

XI. The National Movement

"I am sorry to say that if no instructions had been addressed in political crises to the people of this country except to remember to hate violence, to love order and to exercise patience, the liberties of this country would never have been obtained."—William Ewart Gladstone.

1. THE RISE OF INDIAN NATIONALISM

In the modern period the reality of the Indian nation can in practice no longer be denied, although the echoes of the old denial still survive. In consequence, with curious forgetfulness of the previous arguments which up to a generation ago so emphatically denied the Indian claim to national existence and dismissed India as "a geographical expression," the alternative argument is now in general favor to the effect that, if the Indian nation exists and has compelled recognition of its existence, then this must be regarded as the proud achievement of imperialism, which has brought Indian national consciousness into existence and planted the seeds of British democratic ideals in India; and even, by a kind of teleological anachronism, this is regarded as having been the real objective of British rule from the beginning.

"The politically minded portion of the people of India ... are intellectually our children. They have imbibed ideas which we ourselves have set before them, and we ought to reckon it to their credit. The present intellectual and moral stir in India is no reproach, but rather a tribute to our work." (Montagu-Chelmsford Report, 1918, p. 115.)

This is the picture which the modern cultured imperialist seeks to create in utterances for public consumption. The now much rarer public survivals of the old-fashioned type of utterance (such as the famous declaration of Joynson-Hicks that "we did not conquer India for the benefit of the Indians. I know that it is said at missionary meetings that we have conquered India to raise the level of the Indians. That is cant. We conquered India by the sword, and by the sword we shall hold it. We hold it as the finest outlet for British goods") are today regarded in high official quar-

ters as in bad taste and tactically undesirable in an already sufficiently embarrassing situation.

There is no question of the change of tone in official utterance in the modern period. But the skeptical may be pardoned for inquiring whether the change of tone is not the reflection, rather than the cause, of the rising national movement.

What is the measure of truth in this claim?

The democratic evolution of the modern age, which developed in many lands, including England as one of its earliest homes, is not the peculiar patent of England. Nor is it correct that it requires the alien domination of a country in order to implant the seeds of the democratic revolution. The American Declaration of Independence, and still more the great French Revolution, with its gospel of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, far more than the already ageing English parliamentary-monarchical compromise, were the great inspirers of the democratic movement of the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917 have performed a corresponding role as the signal and starting-point of the awakening of the peoples, and especially of the awakening consciousness of the subject peoples of Asia and all the colonial countries to the claim of national freedom.

The notion that India could have had no part in these world currents, or pressed forward to the fight for national and democratic freedom, without the interposition of England, is fatuous self-complacency. On the contrary, the example of China has shown how far more powerfully the national democratic impulse has been able to advance and gain ground where imperialism had not been able to establish any complete previous domination; and this national democratic movement of liberation has had to struggle continuously against the obstacles imposed by imperialist aggression and penetration.

Did the Indian national movement arise because the educated class in India were taught by their masters to read Burke, Mill and Macaulay and to delight in the parliamentary rhetoric of a Gladstone and a Bright? So runs the familiar legend. The legend is too simple, and on a par with the derivation of modern France from the will of a Napoleon, or the Catholic derivation of Protestantism from the personal idiosyncrasies of Luther. The Indian national movement arose from social conditions, from the con-

ditions of imperialism and its system of exploitation, and from the social and economic forces generated within Indian society under the conditions of that exploitation; the rise of the Indian bourgeoisie and its growing competition against the domination of the British bourgeoisie were inevitable, whatever the system of education; and if the Indian bourgeoisie had been educated only in the Sanscrit Vedas, in monastic seclusion from every other current of thought, they would have assuredly found in the Sanscrit Vedas the inspiring principles and slogans of their struggle.

When Macaulay, on behalf of imperialism, imposed the system of Anglicized education, and defeated the Orientalists, his object was not to create Indian national consciousness, but to destroy it down to the very deepest roots of its being, in much the same spirit as the Tsarist methods of Russification of the conquered nationalities of the old Russian Empire. His object was to train up a stratum of docile executants of the English will, cut off from every line of contact with their people. Nothing was farther from his thoughts than to implant the seeds of democracy. On that question his views were emphatic. It was Macaulay who declared: "We know that India cannot have a free government. But she may have the next best thing—a firm and impartial despotism."

There is no need to minimize the historical significance and achievement, for good and for evil, of British rule in India, or the contribution of that rule, however unwillingly or unconsciously, to the forces which have gone to mold the Indian nation.

The first and most important achievement of the British conquest and exploitation of India was the negative achievement, or *destructive* role—the ruthless destruction of the foundations of the old order of society in India. Such a destruction was the necessary precedent to any new advance. It does not necessarily follow from this that such a destruction would have been impossible without the British conquest. On the contrary, there is some reason to judge that the traditional Indian society in decomposition at the moment of the British conquest was trembling on the verge of the first stage of the bourgeois revolution on the basis of its own resources, when the already matured British bourgeois revolution overtook it in the phase of disorder and transition and was able to establish its domination. But in the actual historical record this destruction was the achievement of British rule.

The second achievement, less completely carried out, was the laying of the material basis for the new order by the political unification of the country, the linking up of India with the world market, the establishment of modern communications, especially the railways and telegraphic system, with the consequent first beginnings of modern industry and training of the necessary accompanying personnel with administrative and scientific qualifications.

These achievements could not in themselves bring either liberation or any improvement in conditions for the mass of the Indian people. They could only lay the material premises for both.

In the earlier period of British rule, in the first half of the nineteenth century, the British rulers—in the midst of, and actually through all the misery and industrial devastation—were performing an actively progressive role, were in many spheres actively combating the conservative and feudal forces of Indian society.

After 1857 a transformation took place in British policy and the character of British rule. From this point British policy shifted its center of gravity increasingly to winning the support of reaction in India against the masses; while its relationship to the new progressive forces, who represented the rising Indian bourgeoisie, passed from the former cordial closeness to coolness and suspicion, and even hostility, mitigated only by attempts here also to form temporary alliances of convenience against the masses. An abrupt end was made of the system of annexation of the Indian States into British India. The path of social reform was no longer actively pursued, but gave place more and more markedly to zealous protection of every reactionary religious survival and custom (the Age of Consent Act of 1891 being almost the solitary exception in this later period).

While the objectively progressive role of the preceding phase of British rule in India was thus coming to an end in the later decades of the nineteenth century, new forces were growing up within Indian society. During the second half of the nineteenth century the Indian bourgeoisie was coming to the front. In 1853 the first successful cotton mill was started in Bombay. By 1880 there were 156 mills employing 44,000 workers. By 1900 there were 193 mills employing 161,000 workers. From the outset the new cotton textile industry was financed and controlled mainly by

Indians; and it had to make its way against heavy difficulties. At the same time was appearing the new educated middle class, trained in the principles of Western education, developing as lawyers, doctors, teachers and administrators, and advancing to the claims of nineteenth-century democratic conceptions of citizenship. These beginnings, both in the field of capitalist industry and of the new Westernized intelligentsia, were still relatively small. But the new class was appearing which was inevitably to find in the British bourgeoisie its overshadowing competitor and obstacle to advance, and was therefore destined to become the first articulate expression and leadership of Indian national claims.

The basic economic conflict between the new Indian bourgeoisie and the British bourgeoisie was already revealed when in 1882 all duties on cotton imports into India were removed by the Government in response to the demands of the Lancashire manufacturers against the rising Indian industry. Three years later the Indian National Congress was formed.

Finally, the growing impoverishment and desperation of the peasantry, consequent on the cumulative process of British capitalist penetration, were beginning to reach serious proportions by the second half of the nineteenth century, and especially during its last three decades, and to find expression in mass unrest.

Thus by the last quarter of the nineteenth century the conditions were now present, which had not existed in the first three-quarters, for the beginning of the Indian national movement.

2. THE NATIONAL CONGRESS

The Indian National Congress, the premier organization and still the leading organization of the Indian national movement, was founded in 1885.

The story of the origin of the National Congress has often been used to substantiate the claim of British imperialism to be the foster-parent of Indian Nationalism. In fact, however, the story of this origin, and the contradiction of its subsequent history, afford a very striking demonstration of the strength of the forces of Indian Nationalism and of the inevitable growth of the struggle against imperialism.

As is well known, the National Congress, while arising from the preceding development and beginnings of activity of the Indian

middle class, was brought into existence as an organization through the initiative and under the guidance of an Englishman. More than that—what is less universally known—the National Congress was in fact brought into being through the initiative and under the guidance of direct British governmental policy, on a plan secretly pre-arranged with the Viceroy, as an intended weapon for safeguarding British rule against the rising forces of popular unrest and anti-British feeling.

Yet no sooner had the legal existence of a national organization, within whatever limited original intended bounds, been thus authorized, than its inevitable tendency as a focus of national feeling began to assert itself. From its early years, even if at first in very limited and cautious forms, the national character began to overshadow the loyalist character. Within a few years it was being regarded with suspicion and hostility by the Government as a center of "sedition." The subsequent developing mass movement of national struggle swept it forward, already in a first preliminary stage before the war of 1914, and still more decisively after it, to the plane of far-reaching mass struggle, avowing the aim of complete national independence, while the Government proclaimed it illegal and sought to suppress it. Today the National Congress is the main focus of the organized millions of the national movement.

The origins of Indian Nationalism are commonly traced to the foundation of the National Congress in 1885. In fact, however, the precursors of the movement can be traced through the preceding half-century. The reform movement which found expression in the Brahma Samaj was established in 1828. In 1843 was founded the British India Society in Bengal, which sought to "secure the welfare, extend the just rights and advance the interests of all classes of our fellow subjects." In 1851 this was merged into the British Indian Association, which in the following year presented a Petition to the British Parliament, declaring that "they cannot but feel that they have not profited by their connection with Great Britain to the extent which they had a right to expect," setting forth grievances with regard to the revenue system, the discouragement of manufactures, education and the question of admission to the higher administrative services, and demanding a Legislative Council "possessing a popular character so as in some respects to represent the sentiments of the people."

These earlier associations were still mainly linked up with the landowning interests; and indeed the merger by which the British Indian Association was formed included the Bengal Landholders' Society. In 1875 the Indian Association, founded by Surendra Nath Banerjea, was the first organization representative of the educated middle class in opposition to the domination of the big landowners. Branches, both of the more reactionary British Indian Association and of the more progressive Indian Association, were founded in various parts of India. In 1883 the Indian Association of Calcutta called the first All-India National Conference, which was attended by representatives from Bengal, Madras, Bombay and the United Provinces. The National Conference of 1883 was held under the presidency of Ananda Mohan Bose, who later became President of the National Congress in 1898; in his opening address he declared the Conference to be the first stage to a National Parliament. Thus the conception of an Indian National Congress had already been formed and was maturing from the initiative and activity of the Indian representatives themselves when the Government intervened to take a hand. The Government did not found a movement which had no previous existence or basis. The Government stepped in to take charge of a movement which was in any case coming into existence and whose development it foresaw was inevitable.

The official founder of the National Congress was an English administrator, A. O. Hume, who had been in Government service until 1882, when he retired and took up the work of the formation of the Congress. Hume in his official capacity had received possession of the very voluminous secret police reports which revealed the growth of popular discontent and the spreading of underground conspiratorial organization. The period of the seventies was a period of heavy famines and distress, and the growing unrest had been demonstrated in the Deccan peasant risings. The disastrous famine of 1877 coincided with the costly durbar, at which Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India, and with the Second Afghan War. Unrest was met by repression. The freedom of the press was removed by the Vernacular Press Act of 1878. In the following year the Arms Act left the villagers without even the means of defense against the raids of wild animals. The right of public meeting was cut down. The biographer of Hume writes:

"These ill-starred measures of reaction, combined with Russian methods of police repression, brought India under Lord Lytton within measurable distance of a revolutionary outbreak, and it was only in time that Mr. Hume and his Indian advisers were inspired to intervene." (Sir William Wedderburn: *Allan Octavian Hume, Father of the Indian National Congress*, 1913, p. 101.)

Hume established contact with the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, an experienced politician, in the early part of 1885, to place the situation before him. It was at this interview, in the headquarters of imperialism at Simla, that the plan of the Indian National Congress was hatched. The first President of the Congress, W. C. Bonnerjee, has published his account of this origin:

"It will probably be news to many that the Indian National Congress, as it was originally started and as it has since been carried on, is in reality the work of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, when that nobleman was the Governor-General of India. Mr. A. O. Hume, C.B., had in 1884 conceived the idea that it would be of great advantage to the country if leading politicians could be brought together once a year to discuss social matters and be upon friendly footing with one another. He did not desire that politics should form part of their discussion." (W. C. Bonnerjee, *Introduction to Indian Politics*, 1898.)

Lord Dufferin's aim to build up through the Congress a basis of support for the Government, by separating the "loyalist" elements from the "extremists," was very clearly set out in his speech on the demands of the educated classes in 1886, the year following the foundation of the Congress.

The calculation is perfectly clear. And in the immediate outcome it looked at first as if it would be fully successful. The First Congress was most dutiful to imperialism; its nine resolutions cover only detail administrative reform suggestions; the nearest approach to a national democratic demand was the request for the admission of some elected members to the Legislative Councils.

The twofold character of the National Congress in its origin is very important for all its subsequent history. The double strand in its role and being runs right through its history: on the one hand, the strand of co-operation with imperialism against the

“menace” of the mass movement; on the other hand, the strand of leadership of the masses in the national struggle.

3. THREE STAGES OF NATIONAL STRUGGLE

The historical development of Indian Nationalism is marked by three great waves of struggle, each at a successively higher level, and each leaving its permanent marks on the movement and opening the way to a new phase. In its earliest phase Indian Nationalism, as we have seen, reflected only the big bourgeoisie—the progressive elements among the landowners, the new industrial bourgeoisie and the well-to-do intellectual elements. The first great wave of unrest which disturbed these placid waters, in the period preceding 1914, reflected the discontent of the urban petty bourgeoisie, but did not yet reach the masses. The role of the masses in the national movement, alike of the peasantry and of the new force of the industrial working class, emerged only after the war of 1914-18. Two great waves of mass struggle developed, the first in the years immediately succeeding the war, the second in the years succeeding the world economic crisis.

For twenty years the National Congress developed along the path laid down by its founders. During these twenty years no basic claim for self-government in any form—that is, no basic national claim—was formulated in its resolutions, but only the demand for a greater degree of Indian representation within the British system of rule. The maximum demand was for representative institutions, not yet for self-government.

The Congress of those days was exclusively representative of the upper bourgeoisie, and especially of its ideological representatives, the educated middle class. While it won an enthusiastic and wide response from these circles from the outset, so much so that measures had to be taken from an early date to restrict the number of delegates, that response was entirely confined to these social elements. The early Indian bourgeoisie of that time understood very well that it was in no position to challenge British rule. On the contrary, it looked to British rule as its ally. For them the main enemy was not British rule as such, but the backwardness of the people, the lack of modern development of the country, the strength of the forces of obscurantism and ignorance, and the administrative shortcomings of the “bureaucratic” system respon-

sible for the situation. In their fight against these evils they looked hopefully for the co-operation of the British rulers.

It should not be assumed that these early Congress leaders were reactionary anti-national servants of alien rule. On the contrary, they represented at that time the most progressive force in Indian society. So long as the nascent working class was still completely without expression or organization, and the peasants were still the dumb millions, the Indian bourgeoisie was the most progressive and objectively revolutionary force in India. They carried on work for social reform, for enlightenment, for education and modernization against all that was backward and obscurantist in India. They pressed the demand for industrial and technical economic development.

But their faith and hope in British imperialism as their ally in this work were doomed to disappointment. British imperialism understood very clearly—more clearly than they did themselves—the significance of this progressive role, and the inevitable conflict that it would mean with the interests of imperialist rule and exploitation. Therefore from an early period the original patronage of the Congress turned to suspicion and hostility. Within three years of its foundation, the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, its original inspirer, was speaking with contempt for the “microscopic minority” represented by the Congress. In 1900 Lord Curzon wrote in a letter to the Secretary of State: “The Congress is tottering to its fall, and one of my great ambitions while in India is to assist it to a peaceful demise.” (Ronaldshay, *Life of Lord Curzon*, Vol. II, p. 151.)

As the failure of the old policy became clear, it was inevitable that a new school should arise, criticizing the “Old Guard,” and demanding a more positive program and policy which should represent a definite breaking of the ties with imperialism. This new school, associated especially with the leadership of B. G. Tilak, came to the front already in the last decade of the nineteenth century, but was not able to play a decisive role until the situation became ripe in the following decade.

Cut off from any scientific social and political theory, the new leaders sought to find the secret of the compromising ineffectiveness of the Moderate leaders in their “denationalized” “Westernizing” tendencies, and concentrated their attack against these tendencies. Thus they fixed their attack against precisely those

tendencies in respect of which the older Moderate leaders were progressive. Against these, they sought to build the national movement on the basis of the still massive forces of social conservatism in India, on the basis of Orthodox Hinduism and the affirmation of the supposed spiritual superiority of the ancient Hindu or "Aryan" civilization to modern "Western" civilization. They sought to build the national movement, the most advanced movement in India, on the basis of the most antiquated religion and religious superstitions. From this era dates the disastrous combination of political radicalism and social reaction in India, which has had such a maleficent influence on the fortunes of the national movement, and whose traces are still far from overcome.

The starting-point of the opposition leadership, as against the Old Guard, was undoubtedly the desire to make a break with compromising policies of conciliation with imperialism, and to enter on a path of decisive and uncompromising struggle against imperialism. To this extent they represented a force of advance. Their appeal reached to the discontented lower middle class and to the hearts of the literate youth, especially to the poorer students and the new growing army of unemployed or poorly paid intellectuals, whose situation was becoming increasingly desperate in the opening years of the twentieth century, as it became manifest that there was no avenue of advance or fulfillment for them under imperialist conditions, and who were little inclined to be patient with the slow and comfortable doctrines of gradual advance preached by the solidly established upper-class leaders.

In the practical struggle the Orthodox Nationalists, while building on the religious basis for their argument, could derive no weapon or plan of action therefrom save the universal weapon of desperate, but impotent, petty-bourgeois elements divorced from any mass movement—individual terrorism. When by 1905 the situation was ripe for a new stage of struggle, the main weapon which was found was one which was remote from all the previous religious and metaphysical speculations and bore an essentially modern and economic character—the weapon of the economic boycott.

The forces which gathered for a new stage of struggle in 1905 reflected the wave of world advance at that time following the defeat of Tsarism by Japan (the first victory in modern times of an Asiatic over a European Power, having its own profound reper-

cussions in India) and the initial victories of the First Russian Revolution. The immediate issue which precipitated the struggle in India was the Partition of Bengal, then the center of political advance in India, a plan devised by Lord Curzon and carried out under his successor. Against this Partition, which aroused universal indignation, the boycott of foreign goods was proclaimed on August 7, 1905.

A rapid swing forward of the national movement followed. The 1905 session of the Congress still gave only conditional support to the boycott. But the Calcutta Congress in 1906, strongly under the influence of the Extremists, adopted a complete new program, sponsored by the old Father of the Congress himself, Dadabhai Naoroji. This program proclaimed for the first time the aim of Swaraj or Self-Government, defined as colonial self-government within the Empire ("the system of government obtaining in the self-governing British colonies"), support of the boycott movement, support of "Swadeshi" or the promotion of indigenous industries, and National Education. Swaraj, Boycott, Swadeshi and National Education became now the four cardinal points of the Congress program.

The hand of Government repression rapidly followed the new awakening of the movement. In 1907 was passed the Seditious Meetings Act, and a new and drastic Press Act followed in 1910 (the previous Press Act of 1878 had been repealed under the liberal administration of Lord Ripon in 1882). On the basis of a regulation of 1818 the method of deportation without trial was brought into play against the Extremist leaders. All this took place under the "liberal" Lord Morley as Secretary for India. In 1908 Tilak, the man whom the Government most feared, was sentenced to six years' imprisonment for an article published in his newspaper, and was held in prison in Mandalay until the month before the outbreak of the war. The arrest of Tilak led to a general strike of the Bombay textile workers—the first political action of the Indian proletariat. Most of the other prominent leaders were either sentenced or deported, or passed into exile to escape sentence. Between 1906 and 1919 there were 550 political cases before the courts in Bengal alone. Police action was carried out with great rigor; meetings were broken up; agrarian riots were ruthlessly suppressed in the Punjab; school-children were arrested for singing national songs.

As in the previous period, repression was followed and accompanied by concessions to "rally the Moderates." The very limited Morley-Minto Reforms in 1909 gave a grudging extension to the system of representation initiated in the Indian Councils Act of 1892, by permitting a minority of indirectly elected members in the Central Legislative Council, and a majority of indirectly elected members in the Provincial Councils; the Councils were advisory bodies and had no effective powers. The Moderate leaders, now in sole control of the Congress, seized the occasion of these Reforms to proclaim their unity with the Government.

The revision of the Partition of Bengal in 1911 represented a partial victory of the boycott movement. The wave of struggle which had developed during the years 1906-11 did not maintain its strength during the immediately succeeding years; but the permanent advance which had been achieved in the stature of the national movement was never lost. The Indian claim to freedom had for the first time during those years been brought to the forefront of world political questions; and the seed of the aim of complete national liberation, and of determined struggle to achieve it, had been implanted in the political movement, and was destined in the subsequent years to strike root in the masses of the people.

It was the shock of the first world war, with its lasting blow to the whole structure of imperialism, and the opening of the world revolutionary wave that followed in 1917 and after, which released the first mass movement of revolt in India.

Just as the awakening of 1905 reflected the world movement, even more so was this the case with the great mass movement which shook the foundations of British rule in India in the years succeeding 1917.

The war of 1914, following the lesson of the defeat of Russian Tsarism by Japan a decade earlier, completed the shattering of the myth of the invincibility of Western imperialism in the eyes of the Asiatic peoples. The spectacle of the suicidal conflict of the imperialist Powers aroused hopes in the breasts of millions of the subject peoples that the hour of collapse of the existing empires was at hand.

The British Government took firm measures from the outset to hold the situation in hand, by the adoption of special legislation and powers, notably the Defense of India Act, and by the im-

prisonment or internment of the most irreconcilable fighters or members of the revolutionary groups. In this task it was assisted in the earlier period of the war by the willing co-operation of the upper sections of the political movement. The Congress, under control of the Moderate leaders, proclaimed its loyalty and support of the war in resolutions adopted at each of its four annual sessions during the war, and even at the Delhi session in 1918 at the close of the war passed a resolution of loyalty to the King and congratulations on "the successful termination of the war."

These demonstrations of "loyalty" by the Moderate leaders were regarded by British official opinion as an expression of gratitude and enthusiasm for the blessings of British rule. In fact, however, the calculation of these leaders, as they themselves subsequently explained, had been by these services to imperialism at war to open the door most rapidly to Indian self-government. Thus Gandhi declared, in his speech at his trial in 1922:

"In all these efforts at service I was actuated by the belief that it was possible by such services to gain a status of full equality for my countrymen."

They were later to express their disillusionment.

The docility of the upper political leadership did not prevent the growth of mass unrest from the conditions of the war. The very heavy burdens of crippling financial contributions exacted from the poverty-stricken people of India for the service of the war, the rising prices and the reckless profiteering created conditions of mass misery and impoverishment, which were reflected in the unparalleled toll of the influenza epidemic at the end of the war, killing 14 millions. The growth of unrest was reflected in the Ghadr movement in the Punjab, and in mutinies in the army, which were suppressed with ruthless executions and sentences.

The growing unrest began to find a reflection in the political movement, in which new stirrings appeared from 1916 onwards. In 1916 Tilak founded the Home Rule for India League. His campaign was joined by the English theosophist, Mrs. Besant, who sought to guide the national movement in channels of "loyalty" to the Empire and was later to take an active part in the fight against non-co-operation. Reunion between the Extremists and Moderates was achieved at the Lucknow Congress in 1916. Even more important, the plans for alliance between the Congress and the Moslem League, which had been originally prepared at

the Karachi Congress in 1913, reached fruition in 1916. In 1916 the Lucknow Pact of the two bodies reached agreement on a common scheme for reforms in the direction of partial self-government within the Empire (elected majorities in the Councils, extended powers of the Councils, half the Viceroy's Executive to be Indians), which became known as the Congress-League scheme. At the same time the aim was proclaimed of India becoming "an equal partner in the Empire with the self-governing Dominions."

This was the position when the rapid transformation of the world situation in 1917, following the Russian Revolution, affected the whole tempo of events and found its speedy reflection in the relations of Britain and India. Within five months of the fall of Tsarism the British Government hastened to issue a declaration (known as the Montagu declaration) which proclaimed the aims of British rule in India to be "the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of Responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire," and promising "substantial steps in this direction as soon as possible." But the reforms were not enacted until the end of 1919 and only came into operation in 1920. By that time the whole situation in India had changed.

The Reforms were partially successful, as with the Morley-Minto scheme a decade earlier, in creating a division in the upper-class national camp; but the support of the Moderates thus secured was of far less weight in the political situation at this more advanced stage of development.

For in fact, despite the still-continuing co-operation of the Congress, the whole situation in India had changed in 1919, and the basis for co-operation was disappearing from under the feet of the Congress. The year 1919 saw a wave of mass unrest spread over India. Already the closing months of 1918 and the first months of 1919 saw the opening of a strike movement on a scale never before known in India. In December, 1918, the Bombay mill strike began, which by January, 1919, extended to 125,000 workers. The Rowlatt Acts, introduced in the beginning of 1919 and enacted in March, with the purpose to continue after the lapse of war-time legislation the extraordinary repressive powers of the Government, for dispensing with ordinary court procedure, and for imprisonment without trial, aroused widespread

indignation as demonstrating the iron hand of imperialism beneath the velvet glove of Reform. Gandhi, utilizing his South African experience, sought to organize a passive resistance movement against the Rowlatt Bills, and formed a Satyagraha League for this purpose in February. A hartal, or general day of suspension of business, was called for April 6. The response of the masses startled and overwhelmed the initiators of the movement. Through March and April a mighty wave of mass demonstrations, strikes, unrest, in some cases rioting, and courageous resistance to violent repression in the face of heavy casualties, spread over many parts of India. The official Government Report for the year speaks with alarmed amazement of the new-found unity of the people and the breakdown of all the official conceptions of Hindu-Moslem antagonism:

"One noticeable feature of the general excitement was the unprecedented fraternization between the Hindus and the Moslems. Their union, between the leaders, had now for long been a fixed plan of the nationalist platform. In this time of public excitement even the lower classes agreed for once to forget their differences. Extraordinary scenes of fraternization occurred. Hindus publicly accepted water from the hands of Moslems and vice versa. Hindu-Moslem Unity was the watchword of processions indicated both by cries and by banners. Hindu leaders had actually been allowed to preach from the pulpit of a Mosque." (*India in 1919.*)

Extraordinary measures of repression followed. It was at this time that the atrocity of Amritsar occurred, when General Dyer fired 1,600 rounds of ammunition into an unarmed crowd in an enclosed place without means of exit, killing (according to the official figures) 379, and leaving 1,200 wounded without means of attention, the object being, according to his subsequent statement, to create "a moral effect from a military point of view, not only on those who were present, but more especially throughout the Punjab"—*i.e.*, to terrorize the population. For nearly eight months all news of it was officially suppressed and withheld from parliament and the British public. For diplomatic reasons, in face of agitation and a Congress inquiry, a committee had to be set up by the Government to inquire into and condemn this outrage; but General Dyer received the plaudits (and a purse of £20,000)

from the imperialists for his brave stand, and his action was officially approved by the House of Lords. Martial law was proclaimed in the Punjab; and the record of the wholesale shootings, hangings, bombings from the air, and extraordinary sentences perpetrated by the tribunals during this reign of terror, is still only available in fragmentary form from the subsequent inquiries.

Gandhi took alarm at the situation which was developing. In view of sporadic cases of violence of the masses against their rulers which had appeared in Calcutta, Bombay, Ahmedabad and elsewhere, he declared that he had committed "a blunder of Himalayan dimensions which had enabled ill-disposed persons, not true passive resisters at all, to perpetrate disorders." Accordingly, he suspended passive resistance in the middle of April, within a week of the hartal, and thus called off the movement at the moment it was beginning to reach its height, on the grounds, as he subsequently explained in a letter to the Press on July 21, that "a civil resister never seeks to embarrass the Government."

The tide of rising mass unrest was still advancing in 1920 and 1921, and was to be further intensified by the economic crisis which began to develop in the latter part of 1920. The first six months of 1920 saw the greatest height of the strike movement, with no less than 200 strikes involving one and a half million workers.

It was in this situation that in 1920 Gandhi and the main body of the Congress leadership (now deserted by the former Moderates) executed a decisive change of front, threw over co-operation with the Reforms, determined to take the leadership of the rising mass movement, and for this purpose evolved the plan of "non-violent non-co-operation." Henceforward the mass struggle was to be led by the Congress; but the price of that leadership was to be that the struggle must be "non-violent."

The new plan of non-violent non-co-operation was adopted at the Calcutta Special Congress in September, 1920. The resolution proclaimed the policy of "progressive non-violent non-co-operation inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi, until the said wrongs are righted and Swaraj is established." The policy envisaged successive stages, beginning with the renunciation of titles bestowed by the Government, and the triple boycott (boycott of the legislatures, law courts and educational institutions), together with "reviving hand-spinning in every house and hand-weaving," and leading up

at some future date to the final stage of non-payment of taxes. It will be seen that the immediate measures were measures of boycott to be adopted by the middle-class elements, officials, lawyers and students, with the only role for the masses the constructive task of "hand-spinning and hand-weaving"; the active participation of the masses, through non-payment of taxes (which inevitably meant a No-Rent campaign) was reserved for later.

The boycott of the elections to the new legislatures, which took place in November, was markedly successful, two-thirds of the electors abstaining. The boycott of educational institutions had a considerable measure of success, masses of students sweeping with enthusiasm into the non-co-operation movement. The lawyers' boycott was less successful, except for a few outstanding examples, such as those of Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das.

At the annual session of the Congress at Nagpur in December, 1920, the new program was finally adopted with practical unanimity. The Creed of the Congress was changed from the previous proclamation of the aim of colonial self-government within the Empire, to be attained by constitutional means, to the new aim of "the attainment of Swaraj by peaceful and legitimate means." The organization of the Congress was carried forward from its previous loose character to the machinery of a modern party, with its units reaching down to the villages and localities, and with a standing Executive ("Working Committee") of fifteen.

The new program and policy inaugurated by Gandhi marked a giant's advance for the National Congress. The Congress now stood out as a political party leading the masses in struggle against the Government for the realization of national freedom. From this point the National Congress won its position as the central focus of the united national movement, a position which, through good and evil repute, through whatever changes of tactics and fortunes, it has maintained and carried forward up to this day.

A great sweep forward of the mass movement followed the adoption by the Congress of the new militant program of struggle against the Government for the speedy realization of Swaraj. Gandhi freely declared as a firm and certain prophecy (which, despite its naïve character, was confidently believed by his followers in the flush of enthusiasm of those days) the rash promise

that Swaraj would be achieved within twelve months, that is—for the date was definite—by December 31, 1921.

The advance of the movement in 1921 was demonstrated, not only in the enthusiastic development of the non-co-operation movement, but in the accompanying rising forms of mass struggle in all parts of the country, as in the Assam-Bengal railway strike, the Midnapore No-Tax campaign, the Moplah rebellion in Malabar in the South, and the militant Akali movement against the Government-defended rich Mohants in the Punjab.

Towards the closing months of 1921 the struggle leaped to new heights. The Government, in deep alarm and anxiety over the whole situation, played their hoped-for ace of trumps against Gandhi by bringing in—not merely the Duke of Connaught, as earlier in the year—but the Prince of Wales himself to tour India. The hartal all over India which greeted the Prince of Wales on his arrival on November 17 was the most overwhelming and successful demonstration of popular disaffection which India had yet known. The hostility of the people and the angry repression by the Government led to sanguinary struggles, which Gandhi sought vainly to check and which led him to declare that Swaraj stank in his nostrils.

From this point the National Volunteer movement began to consolidate its ranks. They were still organized within the framework of the Congress or of the Khilafat movement on the basis of “non-violent non-co-operation”; but many wore uniform, drilled and marched in mass formation to organize hartals and the boycott of foreign cloth by picketing and peaceful persuasion.

The full force of Government repression was turned against the National Volunteers. The Governmental Press, such as the *Statesman* and the *Englishman*, complained that the National Volunteers had taken possession of Calcutta and that the Government had abdicated, and demanded immediate action. The Government proclaimed the Volunteers illegal organizations. Arrests spread in thousands. Thousands of students and factory workers replenished the ranks of the Volunteers.

By the end of December all the best-known Congress leaders, except Gandhi, were imprisoned. Twenty thousand political prisoners filled the jails. At the highest point of the struggle, at the beginning of the following year, 30,000 were in jail. Enthusiasm was at fever heat.

The Government was anxious and perplexed, and began to lose its nerve. If the infection of universal defiance of the Government spread from the towns and began to reach the millions of the peasantry, there was no salvation left for British rule; all their guns and airplanes would not avail them in the seething caldron of rebellion of 300 millions. The Viceroy proceeded, through the intermediary of Pandit Malaviya, to negotiate with the political leaders in jail. He offered legalization of the National Volunteers and release of the prisoners in return for the calling off of civil disobedience. The negotiations proved abortive.

In this situation the Ahmedabad Congress was held at the close of the year 1921. Amid enthusiasm the Congress passed resolutions proclaiming “the fixed determination of the Congress to continue the campaign of non-violent non-co-operation with greater vigor . . . till Swaraj is established and the control of the Government of India passes into the hands of the people,” calling on all over eighteen years of age to join the illegal National Volunteers, pledging the aim “to concentrate attention upon Civil Disobedience, whether mass or individual, whether of an offensive or defensive character,” and placing full dictatorial powers for this purpose in the hands of “Mahatma Gandhi as the sole Executive authority of the Congress.”

Gandhi was now Dictator of the Congress. The movement was at its highest point. Full powers had been placed in his hands to lead it to victory. The moment had come for the final trial of strength, for the launching of mass civil disobedience. The whole country was looking to Gandhi. What would he do?

Gandhi's action was peculiar. He waited a month. During this month districts approached him, pleading to begin a No-Tax campaign. The news of the growth of unrest among the peasantry immediately determined Gandhi that there was no time to be lost. At a hasty meeting of the Working Committee at Bardoli on February 12, the decision was reached, in view of the “inhuman conduct of the mob at Chauri Chaura” (where angry peasants stormed and burned a village police station, resulting in the death of twenty-two police officers) to end mass civil disobedience and to substitute a constructive program of spinning, temperance reform and educational activities. The battle was over. Motilal Nehru, Lajpat Rai and others sent from prison long and indignant letters to Gandhi protesting at his decision. Gandhi coldly replied

that men in prison were "civilly dead" and had no claim to any say in policy.

The Bardoli resolution of February, 1922, suspending mass civil disobedience in the name of "non-violence," threw an instructive light on the real meaning of "non-violence." Of its seven clauses no less than three dealt with the necessity of the payment of rent by the peasants to the landlords or Government (though non-payment of rent could hardly be suggested by any one to be a "violent" action):

"Clause 6: The Working Committee advises Congress workers and organizations to inform the ryots (peasants) that withholding of rent payment to the Zemindars (landlords) is contrary to the Congress resolutions and injurious to the best interests of the country.

"Clause 7: The Working Committee assures the Zemindars that the Congress movement is in no way intended to attack their legal rights."

After the movement had been thus paralyzed and demoralized from within, the Government struck with confidence. On March 10 Gandhi was arrested and sentenced to six years' imprisonment. Not a ripple followed in the mass movement. Within less than two years Gandhi was released. The crisis was over.

For half a decade after the blow of Bardoli the national movement was prostrated. The Congress fell to a low ebb. By 1924 Gandhi was declaring that, in place of the proclaimed aim of 10 million members, they could not claim more than 200,000: "We politicians do not represent the masses except in opposition to the Government." In this depression of the national movement the sinister symptom of communal disorders was able to spread over the land. The Moslem League separated itself again from the Congress. The Hindu Mahasabha conducted a narrow and reactionary counter-propaganda.

A section of the leadership of the Congress, represented by C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru, sought after Bardoli to make a decisive turn away from what they regarded as the sterile and unpractical policies of Gandhi by forming a new party, while remaining within the Congress, to contest the elections and carry forward the fight on the parliamentary plane within the new legislatures. This new party was named the Swaraj Party.

The decision to end the boycott of the elections and of the

legislatures was undoubtedly, in view of the weakness of the mass movement, a step in advance. It was opposed by the impotent and conservative "No-Changers" in the Congress, who clung to Gandhi's "constructive program" of spinning, temperance, removal of untouchability and similar social reforms as the only path of salvation; but they were powerless to prevent sanctioning of its adoption by that section of the Congress which desired a more positive policy. By 1925 the Congress made its complete and unconditional surrender to the Swaraj Party, which held the majority and whose leaders took over decisive control, while Gandhi passed for the time being into the background.

The Swaraj Party leaders, however, in seeking to turn away from the policies of Gandhi which had landed the movement in an *impasse*, also turned away still farther from any basis in the masses. The Swaraj Party was the party of the progressive upper bourgeoisie; its existence depended on the support of these elements, just as its main leaders came from among them. In practice, therefore, the Swaraj Party, though intended to represent a step in advance, was no more than the reflection of the ebb of the tide of mass struggle. The Swaraj Party was the party of the progressive bourgeoisie moving to co-operation with imperialism along the inclined plane of parliamentarism. From its inception it slid downwards ever closer to the supposed enemy. At the new elections in the autumn of 1926 the Swaraj Party suffered a marked setback, except in Madras.

But the hopes of the bourgeoisie for harmonious co-operation with imperialism were destined to end in disillusionment. As soon as it was clear that the forces of the national struggle had weakened, and that the Swarajists, divorced from the mass movement, were reduced to pleading for terms, imperialism reversed the engines, began to go back on the partial economic concessions granted to the Indian bourgeoisie during the previous years, and opened an economic offensive to re-establish full domination, through the Currency Bill of 1927, the establishment of the rupee ratio at 1s.6d. (in the face of universal Indian protests), and the new Steel Protection Bill of 1927, which undermined the protection of the 1924 Act by introducing preferential rates for British steel. Towards the end of 1927 the Simon Commission was announced, to settle the fate of the future constitution for

India; no Indian representatives were included in the Simon Commission.

Thus the Indian bourgeoisie, however unwillingly, found themselves once again forced to turn aside from their hopes of co-operation and to look towards the possibility of harnessing the mass forces once more in their support, if they were to have any prospect of driving a successful bargain. But the conditions were now far more difficult and complicated than a decade ago. For in the interval the mass forces had begun to awaken to new life of their own, to independent political expression and aims, and to active struggle, not only against imperialism, but against the Indian exploiters. The triangular character of the contest, or rather the deeper contest between imperialism and the Indian masses, with the hesitant and vacillating role of the Indian bourgeoisie, was now coming far more clearly to the front. Hence the peculiar character of the new stage of struggle which now opened out, developing from its first signs in the latter part of 1927 to its full strength in 1930-34; on the one hand, the far more widespread, intensive and prolonged character of the struggle; on the other, the spasmodic, interrupted tempo of development, the zigzag vacillation of aims, the repeated accompanying negotiations, and sudden truces without settlement, until the final collapse.

The new factor which developed for the first time in the middle years of the nineteen-twenties, and gave the decisive impetus to the new wave of struggle, though not yet its leadership, was the emergence of the industrial working class as an independent force, conducting its own struggle with unexampled energy and heroism, and beginning to develop its own leadership. With this advance the new ideology of the working class, or socialism, began to develop for the first time as a political factor in India, and the influence of its ideas began to penetrate the youth and the left sections of Indian Nationalism, bringing new life and energy and wider horizons. The Cawnpore conspiracy trial of 1924 showed the sharp look-out of imperialism to stamp out the first signs of revolutionary working-class politics. The growth of the Workers' and Peasants' Party, which came to the front during 1926 and 1927, preceded the great advance of trade unionism and the strike movement in 1928. The colossal strike movement of 1928, with a total of 31,647,000 working days lost, or more than during the previous five years put together; the growth of the new fighting

Girni Kamgar Union or Red Flag Union of the Bombay textile workers to an officially returned membership of 65,000 within a year, and increase of trade-union membership by 70 per cent; the foremost political role of the working class in the demonstrations against the Simon Commission during that year; the rising militant consciousness of the trade unions and the victory of the left wing in the Trade Union Congress in 1929—these were the harbingers and the driving force that led to the new wave of struggle of the Indian people.

The reflection of this advance began to appear in the emergence of a new left wing in the Congress and the national movement. Towards the end of 1927 Jawaharlal Nehru returned from a prolonged tour of over a year and a half in Europe, where he had made contact with socialist circles and ideas. The Madras Congress, at the end of 1927, showed the advance of new leftward tendencies, especially among the youth. A resolution for complete independence as the aim of the national movement—always previously opposed by the leadership—was unanimously carried (in the absence of Gandhi, who later condemned it as "hastily conceived and thoughtlessly passed.") Boycott of the Simon Commission was determined; at the same time participation in an All-Parties Conference was approved to evolve an alternative constitutional scheme. The Congress affiliated to the newly founded International League Against Imperialism.

The apparent victory of the left at the 1927 Congress was superficial and based on lack of opposition. But as 1928 unfolded its events, with the success of the demonstrations against the Simon Commission, with the advance of the strike movement, and with the growth of the newly founded Independence League and of youth and student organizations, it was clear to the older leadership that the left was developing as a force which might rapidly sweep the Congress. At the All-Parties Conference the older leadership, in collaboration with the moderate or reactionary elements outside the Congress, evolved a scheme (known as the Nehru Report, from the Chairman, the elder Nehru) for a constitution based on responsible government within the British Empire, thus shelving the demand for independence. But in face of the rising tide of feeling, there was doubt whether this scheme would be accepted by the Congress.

In this critical balance of forces, with the certainty of big new

struggles ahead in a far more advanced situation than a decade previously, the right-wing leadership once again turned to Gandhi, whom they had previously thrust aside, and whose star now once again rose. At the Calcutta session at the end of 1928 Gandhi returned to active leadership of the Congress. Whatever the views of the moderate leaders might be with regard to his personal idiosyncrasies, there was no question that he was the most subtle and experienced politician of the older group, with unrivaled mass prestige which world publicity had now enhanced as the greatest Indian figure; the ascetic defender of property in the name of the most religious and idealist principles of humility and love of poverty; the invincible metaphysical-theological casuist who could justify and reconcile anything and everything in an astounding tangle of explanations and arguments which in a man of common clay might have been called dishonest quibbling, but in the great ones of the earth like MacDonald or Gandhi is recognized as a higher plane of spiritual reasoning; the prophet who by his personal saintliness and selflessness could unlock the door to the hearts of the masses where the moderate bourgeois leaders could not hope for a hearing—and the best guarantee of the shipwreck of any mass movement which had the blessing of his association. All the hopes of the bourgeoisie were fixed on Gandhi as the man to ride the waves, to unleash just enough of the mass movement in order to drive a successful bargain, and at the same time to save India from revolution.

At the Calcutta Congress in December, 1928, Gandhi had difficulty in securing acceptance of the Nehru Report. The resolution he drafted promised that this Report should not be regarded as in any way withdrawing the aim of complete independence, and that if this Report were not accepted by the Government by December 31, 1929 (Gandhi had originally drafted 1930, giving two years' respite, but 1929 was carried), then the Congress would revive the campaign of non-violent non-co-operation, and this time begin with non-payment of taxes. Even this resolution was only carried by a relatively narrow majority.

The twelve months of delay secured time for imperialism to act. Imperialism did not waste its opportunity. In March, 1929, all the most prominent leaders of the rising working-class movement were arrested from all parts of India, and brought to the remote court of Meerut for trial (where they could be tried without

jury); the trial was dragged out for four years, while they were held in prison, during all the succeeding wave of struggle, before even sentence was pronounced. Besides representing the decisive leadership of the trade unions and of the Workers' and Peasants' Party, three of the leaders arrested were also members of the All-India Congress Committee or elected Executive of the National Congress. Thus the working class was decapitated, and the strongest and most clear-headed and determined leaders of the left, with a real mass basis, removed, before the struggle in the hands of the Congress leadership was allowed to begin. At the same time was put into force the Public Safety Ordinance by decree of the Viceroy, directed against the militant forces.

One last effort was made by the moderate leadership to reach an agreement with imperialism. Following a very vague statement by the Viceroy on October 31, 1929, which made a reference to the "goal of Dominion status" to be reached at some unknown future date (a statement which, as *The Times* declared on the following day, "contains no promises and reveals no change of policy"), the party leaders in India united to issue a response, known as the Delhi Manifesto, wholeheartedly offering co-operation: "We appreciate the sincerity underlying the declaration. . . . We hope to be able to tender our co-operation with His Majesty's Government in their effort to evolve a scheme for a Dominion constitution suitable to India's needs." The statement was signed by Gandhi, Mrs. Besant, Motilal Nehru, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Jawaharlal Nehru and others; Nehru disapproved of it, and later judged it "wrong and dangerous"; but at the time he was, as he states, "talked into signing" it on the grounds that, as President-Elect, he would otherwise be breaking unity.

The Delhi Manifesto was received with delight by imperialism as a sign of weakening. It produced no practical result save to confuse the Congress ranks; the subsequent meeting with the Viceroy on the eve of the Congress was fruitless.

At the Lahore Congress, accordingly, at the end of 1929, the decision for action was taken. The Congress authorized the All-India Congress Committee "whenever it deems fit, to launch upon a program of Civil Disobedience, including non-payment of taxes." At midnight, as 1930 was ushered in, the Flag of Indian Independence (red, white and green—later, the red was withdrawn and substituted by saffron) was unfurled. On January 26,

1930, the first Independence Day was celebrated throughout India in vast demonstrations at which the pledge to struggle for complete independence was read out, proclaiming it "a crime against man and God to submit any longer" to British rule, and declaring the conviction that "if we can but withdraw our voluntary help and stop payment of taxes, without doing violence even under provocation, the end of this inhuman rule is assured."

What was to be the aim of the struggle that now opened? What was to be the plan of campaign? What were to be the minimum conditions which would be regarded as justifying a settlement? In what way was such irresistible pressure to be brought on the British Government as to compel "the end of this inhuman rule"? On all these questions there was from the outset no clearness.

Complete independence might appear to have been the defined aim of the campaign, and was probably so regarded by the majority of the Congress membership and by the masses who responded to the Congress call. Indeed, the recorded last dying words of Motilal Nehru, who died on the eve of the Irwin-Gandhi Agreement, appear to suggest that this had been his conception of the struggle: "Let me die, if die I must, in the lap of a free India. Let me sleep my last sleep, not in a subject country, but in a free one."

This was not, however, the conception of Gandhi. Immediately after Lahore he published a statement, through the *New York World* of January 9, that "the independence resolution need frighten nobody" (repeated in his letter to the Viceroy in March), and on January 30, through his paper *Young India*, he made an offer of Eleven Points, covering various reforms (rupee ratio of 1s. 4d., total prohibition, reduction of land revenue and military expenditure, protective tariff on foreign cloth, etc.) in return for which civil disobedience would be called off.

Gandhi's strategy corresponded to his conception of the struggle. Given this understanding, that it was not a strategy intended to lead to the victory of independence, but to find the means in the midst of a formidable revolutionary wave to maintain leadership of the mass movement and yet place the maximum bounds and restraints upon it, it was a skillful and able strategy. This was shown already in his brilliant choice of the first objective of the campaign and the method of conducting it. He decided to lead the fight against the salt monopoly of the Government.

This diverted the fight from the possibility of participation by the industrial working class, the one force which Gandhi has made clear in every utterance that he fears in India; it was capable of enlisting the support and popular interest of the peasantry, while diverting them from any struggle against the landlords. So followed the march to Dandi, on the seashore, by Gandhi and his seventy-eight hand-picked followers, dragging on through three precious weeks, with the news-reel cameras of the world clicking away, while the masses were called on to wait expectantly.

Nevertheless, the moment the three weeks were completed with the ceremonial boiling of salt by Gandhi on the seashore on April 6 (not followed by arrest), the overwhelming mass movement which broke loose throughout the country took the leadership on both sides by surprise. The official instructions given were confined to the most limited and relatively harmless forms of civil disobedience: violation of the Salt Law, boycott of foreign cloth, picketing of the foreign cloth shops and Government liquor shops. Gandhi's conception of the movement was shown in the instructions given by him on April 9:

"Our path has already been chalked out for us. Let every village fetch or manufacture contraband salt, sisters should picket liquor-shops, opium dens and foreign cloth dealers' shops. Young and old in every home should ply the takli and spin and get woven heaps of yarn every day. Foreign cloth should be burnt. Hindus should eschew untouchability. Hindus, Mussulmans, Sikhs, Parsis and Christians should all achieve heart unity. Let the majority rest content with what remains after the minorities have been satisfied. Let students leave Government schools and colleges, and Government servants resign their service and devote themselves to the service of the people, and we shall soon find that Purna Swaraj will come knocking at our doors."

The mass movement which developed already in April went considerably beyond these simple limits, with rising strikes, powerful mass demonstrations, the Chittagong Armory Raid in Bengal, the incidents at Peshawar, which were in the hands of the people for a fortnight, and the beginnings of spontaneous no-rent movements by the peasants in a number of localities, especially in the

United Provinces, where the Congress vainly sought to mediate on a basis of 50 per cent payment of rents.

Most significant for the whole future was the refusal of the Garhwali soldiers at Peshawar to fire on the people. Following the arrest of local leaders, armored cars were sent to cow the angry mass demonstrators; one armored car was burned, its occupants escaping; thereupon wholesale firing on the crowds was followed by hundreds of deaths and casualties. Two platoons of the Second Battalion of the 18th Royal Garhwali Rifles, Hindu troops in the midst of a Moslem crowd, refused the order to fire, broke ranks, fraternized with the crowd, and a number handed over their arms. Immediately after this, the military and police were completely withdrawn from Peshawar; from April 25 to May 4 the city was in the hands of the people, until powerful British forces, with air squadrons, were concentrated to "recapture" Peshawar; there was no resistance. The government subsequently refused all demands for an inquiry into the incident. Seventeen men of the Garhwali Rifles were subjected by court-martial to heavy sentences, one to transportation for life, one to fifteen years' rigorous imprisonment, and fifteen to terms varying from three to ten years.

When it became clear that the power of the mass movement was exceeding the limits set it, and that the authority of Gandhi, who had been left at liberty, was in danger of waning, on May 5 the Government arrested Gandhi. The official justification for the arrest was stated in the Government *communiqué*:

"While Mr. Gandhi has continued to deplore these outbreaks of violence, his protests against his unruly followers have become weaker and weaker, and it is evident that he is unable to control them. . . . Every provision will be made for his health and comfort during his detention."

The response to the arrest was shown in the wave of hartals and mass strikes all over India. In the industrial town of Sholapur in the Bombay Presidency, with 140,000 inhabitants, of whom 50,000 were textile operatives, the workers held possession of the town for a week, replacing the police and establishing their own administration, until martial law was proclaimed on May 12. "Even the Congress leaders had lost control over the mob, which was seeking to establish a regime of its own," reported the correspondent of *The Times* on May 14, 1930. "They took charge of

the administration," reported the *Poona Star*, "and tried to establish their own laws and regulations." Contemporary evidence bears witness to the complete order maintained.

Imperialist repression was limitless. Ordinances followed one another in rapid succession, creating a situation comparable to martial law. In June the Congress and all its organizations were declared illegal. Official figures recorded 60,000 civil resisters sentenced in less than a year up to the Irwin-Gandhi Agreement in the spring of 1931. These figures are certainly an underestimate, since they omit the masses sentenced for offenses of intimidation, rioting, etc., and cover only those recognized by the Government as political prisoners. The very detailed Nationalist records place the total at 90,000.

Imprisonment was the least of the forms of repression. The jails were filled to overflowing, and it was clear that wholesale imprisonment was powerless to check the movement. Therefore the principal weapon employed was physical terrorism. The records of indiscriminate lathi charges, beating up, firing on unarmed crowds, killing and wounding of men and women, and punitive expeditions made an ugly picture. The strictest measures were operated to cast a veil of censorship over the whole proceedings; but the careful records of the Congress provide volumes of certified and attested facts and incidents which throw some light on the brutality employed.

Nevertheless, the power of the movement during 1930, exceeding every calculation of the authorities, and growing in spite of repression, began to raise the most serious alarm in the imperialist camp. By July 6, 1930, the *Observer* was reporting the "defeatism" and "demoralization of Europeans" in India.

It became essential for imperialism at all costs to negotiate a settlement. On the basis of the struggle and sacrifices of the Indian people the Congress leadership held a strong hand. The only hopes of imperialism for salvation were now placed in the moderate national leadership, whose alarm at the extension and unknown possibilities of the mass struggle they knew to be genuine.

Negotiations were begun in the autumn of 1930, but without result. On January 20, 1931, MacDonald as Prime Minister made the declaration at the Round Table Conference:

"I pray that by our labors India will possess the only thing which she now lacks to give her the status of a Dominion among the British Commonwealth of Nations—the responsibility and the cares, the burdens and the difficulties, but the pride and the honor of Responsible Self-Government."

The bait was thus held out in a rotund phrase which in hard practice committed the Government to nothing, as subsequent events were to show. The Round Table Conference was then adjourned to enable the Congress to attend. On January 26, 1931, Gandhi and the Congress Working Committee were released unconditionally and given freedom to meet. On March 4 the Irwin-Gandhi Agreement was signed, and the struggle was declared provisionally suspended.

The Irwin-Gandhi Agreement secured not a single aim of the Congress struggle (not even the repeal of the Salt Tax). Civil Disobedience was to be withdrawn. Congress was to participate in the Round-Table Conference, which it had sworn to boycott. Not a single concrete step to self-government was granted. The basis of discussion at the Round-Table Conference was to be a Federal Constitution with "Indian responsibility"—but there were to be "reservations of safeguards in the interests of India." The Ordinances were to be withdrawn and political prisoners released—but not prisoners guilty of "violence" or "incitement to violence" or soldiers guilty of disobeying orders. Freedom of boycott of foreign goods was to be allowed—but not "exclusively against British goods," not "for political ends," not with any picketing that might be regarded as involving "coercion, intimidation, restraint, hostile demonstration, obstruction to the public." And so on with the clauses, which gave with one hand and took away with another. The maximum gain was the right of peaceful boycott of foreign cloth—the one positive element which very clearly pointed to the decisive interests on the Indian side behind the agreement.

The fact that the British Government had been compelled to sign a public treaty with the leader of the National Congress, which it had previously declared an unlawful association and sought to smash, was undoubtedly a tremendous demonstration of the strength of the national movement. This fact produced at first a widespread sense of elation and victory. Only slowly, as the

meaning of the terms began to be understood, the realization dawned that nothing whatever had been gained. All the aims of complete independence and no compromise with imperialism, so loudly proclaimed at Lahore, had gone up in smoke.

The Irwin-Gandhi Agreement thus repeated the Bardoli experience on an enlarged scale. Once again the movement was suddenly and mysteriously called off at the moment when it was reaching its height.

The Karachi Congress, hastily convened the same month, unanimously endorsed the Agreement. Jawaharlal Nehru was given the task of moving it, "not without great mental conflict and physical distress." "Was it for this," he thought, "that our people had behaved so gallantly for a year? Were all our brave words and deeds to end in this?" He felt, however, that it would only be "personal vanity" to express his dissent.

A concession was made to Left Nationalism at the Karachi Congress by the adoption of a progressive social and economic program, embodied in a "Fundamental Rights" resolution, which included a basic democratic charter of an advanced type, nationalization of key industries and transport, labor rights and agrarian reform. This program, which remains valid, marked an important step forward for the Congress. It was not, however, compensation for the capitulation embodied in the Irwin-Gandhi Agreement.

Outside the Congress, sharp criticism of the Agreement was expressed from the youth and from the working-class movement. This was shown in numerous resolutions from youth organizations and conferences, and in the hostile demonstrations of Bombay workers against Gandhi on his departure for the Round-Table Conference. Such demonstrations, *The Times* noted, would have been unthinkable ten years earlier.

Imperialism, once it had secured the whip-hand, was determined to use its advantage to the utmost. The "truce" from the outset had been one-sided; repression had continued. Gandhi returned in the last days of 1931 to hear a pitiful tale from his colleagues. He cabled at once to the Viceroy, begging for an interview. It was refused. Imperialism had utilized every day of that nine months' truce (while the comedy had been enacted in London) to complete its grim preparations for a decisive battle. Sir John Anderson, with experience of the "Black and Tan" regime in Ireland, had been nominated Governor of Bengal to take in

hand the arrangements. There was to be no surprise this time. The Congress was to be taught a lesson. It was to be a fight to a finish, with unconditional surrender as the only terms.

Swift and sharp the blow fell on January 4, 1932. On the same day negotiations were broken; the Viceroy issued his Manifesto; Gandhi was arrested; Ordinances appeared in a batch (no dribbling out this time, one by one, as they were thought of, as in 1930, but straight from the pigeonholes on the first day); all the principal Congress leaders and organizers were arrested all over the country; the Congress and all its organizations were declared illegal, their press banned, their premises, funds and property confiscated. A triumph of organization.

The Government made clear that the object was a knock-out blow. Sir Samuel Hoare informed the House of Commons that the Ordinances were "very drastic and severe" and that there was to be no "drawn battle" this time.

The Congress leadership was taken by surprise. This was such a sudden change from the atmosphere of the Round-Table Conference. They had made no preparations. In 1930 the Congress had been on the offensive. Now it was thrown on the defensive. They had not realized the price of the Irwin-Gandhi Agreement. Dr. Syed Mahmud, of the Congress Working Committee, informed the India League Delegation:

"The world does not know anything about the resolution that Mahatma Gandhi drafted and proposed before the Working Committee. The Mahatma was bent on co-operation. . . . The Government did not want co-operation. From my own inside knowledge I can say that the Congress was not prepared for the conflict. We had hopes that the Mahatma would bring peace somehow on his return from London." (*Condition of India*, Report of India League Delegation, 1933, p. 27.)

He added "that he and his colleagues had definite information that the Government's plans for repression were ready in November while Gandhi was still in London, and that the Government's sudden blow at first staggered the Congress."

Repression this time, in 1932-33, far exceeded the level of 1930-31. In the first four months, according to the public report of Pandit Malaviya on May 2, 1932, there were 80,000 arrests. After fifteen months, by the end of March, 1933, according to

the report to the illegal session of the Congress at Calcutta in April, 1933, the total had reached 120,000 arrests. Some record of the accompanying wholesale violence, physical outrages, shooting and beating up, punitive expeditions, collective fines on villages and seizure of lands and property of villages can be found in the India League Delegation Report, "Condition of India," issued in 1933.

The Government had counted on a fight to a finish in six weeks. The toughness of the national movement was such that the battle, despite the unfavorable conditions, dragged on for twenty-nine months before the final surrender. By the summer of 1932 Gandhi abandoned all public interest in the national struggle, and devoted himself to the cause of the Harijans (untouchables). His dramatic "fast unto death" in September was directed, not against the repression, not to any object of the life-and-death struggle of the national movement going on, but to prevent the scheme of separate representation for the "depressed classes." It ended, neither in death nor in the attainment of its objective, but in the Poona Pact, by which the number of reserved seats for the "depressed classes" was doubled. The episode served to divert attention from the national struggle, of which he was still supposed to be the responsible leader.

In July, 1933, after a request by Gandhi for an interview with the Viceroy had been refused unless civil disobedience were first finally ended, the Congress leadership decided to end mass civil disobedience and replace it by individual civil disobedience. At the same time the Acting President issued orders dissolving all Congress organizations. The Government showed no response save to increase its repression against the individual civil resisters. In August Gandhi was arrested anew, but was released before the end of the month, following a fast.

It was not until May, 1934, that the final end came to the struggle which had opened with such magnificent power in 1930. In May, 1934, the All-India Congress Committee was allowed to meet at Patna to end civil disobedience unconditionally (with the solitary exception recommended by Gandhi). There were no terms and no concessions from the Government. At the same time decisions were taken, for which the preliminary steps had already been prepared, for the new stage of contesting the coming elections directly on behalf of the Congress.

In June, 1934, the Government lifted the ban on the Congress, but not yet on many of its subsidiary organizations, youth organizations, peasants' unions and the Red Shirts of the North-West Frontier Province. In July, 1934, the Government proclaimed the Communist Party of India illegal. The new stage was opening.

In the autumn of 1934 Gandhi resigned from membership of the Congress, his work for the time being accomplished. In a parting statement he explained that "there is a growing and vital difference of outlook between many Congressmen and myself." It was clear that for "the majority of Congressmen" non-violence was not "a fundamental creed," but only "a policy." Socialist groups were growing in the Congress in numbers and influence: "if they gain ascendancy in the Congress, as they well may, I cannot remain in the Congress." The new stage was making itself felt; and it was unwelcome to the old ideas.

The unhappy final ending of the great wave of struggle of 1930-34 should not blind us for a moment to its epic achievement, its deep and lasting lessons and its gigantic permanent gains. The reasons, in the tactics and methods pursued, for the temporary failure of a movement which had at its command such limitless resources of popular support, enthusiasm, devotion and sacrifice, and which was undoubtedly within reach of success, constitute a lesson which needs to be learned and studied again and again for the future. Those reasons have been implicit in this narrative. But the national movement can be proud for the record of those years. Imperialism dreamed in those years by every device in the modern armory of repression to smash and cow the people of India into submission to its will, and to exterminate the movement for independence. It failed. Within two years, after all those heavy blows, the national movement was advancing again, stronger than ever. The struggle had not been in vain. The furnace of those years of struggle helped to forge and awaken a new and greater national unity, self-confidence, pride and determination.

4. NATIONAL STRUGGLE ON THE EVE OF THE WAR

When the National Congress met at Lucknow in the spring of 1936, it was still recovering its forces from the effects of the heavy struggle and Government repression which had reached a

climax in 1934. Membership stood at below half a million, registering 457,000.

The reactionary constitution which was the parting legacy of Gandhi, and which had been adopted at the Bombay Congress in 1934 had undoubtedly a restricting effect (it had to be partially modified at Lucknow). The center of activity had been transferred to the parliamentary field, with the participation in the elections for the Legislative Assembly at the end of 1934; but the parliamentary activity bore a humdrum character and aroused no mass interest. The presidential address of Nehru at the Lucknow Congress unsparingly criticized the weakness of the existing position, declaring "we have largely lost touch with the masses."

The presidential address of Jawaharlal Nehru at the Lucknow Congress was memorable for its proclamation of the socialist aim, for its focussing of the Indian struggle in the context of the gathering world struggle against fascism and reaction, and for its demand for a broad mass front or "joint popular front" of all the anti-imperialist forces, uniting the workers and peasantry with the middle-class elements dominantly represented in the Congress. New stirrings were visible on all sides. The socialist wing was advancing in the Congress. Already representing an important, though small, grouping at Lucknow, by the Faizpur Congress in December, 1936, it numbered one-third of the Congress Committee. The proposal put forward by Nehru at Lucknow for the collective affiliation of the workers' and peasants' organizations to the Congress was not adopted, being defeated on the Congress committee by 35 votes to 16, and giving place to the formation of a Mass Contacts Committee for further consideration of the question.

From the Lucknow session of April, 1936, the modern history of the National Congress opens. From this point a rapid advance has taken place. By the Faizpur Congress in December, 1936, membership had reached 636,000. By the end of 1937, after the elections and the formation of the Provincial Congress Ministries, it leaped up to over 3 millions, totaling 3,102,000 at Haripura in February, 1938. By the end of 1938 it had passed the 4 million mark, with 1¼ million members in the United Provinces alone; by the Tripuri Congress in 1939 it touched 5 millions, and by the Ramgarh Congress in 1940, 6 millions.

The Lucknow Congress approved the decision to contest the

elections under the new Act in the coming year. In August, 1936, the Election Manifesto was issued, and was endorsed at Faizpur.

The National Congress entered the elections as the only organization contesting them on an All-India basis. Against the motley array of communal fractions and mushroom "parties" and groupings hastily created, often with thinly concealed official encouragement, in the different provinces to fight the Congress, the National Congress stood out as the representative of the united national front. The Congress Election Manifesto was a document which placed in the forefront the aim of complete national independence and of the Constituent Assembly, condemned without reservation the imperialist Constitution and explained the purpose of sending representatives to the legislatures "not to co-operate in any way with the Act, but to combat it and seek to end it." At the same time the Election Manifesto did not rest on the basis of general principles. It set out also a concrete immediate program, both of democratic demands for civil liberties and equal rights, and also a social and economic program capable of appealing to the broadest masses of the people. This broad democratic program, with its direct voicing of the immediate demands of the peasants and industrial workers, played a big part in mobilizing the overwhelming mass support (far beyond the actual electorate) won by the Congress in the election campaign.

The election results showed a sweeping victory of the National Congress to an extent that startled the Government and official opinion and afforded a powerful demonstration of the united national will for independence. The extent of the Congress victory can be measured from the results. The significance of the Congress total of 715 seats is the more marked when it is remembered that out of the nominal total of 1,585 seats, there were in reality only 657 seats open to general competition and not earmarked for some special section.

In July, 1937, Congress Ministries were formed in the six Provinces where the Congress held absolute majorities in the Lower House: Bombay, Madras, United Provinces, Bihar, Central Provinces and Orissa. Soon after, the access of a group of eight non-Congress members in the North-West Frontier Province to co-operation with the Congress and acceptance of Congress discipline (in a signed declaration) gave the Congress an absolute majority there also, leading to the formation of a Congress Min-

istry. Thus Congress Ministries were established in seven of the eleven Provinces of British India, with an aggregate population of close on 160 millions, or three-fifths of the population of British India, and over two-fifths of the total population of India. Congress governments were later formed in Assam and Sind.

The Congress Provincial Ministries were in office for over two years until, with the war crisis and the rupture with the Central Government, they resigned in November, 1939.

The Congress Ministries in the Provinces were not in any modern parliamentary sense Governments. Gandhi, in an article in the *Harijan* in August, 1938, made clear the extreme limitations of their powers and their consequent special role as instruments in the real struggle for liberation:

"Democratic Britain has set up an ingenious system in India which, when you look at it in its nakedness, is nothing but a highly organized military control. It is not less so under the present Government of India Act. The Ministers are mere puppets so far as the real control is concerned. The Collectors and Police may at a mere command from the Governors unseat the Ministers, arrest them and put them in a lock-up. Hence it is that I have suggested that the Congress has entered upon office, not to work the Act in the manner expected by the framers, but in a manner so as to hasten the day of substituting it by a genuine Act of India's own making."

XII. The Labor and Socialist Movement

"The Indian proletariat has already matured sufficiently to wage a class-conscious and political mass struggle—and that being the case, Anglo-Russian methods in India are played out."—Lenin in 1908.

I. THE GROWTH AND CONDITIONS OF THE WORKING CLASS

The industrial working class in India, in the modern sense, is not numerically large in relation to the population; but it is