party of the Congress at Gaya (termed as no-changers) had passed resolutions declaring to maintain boycott of Govt. and aided Educational institutions, of Law courts and of councils. Besides, they had also passed a resolution calling upon all local Congress committees "to complete the preparations for offering civil disobedience by strengthening and expanding the National organisation and to take immediate steps for the collection of at least Rs. 25 lakhs for the Tilak Swarajya Fund and the enrolment of at least 50,000 volunteers" (See Resolutions passed at the Gaya Congress, reproduced in OSD, Home Deptt, India in 1922-23, Appendix V, pp. 321-24; also see I.A.R., 1923, pp. 2-3). But the Congressmen spent much of their time and energy in mutual recrimination rather than concentrating upon the task in view. Consequently, the Gaya resolution became a dead-letter. Official reports looking at the effect of Gaya resolution in Bengal noted: "Except for a slight recrudescence of picketing in Bakerganj and Noakhali at the beginning of the year, and similar isolated attempts in other Eastern Bengal districts as a result of the resolutions passed at the Gaya Congress, the political situation in Bengal did not show any decided change. The no-changers appealed for volunteers but met with scant success, their failure being particularly noticeable in Calcutta". The collections for the Tilak Swarajya Fund were also found to be increasingly difficult and by the end of the April 1923, the report added, it became clear that "the Gaya programme had produced little activity and no enthusiasm" (cf. Bengal Administration Report, 1922-23, pp. XV-XVI).
Congress in a special session at Delhi in September 1923 passed a resolution authorizing the Swarajists to follow their programme while at the same time urging the congressmen to pursue the constructive programme of Gandhi. The Congress thus gave legitimacy to the Swarajya party and the decision contributed a great deal in removing the depression that prevailed in the national political scene.

**Swarajya party in Bengal**

The Swarajists in Bengal led by C.R. Das now found their policy vindicated and their main effort was now directed towards the ensuing election to the Bengal Legislative Council. Most of the major nationalist newspapers in Bengal had by now swung over to support the Swarajists; Das also launched his daily paper *Forward* in October to supplement the campaign of the Swarajya Party. The disadvantages which the Swarajists had been suffering in the Bengal Congress committee due to their minority were also turned in their favour by this time.

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18. For a detailed account of the events leading to the compromise and recognition of the Swarajist programme of Council entry, see I.A.R. 1923, Supplement, pp. 2-7; *Subhas Ch. Bose, op. cit.*, pp. 84-87; Abul Kalam Azad, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17.


as they were able to gain outright majority in the Committee. On the other hand, the Swaraj Party's propaganda appeared to be meeting with increasing success and public opinion seemed to be veering round to the policy formulated by C.R. Das and his colleagues. In the atmosphere of general political despondency that prevailed following the collapse of the civil disobedience movement, the articulate Bengalis were quite receptive to the new programme which would provide them a new sense of involvement in anti-British politics and remove the lethargy from the political arena. To them the Swarajya Party politics of non-cooperation within the legislature seemed to be a more positive move, perhaps the only feasible one for the time being when there was no immediate possibility of a mass movement.

**Bengali Nationalist Muslims and the Council entry:**

In this background, C.R. Das and his party in Bengal must have felt pleased with the progress they had made and optimistic for their success in the forthcoming elections. There were, however, other factors which could not be overlooked if the party's declared objective was to be pursued with definite backing of all sections of the people. While

appreciating the importance of cultivating the Bengali middle class Hindu votes, C.R. Das realised that no party could hope to command a majority in the Bengal Legislative Council unless it had Muslim backing. Almost all the prominent nationalist Muslims of Bengal were in jail\(^\text{22}\) while the controversy on the question of council entry was going on in the country and C.R. Das was engaged in promoting his council entry programme in Bengal. They were, of course, not unaware of the developments, for C.R. Das had first floated his programme in Alipore Jail where they had been imprisoned\(^\text{23}\). It seems certain that Das held discussions with them on the question but the nature of their response was not publicly known\(^\text{24}\). Due to their absence from the political scene outside articulation of nationalist Muslim opinion was lacking and people were confused. Following the split at the Gaya Congress, an official confidential report from Bengal noted: "Probable result of the Congress split is

\[\text{22. Abul Kalam Azad, Mujibur Rahman, Akram Khan, Wazed Ali Khan Panni, Pir Badshah Meah and Naji Abdur Rashid Khan were all undergoing imprisonment for one year along with other nationalists. They were released only at the beginning of January, 1923.}\]


\[\text{24. Abul Kalam Azad wrote in retrospect: } \text{"Mr. C.R. Das used to discuss the situation with me almost every day.... He believed in an alternative programme and said that in the existing situation, ... Congress must prepare to capture the legislatures in 1924 and use them to further our political ends.... I thought he was over-optimistic but I agreed with him that when he was released he should consult friends and prepare a new programme for the country". } \textit{Ibid.}\]
increasing divergence of opinion between Hindu Congressmen and Muhammadans of the Khilafat party. A tendency in this direction has already shown itself in the District Congress committee of Dinajpur and it is also reported that one of C.R. Das' meetings nearly resulted in a general fight owing to Muhammadan opposition. There is a possibility indeed that by way of reaction the Muhammadans of Eastern Bengal and perhaps also of Northern Bengal may turn to more violent forms of political activity.

At present the Muhammadans consider themselves bound by the decision of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema that entry into the Council is haram, and this view has been endorsed in public by Abul Kalam Azad who has recently been released from jail. It is understood, however, that privately the latter disagreed with this decision and will do the best to get it reversed with a view to effecting a reconciliation between the two wings of the non-cooperation movement. On the other hand, Maulana Akram Khan, another prominent Muslim leader in Bengal, is believed to be in favour of a more violent programme and in this he probably has the support of Badshah Meah who exercises considerable influence in Eastern Bengal. But the situation was not as dismal for C.R. Das in regard to Muslim support in Bengal as the above report suggested. Despite the fatwa (religious

25. Govt. of India, Home Poll (Dep), January 1923, No. 25. Fortnightly report from Bengal.
decree) of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema for boycotting the Councils, Abul Kalam Azad was instrumental in bringing about a compromise which facilitated the task of C.R. Das. Mujibur Rahman, after his release, though adhering to the "no-change" group and writing articles urging the people to follow non-cooperation programme of the Congress and the Khilafat Committee, scrupulously avoided criticising the Swarajists through his paper, *The Mussalman*. A strong opposition to the Council entry programme could come from the pro-nationalist Ulama of Bengal. The Anjuman-i-Ulama-i-Bangla in fact discussed the issue at its conference at Chandpur in February, 1923 but instead of directly opposing the council entry passed a resolution to the effect that the "question of council entry be referred to a sub-committee which is to report within three months". But there is no report of any other meeting or conference of the Anjuman having been held during the year to decide the issue. On the other hand, Akram Khan, one of the most prominent nationalist Muslims and the principal organizer of the Anjuman, became in mid-1923 the interim President of the Bengal Congress committee supported by C.R. Das, following the resignation of orthodox Gandhians. Later on as President


of the Bengal Provincial Conference at Serajganj, he strongly supported C.R. Das and his programme. Other nationalist Muslims also came out gradually in favour of the nationalists' entry into the Council. The editor of the Bengali Journal Cholton, Manirussaman Islamabadi, a prominent Congressman and one of the leaders of the Khilafat committee and the Anjuman-i-ulama, did not feel that Swaraj would be attained by getting elected to the Council or only through non-cooperation. He, however, felt that a combination of these two could clear the road to Swaraj. He wrote: "Everyone must agree... that if a number of patriotic independent minded people can get elected to the Council instead of incompetent useless yes-men and lackeys, then at least the country will not be harmed to the extent to which it was in the past." In another article on the eve of the elections, he criticised the no-changers of the Congress for misguiding the Muslims by reminding them of the Fatwa (religious decree) that was issued during non-cooperation movement declaring council membership 'haram' for Muslims. The article urged the Muslims not to fall prey to such preachings. It added: "At the recent special Delhi Congress Maulana Abul Kalam Azad has decreed that it is not only jayaj to become council members but on the contrary one's


special obligation.... Relying upon what little knowledge we possess of religion and of the Quran and Hadith we say without hesitation to the Muslims of Bengal and to Muslim voters that voting for worthy candidates who will fight the Government in the Assembly for the sake of the Country and for the good of its people is not only jayej but indeed also one's special duty". All these obviously helped in moulding the articulate Muslim opinion towards the council entry programme vis-a-vis the Swarajya party politics in Bengal.

State of communal relations:

Thus Das could well be confident of securing Muslim support in legislative politics with the cooperation of the Bengali nationalist Muslims along with whom he had been largely instrumental in strengthening the Hindu-Muslim political alliance in Bengal for the purpose of Khilafat-Non-cooperation movement. But some disquieting developments during 1922-23 in other parts of India, coupled with some local irritants, tended to weaken the basis of Hindu-Muslim alliance and provided stimulus to communal elements to reassert themselves. The post-war years were the years of the forging of unity and of large-scale united political action by the people of both the communities. With the abrupt end of the non-cooperation

32. Choltan, 9 Kartik, 1330 B.S. (26 October, 1923).
movement a contrary process set in. The communalists of various hues, mostly political reactionaries who had been forced to lie low because of overwhelming mass involvement in the non-cooperation movement, now emerged from their retirement and took recourse to familiar communal propaganda which had the effect of undermining national unity and national consciousness. To the satisfaction of the alien rulers, old feelings of rivalry, jealousy and fear, which had been relegated to the background as a result of united mass struggle against foreign rule, sprang up again. The old dissensions based upon absurd issues like cow sacrifice and music before mosque were raked up and new causes of complaints like Shuddhi or Tabligh and Sangathan or Tanzim were added resulting in very unfortunate consequences. There were riots in several places of northern India and the Punjab during 1922-23, resulting in loss of lives and properties. A detailed account of these incidents will not serve our purpose here. More serious than the actual occurrence was the legacy of bitterness which was left. Strenuous efforts were made by Congress leaders and nationalist Muslims to maintain mutual tolerance and unity among the members of both the communities; and emphatic warnings were given as to the danger which beset the national move-


ment from these lamentable divisions. But the structure so painfully erected by Gandhi and his nationalist colleagues seemed to be threatened and by 1923 the difficulty of maintaining the Hindu-Muslim entente was becoming apparent. Although the manifestations of ill-feeling in other provinces were happily absent from Bengal and although the Bengali nationalist Muslims through their organisations and organs continued to argue for nationalist alliance to promote Indian unity through which only, they believed, that the Muslim advancement could be secured, and while still they had maintained a comfortable support among the Muslims endeavours were not lacking on the part of the communalists of both the communities to play upon the unfortunate happenings outside the province, to give a new lease of life to the false notion of separate interests, to inject the ridiculous apprehension of 'extinction of Muslim community' by the Hindus and vice-versa. Some

35. For instance see A.K. Azad's speech at the special Congress session, Delhi, September 1923, in I.A.R. 1923, Vol. 2, pp. 193-95. Also Resolution passed by the A.I.M.I. session, Lucknow, 1 April 1923, on Hindu-Muslim unity, in S. Pirzada, op. cit., pp. 573-74. Also see H. Rahman, op. cit., p. 49.

36. See the Muzzalman, various issues, January-December, 1923.

37. See Bengal N.N.R., January-December, 1923; Govt. of Bengal, Political Deptt., No. 1/23; Ibid., June, 1923, No. 1c-23, Proc. B625-6; Govt. of India, Home Poll (Dept.), March 1923, No. 25.
communalist journals, provided sustenance to the communal dissensions. One of these journals, Islam-darshan, continuously worked to alienate the Muslims from the Hindu-Muslim united political platform. At the end of the non-cooperation movement, in one of its articles it tried to put all the blame for the failure of the movement upon the Hindus and condemned the Nationalist Muslims for misleading the Muslims. It stressed that 'the Muslims had suffered far more than Hindus; more Muslims than Hindus had given up Government jobs, and that 'the Moplahs had become virtually extinct due to the non-cooperation movement'. It added: 'Muslims suffered immense losses through the use of indigenous textiles as well. Hindu and Marwari shop-keepers made huge profits by selling indigenous cloth at high price. On the other hand, it was the Muslims who paid the penalty by buying coarse home-spun cloth at inflated prices'.

In a subsequent article the journal expressed doubt 'whether even the next fifty years will remedy the utter decline in its (Muslim community) sense of nationhood, its principles and its religion and also the terrible catastrophe that fell upon the Muslim community as a result of Non-cooperation'.

The motive of these writings was too obvious. The Hindu communalist journals were not slow in publishing irresponsible


39. Ibid, p. 84. In an earlier issue, the journal wrote: "Alas! ignorant Muslims have under the influence of foolish Swadeshi Maulanas now lost their religion and faith". In cooperation with Hindus at various meetings, conferences and Congress, they worshipped Mother cow, contd...../-
articles and making provocative comments regarding the Muslims' 'intentions' in India, atrocities by the Moplahs in Malabar, Kohat riots, cow slaughter and other minor incidents⁴⁰. All these tended to subject the Hindu-Muslim entente to a strain especially in the atmosphere created by the collapse of the mass movement. In the prevailing situation even some ardent nationalists and newspapers failed to adopt a positive approach and played into the hands of the communalists and enemies of national unity. They criticised the Congress and Gandhi for weakening Hindu society by allying with the Muslims during the non-cooperation movement. While Bipin Chandra Pal thought that the "Khilafat agitation has helped to make the Mohamedan community as a whole much stronger than the Hindu community" and said that the "Hindus must apply themselves seriously to organise their forces and resources just as the Mahomedans have done",⁴¹ to the Calcutta newspaper, Nayak, the "Congress has become an insignificant tail of the Khilafat conference" and the "Muhammadans are daily growing stronger and more united"⁴².

cont...

the statue of Tilak and the image of Mother India. In conclusion the journal exhorted the Muslims that "not one iota of advancement will be achieved by the Muslims through a hundred thousand movements until they completely abandon contact with idolatry and fully follow Islam". Ibid, pp. 79-80.

⁴⁰ For extracts see Bengal N.N.R., 1922-23, particularly the writings from the journals like Swatantra, Viswanitratra, Bharatmitra and even the Basumati.

⁴¹ Letter to the editor of the Englishman, quoted in Francis Robinson, op. cit., p. 338.

⁴² Nayak, 19 February, 1923. The Journal while advancing its thesis added: "within the next ten or twenty years contd,.../-
The narrow communal spirit that marked the discussion of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation Bill in the Bengal Legislative Council, relating to communal representation and electorate, and attempted statutory provision to stop cow-slaughter, followed by a heated discussion on communal lines by some intemperate and irresponsible newspapers also served to focus attention on the difficulties in the way of communal unity. The legislation to effect a reform of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation had been mooted for some years. The issue had originally roused difference of opinion on communal lines when the Calcutta Muslim elites pressed for separate representation in the corporation. However, in 1919, the issue was shelved and remained submerged by the nationalist struggle in the succeeding years. But when Surendranath Banerjea became the Minister of local self-government, he took the initiative in late 1921 and set to work to shape the proposed legislation conforming to his nationalist ideals. He was concerned to reduce to a minimum communal and other special representation in the

they are sure to oust the Hindus from their leading position in Bengal, if they are intelligently guided, whether secure communal representation or not. Our Babus can make very dexterous use of the catchphrases of international politics, such as 'mandate', 'franchise', 'proletariat' etc., but they do not understand their household matters.... The 2½ crores of Hindus of Bengal are scattered and feeble like flocks of sheep without a shepherded" (Ibid).

Corporation. His motion provided for reserved seats in general electorates for the Muslims and Europeans, discarding the reactionary concept of separate electorate. But they immediately provided the lever to the communalists belonging to all communities to exercise their talents in the Council. Muslim, Marwari, and European members — all demanded recognition of separate communal electorates.\textsuperscript{44}

The discussion of the bill outside the Council was marked by narrow sectarian spirit, the communalists on the Muslim side accusing the Hindus of plotting to destroy the political existence of their community, while the Hindu communalists alleging that the former intended to re-establish 'Muslim rule' with the help of outside powers.\textsuperscript{45} To this was added the campaign against cow slaughter. Throughout the period, the Marwaris carried the issue into the corporation and the press.\textsuperscript{46} In 1922 they offered to accept a legislative ban on music before mosques in return for a legal ban on cow sacrifice. The offer was rejected outright by the votaries of cow sacrifice on the ground that once any concession to Hindu or Marwari religious susceptibilities was made other religious

\begin{footnotes}
45. Bengal N.N.R., January-April, 1923.
46. Ibid, February 1922, August 1922, and February 1923. Also see Patrika, August-December, 1922, various issues; Bengal Administration Report 1922-23, p. XVII.
\end{footnotes}
practices might be attacked. The proposal was not favoured by Bengali nationalists either. But the Marwaris did not abate their efforts and Amulya Dhone Addy, a member of the Legislature, took the issue to the Council. His inclusion in the select committee which considered the Corporation bill was received with suspicion by the conservative Muslims. They became furious when the select committee reported against the acceptance of communal electorates and, at the same time, recommended the acceptance of Addy's proposal to give the corporation power to restrict the slaughter of cattle in the city. When the bill came again before the Council in early 1923, the conservative Muslims assembled all their forces against it; they had the support of the Europeans. Consequently, Banerjea agreed to accept a compromise which provided separate communal electorate for the Muslims for the first nine years; the proposal regarding a ban on cow slaughter in the city was also abandoned. Though Bengali nationalist Muslims were opposed to any legislative ban on the slaughter of cattle, they expressed their strong disapproval of the sep-

47. Govt. of India, Home Poll (Dep), August 1922, No. 112.
48. Ibid. Also Bengal N.N.R., August, 1922.
49. The Mussalman, 9 and 16 February, 1923; Govt. of India Home Poll (Dep), March, 1923, F.R. from Bengal.
rate communal electorate in the Corporation and criticised those Muslim Legislators who were bent upon it. But the nationalist Muslims were not members of the legislature and could not therefore influence its proceedings. While the conservative Muslims found comfort from the Act, their counterparts among the Hindus and Marwaris were not reconciled; and they condemned the Hindu members particularly Banerjea for conceding too much to the Muslims. The Corporation Act thus led to growth of communalism, and tempers that were raised during its deliberations poisoned the mainstream of public life.

The intransigence of the conservative Hindus and Marwaris and their efforts to organise the Hindus for preserving 'Hindu interests' led to the formation in Calcutta in mid-1923 of a number of communalist organisations, most prominent being the Hindu Sabha, supported by some new vernacular newspapers. Influence of Arya Samaj and its offshoots, Shuddhi


53. Bengal N.N.R., August, 1923, e.g. Sarathi.
and Sangathan was also in evidence. In September 1923 some up-country Hindus in Calcutta organised the Hindu Dharma Sudharak Samity to denounce cow killings and Muslim 'atrocities', after some up-country Muslims had gathered in the Nakhoda mosque the previous July to criticise the activities of the Arya Samaj and to support Tablígh and Tanjim. Later in the year, the visit of Swami Shradhanand to Calcutta to explain the Shuddhi movement led to counter propaganda amongst Calcutta Muslims, though the Swami was careful to explain that his movement was not intended to be anti-Muslim in any way. Conservative and communal elements among the Muslims were not inactive and with official encouragement and assistance began to assert themselves. Throughout the period of mass struggle they had been denouncing the anti-government united national movement, of course, with little response, but now in the situation of despair among the people and with the growing activities of some sectarian and backward looking organizations in other parts of the country, they found the opportunity to make a determined bid to extend their influence. In furtherance of their aim, while on the one hand they attacked the 'Hindu leaders' for their 'deceitfulness and hypocrisy' and 'strengthening the Hindu communities' at the cost of the Muslims during the non-cooperation movement, and urged the Mus-

54. Govt. of Bengal, Political Deptt., file No. 1/23, confidential Police report; Govt. of India, Home Poll (Dep), July 1923, No. 25; Patrika, various issues, September-October, 1923; Choltan (Bengali weekly) various issues, 1330 B.S.; Bengal Administration Report 1922-23, p. XVII.
lims to foresee the nature of Swaraj in the context of the Shuddhi and Sangathan movements, on the other hand, they condemned the role of the prominent nationalist Muslims who, it was alleged, had done 'immense harm to the Muslim community' by allying it with the Hindus in 'a foolish movement' and undermined the religious spirit of the Muslims by making them follow 'un-Islamic practices' such as shouting of Bande Matarm in conjunction with Allahu Akbar, displaying of the picture of mosque together with Hindu temple, and offering homage to the images of 'Hindu and Muslim national leaders'. That the sectarian and divisive movements in other parts of India and counter propaganda in Bengal had produced effects among the people and tended to undermine the credibility of Hindu-Muslim entente could not be overlooked. A prominent nationalist Muslim in editorial for his Bengali journal lamented: "The sacred sense of unity and fellowship that was gradually strengthening between Hindus and Muslims due to Mahatma Gandhi's determined effort is now facing ruin because of the Sangathan and Shuddhi movements. It does not even seem likely that any good will be achieved for the Hindu community by the

55. See Islam-darshan (monthly journal), various articles, 1327-29 B.S., e.g., 'Haram O Kofar' (Sarban 1327), 'Khelaafat O Non-cooperation' (Aswin, 1328), 'Islam O Bartaman andolan' (Falgun, 1328), 'Islam pauttalikata' in Ibid, 'Abhibhasan' (Bhadra 1331), 'Asahajoger abashan' (Agrahayan, 1331), 'Kaferi fatwa' (Jaistha, 1332), and many others. Also see Bengal N.N.R., 1922-23, Govt. of Bengal, Political Deptt, file No. 1/23, confidential police report; Govt. of India, Home Poll (Dep), July, 1923, No. 25. The Anjuman-i-Walizin-i-Hanifa-e-Bangla, which was founded to counter the non-cooperation movement, was also now trying to fan unrest among the Muslims. See Ibid, March, 1923, no. 25, Fortnightly report from Bengal.
Hindu Sabha. The only gains will be an intensification of anti-Muslim feeling and the ruin of the high and noble aims of Congress.\(^{56}\) The nationalist Muslims, nevertheless, continued their sincere and determined efforts to retain Muslim support towards their long cherished policy of united action for national advancement. With this end in view they continued to denounce the activities of sectarian organisations emphasizing the need for national unity to realize the national aims.\(^{57}\) The Mussalman urged "the Hindus and the Muslims to be


\(^{57}\) See the Mussalman, 16 February, 13 April, 22 June, 20 July, 1923 and other issues; Choltan (Bengali weekly), Baisakh, 1330 B.S., Jaistha, 1330 B.S.; Bhadra 1330 B.S. and Sraban, 1330 B.S. The Mussalman, while criticizing the role of Shuddhi, Sangathan and other divisive forces, urged the cessation of their activities in the interest of Indian unity. It declared: "Indian unity, real and lasting, must be based on mutual toleration and mutual love... but unfortunately there are men even in the fold of the Nationalists, Hindus and Muslims, who have a very narrow conception of Indian unity". Ibid, 16 February, 1923. The Bengali journal Choltan also denounced the activities of these organizations and appealed to the people and the Congress leaders who espouse peace, Hindu-Muslim unity and Swaraj to take steps to stop these organizations (Ibid, Jaistha 1330 B.S.). The journal also drew attention to the threat to the Hindu-Muslim harmony at some places outside Bengal and remarked: "What can be more regrettable than that Hindus and Muslims through forming factions... should destroy the unity and harmony upon which independence of India depends". Ibid, 28 Baisakh, 1330 B.S. It also expressed regret that some Calcutta newspapers such as Servant, Ananda Bazar Patrika, Amrita Bazar Patrika and Basumati were "constantly beating the drum of Hindu-Muslim unity and fellowship", yet never hesitating to support such things which at one stroke could "wipe out any plan of unity from the country for ever". Ibid, 14 Bhadra 1330 B.S.
tolerant of each other" in spite of "provocations from any quarter" and advised the Muslims "not to make any parade of their right of cow killing in the ensuing Bakr Eid". And Mujibur Rahman, as Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Khilafat Committee, in a signed circular addressed to the District committees, urged the organisation of Hindu-Muslim joint meetings on the coming Eid day and the passing of resolutions "showing the determination of the Hindus and Mussalmans of India to remain united for the common goal of achieving Swaraj". On the other hand, the Bengali journal Cholitan endeavoured to remove misgivings regarding Swaraj. It wrote: "...many short-sighted and politically-ignorant Muslims believe Swaraj will benefit Hindus and that Swaraj is a Hindu affair". It argued: "The holy places of the Muslims and Muslim domains will never be free from danger until India has achieved Swaraj... must all, first of all, think about achieving the freedom of India in order to attain the objectives of their nation and religion.... Swaraj will benefit Muslims more than Hindus. Swaraj for India will widen the path for the rise of Muslims throughout the whole world". But this stand did not make the situation smooth for nationalist Muslims. More particularly, they needed to offer a worthwhile alternative to the

58. The Mussalman, 22 June, 1923.
60. Cholitan, 18 Jaistha 1330 B.S. (1 June, 1923).
communalists' campaign for alienating the Muslims from the national mainstream.

Swarajya Party endeavours to maintain Hindu-Muslim entente:

It was in the background of this situation that C.R. Das embarked upon acquiring Muslim support for his council entry programme and Swarajya Party. Das was encouraged by the sympathy and support he had received at the national level from prominent Muslims such as Hakim Ajmal Khan, Mohammed Ali, Abul Kalam Azad and others. Das made clear his disapproval of the sectarian movements initiated by some sections among the Hindus. He insisted that political and social security in Bengal could be ensured only if the Bengali Hindu elites were willing to admit the Muslims as well as Hindu lower orders to a form of partnership. He was, however, aware that he could not expect electoral support from the conservatives and communalists, who had been always against a nationalist alliance in the anti-British struggle. His hope lay in the nationalist Muslims with whom he worked for years and who had brought large number of the Muslims in Bengal to the national political agitations in the wake of the Lucknow Pact (1916) and throughout the Home rule movement, Rowlatt Act agitations, and the Khilafat-Non-cooperation movement. But it was now apparent that the nationalist Muslims were finding it increasingly dif-

difficult to resist the communalists' propaganda of 'Hindu domination'. Das was not going to judge the extent of truth in this propaganda, but was determined to press for improvements in communal relations. The Lucknow pact was no longer considered relevant, and there was no other internal or external stimuli which could rouse popular passions. He had therefore to formulate some new approach to counteract the communalists, and, indeed, Das not only argued that such an approach was essential, he also placed his leadership and reputation on the line and went farther than any nationalist politician to secure Muslim support.

Das had begun his exertion in this regard when he came out of prison in August 1922. Immediately after the receipt of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee Report, in October, 1922, while arguing for his council entry programme he had also proposed that the Congress should make "a clearer declaration of the rights of the different communities in India under the Swaraj Government" and that it "should bring about a real agreement between all the communities by which the rights of every minority should be clearly recognised in order to remove all doubts which may arise and all apprehensions which probably exist", for he believed that "true unity of all sections of the Indian nation can only be based on a proper cooperation and the recognition by each section of the rights of the others".

In his presidential speech at the Gaya Congress he had urged the Congress to consider the issue, but the Congress, then under the shadow of a split between the pro-change and no-change groups, could not attend to the issue. It however appointed a small committee at its special session in Delhi in September, 1923 to examine the proposition of an agreement and prepare a draft. Das, however, was willing to negotiate terms of a compact at the provincial level in Bengal, pending formulation of any agreement at the national level. Consequently, as early as September 1923, discussions were begun with some prominent nationalist Muslims for working out the details of a 'Hindu-Muslim pact' in Bengal. The discussions

64. Presidential speech at the Gaya Congress, 26 December 1922, in Congress presidential Addresses 1911-1934, pp. 587-600.

65. The Congress decision to appoint a committee was preceded by a demand by Muslim League at its 15th annual session (held at Lucknow on 31 March-1 April 1923) to formulate a National Pact. The League prefaced its demand by stating that "complete unity should be maintained among the various communities and sects inhabiting India", that this unity and solidarity were essential "for the attainment of our goal", and that complete unity and understanding were not possible "without full faith and trust in the fairness and justice of the various communities in their relations with each other". The League had also appointed a committee to collaborate with similar committees to be appointed by the Indian National Congress, the Khilafat Committee, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, the Hindu Mahasabha, in order to prepare and bring about an Indian National Pact. See I.A.R., 1923, Vol. I, part 2, pp. 934-36.

66. See A. Karim, op. cit., pp. 1-2. Dr. Shila Sen, in an introductory reference in her contd....
continued secretly and the details were not settled until after the elections, but in the meantime articulate Bengali Muslim opinion began to flow strongly in the direction of council entry and more particularly in the direction which the Swarajists had laid down. The Bengali nationalist Muslims, disturbed by the effects of the anti-national propaganda by the reactionaries pinned their hopes of restoring the situation of communal amity and winning back the people to their politics by involving themselves in election campaigns, and in the Council. If they could recapture people's attention by their actions in the Council, then the community's

book *Muslim Politics in Bengal 1937-47*, p. 52, writes that C.R. Das negotiated and concluded the terms of the pact with the communalist leaders such as Sir Abdur Rahim. But it seems that she was misinformed by her sources. As a matter of fact, the negotiations were made between Das and some prominent nationalist Muslims and the terms of the pact were finalised by the Muslim and Hindu members of the Council belonging to the Swarajya party on 16 December 1923. Besides, subsequent attitude of the communalist politicians towards the Swarajists inside the council does not give any hint that they at any time overtly or covertly were associated with the negotiations or the pact. It was mainly the result of the endeavours of some nationalist Muslims and the Swarajist Hindu and Muslim members of the Bengal Council. cf. A. Karim, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2.

67. *Cholten* (Bengali Weekly), Jaistha, 1330 B.S. and Kartik, 1330 B.S.

68. cf. our text above. Also M.N. Islam, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-84 Passim. As an instance of the nature of such propaganda we may quote from the writings of a communalist journal, *Islam-darshan*, which wrote: "...each Muslim should bear in mind that for us Islam comes first, and our country second.... First and foremost we are Muslims.... We desire Khilafat and Swaraj, but..."
faith in them would surely be renewed. Besides, Das' efforts to remove the causes of friction and mistrust through some agreement would enable them to resist the disruptive forces and promote the cause of national unity and united political actions. 

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cont...

not at the expense of any portion of Islam, on the contrary, by fully preserving Islam". The journal therefore condemned the 'non-Islamic practices and beliefs' that had entered Muslim society as a result of the Khilafat Swaraj movements. Ibid, p. 79.

69. cf. A. Karim, op. cit., pp. 25-26; Akram Khan's Presidential speech at the Bengal Provincial Conference, Serajganj, in I.Q.R 1924, Vol. I, pp. 665-68. Also letter to the editor The Forward, 13 December, 1923, under the heading 'communal dissensions and the Swarajya party', by a nationalist Muslim from Kushtia, Aftab Hossain Joardar, a candidate in the elections to the Bengal Council. In his letter, while arguing the case of Swarajya party and eulogising the efforts of Das to maintain Hindu-Muslim unity, he wrote: "Now that the Swarajya Party... is about to storm the citadel of bureaucracy in their Council chamber, efforts will surely be made to sow the seeds of discord and disunion in the Swarajist camp and the time-worn tactics of 'Divide and rule' will undoubtedly be resorted to... taken the solidarity of the Party. Awakening of communal jealousies has always proved a fruitful source of mischief.... The complexity of the problem has taxed the ingenuity and baffled the best efforts of all the distinguished leaders of the country; yet a solution must be arrived at, if our united battle against the bureaucracy is to be continued with unabated vigour, and Swaraj attained within a reasonable distance of time". He then suggested to the Swarajya Party leaders to sort out the main irritants between the members of the two communities and formulate measures to remove those. He added: "It is highly necessary and desirable that every point of view should find adequate expression and receive due and proper consideration before the party finally decides upon its future course of action in the council". He concluded thus: "Swaraj is our goal we are to wrest our country's freedom from an alien bureaucracy which sapping the vitality of the Nation. All our national efforts and united struggles must be directed towards the attainment of that end". Ibid.
Elections to the Bengal Council:

Thus armed with articulate Bengali Hindu and Muslim support, and counting on strong mass support and sympathy which they had obtained by conducting the greatest anti-British agitation and suffering imprisonments en masse for national causes, C.R. Das and his party approached the elections to the Bengal Legislative Council in November 1923 with optimism. It had originally been contemplated that every seat would be contested "to capture the council". But when nominations were compiled, the party declared that it had 57 nominees, 34 in the non-Muslim constituencies and 23 in the Muslim constituencies. In many other constituencies where the Swarajya Party put forward no candidates, including the Muslim constituencies, several independent candidates, received the


71. Ibid, 3 November, 1923. The names of the Swarajya Party candidates were published in Ibid. The Swarajya Party nominees in the Muslim constituencies (out of 39 seats for the Muslims) were: Md. Yasin (Burdwan North), Aftab Hossain Joardar (Nadia), Moulvi Abbas Samad (Murshidabad), Md. Abdul Quadir (Jessore South), Ahmed Rafiuddin (Jessore North), Syed Sultan Ali (Khulna), Shamsuddin (Dacca West, rural), Abdul Siddiqi (Dacca East, rural), Allah Bux Sircar (Dacca city), Khondakar Abdul Aziz (Faridpur North), Syed Abdur Rauf Chowdhury (Faridpur South), Achimuddin Ahmed/Sayed Endadul Huq (Tippera), Haji Abdur Rashid Khan and Sayedul Huq (Noakhali), Baqir Mohammed (Rangpur West), Mohiuddin Khan (Rangpur East), Abdul Jabbar Palwan and Tayebuddin Ahmed (Mymensingh), Amanat Khan and Nurul Huq (Chittagong), Haji Lal Mohammed (Rajshahi South), Abdul Gafur (Pabna), Syed Manir Ahmed Chowdhury (Maldacum Jalpaiguri), Ibid.
active assistance of the party. For instances, Syed Mahboob Ali and H.S. Suhrawardy in the two Muhammadan seats of Calcutta north and south respectively, Syed Nasim Ali in the 24-Parganas rural constituency, and Major Hasan Suhrawardy in Hooghly cum Howra constituency, got active support of the Swarajya Party. The main consideration for giving this support was, it seems, the commitment of these candidates to the national ideal of Swaraj and to giving general support to the Swarajya Party inside the council on vital national issues.

Swarajist election campaign was well organised and effective, but except in Calcutta and the big towns, little use was made of the public platform to explain the party's programme. C.R. Das did visit some important towns and addressed public meetings. But the voters were scattered and, therefore,

74. Bengal Administration Report 1922-23, p. XX. Also cf. H.S. Suhrawardy's election manifesto in which he expressed his intention to back all national demands and declared further: "I am anxious that Swaraj should be attained as early as possible. I do not seek office nor am I prepared to accept any. I am prepared to resign the membership of the Council whenever the best interests of the country, demand it, and certainly whenever the majority of the elected members of the council resign". The Forward, 9 November, 1923.
75. The Forward, 2-15 November, 1923.
in addition to personal campaign by the candidates, reliance was mainly placed on the press. The Swarajya Party took care not to put forward more than one candidate in any constituency. The result was that the elections were marked throughout by solidarity on the part of the Swarajists. This was so also in the Muhammadan constituencies in many of which the Swarajist Muslim candidates faced influential Nawabs and Khan Bahadurs. These titled Nawabs and Khan Bahadurs were mostly landlords having vast economic power so as to influence the voters. Unlike the Swarajist Muslims, all of them went to contest the elections, banking on their own power and influence and the blessings of the local British officials. They were all loyalists and their privileged social and economic position closely bound them to the maintenance of existing rule in the country in so far as it maintained the social status quo. These upper class Muslim contestants had no affi-

76. *The Forward, Amrita Bazar Patrika* and other newspapers continuously published C.R. Das' appeal to the voters, Muhammadan and non-Muhammadan, for electing Swarajya Party candidates. One such signed appeal of Das contained, inter alia: "In India freedom is inconsistent with the maintenance of the bureaucracy in any shape or form. This system must be ended.... I appeal to all voters in Bengal, Muhammadan and non-Muhammadan, for the council or the Assembly to vote solid for all Swarajya candidates for the Assembly as well as for the Council, including those who have stood for the Universities of Calcutta and Dacca. Patriotism requires it. The honour of Bengal demands it. - C.R.Das". *The Forward*, 21 November, 1923.
iliation to any organization whatsoever, and they all fought each for himself. In the last election of 1920, they did not have to face opposition due to the boycott by nationalist candidates; but now in the face of strong opposition they could not depend solely on their own influence and it was reported that communal and religious appeals were in evidence in their campaigns. Besides these rich Muslims, a few other personalities were also in the run as independent candidates. Among them A.K. Fazlul Huq and Abul Kasem were prominent. While the former was contesting from Bakarganj, the latter stood for a seat from Burdwan. Little was known of their election programme or the nature of their campaign, for no report of their activities on the eve of the elections was published in the press.

77. Govt. of Bengal, Report, op. cit., p. 143.
78. cf. Bengal Administration Report 1922-23, p. XXIII. Communal and obscurantist appeal was in evidence in some Hindu constituencies also. For instance, in the central areas of Calcutta around Bara Bazar, even the Swarajist canvassers tried to exploit the sentiments of the conservative up-country Hindus and Marwaris by promising to protect cows and using slogans such as "Gow Mata Ki Jai", though it was not a party policy. In some mufussil constituencies also it is reported that the anti-Swarajist candidates took recourse to communal appeal promising to protect 'Hindu interests'. The Statesman, 10-30 November, 1923, various issues; Amrita Bazar Patrika, 1-10 November, 1923; Govt. of India, Home Poll (Dep), December, 1923, No. 25, F.R. from Bengal; Bengal Administration Report 1922-23, p. XXIII.
79. The Forward, 9 November, 1923.
The elections began in mid-November and the pro-Swarajist press maintained continuous excitement among the people by publishing the Swarajist success in one constituency or the other. All the results were declared by 30 November, and surveying the results the Statesman wrote next day: "Bengal had declared itself Swarajist. In every kind of Bengali constituency the Swarajists have triumphed. "Even the Mohammedan electorate", the paper continued, "which was considered to be a safe asset for Government has been rent asunder."

Indeed, the success of the Swarajya Party throughout the province was impressive. The moderate party had been reduced to a non-entity and nearly all its leading figures who dominated the last council, had been kept out of the council. While in the non-Muslim constituencies, the Swarajist candidates

80. The Statesman, 1 December, 1923. For details of the election results see Amrita Bazar Patrika, 30 November and 1 December, 1923; the Forward 27 November - 8 December, 1923; the Mussalman, 30 November and 7 December, 1923.

81. For instances, in 24-Parganas Municipal North constituency, Surendranath Banerjea suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of a young Swarajist candidate, Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy; Sir Nilratan Sarkar was defeated in the Calcutta University constituency by Dr. Promothanath Banerjee, while S.R. Das, erstwhile Advocate General, had been defeated in Calcutta by S. Roy. These were some of the crowning triumphs of the Swarajya Party over the moderates in Bengal. cf. The Forward, 28-30 November and 1 December, 1923; I.A.R. 1923, Vol. 2, p. 29.
captured majority of the seats, in the Muslim constituencies they secured half of them 82. Of the Muslim candidates who contested as Swarajya Party nominees in the Muslim Constitu-

82. The distribution of seats under the 1919 Act was as follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Elected Seats</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Muhammadan urban</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Muhammadan rural</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhammadan urban</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhammadan rural</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europeans</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-Indians</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Land-holders</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European trade and commerce</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian trade and commerce</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcutta University</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dacca University</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nominated and Ex-officio members</th>
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<td></td>
<td>26</td>
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Total: 114

Grand Total: 140


Of the total 85 non-Muhammadan and Muhammadan seats noted above, the Swarajya Party candidates captured 45 seats, 25 Hindus and 20 Muslims. The Calcutta University seat also went in its favour. The Party was also assured of the committed support of about 20 independents, both Hindus and Muslims, who had received active support from the Swarajists during elections. See the Forward, 27 November - 8 December, 1923; I.A.R. 1923, Vol. 2, pp. 29-30; Bengal Administration Report 1922-23, pp. xx-xxii; Ibid, 1923-24, p. i. Also see Govt. of Bengal, Report on the Working of the Reformed Constitution in Bengal 1921-27, pp. 143-56.
encies, 20 were elected. An average of 49.6% of the Muslim voters exercised their franchise in the urban constituencies, while in the Muhammadan rural constituencies the average percentage was 32.4, which gave indications both of better organisation for bringing voters to the polls and of greater interest taken in politics. In a number of constituencies the Swarajist Muslim candidates inflicted a crushing defeat upon the politically loyalist and conservative Khan Bahadurs and Landlords. In 3 of the 6 Muhammadan urban constituencies (Dacca, Chittagong and 24-Parganas Municipal) the Swarajya Party put forward its candidates and all the three were ret-

83. The Forward, 8 December, 1923. The names of twenty Swarajist Muslims who were elected was published in Ibid, one independent Muslim member joined the party later.

84. Govt. of Bengal, Report, op. cit., p. 147.

85. The Forward, 27 and 29 November, 1 December and 4 December, 1923. For examples, Nawabzada Khan Bahadur K.M. Afzal in Dacca, Khan Saheb Abdul Aziz in Noakhali, Khan Bahadur Abdus Salam in Jessore, Khan Bahadur Wasimuddin in Pabna, Khan Bahadur Amaduddin in Rajshahi - all were defeated in the hands of the Swarajist Muslim candidates. (Ibid). Some other loyalist Khan Bahadurs and landlords, were, of course, elected, but the number of votes they received in comparison to the total votes polled shows the anti-loyalist and anti-landlord tendency among the voters. For instances, in the Dacca west rural Muhammadan constituency, Nawab Khan Bahadur Nawab Ali Chowdhury was elected getting 1103 votes while his four opponents polled 1130 votes. Similarly in Jalpaiguri cum Malda Muhammadan constituency Khan Bahadur Musharraf Hossain was elected polling 2296 votes as against 3151 polled by his four opponents. Ibid., 28 November, 1923.
urned, while in three others (Calcutta North, South and Hooghly cum Howrah Municipal), where the party had no candidates, three independents who were sympathetic to Swarajist cause, Syed Mahboob Ali, H.S. Suhrawardy and Major Hasan Suhrawardy, were elected. The Muslim polling in Calcutta city, where the first two were elected, reflected the rejection of the loyalist and conservative elements. Other important features of the elections were that though Fazlul Huq was elected from Bakarganj, Abul Kasem a long time Congress man but now belonging to the moderate camp, suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of a Swarajist Muslim in Burdwan.

Notwithstanding the impressive victories of the Swarajists, the party could hardly claim a majority in the Council. But it was evident that they were the only party with a solid nucleus of votes behind them and they could also place reliance upon a group of independents numbering about twenty. Subsequent developments helped the Swarajists not only to consolidate their ranks but to gain fresh adherents. Thus,

86. Ibid, 27-29 November, 1923.

87. The Statesman, 19 January, 1924; Govt. of India, Home Poll (Dep.), September 1924, No. 25, F.R. from Bengal. In the two Calcutta city constituencies about 47% voters registered their votes and the two successful candidates Mahboob Ali and H.S. Suhrawardy, secured 70% and 57% respectively of the total votes polled. The Forward, 27 November, 1923.

88. Ibid, 7 December, 1923.
although the Swarajists and independents did not possess a clear majority over all possible combinations, it was well understood in the official circles that they formed a remarkably solid block of opposition which, in the even of non-attendance or secession of a few members of any of the remaining groups, was likely to defeat the Government.

Swarajists decide their strategy:

Once the election process was over, the Swarajya Party leaders immediately concerned themselves with deciding the course of action to be followed in the Council in pursuance of their policy of "uniform, consistent and continuous obstruction". Consequently, at a meeting of the newly elected Swarajist members of the Council on 16 December 1923, their would-be policy in the council was decided upon: (i) to insist on the release of all political prisoners; (ii) to insist on the withdrawal of all repressive laws; (iii) Formulation of national demands for the province, which should be of complete provincial autonomy and effective provincial responsible Government; (iv) vote of non-confidence in ministers, if necessary; (v) reduction or refusal of salary of Ministers; (vi)

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89. Govt. of India, Home Poll (Dep), December, 1923, No. 25; Govt. of Bengal, Report on the Working of Reformed Constitution in Bengal, pp. 155-56. Also see Bengal Administration Report, 1923-24, p. 1.
all measures proposed by the Government to be rejected or post-
tponed till the grant of the national demands; (vii) if the
budget comes up before such grant it should be thrown out,
unless in the meantime there is a change of situation which
indicates an honest inclination on the part of Government to
concede the demands, in which case the party will meet to
reconsider the situation; (viii) no Swarajist should accept
office until the national demand is granted.90

The Bengal Pact:

While the Swarajists were preparing themselves for the
ensuing fight, their politics were a matter of great concern
to the authorities.91 The Swarajist leadership particularly
C.R. Das, was quite conscious of this and of the strategy
that might be adopted by the authorities. He was also con-
cerned about the communal and separatist propaganda, and also
of the covert or overt attempts that might be made by the
interested parties to create division among the Swarajist

90. The Forward, 18 December, 1923; the Mussalman, 21 Dec-
ember, 1923; I.A.R. 1924, Vol. I, p. 64. Also Bengal
Administration Report, 1923-24, pp. i-ii.

91. cf. Speech of Lord Lytton, the Governor of Bengal, on
the occasion of St. Andrews day dinner at Calcutta, in
the course of which he expressed his concern at the new
political developments created by the Swarajist success
in the elections and its avowed policy. For full
details of the speech see The Forward, 1 December,
1923.
members, mainly on communal lines. He had to formulate measures to controvert these and also to sustain the support for the national cause shown by the Muslims during the nationalist agitations and the council elections. The nationalist Muslims were equally concerned about the situation. A newly elected Swarajist Muslim M.L.C. wrote: "Now that the Swarajya Party, to the utter dismay and disappointment of our Moderate and Anglo-Indian friends, is about to storm the citadel of bureaucracy in their council chamber, efforts will surely be made to sow the seeds of discord and disunion in the Swarajist camp and the time-worn tactics of 'Divide and Rule' will undoubtedly be resorted to weaken the solidarity of the party....

Be it said to the credit of the Swarajya Party and its leaders that they have never sacrificed the national to the communal interests and have always kept clear of the shoals of communal bitterness which unfortunately is the predominating feature of the Indian public life to-day. They have never allowed the all-important question of fighting the bureaucracy to be eclipsed and over-shadowed by other minor issues. Shuddhis and Sangathans have never appealed to them as against Swaraj and independence. This alone explains the enthusiasm with which the Swarajya candidates were received by the Muslim community everywhere in the province. I sincerely hope and trust that the party policy and the party programme will be marked by that breadth of view and catholicity of spirit which has won for
the party the support of the Muslim community to a very considerable extent". After suggesting lasting solution should be found to end the friction regarding representation, employment and other issues, which might be used by the "enemies of independence" to weaken the Swarajya Party, the new M.L.C. concluded: "The most hopeful feature of the situation, however, is that Deshbandhu Das enjoys the fullest confidence of the Muslim community. He can be safely relied on to keep the spirit of camaraderie intact between his personal and party followers in the council and steer the Swarajists back through the scylla of official seduction and charybdis of communal friction alike" 92.

The identical concern of C.R. Das and the nationalist Muslims to maintain national political unity of the Hindus and Muslims and to oppose the attempts of the bureaucracy and the communalists made them at the first instance to expeditiously conclude the negotiations that had begun in September 1923 to bring about a 'Hindu-Muslim compact' in Bengal. Immediately after the election, in discussions between a number of prominent nationalist Muslims and C.R. Das and his other associates, the terms of a draft 'Hindu-Muslim Pact'

92. Letter to the Editor, the Forward (13 December 1923), from Aftab Hossain Joardar, M.L.C. from Kushtia.
were settled, and after intensive deliberations these were accepted at a meeting of the Swarajya Council Party on 16 December 93.

Before discussing the terms it would be useful to examine how it came about, for, C.R. Das was accused of offering 'this bait to lure' the Muslims 94. Das strongly refuted this accusation stating that "the swaraj members, Hindus and Muslims, were elected before one word was said about this pact. They were all elected as Swaraj members" 95. He corroborated the statement of Abdul Karim regarding the genesis of the pact 96. The latter had written: "It will be seen from the facts that the idea of a pact did not originate in a time-serving spirit but in a far-seeing endeavour to guard against a situation that seemed only too likely to arise before long and prove disastrous to the interests of the country and of both the communities. It will be further seen that it was not Mr. C.R. Das who first moved in the matter with a view, as supposed, to court the support of the Musalman members of the

93. The Forward, 18 December, 1923; the Mussalman, 21 December, 1923; I.A.R. 1924, vol. 1, pp. 63-64. Also see A. Karim, Letters on Hindu-Muslim Pact, pp. 1-4 and Appendix-A.


96. Ibid.
Bengal Legislative Council. On the contrary, the proposal in its inception came from the other party concerned, and was developed into its final form after careful deliberation on both sides. "Realising the necessity of a pact like the one proposed", continued A. Karim, "in the latter part of September last I sent word to Mr. C.R. Das through Maulvi Tamizuddin to arrange for a free and frank discussion of this important question.... During my stay at Dacca and Chittagong, I was all the more convinced of the urgency of a clear understanding... to ensure success in the ensuing fight with the bureaucracy for the early attainment of responsible self-government.... I had an interview with Mr. C.R. Das at which Mr. Nasim Ali and Sreejut Bijoy Kristo Bose were present. I was glad to find that Mr. Das was inclined, unlike many of his short-sighted co-religionists, to take a long view of the situation.... Accordingly the 9th of December was fixed for a through discussion of this outstanding national problem. On that day I called at Mr. Das' place with a draft of the proposed pact drawn up in consultation with some leading Musalmans. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Messrs Nasim Ali, Wahed Hossain and others took part in the discussion.... As a result, certain definite terms were agreed upon, and Mr. Das undertook to put up the proposals for a pact before the conference of the Swarajist members of the Bengal Council that was to have been held on December 16. At the conference... after a thorough discussion
the terms of the draft pact were accepted with certain modifications... and it was signed by most of the Hindu and Mussalman Swarajist members of the Bengal Council. This is how the pact came into being. 97

The terms of the agreed pact which was subsequently called the Bengal Pact were published on 18 December over the signature of Subhas Chandra Bose as Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Congress. The pact, after stating, in its preamble, that "in order to establish a real foundation of self-government in this province it is necessary to bring about a pact between the Hindus and Mahomedans of Bengal dealing with the rights of each community when the foundation of self-government is secured", enunciated that: (a) Representation in the Bengal Legislative Council be on the population basis with separate electorates subject to such adjustment as may be necessary by the all India Hindu-Muslim pact and by the Khilafat and the Congress; (b) Representation to local bodies to be in the proportion of 60 to 40 in every district-60 per cent seats to the community which is in the majority in the district and 40 per cent to the minority (This provision was to be further considered). (c) 55 per cent of the Government posts should go to the Mahomedans to be worked out in the following manner: Fixing of tests of different classes of appointments. The Mahomedans satisfying the least test should be preferred till the above percentage is attained; and

after that according to the proportion of 55 to 45, the former to the Mahomedans and the latter to the non-Mohamedans, subject to this that for the intervening years a small percentage of posts, say 20 per cent should go to the Hindus (d) No resolution or enactment be allowed which affects the religion of any of the different communities without the consent of 75 per cent of the elected members of that community; Music in procession before any mosque should not be allowed; cow-killing for religious purpose should not be interfered with; no legislation or enactment in respect of cow-killing for food will be taken up in the council. Endeavour should be made by members of both the communities outside the council to bring about an understanding between the communities. Cow-killing should be carried on in such a manner as not to wound the religious feelings of the Hindus. The pact also provided for the formation every year of representative committees in every sub-division, of which half the members should be Mahomedans and half Hindus, each committee choosing its president from among themselves with power to prevent or arbitrate upon any dispute between the Hindus and Mahomedans in accordance with provision stated earlier. 98

98. The Forward, 18 December, 1923; the Mussalman, 21 December 1923; I.A.R. 1924, vol. 1, pp. 63-64. Also see A. Karim, *op. cit.* Appendix-A.
Muslim reaction towards the Pact:

The pact was seen in the Swarajist circles as an agreement on the basis of which 'the rights of each community' were to be safeguarded upon the attainment of Swaraj. The terms were in fact almost entirely Muslim in sympathy. The pact was certainly generous in its concessions: Muslim upper and middle class aspirations regarding representations and jobs were to be satisfied, whilst some of the supposed grievances of the up-country lower class Muslims vis-a-vis the susceptibilities of the up-country Hindus, particularly in Calcutta, in regard to the cow slaughter and music before mosques, were to be redressed. The articulate Muslim reaction was immediate and favourable. The Bengali nationalist Muslims were full of praise for C.R. Das. While inveighing against the communal and reactionary agglomerations to wean away the Muslims from nationalist alliance, they strongly urged the Muslims not to fall prey to this propaganda, for, they said, the new pact would remove

99. Letters to the Editors, The Mussalman, 21 and 28 December, 1923; the Forward, 22 December 1923 and other issues. Also see Muzaffar Ahmed, Nazrul Islam Smritikatha (in Bengali), p. 195. Poet Nazrul Islam, it is said, considered the pact as impractical and wrote a satiric poem on the reaction of Muslims and Hindus following the pact. Ibid.
causes of mistrust and dissension among Hindus and Muslims. They asked Muslims to work shoulder to shoulder with their fellow countrymen within and outside the Council to establish Swaraj. Mohammed Ali and Abul Kalam Azad also joined the Bengali nationalist Muslims in urging the Muslims to maintain and strengthen Hindu-Muslim unity for the sake of Swaraj which was the sine qua non for securing the rights of all sections of the people. Besides the Bengali nationalist Muslims,


101. The Mussalman, 4 January, 1924; Govt. of India, Home Poll (Dep), January, 1924, No. 25. Abul Kalam Azad, in supporting the Bengal pact and recognising the sincere efforts of C.R. Das, recorded in retrospect: "In Bengal Muslims were the majority community, but for various reasons they were educationally and politically backward. Even though they numbered over 50 per cent of the population, they held hardly 30 per cent of the posts under the Government. Mr. C.R. Das was a great realist and immediately saw that the problem was an economic one. He realized that till the Muslims were given the necessary assurances for their economic future, they could not be expected to join the Congress whole heartedly. He therefore made a declaration which impressed not only Bengal but the whole of India.... He pointed out that so long as the Muslims were not properly represented in public life and in the services, there could be no true democracy in Bengal. Once the inequalities had been rectified, Muslims would be able to compete on equal terms with other communities and there would be no need for any special reservation". A.K. Azad, India Wins Freedom, p. 18.
some moderate sections among the Muslims such as Abdullah Suhrawardy, Mahboob Ali and Rezaur Rahman, who had opposed recent popular agitational politics and non-cooperation but were no loyalists and had sympathised with nationalist goals and were hopeful of a return to constitutional politics and a communal compromise, also rushed to record their approval of the pact. Popular Muslim opinion was also favourably impressed by the pact. The Muselman published reports of public meetings in support of the pact in different places organized by the Khilafat Committees. This was also revealed during the elections to the Calcutta corporation in March and to some other local bodies in the mufussil in the succeeding months, which we shall discuss later.

Opposition to the Pact:

While the wider support of a large number of Muslims to the pact was according to the expectation of its promoters, it immediately brought about a howl of protests from large sections of Hindus, Marwaris and the press. The Viswamitra forecasted the establishment of 'Muslim domination' and warned

102. The Statesman, 19 January, 1924; the Musselman, 28 December, 1923 and 4 January, 1924; Govt. of India, Home Poll (Dep), January, 1924, No. 25, F.R. from Bengal.

103. The Musselman, 28 December 1923, 4 and 11 January, 1924.
of its consequences, whilst the Amrita Bazar Patrika stated the viewpoint of a section of the middle class Hindus in declaring "that the educated middle class recognise in this pact a wanton disregard not only of the Hindu but of true national interests". Frequent public meetings were organised to denounce the pact, and even some prominent nationalists expressed their strong disapproval of it. Surendranath Banerjea challenged the right of the Swarajists to conclude such a pact and thundered out that it had set the Hindu community of Bengal "ablaze with indignation". K.K. Mitter, editor of the Sanjibani, addressing one of the protest meetings at Calcutta, demanded the scrapping of the pact which was "inequitable" and in which "Hindu interests were not looked into". He however, assured the Muslims that 'when the Mahomedans of Bengal become


105. Amrita Bazar Patrika, 23 December, 1923. At a subsequent protest meeting held in the Indian Association Hall on 29 December, 1923, presided over by himself, Surendranath Banerjea sponsored a resolution which declared: "The Indian Association condemns the pact between the Bengal Swarajist party and some Mahomedan members of the Bengal Legislative Council. In the opinion of the Association the pact is detrimental to the national interests, unjust to the Hindus and Wurtiful to their religious feelings and will seriously handicap the progressive growth of self-government in the country" Ibid, 30 December, 1923; Also see the Mussalman, 4 January, 1924. The terms of the agreement also angered many up-country Hindus and Marwari who organized a number of protest meetings in Calcutta condemning "the obstinate attitude of the Bengal Swaraj Party attempting to confirm the Hindu-Muslim pact, which has been vehemently opposed by the Hindu Public of India". Amrita Bazar Patrika, 6 January, 1924.

contd..../-
real patriots, when they come to recognise Bengal as their motherland in the same way as the Hindus do then will the Hindus, with their proverbial generosity, concede the Mohammedans more than their just demands. Apart from weakening the general support of Hindus to the Swarajya Party, such statements provided a lever to the conservative and communal elements among the Muslims to depurate the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity and to dilate upon the "Hindu unwillingness to accept Muslim advancement".

Coconada Congress and the Bengal Pact:

Das knew that there would be opposition to the pact by some, but he was perhaps taken unawares by the vehemence with which the pact was condemned. To assuage opposition, he emphasised that the provisions of the pact would not come into effect until the attainment of Swaraj and full responsible Government. In his newspaper, the Forward, he also argued that the Muslims would gain "nothing more than they were entitled to get in fairness and justice". But the anger of the

For reports of other protest meetings and organization of committees to protect cows from Musalman knives and the right of playing music in religious processions, see Ibid, various issues, January-February, 1924.

106. Amrita Bazar Patrika, 7 January, 1924; the Mussalman, 11 January, 1924.

107. Islam-darsan, Agrahayan, 1331 B.S.

opponents was not lessened. The pact also became a subject of great controversy at the Coochandna session of the Congress in the end of December 1923. Das desired the Congress to put its seal of approval on the move of the Bengal Congress and Swarajya Party in bringing about the 'Hindu-Muslim pact', for this would give credibility to the agreement and strengthen his party's political position in Bengal vis-a-vis the political reactionaries and the Government. With the support of some prominent leaders from other provinces, such as Motilal Nehru, Dr. Ansari and Mohammed Ali, Das strongly argued his position and emphasised that it was only a suggested pact. He asserted that

109. Govt. of India, Home Poll (Dep), December, 1925, No. 25, F.R. from Bengal; Bengal N.N.R., December, 1923 and January-March, 1924.

110. At Coochandna, C.R. Das tried to remove, the apprehension of the Congressmen regarding the pact and argued that it was not a final but a "suggested pact". He stated: I find that there is a great deal of misapprehension about the pact. People seem to think that it is a concluded agreement and that the Swarajya Party and the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee are trying to force a concluded agreement upon the people of Bengal. A moment's reflection would show that it is not, nor can it be, the fact. What the Swaraj Party has done is simply to put before the public a suggested pact. It does not become a pact of Hindus and Musalmans of Bengal before it is accepted by them..." He added: "Those who put forward this pact believe that it is just and reasonable. All that they want is that the people should consider the terms and either accept them or suggest other terms in their place. It would be the duty then of the whole of Bengal to accept or neglect the pact.... I repeat that this pact is suggested only for the province of Bengal and is not intended to be applicable to the whole of India; and the B.P.C.C. has submitted it for the consideration of the Indian National Congress". See the Mussalman, 4 January, 1924.
the National Congress could not deny Bengal of her "right of suggestion on such a vital question". "You may delete the Bengal pact from the resolution", he argued, "but you cannot delete Bengal from the Indian National Congress. Bengal demands her rights of having her suggestion considered by the National Assembly... Bengal will not be deleted in this uncemomious fashion... you cannot refuse Bengal the right to make a suggestion". But in spite of Das' entreaties and support of some prominent Congressmen from other provinces, the Congress refused to accept the motion of Motilal Nehru to consider the Bengal Pact along with the proposed Indian-
National Pact,\textsuperscript{113} in the face of strong opposition from many other Congressmen particularly belonging to the non-changer group\textsuperscript{114}.

While the failure of the Bengal Swarajists to secure the National Congress' support for the Bengal pact pleased its opponents in Bengal and provided a further cause to the Muslim loyalists and communalists to denounce the Congress,\textsuperscript{115} some nationalists in Bengal felt that the Congress was not giving Bengali spokesmen a proper hearing;\textsuperscript{116} some others complained that the Coconada Congress had dealt a blow to the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. For example, the editor of the Mussalman, Mujibur Rahman, a Congressman, wrote that the Congress was "guilty of doing a thing most inexpedient, if not anything worse". He was convinced that "the result will be deplorable", and added: "We Congressmen deplore it deeply". He further added: "Personally we do not entertain much love for pacts. We know and believe that pacts are only temporary palliatives cont...

\textsuperscript{113} For details of the proposed Indian National Pact prepared by the committee appointed for the purpose by the Indian National Congress, see A.M. Zaidi, \textit{Evolution of Muslim Political Thought in India}, Vol. 2, pp. 463-67.

\textsuperscript{114} cf. Subhas Chbo Bose, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 92.

\textsuperscript{115} Bengal N.N.R., 1924 (January).

\textsuperscript{116} The Mussalman, 11 January, 1924 (Letters to the Editor); H.N. Das Gupta, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 100-01 Passim.
not remedies, but when the bulk of the nation are not at all altruistic in temperament or have not even cultivated a sense of refined self-interest but are, generally speaking, rather short-sighted and aggressively selfish, it is necessary that there should be some sort of pact or agreement between the different communities to provide a basis for united action and workable unity. We are directly associated with the Congress... our readers are aware of our anxiety, and the concern we feel, for Hindu-Muslim unity and for the building of an Indian nation". "In our opinion", the editorial concluded, "the blunder which the Cocanada Congress has committed is the worst in the history of the Congress movement and had dealt a serious blow to the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity and the cause which the Congress has in view". He, however, urged the Muslims not to be misguided by the reactionary propaganda against the Congress but to strengthen the "National institution"117.

Notwithstanding the repudiation by the Cocanada Congress and strong opposition in Bengal, C.R. Das continued to defend the Bengal Pact whole-heartedly and declared that "the pact must be accepted"118. Strongly refuting the allegation

117. The Mussalman, 4 January, 1924 (Editorial).

118. See the Englishman, 7 January, 1924 and also see the Mussalman, 11 January, 1924.
that "the pact had sown seeds of discontent and distrust", he argued that "the disunion was not owing to the pact but because of opposition to it for which Hindu sangathan and no-changers were responsible to a certain extent." He was able to secure the approval of the Bengal Provincial Conference to the Pact in early June. C.R. Das' determined espousal of the Bengal pact in the face of strong opposition strengthened the Muslim supporters of the Swarajya Party and the communalist propaganda against them could not shake their nationalist connections and their commitment to the Swarajist cause. This was reflected in the viewpoints of articulate Bengali Muslims. We may quote from one of the numerous writings in the press.

One Abdul Matin Chowdhury from Sylhet wrote in the correspondence column of the Mussalman: "The political history of the last few years bears eloquent testimony to the Muslims unselfish public spirit, his power of organisation, his fervent patriotism, his ungrudging readiness to work and suffer for the country's cause.... Now the Muslim's duty is plain and clear enough. Stand by the pact and the Party, inside the

121. cf. Proceedings of the Bengal provincial conference at Serajganj, 1-3 June, 1924, vide the Indian Quarterly Register, 1924, vol. I, pp. 665-72. Since then the pact continued to be the accepted programme of the Bengal Congress during C.R. Das' life time though opposition to contd....-/"
Council and outside. Do not be seduced to cooperation, however ingenuously veiled, with a Government that thwarts the Arab aspiration for independence and denies self-determination to our motherland. The Swaraj Party raised their popularity by befriending the Muslim's cause. Do not desert them in the Council treacherously. Do not add to the charge of inefficiency, the stigma of ingratitude as well. Do not let Moulvi Fazlul Huq play the Fazle Husain in Bengal, with its inevitable repercussion on the masses, and disastrous consequences on the Congress and Khilafat activities throughout the province". He added: "They must continue the battle for Swaraj even though a section of their countrymen betrays the cause in their preference for a fight for little crumbs from bureaucrats' table".

Muslim Support to Swarajya Party:

Though the continued outcry against the Bengal pact among some sections of the people was a matter of concern to the Bengali Muslims, a large majority of them nevertheless remained committed to the Swarajist cause. Respect for the motives of C.R. Das and his party was genuine and widespread.

It continued unabated from other circles. After the death of C.R. Das, however, the pact again became a subject of controversy among the Bengal Congressmen and eventually lost its relevance. See IQR, 1926, Vol. I, pp. 85-100; Muzaffar Ahmad, Kazi Nazrul Islam Smriti-katha, pp. 195-96.

122. The Mussalman, 11 January, 1924.
123. See the Mussalman, various issues, January-December 1924; Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings 1924.
This was clearly demonstrated during the elections to the Calcutta Municipal Corporation and some other Municipalities or District Boards in the mufussil. In regard to the elections to the Calcutta Corporation held on 17 March, 1924, the Muslim contribution towards the victory of the Swarajya Party candidates was remarkable. The Party in alliance with the Calcutta Khilafat Committee and the rising politician, H.S. Suhrawardy, whose family wielded a good deal of influence in Calcutta, put up candidates most of the 63 elected seats, 48 non-Muslim seats and 15 Muslim seats. In most of the constituencies, their candidates were elected unopposed following the withdrawal of many independent candidates. C.R. Das and other Swarajya Party leaders along with Akram Khan, Mujibur Rahman, H.S. Suhrawardy, Nasim Ali and other nationalist Muslims jointly addressed mass meetings in many parts of the city in support of their candidates.

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124. The Forward, various issues, March-April, 1924; Govt. of India, Home Poll (Dep.), August 1925, No. 112. Also Bengal Administration Report, 1923-24, p. v. Apart from the Calcutta Corporation the Swarajya Party also scored successes in some Municipalities or District Boards in the mufussil such as Jessore, Dinajpur, Mymensing, Nadia and Midnapur, Ibid.

125. The Forward, 16 March, 1924. After the elections, the journal claimed that out of 63 councillors, 53 belonged to the alliance, Ibid, 19 March, 1924.

126. Ibid, 5-15 March, 1924; The Mussalman, 14 March, 1924.
According to the new Calcutta Corporation Act, 15 seats were reserved for the Muslims to be elected through separate electorate. These 15 seats were distributed among 7 constituencies. Out of these 15 seats, the alliance put up 13 candidates in six constituencies and 7 of them were declared elected unopposed following the withdrawal of independent candidates in their favour. Apart from a few non-Muslim constituencies, elections were held in four Muslim constituencies for electing seven councillors. The alliance candidates won four of these thus taking their total number to eleven. Of

127. The respective number of members to be elected from the seven Muslim constituencies were as follows:

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Total 15

cf. the Forward, 26 February, 1924.

128. Ibid, 9 March, 1924. One independent candidates S.M.S. Rahman, a lawyer, was also elected unopposed from constituency No. I in which the alliance put up no candidate. The Forward, of course, reported that he was supported by the Swarajya Party and Khilafat Committee. Ibid.

those Muslim constituencies where elections were held, the Muslim vote for the Swarajist-supported candidates was strongest in the central mercantile wards of the city. The electorate there consisted of up-country, Urdu-speaking merchants, property-owners and artisans who had formed the backbone of the Khilafat-Non-cooperation movement and who now voted for nationalist and anti-British candidates. The independent candidates came from the upper middle class areas on the fringes of the city - all were members of long-established families, all were Urdu-speaking and represented wards where anti-British political activities in recent years had been minimal. The results of the Corporation elections, particularly in the Muslim constituencies, showed that the credibility of the nationalist alliance was not shattered as yet, despite the tensions generated by the communalist propaganda on absurd issues like cow-slaughter and music before mosques and also by the strong and prolonged opposition to the Bengal Pact, which we have discussed before.

The new alliance had won the Swarajya Party the richest prize in Bengal, the Calcutta Corporation, which had been

130. Govt. of India, Home Poll (Dep), September, 1924, No. 25. For instance, in the constituency No. III, the nationalist alliance-sponsored candidates, Dr. K. Ahmed and Shamsul Huq, were elected securing both about 1500 votes, while their opponent, a Pro-Government conservative, could secure only 250 votes. Similar trend was seen in constituencies V and VI. The Forward, 19 March, 1924.

131. Govt. of India, Home Poll (Dep), September, 1924, No. 25.
so long under official control and through which they could hope to extend and consolidate their influence in Calcutta, still the key to political Bengal. Following the formation of the newly elected Municipal Council, C.R. Das proceeded to show his strong adherence to the terms of the Bengal Pact, ignoring the continued opposition to it. Though the terms of the pact were intended to be implemented only under a Swaraj Government, Das thought it prudent to prove his commitment to the Pact through the functioning of the Corporation under his party's control. At the first meeting of the Corporation Council, Das was elected Mayor and Hussain Shahid Suhrawardy Deputy Mayor, whilst prominent Bengali nationalist Muslim, Akram Khan, was chosen Alderman along with another Calcutta Muslim, Syed Mohammad Karim Aga. A few days later when Subhas Chandra Bose was appointed the Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation, Haji Abdur Rashid Khan, a prominent Bengali non-cooperator and Swarajya Party member, was appointed the Deputy Chief Executive Officer. To convince the Muslims of Swarajya Party's determination to abide by the terms of the pact in regard to the Muslim share in employment, 25 Muslims were appointed in July to the first vacancies in the Calcutta Corporation Offices. These steps were received with acclama-

132. See *the Forward*, 12 April, 1924; *the Mussalman*, 18 April, 1924.
133. Ibid, 2 May, 1924.
mation by the educated Muslims, and the newspapers owned by
the nationalist Muslims, while appreciating the initiatives
of C.R. Das and his party in this regard, urged the Muslims to
continue to work for strengthening the national cause within
the Legislative Council and outside.\textsuperscript{135}

Non-cooperation within the Legislature:

Following its success in the elections to the Bengal
Council, the Swarajya Party had declined the request of the
Governor to accept the charge of the transferred departments
of the Government. Consequently, the Governor had to turn to
other individuals and groups in search of ministers, and was
finally able to form a ministry composed of Surendranath
Mallick, A.K. Fazlul Huq and Abdul Karim Ghuznavi.\textsuperscript{136} The

\textsuperscript{135} The Muhammadi, various issues, May-July, 1924; the Musal-
man, 18 and 25 April, 2 and 16 May, and 25 July, 1924.
Though Gandhi defended the Swarajist action in filling
the majority of the vacancies by the Muslims (see \textit{collected works of Gandhi}, Vol. xxiv, pp. 479-80), these
were, of course, not liked by some sections, and provo-
ked anger and resentment from even some nationalist
newspapers such as Amrita Bazar Patrika, Ananda Bazar
Patrika, Servant, Basumati and Vishwantra, all of whom
criticised the Swarajya Party leaders for trying to
turn the scale "against the Hindus" to buy 'Muslim
support' (see Bengal N.N.R. 1924, July-August). These
reactions also provided further materials to the Muslim
communalist journals to augment their campaign against
Hindu-Muslim nationalist alliance. See, for instance,
Islam Darshan, Sraban, 1331 B.S.

\textsuperscript{136} See the Mussalman, 4 January, 1924. Selection of Mini-
sisters from members, other than the Swarajists, divided
into various groups, was not a smooth affair for the
Governor, Lytton, who recorded in retrospect: "The
Mohammedan Moderates were divided in to groups composed
of the personal followers of three or four prominent
contd....../-
Swarajists took the appointment of Ministers as a challenge. Moreover, a successful onslaught on a Minister would be regarded as a success against the so-called reformed institutions. Besides, the Swarajist Council Party, in its meeting on 16 December 1923, had already decided, inter alia, not to allow the Ministers to function as agents of dyarchy.

The Swarajists first set out to knock down the Ministers outside the legislature. Surendranath Mallick was the first target. Shortly after his appointment, he was unseated on an election petition and in the re-election that was ordered, he failed to regain his seat against a Swarajist sponsored candidate. He was thus forced to resign the ministership\(^{137}\). This left the two other Ministers to face the continuous onslaughts. The attack on Fazlul Huq and Ghuznavi was begun through the press, which described the two Ministers as a pair of self-seeking opportunists\(^ {138}\). The Swarajya Party organs and a few other journals sympathetic to it maintained a prolonged campaign against the Ministers for collaborating with the bureaucracy and supporting the enemies of freedom\(^ {139}\). Simultaneously, inside the Legislative Council, they were under constant attack and were frequently ridiculed for their pro-government actions.

cont...

individuals with little liking for each other.... There was no personality whom all the members of the Moderate party - if party it could be called - accepted as leader. Neither the 11 Hindus nor the 18 Muhammadans even, had a leader of their own, and almost every member of the 29 wanted to become a Minister himself". Earl of Lytton, Pandits and Elephants, pp. 45-46.

Consequently, not only the 'Ministry' but also the dyarchy itself proved to be short-lived.

The new Legislative Council of Bengal was sworn in on 22 January 1924 and the Governor formally inaugurated its session with an address on the next day. Immediately thereafter the Swarajya Council Party began its moves in accordance with its declared programme. Its first move was to put forward resolutions recommending the release of detenues under Regulation III of 1818, the release of all other political prisoners, and the repeal of repressive Laws. But despite all out efforts by the official members and the loyalist members,

140. This resolution was related to 17 prominent Bengali revolutionaries who were detained without trial under the said century-old regulation. They were; Muzaffar Ahmad, Amrita Lal Sarkar, Rabindra Mohan Sen Gupta, Satish Chandra Pakrashi, Mamnohan Bhattacharya, Upendra Nath Benerjee, Kali Prasad Banerjee, Jiban Lal Chatterjee, Bhupati Majumdar, Ramesh Chandra Datta Chaudhury, Manoranjan Gupta, Jyotish Chandra Ghosh, Atindra Mohan Roy Chaudhuri, Nalini Nath Gupta, Bhupendra Kumar Dutta, Amarendra Nath Chatterjee and Jadu Gopal Mukerjee. All of them were arrested between September and December 1923 excepting Muzaffar Ahmad who was arrested in May, 1923 (see statement by the member of the Executive Council in charge of the political Deptt, 28 January, 1924, vide Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings (hence fourth referred to as B.L.C.P.) 1924, vol. XIV, part I. Also see Indian Quarterly Register, 1924, Vol. I, p. 387). From among these prisoners, Muzaffar Ahmad was later prosecuted along with S.A. Dange and Shaukat Usmani in the famous 'Kanpur Bolshevik conspiracy case'.

government was defeated on all the three resolutions. Along with the Swarajists, many independents voted for the resolutions. Besides all the Muslim members of the Swarajya Party, a few other independent Muslim members notably H.S. Suhrawardy, Abdullah Suhrawardy also voted with the Swarajists and other nationalists. Following these defeats, however, the Bengal Government had some respite in the council for about three weeks as the council sessions were adjourned till mid-February. The recess of the council was utilised by the Bengal Swarajya Party to carry on a public campaign through the press and meetings throughout Bengal to explain their policies in the council and to expose the attitude of the Government as well as the Indian supporters of the Government's repressive measures.

142. Among the Muslim members of the Swarajya Party, who spoke frequently in support of the resolutions, the most vocal was Nurul Haq Chowdhury who made slashing attacks upon the Government for trying to strangle the voice of nationalism, and upon the loyalists, particularly the two Ministers (Fazlul Haq and Ghuznavi), for betraying the people and collaborating with the reactionary bureaucracy. Among the total of 40 Muslim members (including 21 Swarajists), only 11 sided with the Government against the resolutions. Of these eleven, one was the Executive Councillor (Sir Abdur Rahim), two were the Ministers (Fazlul Haq and Ghuznavi) and others were well-known loyalist Nawabs and Khan Baha-durs. For details see B.L.C.P., 1924, Vol. XIV, part I (24, 25 and 28 January); I.O.R. 1924, vol. I, pp. 380-91; the Mussalman, 1 and 8 February, 1924; The Forward, 25-30 January, 1924.

143. The Forward, 1-20 February, 1924, various issues.
Against the budget and the Ministers:

Meanwhile, the Council reassembled after the recess on 18 February for its budget sessions which continued till 1 April, and the real test of strength between Government and the Swarajya Party came with the debate on the budget proposals. In their campaign to obstruct the system of Government and frustrate the work of the Bengal Council, the Swarajists had chosen, inter-alia, two major fronts on which to challenge the Government and its ministers. The first and the more important of these was the issue of the ministers' salaries and the second was the government's financial demands. Before the commencement of the Swarajist attack on these fronts, however, they captured another issue in an attempt to pull down the Ministers. This was the recent action of the two Ministers who had voted with the Government against the resolutions which demanded release of detenus and repeal of repressive laws. On 20 February an independent nationalist member, Kumar Shibsekhareswar Roy, moved "for the adjournment of the business of the Council" for discussing "a definite matter of public importance namely, the recent action of the Ministers as evinced by their disagreement with 76 members of the Council"

144. cf. the Resolutions passed at the meeting of the Bengal Swarajya Party on 16 December, 1923, see our text above.
in the matter of the resolutions passed by the Council regarding the release of political prisoners and the repeal of repressive Laws. The ministerialists tried to project the issue as a communal one. Shortly before the Council began its proceedings, a procession of the Muslim students came to the Town Hall (the venue of the Council sessions) with placard containing warning to the Muslim members not to run the risk of falling in with the endeavours of some of the 'Hindu members' of the Council to break the Ministry composed of Mahomedan gentlemen. During the course of the proceedings also a large number of leaflets containing a similar appeal was distributed among the Muslim members asking them 'to save the Mahomedan Ministry and not to be wiled away by the camouflage and guise of their bitterest enemies'.

The discussions on the issue were most heated as the Swarajists and some independents censured the Ministers one after another. In the division on the motion 63 voted for

146. Amrita Bazar Patrika, 21 February, 1924; the Forward 21 February, 1924. Also see I.Q.R. 1924, vol. I, pp. 405-06.
and 64 against 148. Though by a stray majority of one vote the motion which was virtually one of "no-confidence" was lost, the Ministers could hardly see their position as secure. The British authorities in Bengal became even more apprehensive about the imminent Swarajist onslaught during the budget discussions. Therefore, they had to devise measures to face the challenge. One such measure would be to make attempts to break the Swarajya Party solidarity inside the council. Communalism which had been used on many previous occasions could again be used in an attempt to split the Muslim members of the party from their Hindu Colleagues in the Council. With this object in view, first the Ministers were authorised to use their power and influence to convert the members, and to inject the theme that the 'Hindu dominated Swarajya Party had been attempting to strike down a Muslim ministry' 149. Evidently this tactics did not work. Now the officials took recourse to another means

148. For detailed particulars regarding the voting for and against the motion, see B.L.C.P. 1924, vol. XIV, No. 2, pp. 140-50. On an examination of the members who voted for and against the motion some interesting facts came out. Out of 64 members who voted against the motion, all the nominated officials and non-official together with 4 members of the Executive council making the total of 26 were present and voted against the motion. Thus only 38 elected members sided with the Ministers; of these 15 were Europeans, 17 were Muslims and 6 were loyalist Hindus. Out of these 17 Muslims majority were loyalist Nawabs and Khan Bahadurs, while a few were independents. So that a majority of the Indian elected members voted for the motion, the Swarajist members (both Hindu and Muslim) and independents (among whom a few were Muslim) voting solidly for it.

149. Earl of Lytton, op. cit., pp. 51-52. Also cf. Islam-darshan, Agra hayan 1331 B.S.
by which, they hoped, the faith of the Muslim members of the Council in the Swarajya Party would be shattered. And that was to bring the controversial Hindu-Muslim Pact or the Bengal Pact into the Council. Early in the budget session, a loyalist Muslim member of the Council, Khan Bahadur Musharraf Husain, was persuaded to move a resolution for giving immediate effect to the principles of the Pact by the appointment of 80% of Muhammadans to Government services until the number of Muhammadans in each branch became 55% of the whole. It was thought in the official circles that on this issue all Muslims would join together on one side and all Hindus on the other. It was so arranged that the Council took up the motion for dis-


151. Sir Abdur Rahim (Member, Governor's Executive Council) recorded later what the officials hoped to gain from this: "It was felt in Government circles and among those who were anxious to defeat and destroy the Swarajist Party that Mr. C.R. Das would, by this resolution, be pushed into a tight corner; he would lose either his 20 Muhammadan followers, to all or to most of whom the Pact had been a strong inducement to join his party or the support of the Nationalists without whose help he would never have secured a majority against the Government, but who would, on no account, accept the terms of the Pact. Khan Bahadur Mushruff Hossain received every sort of encouragement from the supporters of Government and also from individual members of Government to press his resolution" (Confidential note of Sir Abdur Rahim dated 27 July 1925, Govt. of Bengal, Home (Appt) 4M-12 (1-3), proceedings A, Nos. 70-71 November, 1925, Quoted in Broomfield, op. cit., p. 254.
discussion immediately preceding the voting on the budget demands, and during the debate every effort was made to force the Swarajists to commit themselves. Spokesmen for the Government and the European non-officials shed a lot of crocodile tears for the Muslims and expressed their support for the resolution. But the hidden hand and the real motive behind the resolution was clearly seen by the Swarajists, and its Muslim members were more vocal in denouncing the pseudo sympathizers of the Muslims. For instance, Nurul Huq Chowdhury, a prominent Swarajist member from Chittagong and a frequent speaker in the Council, while strongly defending the preamble of the Pact which stated that its provisions would be implemented only "when the foundation of self-government is secured", made scathing criticism of the ministerialists and the loyalists "exposing the hidden hands behind the motion". He added: "We Mohammedans of the Swaraj Party want our due share but not from this Government". Referring to D.P. Khaitan's insinuation that the Pact was only a bait given by the Swaraj Party to keep the Mohammedans on their side, he challenged that statement. "And if it was a bait", he continued, "it is not on the side of the Swaraj Party but it is on the side of the bureaucracy. They had made a gentleman come forward and move such a resolution in order to drive a wedge between the two communities by this. Sir Hugh Stevenson said yesterday that the members of the Government wanted to avoid the awkwardness of a division.... The awkwardness was not with the Swarajists but with the Government". "I say", he concluded, and "I challenge the

Government will be in an awkward position if they are to go to a division and be defeated." C.R. Das moved an amendment that the motion be adjourned sine die, emphasizing that conditions of the pact were meant to come into operation only upon the attainment of Swaraj. When the amendment was put to vote, not only did the Muslim members of the Swarajya Party stood firmly behind C.R. Das, but Major Hasan Suhrawardy (Deputy President of the Council) and Hussain Shahid Suhrawardy, an independent member, both spoke up to defend C.R. Das. Eventually Das' amendment was carried by an overwhelming majority - 66 for and 48 against; thus the attempt to split the Swarajists was defeated. But the British authorities in Bengal and their collaborator communalists did not abate their efforts in promoting communalism and discrediting the nationalist Muslims which, of course, need a separate study.

153. The Forward, 14 March, 1924.
154. H.S. Suhrawardy, felt that the resolution (of Nawab Musharraf Hussain) was moved "intentionally" to stir up "communal feeling". He said, "We feel it to be an attempt to create dissension between Hindus and Muhammadans and thereby obscure the paramount issue of constitutional reform ... the bringing of this resolution was a move to test the sincerity of the Swaraj Party. There was no man in any community who commanded more confidence of both Hindus and Muhammadans than Mr. Das. The Muhammadans relied on his promise and sincerity and on the justice of their cause.... In the Council under the Swaraj the Muslim members would be in the majority and they would be able to insist on giving effect to the pact". Ibid.

With this background, as was expected, the climax to the Swarajya Party "Policy of obstruction" with a view to

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15 and 22 March, 1924. The debate on the original motion and the amendment had given a new lease of life to the controversy on the Bengal Pact outside the Council. While its opponents among the Hindus renewed their attacks against the pact, the communalists among the Muslims exploited the debate in their attempt to convince the Muslims that the 'Hindu-dominated' Swarajya Party and Congress were not sincere regarding the 'interests of the Muslims' that the Swarajist Muslims in the Council were only playing into the hands of the 'deceitful leaders' of the Swarajya Party. (See Islam-darshan, Chaitra, 1330 B.S.; Ibid., Baisakh-Jaistha, 1331 B.S. and other subsequent issues; Moslem Hitaishi, Chaitra, 1330 B.S.) Despite this adverse propaganda, C.R. Das was able to maintain the solidarity of his Party and the support of a large section of the Muslims. In addition to the Muslim members of Swarajya Party, he had also obtained the valuable support of the Suhrawardies. Besides, the special sessions of the All India Khilafat Conference held at Calcutta from 19-21 March, 1924, also lent its strong support and urged the Muslims not to be misled by the anti-national propaganda. It strongly endorsed the viewpoint of C.R. Das regarding the pact in a resolution which stated: "The Calcutta Khilafat Conference fully supports the draft Hindu-Muslim pact which the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and the Bengal Provincial Khilafat Committee have after joint consultation and deliberation adopted. This conference however, desires to elucidate the fact that in determining the communal shares, in representation and other privileges in this pact, it is not intended that effect should be given to this distribution of shares by means of any measure to be adopted by the existing legislature or through the instrumentality of the present bureaucratic Government. This conference declares that all that is intended is that a clear and satisfactory decision should be placed before the country with regard to the representative and other privileges of Hindu and Muslims respectively, to which the future national Government of India would give effect when it is established. This conference, therefore, views with great disfavour the regrettable efforts which some Muslims of the Bengal Legislative Council have made with regard to this distribution of communal shares in that council and for which they have attempted to seek authority in the Bengal Hindu-Muslim Pact". See the Mussalman, 22 and 29 March, 1924; I.Q.R. 1924, Vol. I, pp. 93-96(b); Also A.M. Zaidi, Op. cit., vol. II, pp. 621-22.
"making the Government through the council impossible", came in the second half of March 1924 with the all out attack by the Swarajists on the Government's financial demands. A detailed reproduction of the proceedings here will not serve our purpose. It will suffice to give a brief review of the important successes of the Swarajists which ultimately led to the suspension of dyarchy in Bengal.

The budget for the year 1924-25 came up for discussion on 18 March, 1924. Sensing danger to the budget demands, on 18 March, immediately before the commencement of the discussion on demands, the Governor suddenly appeared in the Council without information and lectured to the House on the possible effects of refusal of demands, and the constitutional issues involved therein. He left a veiled warning for the members, in fact for the opponents of the Government, that for all possible unfortunate developments they would be responsible. The Governor stated in the course of his speech: "There is a section of this council which for reasons of policy desires to reject in to the budget.... I have come to state what will or what can happen if the budget is rejected". He added: "in regard to reserved subjects I have power to restore every single grant in the budget which has been rejected. No interest therefore on the reserved side of Government need suffer by the rejection of the budget.... With regard to the Transferred subjects however, I have no power to restore a single grant.... No loans, no grants-in-aid could be authorised by me. Both the Universities at Calcutta and Dacca would be deprived of all Government assistance, and the Dacca University, being without any other source of revenue would have to close down at once" (The emphasis put on Dacca University was perhaps aimed at influencing the Muslim members from East Bengal).

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Swarajists, however, used every means to carry the various motions for reduction and total refusal of demands and their greatest success was with the reserved subjects. On this side, demands under almost all major heads were rejected in their entirety. To the surprise of the authorities even the demand under the head, 'Administration of Justice', which they considered as a much less controversial subject, was also negatived. On the other hand, on the transferred side their move was cautious. Apparently they were unwilling to obstruct demands for certain important transferred subjects such as education, medical, public health, which would affect a large number of people, and besides, the Government could exploit their refusal of these demands to discredit them among the people. On the transferred side, however, the real crux was the question of the Minister's salaries. The contest over this item was regarded by both sides as a major trial of strength.

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He further added: "Government aid to all local institutions would cease; 18 lakhs to local bodies for primary education, would be withdrawn 5 lakhs of loans to Municipalities and District Boards would cease; 19 lakhs to Municipalities and District Boards for public health and water supply, and 3 lakhs of grants to hospitals and dispensaries would also be lost. Generally speaking, the nation-building departments would be completely starved and no Government assistance of any kind could be given in mofussil districts". BLCP 1924, Vol. XIV, No. 5, pp. 15-18; I.Q.R. 1924, vol. I, pp. 418-19.

Eventually, after a long debate, the motion of Sayedul Huq, a Swarajist Muslim, to refuse in its entirety the demand under the head, "General Administration, Ministers' pay", was carried by 63 votes to 62\textsuperscript{158}.

Demands of resignation by the Ministers were immediately raised in the council and the press but the Ministers did not resign\textsuperscript{159}. The Governor, who had appointed them, was determined not to accept the refusal of Ministers' pay as a final verdict on dyarchy. Consequently, he allowed the two ministers, Fazlul Haq and A.K. Ghuznavi, to remain in office without pay and to work to secure a majority at a voting in the next sessions. And till the next sessions of the council the two Ministers were frantically trying to buy support. Their targets were the Muslim members. Their strategy in this direction was, firstly, communal, that is, urging the Muslim members to save the 'Muslim ministry', and secondly that of offering various inducements. But as the subsequent events were to show the Ministers miserably failed to win over even a single Swarajist Muslim member or any other Muslim M.L.C., sympathetic to

\textsuperscript{158} B.L.C.P. 1924, vol. XIV, No. 5, pp. 164-84.

\textsuperscript{159} cf. Speech of Nurul Huq Chowdhury in the Council on 27 March, B.L.C.P. op. cit., Also see the Forward 26 March, 1924, the Muharrmadi, 29 March and 5 April, 1924.
the Swarajya Party. Consequently, when a fresh demand for Ministers' salaries was put before the Council in August, it was again defeated. Fazlul Huq, expressing his indignation at the Ministers' peculiar position under the dyarchy, exclaimed: "...that so far as dyarchy is concerned, I wish with all my heart that it comes to an end today." The two ministers immediately resigned. The Council was immediately prorogued until further notice, and it did not meet again until 1925, while the Governor himself assumed charge of the transferred departments with effect from first of September. In March, 1925 the Government made a final attempt to obtain the sanction of the council for two new Ministers' salaries, but it again suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of Swarajists and other nationalist independents. Thereafter, the Government had no

160. B.L.C.P. 1924, vol. XVI, pp. 46-69; the Forward, 27 August, 1924; the Mussalman, 30 August 1924.


162. Early in 1925 the Bengal Governor and his Advisors tried a different tack in an attempt to outmanoeuvre the Swarajists. They held meetings with the leaders of different groups, and it seemed that they held out the prospect of ministerial office to some leading men, particularly the independents who often voted with the Swarajist but were not averse to taking office (cf. the Mussalman, 23 January, 1925). The Government acted on the presumption that the Swarajists' adverse vote on the question of salaries had been aimed not so much against the Ministry as an institution as against the Ministers then in office. Therefore, in order to outwit the Swarajists, the Government, in February, without proposing the name of any person as Minister and without specifying the salaries, moved in the Council, that provision of salaries for a ministry be made in the budget for the ensuing financial year. That the Governments' covert

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other alternative but to suspend the dyarchy in Bengal for the remaining period of the council.\textsuperscript{163}

The Swarajist legislative activities had maintained to some extent the spirit of struggle in that limited field when the Bardoli decision had practically all but undermined it in the country at large, but the Swarajist effort did not involve the masses in general in any positive struggle for Swaraj. The masses, who had gained a voice in the popular agitational movement during 1919-22, were to a large degree left out in the manipulation paid dividends was clear when during the voting many independents, who had previously supported the Swarajists, now voted for the Government and surprisingly, B. Chakravarty, whose group had always voted with the Swarajists, now remained neutral. Consequently, the Swarajists failed to defeat the Government motion. But the self-satisfaction of the Government and the hopes of some independents were short-lived. When, in March 1925, the Governor chose two proved loyalists, Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury and Raja Mannmatha Nath Ray Chaudhuri, Zamindar of Santosh (Mymensingh) as Ministers, the nationalist independents were disappointed and the Swarajists again brought around the situation in their favour. On 18 March, the Government moved the Council for the grant of two ministers' salaries. The Swarajists and other independents joined together to defeat the Government's motion. Fazlul Hug, the ex-minister, strongly argued against the 'Ministry' as well as the dyarchy. Eventually on 23 March, the Government's motion was defeated by 69 votes to 63. For details see B.L.C.P. 1925, vol. XVII, No. 2; \textit{Ibid}, No.4; I.Q.R. 1925, vol. I, pp. 136-152(d); \textit{the Forward}, 18 February-28 March, 1925.

\textsuperscript{163} See Govt. of India "Gazette Extraordinary" dated 13 June, 1925, published in all the prominent newspapers on 14 June. Also see the \textit{Mussalman}, 16 June, 1925; \textit{I.Q.R.}, 1925, vol. I, pp. 152(e)-152(f).
cold. Besides, although the Swarajya Party put much emphasis on maintaining Hindu-Muslim unity and was able to pursue it with success in regard to its legislative politics and in capturing some self-governing institutions, these were not supplemented by any similar movement amongst the mass of Hindus and Muslims. There was no positive programme to mobilise the mass of the people against communalism, educate them regarding the true nature of imperialism, and transform their various discontents into struggle against imperialism. The party had tried to salvage the communal relations through the so-called Bengal pact and no doubt succeeded in sheild the Bengal politics, for some years, from the harmful effects of communalism. Unfortunately, the pact was based on the notion of keeping together the educated Hindus and Muslims as separate entities without secularization of their political outlook which would make them realise that in politics they had no separate interests as Hindus and Muslims. The pact, therefore, left the way open to the future resurgence of communalism in Bengal politics.

Resurgence of Communalism:

The sudden and untimely death of C.R. Das, on 16 June 1925, deprived the Swarajya Party and the national movement in Bengal of the guidance of its most powerful leader. His death may be regarded as the beginning of a period of all-round depression in the Bengali nationalist circles. His personality was, among other things, a powerful cementing factor within
the Swarajya Party and also in the domain of Hindu-Muslim relations in Bengal. That such a man was at the head of the party helped to rally extensive Muslim support for that party and many Muslims openly and proudly declared themselves as Swarajists. The party, which owed so much to him, showed signs of paralysis after his death, and the dissensions that arose in the nationalist circles contributed a great deal to the weakening of the spirit of anti-imperialist struggle for years to come.

Once again communalism emerged as a major force with the support of the authorities. While the Muslim communalists amplified the supposed fears of 'Hindu domination and deception', a section of Hindus felt "that there was too much of

164. Govt. of India, Home Poll (Dep), December, 1924, No. 25.
165. Islam-darshan, Agrahayan 1331 B.S.; Ibid., Paus, 1332 B.S.; Muslem-Hitaishi, various issues, Chaitra 1330 B.S. and Falgun-Chaitra, 1331 B.S. The Muslim communalists made great play of the Swarajist opposition to the Government sponsored resolution in the Bengal Legislative Council moved by Nawab Musharraf Hussain, demanding immediate implementation of the Bengal Pact provision with regard to the employment of Muslims, and also the fall of the two ministers. The prolonged outcry against the Pact carried on by some section of the press, communalists and even by some nationalists, gave the Muslim communalists 'ample proofs' of 'Hindu jealousy' and deceitfulness'. The communalist journal, Islam-darshan, attacked C.R. Das whose policies and approach, it believed, were devoid of honesty. 'Similarity between what he says and does is extremely rare. When it came to deeds he failed to keep any of his pledges to the Muslims. Upon getting supreme power in the corporation he displayed to the full his policy of grabbing for himself. He opposed Muslim interests in the council contd..../-
the stand-up-and deliver about the Muslim attitude, too much of an attempt to extort special privileges with the threat of going over to the other side". The Hindu communalists flourished over the supposed apprehension of a section of the Hindu middle classes who thought that the 'Muslim majority' in Bengal might endanger the 'Hindu interests' in a future constitutional set up, and that the growing 'Muslim job-seekers' might, with the help of the Government, jeopardise the prospects of the 'Hindu-job-seekers'. Though these apprehensions were based on false notions, the exaggerated and irrational demands made by so-called champions of 'Muslim interests' and the Government's motivated response towards these, increased their apprehension. The Hindu Mahasabha gained prominence, claiming to protect 'Hindu interests' or to be more accurate, to promote Hindu communalism in opposition to Muslim communalism. The aggressive activities of the Hindu Sabha and the

Bengal branch of the Mahasabha stimulated still further the Muslim communalism, and so action and reaction went on and in the process the communal temperature went up. To perpetuate communal dissensions, the Government openly took recourse to various measures which included temptations to Muslim job-seekers,\textsuperscript{167} encouragement to the communalists to organise 'Muslim conferences' in opposition to the Bengal Provincial Conference with a view to wean away the Muslims from the latter, and strengthening of the local Muslim Anjumans (Associations)\textsuperscript{168}.

\textsuperscript{167} Sir Abdur Rahim, a member of the Bengal Governor's Executive Council recorded: "...most members of the Government seemed to realise that one means of rallying the Muhammadans was to investigate the ways and means of removing their grievances regarding employment in public service" (Note of Abdur Rahim, dated 27 July 1925, \textit{op. cit.}, cf. J.H. Broomfield, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 270). The Government seriously pursued this means, for, it thought, this would not only keep out the educated Muslim youths from the 'Bengali agitators' but would also make the Muslims in general realise that the government was more concerned for their well-being than the nationalists. In October 1925, a meeting of the Governor's Executive Council decided to instruct all departments to increase the tempo of Muslim recruitment, and in December of the same year a communiqué was issued announcing "the intention of the Government to reserve for Muhammadans, a larger percentage of vacancies in certain services". While it cannot be denied that the Muslim job seekers were at a disadvantages, this action of the Government was in itself a tacit acknowledgement of its political motive. See \textit{Bengal Administration Report 1925-26}, p. ii; Bengal N.N.R. 1925 (December) and 1926 (January).

\textsuperscript{168} In 1924 and 1925, following the repeated defeats at the hands of the Swarajists in the Bengal Council and failure to drive a wedge between the Hindu and Muslim members of the Swarajya Party in the council the Government in Bengal decided to encourage dissensions outside the council on communal lines. On 1st June, 1924 and on 2nd May, 1925, the annual Bengal provincial conference were held contd....../
These artifices of the Government were no new inventions, but in the prevailing disruptive situation they began to receive increased attention and their effect was to give further impetus to political reaction and separatism. The occasional squabbles resulting out of absurd issues like cow korbani and music before mosques vitiated the atmosphere and came as handy weapons to the reactionaries and communalists, then engaged in destroying communal cooperation. Some extremely irresponsible journals, both Hindu and Muslim, also largely contributed to the aggravation of communal tension 169.

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at Serajganj and Faridpur respectively. To stimulate dissensions between the Hindus and Muslims simultaneously with these conferences 'Muslim conferences' were also organised at the same places and at the same time with tacit patronisation of the officials. While the nationalists press termed these as failures, the government reports enthusiastically recorded their success 'in weakening of Swarajist influence over the Muhammadan community'. It may be noted here that separate 'Hindu conferences' were also organised simultaneously at the same places, one of which was attended by Swami Shradhanand.

In addition to the above, the Provincial Government keeping in view the next elections to the Bengal Council took active interests and instructed its district officials to stimulate and consolidate the local communal associations who would, in turn, impress upon the electors for electing only those candidates who would place the 'interests' of their community above everything else. Govt. of Bengal Political File 8A-2, proceedings B, Nos. 653-64, September, 1924; Ibid, 8A-5, proceedings B, Nos. 451-461, September, 1927; Bengal Administration Report, 1923-24 and 1924-25.

169. Bengal N.N.R., 1925-26, cf. extract from the article of journals such as Swatantra, Viswanittra, Bharatmitra, Bhijali, Agre-e-Jadid, Matwalle, Hansfi, Moslem darpan, etc.
The Bengal nationalist Muslims made continued efforts to stem the tide of communal bitterness. Throughout 1925 they made attempts to reactivate the Bengal Muslim League and the Khilafat Committee as associate organizations of the Bengal Congress and Swarajya Party with a view to mobilise the Muslims against the communalists and the sinister moves the Government. But in the absence of any positive socio-economic programme which could rouse the people, coupled with a weak organizational structure, they could hardly cope with the combined strength of the communalists and their mentors, the British authorities. The Bengal Congress and the Swarajya Party were too involved with their internal disputes to be able to check the growth of Hindu communalism, and maintain their credibility among the Muslims. Besides, the role of a few Congressmen openly talking in the tone of the communalists further undermined the faith of many Muslims in these organizations and in Hindu-Muslim political cooperation. Consequently, the national political unity of the Hindus and Muslims in Bengal, which was so assiduously built through years of effort and which gave an unprecedented boost to nationalism, was gradually shattered thereby inaugurating an atmosphere dark with forebodings.

However, a hasty conclusion cannot be drawn here to the effect that there was a definite and irreversible polarisation in Bengal on communal lines. It is true that aggressive activities by the Muslim and Hindu communalists, and other divergent
developments alienated many Hindu and Muslim petty bourgeoisie in the urban areas from each other and the fierce communal riots of April 1926 in Calcutta left a deep wound on communal relations. Many from the urban middle and lower middle classes, Hindu and Muslim, lent their energies to distinctly communal politics, but the separatism could in no way overwhelm all sections of either communities. As for the Muslims, many of their articulate members remained adherents of the ideals of Hindu-Muslim political cooperation, but in the prevailing vitiated atmosphere they could not play a dominant role. The communalist politicians survived by playing up prevailing dissensions, irrational issues and false notions. But there was no unity of leadership or purpose; all of them were only bidding for influence, compounding the confusion of the Muslims.

The heightened communal dissensions and separatist activities in the urban areas, particularly in Calcutta, certainly filtered down to influence many people in the mufussil areas. But polarisation on communal lines at the mass level was not yet in evidence. To the masses in rural Bengal, neither the traditional clash for power and influence between interest groups in the urban areas supposed to be belonged to different communities nor the limited "loaves and fishes" at the disposal

of the Government were of immediate relevance. The realities of daily life and ability to pursue traditional economic voca-
tions were more important. Direct economic conflicts between
the lower class Muslims and Hindus were not in evidence. Apart
from a limited amount of caste and pseudo-caste economic spe-
cialisations, which affected Hindu and Muslim alike, occupations
cut across communal boundaries. There were some reports of
occasional tensions between different sections but these were
isolated in a few places without involving large number of
people. Again there were reports of happenings which unconsc-
ciously took the form of class conflicts. For instances, there
were reports of boycott of Saha money-lenders by Muslim culti-
vators in the Dacca and Mymenshing districts\textsuperscript{171}. A Mufussil
journal, representing upper class interests, expressed in 1926
apprehension regarding "the speeches delivered in the various
mass meetings held at different places either jointly by the
Muhammadans and the Namasudras or by the Muhammadans alone",
from which it was "apparent that the Namasudras and the Muha-
madans are uniting against the upper classes"\textsuperscript{172}.

\textbf{*****}

\textsuperscript{171} Bengal Administration Report 1923-24, pl XI.
\textsuperscript{172} The Barisal Hitashi, 14 July, 1926, Bengal N.N.R.
1926.