CHAPTER VIII
CONGRESS AND WORLD WAR II:
A RETURN TO THE GANDHIAN FOLD?

On 3 September 1939, the long anticipated war in Europe finally broke out. The shadow of this war had loomed large over the world for the last several years. In India, the nationalists had, since 1936, been declaring from public platforms and at meetings that they would not support Britain in a second European war. The reason was simple: India's support to Britain in the First World War had only fetched her the Rowlatt Act and Jallianwala Bagh.

The commencement of the war nevertheless found the

1. At the Lucknow session of the INC in April 1936, a resolution titled 'War Danger' had been passed. It warned against India being made a tool in an Imperialist War and declared the opposition of the Congress to participation in any Imperialist War. A.M. Zaidi & S.G. Zaidi (eds.), The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress, Vol.II, p.116.

At Faizpur, the War Danger resolution stated: "No credits must be voted for such a war and voluntary subscriptions and war loans must not be supported and all other war preparations resisted." Ibid., p.204.

At Haripura, in February 1938 the resolution titled Foreign Policy and 'War Danger' had deplored England's attempts to arrive at an arrangement with Nazi Germany. It also expressed determination to resist any attempt to involve India in a war. Ibid., pp.427-8.

2. For an example of this position see Purshottamdas Tandon's speeches in Etawah in January 1940, PAI UP No.5/1940, 20-27 January, p.21.
Congress divided on the question. Gandhi was openly sympathetic to Britain's plight in the war and was even willing to offer moral support. The Left labelled the war as an Imperialist one in which India had no part to play. Instead it should press for independence by launching a civil disobedience movement. Jawaharlal Nehru's stand was an attempt to reconcile these divergent points of view. At the Working Committee meeting in Wardha on 14 September 1939 he proposed a resolution, the main features of which were: Britain must define her objectives in this war. If she was fighting Germany as the saviour of democracy, she must grant complete independence to India. The policies of the British Government currently prevailing in India, and the repressive measures which had already been unleashed, were condemned as being contrary to the spirit of democracy. Doubtless, India's sympathies were with Britain in her attempt to defeat fascism. But only an independent India would lend her support to Britain.3

This draft resolution evoked mixed reactions amongst the Working Committee members. The majority, including Maulana Azad, agreed with the text of the resolution. But Gandhi and his followers were unhappy at the possibility of

India veering away from the path of non-violence. For, if Britain were to accede to the Congress demands, there was a distinct possibility of India joining the Allied War effort—an act contrary to the non-violence ethic. Members of the Left, i.e., Subhas Bose, Acharya Narendra Dev and Jayaprakash Narayan had also been invited to this session to express their views. Bose was of the view that England would not respond to any suggestions from the Congress about the principle of democracy. This led to a heated exchange with Nehru who maintained that the Congress had to act in a dignified manner. However, Nehru was allowed to have the last word at this Working Committee meeting. His resolution was passed with few changes. Despite their differences, Gandhi seemed anxious to give the platform to Jawaharlal Nehru. He apparently even suggested that Nehru should become President of the Congress in place of Rajendra Prasad. Technicalities prevented this suggestion from being carried through, however. Nevertheless a three-member War Sub-Committee was formed with Maulana Azad, Vallabbhai Patel

4. See letters from J.B. Kripalani and Shankarrao Deo to Rajendra Prasad, 13 & 12 October respectively. Valmiki Choudhary (ed.), *Rajendra Prasad Correspondence and Select Documents*, Vol.4, p.130.


and Jawaharlal Nehru as its members. Clearly, the initiative was in the hands of those who advocated a tough line vis-a-vis the British Government.

How, then, do we account for Gandhi's emotional reaction at the outset of the war: "I could not contemplate without being stirred to the very depth, the destruction of London..."? Indeed, this reaction even seemed to be a betrayal of India's cause. But, as Gandhi himself explained to a correspondent, this display of sympathy for the adversary was part of his strategy: "A satyagrahi loves his so-called enemy even as his friend. As a satyagrahi, i.e., votary of ahimsa, I must wish well to England." By thus disarming his opponent, he wished to secure a psychological advantage. Moreover, it must also be remembered that Gandhi was only offering emotional support - there was no question of giving material help to the war effort.

By expressing sympathy with Britain's cause, Congress got a hearing from certain progressive sections of British public opinion. Labour leaders like Attlee, Wedgewood Benn and Stafford Cripps agreed with the Congress that the time

had come for Britain to make very substantial concessions to India.10 Newspapers like the Manchester Guardian also urged the Chamberlain Government to be more open to change.11 Though all these suggestions had little effect on the authorities, Congress was assured of a powerful pressure lobby within Britain.

In India, however, the Congress resolution was viewed with suspicion by the radicals. Members of the CSP, the Communist Party and the Forward Bloc unanimously believed that the time had come to launch an all-out offensive

10. "Attlee has evidently been spoon-fed by the Congress and I suspect through the agency of Krishna Menon and he took a purely Congress view of the problem." Zetland to Linlithgow, 11 October 1939, Linlithgow Papers, Mss. Eur. F.125/8, p.104. In a letter on 16 October 1939 Nehru informed Rajendra Prasad, Gandhi and Patel: "I have been receiving some news from England... I gather from all these that our statement and resolution have created some stir in political and journalistic circles in London." SWJN, Vol.10, p.189.

See also Stafford Cripps' letter to Nehru, 11 October 1939, JN Papers, Vol.14, pp.97-100.

against the imperialist regime. They were the earliest champions of non-participation in the war effort and when the war clouds hung heavy over the horizon in August 1939, they had abandoned all their routine activities to concentrate wholly on anti-war propaganda, as will be seen later in this chapter.

Different left groups reacted differently to the Working Committee resolution. A prominent member of the Forward Bloc lamented that "the Working Committee has not given any clarion call for general mobilisation of the people with a view to initiate any struggle if the British reply is not satisfactory." From the CSP camp Jayaprakash Narayan felt that there was no need for Congress to wait and see what Britain was going to say. This was an imperialist war and any help given to India would only strengthen imperialism. The Communists warned that "compromise on the issue of the war is the biggest danger that faces the national movement."


According to them, the Gandhian leadership "had entered into its last and most reactionary phase." 15 Despite these differences there was a general belief that the Congress was capable of reacting correctly "at the right psychological moments." 16 Given this faith in Congress potential, the Left decided not to take any hasty step. Since Congress had not ruled out the possibility of future mass action, it was considered unwise to openly criticize the Congress at this juncture. 17 All action was held in abeyance until the general AICC session of the Congress, which was scheduled to meet on October 8 and 9 to endorse the Working Committee resolution.

The loose confederation of Left parties under the Left Consolidation Committee 18 planned to hold an Anti-Imperialist Conference at Nagpur simultaneously with the AICC session. However, as the time drew nearer, only the Forward Blocists and the Communists seemed enthusiastic about it.

15. A.K. Ghosh, "CSP and the War from Socialism to Gandhism", Joshi Archives, 1940/46.

16. Ibid.


18. For details on the origins of the Left Consolidation Committee and its activities prior to October, see Chapter IV.
Sahajanand was anxious that the Conference should not be seen as opposed to the official Congress: the idea was to "simply strengthen its (Congress's) hands in taking opportune decisions at this most critical juncture." Ultimately the Conference, which was on a low key, did appear as a challenge to the AICC. It was mainly attended by Forward Blocists, Kisan Sabhaites and a few Communists. The CSP denied having participated in the Anti-Imperialist Conference.

Despite this deflection of energies towards Nagpur, the Left parties did make their presence felt at the AICC session at Wardha on 8 and 9 October. There was, however, a slight difference in the tone of the new resolution that was drawn up here. Some of the toughness of the earlier statement had been whittled down and the Congress seemed eager to give "every opportunity for the war and peace aims of the British Government to be clarified." As many as 23 amend-

20. Sahajanand's statement on Anti-Imperialist Conference and Rally, op. cit.
ments were put forward to this draft resolution. While most of these were either lost or withdrawn, the amendment proposed by Jayaprakash Narayan was considered more seriously. This amendment desired the Congress to "refuse to entertain a settlement on the issue of freedom which pledged in advance the country's support to this war." Yet, this resolution too was defeated by 181 votes to 84. The original draft resolution was carried by a majority of 188 votes to 58.

Quite understandably the Leftists were displeased with this delay in going on the path of conflict. The Forward Bloc had threatened to disregard the AICC decision and to go ahead with their programme. Jawaharlal Nehru was rather sensitive to such developments at the AICC session. In a letter to V.K. Krishna Menon in London he noted: "Please realise the depth of feeling here against any co-operation in the war." He further added, "The forces against it (a

24. Ibid., p.9. See also Jawaharlal Nehru in a letter to Krishna Menon, 16 October 1939, SWJN, Vol.10, p.182.
27. Ibid.
Differences between Gandhi and other members of the Working Committee erupted once again on the issue of non-violence. Gandhi felt that an independent India could not build up an armed strength, since that would be contrary to the spirit of non-violence. Since the other members thought this was an unrealistic position, Gandhi lamented that he was out of tune with the Congress - that perhaps someone else should assume the reins of leadership, etc.

It was into this atmosphere of uncertainty that the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, stepped in with his characteristic tactlessness. (To blame the Viceroy would, however, be unfair. The onus was mainly on the Home Government). His speech of 17 October left no doubt in anyone's mind about the rigidity of the British position at this moment of crisis. There was to be no constitutional advance - yes,

28. Ibid.
29. Gandhi recounted these differences in the course of an interview with the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, on 5 October 1939, Linlithgow Papers, F.125/8, p.169.
perhaps the 1935 Act could be revised at the end of the war. The Viceroy considered it more important that all sections of Indian opinion should arrive at a consensus. The wishes of the minorities must be fully respected. Finally, in order to associate "Indian public opinion" with the war effort, he proposed the setting up of a consultative group "representative of all the major political parties in British India and of the Indian Princes." This consultative group was to have a floating membership and would be consulted by the Viceroy on defence matters if he so wished; the Committee would occasionally be given tidbits of war information as well.

The effect of this speech on the Congress was instantaneous. Mahatma Gandhi, for the first time in this situation, adopted a critical tone: "The Congress has asked for bread and it has got stone. The old policy of divide and rule is to continue," he observed. The Working Committee meeting at Wardha on 22 and 23 October unanimously resolved not to give any support to Great Britain and, as a first step in this direction, called upon the Congress Ministries

32. For details see Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 28 Sept. 1939, Zetland Papers, Roll 9.
33. Ibid.
to tender their resignations. Observers noted that there was complete agreement and a visible sense of relief amongst the members when this resolution was passed. The only note of restraint was the warning to Congressmen not to indulge in any "hasty action in the shape of civil disobedience, political strikes and the like."  

Our narrative up to this point suggests that there was a popular wave in favour of the resignation of Ministries. Gandhi himself had observed that, en route to Simla to meet the Viceroy, he was met by crowds in Delhi who seemed to tell him that no compromise should be made. The people seemed to be in a militant mood.

But several other motives have been ascribed to the Congress decision to resign from office - a popular interpretation being that things were going badly for the Ministries, left-wing pressure and discontent were mounting and the resignations were a face-saving device. There is

37. Ibid.
enough evidence to prove that the Ministries were having a tough time - in U.P. the Khaksars, Kanpur labour and students were threatening the peace of the Province. But the U.P. Governor did not seem to think that the Ministries would resign just yet - several legislative measures were yet to be finalised and the Governor's assent to the Tenancy Bill was still to be obtained.

British journalists and historians have offered other explanations: For instance, Guy Wint and George Schuster in their book *India and Democracy* have suggested that Congress would have lost the support of the people if it had not resigned; and "since Congress leaders in general are no less nervous about their following than are, say, film-stars", the Congress High Command did not dare to take a moderate line. "Rival claimants would have stolen their thunder". What is lacking in the explanation (besides its obvious frivolity) is an understanding of the British attitude at this juncture, which virtually drove the Congress to resignation.

41. Ibid.
Gandhi justified the resignations decision with the following words:

I am quite clear in my mind that what has happened is the best for the cause. It is a bitter pill. I know. But it was needed. It will drive away all the parasites from the body. We would have been obliged to do wrong things which we shall be able to avoid. We shall come to power with added strength.  

Indeed, Gandhi's main concern in the following months was to be the "cleansing" of the Congress, as indicated above.

When the resignations actually came into effect, Jawaharlal Nehru observed in a National Herald editorial titled "The Congress Leaves Office":

It was a moving sight to see some of the ministers bidding farewell to their office staff. Many of them were in tears and even the humble chapsarakas was if something they had valued greatly was going out of their lives.  

But there was little time for sentimentality in the Congress. The question of "what next" loomed large in every Congressman's mind. There was, quite logically, an expectation that the resignations would ultimately be followed up by a mass movement. In eastern, central and western U.P. preparations were already afoot with many local-level

44. SWJN, Vol.10, p.217.
Congress committees converting themselves into "war councils" to propagate secret anti-war propaganda. In some districts, the process of transferring records of the Congress offices to secret places to prevent their seizure by the authorities had already begun. In Benares, a secret courier system had also been established. The Kanpur Congress had even put out a secret circular asking the City, District, Ward and Mandal War Councils to contribute Rs.8 each towards a "Provincial Emergency Fund". The circular went on to claim that Acharya Narendra Dev had been appointed as the first Dictator of the Province.

At another level, more extreme forms of resistance were being advocated. Local leaders of the Forward Bloc, most prominently Bishambhar Dayal Tripathi of Unnao, advocated acts of sabotage and attacks on police stations by Congressmen. In every one of his numerous speeches at this time,

45. PAI UP No.43/1939, 14-21 Oct., p.276 for Benares, Ghazipur and Mainpuri, No.44/1939, 21-28 Oct. for Farrukhabad, Lucknow, Mathura and Allahabad; Nos.45 & 46 for Ballia, Bareilly, Fatehpur, Jhansi, Sultanpur, Sitapur, Mirzapur, Gorakhpur, Meerut and Bulandshahr; No.47/1939, 11-18 November, p.292 for Hamirpur and Muzaffarnagar. The Dehradun district War Council was formed later, PAI UP No.49/1939, 25 Nov.-2 Dec., p.300.

46. This happened in Farrukhabad, for instance. PAI UP No.46/1939, 4-11 Nov., p.288.

47. PAI UP No.47/1939, 11-18 Nov., p.292.

Tripathi emphasised the fact that there were so few policemen in each thana and they could be easily overpowered by the villagers. These actions, in Tripathi’s estimation, would hasten the impending downfall of the Raj. Anti-police rhetoric was also popular in Azamgarh and Aligarh. In early November, J.B. Kripalani reported to Mahatma Gandhi that in U.P. “anonymous placards had been circulated asking people to cut wires and tear up rails.”

Gandhi described these activities as people taking the law into their own hands. Not only did these acts violate the non-violence principle but they were totally at variance with his proposed plan of action for the Congress. On 28 October 1939, Gandhi had written in the Harijan:

> So far as I can see there is no possibility of civil resistance on a large scale unless Congressmen show perfect discipline and greater appreciation than hitherto of non-violence and truth. There need be none unless we are goaded into it by the authorities.

A few days later, on 4 November 1939, he spelled out his

49. UP Police File 211/1939.
50. Ibid.
51. PAL UP No.40/1939, 23-30 Sept., p.258.
reservations on civil disobedience more explicitly:

Apart from the uncertainty of the observance of non-violence in Congress ranks is the tremendous fact that the Muslim League looks upon the Congress as the enemy of the Muslims. This makes it well-nigh impossible for the Congress to organise successful non-violent revolution through civil disobedience. It will certainly mean Hindu-Muslim riots.54

These words would have dampened the spirits of many a Congressman. Even Jawaharlal Nehru described them as "unfortunate".55 In a Province like the U.P., where the link with Gandhi was in any case a tenuous one,56 this created a peculiar dilemma. There was no question of rejecting Gandhi or his leadership - in fact his advice was eagerly sought once the Ministries had resigned and the possibility of a confrontation with the British opened up. A UPCC meeting in November 1939 had passed a resolution placing full faith in Gandhi's leadership.57 (The appeal of

54. CWMG, Vol.LXX, pp.315-316.
56. U.P. had never been a Gandhian Province in the manner of Madras or Gujarat. There was no counterpart of a C. Rajagopalachari or a Vallabhai Patel or a Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan among U.P. Congressmen. The attitude of Jawaharlal Nehru towards Gandhi symbolised that of most U.P. Congressmen - acceptance of Gandhi's leadership and methods, but no great enthusiasm for the charkha and ahimsa, even some impatience with it.
Subhas Bose had greatly dwindled.) But this faith had been reposed in the expectation that Gandhi would give the call for a mass movement which, in their understanding, was imperative at this juncture. Gandhi on his part seemed least inclined to do so. Where would that leave the U.P. Congressmen? Would they ignore Gandhi and act on their own convictions? Or would they swallow their convictions and try to fall in line with the Mahatma? From the account given below it will be clear that the latter path was adopted.

In November 1939 U.P. Congressmen had their first opportunity in many years to enter into a dialogue with Gandhi on these issues. The meeting was arranged by Jawaharlal Nehru on the occasion of Gandhi's visit to the Province for the Working Committee meeting. The meeting began with a query from the Congressmen of U.P. — "Should we not strike while the iron is hot?" Gandhi replied that for him preparedness meant willingness to respond to the commander's call at any moment and at any place. This preparedness would only come from regular spinning. Gandhi even suggested that when the army was fully prepared there would be no

need to fight at all! Gandhi's interrogators then asked what would be the minimum period of spinning required to start a movement. Gandhi's response was: "Is it necessary that we should start a movement in just three or six months? It could take six years. What is necessary is that we should be fully prepared."59 The participants in this dialogue seemed to be at two different levels of understanding altogether! Gandhi's insistence on charkha spinning was unrelenting; he recommended that this activity be taken up seriously by the several lakhs who constituted the U.P. Congress membership. It would have the additional effect of driving out mill-made cloth from the Province. Having made the point, Gandhi, the tactical democrat, then expressed his willingness to go along with any programme of satyagraha that his interrogators could devise, provided he was convinced of its viability. Finally, on the question of Hindu-Muslim unity he appeared more optimistic - he was confident that the Muslims would come round and not pose a threat to the nationalist campaign ultimately.60

Whether Gandhi managed to convert the Congressmen of U.P. to his views or not, the PCC had resolved to pay more


60. Ibid.
attention to charkha spinning. In December itself arrangements were made to start charkha centres in all the Congress mandals of Allahabad district.61 A UPCC circular of 15 January 1940 announced the setting up of a temporary five-man committee under the convenorship of R.S. Pandit to deal with the spinning and weaving of khaddar.62

At the level of popular rhetoric too, there was a noticeable change. By the end of 1939 most Congressmen in the Province had accepted the need for unity and discipline in Congress ranks and become more guarded in their speeches.63 However, the idea that independence could never be attained by spinning charkha continued to be freely aired at Forward Bloc and Youth League meetings in Allahabad.64 There is also evidence of pamphleteering against the Gandhian leadership in parts of western U.P.65

In fact, it was not easy to convince Congressmen of the

61. PAI UP No.50/1939, 2-9 Dec., p.306.
62. UPCC Circular No.139, AI CC/20/1940, pp.317-319.
63. PAI UP No.2/1940, 31 Dec.-6 Jan., p.5.
64. PAI UP No.1/1940, pp.1 & 4.
65. One such pamphlet from Etawah by Aditya Kumar Vajpayee titled 'Krantikari Hitler' dated 1.1.1940 declared that the country at present had no need for empty idealism and emphasis on principles. Proscribed Literature, Chicago University, Reel 12, No.14.4.
Province to take the amended Independence Day pledge of 1940 with the *charkha* clause. This clause, which had been inserted into the original 1930 pledge at a Working Committee meeting in December 1939 stated: "Charkha and Khadi are an integral part of the constructive programme... we shall, therefore, spin regularly, use for our personal requirements nothing but Khadi and so far as possible products of village handicrafts only and endeavour to make others do likewise."66 Congress directives were that official organs, i.e., Congress Committees, *must* take the pledge at meetings. Others taking the pledge individually could omit the clause.67 Subhas Bose advised his followers to categorically reject the new clause, though at the same time warning them not to create any confrontation with the official Congress Committees over this issue.68 M.N. Roy's *Le*ague of Radical Congressmen came out with a pamphlet "Congress ko khatre se bachao" in criticism of the *charkha* clause.69 The Socialists and Communists decided to take the pledge in its


1930 form. And when it came to the actual day itself, it was reported that in places like Allahabad, Agra and Mathura many had refused to repeat the charkha clause or had taken the pledge in its 1930 form. On the other hand the directive that there should be no strikes in colleges or factories on 26 January was flouted with many students managing to get their institutions closed for the day.

Indeed, students of the Province were rather active politically in this period. Around the time that the resignation of Ministries took place, district-level representatives of the Students Federation had met in Lucknow to discuss what action they should take to "end Imperialism in India". Despite evidence of the entry of communal feelings into the student movement by this time, students were the most enthusiastic section of society to participate in

70. *PARI UP* No.4/1940, p.16.
75. Both in Allahabad and Lucknow Universities Muslim students were reported to be objecting to the flying of the Congress flag on University buildings. *PARI UP* No.49/1939, 25 Nov.-2 Dec., p.302.
the Independence Day celebrations of 1940. 76

Since *charkha* spinning *per se* was not going down too well with the Congressmen of U.P. at this time, it was found to be more worthwhile to concentrate on the Qaumi Seva Dal or volunteer movement. At the beginning of the War this movement had already acquired a new meaning — enrollment in the Seva Dals could be projected as the nationalist alternative to enlistment in the British army to fight the Second World War. 77 Leaders of the Left such as Z.A. Ahmed and ex-revolutionary terrorists like Jogesh Chatterji and B.N. Sanyal, besides Subhas Bose, now showed enthusiasm for the movement. 78 In Kanpur there was even talk of forming a secret volunteer corps of *nazdoors* and *kisans* to fight in the coming struggle. 79 But quite apart from all this, the UPCC itself paid greater attention to the volunteer programme in November and December 1939. A camp was held in Lucknow in November 1939 to train captains for volunteer


77. See speeches to this effect in Azamgarh and Sultanpur districts in January 1940. *PAL UP* No.3/1940, 6-13 Jan., p.11; No.4/1940, 13-20 Jan., p.15.


work in the various districts. This was followed by a meeting of the volunteer board in Mathura where it was decided that the work of volunteering must be speeded up. This involved enrollment of new recruits to the volunteer movement and explaining to them the Congress programme with special emphasis on *ahimsa*. Rallies by volunteers, first at the *mandal* and *tahsil* levels, followed by the district level, were recommended. Response to this programme was greater in western and central U.P. especially Bulandshahr, Dehradun, Hamirpur, Jhansi, Aligarh, Kumaun, Mainpuri, Muzaffarnagar, Rae Bareli, Unnao, Sitapur, Allahabad, Hardoi and Moradabad than in eastern U.P., where Gorakhpur (under Shibbanlal Saksena), Azamgarh, Ballia and Jaunpur were the only districts involved. A further dimension to volunteer activity, especially in some of the more remote eastern U.P. districts, was the use of volunteer camps and meetings for undercover revolutionary activities. For instance, many of the organisers of the Khalispur Train Dacoity, which took place on 9 July 1940 on the Benares-Jaunpur border, had


participated in Qaumi Seva Dal camps in Shahgunj, Jaunpur, in February and early July 1940.  

By February-March 1940, however, there seemed to be a lull in the volunteer movement. Perhaps the preoccupation of most Congressmen with the Ramgarh session of the Congress affected this activity, which was only to revive around the time of the 8 August offer of Lord Linlithgow.

In the meantime elections to the UPCC had been held in February 1940. Sri Krishna Dutt Paliwal had been elected President, defeating Congress Socialist Damodar Swarup Seth by 212 votes to 174. A Rural Development organiser and Agra-based editor of the Sainik, Paliwal had a reputation of being more right of centre. Keshav Dev Malaviya and Pt. Balkrishna Sharma were elected as General Secretaries. Elections to subordinate Congress committees had been suspended in December 1939 until further notice. In April 1940 it was decided to continue without elections for 1940

83. UPSA CID File RR Nos.5&6.
84. AICC/G-65/1940, p.1. Also PAI UP No.8/1940, 10-17 Feb., p.40.
85. Ibid.
86. UPCC Circular of 8 Dec. 1939, AICC/P-20/1940, p.181.
The Ramgarh session marked a turning point in the career of the Congress. To a large extent the mood at this session was determined by the breakdown of the Gandhi-Linlithgow talks in early February 1940 over Linlithgow's refusal to go beyond his previous offer of 17 October. The only resolution put forward at Ramgarh had already been drafted at the Patna session of the Working Committee (28 February-1 March). It referred to the necessity of civil disobedience, to which the Congress would unhesitatingly resort as soon as the Congress organisation was considered fit enough for the purpose. This resolution was passed by a clear majority with only 16 being opposed to it. The passing of the resolution posed no problems, but there were apparently many hurdles to be crossed yet.

Gandhi, who addressed the subjects committee of the Ramgarh session after a gap of four years, explained that though on previous occasions he had launched a movement

88. See Gandhi's statement to the Press after interview with Viceroy, 6 Feb. 1940, CWMG, Vol.LXXI, p.188.
without all the conditions that he had laid down being fulfilled, this occasion was different. The Congress was now faced with a far more difficult situation - there was an internal as well as an external crisis. While on the one hand, there was indiscipline, factionalism and lack of faith in non-violence within the Congress, there was, on the other hand, a more determined adversary to contend with - Britain in the midst of war would be at its repressive best. Only the most dedicated Congressmen would be able to meet this challenge. This was to be done through the conversion of all Congress committees into satyagraha committees. In these committees Gandhi's "word will be law" and therefore there was no question of democracy now. While it was compulsory for Congress committees at all levels to convert themselves into "units of satyagraha", members of these committees had the option to enroll as satyagrahis or to resign from the committees.

The message was clear - only those who believed in the basic tenets of satyagraha would now find a place in the Congress. Gandhi did, however, make a distinction between "active" and "passive" satyagrahis. Unlike the former, the

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latter would not be required to sign a pledge, spin or go to jail, but they would be supporters of all such activities.\textsuperscript{92}

This set of instructions from Gandhi were to cause major ripples in the Congress organisation, as will be seen shortly. What was Gandhi trying to achieve by these elaborate exercises? At one level he was trying to gauge the commitment of Congress members to the principle of non-violence. At another, he wished to purge the Congress of undesirable elements and create a disciplined task force - impressive not in numbers but in quality - somewhat like Lenin's prescriptions for the Russian Social Democratic Party in 1903. But in the eyes of many who were impatient for a movement, all this seemed to be a mere resort to delaying tactics.

In the meantime Subhas Bose had devised an alternative course of action, which had taken shape at the Anti-Compromise Conference held simultaneously with the Ramgarh Congress Session. The main resolution at this Conference proclaimed that Britain had no right to frame a constitution for India and that no "rapprochement with imperialism behind the back of the masses" would be tolerated. The immediate plan of action was "intensification of local struggles"\textsuperscript{92}.

through some sort of civil disobedience. Bose's "movement" was to begin on 6 April - so as to coincide with the National Week. On each day activity would revolve around a specific theme; thus 7 April was to be "Kisan and Mazdoor Day" with meetings to formulate "rights of kisan and mazdoor communities", 8 April was to be Anti-War Day, 9 April, Political Prisoners' Day, 10 April, Students' Day and finally 13 April, Jallianwala Bagh Day. The programme was carried through but with very little enthusiasm. In U.P., for instance, all the meetings were poorly attended with the exception of those in Allahabad and Lucknow. Practical forms of civil disobedience were largely restricted to defiance of orders prohibiting processions and the hoisting of the Congress flag on Governmental buildings, which resulted in several arrests. This abortive attempt costs the Forward Bloc dearly and and many of the members resigned from the party in sheer disgust.

93. The Leader, 18 March 1940, p.10.

94. PAI UP No.15/1940, 31 March-6 April, pp.78-79.

95. Ibid. and PAI UP No.16/1940, 6-13 April, p.84.

96. The Leader, 9 April 1940, p.3; 10 April, p.11, 11 April, p.4; 12 April, p.4; 13 April, p.3; 14 April, p.7.

the Left, none had joined Bose's campaign. Instead they were seriously considering the possibility of becoming satyagrahis. This is another pointer to the enduring appeal of Gandhi; he could move the people into action even by a limited enrollment campaign - something which Bose with all his dramatic moves was unable to do.

In the wake of Gandhi's instructions at Ramgarh, the UPCC Council met at Allahabad (30 March-1 April) and announced its conversion into the biggest Satyagraha Committee of the Province. All subordinate committees of the U.P. Congress were to become satyagraha sanitis. Lists of Congress committees were to be scrutinised and active satyagrahis enrolled. However a satyagrahi must be enrolled only after he had fully comprehended his duties. Those members of Congress committees who did not wish to become satyagrahis should resign from the committees. Lists of active satyagrahis were to be sent every fifteen days to the main office. Each member of a Satyagraha Committee was required to go to the villages to enrol satyagrahis and to maintain contact with the depressed classes. They were also entrusted with the task of enrolling Congress members.

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99. Ibid.
charkha and khadi, Vichitra Narayan Sharma of the Meerut ashram was appointed organiser of the overall khadi programme of the Province. While his job was to advise Congressmen and to provide khadi bhandars and kendras with all the materials for spinning, the task of enthusing the people about charkha spinning and teaching them how to do so remained with the Congress Committee.100

There was enthusiasm for the new set of activities outlined by Gandhi among Congressmen of all hues. Enrollment of active satyagrahis began in early April as part of the National Week activities. Intriguingly, the earliest reports of large-scale charkha activity and enrollment of satyagrahis came from Kanpur - a major centre of Leftist activity.101 Even more noteworthy was the urgent circular issued by Damodar Swarup Seth, the General Secretary of the UPCSP, instructing all Congress Socialists of the Province to enroll as active Satyagrahis.102 This was because "the Party has already accepted Mahatma Gandhi's leadership in the impending national struggle and they cannot reject the

100. UPCC Circular No.8, dt.24.4.40, AICC/G-5 Part I/1940, pp. 221-6


102. National Herald, 5 April 1940, p.4.
constructive programme so much insisted upon by Gandhiji and retain his leadership at same time." 103 Communist Party instructions to its members were that they should sign the pledge so that the organisation could be captured from within. 104

Unlike the Socialists and Communists, Royists were instructed to adopt a path of defiance - Radical Congressmen would neither enrol as Satyagrahis nor would they resign their membership of Congress committees. Satyagraha represented a "policy of compromise" and no one could force them to resign from committees to which they had been duly elected. 105 The Dehradun Town Congress Committee, perhaps acting on this advice, outvoted the proposal to turn the Committee into a Satyagraha unit. 106 But that was the only known instance of defiance of Gandhi's instructions by a Congress committee.

National Week provided an initial boost to the

103. Ibid.

104. Letter from Purnima Banerji to J.B. Kripalani referring to this circular. AICC/G-4/1940-41, pp.51-53.

105. Instructions from the Secretary to all branches of the UP League of Radical Congressmen, The Leader, 22 April 1940, p.13.

106. UPCC Secretary's report of 13 May 1940, AICC/G-5 Part I/1940, pp.187-203.
Satyagraha preparations. From Allahabad, Benares and Mathura there were reports of spinning programmes and enrollment of active satyagrahis in this period.107 The news that in places like Kanpur and Agra, Muslim members of the Congress were enrolling as active satyagrahis, was indeed heartening.108 By the end of April 1940, the first progress report on satyagraha preparations was ready. 5,400 satyagrahis had been enrolled in the Province. They represented some 65 per cent of DCC members in 22 of the 48 districts of U.P.109 Thus more than half the districts of the Province were yet to be actively involved in the programme. There were cases of resignations from Congress committees owing to disagreement with the Gandhian programme, e.g., in Bareilly nine members of the District and Town Congress Committees had resigned for this reason.110 The UPCC report referred to three categories of Congressmen who had not enrolled as Satyagrahis: (1) those who were members in name only and habitually did not attend any Congress meetings (Gandhi had made it clear that he wanted to weed out all

107. The Leader, 9 April 1940, p.5 for Benares; 14 April 1940, p.4 and 16 April 1940, p.5 for Allahabad; 22 April 1940, p.14 for Mathura.

108. National Herald, 16 April 1940, p.11.

109. The Leader, 28 April 1940, p.11.

110. PAI UP No.19/1940, 27 April-4 May, p.88.
such members); (2) some 23 who had "on conscientious grounds refused to become satyagrahis"; and (3) those who had declared their intention to become satyagrahis but asked for some time to do so.\textsuperscript{111}

While it was hoped that the pace of enrollment of satyagrahis would increase in the following months, it was equally important to ensure that those who had actually signed the satyagraha pledge devoted the greater part of their time to Congress work. This was not easy for those who were engaged in some profession - practising lawyers for instance. Such individuals were required to make a choice; if they could not devote sufficient time to Congress activities, they should resign from the Congress committee and make way for more committed members.\textsuperscript{112} It was reported that in Gonda a majority of the 350 satyagrahis enrolled had later resigned on being told that they would have to go to jail without financial aid for their families.\textsuperscript{113}

Gandhi's insistence on rigid adherence to his conditions and a lack of conviction in his programme seems to have affected satyagraha preparations at the lowest

\textsuperscript{111. UPCC Report dt. 25 April 1940, AIICC/G-5(Part I)/1940, pp.397-8.}
\textsuperscript{112. Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{113. PAI UP No.19/1940, 27 April-4 May, p.99.}
levels of the Congress organisation. While some 75 per cent of district and town-level Congress Committee members were said to have enrolled themselves by June 1940, the response at the mandal level was rather poor. Of the 2,000 mandals in the Province, only 800 were functioning as required and the majority of Mandal Congress Committee members had not become satyagrahis.114 A Mandal Committee could have anything from 11 to 30 members, of whom more than 4 or 5 had become satyagrahis.115 The only district which could boast of a sizeable number of mandal satyagraha samitis was Unnao, with 47 samitis as opposed to 17 each in Benares and Kanpur and 4 in Lucknow.116

While all this activity was proceeding apace, there was an underlying current of violent rhetoric in the Province as well. References to takeover of police stations, jails, courts and looting of Government treasuries, telegraph wire-cutting and smashing of railway lines came in from Azamgarh (which had the greatest incidence of such speeches at this time), Sultanpur, Gonda, Fatehpur and even Muzaffarnagar.

114. UPCC Reply to AICC Questionnaire, 10 June 1940, AICC/G-5 (Part IV)/1940, p.133.
115. Ibid., p.134.
116. District-wise list of Satyagrahis enrolled and Mandal Committees functioning as Satyagraha Committees attached to UPCC report of 10 May 1940, AICC/G-5/Part I.
(where the speakers were from Ballia). This not only presaged the forms of protest in the 1942 movement, but testified to the persistence of non-Gandhian strains in the Province at this time.

In parts of Eastern U.P., especially Jaunpur, underground HSRAites were also active in this period, planning train dacoities to collect funds for the purchase of weapons for the overthrowal of the British Government. Their first successful strike was on 9 July 1940 when the 170DN Passenger between Lucknow and Mughalsarai was stopped between Khalispur and Babatpur (Benares district) with the bursting of crackers and lanterns. In a virtual re-enactment of the Kakori Train Dacoity of the 1920s, the passengers were asked not to alight: "Keep your windows shut. We have to loot Government property." The ransacking of the mail van took about half an hour and a sum of Rs.2226/8 was appropriated. The money was believed to have been used for the purchase of firearms and for the printing of the 'Ranbheri', a revolutionary pamphlet. The incident was believed to have been masterminded by the well-known ex-revolutionary

117. PAL UP No.18/1940, 20-27 April, p.85; No.19/1940, 27 April-4 May, pp.99 & 101-2; No.20/1940, 4-11 May, p.106 and No.21/1940, 11-18 May, p.108.

118. UPSA CID Files RR Nos.4 & 6.
terrorist, Bhupendra Nath Sanyal. 119

Meanwhile, by 10 July 1940, the Province had managed to enroll just 15,200 satyagrahis from a total primary membership of 8 lakhs. However, this figure was rather impressive when compared to that of other Provinces – the next largest figure being 6,000 for NWFP, followed by 2,765 for Tamil Nadu, 1,991 for Bihar, 1,771 for Gujarat and 1,370 for Andhra. 120

Intriguingly and for whatever reasons, the districts of eastern U.P. were more enthusiastic about the Gandhian programme than the western counterparts. The figures for Gorakhpur and Mirzapur (465 each), for Ballia (417), Ghazipur (208), Banda (240), Basti (270), Azamgarh (185) and Gonda (188) indicate a better average than for western and central U.P. Jhansi had 85 satyagrahis; Meerut 86, Mathura 82, Shahjahanpur 86, Fatehpur 110, Bareilly 113. Bulandshahr with 352, Almora with 323 and Saharanpur with 334 had somewhat better figures and Aligarh had the highest figure for the Province with 487. In central U.P., Sitapur had 446 satyagrahis, Lucknow had only 150, Fyzabad 175, Barabanki 84

119. Ibid. Information received by Dy. S.P.
120. AICC/G-28 (Part 2)/1940, p. 48.
and Rae Bareli 73. It would be somewhat far-fetched to make a linkage between this response to the Gandhian programme in 1940 and the role played by eastern U.P. in the Quit India movement two years later, since the specificities of the two situations were so different. But it certainly does appear that the remoter parts of the Province were more in tune with Gandhi than the established Congress centres. The decision of the CSP to participate in the Gandhian programme at this juncture would have had some impact on mobilisation in eastern U.P. Correspondingly the relatively poor response to Individual Satyagraha in these areas may be related to the CSP decision not to participate in the movement.

Even while all these preparations were afoot, statements from Gandhi indicated the evolution of his plan for Individual Satyagraha. On 23 April 1940 he observed: “All I want the Congress to do through civil disobedience is to deny the British Government the moral influence which the Congress co-operation would give.” While he virtually ruled out mass civil disobedience, he felt that the choice

121. District-wise list of satyagrahis and Mandal Satyagraha Committees, UPCC Report of 10 May, AICC/G-5/(Part I)/1940.

lay between "individual civil disobedience on a very large scale" and "very restricted" civil disobedience, confined only to himself.123 By late July he was inclined towards a very restricted form of individual civil disobedience.124

Gandhi's decision may have arisen from the dismal record of actual work done by the enrolled satyagrahis. In June 1940 the UPCC Secretary complained that members were not doing their work conscientiously and that there was a lack of commitment to charkha spinning in particular. Even half the quota of khadi yarn fixed for the Province (15 million yards) had not been met until 4 June, whereas the quota was to be completed by 15 June.125

Preparations for satyagraha were further confounded by the serious reverses that the Allies suffered in the War from April 1940 onwards. The German occupation of Norway in that month, followed by the overrunning of the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg by Hitler's troops in May and the final collapse of France in June, affected India in many ways, most of all politically. The immediate popular

123. Ibid.
reaction was one of panic generated by rumours of the collapse of Britain. In the districts of U.P. there were reports of large-scale withdrawal of deposits from banks. It was considered safer to hoard silver and traders were apparently unwilling to exchange currency notes for silver. The need to organise self-defence was manifest in the sudden spurt in arms and ammunition sales reported from Aligarh, Budaun, Meerut, Moradabad, Muzaffarnagar, Allahabad, Barabanki and Sitapur. For those who did not have access to sophisticated weapons, purchase of bows and spears was the resort. German radio broadcasts were listened to rather attentively, despite the Government orders banning tuning to these stations. In Banda a popular rumour was that Hitler would reach India by 19 June. Such an eventuality was apparently not anticipated with dread — indeed the Province at this time displayed a sneaking

126. One of the first districts to report withdrawal of deposits was Banda in mid-May 1940. PAI UP No. 21/1940, 11-18 May, p. 110. This was followed by Budaun in late May, No. 22/1940, 18-25 May, p. 114; Gonda, Rae Bareli and Jhansi in early June, No. 25/1940, 8-15 June, p. 131.

127. PAI UP No. 23/1940, 25 May-1 June, p. 119.

128. PAI UP Nos. 24 & 26/1940, 1-8 June and 15-22 June, pp. 126 & 139 respectively.

129. PAI UP No. 24/1940, p. 128.
admiration for Hitler's strength and invincibility.\textsuperscript{130}

In such circumstances, all talk of civil disobedience receded into the background. The people seemed to have forgotten Gandhi's instructions to prepare for \textit{sayaggha}. In fact, at the level of the Congress leadership, serious doubts began to be expressed about the feasibility of adhering to a policy of non-violence during the war. While Gandhi continued to hold the view that India should not involve herself in this or any war, others felt that the defence of India must be organised to prevent external aggression. These views found expression in the resolution passed by the Congress Working Committee at Wardha on 21 June 1940:

While the Working Committee hold that the Congress must continue to adhere strictly to the principle of non-violence in their struggle for independence, the Committee cannot ignore the present imperfections and failings in this respect of the human elements that they have to deal with.... The Committee have deliberated over the problem that has thus arisen and

\textsuperscript{130} PAI UP No.28/1940, 29 June-6 July, p.132. Pro-German posters stating "Hitler's aim is to make the country free and we should welcome him" were found in Benares in late June. PAI UP No.27/1940, 22-29 June, p.146. In Fatehpur a speech at a Congress volunteer rally was all about how British rule in India would be finished by Hitler and how German rule was far more preferable. PAI UP No.28/1940, 29 June-6 July, p.152.
have come to the conclusion that they are unable to go the full length with Gandhiji... they... absolve him from responsibility for the programme and activity which the Congress has to pursue under the conditions at present prevailing in India and the world.... Congress Committees should organise, wherever necessary, people in villages and other areas for self-defence and in order to maintain a sense of public security in their respective areas.131

Thus the Congress had taken a major step: it had chosen to relieve Gandhi of the responsibility of leading the Congress, so as to organise internal security and India's defence.132 This step was advanced further at the emergency meeting of the Congress Working Committee in Delhi from 3-7 July when a resolution framed by C. Rajagopalachari, calling for an unequivocal declaration of India's independence and the immediate creation of such a provisional National Government as would "command the confidence of all the elected members in the Central Legislature", was adopted. Only then, the resolution stated, would Congress be able to "throw in its full weight in the efforts for the effective


132. To this Gandhi's response was: "I congratulate the members on their honesty and courage, though I am sorry for myself that I could not inspire them with confidence in our creed and in my leadership." Speech at Gandhi Seva Sangh and Charkha Sangh meeting, 22 June 1940, CWMG, Vol.LXXII, p.183.
organisation of the Defence of the country." There was no unanimity on this decision. It is known that while Sardar Patel, Rajaji, Bhulabhai Desai, Jamnalal Bajaj, Syed Mahmud, Asaf Ali and Pattabhi Sitaramayya voted for the resolution, Nehru, Acharya Narendra Dev and Achyut Patwardhan voted against it. So did Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan on grounds of non-violence. Sarojini Naidu, Rajendra Prasad, Shankarrao Deo, Prafulla Chandra Ghosh and Acharya Kripalani remained neutral. Seldom before had there been such a multi-polar division in the Congress. "Rajaji has stabbed us in the back", wrote an anguished Jayaprakash Narayan to Jawaharlal Nehru on 27 July. He felt that if there was to be a settlement, Jawaharlal Nehru had best "leave the Congress and form another political organisation."135

What came to be known as the Delhi offer of the Congress was debated at length when the AICC met at Poona on 28 July. The resolution confirming the offer was passed by 95 votes to 47. About 40 members including Nehru, Prasad, and Acharya Kripalani remained neutral. But there was a

135. J.N. Papers, Vol.54, p.60
136. A Centenary History..., p.360.,
further twist to the tale. Shortly after the Poona meeting, all but four members of the Working Committee sent in their resignations to Maulana Azad because they felt that India should not participate in the war. This action practically buried the Delhi-Poona offer of the Congress, since Azad requested the members not to resign and accepted their terms.137

With the top-level Congress leadership thus torn by internal differences, one could hardly expect any serious mobilisation work in the Provinces. However, in the U.P. there was a revival of interest in volunteering and Seva Dal activities. In the panic-stricken month of June, volunteer training seemed an effective means of organising self-defence.138 Even satyagrahis were reported to be attending volunteer training camps in Azamgarh, Aligarh, Sultanpur, Bulandshahr and Almora.139 The PCC coordinated these efforts by allocating July 4 and 5 as days when special attention would be paid to volunteering through the holding of rallies, etc.140 Once again, Aligarh seemed to be pursuing

137. Ibid., p.361.
138. PAI UP No.28/1940, 29 June-6 July, p.152.
139. PAI UP No.26/1940, 15-22 June, p.142.
140. PAI UP No.27/1940, 22-29 June, p.149.
the new programme with vigour and in a more systematic fashion. The DCC had divided the whole district into 16 kendras. Within each kendra there would be five to six Congress mandals and 20-25 volunteers in charge of a sardar or captain. Each kendra was entrusted with the task of supervising Congress work in its region, raising subscriptions for Congress funds and of maintaining public peace.141 By and large, it was reported that it was becoming increasingly difficult to tell satyagrahis apart from volunteers.142 Obviously, the work of the former had merged inextricably with that of the latter. Government sources put the figure of total volunteers for U.P. at 30,178 by the end of June 1940.143 But this was still far short of the intended target of one lakh volunteers.144

If preparations for civil disobedience had suffered a setback, anti-British feeling was nevertheless manifest in different forms. The people were extremely receptive to anti-war propaganda. By July-August 1940, the focus had shifted from anti-recruitment to opposing forced war

141. PAT UP No.31/1940, 20-27 July, p.171.
142. PAT UP No.29/1940, 6-13 July, p.159.
144. Ibid.
subscriptions, probably because the authorities had stepped up their efforts to realise contributions to the war effort.\textsuperscript{145} UPCC leaflets protesting against forced realisation of war subscriptions were recovered from different parts of the Province. Modified versions of these leaflets were also being produced by individual DCCs and circulated in their respective districts.\textsuperscript{146} These leaflets and circulars caused considerable embarrassment to the British Government, which was anxious to prove that there was no coercion in war subscriptions.\textsuperscript{147}

Defiance of and resentment towards British rule was accentuated by the Government's decision to impose a ban on volunteering activities by an order of 6 August 1940.\textsuperscript{148} That the people of the Province would not accept any restrictions

\textsuperscript{145} At the UPCC E.C. Meeting of 15 June 1940 it was reported that "Zamindars are made to pay a percentage of their revenue, Government servants a part of their salaries, sums are deducted from the wages of workers and kisans are in some places forced to pay a sum for every plough or are induced to pay something for the war funds when they come to court as litigants." \textit{UPCC E.C. Proceedings}.

\textsuperscript{146} \textit{PAI UP} No.32/1940, 27 July-3 August, p.177.

\textsuperscript{147} Hallett to Linlithgow, 17 Sept. 1940, \textit{Linlithgow Papers}, F.125/103, pp.241-2.

\textsuperscript{148} \textit{Home Poll} 18/7/40, F.R.U.P. ii.
their most popular campaign was evident from the 20,000 strong crowd which turned up for the volunteer rally and Nehru’s address at Kanpur on 11 August 1940. Addressing the rally, Nehru reflected the changed mood of the Congress, provoked by the extremely paltry offer made by the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, on 8 August:

There is an atmosphere of expectancy, determined enthusiasm and cool courage reminiscent of the civil disobedience days. It appears as if the whole of Cawnpore has turned out to offer its support to the Congress as against the reported move of the government to ban even a rally of the non-violent Seva Dal volunteers.... There is an unbridgeable gulf between the Congress demand and the Viceroy’s pronouncement and I do not see how we can accept it.

He followed this up with a similar visit to Benares, where his meeting was attended by some three to four thousand. But Nehru advised restraint and even a policy of compromise with the British Government. In any case, he advised Congressmen to await the instructions of the Working Committee.

Soon thereafter began the major arrests in the

149. [PAI UF NO.34/1940, 10-17 August, pp.188-9. Lala Padampat Singhania, a Kanpur industrialist, made a contribution of Rs.2,500 to this rally.]

150. [SWJN, Vol.11, pp.116-117.]

151. [Ibid.]
Province. It may be mentioned here that even earlier, by May 1940, arrests of district-level Congressmen, serving of notices under Section 144, fines for selling seditious literature, searches of newspaper offices and demands of security from newspapers had already begun. Major Left leaders like Balkrishna Sharma and Rammanohar Lohia had been arrested under the Defence of India Rules in May-June 1940. Some Congress MLAs, e.g., Ch. Charan Singh, had been arrested in late July 1940. That the Hallett administration intended to take the Congress bull by the horns was evident in the decision to arrest no less a person than S.K.D. Paliwal, President of the UPCC, under Section 144 Cr. P.C. for defying a ban on his participating in processions and delivering speeches in Farrukhabad district. But if the Governor intended this arrest to have an intimidating effect, his expectations were belied. The arrest only whipped up public excitement. The follow-up arrest of Balkrishna Sharma under the DIR for holding protest meetings in connection with Paliwal's arrest heightened the tempo.

152. Report of Repression prepared by UPCC General Secretary, 30 May 1940, AICC/G-25/1940, p.259.
153. SWIN, Vol.11, p.309.
154. PAL UP No.32/1940, 27 July-3 Aug., p.177.
Meetings and *hartals* were reported from places as distant as Basti and Mirzapur as well as from practically every district of western U.P.\textsuperscript{156}

What gave a further boost to the defiant spirit was the U.P. Government's inability to arrest Jawaharlal Nehru for all his seditious activity in the Province. This was because the Government of India was yet hopeful of a negotiated settlement with the Congress and did not want to alienate the leadership at this juncture. But if Nehru's arrest was not on the cards, the Hallett Government was not going to compromise on lesser leaders. By September 1940, a total of 640 arrests of Congressmen had taken place in the Province. Kanpur headed the list with 93 arrests.\textsuperscript{157} Doubtless, repression had been unleashed in the Province and the stage set for Gandhi's movement of civil disobedience in defence of the right to freedom of speech during the war period.

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{157} *Home Poll* 18/8/40 F.R.U.P. ii.