CHAPTER- III

Subhas Chandra Bose and The Indian National Congress

This chapter aims at chronologically discussing the political landscape of nationalist politics in British India from 1885 to 1941. The chapter will give a brief background of the leading political parties, including indigenous revolutionary organizations, their dynamics and leadership; how they interacted with each other and the nature of their respective relationships with the British in India. The intention is to contextualise the activities of Bose in the contemporary Indian political scenario and therefore it will not necessarily deal with the full spectrum of parties and politics but only those that had relevance with Bose’s life and work. The chapter will finally look at the clash between Bose and the INC high command in 1939 and its consequences that led to Bose's decision to leave INC as well as India, to start an armed struggle from abroad to free his country which led to his eventual alliance with Axis powers.

The emergence of INC marks was an important turn in Indian History. However, before the INC came to existence there were a few other associations for the purpose of liberating India but lacked any systematic program or plan of action, and almost all of these associations essentially had a regional character. Notable among them were the British Indian Association of Bengal which was started in 1851, the Bombay Presidency Association, the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha and the Indian Association in 1876.¹ The INC and the rise of other Indian political parties were basically the outcome of the revolt of 1857-1858. The consequences of the revolt of 1857-1858 effected a complete overhaul of the political system in the Indian subcontinent. The British government was hoping to institute some kind of establishment which guaranteed to keep the channels of communication open with the Indian leaders; to ensure that an event like the revolt of 1857 did not happen again. The direct result of this was the creation of the INC in 1885. Though this organization came into existence in the year 1885 through the efforts of a retired English officer, A. O. Hume who had for a long time held the high post of Secretary to the Government of India in the Home Department, its seeds may be said to have been sown in 1835 by

Raja Ram Mohan Roy, one of the makers of Modern India and whose effort was partly responsible for the introduction of English education in the country.

The English education which was introduced in India with the aim of training clerks to run the machinery of the Government churned out some awakened young men also, who after receiving higher education in India and abroad became politically conscious and became sensitive to the racial discrimination to which Indians were subjected to. It awakened in them self-respect, patriotism and the desire to see their country free. With this began the revolt against the British sense of racial superiority and their attitude of rude domination towards the subject races. At this juncture, A.O. Hume placed a proposal before the socially advanced Indians and later before the then Viceroy Lord Dufferin that an association must be formed to promote mental, moral, social and political regeneration of the people of India, in order to ensure lasting peace and permanent maintenance of law and order. The idea pleased the Viceroy who believed that “as the head of the Government he had found the greatest difficulty in ascertaining the real wishes of the people; and that for purposes of administration, it would be a public benefit if there existed some responsible organization through which the Government might be kept informed regarding the best Indian public opinion.”

Hume, after earning the consent of Lord Dufferin, strived sincerely and on 28th December 1885 held the first session of the Indian National Congress at Bombay under the presidency of W. C. Banerjee.

Western education was introduced with the purpose of meeting the human resource requirement for running the huge machinery of the British Government in India and their expanding trade and growing industries. The main objective was to create people who will be Indian in blood and colour but English in taste and opinion. The western-educated class was the elite which occupied various posts in the administration and monopolized other professions. In early phases they developed a feeling as if they were the real leaders of the country, representing their country and they were chosen to speak for all their countrymen. They believed in the legitimacy of the British rule in India and formed the ideological base for the future moderates of

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the INC. The INC, at its beginning, was a modest institution consisting of middle-class Indians who were loyal to the British. The second half of 19th century witnessed the flowering of a national political consciousness and the foundation and growth of an organized national movement. The Bengal Renaissance commenced in Bengal, the capital of the British government, where the percolation of British and European ideas stimulated Indian reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who was one of the first Indian leaders to start a program of social reforms. This period witnessed an awakening in diverse spheres of Indian life. Indian leaders who were not satisfied with the insufficient political concessions from the British Government understood the political aspect of the Renaissance and it generated an increasing awareness among them. The result was that a new group of leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak emerged, who proclaimed the need for more aggressive methods of agitation to attain complete independence from the British Raj.

By 1905, the INC was divided into two groups known as the Moderates and the Extremists. The rise and evolution of extremism was a reaction against the endeavours of the western reformists who wanted to renovate India in the image of the West. It is difficult to demarcate as to when the Congressmen came to be divided into these two groups. The moderate section of the INC wished to work for the limited objective of administrative reform, primarily through petitioning the colonial rulers. The militant section, the ‘Extremists’, who were gaining a stronger hold over the organization felt that they would make no progress in the fruition of their demands unless the Congress broke out of the ‘petition mode’. The extremists believed in agitation-al methods of struggle, even sacrificing one’s life if it is needed, for the nationalist cause. The period from 1905 to 1919 of INC may be described as the era of Extremists while the initial two decades is known as the Moderates Era.

The origin of Extremism may be traced back to the 1890’s. It was Aurobindo Ghosh (1872-1950) who sowed the seeds of Extremism through his writings.⁷ The nationalist leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji, P.M Mehta, M.E. Wacha, W.C. Banerjee, S.N. Banerjee and many others dominated the Congress politics during the period from 1885 to 1905. They were staunch believers in liberalism and ‘moderate’ politics and came to be labeled as Moderates. Prominent leaders of Extremists were Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghosh and Lala Lajpat Rai who demanded self–government for India free from the tutelage of British supremacy.

1905 is important as it ushered in political extremism. This can be traced back to Lord Curzon’s partition of Bengal in this year. This administrative step radicalized the Bengali middle class. Rash Behari Ghosh took Curzon responsible for the rise of extremism. The situation was changing very rapidly in 1905 that in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 the Japanese defeated the forces imperial Russia. This victory of Japan, an Asian country, was interpreted as the symbol of the rise of the east. The Indians drew the inspiration from the war and started believing that it would not be difficult to drive away the English from India if it was possible for an Asian country to defeat a European power.⁸ Lord Curzon could have pacified the agitated Indians, had he followed a policy of compromise based on tact and pragmatism. But he had a dim view of India and the capacity of Indians to govern themselves.⁹

The agitation following the partition of Bengal (1905) brought the Extremists into prominence in the INC. As a result of this rift within the INC, the conference held in the city of Surat in 1907 witnessed extremist nationalists headed by Aurobindo Ghosh trying to get control of the organization from the Moderates, still mostly constitutionalists and gradualists, but failed and left the INC in disgust. Aurobindo created a separate Nationalist Party for those INC members who left with him and until the commencement of the First World War it was Aurobindo’s activities that were at the epicenter of nationalist politics. Aurobindo himself fled in 1910 to the relative safety of the French enclave of Pondicherry to escape being arrested for his incendiary articles. Once there, he renounced politics altogether and the Moderates

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⁹ Ibid., p. 17.
were bent upon altering the resolutions of 1906 National Congress Session regarding Swadeshi movement, boycott movement and self-government.\textsuperscript{10}

Running parallel to this divide was the religious revivalism in Bengal, which was an integral part of the ideology of extremism. The religious revivalism was led by two men Sri Rama Krishna and Narendranath Datta, later known as Vivekananda. Rama Krishna was the apostle of divine realization and by his practical example he proved that Hinduism was not a dying religion. This shocked the western-educated Indians, who used to think that Hinduism was a dead religion and therefore believed in Christianity. Rama Krishna and Vivekananda gave a new shape to the Hindu religion, by rising above the distinctions of caste, creed and baneful rituals and proved that Hinduism is an everlasting source of spirituality. Vivekananda toured throughout the nation and abroad and tried to enlighten all with his theory and spread the cultural heritage of India. Many concepts of Vivekananda were accepted by extremists like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Aurobindo and later Bose, in their struggle for the liberation of the country.\textsuperscript{11}

Rabindra Nath Tagore, Nazrul Islam and Bankim Chandra Chatterji also played a vital role in motivating Indians by their work of literature. Bankim Chandra gave the clarion call of ‘Bande Mataram’ through \textit{Ananda Math}. He implored the Indians to revive the primeval purity of Indian culture and traditions and inspired a new sense of self-conscious nationalism.\textsuperscript{12} He had great love and respect for Indian culture and tradition and was aggrieved when he found the western-educated youth worshiping the West and ridiculing the culture and the heritage of the country. He was responsible for raising nationalism to the dignity of religion in Bengal. He identified patriotism with religion and tried to get rid of any feeling of indifference towards nationalism. In his work \textit{Kamalakanter Daphtar}, Bangabhumi (Bengal) was identified with goddess Durga and motherland; motherland and the goddess should be considered inseparable.\textsuperscript{13} Bankim Chandra exercised great “influence upon the new nationalism, consciously channeled religious discussion in political direction and

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., pp. 8-9.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 9.
helped to bring about a fusion of religion and politics which so excited many young Hindu Bengalis and so disturbed officials in twentieth century."\(^{14}\)

Meanwhile, Gandhi had returned from England after qualifying as a barrister in 1891. He started his legal career in Bombay but made little headway. He decided to settle down at Rajkot in Gujarat to make a normal living. He, however, fell out with the British Political Agent in Rajkot, in whose court most of his work lay. It was at this time that Dada Abdullah, an Indian merchant in Natal (South Africa), offered to engage him for a civil suit in that country. The contract was for a year; the remuneration was 105 pounds, a first class return fare and actual expenses. The fee was modest, and it was not quite clear whether he was being engaged as counsel or a clerk. As Gandhi wanted to get away from Rajkot, he accepted the offer eagerly. Towards the end of May 1893, he landed in Durban. It took Gandhi no time to witness the humiliation was being meted out to the Indians. He also had encounters with white racism in South Africa. Gandhi initiated a fight for justice for the Indians in South Africa and in due course of time became quite popular among them. In 1896 Gandhi went to India to bring his wife and children and to canvass support for the cause of Indians overseas. Distorted versions of his activities and utterances in India reached Natal and inflamed its European population. On landing at Durban in January 1897, he was assaulted by a white mob. But he continued his struggle for the cause of the Indians and managed to make some improvements in the condition of the Indians. Gandhi told the British High Commissioner in South Africa; “it is not political power, but we do wish to live side with other British subjects in peace and amity, and with dignity and self-respect.”\(^{15}\) Europeans did not want that to happen. In 1906 the Transvaal government published a particularly humiliating ordinance for the registration of its Indian citizens. The Indians held a mass protest meeting at Johannesburg and under Gandhi's leadership took a pledge to defy the ordinance if it became law and to suffer all the penalties resulting from their defiance. Thus Satyagraha was born, a new method of rectifying wrongs and fighting oppression without hatred and without violence.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., p. 10.  
The Satyagraha struggle in South Africa lasted eight years. It had its ups and downs, but under Gandhi’s leadership the small Indian minority sustained its resistance against heavy odds. Hundreds of Indians chose to sacrifice their livelihood and liberty rather than submit to a law which was repugnant to their conscience and self-respect. In the last phase of the struggle in 1913, hundreds of Indians including women went to jail and thousands of Indian labourers, who had stopped work in the mines, faced imprisonment, flogging and even shooting. It was a terrible ordeal for the Indians, but it was also a bad advertisement for the rulers of South Africa.

On 9th January 1915 Gandhi returned to Bombay. He was applauded by the Indians for his struggle and sacrifice in South Africa. In 1915, Gokhale died in Poona which came as a great shock to Gandhi for he had accepted him as his political mentor. After Gokhale’s death, Gandhi never left the country again except for a short trip that took him to Europe in 1931. Though he was not completely unknown in India, Gandhi followed the advice of his political mentor, Gokhale, and took it upon himself to obtain a familiarity with Indian conditions. He traveled widely for one year. Over the next few years, he became involved in numerous local struggles, such as at Champaran in Bihar. In 1919 Gandhi took the first major decisive step in establishing himself as a nationalist leader by opposing the Rowlett Bills. By this time, Rabindranath Tagore had already titled him 'Mahatma' or 'Great Soul'.

Gandhi followed the policy of Gokhale faithfully and extended all cooperation to the British war-efforts during the war. But the obduracy of the Chelmsford Government in passing the Rowlett Bill forced Gandhi to lose faith in the British sense of justice. He had shared the bitter experience of the Indians, suffering indignity and hardship due to the oppressive measures of the British rule. Gandhi realized that in order to enable the Indians to live with freedom and dignity they must be organized so that they could fight against exploitation and oppression. He however was opposed to violence and terrorist activities.

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3.1 Joins The Indian National Congress

With the determination to work for the salvation of his country and especially after resigning from the Indian Civil Service, Bose landed in Bombay on 16\textsuperscript{th} July 1921. A few months earlier he had talked with M.N. Roy, a prominent leftist leader in Calcutta, about the possibilities of revolution in India. Bose was impatient about beginning the battle and probably thought that this is what Gandhi offered. He had returned determined to be a revolutionary. Without wasting any time he arranged a meeting with Gandhi because by that time Gandhi had become the undisputed leader in the Indian political set up. He had a long conversation with Gandhi about the program of non-violence and non-cooperation that Gandhi had launched. He also sought his advice regarding his intentions and future.\textsuperscript{18}

During his meeting with Gandhi, Bose had asked many questions about the program the former had adopted and the answers received could not satisfy him completely. Bose was “depressed and disappointed” and felt that there was a deplorable lack of clarity in the plan which Gandhi had formulated and that he did not have a clear idea of the successive stages of the campaign which could bring India to her cherished goal of freedom.\textsuperscript{19} The meeting, though productive, did not solve Bose’s personal doubts as to the right course he ought to adopt to fulfill his desire to serve India. Bose craved for action but Gandhi’s plan of action was largely passive. Instead of pursuing a revolutionary plan, Gandhi hoped that the British would have a change of heart as a result of his methods. It was only when Bose met Chittaranjan Das on his return to Calcutta and after exhaustive and continuous conversations with him about the object of the Congress movement that Bose began to see his way clearly and was finally able to take the decision of dedicating himself to the movement started by Gandhi.\textsuperscript{20}

Bose found a leader whom he desired to emulate in Chittaranjan Das and decided to follow him as he felt that Das was the man who knew what he was about

\textsuperscript{19} Shridhar Charan Sahoo, \textit{Subhas Chandra Bose Political Philosophy}, New Delhi: Aph Publishing Corporation, 1997, p. 27
\textsuperscript{20} Girja K Mookerjee, \textit{Builders of Modern India Subhas Chandra Bose}, New Delhi: publication Division Government of India, 1984, p. 17.
and could give all that he had, and demand from others all that they could, for the cause of the country.\textsuperscript{21} By this time Das was at the peak of his political career and was a well-known leader throughout Bengal and was best suited for Bose. Bose made him as his political mentor. In 1921, during the initial period of his political career, Bose was made the principal of National College which was started by Das. Bose was not much interested in the college and wanted to be a part of the political activity in the country as the whole country witnessed a sequence of political activities such as Gandhi’s call for Swaraj and the first death anniversary of Bal Gangadhar Tilak on 1st August 1921 which was observed all over the country with huge bonfires of foreign textiles created a patriotic fervor in the country. In spite of his eagerness in joining politics, he gave importance to education as he believed that it would be helpful in the reconstruction of the nation. He tried to establish a network of schools which was necessary to educate the students who left the Government schools and colleges in response to the call of INC. Soon he was made in-charge of the publicity board of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee (hereafter BPCC) and the head of the National Volunteer Corps. Bose knew his responsibilities in these posts and without letting down the expectations of Chittaranjan Das, he organised the propaganda in such a way that it made the Government feel embarrassed. His main slogan was: “To make our non-cooperation with the British successful, Indians must have the fullest cooperation among themselves.”\textsuperscript{22} The Statesman, a leading Anglo-Indian newspaper of Calcutta, observed that the Congress got a person with rare skill and ability, whereas the Government had lost a competent officer.\textsuperscript{23}

In September 1921, many Congress leaders came to Calcutta with Gandhi to coax the former extremist leaders of Bengal to join the new non-cooperation movement. Bose was entrusted with arranging the meeting between Gandhi and the extremist leaders; which seems ironic on hindsight. The conference took place behind closed doors in the presence of Chittaranjan Das. Gandhi and Das had talked to the revolutionaries and tried to convince them that non-violent non-cooperation, instead of weakening or disheartening the people, would strengthen their power of effective

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., p. 95.
resistance. The conference ended with the decision to give a chance to the Congress to strive for Swaraj and do nothing which will get in the way of its goal. Many of the extremist leaders even joined Congress organization as loyal and active members. This was the first time Bose had an opportunity to come in personal contact with prominent leaders of the Congress.\textsuperscript{24}

As a result of the meeting, the non-cooperation movement became the most effective non-violent weapon to protest against the proposed visit of the Prince of Wales to India with the idea of pacifying public feelings and to make the Indians cooperative in their attitude towards the inauguration of the Montford reforms. The country was still on the road to recovery from the trauma of Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the declaration of the Rowlett act. Instructions were issued by the Congress Working Committee to boycott the visit of the Prince of Wales. A call for a strike on 17\textsuperscript{th} November was given and it was decided to wave black flags and observe complete hartal at the time of visit.\textsuperscript{25}

As a precautionary measure all the prominent leaders of the province including Chittaranjan Das, his wife and son, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad—an outstanding Muslim leader of Calcutta, and Bose were arrested and sentenced to different terms of imprisonment. Government was now confident that Calcutta would roll out a royal welcome to the Prince. Chittaranjan Das gave a stirring message to Bengal:

“I feel the handcuffs on my wrists and the weight of iron chains on my body. It is the agony of bondage. The whole of India is a vast prison. The work of the Congress must be carried on. What matters whether I am taken or left? What matters whether I am dead or alive?”\textsuperscript{26}

The message from Das along with the strenuous efforts of Bose, who was now released from prison, had created quite a psychological atmosphere for a complete hartal. The hartal was a grand success and the whole administration was paralyzed in

\textsuperscript{25} Daya Mukherjee, \textit{Subhas Chandra Bose Accelerator of India’s Independence: Political History, Biography}, New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1997, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{26} Durlab Singh, \textit{The Rebel President A Biographical Study Of Subhas Chandra Bose}, Lahore: Hero Publications, 1946, P. 52.
Calcutta, as result of which a government notification was issued within 24 hours declaring the Congress volunteer organization illegal.\(^{27}\)

In response to this Provincial Congress Committee of Bengal held a secret closed-door meeting to discuss the situation. Chittaranjan Das, the president of the Provincial Congress Committee was vested with all powers and was also authorized to nominate his successor. Bose who was earlier a member of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee was now made in-charge of the new movement by Das. Thousands of people came forward to join as volunteers for courting arrest. There was no room in the jails and orders were issued for summary release, but no one was prepared to leave the prison. On 10\(^{th}\) December 1921, Bose was arrested for parading illegally and received a sentence for six months imprisonment. In the prison Bose lived in close proximity with Das and served him as secretary, cook and valet. His long discussions with him on several subjects helped in his political growth.\(^{28}\)

In February 1922, Gandhi got the news of outbreak of violence at Chauri Chaura. The police had opened fire on a mob had retaliated by setting fire to the police station and burning to death twenty one constables and the son of a sub-inspector of police. Hearing this Gandhi immediately called off the civil disobedience movement which was almost near to its goal as he felt that the nation was not yet ready for non-violent non-co-operation. Many leaders, including Bose, Chittaranjan Das, Motilal Nehru and Lala Lajpath Rai resented the suspension of the movement when it was at its climax. They called it Gandhi’s greatest blunder and protested strongly against the embarrassing and ill-timed capitulation. Gandhi was at the verge of success of a massive experiment in the world’s history but he decided to quit and the British did not miss this opportunity to arrest him.\(^{29}\)

Towards the end of 1923 Bose became the general secretary of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. Chittaranjan Das was then the president. On 24\(^{th}\) April 1923, Das became the first mayor of Calcutta Corporation. Bose carried out

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\(^{27}\) Ibid., p. 52.  
several municipal reforms during this period and earned a very good reputation of being an able administrator. He was only twenty-seven years old then. By this time the Calcutta Municipal Corporation had become a very powerful forum for nationalist activities and some of the most forceful speeches of Chittaranjan Das were delivered from the mayor’s chair.

After joining the office, Bose decided to contribute half of his monthly salary of three thousand rupees for charitable purposes. The entire system of administration was changed and it proved popular too. The newly elected Swarajist councilors and Aldermen, including the mayor, came dressed in home-made Khadi clothes. The education department, for the first time, started to provide free primary education to the citizens. Besides, free medical dispensaries and a milk-kitchen for supplying free milk to the poor children were established. The departmental heads of the corporation who were chiefly British began to realize that they were public servants and not masters. If any officer still felt racial or official superiority, the Swarajist executive officer proved strong enough to deal with them. Khadi became the official uniform of municipal employs. The British government came down heavily on the Swarajist workers when Bose had hardly occupied office for six months.30

The government was in search of an opportunity to suppress the Swarajist party by any means as it was dynamically growing and proving to be a challenge to the British administration. The murder of a European by Gopinath Saha provided that opportunity. Saha wanted to murder Charles Tegert, the commissioner of police of Calcutta, instead one Mr. Dey was killed by mistake. He was executed for terrorist murder.31 The government still doubted that this incident might lead to more rebellious activity and as a precautionary measure it wanted to strike harder on the Swarajist as their popularity had far surpassed the popularity of the Congress leaders32

Bose and Das had great admiration for the sacrifice and dedication of the revolutionaries even though they were opposed to terrorism. The Swarajist made an

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official condemnation of terrorism.\textsuperscript{33} Chittaranjan Das succeeded in getting a resolution passed in the Sirajgunj Bengal provincial conference praising Saha for his terrorist deeds. This created a bitter controversy between Das and Gandhi. The same difference in attitude continued, when Jatin Das died in the Lahore prison following a hunger strike. 600 rupees was sent by Bose on behalf of the citizens of Calcutta to the family of Jatin Das who was seen as a martyr for the nation. This failed to make any impression on Gandhi and he just kept silent on the incident. On asking he replied that he had purposely refrained from commenting, because if he had done so he would have done so unfavorably.\textsuperscript{34}

Gandhi took the same stand on the incident of the attack on the life of the viceroy, Lord Irwin, just a week before the Lahore session of the Congress. As the dynamite did not explode in time, Lord Irwin had a narrow escape. The independence resolution which was moved in this session of the Congress included a clause congratulating the viceroy for his providential escape which read:

“The Congress deplores the bomb outrage perpetrated on the viceroy’s train and reiterates its conviction that such action is not only contrary to the creed of the Congress but results in harm being done to the national cause. It congratulates the viceroy and Lady Irwin and their party including the poor servants on their fortunate and narrow escape.”\textsuperscript{35}

Bose was opposed to the inclusion of such a clause in a political resolution and he wrote:

“The feeling in the Congress was that, that clause was uncalled for in a political resolution, but the Mahatma instead or retaining it, probably because he wanted to placate Lord Irwin and prepare the ground for a rapprochement in future.”\textsuperscript{36}

Bose had a soft corner for the revolutionaries and knew many of them personally. “Inevitably official suspicion turned against him: to the British he was that most sinister of objects, an enigma.”\textsuperscript{37} As it was not sufficient, a new emergency ordinance was issued by the viceroy, called the Bengal ordinance, and Bose was

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p. 106.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p. 106.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Ibid., pp. 106-107.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p. 107.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Ibid., p. 107.
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arrested, as one of the most dangerous, under the Regulation III. On 25th October 1924, in the early hours of the morning, Bose was roused from the sleep by some police officers. He was told that they have a warrant to arrest him and for searching his house for arms, explosives, ammunition etc. But nothing was found from his house and no charge was made against him. No compensation was asked from him and no reason was given for their intrusion. He was just told that they have got brute force and that they shall drag him to prison.38 “No charge was ever brought, and such was the clamour against his arbitrary detention that, had conviction been possible, the authorities could hardly have refrained from trying him.”39

A large number of arrests were made so suddenly and unexpectedly on October 25th 1924. These arrests were made partly under Regulation III of 1818 and partly under an emergency (called the Bengal Ordinance) promulgated by the viceroy (Rufus Daniel Isaacs) on the midnight of 24th October which created tremendous excitement in the country. Official circles came out with the excuse that a revolutionary conspiracy was on foot and the arrest had to be made before anything serious happened; but it was hard to make the public believe that those who had been arrested were engaged in revolutionary conspiracy.40

In the Alipore jail, Bose performed his municipal duties for two months. His subordinates were allowed to call on him with files. Chittaranjan Das also met him several times. This arrest only succeeded in making the whole country, including Gandhi, convinced that the Swaraj party’s success had led the government to take such repressive measures. Bose’s arrest made Das extremely bitter over the British attitude:

“All that I want to say is that Subhas is no more revolutionary than I am. Why have they not arrested me? I should like to know why? If love of one’s country is a crime, I am a criminal. If Subhas is criminal, I am a criminal. Not only the chief executive officer of the corporation, but mayor of this corporation is eventually guilty. I can

only say these ordinances are directed against us only to put down lawful organization."  

There was a very strong objection against the arrest of their popular leader by the people of Bengal. On the other hand, *The Statesman* and *The Englishman*, the two leading Anglo–Indian dailies of Calcutta, strongly exhorted the authorities for his detention on the plea that he was "the brain of the revolutionary conspiracy."  

Government was forced to think seriously about releasing Bose but the prestige of the police, at whose insistence the arrests had been made, stood in the way and the proposal was dropped. The agitation over Bose’s arrest gained more strength at that time since the public thought that the object of the government was to strike at the Swarajist administration of the new corporation. Officials and semi-official circles were therefore at pains to put forward an excuse for the arrests to find some credence among the public. Bose’s solicitors at once filed legal proceeding against both the papers which reported against him for defamation. The proceedings dragged on for months and in the meantime attempts were made to secure the help of the government for obtaining proofs to substantiate the charges made against Bose in the press in support of the government. As the government did not agree to help in the matter, an attempt was made to secure the assistance of the Indian office in London. By that time there had been a change in the cabinet in England.

A general election had taken place in October and as a result of the scare created by the Zinovieff letter, there had been a landslide in favor of the Conservative Party. Following the defeat of the Labour Party at the polls, the Labour secretary of state for India, Lord Oliver, had made room for the Conservative secretary of state, Lord Birkenhead. Though the India office was inclined to help the Anglo-Indian papers in the suit brought against them for defamation, they were unable to find any documentary evidence to prove Bose’s complicity in a revolutionary conspiracy.  

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3.2 Life in Mandalay Jail

In January 1925, Bose was shifted to Mandalay Jail with seven other prisoners. He was taken by a ship from Calcutta to Rangoon. His cabin was heavily guarded by police. The ship reached Rangoon after four days and from there Mandalay was about a day's rail journey. Bose was upset by his arbitrary arrest without trial and his speedy and secretive removal to the remote Mandalay prison. He did not have any idea about how many days he was to be detained behind bars. Though being behind bars was not a new experience for him, the circumstances were totally different this time. The government was not ready to provide him with books and they decided that he could not even have his favorite paper *The Forward*, commonly known as *The Jewish Daily Forward*, the publication of which began in 1897 as a Yiddish-language daily issued by dissidents from the Socialist Labor Party of Daniel De Leon. The authorities thought that this would prevent him from his revolutionary ways. Bose used his time well in Mandalay. He managed to read widely, he wrote innumerous letters and articles, classified his ideas and planned for the future. His two and a half years in Burma were a turning-point in his life. He was brought to prison as a 28-year-old activist full of dedication but without properly developed political ideas. He left as a hardened, skeptical man of 31, brimming with ideas and plans. He made great efforts to get to know Burma and although the climate did not agree with him, he was full of admiration for the Burmese.44

He wrote many letters from the jail, sharing his knowledge and experience, to his friend Dilip Kumar Roy (22 January 1897–6 January 1980) who was a Bengali Indian musician, musicologist, novelist, poet and essayist. In Presidency College of Kolkata, he was closely associated with Bose.45 The depression due to his jail sentence soon lifted as his philosophic nature once again helped him to develop his typically strong enthusiasm which characterized the rest of his life. His optimistic temperament is evident from his letters to his friend Dilip Roy:

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“You write you are getting daily a sadder, if not a wiser man, to contemplate how our earth is soaked by tears of humanity from crust to centre. But then these tears are not all of pain and anguish: there are drops of compassion and love as well. Would you really decline to traverse the shoals of pain and suffering, if you knew that there are richer tides of blessing waiting? So far as I am concerned, I see little warrant for pessimism and despondency. On the contrary, I feel, sorrow and suffering should impel us to courage for a higher fulfillment. Do you think what you win without pain and struggle has any lasting value?”

Bose knew the price of liberty and from the moment he decided to join the freedom struggle, he was mentally prepared for the worst. He could, therefore, adjust himself to any circumstance and see a silver lining in every dark cloud. On another occasion he said:

“Do you want the fragrance of the full-blown rose? If so, you must accept the thorns. Do you want the sweetness of the smiling dawn? If so, you must live through the dark hours of the night. Do you want the joy of liberty and the solace of freedom? If so, you must pay the price. And the price of liberty is suffering and sacrifice.”

It was in Mandalay that Bose received the greatest shock of his life when the news of Chittaranjan Das’ death on 16th June 1925 reached him. More than a great loss to the nation it was a severe personal loss for Bose as Das was his friend, philosopher and guide. Bose was extremely depressed after the death of Das. The grief coupled with the climate of Mandalay did not agree with his constitution and he fell seriously ill with an attack of bronchopneumonia in the winter of 1926. It turned out to be a case of suspected tuberculosis and Bose was transferred to Rangoon for medical examination. The medical board composed of Lieut. Col. Kelsall and Bose’s brother Dr. Sunil Chandra Bose, who naturally wanted his brother out of prison, recommended that he should no longer be detained in prison. Instead of releasing him on the basis of the medical report, the Government made a conditional offer in the Bengal Legislative Council that Bose would be released from detention provided that he agrees to go straightaway to Switzerland from Burma, without touching Indian soil, for recuperating his health at his own expense. The motive was obvious. The

government considered him as a dangerous political personality. Bose rejected this conditional offer with contempt as this would have meant the acceptance of indefinite exile. In his letter to Sarat Chandra Bose he wrote: “I have no desire to become a voluntary exile from the land of my birth.”

The philosophy that influenced his thoughts is reiterated in his words:

“I have no desire to become a voluntary exile from the land of my birth.”

Detained in jail without any trial, his health was getting worse day by day. Due to great public pressure, orders were issued for his transfer to Almora Jail. Arrangements were made for his transportation, with top secrecy early one morning in May 1927 by a boat sailing from Rangoon. It took four days to reach Diamond Harbor on River Hooghly. Before his boat reached Calcutta, he was removed to the Governor’s lounge for another medical examination. There he met with Lowman, the Director of the Intelligence Department. The board wired the report to the Governor at

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48 Ibid., p. 40.
49 Ibid., pp.40-41.
Darjeeling. The police was opposed to the release of Bose and the police officers tried to influence the medical board to submit a report in favour of his transfer to Almora or deportation to Switzerland, but they could not succeed. The doctors urged the immediate release of Bose in view of his health. He was released on 16th May 1927, after a long incarceration of about three years.\(^{50}\)

After his release, people's choice fell naturally upon Bose to lead the province after Chittaranjan Das. He was elected President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. Gradually Bose overcame the shock he had received at Das’ death and started his political activities once again with renewed enthusiasm. In November 1927, Viceroy Lord Irwin (1926-1931) made an announcement regarding the appointment of Simon Commission. The non-cooperation movement had failed and there was a lull in political activities thereafter. In 1927 the British Government wanted a report on the political reforms to be introduced in India and on amending the Government of India Act. So it appointed a commission and it consisted of Sir John Simon and six other members. All of them were members of the British Parliament. There was not a single Indian member. The Congress felt that the commission was an insult to Indians, for these English men were to shape the future of India. This disturbed the political atmosphere in India and gave a definite left-wing orientation to the Congress, which was seen in annual session of the Indian National Congress held at Madras.\(^{51}\)

In December 1927, the annual session of the Indian National Congress held at Madras under the president-ship of Dr. Ansari, the Muslim leader of Delhi, a resolution was passed to boycott the Simon commission. Bose was not able to attend the session. He sent a message saying complete independence should be the ultimate goal of Congress. Jawaharlal Nehru (hereafter Nehru) and Srinivasa Iyengar were among those who worked for and made possible the passage of the resolution declaring complete independence to be the goal of Congress.\(^{52}\)


The other significant event of the Madras session of Congress was the appointment of Bose, Nehru and Shuaib Qureshi as general secretaries of the party. This event provided a left orientation to the Congress organization. Nehru was new to the Indian politics as he had just returned from Europe. In the initial stage of his political career in the Congress, he was associated with Bose for a few years. The rivalry between the two, Bose and Nehru, started when the dominance of the Nehru faction asserted itself in the Congress. In 1928, Bose was elected President of the All India Trade Union Congress. He occupied the post till 1931. Apart from this he became the General Officer in Command of the Volunteer Corps. During this time Bose realized that he could also lead and act. By becoming President of the Trade Union Movement, Bose was able to draw the so-far untapped strength of the working classes in India for the freedom movement.

The years 1928 and 1929 saw a new drive in youth movements’ revolutionary activity and unrest in the labour world. Bose found it the right time to start a political campaign. Bose thought Gandhi alone could give the leadership to the country. He met Gandhi in Sabarmati in May 1928 and requested him to start a vigorous campaign. But Gandhi refused saying he could not see any light. Later on 12th March 1930, Gandhi launched The Civil Disobedience Movement by conducting the historic Dandi Salt March, where he broke the Salt Laws imposed by the British Government. But by that time the labour unrest had subsided to a large extent. Gandhi agreed that he should have launched it two years earlier. Unfortunately Congress and the Swarajist leaders who had the Congress machinery in their hands lost a bit of their charisma for not utilizing the situation in 1928.

This was probably the view of the left wing of Congress led by Bose and Nehru. Their assessment was based on the study of the political situation of the country. In February and March of 1928, an all-party conference was held in Delhi to discuss the directive of Madras Congress and to meet the challenge of Lord

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Birkenhead. Lord Birkenhead had earlier challenged the Indian political leaders to come forward with a better constitution for India and thus prove the British Government of India to be unworthy. The Motilal Nehru Report was published in the month of August as an outcome of the conference. The report regarded Dominion Status as the next immediate objective. On this the Committee could not be unanimous since the left-wing minority did not accept it. They were in favour of complete national independence (Purna Swaraj). Bose and Nehru opposed the report and they also offered to resign their general secretary-ship. It was decided by them that a separate body called the Independence League should be formed with a view to protest against the decisions of Nehru Committee and consequently of the All-Party Conference. Bose for the first time raised the banner of revolt against the compromising tendency visible in the Congress programme. 56

The second significant event of the year was the arrival of the Simon Commission in India. Bose implored Gandhi to take a positive lead for the country against the arrival of the Simon Commission. The Indian National Congress again adopted a passive stand with mere black flag demonstrations and the boycott of all the functions connected with it. 57

In December 1928, the Calcutta session was held. This was the largest attended meeting since the inception of Congress and it witnessed the open rift between Gandhi and Bose on the issue of Dominion status. In this session Bose raised a uniformed volunteer force trained on military basis. Bose had devoted much time to gathering and training two thousand volunteer corps. They were mainly to look after the delegates during the meeting. The idea behind this was Bose’s ambition of the Indianization of the Indian army, since free India would have to defend itself and military training was better sooner rather than later. This made a great impact on the members of the Congress. The session was followed by a long discussion on the Nehru report on the Dominion status. Gandhi was personally satisfied with the report, but Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru and the younger section in the party opposed his view. Gandhi suggested by way of compromise that the dominion status be accepted and a

56 Ibid., p. 122.
57 Daya Mukherjee, Subhas Chandra Bose Accelerator of India’s Independence: Political History, Biography, New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1997, p. 43.
time limit to be given. If Britain did not accept the proposal by the end of 1929, or reject it before that, the Congress will be free to organize a campaign of non-violent non-cooperation.

The Calcutta session created two groups in Congress which was noticed earlier also, but not as dominant as of now. The senior group in the Congress agreed to the Dominion status. This was not accepted by the left wing led by Bose. The compromise resolution of Gandhi failed to satisfy Bose. With the support of Jawaharlal Nehru, Bose moved an amendment to it that the Congress would be content with nothing short of independence which implied severance of the British connection. Then Gandhi’s resolution was put to vote and the vote could hardly be called as free vote. The followers of Gandhi made it a question of confidence in their leader and opined that if Gandhi was defeated in the voting he would retire from the Congress. The party members did not want Gandhi to be out of Congress. This can be seen as personal politics and the use of his popularity to make the left wing weak. Jawaharlal Nehru absented himself from voting as the resolution said nothing about independence. The amendment moved by Bose and supported by Jawaharlal Nehru lost by 973 votes to 1,350. The margin of defeat of the left wing proved that it was beginning to be strong and influential.58

Bose was a bit disappointed with the Congress for the decision of Dominion form of Government and for not utilizing the opportunity. In the early months of 1929, he presided over a series of students’ and youth conferences in Bengal, Punjab, Nagpur, Amraoti and Maharashtra. He preached to them the values of integrity and sacrifice and infused them with the courage for adherence to the national goal of complete Independence. In that year the Meerut conspiracy case took place. It was a controversial court case, in which several trade unionists, including three Englishmen were arrested for organizing Indian-rail strike. This immediately caught attention in England since it affected their colonization and industrialization. The agitation among the nationalist intelligentsia, students, youth and growing unrest in the working class

made Bose think seriously about a bigger political campaign against the British government.  

Bose had a strong feeling that the Lahore Congress will adopt a resolution in favour of complete independence. The youth movement was rapidly gaining momentum. To some extent this movement was responsible for the development of militant and radical trends in the country. Many young leaders were attracted towards Bose’s new lines of activity. It is seen that wherever the older generation failed, the younger became self-conscious and took up the responsibility to further the struggle for freedom. Due to his extremist views and ardent support for activism and revolutionary methods Bose thought the philosophy of Gandhi and Aurobindo is harmful for the country. He was of the opinion that the time was not the one for metaphysical speculation.

He said:

“the actual effect of the propaganda carried on by the Sabarmati school of thought is to create a feeling and an impression that modernism is bad, that large scale production is an evil, that wants should not be increased, that the standard of living should not be raised, that we must endeavour to the best of our ability to go back to the days of bullock-cart, and that the soul is so important that physical culture and military training can well be ignored. The actual effect of the propaganda carried on by the Pondicherry school of thought is to create a feeling and an impression that there is nothing higher or nobler than peaceful contemplation, that Yoga means Pranayama and Dhyana, that while action may be tolerated as good, this particular brand of Yoga is something higher and better. This propaganda has let many a man to forget that spiritual progress under the present day conditions is possible only by ceaseless and unselfish action, that the best way to conquer nature is to fight her, and it is weakness to seek refuge in contemplation when we are hemmed in on all sides by dangers and difficulties. It is passivism, not philosophical but actual, inculcated by these schools of thought against which I protest. In this holy land of ours, Ashrams are not new institutions and ascetics and Yogis are not novel phenomenon: they have held and they will continue to hold an honored place in society. But it is not their lead

59 Daya Mukherjee, Subhas Chandra Bose Accelerator of India’s Independence: Political History, Biography, New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1997, pp. 43-44.
that we shall have to follow if we are to create a new India, at once free, happy and great… In India we want to a philosophy of activism. We must be inspired by robust optimism. We have to live in the present and to adapt ourselves to modern conditions.” 60

Bose had a strong feeling that the leaders must have the capacity to think ahead of their contemporaries and must take the responsibility of creating public opinion. While doing so many might court unpopularity, but this should not bother the leaders in their determination to fight against the whole world, if necessary, for the good of his country.61

On 31st October 1929, Lord Irwin issued a statement saying that “I’m authorized on behalf of His Majesty’s government to state clearly that, in their judgment, it is implicit in their declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India’s constitutional progress, as there contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion status”62. After this, leaders of several parties including the Congress met in Delhi and expressed appreciation of the sincerity underlying his offer, and decided to offer cooperation in formulating a Dominion constitution for India. The signatories, including Gandhi and Motilal Nehru, expressed their belief that the business of the Round Table Conference would be to draw up a Dominion constitution for India. Jawaharlal Nehru at first was not willing to sign the Delhi manifesto. But Gandhi’s wishes prevailed here also, and the younger Nehru signed it (here it is notable that prior to this Jawaharlal Nehru had the same view that Bose held for the freedom of the nation, and opposed the idea of Dominion status). Several who called themselves left wingers, including Bose and Dr. Kitchlew of Punjab, issued a separate statement and opposed the goal of dominion status and the participation in the round table conference. Feeling that he was no longer in accord with the great majority of the Congress Working Committee and that his membership in it would prevent him from voicing his opposition, Bose sent in his letter of resignation from the Working Committee. However, after discussion with Gandhi and Motilal Nehru, Bose withdrew his resignation, feeling that he could still agitate for the independence and

61 Ibid., pp. 130-131.
continue in the Working Committee. Bose recognized that Jawaharlal has now given up independence at the instance of Gandhi. Bose always hoped that the younger Nehru would stand with him and push the Gandhian leadership to a more radical position; but often Nehru retracted his genuine opinions which were more in concordance with Bose. This often left Bose exposed and ally-less, which did not stop Bose from continuing to make his challenges, but often without much success. And Bose, slowly but increasingly, came to feel more resentment against Jawaharlal Nehru than Gandhi. Moreover, he gradually came to feel that he could not follow his path of action while staying in Congress.63

The Lahore session of Congress was at hand by December 1929 and a president needed to be elected for the session. At this juncture Jawaharlal Nehru became the president with the support of Gandhi and Bose was deprived of his general secretary-ship sooner. This tactical move of Gandhi proved fatal to the left wing in Congress. On one hand, the left wing lost a strong and popular leader from their ranks and on the other, Jawaharlal Nehru was prevented from implementing his left wing ideas as he was surrounded by right wing members instead of leaders like Bose in the working committee and thus rendering him ineffective. The Lahore Congress saw the culmination of Bose's dream of the declaration of the national goal as complete independence. But what Bose demanded at Lahore was a complete programme of action based on the organization of the peasantry working classes and the youth in one solid mass to enforce the national demand. According to him there could be no half-way measures in the national struggle. It had to be a “total boycott of British rule and administration leading to a parallel government”64. One can notice that Bose was alienated in Congress due to ideological differences with a majority of Gandhian followers.

The difference in opinion between Bose was not the only difficulty that Congress faced during the last weeks of 1929. The first serious split in the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) also took place in December just as Bose was assuming the presidency of this organization. Since renewed trade union activity got

63 Ibid., pp. 215-216.
64 Daya Mukherjee, Subhas Chandra Bose Accelerator of India’s Independence: Political History, Biography, New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1997, p. 44.
under way in the late 1920s, the communist, socialist, and nationalist left within the AITUC had been growing. At the Nagpur session of the trade unionists, in early December, the politically-left nationalists defeated the right on a number of issues. These included affiliation with the Pan-Pacific trade union Secretariat (which the Right maintained was a communist organization), boycott of the Whitley Commission on Indian Labour and membership of the Girni Kamgar Union (a section of textile workers union in Bombay, which branched out from Girni Kamgar Mahamandal in 1928) in AITUC. With their defeat in all of these issues, the right-wing members of the AITUC executive committee walked out and their rift came out in open.65

In a statement published on 9th December, 1929 in Liberty (Chittaranjan Das brought out a paper called Forward to fight the British Raj and later changed its name to Liberty), Bose appealed those who left AITUC to return. He said, in part: “there is a fundamental difference of mentality and outlook between the right wing and the left…I should state most empathetically that it is a mistake to regard a right winger as an agent of British imperialism and a left winger as an agent of Moscow…I do not know why the right wing suddenly developed a defeatist mentality and withdrew from the Congress. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has made it perfectly clear…that if the right wing had rallied all their supporters they could still have commanded a majority…if they (i.e., the right wings) believe in democracy, they cannot object to the growing importance of the left wing in the T.U.C., nor can they grudge the recognition granted to the Girni Kamgar Union. Further, they should take the verdict of the executive council…on the question of the boycott of Whitley Commission, in a sporting spirit and abide by the decision of the majority.”66

Bose wanted to reconcile the factions and thus strengthen AITUC. Jawaharlal Nehru who was in accord with Bose’s views, praised his conciliatory efforts, but neither he nor Bose could bring about a compromise. The right wing of the AITUC moved to form a separate organization, the Indian Trade Union Federation, which later became the National Trade Union Federation. The factional issues spilling out to the public was affecting the Congress in organizational level.

66 Ibid., p. 220.
The gradual dropping of leftist members from the Congress Working Committee made the relation worse between the rightists and leftists in the Congress. Bose found it difficult to work within the Congress and formed Congress Democratic Party on the 2nd January 1930. This party advocated a militant political programme and drew the sympathy of the leftist followers. But the new party could not become effective as Bose was arrested and taken to Alipore Central Jail, as soon as he returned to Calcutta from the Lahore Congress and was sentenced to one year imprisonment.\textsuperscript{67}

During the early months of 1930, Gandhi was preparing along with the Congress Working Committee for a new campaign, civil disobedience movement, for the implementation of the independence resolution of Lahore Congress. This was meant to lead the country to complete freedom (Purna Swaraj). It was decided by the Working Committee that the campaign should be controlled by the followers of Non-Violence. Gandhi was afraid of eruption of violence and was a little worried about the impatient youth. Gandhi felt that the government would not be more accommodating to the Congress demands without the pressure that a mass campaign could bring. Gandhi launched his salt march (Dandi March) on 12\textsuperscript{th} March 1930 while Bose was coping with his imprisonment in Alipore jail.\textsuperscript{68}

Gandhi had accepted the idea of ‘complete Independence’ under the pressure of the prevailing circumstances during Lahore Congress. The year of grace given to the British government for the fulfilment of the conditions of Motilal Nehru report by Gandhi and the Congress in the all parties meet in Delhi had expired. And he did not have any other option rather than starting the campaign. Bose watched the movement from the prison with full admiration of Gandhi’s leadership.

The Dandi march created a mass awakening in the entire country, while the revolutionaries were carving a niche for themselves. They did not believe in mercy but in retaliation. The incidents of Chittagong, Dhaka Comilla, Calcutta, Midnapore and many other places are the evident examples of this. Bose was released from the

jail on 23rd September 1930 and the moment he was outside, he started travelling around the country in a campaign to infuse a new spirit into the organizations of the country. In connection with this programme, he made a visit to the northern parts of Bengal. On his visit there, an order was passed by the D.M. prohibiting his visit to Malda. The District Magistrate of Malda’s anxiety was evident in the order, ‘no entry for Bose in this region’69. Bose protested saying, “this order is illegal” and proclaimed that “as a self-respecting citizen of the country I refuse to abide by the D.M.’s order.” Thus, for disobeying the order Bose was arrested again and taken to the first class chamber and his trial started immediately. Disobeying the order of District magistrate was not an ordinary offence and the verdict was imprisonment for seven days. The authorities however realized that the news of his arrest would result in a wave of processions taking place in the region. As the Malda town was small, it would not take much time for things to go out of the D.M.’s control. So without taking further risk, Bose was sent to Alipore Central Jail via Natore.70

He was later released from the jail later in the month of January 1931. By January 26th 1931, dissatisfaction peaked again in the INC. The Congress had been declared an illegal institution by the British Government and meetings and conferences were banned. However, 26th January was supposed to be the day of taking oath for the independence of the country. Hence all the orders were ignored. The national flag was to be hoisted and processions to be staged. The procession in Calcutta was led by Bose. There was a vast police force to make sure no one got near the dais. Bose had been warned privately by a senior police officer not to take part in it: ‘tell your boss’ he replied to the messenger, ‘that I will break the law.’71 In the court, as a Congress man he could make no defense, but he vigorously, as Mayor, spoke about the conditions in the lockup in which he had spent the night. Bose went straight ahead with his processions chanting Bande Mataram without bothering about the police force. With no option left, the police commenced a brutal Lathi-charge on the gathering. Even Bose was injured in the Lathi-charge and was arrested for another six month imprisonment. Later he was released with other political prisoners under

70 Ibid., pp. 82-83.
the agreement between Gandhi and the viceroy, known as the Gandhi-Irwin pact. There followed ten months of liberty before the new crisis, on Gandhi’s return to India from the Second Round Table Conference in December 1931. While Gandhi had been negotiating, Bose had abstained from embarrassing him, although he saw no hope of a successful issue. But as the unrest of 1931 began to grow he became a thorough nuisance to authorities in Bengal, criticising, inciting, prying into any situation of political delicacy, displaying a haughty detachment to British officials who impeded him, disregarding orders, injunctions and prohibitions. He was naturally included in the general arrests of leading Congress men.\textsuperscript{72}

On 5\textsuperscript{th} March 1931, the Gandhi-Irwin pact or the truce document was signed according to Gandhi’s terms and all the prisoners held during the Civil Disobedience movement were released. Gandhi however did not make any request for the release of prisoners held for violent activities. On the 23\textsuperscript{rd} March 1931, Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were hanged. The ‘divide and rule’ policy of the British had succeeded. Once again they made compromises with Congress but dealt with an iron hand with the revolutionaries. This shows clearly that Gandhi’s prejudice against the resort to arms was too deeply ingrained by that time. As a result the Yugantar and Nuojawan institutions expressed such dissatisfaction that the whole country seemed to be losing faith in the leadership of Gandhi.\textsuperscript{73} The terms of the Pact were a great disappointment to Bose. On his release he rushed to Bombay to meet Gandhi, travelled with him to Delhi and held lengthy discussions with him. The Karachi Congress was held under the shadow of tragedy as Bhagat Singh and his comrades were executed in total disregard of public opinion in India.\textsuperscript{74}

This made Gandhi to foresee an impending storm. But he was determined to prevent any such upheaval. The Round Table Conference was to be held soon and to join that conference he would have to go to England. The Congress was the only all India organization then; but on the issue of Bhagat Singh and the others, it could get

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., pp. 35-37.
divided which would not be desirable at all. Then Gandhi realized that there was only one person who could tackle the situation, the undeniable leader of the young - Bose. Bose was called to Gandhi’s presence and the whole situation was explained to him. Bose agreed to see to it that there would not be any difference of opinion at the Round Table Conference since he felt that any disunity in the Congress would only benefit the British. He imposed only one condition. Whereas there would be no untoward comment inside the conference, he must have the right to protest outside it. While Bose did not allow the conference to be disrupted, in his speeches outside he kept taking up the challenge:

“Why should the Civil disobedience movement be abandoned? Why was the release of the revolutionaries, particularly the release of Bhagat Singh and the others, not included in the pact? What have Indians achieved by the Gandhi-Irwin Pact? When the Indians had at last got up from their century old slumber and actively taken part in the liberation movement, the pact has only succeeding in putting them back to where they had begun. Was it the policy of Gandhi only to bring all active efforts of the people to a standstill?”

These were the questions which made Bose restless and which he articulated with great vehemence and fervor. After these questions raised by Bose, Gandhi called a special meeting to pay tribute to Bhagat Singh and the revolutionaries and the great non-violent leader himself praised the bravery and sacrifice of these shaheeds. A resolution was passed and Gandhi named Bhagat Singh as Sardar Bhagat Shingh. This action of Gandhi was widely appreciated.

But somehow Bose personally felt that the Round Table Conference was not as great as it seemed and that it was just a bluff by the British Government. He thought the main idea of the British was to prove to the whole world that the Indians were not worthy of attaining independence. Gandhi did not want to believe this as he never had any lack of faith in anybody’s word and did not harbor any hatred or antagonism towards any one. The British were no exception. Thus he had no doubt in his mind about the good intentions of the British Government. Studying the mind and resolve of Gandhi, Bose at last said in dissatisfaction: “I will not stand in the way of

76 Ibid., p. 86.
Gandhi going to the Round Table Conference. Let him come back disillusioned. I will then stand vindicated.” Bose was opposed to the Round Table Conference and said that no useful purpose could be served by such conferences. “Even if Dominion Status is offered tomorrow”, said Bose, “our duty will be to organise the younger section into a republican party as was the case in Ireland and to keep up the agitation for Independence.”

When Gandhi was selected by the Congress Working Committee as the sole representative of the Congress to the Second Round Table Conference, Bose considered this to be a tactical error. Despite his misgivings, Bose sent the following telegraphic message to Gandhi on the eve of his departure for England: “Our hearts are with you. Wherever you go awakened India will follow you with expectant eyes confident that the Nation’s honour will be safe in your keeping. We shall fight again if need be but not accept less than our birth right.”

As anticipated by Bose, the conference turned out to be a mockery of the ideals it had set out to achieve. The British government set up a whole lot of self-appointed leaders and sectarian elements against Gandhi and swiftly turned the tables on him by focusing on the problem of minorities and that of the future federal structure of India, neatly sidestepping the main issue of national independence. According to Bose, Gandhi’s London visit was badly planned from all points of view. It was a disillusioned Gandhi who returned from London. Further, Bose regretted that no attempt was made to put Gandhi in touch with the people and circles who counted in European politics outside England.

According to the view of Bose, the nomination of Gandhi as the sole representative of the Congress was a great blunder. Bose is a person who never minced words and whatever he felt he expressed it boldly. He had great respect for Gandhi, but did not agree with the methods he adopted for winning India’s independence. He said, “Mahatma Gandhi has rendered and will render phenomenal service to his country. But India’s salvation will not be achieved under his
leadership”81 shortly after Gandhi’s return from the Round Table Conference on 28th December 1931 with a huge burden of ‘failure’ on his head. He had acquired a great deal of publicity, and a new name given by Winston Churchill - the ‘Half Naked Fakir from India’. Gandhi was surprised to find the repressive measures let loose by the government in different parts of the country. Despite Bose’s opposition, on December 29th 1931, the Congress Working Committee authorized Gandhi to seek an interview with the new Viceroy Lord Willingdon, but the Viceroy refused to discuss with Gandhi any measures adopted by the Government. As Bose had feared, the wish of the British was fulfilled and massive propaganda was unleashed in different countries of the world. “What can we do? We were ready to give them freedom. They themselves are not fit enough to receive it because of their internal differences in views and opinions.”82

In May 1931, Bose presided over the Naujawan Bharat Sabha conference in Uttar Pradesh and in July the Calcutta session of the All India Trade Union Congress. The Bengal Political Conference held in December under Bose's inspiration felt that civil-disobedience should be restarted. After getting a negative and unfriendly reply from the Viceroy, the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution calling upon the nation, on 1st January 1933, to resume Civil disobedience movement considering the time was ripe for reviving the movement.

While the first Civil disobedience movement may have caught the British Government napping, Gandhi's novel method of resistance in 1932 saw them better prepared to deal effectively with the second civil disobedience movement and they went on the offensive. Lord Willingdon had replaced the milder Lord Irwin as Viceroy and he cracked down heavily on the agitators. Bose presided over the Maharastra Youth conference in Poona and a resolution was passed asking the Congress Working Committee to resume the Civil Disobedience movement. The Government had issued orders to strike hard at Congress organizations. All the leaders were rounded up. By 2nd January 1932, Bose was arrested at Kalyan on his

way back to Calcutta. Nehru was arrested earlier on his way to Bombay. On 4th January Gandhi was arrested along with Sardar Patel and it became evident that next to Gandhi and Nehru, Bose has become the third most important leader in the Congress ranks. In January 1932, Bose was first lodged in a small jail in a remote place called Seoni in Madhya Pradesh. He was soon joined there by his elder brother Sarat Chandra, a leading lawyer, front rank Congressman and Alderman of Calcutta Corporation.

The repressive measures adopted by the government could not successfully snuff out the Civil Disobedience movement which was in full swing. When the country was thus engaged in a life and death struggle, Gandhi declared his ‘fast unto death’ on September 20th to protest against the ‘Communal Award’ to grant permission for separate electorates to minority communities by Ramsay Macdonald, the then British Prime Minister. Such an unexpected step by Gandhi surprised Bose and Nehru and considerably weakened the tempo of the movement. Bose records his feelings from the Seoni sub jail of Madhya Pradesh:

“While the Mahatma’s fast had a remarkable effect on his countrymen, in the international sphere it did not prove to be an unmixed blessing. It served to advertise to a disproportionate degree the issue of the depressed classes. Hitherto the world had known only one issue relating to India, the political issue- India’s grievance against England. Now the leader of the Nationalist movement himself announced to the world that there was another issue- the internal issue- of such vital importance to India that he was prepared to stake his life for it. And the British propagandists were not slow to take advantage of the opportunity.”

On 26th January 1933, the Independence Day celebration was organized with great enthusiasm to accelerate the tempo of the civil disobedience movement. The Government used repressive methods to break the demonstration and processions; but processions were organised in defiance of Government orders. At such a critical juncture, Gandhi announced his decision about the suspension of the Civil

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Disobedience campaign for six weeks, which was subsequently extended for six weeks more. While suspending the movement Gandhi appealed to Viceroy Willingdon to withdraw ordinances and release the Civil disobedience prisoners, but this request was rejected by the Government.  

Hindu leaders assembled in Bombay and finally an agreement was reached about abolishing completely separate electorates. The Poona Pact enabled Gandhi to break his fast. The turn of events completely bewildered Bose who felt that the prime issue of Indian independence was side-tracked and drowned by the emotional excitement over Gandhi’s fast. He thought that the cunning British Government had once again got the better of the Congress by successfully side-tracking the main issue of national independence. Civil disobedience and mass Satyagraha took a sudden back seat as issues like anti-untouchability campaigns and debates on temple entry bills came to the forefront. Bose and the radical elements could not help but feel resentful.

The Poona Conference of the Congress in July, 1933 authorized Gandhi to make another attempt to meet the Viceroy to arrive at an understanding with him failing which the Congress should resume ‘Individual Civil Disobedience’. Gandhi’s request for an interview met with a humiliating rebuff. In accordance with the decision of the Poona Conference, Gandhi along with some followers proceeded to start the Civil Disobedience movement individually and by August, 1933 all of them were in prison without producing any desirable impact. While in prison Gandhi served a notice to the Government that he would resort to fasting if he was not granted facilities to conduct his anti-untouchability campaign as he was given during his detention in September 1932. He was immediately set free as the Government realised by then that the movement had fizzled out. After being released from prison Gandhi declared that he would consider himself a prisoner till August 1934, since he have been released by the Government before the expiry of his prison term and hence would not offer Civil Disobedience during that period. The Congress was now preparing itself to turn to its Parliamentary Programmes and this was approved by the

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All India Congress Committee called at Patna in May 1934. At the same time the 
Socialist Congressmen met there in a conference to prevent the outright drift of the 
Congress to constitutionalism. They put forth a very radical and dynamic programme 
of action before the country but could not succeed in preventing Gandhi from 
suspending the Civil Disobedience movement.88

3.3 Exile in Europe

Since the health of the Bose brothers was getting worse in the jail, they were 
shifted to Jabalpur Central Jail. From there Bose was shifted from place to place 
allegedly for medical diagnosis and treatment; first to Madras and then to Bhowali 
Health Centre. But no improvement could be perceived and his health went on failing 
with a persistent fever and finally he was taken to Balaram Hospital, Lucknow. 
However, his health failed rapidly. The English doctor Colonel Buckley felt that 
things had gone far enough and that he should be sent to Europe, if he was to live. 
Left with no option, the British Government agreed to allow Bose to proceed to 
Europe for treatment and cure, and not to release him in India. Before his departure, 
he was brought back for a while to Jabalpur jail where his brother was held. On 13rd 
February 1933 Bose sailed for Vienna. At Bombay port, one of the two police chiefs 
was allowed to see him off. He was brought to the port in a closed ambulance where 
he boarded the Italian ship S.S. Ganges on another enforced exile which was destined 
to open a new chapter in his political career.89 Over a span of twenty years, Bose was 
incarcerated eleven times by the British, either in India or in Rangoon (which was his 
first forced exile). During the mid-1930s he was exiled by the British to Europe, 
where he championed India's cause and aspiration for self-rule before gatherings and 
conferences.

A few days before his departure to Europe he sent two letters, one to 
Rabindranath Tagore and another to Gandhi, asking letters from them for introduction 
while he was convalescing in Europe. He got the letter from Rabindranath Tagore

88 Hari Hara Das, Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Movement, New Delhi: Sterling 
89 Reva Chatterji, Netaji Subhus Chandra Bose Bengal, Revolution and Impendence, New Delhi: Ocean 
Books Pvt. Ltd, 2000, p. 94. see also B.k. Ahluwalia and Shasi Ahluwalia, Netaji and Gandhi, New 
immediately but Gandhi sent a message saying that he was not prepared to give any letter of introduction. Bose got a rude shock as he was hoping that Gandhi would not deny him such a small favour. Probably Gandhi did not do it for he thought that Bose’s way of struggle for independence was not appropriate. Bose tore up the letter from Rabindranath Tagore and made up his mind to proceed with his own work and identity and not to depend on anybody else’s recommendation letters for introduction.  

Like many Indians before Independence, he carried a British passport and in his passport his stay in Europe was restricted exclusively to Austria. On the 8th of March, 1933, Bose reached Vienna and was placed under the treatment of Dr. Furth. Bose was not happy with Dr. Furth’s diagnosis that the main problem lay not in the lungs but in the abdomen, particularly the gall-bladder and the duodenum. When, by the first week of March 1933, there had not been much progress, he wrote to the secretary of state for India requesting for facilities for his passage to Germany and England. The India office had expected this, and their position was minuted by W.J. Clauson on 25th March.

The objections to his visiting Berlin or London are well-known: both were centers of Indian youth, vulnerable to be led into extremist paths. Even before he left India, when he was supposed to be very ill, Bose was indulging in terrorist intrigues: he was, of course, a very experienced organizer and his presence among the more or less unorganized or disorganized students in England or Germany would likely be very undesirable. Bose later found very good physicians and received satisfactory medical treatment in Vienna. After a few weeks of treatment and rest, he began to recover rapidly. As soon as he felt stronger physically, he began to take active interest in his new surroundings and sought to establish contact with people in Europe in the interest of the nationalist movement in India. He found a kindred spirit in another leading Indian politician then convalescing in Europe, Vithalbhai Jhaverbhai Patel (hereafter V.J. Patel), an elder brother of Vallabhbhai Patel. V.J. Patel not only shared

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his interest in promoting international goodwill for Indian nationalist aspirations but also his antipathy towards Gandhian way of independence struggle.

3.4 Political Activities in Europe

Bose began meeting people in Vienna for the purpose of launching an Austrian-Indian society there. He made influential friends from cultural and economic circles in Austria and this helped him in establishing many cultural and economic ties between Austrians and Indians. He opened channels of communication with many European writers and scholars such as Romain Rolland and spent time to develop constructive discussions and relations. By personal contacts, correspondence, lectures, writings etc. He endeavoured to create in the people of Europe an interest in the Indian national movement and to win their sympathy for the struggle for freedom being carried on by the INC and moral support against Britain. In Vienna he met diplomatic representatives of many countries at the functions organized by the Austrian-Indian society. While representatives of some countries were totally indifferent, Bose soon discovered with great satisfaction that the neighboring countries of Austria, viz. Czechoslovakia and Poland, reacted very positively to his efforts and showed a great deal of understanding of the struggle for national independence being fought by the Indian people. He drew inspiration from the freedom struggle of these two nations that sought the help of other nations (Russia and Japan) for the achievement of their goal. In due time, he received a visa to visit Czechoslovakia from the Consul General of that country and travelled to Czechoslovakia to continue his treatment.

On 29th June 1933 he reached Prague. While being there, he often had political discussions with Edouard Benes, the then Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia. He studied the Czechoslovakia Youth Movement, ‘Sokol’ and the history of Czechoslovakia Legion which was created during the First World War outside Czechoslovakia with the support of Great Britain and Russia to fight for their liberation from Austrian domination. In Prague he also met Professor Lesny, a well-

known ideologist, a friend and biographer of Rabindranath Tagore and one-time Professor at Viswa Bharati. They discussed on the significance of the cultural and economic ties between India and Czechoslovakia and to further such ties the Czechoslovakia-Indian Association was brought into existence in 1934, with Lesny as the president. At the inauguration of this society at the Lubkowitz Palace in Prague, Bose spoke on the struggle for freedom of India carried on by the INC.\textsuperscript{94}

Bose was able to procure a visa to travel to Poland from a visiting Polish minister he had befriended and went there to make further connections with prominent Polish leaders. There he studied the history of Polish legion which was trained by the Japanese and fought for the freedom of that country. Meanwhile news of the cancellation of civil disobedience movement reached Bose in Vienna. He and V. J. Patel were upset over the cancellation of the mass movement and issued a scathing statement, part of which read:

“The time has …. come for a radical reorganization of the Congress on a new principle and with a new method. For bringing about this reorganization a change of leadership is necessary, for it would be unfair to Mahatma Gandhi to expect him to evolve or work a programme and method not consistent with his lifelong principles. If the Congress as a whole can undergo the transformation, it would be the best course. Failing that a new party will have to be formed within the Congress composed of all the radical elements.”\textsuperscript{95}

Here one can note that the ideological rift between Gandhi and Bose has been widening, particularly with the suspension of civil disobedience movement. Soon thereafter, Bose was invited to preside over an Indian Political Conference in London. As he was not allowed to enter England, his presidential speech was read at the meeting by Dr. Bhatt in absentia. In the speech he appealed to the Indian residents there to contextualise the situation in India in the light of the changes that had been


taking place all over the world and to express the need of Indian independence. Criticizing the policy of Gandhi, he said:

“If the Delhi pact of 1931 was a blunder, the surrender of 1933 was calamity of the first magnitude. By suspending the Civil Disobedience Movement at a critical hour, work was suffering and the sacrifices of a nation for thirteen years are virtually undone.”

In this conference a committee was formed of twenty-two members namely ‘Samavadya Sangh’ The speech, which is rightly considered to be one of his fundamental political writings, showed clearly that his own political preparation was already far advanced, both in respect of the strategy of the fight against Britain and the ultimate aim of Indian National Revolution. He set out his own messianic faith in India’s destiny in the following words:

“[In the seventeenth century, England made a remarkable contribution to human civilization through her ideas of constitutional and democratic government. Similarly, in the eighteenth century, France made the most wonderful contribution to the culture of the world through her ideas of ‘liberty, equality and fraternity.’ During the nineteenth century, Germany made the most remarkable gift through her Marxian philosophy. During the twentieth century Russia had enriched the culture and civilization of the world through her achievement in proletarian revolution, proletarian government and culture. The next remarkable contribution to the culture and civilization of the world, India will be called upon to make].”

From Warsaw, Bose went to Germany on 17th July 1933, as he wanted to establish further contacts with other politicians. He was keen to meet and know leaders of Germany and Italy because these countries had then become centers of important political movements in Central Europe. He was fascinated by how Hitler and Mussolini had succeeded in creating extraordinary national consciousness amongst the German and Italian masses. In July 1933, Bose arrived in Berlin from Warsaw at the railway station of Friedrichstrasse. The German Foreign Office had

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96 Daya Mukherjee, Subhas Chandra Bose Accelerator of India’s Independence: Political History, Biography, New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1997, p. 50.
97 Ibid., pp. 50-51.
been alerted by the Indo-German Society in Berlin to receive him at the station and to help him during his stay in Berlin. Bose did not, however, want to become a guest of the German Government, but wanted to discuss with them issues relating to the overall German policy towards India and particularly to her struggle against Britain. He, therefore, left the guesthouse and went to stay in Grand-Hotel-am-Knie in Charlottenburg at his own expense. In Berlin, Bose was anxious to speak to Hitler to change his erroneous judgment regarding the Indian people and the fight for freedom which the Indian people were carrying on to liberate themselves from the British yoke. He wanted Hitler to change his damaging comments about Indians in the new edition of his book *Mein Kampf*.99

Bose sincerely believed that if he succeeded in persuading Hitler to retract the passage, he would then have fulfilled an important mission in Europe and would have won some political advantage for India. So he tried through the officials of the German foreign Office and also through the Office of the Chancellor to meet Hitler; but failed to meet him. The spokesmen of the German Foreign Office maintained that the German government should remain neutral in the fight which the Indian people were carrying on against Britain.100 The Imperial German Government had taken considerable interest in the Indian revolutionary movement during the First World War and they could not remain completely uninfluenced by the efforts of Bose to project the current Indian struggle in Germany. All that he could do was to write a letter of protest to the well-known daily of the National Socialist Party, the *Volkischer Beobachter*, which in an issue in July 1933 wrote that “Germany has no interest whatsoever in the internal affairs of India”.101

Bose could, however, meet the leaders of some of the dissident groups of the National Socialist Party. These secret but dissident groups of the National Socialist Party assured Bose that they would help the revolutionary organization in Bengal with technical equipment, arms and ammunition as well as instruments for sending secret messages etc. if a reliable method of transporting these materials from Germany to

99 Ibid., p. 42.
Bengal could be established.102 However, attempts for establishing liaison between secret organizations in Germany and the underground organizations in Bengal failed to achieve anything.

In Berlin, Bose also studied the state of affairs of the colony of Indians in Berlin. Since the end of the First World War, Indians living in Berlin had been divided into three separate groups and one such group consisted of those political exiles who, during the First World War, had worked together with the German Foreign Office to organize a revolt against the British in India. One of the groups consisted of newly arrived young students in Berlin and its organizer was A.C.N. Nambar, who had been asked by Jawaharlal Nehru to organize an Indian Information Office in Berlin. The function of this office was to supply information to German newspapers about the arrival of important Indians in Germany, provide advice and help to Indians coming to Germany and find seats in German universities or apprenticeships in industries for Indian students who were then coming to Germany in large numbers. Nambar later went on to become a close associate of Bose in Germany during the Second World War.103

Thus, even the members of the German Foreign Office who were not enthusiastic members of the National Socialist Party, could not do much to help the Indian cause. They eventually asked Bose to see Dr. Franz Thierfelder who was then director of the German Academy in Munich. Accordingly he went to Munich and met Dr. Franz Thierfelder, with whom he discussed the prospects for improving Indo-German relations. Bose and Thierfelder became good friends and began to keep up a correspondence with each other. As a result of all these efforts and Bose’s positive attempts to improve Indo-German relation, anti-Indian reporting in the German media was somewhat reduced. But the constant reference to Indians as ‘coloured people’ in the German press was not stopped. This attitude of the National Socialist Party towards the Indians did not sit with ease with its theory of Aryan origin of the Indians and the Germans and also led to the rejection of whatever suggestions Bose and his German friends made to the German Government. Goebbels reportedly said to an

102 Ibid., p. 44.
Indian journalist, Habibur Rehman (published later in the German press), that the Japanese and the Indians possessed a culture of high order which reflected their racial qualities. But even the publication of this statement did not prevent the German press from labeling Indians as an inferior race again.\textsuperscript{104}

It was very clear that official Germany, during this particular period, did not take any interest whatsoever in Indians affairs. It can be emphasized that the claim of the German Foreign Office to conduct the relations of the Third Reich with foreign countries independently was not fully accepted by the party. It shows the ambivalence of Hitler’s attitude towards Britain and also shows how mistaken Bose was in the beginning as to the true nature of the Nazis.\textsuperscript{105} After leaving Germany, Bose spent most of the autumn of 1933 with V.J. Patel who helped him set up the Indian-Irish Independence league. Patel died of heart attack on 22\textsuperscript{nd} October 1933 and he had willed a portion of his fortune to Bose to be spent “for the political uplift of India and preferably for publicity work on behalf of India’s cause in other countries.”\textsuperscript{106}

Bose was invited to attend an Asian students’ Congress in Italy from 22\textsuperscript{nd} to 28\textsuperscript{th} December. Some six hundred Asian students from different Universities and colleges in Europe attended the Congress. Unlike the Germans, the Italians were only too eager to welcome Bose. His stay was much pleasanter in Italy than in Germany; and he had no problems in meeting Mussolini. He met him three times on this visit and twice subsequently, and had long discussions with him about India.\textsuperscript{107} When Bose went to the Palazzo Venezia to meet with Mussolini, Bose was greeted with the words: “Viva l’India” (long live India). Guards of honour accompanied Bose and he was taken to Mussolini’s office by the Foreign Minister, Conte Galeazzzo Ciano. Mussolini congratulated Bose for his insightful speech made before the students in


\textsuperscript{106} Sugata Bose, \textit{His Majesty’s Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India’s struggle against empire}, New Delhi: Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd, 2011, p. 93

Berlin, in which he clearly outlined the future of free India and the strong centralization and powerful organization that were needed there.\textsuperscript{108}

Bose’s meeting Mussolini was not out of romanticism or ideology, but rather by the pragmatic consideration that Mussolini was the leader of an important country with certain conflicts of interest with Britain in the Mediterranean. Bose emphasized on the possibilities of cultural relations between Italy and India. The Senator Giovanni Gentile had sent him a draft of the Indo-Italian Cultural Relationship Scheme which, he hoped would materialize as soon as the war was over. On this suggestion, Bose replied:

“First things come first. Our first preoccupation is to free India from foreign yoke. To tell you the truth, we have at present relegated culture and cultural relationships to the last place. Before we could think of any cultural relationship, we have, first of all, to free India from the claws of the British Lion. Then we have to embark upon freeing India from many internal tyrants like the dead tradition, religious taboos, communal cancer, medieval feudalism of the Indian princes, and many other evils. When we have sufficiently clothed our naked limbs and fed the walking skeletons, then we may give our attention to culture, self-realization and all the rest of it. First we are determined to live and then speculate and philosophize.” \textsuperscript{109}

During his visit to Europe, Bose took up the task of studying the popular movements that succeeded against the ruling class. He studied the history and nature of such upheavals and closely examined the way they seized power from the ruling class. The ideological colour which each movement gave to their battles for liberation was less critical to him. This might have forced him to believe in the chance of success of an armed revolt through disciplined and trained soldiers. Bose examined how Lenin, Stalin, de Valera, Kamal Ataturk, Hitler and Mussolini succeeded in stirring up the nationalistic spirit of the people of their countries for the realization of their goals. At the same time, he also studied the apathy of Indian masses towards the freedom movement as well as their miserable condition. He thought about the

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\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., pp. 41-44.
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possible ways of stirring and organising the Indians for the fight for the liberation of their nation.\textsuperscript{110}

In Berlin, Bose frequently used to tell his friends that the realisation of a national transformation in India required battles on a large number of fronts simultaneously. Frequently he spoke acidly in opposition to the ‘Moderates' or the ‘Reformists' in the Congress, who accepted that by being amiable and obliging to the British they could gain concessions from them and in reality never received any significant favour from the rulers. Bose was, therefore, of the opinion that a dominated people like the Indians would be able to liberate themselves only if they were truly awakened and organised; and it was the organised masses that the British feared most. It was clear to him that India could never realise her goal of freedom just because her cause was just and that waiting for a ‘change of heart’ of the British administrators would only take a long time. In the view of Bose, it was not for the British to give India a constitution but Indians themselves.\textsuperscript{111}

Bose often came into open conflict with Gandhi, because of his views on the aims and technique of the struggle. Bose wanted, as early as in the early thirties, the question of Indian independence to become a global issue and the world opinion to be mobilised in favour of Indian independence. In this respect also, Bose’s ideas were against those of Gandhi. Bose regarded the work in opposition to Britain to be simply a stepping stone towards a higher socio-financial goal. Already in the thirties, he had gone around Europe gathering information which could be useful in the reconstruction of autonomous India; and the thought of national reorganisation which he later gave expression to as the Congress President in 1938 had taken shape in his mind during his European exile. It was clear already that on all financial and social issues, Bose’s thoughts were absolutely left-oriented though his socialism was of a more realistic nature.\textsuperscript{112}

Some historians were of the opinion that despite long stay in Europe Bose never developed a proper world outlook. Bose’s eclecticism, or what one of his more


\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., pp. 48-49

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., p. 49.
uncritical supporters has called his rejection of monotheism (the path of salvation), made him pursue any movement that would help the cause of Indian freedom. He realised that a slave India did not have the luxury to choose friends and that it had to do with what was offered. This surely made him ignore to an extent the way Nazism viewed India. For Hitler the Indian freedom fighters were ‘Asiatic Jugglers’ who could achieve little, and he once advised an astounded Halifax that the solution for Gandhi was simple: ‘shoot him.’\textsuperscript{113} India was a nation in which Germany had small strategic and even less commercial interest and one which in any case was solidly barred from human advancement by the Nazi racial philosophy. Alfred Rosenberg, Germany’s philosopher who was credited with great insight into Indian culture, could find little virtue in these ‘Poor Bastards’(Indians) and was convinced that from the ‘Nordic as well as German point of view the British rule in India must be supported.’\textsuperscript{114} Bose also failed to see that Nazism could have been an even more terrible menace for India than the British, and it is certain that his pragmatism ran close to opportunism.\textsuperscript{115}

While in exile in Europe, Bose received the news that his father had fallen seriously ill and he decided to fly to India. The moment he landed in India he was served with an order under Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act. The order put restriction on his movements and ordered him as follows:

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1. To proceed at once to 38/2, Elgin Road and reside there till further orders.
2. Not to be absent from the precincts of the said house and not to interview any visitors at any time.
3. Not to correspond, converse or communicate or associate in any manner with anybody, save the members of your family actually living at 38/2, Elgin Road.
4. To deliver unopened to the Deputy Superintendent of Police, Special Branch, Calcutta, or the officer specially deputed by him for the purpose, all books or communication (Whether such communications

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., pp. 96-97.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., p. 91.
be in the nature of telegrams, letters, postal packages or otherwise) received by you from any source whatever or intended for to whomsoever address and whether the same be received by you or by some agent or servant on your behalf.

5. When so required by the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, or by any Magistrate, to facilitate in every way access of such person for any lawful purposes to the premises in which you are living.

6. If you knowingly disobey any of the directions, you will be punishable with imprisonment from a term which may extended to seven years and liable to fine.”

Bose's father died on the day he arrived. He was allowed to do the final rituals of his father. However he desired to stay for some more time in India but the Government ordered him to return to Europe within a week. Bose kept in touch with the British Government requesting permission for staying for one month. He stated, “Incarceration in my nation is a cut above luxury abroad”. His request was not granted. In addition, his health had weakened and his doctor urged him to return to Vienna. On 10th January 1934, he left for Europe again.

He first landed at Naples, a city of Italy, and then went to Rome and spent about a week there. Rome greatly fascinated him and he said: “It is a blend of the old and the new”. He spent his early visit for touring and understanding the municipal administration, but his second visit was that of a sharp political observer. The second exile in Europe brought real changes in Bose’s views. Bose was interested in certain viewpoints of fascism and expressed his view that a synthesis of that ideology and socialism could be beneficial in the reconstruction of the nation. His detailed comments on the matter in his book, *The Indian Struggle: 1920-1934*, which was first published in 1935, precisely outlines the views he kept throughout the greater part of his life. The most important of them, along with Bose’s activities and thought during

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118 Ibid., p. 55.
this second exile could be discussed for the purpose of comprehending his ideology better.

Programme Outlined:

Contending that the INC was somewhat “out of date,” and suffered from a lack of unity and strong leadership, Bose predicted in *The Indian Struggle* that out of a “left-Wing revolt there will ultimately emerge a new full-fledged party with a clear ideology, programme and plan of action.”¹¹⁹ The programme and plan of action of this new party would, Bose wrote, follow this basic outline:

1. The party will stand for the interests of the masses, that is, of the peasants, workers, etc., and not for the vested interests, that is, the landlords, capitalists and money-lending classes.
2. It will stand for the complete political and economic liberation of the Indian people.
3. It will stand for a Federal Government for India as the ultimate goal, but will believe in a strong Central Government with dictatorial powers for some years to come, in order to put India on her feet.
4. It will believe in a sound system of state-planning for the reorganization of the agricultural and industrial life of the country.
5. It will seek to build up a new social structure on the basis of the village communities of the past that were ruled by the village “Panch” and will strive to break down the existing social barriers like caste.
6. It will seek to establish a new monetary and credit system in the light of the theories and the experiments that have been and are current in the modern world.
7. It will seek to abolish landlordism and introduce a uniform land-tenure system for the whole of India.
8. It will not stand for a democracy in the Mid-Victorian sense of the term, but will believe in government by a strong party bound together by military

discipline, as the only means of holding India together and preventing chaos, when Indians are free and are thrown entirely on their own resources.

9. It will not restrict itself to a campaign inside India, but will resort to international propaganda also, in order to strengthen India’s case for liberty, and will attempt to utilize the existing international organizations.

10. It will endeavour to unite all the radical organizations under a national executive so that whenever any action is taken; there will be simultaneous activity on many fronts.”

During the second exile, in Italy, Bose attempted to study again in detail various national liberation movements across the continent. One of the most successful examples, of movements for national liberation and national unity of a divided people, he came across was that of Italy. One of the subjects of his special interest was the underground organisation known as Carbonieri. This Italian secret organisation actually came into existence in South Italy at the time of the Vienna Congress. Its members were recruited from among high officials of government and officers of the army. From their high position they were able to influence the Italian masses in favour of national unity, more or less in the same way as the Bengali nationalists did in Bengal. One can observe that like the Italians, the Bengali people were deeply emotional and could be roused quickly to action when it concerned their vital problems.

The ‘Carbonieri’ were the pioneers of Italian freedom movement and of Italian ‘Risorgimento’ and it was their movement which led finally to the establishment of the Italian State. Their method consisted of direct action as well as *attentant* revolt, that is to say, organised popular rebellion together with occasional limited conflicts with the authorities which today, after the Second World War, would be termed as ‘guerilla warfare’. Bose was fascinated by their method of agitation and propaganda for national freedom as the political conditions in India showed certain likenesses, even though in different centuries. In his conversations with his friends in Europe, he often referred to the writings of Mazzini (1805-72) who had formed a small group called ‘Young Italy’ from amongst the members of ‘Carbonieri’ in order to unite all the Italians who represented the forces for freedom, who believed in republican ideals

\[120\] Ibid., pp. 349-350.
of government and who accepted the slogans of the French Revolution -liberty, equality and fraternity. One can state that both Mazzini and Bose became, in their contemporary times, new prophets of nationalism in their respective countries. They can be regarded as the path-finders for their people in their search for nationhood. It is noteworthy that they showed remarkable similarities in their political concepts and ideas.¹²¹

From his study of the history of Italian Freedom Movement, Bose gained an insight into the technique to be employed in the first stage of the national awakening of the Indian people. He believed that young trained cadres could create awareness among Indian mass and bring forth a national consciousness. Some of the thoughts he shared with his friends in Berlin on the basis of his experiences and studies in Italy related particularly to the training of young cadres for national revolution. He understood that the fore-runners of a new and strong national consciousness could only be the youth. They were to be inspired and trained in such a way that they would be ready to sacrifice everything, when the call came, for Mother India. But the fulfillment of this aim -creation of inspired young cadres- could not be achieved in the conditions then existing in British India except through secret organisations.¹²²

It should be noted here that his conversations with Mussolini helped him in formulating or at least thinking about his revolutionary methods. In a conversation which Bose had with Mussolini and which he afterwards related to his friends. Mussolini asked Bose: “Do you really and firmly believe that India will be free soon?” When he said “Yes”, Mussolini asked him again: “Are you for reformist or revolutionary methods for achieving Indian independence?” Bose said in reply that he preferred revolutionary to reformist methods. Mussolini said, “Then indeed you have a chance.” Continuing the discussion, Mussolini asked him again: “Have you got any plan for such a revolution?” As Bose remained silent, Mussolini told him: “you must immediately prepare a plan for such a revolution and you must work continuously for its realisation”.¹²³ This was during the first of Bose’s visits to Italy and in the further

¹²² Ibid., p. 50.
visits Bose made all efforts to grasp the features and aspects of revolutions and liberation movements of Europe.

Of all the European Nations, Ireland was in all probability the one most essentially intrigued him. Ireland had, like India, suffered under British domination and had to assert its independence by an open revolt. British oppression and exploitation of the Irish people and of the Indian people appeared similar. In Ireland, Bose could usefully learn the practicability of underground organisations set up by the Irish revolutionaries. German friends of Bose considered the Sinn Fein movement as a successful historical model for India’s fight for freedom, particularly as India was facing the same enemy. As the Sinn Fein movement became stronger and acquired a popular base in Ireland, it became necessary for the new national leaders to put the organisation underground and bring its activities under control in the interest of post-war administration of the new Free State. This Irish experience was not lost on Bose who did not encourage in practice the formation of too many underground organisations in Bengal or India. Another important historical parallel which appealed to him was the idea of an alliance with Germany as a potential enemy of Britain. The Imperial German Government had declared during the First World War that if Germany won the war, she would immediately concede Ireland’s independence.

On a comparative study, Bose recognized interesting parallels between political movements in pre-independence Ireland and India. The Irish Nationalist Party looked like Indian moderate parties and like the Indian Liberal Federation, was in favour of established routines like ‘home rule’ which indicated restrained independence under British command. The ‘United Irishman’ which arose out of the Sinn Fein movement resembled the Indian radicals, of whom Bose was one, and this party wanted to free Ireland completely of British domination and make it an independent state. But until the First World War, the radical elements in Ireland played a very small and insignificant role. They refused to take part in the British Parliament because they desired the end of British Empire altogether.124

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During the First World War, the radical elements in Ireland were able to acquire certain significance in the Irish struggle for freedom. After the failure of the Easter Rebellion in 1916, the former leaders of the separatist movement became the recognized leaders of Ireland. Although they were not able to attain complete unification of their country, they consoled themselves with the idea that they had achieved at least a partial victory. In order to assess the effectiveness of German help in the freedom struggle of Ireland, Bose took great pains to study how the Easter Rebellion had taken place. From German sources he gathered material to reconstruct the rebellion as a student of history and to find out the avoidable mistakes committed by the leaders. Bose read in the German archives the decoded telegrams in which the Irish had asked Germany to send arms and the German promise to send twenty thousand machine-guns with ammunition as well as hand-grenades to the west coast of Ireland between Good Friday and Easter Monday of 1916.125

From Berlin, Bose took the first steps to establish personal contact with the Irish President Eamon De Valera, who belonged to a group of hundred volunteers who had participated in the Irish Rebellion and was not hanged but was just sentenced for life-long imprisonment. Bose was eager to meet de Valera, which he did in 1936. De Valera warmly received Bose in Dublin and bestowed him the status of a high dignitary from a friendly foreign country. De Valera interrupted his busy schedule and held three meetings with him: a formal exchange of views in the government building, an informal tea reception hosted by his Fianna Fail party and a private dinner at his residence outside Dublin. They discussed the possibilities and limits of external help for a country that was struggling for freedom from colonial rulers. Bose hoped that he could appeal to the conscience of the world from Ireland. He therefore wrote a number of letters to Irish papers and supplied them with news and articles on the repressive measures of the British imperialists in India.126 He also planned to publish a monthly bulletin on India in English, French and German languages in Ireland and to distribute it from there to the international press. He was greatly disappointed when

125 Ibid., pp. 51-52.
he came to know that the leaders of the All-India Congress Committee had rejected his plan for methodical propaganda in foreign countries on behalf of the Congress.\textsuperscript{127}

On 12\textsuperscript{th} February 1936, Bose returned from Ireland, reached France and spent a few days in Paris meeting political and cultural leaders, like Andre Gide and Andre Malraux. On 17\textsuperscript{th} February 1936, Bose addressed a conference in Paris under the auspices of the League against Imperialists, where Bose analyzed two aspects of the Indian freedom movement: the struggle for national liberation and the endeavor to create a new social order. He noted that many were concerned about the Japanese imperialism in Asia. “If tomorrow China could be strong and unified, if tomorrow India could be free, I am sure it would influence the balance of power in Asia and serve to check the spread of Japanese imperialism.”\textsuperscript{128} On the question of ‘social freedom’, he noted that there was popular pressure on the INC to “declare itself more explicitly on the side of masses.”\textsuperscript{129}

During his stay in Berlin, Bose observed the developments in Turkey too. With the help of Germany, Turkey was able to modernize its army, build up an efficient administration and make it more independent of other powers. Bose found out from his conversations with some Turkish leaders that the Turks were able to continue with their National reconstruction independently, sometimes by rejecting German proposals, in spite of the presence of the German army in the country. This could have made Bose think that Germany could become an ally in India’s fight for freedom and also in the national reconstruction after gaining independence.

The Young Turks’ revolution was led by the ‘Unity and Progress Party’ led by Mustafa Kamal Pasha. Bose was interested in finding out the experiences of an oriental state in introducing radical social reforms in order to catch up with the technologically advanced countries of the world. Bose found that India and Turkey had a significant number of comparable situations and that both required countless social changes. He desired to introduce in India some of the social and regulatory measures which Turkey had found vital in modernizing the nation. Such changes,

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., p. 107.
Bose perhaps suspected, could sway the Muslim population of India towards a new social concept after independence had been achieved. Bose immensely admired the founder of modern Turkey, Kamal Ataturk, whom he considered to be one of the greatest creative statesmen of this century and whom he tried to emulate in several ways.

Ataturk viewed his government as democratic, but curtailed social and individual liberalism as a part of the reconstruction of the nation to prevent any political crisis that could weaken the foundation of the nation. Bose was intrigued by that form of government and it is clear from his writings that he preferred such a system to the typical western democracy, at least in the initial stages of an independent India. He realized that India with its divergent religious and racial population with varying value systems could be successfully integrated to a nation with any prospect of a conflict-less future only if there is a centralized authority to guide them through.\(^{130}\) It is to be mentioned here that Bose was able to impress many European intellectuals with his ideas on democracy, revolution, terrorism, use of violence for freedom struggle, national reconstruction, socialism etc. Evidence of this could be found in the published diaries of French scholar Romain Rolland who considered him intelligent and pragmatic.\(^{131}\)

Meanwhile in India, the promised election under the Government of India Act, 1935 was to be held in 1936. Although it was the INC’s first attempt as a party at the elections, it virtually swept the polls. Congressmen had participated in earlier elections in their individual capacity or as members of the Swaraj Party. The former rebels had now formed governments in six provinces of British India (Bombay, Madras, Bihar, Orissa, the United Provinces and the Central Provinces). In Assam the Congress formed the largest single party but could not assume power. In Bengal it could win only sixty out of two hundred and fifty seats as a consequence of the infamous ‘Communal Award’ imposed by the British and tacitly accepted by the Congress. The ‘Award’ gave undue and unfair weightage of seats to communalist forces and ensured their victory through ‘separate electorates’ for different religious communities. This was the new ‘charter of liberty’, enacted after eight years of


\(^{131}\) Ibid., p. 57.
deliberation through the Simon commission, Round-table conferences and innumerable debates in Parliament. It was Diarchy by more sophisticated means. The British Governors held wide reserved powers in the system and though a federal center was created, it was left weak and ineffectual since its very existence was subject to the agreement of the princes (Encouraged by Churchill and the Conservative Right, The princes refused to agree to this part of the act and it was never implemented).\footnote{Mihir Bose, \textit{The Lost Hero a Biography of Subhas Bose}, London: Quartet Books Limited, 1982, pp. 59-60.}

At a meeting of the All-India Congress it was informally decided that Bose should be elected president of the ensuing Congress session at Haripura (Gujarat), an honour which he fully deserved in view of his long record of service and suffering. News reached Bose in Europe that he had been elected president of the Congress session to be held in April 1938. In his first public statement after receiving the news of his election, he declared:

“It will be agreed on all hands that we have to bring India before the world more than we have done so far. India’s problems, after all, are world problems. On our close contact with the progressive movements will depend not only the salvation of India but also of the suffering humanity as well.”\footnote{V. S. Patil, \textit{Subhas Chandra Bose, His Contribution to Indian Nationalism}, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1988, p. 73.}

This statement was characteristic of Bose. He had realised that no country could live in isolation since the world was shrinking due to the modern advancement in speedy communication; every national problem ought to be viewed in the international context. In fact, he had devoted a good part of his exile in Europe to conducting propaganda for Indian freedom and in educating people and nations on the real state of affairs in India. He considered that publicity on India should always have a three-fold objective: “to counteract false propaganda about India, to enlighten the world about the true conditions in India, and to acquaint the world with the positive achievements of the Indian people in every sphere of human activity.”\footnote{Alexander Werth, ed., \textit{A Beacon Across Asia: A Biography of Subhas Chandra Bose}, Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 1996, pp. 58 -60.} Bose wanted the Congress to contest in the elections and then reject the Government of India Act. He had no illusions about the act of 1935. Many others felt it could turn out to be
dangerous in a way that it would leave the British free to organize collaborators to win the election and prove that Indians did support the British.

3.5 Back to India

In March 1936, Bose sailed on S.S Count Verde for Bombay. As the ship arrived at Port of Bombay police officers came aboard, seized his passport and imposed a guard on him and was taken to jail. He was prepared for arrest since he had left Europe under the order of the British. After a few weeks’ detention in Yeravda jail, Bose was taken to Kurseong in the Darjeeling district of Bengal and interned in the house of his own brother. This vindictive treatment of Bose was widely resented. The issue was raised by an adjournment motion in the Central Legislative Assembly. The government spokesman gave a laboured defense, accusing Bose of having ‘a definite terrorist connection’ and of entertaining ‘a definite idea of violent revolution’. These charges were indignantly repudiated by the Leader of the Opposition who challenged the government to prove them in a court of law. The adjournment motion was carried by sixty-two votes to fifty-nine though it had no effect on an autocratic regime.135

Through the summer and autumn of 1936, public protest about Bose’s detention continued. There were more motions in the Delhi assembly, angry demands by Nehru and others, questions raised in the House of Commons etc. But the Government always gave the same answer- that he was a man of great ability, but dedicated towards revolutionary violence and imprisoned for that reason. When, in December, his intestinal troubles aggravated again, he was brought down to Calcutta and admitted to the medical college hospital. With the election just a month away, the Government had successfully prevented Bose from organising the Congress during a crucial period. The question was what the Congress would do if it won the elections. The debate within the Congress regarding the acceptance of office had reached a crucial stage. Though the session held on 27th – 28th December 1936, had re-affirmed the Congress determination to wreck the act, it was not clear whether the Congress would accept office in the provinces.

From the British perspective, a free Bose would strengthen the Left and complicate the matters. So, while waiting for the election results, the Government decided that Bose should be interned once he was out of hospital. On 10th February 1937, the Home Department sent the Bengal Government the necessary warrant. Meanwhile, legal experts discovered that the previous ‘relaxed’ detention had been technically illegal; and wider political events had made Bose’s detention impossible now. Ultimately, having no ground to detain him any further, he was released unconditionally on 17th March 1937 and he resumed his political activities.\(^{136}\)

He left for Europe on 18th November 1937 to improve his health and reached Naples by air on 21st November en route to Bad Gastein. Bose married Emilie Schenkl, an Austrian national, who was his secretary. According to Schenkl, she and Bose were secretly married in Bad Gastein on 26th December 1937. They had one daughter, Anita, born in 1942. Bose wrote many letters to Schenkl during the period from 1934 to 1942, of which many have been published in the book *Letters to Emilie Schenkl*, edited by Sisir Kumar Bose and Sugata Bose.\(^{137}\) The last phase of his visit to Europe was spent in London with an intensively busy schedule of receptions, dinners, public meetings and personal interviews. He met many important personalities including Lord Zetland, ex-governor of Bengal, who had become the Secretary of State for India. On 18th January 1938, J.B Kripalani, the general secretary of INC, formally announced in India that Bose was elected the president of the 51st session of the Congress to be held in Haripura. Bose left for India on 19th January 1938 and reached Calcutta on 22nd January.\(^{138}\)

In his speeches as Congress president, he vigorously denounced the British rule. He quoted Lenin and praised the British communist party as he sought to reaffirm his left wing credentials while being careful not to antagonise the conservative Gandhian right wing. Nevertheless, as rumours spread about an impending war in Europe, Bose thought that he should keep his channels of communications with


Britain’s enemies open. Bose started reaching out to foreign powers, particularly to enemies of the British. Among the actual and potential antagonists of the British, he included Germany, Italy, Japan and the Soviets. During his visits to Europe from 1933 to 1938, he had made contacts with officials of Germany and Italy. He had been denied a visa to the Soviet Union, but now he sent a letter to comintern officials via his nephew Amiya Bose, who was going to Europe for his advanced studies. On 22nd December 1938, Bose met the German officials Dr. O Urchs and Dr. F Wulfestieg in Bombay.\(^{139}\)

Bose tried to reach out to the Japanese too as they were allies of Germany in the Anti-Comintern Pact. Japan was powerful and was the only Asian power that could challenge militarily the British dominance in Asia. Rash Behari Bose, an earlier Indian revolutionary who now resided in Japan, tried to contact Bose and his letter was intercepted by the British. It said in part:

“The fetish of non-violence should be discarded...Let us attain our goal ‘through possible means’: violence or non-violence. The non-violence atmosphere is simply making Indians womanly men...The Congress should devote attention to only one point, i.e., military preparedness. Might is still the right...
The Congress should support the Pan-Asia movement. It should not condemn Japan without understanding her motive in the Sino-Japanese conflict. Japan is a friend of India and other Asian countries. Her chief motive is to destroy British influence in Asia. She has begun with China...we should make friends with Britain’s enemies...It is now the best policy for the Indians to support Japan and utilise this opportunity to increase their influence in world politics...As in time of war, dictatorship is indispensable, at the present in India’s struggle for freedom, dictatorship is equally indispensable...
I have faith in you. Go ahead irrespective of criticisms, obstacles and impediments. Lead the nation along the right path. And success will be your’s and India’s.”\(^ {140}\)

Though Bose could not receive the letter, some of the views of Rash Behari Bose were quite congenial to him. At the same time, Nehru, another Congress leader

\(^{139}\) Romain Hayes, Bose in Nazi Germany, U.P. India: Random House Publisher India Pvt. Ltd, 2011, pp. 19-20.

with considerable foreign exposure and concern said that, ‘… no enemy of the United Kingdom [is] necessarily our friend.’  During the mid and late 1930s, and especially during his presidency, Bose advocated the use of the International situation to India’s advantage. In March 1938, he wrote to Nehru:

“What has happened in Czechoslovakia recently is but a sequel to the Munich Pact. As a matter of fact, I have been telling Congress friends during the last six months, on the basis of information which I had been getting from Europe, that there would be a crisis in Europe in spring which would last till summer. I have, therefore, been pressing for a dynamic move from our side- for an ultimatum to the British Government demanding Purna Swaraj… there is no sign of any intention on your part or on the part of the Gandhian group to utilise the international situation for our benefit… I feel that either we should take international politics seriously and utilise the international situation for our benefit- or not talk about it at all.”

His demand for issuing an ultimatum to the British, backed with a threat of a renewed non-violent mass movement, was not acceptable for Gandhi. Gandhi and his supporters maintained the Indians were not ready for such a nation-wide movement yet. Bose felt that the Congress right-wing was short-sighted in opposing his position on the matter. He also realised that even though he was the Congress and BPCC president, he was still an outsider to the Gandhi group which controlled the Congress.

Even though he had numerous commitments as Congress and BPCC president, Bose still devoted some of his energies to the Calcutta Corporation. He was elected an alderman in 1937 and returned briefly to Calcutta in November 1937. By February 1938, he started on his task of reforming the Corporation through the Congress Municipal Association. The corporation was reportedly plagued by corruption and nepotism. His ringing indictment of the Corporation was met with the resignation of many members of the Congress Municipal Association. Shortly thereafter, Bose himself resigned from the association and as alderman. Throughout the year of his presidency, he was intensively busy with the Congress work and often visited Gandhi in his efforts to get along with him.

141 Ibid., p. 371.
3.6 Gandhi’s Fury

Before 1938 ended, a new, more important conflict began over the presidency of the INC for the following year. As Bose’s presidency neared its end, to the surprise of many, Gandhi in particular, he sought re-election for a second term. Gandhi wanted a moderate Gandhian to succeed Bose. Even Bose knew that there was less chance of him becoming president again. In a letter written to his wife Emilie in January 1939 from Wardha where he went to see Gandhi, he told her, “Though there is a very general desire for my re-election as the Congress president, I do not think I shall again be the president. In a way it will be good not to be president again. I shall then be more free and have more time to myself.”

Although he well understood the limitations of Congress presidency, Bose felt, as his term was drawing to a close, that he was one of the few who could represent the Indian left wing. He said that if a leftist leader like Acharya Narendra Dev stepped forward to contest for the post, he would withdraw; but nobody did. Gandhi and the high command met and picked Maulana Azad and Pattabhi Sitaramayya as possible candidates.

Meanwhile, there was another point of dispute between Gandhians and Bose. The federal parts of the Government of India Act of 1935 had not become operative, while the provincial autonomy parts had. The federal structure of the Act called for involved significant participation by the Indian states through their princes. Officially the Congress was against it. Bhalubhai Desai, a Congress leader from Bombay, was apparently misquoted by a British politician, Lord Lothian, who announced to the British press that the Congress was ready to compromise on the federal elements of the 1935 Act. G.D. Birla, a conduit from the nationalists to the British, also made such hints. During December 1938 and January 1939, as the election campaign developed, Bose was quoted in the press as having said on several occasions that there was a

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possibility of the right-wing compromising on the federation issue and he, as a staunch anti-federationist, would stand against a right-wing candidate.\footnote{Subhas Chandra Bose, Compiled by Netaji Research Bureau, Crossroads: Being the Works of Subhas Chandra Bose 1938-1940, India: Asia Pub. House, 1962, pp. 85-86.}

In October 1938, Gandhi wrote to a confidant, “There is bound to be some difficulty this time in electing the president.”\footnote{Gandhi, Works, Vol.LXVIII, p. 72, ‘Letter to Manibein Patel’ October 28 1938.} Rabindranath Tagore proposed that Bose should be re-elected in a letter to Gandhi, but Gandhi said it would be better for Bose not to run. Once the Gandhian group had caucused with Gandhi in December 1938, Gandhi wrote to Nehru, “Maulana Saheb does not want the crown of thorns. If you want to try again please do. If you won’t or he won’t listen, Pattabhi seems to be the only choice.”\footnote{Gandhi, Works, Vol.LXVIII, p. 227, ‘Gandhi letter to Nehru from Wardha’, 21 December 1938.} Nehru and Azad did not accede to this request and Pattabhi Sitaramayya from Andhra became Gandhi’s candidate. The Gandhi group in the Working Committee, with Sardar Patel as their spokesman, including Rajendra Prasad, J.B. Kripalani, Bhulabhai Desai, Jannalal Bajaj, Shankarrao Deo and Jairamdas Doulatram asked Bose to step down and not to run again. Patel sent a telegram to Sarat Bose to advise Bose to not divide Congressmen by running again. Sarat Bose answered that members of the Working Committee should not take sides and that Patel’s proposed statement to the press would further accentuate the split between the right and the left in the Congress. He added: “Dr. Pattabhi will not inspire country’s confidence in coming fight. Please do not divide Congress.”\footnote{Subhas Chandra Bose, Compiled by Netaji Research Bureau, Crossroads: Being the Works of Subhas Chandra Bose 1938-1940, India: Asia Pub. House, pp. 88-90.}

Patel issued his statement on behalf of his majority group in the Working Committee, putting forth Sitaramayya as their candidate and asking Bose to step aside and allow the election to be a unanimous one. Bose declined and challenged the Gandhians, stating in part:

“…the position of the Congress president has been raised to a higher level…The president is like the Prime Minister or the President of the United States of America who nominates his own cabinet…questions of policy and programme are not irrelevant…after the Congress of 1934, a leftist has been elected as President every time with the support of both the right and left-wings. The departure from this practice this year and the attempt to set up a rightist candidate for the office of
The result of the election which was announced on 29th January 1939 went in favour of Bose. Bose won the election against Gandhi’s personal candidate Pattabhi Sitaramayya by 1580 votes against 1377 and became the president of Congress for the second time. Gandhi took the defeat of his candidate as a personal defeat. Two days after the victory of Bose, Gandhi issued a statement:

“Shri Subhas Bose has achieved a decisive victory…. I must confess that from the very beginning I was decidedly against his re-election for reasons into which I need not go. I do not subscribe to his facts or the arguments in his manifestos. I think that his references to his colleagues were unjustified and unworthy. Nevertheless, I am glad of his victory; and since I was instrumental in inducing Dr. Pattabhi not to withdraw his name as a candidate where Maulana Sahib withdrew, the defeat is more mine than his. And, I am nothing if I do not represent definite principles and policy for which I stand, I rejoice in this defeat.”

Bose was now a president in his own right. Gandhi said that he should form his own working committee and rule the Congress. He hinted that, the Congress had become a ‘corrupt’ organisation in that its registers contained a very large number of ‘bogus’ members. And he concluded ominously:

“After all, Subhas Babu is not an enemy of his country. He has suffered for it. In his opinion his is the most forward and boldest policy and programme. The minority can only wish it all success. If it cannot keep pace with it they must come out of the Congress. If they can, they will add to the majority. The minority may not obstruct on any account. They must abstain, when they cannot co-operate. I must remind all Congressmen that Bose, who being Congress-minded remain outside it by design,

150 Ibid., p. 91.
Those, therefore, who feel uncomfortable in being in the Congress, may come out not in a spirit of ill-will but with the deliberate purpose of rendering more effective service.  

By this Gandhi in his own characteristic way, had declared war. He says that the vote was a defeat for his principles. It was also a defeat for the Gandhians who had for long run the Congress organization, and it was also an indicator towards the support Bose received in his resolute opposition to the British Government. Even as Bose celebrated his victory, Gandhi was meticulously preparing in his own way to oust Bose.

According to the Congress constitution, an elected president could not be removed and the vote could not be reversed. But the presidency could be made ineffective if the Working Committee and AICC do not support the president. Gandhi had the advantage here of having these two bodies filled with his supporters. Bose’s presidency could hence be rendered ineffective with the help of Working Committee and AICC, with their lack of support. In short Bose could be the president of INC only nominally without the support of Gandhi and his supporters. Immediately after the election and throughout the next few months, Bose was conciliatory towards Gandhi and the Gandhians. Bose did not express the bitterness he felt about Gandhi’s statements. He just reciprocated:

“I do not know what … opinion Mahatmaji has of me. But whatever his view may be, it will always be my aim and object to try and win his confidence for the simple reason that it will be a tragic thing for me if I succeed in winning the confidence of other people but fail to win the confidence of India’s greatest man.”

Bose had been keen to attend the Working Committee session at Wardha on 22nd February 1939. But the doctors warned that, if he did, he would not be able to

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attend the annual session of Congress in Tripuri. So Bose sent Patel what he thought was an innocuous telegram:

“KINDLY SEE MY TELEGRAM TO MAHATMAJI. REGRETEFULLY FEEL WORKING COMMITTEE MUST BE POSTPONED TILL CONGRESS. PLEASE CONSULT COLLEAGUES AND WIRE OPINION- SUBHAS”¹⁵⁶

This message triggered a sequence of events which proved disastrous for him. The Congress right argued that the telegram revealed his dictatorial ambitions. The annual session was only few weeks away, but because of an obscure illness that even his own doctors could not diagnose he would not allow the committee to carry on with its normal business. Patel and eleven other working committee members issued a statement drafted by Gandhi that they were resigning. Nehru issued a separate statement of withdrawal and Bose and his brother found themselves alone on the Working Committee.¹⁵⁷

Gandhi successfully converted a trivial political dispute in a princely Indian state of Rajkot into a major diversion so that Bose was unable to meet Gandhi before Tripuri and agree on who should serve in his Working Committee. Just before the Tripuri session began, Gandhi declared that he had to stay back in Rajkot—a thousand miles far from Tripuri—and began a fast to death in order to obtain a solution to the aforementioned affair and as a result the public and political attentions were successfully diverted. At Tripuri, the carefully planned Gandhian counter-offensive was about to succeed.

In a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee, which preceded the open session, the Gandhian faction moved a resolution which requested the president to nominate the Working Committee in accordance with the wishes of Gandhi. In the midst of the debate a news report was issued that, on the telephone from Rajkot, Gandhi had approved the text of the resolution. Gandhi later denied this; but that was enough to secure a narrow victory. The open session—attended by more than 200,000 people—was Bose’s first public setback. Bose, in his short presidential speech (read out by Sarat Bose) repeated his demand that this was the moment to submit an

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 131.
ultimatum to the British government over Indian independence, ending his speech with a prayer for Gandhi’s good health. The voting on the resolution clearly revealed that Bose’s broad left coalition had disintegrated. The Congress socialists led by Jayaprakash Narayan abstained and though the followers of the former communist M. N. Roy stayed with Bose, they agonised about supporting Bose. The debate in the open session was dramatic, with more than a hint of violence, some of it from Bose’s supporters. But in the end the Gandhians had the vote.  

Bose was shocked by the incidents that happened in Tripuri and even thought of leaving politics. He was pained by the lack of support showed by his comrades and felt cheated, especially by Nehru who used to share leftist sentiments. He wrote to his nephew: “Nobody has done more harm to me personally and to our cause in the crisis than Pandit Nehru. If he had been with us we would have had a majority.” In a letter to Nehru he says:

“…for some time past you have become completely biased against me. Since the presidential election, you have done more to lower me in the estimation of the public than all the twelve ex-members of the Working Committee put together. Of course if I am such a villain, it is not only your right but also your duty to expose me before the public.”

In the same letter Bose accused Nehru of laxity in the fight for complete independence when Nehru had been the president of the Congress. He also said that he could not understand why Nehru was not with him in his demand for issuing an ultimatum to the British to leave India.

It should not be considered that Nehru was against Bose’s policies or staunch opposition towards the British. It is clear from his own words that he was forced to prioritize his commitments even though he approved of Bose’s intentions. He reportedly said years later: “Yes, I had let Bose down; but I did it because I have realized that, at that stage, whatever one’s view might be about the way India should develop, Gandhi was India. Anything which weakened Gandhi weakened India. So I

158 Ibid., p. 132.
159 Ibid., p. 133.
subordinated myself to Gandhi, although I was in agreement with what Bose was trying to do.”

Bose attempted to stabilize the situation and pacify the Gandhians and Gandhi since the question of the nation’s freedom was at stake. For the higher goal of national liberation, he was willing to compromise with Gandhi- which shows how much dedicated he was to his goal. He wrote letters and telegrams offering compromises so that he can form his Working Committee and decide on further action. But Gandhi was non-cooperative and refused every solution for compromise proposed by Bose, claiming that his involvement would only be futile. Bose even suggested that he shall resign from all official positions if Gandhi would resume the mass movements for national liberation. He was sure that it would turn out to be effective since a war in Europe was just around the corner and an ultimatum to the British backed up by a mass movement could win India its freedom. Gandhi did not agree to this too, as he thought that it will only end up in violence. 

Even when Bose offered to accept all nominees of Gandhi in his Working Committee, Gandhi remained non-cooperative. Even Nehru was astounded by Gandhi’s attitude towards Bose and wrote to him saying: “to try to push him out seems to me to be an exceedingly wrong step.” Bose, faced with an unsympathetic Gandhi, felt that the nation would not benefit if he continued to be the president, as he was not yet able to form his Working Committee and pursue the goal of national liberation. In April 1939, four months after his election as president, on the first day of the AICC session in Calcutta, Bose presented his resignation. Despite Nehru’s attempts for a compromise there, Bose stood firm in his decision and Rajendra Prasad from the Gandhian faction assumed the presidency.

Bose did not want to weaken the Congress by remaining the president is clear. Even on the event of his resignation, he duly acknowledged the political might of

163 Ibid., p. 135.
Gandhi by saying; “It will be a tragic thing for me if I succeed in winning the confidence of other people but fail to win the confidence of India’s greatest man.” He did not want the national movement to be sidelined at such an opportune moment because of differences in opinion in the Congress regarding his presidency. He felt that Congress should move on with its mass struggle despite all differences.

3.7 Forward Bloc

Three days after the AICC session in Calcutta, Bose formed his own party, The Forward Bloc. The party technically remained in Congress and attempted to bring together the left and the right factions towards their common objective. Many, including Gandhi, dismissed the Forward Bloc as ‘evil.’ Bose’s life after his resignation was proving to be tough on the face of adverse criticism and non-cooperation from many a Congressman. There were a number of issues over which he had to differ in opinion with the Gandhians and Gandhi, which in turn led to his expulsion from INC. As a result of the expulsion from Congress, he lost the control over Bengal Congress too. He had to work hard to forge the Forward Bloc along the lines of his own expectation. But the popularity of Bose as a leader and administrator helped in attracting huge crowds to his meetings and speeches. Though he wrote about the need of the hour and the objectives of his party in subscribing to that need, the party failed to gain a nation-wide momentum.

Bose conceived the Forward Bloc as a common platform to bring together various radical leftist groups to form a minimum programme. Many leftist groups joined the party, but the bigger ones, like the one led by M.N. Roy, were not willing to join. But a Left Consolidated Committee was successfully formed. On 22nd June 1939, the first All India Conference of the Forward Bloc was held in Bombay, where Bose explained the aim of the Bloc to be:

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“1. To organise and rally all radical anti-imperialist elements on a platform
2. To check out a minimum programme representing the greatest common
measure of agreement among all the radical shades of opinion; and
3. To work for real national unity of action.” 171

Public meetings were held at various places in the country under the aegis of the Forward Bloc and Bose spelt out the tasks of the Bloc as:

“1. To arrest the drift towards constitutionalism
2. To institute revolutionary impulse in the existing programme of Congress
3. To prepare the country for the coming struggles
4. To revamp the Congress volunteer corps; and
5. To establish close and intimate relationship with Kisan Sabhas, Trade Unions, youth and students organisations and State people movements.” 172

The immediate main objective of the Forward Bloc concurred to Bose’s views and ideas on national liberation; to achieve India’s freedom from the British by taking advantage of any international crisis that might weaken Britain. He used his party to voice his concerns and to implore the people as to what they ought to do for Indian freedom in the event of a war in Europe. As the Forward Bloc gained overwhelming popularity, Gandhi himself had to admit that “the popularity of Subhas Chandra Bose had increased after his resignation from the Presidentship of the Congress” 173

It is evident that Bose had anticipated the Second World War and he had been warning the nation as well as his comrades inside and outside the party about it. In September 1939, Britain declared war on Germany and the Viceroy of India, Lord Linlithgow, declared that India is at war with Germany. 174 He did this without even consulting the Indian Legislative. When Gandhi or the Congress did not take up the issue as he had hoped, Bose propagated the slogan “British adversity is India’s

172 Ibid., p. 99.
173 Ibid., p.100.
opportunity”\textsuperscript{175} and the Civil Disobedience Movement started across India by the Forward Bloc reached its zenith.

Bose organized and addressed innumerable public meetings and asked the nation to take advantage of the opportunity by strengthening their movement against the British. When Bose requested Gandhi to initiate the mass movement under the more popular Congress banner, he did not respond positively. When Bose asked for Gandhi’s blessings for his party’s nation-wide movement, Gandhi replied:

“Subhas, you don’t need my blessings or even permission. How can I bless a movement which I consider inopportune? You have got the quality of a great leader and if your conscience tells that it is the best time for striking, go ahead and do your best, if you come out successful, I shall be the first to congratulate you.”\textsuperscript{176}

In Nagpur, the All India Conference of the Forward Bloc was held on 18\textsuperscript{th} June 1940. Bose, in his speech, enumerated the achievements of the Froward Bloc since its inception. The key achievements according to him were successes in:

\begin{quote}
1. Controlling the drift towards constitutionalism
2. Frustrating the efforts of the British to secure the Congress support for the British war efforts; and
3. Creating an atmosphere of struggle.\textsuperscript{177}
\end{quote}

He also reciprocated to the wide accusation against him, that he was fond of only a bloody revolution that might be impracticable in India’s contemporary scenario, saying:

“It is not necessary that the Indian revolution should be a bloody one or that it should pass through a period of chaos. On the contrary, it is desirable that it should be as peaceful as possible and a peaceful transition can be ensured if the people are united and determined to have their freedom.”\textsuperscript{178}

\textsuperscript{175} Ibid., p.172.
\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., p. 100.
He asserted again that an ultimatum should be issued the British to quit India and gave the nation the slogan of “All power to the Indian people here and now.”

Criticism against the Forward Bloc still managed to spread, mostly initiated by the Congress, and there was a recurring accusation that Bose was recruiting fascists. To that accusation Bose had already responded in August 1939 in an article in the party newspaper saying that if fascists meant “those who call themselves Hitlers, super Hitlers or Budding Hitlers, such ‘specimens of humanity’ were to be found in the Rightist camp.” The spread of adverse criticism did not tire Bose. He was still impressed by Germany and its military victories. While he accepted that Germany might be “fascist or imperialist, ruthless or cruel”, he admired the military discipline and planning of Germany; “how she plans in advance; prepares accordingly, works according to a time table and strikes with lightning speed.”

While the German forces occupied Holland and Belgium on its way to France, Bose insisted again that the time for the final massive thrust against the British had come. But Gandhi did not feel that the time is opportune and Congress did not respond positively to Bose’s call. On the fall of France, Gandhi advised the British to: “invite Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini to take what they want of the countries you call your possessions. Let them take possession of your beautiful island with your many beautiful buildings. You give all these, but neither your souls, nor your minds” He also offered to Lord Linlithgow that he was prepared to go to Germany and plead for peace if the British cabinet desired it and even went on to say that Hitler was not as bad a man as he was portrayed.

Recognizing the futility of appealing to the Congress to initiate a mass movement and non-cooperation with British war efforts, Bose started to think about

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181 Ibid., p. 82.
183 Ibid., p. 22.
the possibility of leaving India and opening another front abroad from where he can continue his efforts against British imperialism. But this was a tough task as he was constantly under British surveillance. By the summer of 1940, Bose sent Shankerlal, general secretary of All India Forward Bloc, to Japan to investigate on the possibility of a second front and also to meet Rash Behari Bose and the Japanese minister of foreign affairs. Bose also wanted him to meet the representatives of German, Italian, and Russian governments secretly to find out whether a second front for Indian independence struggle was possible in any of these nations.\textsuperscript{184}