

**The Gandhi Irwin Pact & Political Activities During  
Truce Period [5th March to 31st December 1931] :  
A Case Study of the UP, Madras & Bombay Presidencies**

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**Certificate**

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "The Gandhi-Irwin Pact & Political Activities During Truce Period (5 March-31 December 1931): A Case Study of the U.P., Madras and Bombay Presidencies" submitted by Bushil Kumar in partial fulfilment of requirement for the degree of Master of Philosophy has not been submitted previously for the award of any degree of this or any other University. It is his own work.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

*Mridula Mukherjee*  
Mridula Mukherjee  
Supervisor

*Satish*  
Satish Saberwal  
Chairperson

**To**  
**my parents**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABBREVIATION

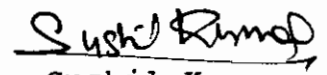
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## ABBREVIATION

AICC	All India Congress Committee
AIMC	All India Muslim Conference
AIML	All India Muslim League
BPCC	Bombay Provincial Congress Committee
CDM	Civil Disobedience Movement
CWC	Congress Working Committee
CWMG	Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi
DCC	District Congress Committee
FR (1)	Fortnightly Report for the First Half of Month.
FR (2)	Fortnightly Report for the Second Half of Month.
<u>H/P, E</u>	Home Department/Political Branch, File No.
INC	Indian National Congress.
NAI	National Archive of India, New Delhi.
N.M.M.L.	Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, New Delhi
P.C.C.	Provincial Congress Committee
SWN	Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru.
U.P.P.C.C.	United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee.
M.P.C.C.	Madras Provincial Congress Committee.
T.O.I.	The Times of India.
I.O.R.	India Office Records, NAI, New Delhi.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Indian national movement in its mass phase had 3 nationwide campaigns i.e Non Cooperation Movement of 1920-22, Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-34 and Quit India Movement of 1942. The Civil Disobedience Movement had two distinct phases interrupted by the truce period from 5 March to 31 December 1931. The basic aim of the national movement was to erode two established notions of benevolence and invincibility of the British rule, with the ultimate objective of wresting power from the colonial Government.<sup>1</sup> For this purpose it adopted a strategy in which a phase of direct confrontation with the colonial Government was followed by a non-movement phase during which political concessions got as a result of first phase of struggle were utilized to strengthen the organisation so that the next phase of mass movement could be launched with more vigour and strength.<sup>2</sup> My purpose is to do an intensive study of this period to understand the significance of such period in the strategy of Indian National movement.

Along with issues such as the foundation of Indian National Congress in 1885, the withdrawal of the Non-

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1. Chandra, Bipan, et.al., India's Struggle for Independence, Penguin, New Delhi, 1989, pp.506-7.

2. Ibid. p.509.



Cooperation Movement by Mahatma Gandhi in 1922 after the Chauri Chaura incident and the partition of India in 1947, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact is also one of the major historiographical controversies of the Indian National Movement. For example, the retreat of the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1922 is criticised as betrayal of the movement by Subaltern and Marxist Scholars while others would explain it as an inherent part of the Gandhian strategy of mass movement. Similarly the Gandhi-Irwin Pact has been variously interpreted by the historians of the different schools. I discuss here at some length some of these interpretations.

The approach of Marxist writers, beginning with R.P. Dutt towards the Gandhi-Irwin Pact has been quite critical. For him it did not secure a single aim of the Congress struggle. To quote him, "All the aims of complete independence and no compromise with Imperialism, so loudly proclaimed at Lahore, had gone up in smoke".<sup>3</sup> Even Gandhi's eleven points, he says, which had previously been an offer of a compromise and a surrender behind the back of Congress had now vanished, and once again the movement was suddenly and mysteriously called off at the moment when it was reaching its height. But despite the criticism, R.P. Dutt

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3. Dutt, R.P., India Today, Bombay, 1949, p.374.

acknowledges that the very fact that the British Government had been compelled to sign a public treaty with leaders of Congress, which it had previously declared an unlawful association and sought to smash, was undoubtedly a tremendous demonstration of the strength of national movement. His treatment of the period following the truce is, however, quite matter of fact. He describes the Karachi session of Congress in April 1931 as a failure of the left and the opponents of the pact, which underlined the strength of Gandhi's position. And finally, the failure of IInd Round Table Conference, the Viceroy's refusal to listen to Mahatma Gandhi and resumption of Civil Disobedience movement.

A.R. Desai<sup>4</sup> though otherwise shares a lot of common ground with R.P. Dutt as a Marxist, does not criticize the pact as a failure or betrayal of the movement. One reason for this could be that unlike R.P. Dutt who visited India for the first time in 1946, A.R. Desai had grown up in the midst of and himself participated in the Indian national movement. He, therefore in his writings generally adopts a more sympathetic approach towards the Indian national movement and its leadership, specially Gandhi. After mentioning the basic provisions of Gandhi-Irwin pact he simply notes

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4. Desai, A.R., Social Background of Indian Nationalism, Bombay, 1946, p.265.

that the left nationalist (Subhash Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru) criticized the agreement and called it a compromise, but though disagreeing they voted for it at Karachi session of Congress to preserve the national unity. Nor does his description of political activity in the period of truce go along the lines adopted by Sumit Sarkar, G. Pandey etc., in criticizing the Congress for holding back peasantry from pursuing no-revenue and no-rent struggles. He describes these movements and also emphasizes the Government's complaint that the Congress was responsible for them and was thus violating the Pact.<sup>5</sup>

Sumit Sarkar's approach too is critical towards the Gandhi-Irwin pact. To quote him, "the logic of events between March 1931 and the wholesale British counter offensive which compelled the Congress to embark on the second Civil Disobedience movement in January 1932, was determined in large part by the profoundly ambiguous consequences of the Gandhi Irwin pact."<sup>6</sup> He echoes David Hardiman's study of Gujarat and argues that it was the pact rather than police lathis which broke the moral of Gujarat Patidars. For coastal Andhra Pradesh, and U.P., he supports the views of Brian Stoddart and Gyanendra Pandey respectively and concludes

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5. Ibid. pp.265-66.

6. Sarkar, Sumit, Modern India, Macmillan, 1983, p.311

that in both areas the year 1931 was probably the psychological moment for full scale no-revenue and no-rent movement in the face of first blast of Depression, but for a crucial period of nine months the Congress held back the peasantry, trying to honour the truce. It was the conclusion of Gandhi-Irwin pact rather than Government's repressive policies which altered the Congress hold on the coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh.<sup>7</sup>

Sumit Sarkar also mentions that however paltry the concrete Nationalist gain, the Viceroy was forced to treat the national leaders on an entirely novel basis of courtesy and equality, a fact of profound psychological significance. The average Congress worker released from the jail seems to have gone back to his village or town almost as a victors, a mood vastly different from the frustration of 1992. Moreover, 1931 was also marked by a considerable extension of party machinery in many areas.

Thus, Sarkar follows the broad lines laid down by R.P. Dutt in seeing the Pact as both a betrayal by and a victory for the Congress. He adds a new dimension, however, which is missing in R.P. Dutt, that during the period of the truce the Congress held back peasant protest that was peaking due to the Depression.

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7. Ibid, p.314

Gyanendra Pandey<sup>8</sup> puts forward the view that the notion of unilinear growth of the Indian National Movement was somewhat misleading. It would appear, on the contrary, that as the organisation and strength of Congress increased and scale of its campaign widened, the social depth of the movement actually diminished. In this he is different from the Marxist writers like R.P. Dutt and especially A.R. Desai who clearly recognize that the Civil Disobedience Movement was an advance over earlier movements in terms of mass participation. For him, Gandhi-Irwin pact was surely one of the most bizarre episodes in the history of Civil Disobedience Movement, and one of the most significant.<sup>9</sup> With the signing of pact, a change of tactics became necessary. The Congress leader returning victoriously from gaol now said that land revenue should not be withheld, while suggesting that remission should be asked for. Having worked large number of peasants up to a fever pitch in late 1930 and early 1931, the Congress had suddenly called off the campaign. What the peasants gained from Satyagraha was not clear. For the peasants of Awadh, Rae Bareli and Agra who

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8. Pandey, Gyanandra, The Ascendency of Congress in U.P. 1926:34; A Study in Imperfect Mobilisation, O.U.P., Delhi, 1978, p.207.

9. Ibid., p.188.

were already suffering from low prices and depression, Congress refused at this juncture to lend its support to peasant action against landlords and Government. In such circumstances, peasant in many places took matters into their own hands and resisted oppression in whatever way they could.

Gyanendra Pandey argues that the Congress leadership, in order to honour the pact did much to reduce the militancy in rural areas. Rank and file Congress leaders, however, worked along very different lines and whatever the strength the Congress got in Agra and Rae Bareli, it was largely the fruit of the efforts of local militants and not that of responsible Congressmen.<sup>10</sup> It was for the peasant clearly a let down. For the Congress too it was a costly mistake. Quite unlike the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930, the campaign of 1932-33 was limited to the big cities and their immediate surroundings, and here it was mainly the financial resources and strong organisation that kept the movement alive.<sup>11</sup>

Thus Gynendra pandey's work reflects the then emerging Subaltern approach, by talking of two levels of politics, one of the elite leadership of the Congress and the other of

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10. ibid, p. 181

11. Ibid., pp.192-93.

the local level militants and the people. The militancy is explained by the action of the grass-roots level workers and the peasants and the big leaders are assumed to have played their expected restraining role. But his own facts are against his formulation because on the one hand he argues that at the height of agrarian crisis the U.P. Congress leadership declined to throw its weight behind the protesting peasants,<sup>12</sup> while on the other hand, accepts the fact that Nehru's message to Rae Bareli peasants and more specifically Gandhi's Manifesto to U.P. Kisan in May 24, 1931 contributed to general turbulence.<sup>13</sup>

David Hardiman<sup>14</sup> criticizes the Pact on the following two grounds:

(i) It did not ensure the return of the confiscated land and restoration of resigned Mukhis, which were the minimum demands of the peasant of the Kheda, Further, had Sardar Patel been with Gandhi during the negotiations for the Pact he would have insisted that Gandhi make the return of confiscated land a basis of negotiations.

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12. Ibid, p.198.

13. Ibid, p.180.

14. Hardiman, David, Peasant Nationalist of Gujarat, O.U.P., Delhi, 1981, p.241.

(ii) Loss of Social respect - the Gujarat patidars who participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement, after returning from the jail found that their neighbouring Patidars refused to marry their daughters, for the Patidars could no longer afford dowries for their daughters as their economic condition worsened during the movement.

In one way or other Hardiman's approach to the pact is similar to that of Gyanendra pandey. But despite these criticisms, Hardiman accepts that Gandhi managed to persuade most of the people who had bought confiscated land to return it. By April 30, 1931, out of 1792 acres which had been confiscated, all but 72 had been returned.<sup>15</sup> If the pact is described as a betrayal only on the ground that it did not ensure the return of confiscated land and, I do not understand why it was betrayal when within two months of the pact (March 5, 1931 to April 30, 1931), most of the confiscated land was returned to its original owners and the rest was returned when Congress Ministries came to power in 1937. Above all, his attempt to suggest that Sardar Patel was more uncompromising than Gandhi only because the latter did not take the issue of confiscated land as aggressively as the former, is a little absurd, because it was not the question

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15. Ibid., p.242.



of lesser of greater militancy but a difference over a matter of detail in a given situation.

Tanika Sarkar,<sup>16</sup> accepts that the entire truce period was one of recovery and preparation both for Government and the Congress, and also admits that the Congress attempt to set up a parallel system of justice in Midnapur Police Stations in Tamruk Sub-Division gave Congress a really powerful base. Regarding revolutionary terrorism, she argues that the year 1931 was quieter than both 1930 and 1932, but major assassinations during 1931 were nicely spaced out to maintain a high level of suspense. She concludes that major function of terrorists in this year was to sustain an alternative course of violent-resistance when the Congress was committed to peace.<sup>17</sup> Although she does not criticize the pact as a betrayal of the movement, but her argument is similar to Gyanendra Pandey as she also says that the Congress leaders instead of leading the peasantry during truce demanded Government actions against peasant agitation as it was in the case of Tippera Peasant and Workers Samiti.<sup>18</sup> She further states that the Congress leaders solicited Govern-

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16. Sarkar, Tanika, Bengal - 1928-34: The Politics of Protest, OUP, Delhi, 1986, p.120.

17. Ibid., p.123.

18. Ibid., pp.132-133.

ment help at a time when the IIInd round of Civil Disobedience movement had already began.

Thus her argument resembles that of Gyanendra Pandey that the Congress was not giving a lead to peasant and was in fact responsible for restraining their activities. Further by suggesting that the increase in the activities of revolutionary terrorist groups were caused by the frustration of the activists with no-struggle policy of the Congress, she moves close to the position that the Gandhi-Irwin pact acted as a brake on a movement that was otherwise surging forward. She refuses thus to distinguish between the capacity to struggle of some of the militant activists, who may have still been in a fighting mood in March 1931, and the vast masses of ordinary people who possibly needed a period of reprieve and rest. Further, like Gyanendra pandey, she notes, but refuses to give adequate credit to the Congress for its role in leading resistance during the truce period. The Midnapur parallel government remains only an empirical observation, it does not become part of her framework.

Judith, M.Prown who writes within Imperialist framework, denies the existence of Indian National Movement as a movement struggling for an independent state. She says that immediate object of Civil Disobedience Movement in Gandhi's

eye was not independence but to create a situation in which the Congress could go to R.T.C. with a strong negotiating hand.<sup>19</sup> For her the pact was neither a failure for one nor a success for other. Both Congress and the Government were keen to have a kind of settlement. The Viceroy was forced by his anxiety to avoid further wide spread agitation when the Government services and financial resources were generally strained and when the present agrarian distress, alongside a land owning system always vulnerable to attack, provided a fertile ground for political agitators. Congress and Gandhi on their part were compelled by Government repression, mass arrests and pressure from business groups.

Both Gandhi and Irwin, according to Brown, justified the Pact in their own way. For Gandhi, Satyagraha implied gentleness and waiting where it seemed appropriate, and no cause had suffered by such actions. Satyagraha was a method of carrying conviction and of converting by appeal to reason and to the sympathetic chords in human beings. The Viceroy and the Secretary of State, who were expecting a stiffer settlement, were surprised that the enterprise had worked.

On march 5, 1931, Gandhi said that the settlement was provisional and that the Congress goal remained Purna

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19. Brown, Judith M., "Gandhi and Civil Disobedience Movement", O.U.P., London, 1977, p.153.

Swaraj. Proposed Constitution might prove the framework for the attainment of this goal, though this was not certain. He (Gandhi) admitted that he had not secured victorious terms but neither had the Government. Moreover Congress had not been fighting for out right victory.

But the most controversial argument which she puts forward is that it was Government and its policy which made Gandhi a national leader. In this she argues that there were various groups interacting in politics and added to this was the need of many in the middle and upper echelons of the Congress for a respectable settlement so that they could relate to their rulers and their moderate compatriots in the new political context when power were promised and which they wished to exploit. But above all, she says, it was the Government policy of treating Gandhi as representative of Congress, preferring private rather than public discussion, which greatly increased Gandhi's personal influence with both the Government and his compatriots and he emerged as an all India broker.<sup>20</sup>

Thus it is clear that Brown takes the Indian National movement as nothing but a mere response to the initiative

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20. Ibid, p. 189.

taken by the British Government. It was in that sense that she said that the object of the Civil Obedience Movement of 1930 was not complete independence but to bargain for a strong negotiating hand at R.T.C. Her argument that it was British Government and its policies which made Gandhi a national leader (broker) is also unacceptable because if we accept this it would mean, among other things, that Gandhi was not a national leader before 1931.

S.N Qanungo, whose framework belongs to the Nationalist School, in his long but extremely well documented article, 'the Struggle for Purna Swaraj 1930-35', published in the Centenary History of the Indian National Congress, Vol.2, 1985, refutes Brown's statement that the immediate object of Civil Obedience Movement of 1930 in Gandhi's eyes was to create a situation for a strong negotiating hand at R.T.C. This attempt to explain Gandhi, according to Qanungo, is singularly incomplete. He asserts that the alarm signals sent by events from autumn 1930 called for a compromise but initiative for a compromise was not in his hand while he was a prisoner.<sup>21</sup> It is important to remember what he has said

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21. Qanungo, S.N., 'Struggle for Purna Swaraj 1930-34', in A Centenary History of Indian National Congress Vol.II, Publication Division, Government of India, 1985, p.243.

earlier that his life had been nothing but a record of settlements. After the Delhi Pact, Gandhi assured that the settlement was only provisional—a truce. The Congress goal remained Purna Swaraj.

Qanungo agrees with Judith Brown's argument that as a Satyagrahi Gandhi was superbly flexible and could switch from being a battle tactician to an architect of peace. After Delhi Pact, while talking to Nehru, Gandhi made it clear that in the struggle for Purna Swaraj in 1930 the Congress had not been fighting for outright victory. It appears that Gandhi's real motive in the struggle was mass awakening, through the great power of non-violence.<sup>22</sup>

As regards the pressure on Gandhi for a settlement, Qanungo acknowledges that there was business pressure on Gandhi, but his emphasis is on other factors. In these, he asserts, that from the autumn of 1930 onwards, different forms of mass upsurges made the second wave of Civil Obedience Movement less manageable. Peasant groups were losing their potency and there was a decline in enthusiasm and support from mill-owners and urban merchants.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, continues Qanungo, one should not forget that Motilal Nehru

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22. Ibid, p. 243

23. Ibid., p.246.

had died, Subhash Chandra Bose was languishing in Alipore jail, and most of the members of the Congress Working Committee were anxious for a settlement. Gandhi could not compose the local disputes of Congress factions and conciliate the Muslim majority provinces. Maulana Shaukat Ali provoked Hindu-Muslim tensions and above all Tori terrorism considerably broke the spirit of the movement.<sup>24</sup>

Thus our discussion of the historiography of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and the period of truce shows how the overall framework of the writers belonging to different Schools is reflected in their analysis and treatment of specific episodes and events. There can, however, also be differences between scholars following the same broad approach, as we found in the case of R.P. Dutt and A.R. Desai. Just as there can be similarities in the conclusions about specific events or issues between scholars belonging to different approaches. Agreement on specificities does not indicate agreement on basics, just as disagreement on specificities does not indicate disagreement on basics. A historiographical analysis enables us to differentiate the specifics from the basics.

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24. Ibid, p.247.

In the following three chapters, I take up case studies of three regions - U.P., Madras and Bombay. The attempt is to see to what extent the actual course of political developments in these regions bears out the historiographical generalizations outlined above, and it is to this question that I will return in the conclusion.



**CHAPTER TWO**  
**UNITED PROVINCES**

## Introduction

Indian National Congress in its Calcutta session had set the goal of Dominion status provided it was conceded within one year by the British Government. Since the one year time limit passed without a positive reply from the Government, the Nehru report was declared to be lapsed. The National Congress in its historic session at Lahore in 1929 passed the resolution on 'Purna Swaraj' or Complete Independence as the aim of the national movement. The Congress Working Committee, in its meeting at Sabarmati Ashram in mid-February, 1930, authorised Mahatma Gandhi to launch a civil disobedience movement. As his ultimatum of 31 January to Lord Irwin in the form of 11 points passed unheeded, there was only one choice left, that of the civil disobedience movement.

Mahatma Gandhi with his chosen band of 78 members of the Sabarmati Ashram, began his historic Dandi March on March 12, 1930. He reached the Coast at Dandi on April 5, 1930 and on April 6, 1930, by picking up a handful of salt, he broke the salt law and thus inaugurated the Civil Disobedience Movement. In Andhra, A.Kaleshwar Rao and Pattabhi Sitaramayya broke the salt law on the Bundur sea-coast on April 6, 1930 while in Tamil Nadu it was C.Rajagopalachari

who led a salt march from Trichinopoly to Vedaranniyam as the Tanjore Coast. Soon the movement spread to every part of the country and took many forms. No-tax campaigns were started in Gujarat, Bihar and United Provinces. But the most remarkable thing that happened during the first phase of Civil Disobedience Movement was the non-violent heroism shown at Dharsana salt work in Gujarat. On May 21 a band of 2000 marched towards the police cordon that had sealed off the Dharasana salt work. As usual the police resorted to lathi charge but not a single arm was raised in defence and by 11 A.M. the toll was 320 injured and two dead.<sup>1</sup>

Chittagong, Peshawar and Sholapur emerged as three storm centres of the movement. At Chittagong, group of revolutionaries headed by Surya Sen seized the local armoury on April 18, 1930, issued an Independence Proclamation in the name of Indian Republican Army, fought a pitched battle on Jalalabad hill on April 22 in which 12 revolutionaries were killed.<sup>2</sup> In Peshawar, the capital of N.W.F.P., the arrest of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and a number of other leaders led to a massive upsurge by Khudai Khidmatgars popularly known as Red Shirts. Here crowds confronted armoured cars

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1. Chandra, Bipan, et.al., India's Struggle for Independence, Penguin, New Delhi, 1989, p.275.

2. Sarkar, Sumit, Modern India, Macmillan, Delhi, 1983, p.287.

and defied intensive firing for three hours at Kissakahani Bazar. Here a platoon of Garhwal Rifles refused to open fire on the crowd. In Sholapur of Maharashtra, the textile workers went on strike on May 7 against the arrest of Gandhiji, took over the city and established a virtual parallel Government which could be dislodged with the imposition of martial law after May 16.<sup>3</sup> As the movement spread to every nook and corner of the country, the Government did not remain the silent spectator of the scene but resorted to brutal lathi charge, firing and arrest of leaders to suppress the movement. All the prominent leaders were arrested one after other. It was estimated that over 90,000 people went to jails.<sup>4</sup>

Liberals like T.B.Sapru and M.R.Jayakar tried to mediate between the Congress and the Government for some kind of settlement. The first attempt in this regard was made in September 1930, but this did not succeed. In February 1931, due to the hectic attempts made by these two liberals, Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru and other leaders were released to enable them to enter into negotiations with the Government. After a series of talks, Mahatma Gandhi and Lord Irwin

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3. Chandra Bipan, et.al., op.cit., p.274.

4. Ibid., p.282.

signed a pact on March 5, 1931 which is known as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Thus the first phase of Civil Disobedience Movement came to an end. The period between 5 March 1931 to 31 December 1931 is termed as the period of the Truce. The following were the provisions of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

1. Consequent on the Conversations that have taken place between His Excellency, the Viceroy and Mr. Gandhi, it has been arranged that the Civil Disobedience Movement be discontinued, and that with the approval of His Majesty's Government certain actions be taken by the Government of India and the Local Governments.<sup>5</sup>
2. Congress would be invited to participate in the discussion at the Round Table Conference.
3. Civil Disobedience would be discontinued, which meant organised defiance of law, non-payment of land revenue and other legal dues, publication of news sheet in support of Civil Disobedience, attempts to influence civil and military servants and village officials against Government would be given up.<sup>6</sup>

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5. Viceroy's telegram to Secretary of State dated March 4, 1931, Lord Irwin's Private Paper, Acc. No.3896, India Office Record (I.O.R.), N.A.I., New Delhi.

6. Chand, Tara, History of National Movement in India, vol.4, Publication Division, Govt. of India, Delhi, 1961, pp.161-62.

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4. Regarding the boycott of British goods, encouragement of Indian industries by propaganda was permitted, but boycott as a political weapon would be eschewed.
5. Picketing employed in the furthermore of boycott of foreign cloth or consumption of liquor would not be allowed outside the limits permitted by the law.<sup>7</sup>
6. The manufacture of salt for consumption was allowed.
7. Ordinances promulgated in connection with the Civil Disobedience Movement would be withdrawn.
8. Notifications declaring associations unlawful would be withdrawn.
9. Pending prosecutions would be withdrawn, except in the cases of offences involving violence.
10. Prisoners not charged with violence would be released.
11. Fines would be remitted.
12. Movable property seized in connection with the movement, if in the possession of the Government as forfeited or attached in connection with the realization of land revenue, would be returned.
13. Immovable property would be returned but property sold to third parties would be regarded as finally disposed off.

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7. Ibid., p.162.

14. Cases of Government officers who had resigned would be reviewed but the posts permanently filled up would not be restored to the original incumbents.
15. In the event of Congress failing to give full effect to the obligations of the agreement, Government would take what actions it deemed necessary.<sup>8</sup>

Non-Payment of land-revenue and rent, non-payment of Chaukidari tax, breaking of salt law, and picketing of foreign cloth and liquor shops were some of the basic forms of the movement during the first phase of Civil Disobedience. To trace the effect of Gandhi-Irwin Pact during truce period, we will have to see whether these methods were relinquished or whether they were perpetuated in a different guise. In other words, we will have to see what the Congress was doing throughout the truce period within the constraint of the provisions of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

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8. Ibid, p.162.

## I

### Congress Attempt to Consolidate its Position and Put its House in Order

The very signing of the Pact shows that the Congress and its leaders were treated as equals of the British. For an organisation which was earlier declared an unlawful association, this was not an insignificant achievement. Moreover, the Congress did not take the pact as final but as a truce and an opportunity to consolidate its scattered position and to prepare for the next round of struggle.<sup>9</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru's circular letter to Provincial Congress Committees also confirms this. In this letter, Nehru, describing the truce period as an opportunity to put their own house in order, said that "P.C.C.s should impress on all D.C.C.s etc. that the terms of provisional settlement between the Government and the Congress should be strictly carried out. It is not becoming or dignified for us to seek shelter in quibbles and the like when the word of our great organisation has been given. When the time comes again for resumption of our struggle, we shall do so with right good

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9. Aj., March 7, 1931, Benares.



will. Meanwhile let us abide by the truce".<sup>10</sup> Again in his message to the people of Rae Bareilly, Nehru while praising the people of Rae Bareilly for their contribution in the Civil Disobedience Movement, said that the Congress has stopped the war to engage in discussions about the troubles of peasants and tenants and complete Swaraj.<sup>11</sup> Further he said that, "If the Government agrees to our terms it will be all right, but if we do not get a satisfactory answer, we will begin our war again. Tenants should never think that Congress made peace without removing their difficulties".<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile, to train and educate the young Congress workers, the All India Volunteers Conference and Hindustani Seva Dal were being organised.<sup>13</sup> Kisan Sabhas and Kisan Panchayats were being set up in the whole of United Provinces. In Salem tahsil of Rae Bareilly district, in May 1931, there were 426 Kisan Panchayats, 2100 members and 1825 volunteers. At that time, the district as a whole had 840 panchayats, 32 Congress offices, 8046 Congress members, 1308

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10. Nehru's letter to all P.C.Cs, dated April 9, 1931 in H/P, F.33/1/1931.

11. H/P, F., 33/XI/1931, (K.W.).

12. Ibid.

13. Aj., March 29, 1931, Benares.

volunteers and 1014 villages with Congress Flags.<sup>14</sup> In other districts too, similar panchayats and Kisan Sabhas were being set up.

## II

### Picketing of Foreign Cloth

Since peaceful picketing was allowed according to the terms of the Truce, we find that it was carried on throughout the truce period. Although Civil Disobedience as such was withdrawn but picketing was as effective as earlier. The Leader of April 2, 1931, reports that there were one and a half million pounds worth of Lancashire goods held up in Bengal alone that could not be moved.<sup>15</sup> In addition, large quantities were in Bombay, Delhi, Amritsar, Karachi, Madras.<sup>16</sup> Picketing was more or less peaceful, but sometimes it involved violence and intimidation. For examples, 15 villagers and Congressmen were put in Allahabad jail for picketing the house of Oudh Bihari, the Zamindar of Manjhanpur in Allahabad district as the latter refused to comply with the Congressmen's demand that he should not pay the

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14. Pandey, G., Ascendancy of Congress in U.P. 1926-34, A Study in Imperfect Mobilization; O.U.P., Delhi, 1978, p.41.

15. The Leader, April 2, 1931, Allahabad.

16. Ibid.

land-revenue to the Government.<sup>17</sup> In Unao district, there was a serious clash between shop-keepers and Congress volunteers in which the latter had lost their stand and flags. A little later the Congress volunteers gathered in large number and decided to picket a neighbouring Muslim village 'Asiwan'. But the Muslim taluqdars came with their guns and the volunteers dispersed.<sup>18</sup> Thus a would be clash was averted.

The Government's fortnightly report for the first half of June attributed the reduction of excise revenue to the picketing.<sup>19</sup> In the second half of the same month, the Allahabad D.C.C. said that peaceful picketing would resume unless dealers were willing to have their bales of cloth sealed with the Congress seal.<sup>20</sup> In the first half of July, picketing of Foreign cloth shops was intensified. Allahabad City Congress Committee decided to start the picketing in Allahabad but Allahabad Merchants' Association wrote to Nehru and P.D. Tandon, asking for permission to dispose off their old stock of foreign cloth but were told that it was

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17. The Leader, April 11, 1931, Allahabad.

18. F.R. (2) May, 1931 H/P, F.18/5/1931.

19. F.R. (1) June, 1931, ii/P, F.18/6/1931.

20. F.R. (2) June, 1931, H/P, F.18/6/1931.

beyond the instructions of the Congress Working Committee.<sup>21</sup> Mr. Vilayet Hussain and Mohammad Hussain, two Muslim merchants in Allahabad district, in their joint letter to Allahabad D.C.C. wrote that picketing should not be started in Allahabad as it would lead to communal disharmony but were told by Nehru that picketing was not a communal question but an economic one. It had nothing to do with communal riots.<sup>22</sup> In Agra a Hindu dealer was fined Rs. 51 for importing a new stock of foreign cloth.<sup>23</sup> On July 4, Nehru himself was supervising the picketing in Allahabad district.<sup>24</sup> Picketing of foreign cloth in Chowk City of Allahabad continued peacefully while Katra and Daryaganj cloth dealers got their stocks of foreign cloth resealed with the Congress seal.<sup>25</sup> Picketing continued in a mild form in the second half of September.<sup>26</sup> Thus it would appear that the picketing of foreign cloth continued, though in a mild form, March to September 1931. It was not as intensive and effective as in the first phase of Civil Disobedience Movement. Nevertheless

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21. The Leader, July 2, 1931, Allahabad, also in Aj. July 2, 1931, Benares.

22. Ibid.

23. F.R.(1) July 1931, H/P, F.18/7/1931.

24. The Leader, July 4, 1931, Allahabad.

25. The Leader, July 4, 1931, Allahabad.

26. F.R.(2), September, 1931, H/P F.18/9/1931.

it continued and the Government could not act against it since the Pact itself had allowed the peaceful picketing.

### III

#### Picketing of Liquor Shops

Picketing of liquor shops also continued along with the picketing of foreign cloth. Fortnightly Report of the second half of the June says that out of 7200 liquor shops, 220 were picketed this year while the number of picketed liquor shops was 1600 in the previous year.<sup>27</sup> On July 21, Allahabad D.C.C. decided to picket the forthcoming toddy sale (which was to be held on July 30) with a view to persuade the prospective bidders of the auction of these shops not to do so.<sup>28</sup> On August 17, 100 volunteers successfully picketed the auction of toddy sale in Gazipur.<sup>29</sup> Although the police helped the bidders to reach the venue of the sale and prevented the volunteers from reaching there, but the Secretary of Gajipur D.C.C. was allowed in the sale premises. As a result of that, only 5-6 shops could be auc-

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27. F.R. (2) June 1931, H/P, F.18/6/1931.

28. The Leader, July 24, 1931, Allahabad.

29. Aj. August, 27 1931, Benares.

tioned.<sup>30</sup> In Gorakhpur district, too, the picketing of liquor shops continued.<sup>31</sup> 112 liquor shops were picketed in the second half of August throughout the Province.<sup>32</sup> During the month of October, picketing showed a slight increase but in many cases it was reported to be perfunctory.<sup>33</sup> Thus the above sources clearly illustrate that the picketing of liquor shop was also going on throughout the truce period but it was peaceful and not so intensive during the first phase & Civil Disobedience.

#### IV

#### Release of Political Prisoners :

Articles 12 of the Delhi Settlement clearly stated that the political prisoner not guilty violence would be released.<sup>34</sup> But there were a number of men still languishing in the jail. The Congress Working Committee appointed K.F. Nariman to collect a list of prisoners who came under the terms of Gandhi-Irwin Pact and were thus eligible for re-

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30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

32. F.R. (2) August 1931, H/P, F.18/8/1931.

33. F.R.(1), Oct. 1931, H/P, F.18/10/1931.

34. Viceroy's telegram to Secretary fo State, regarding the Draft of Delhi Settlement, dated 4 March 1931, Irwin's Private Paper, Acc.No. 3896, I.O.R., N.A.I., New Delhi.

lease, but were not released yet so far. K.F. Nariman furnished the following list on June 8, 1931:<sup>35</sup>

Lists of Political Prisoners still in Jail, both Convicted and under-trial for different Provinces :

Province	No. of Prisoners
Andhra	149
Assam	11
Badaun Dist.	7
Bengal	670
Berar	11
Bombay City	9
C.P.Hindustani	79
C.P.Maharashtra	6
Delhi	5
Karnataka	2
Kerala	6
Maharashtra	124
Meerut Prisoner	30
N.W.F.P.	50
Punjab	89
Tamil Nadu	13
United Provinces	40
Orissa	7
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	1308
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The above mentioned table did not include, Chirner under trials, Garhwali prisoners and Mopla rebellious prisoners. Ajmer, Burma and Sindh did not sent their list to

35. A.I.C.C., F.G.-43/1931, Release of Political Prisoners After the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

Mr.K.F. Nariman. Yet, it is evident that 1308 participants of Civil Disobedience Movement were in Jail till June 8, 1931.

V

Congress Chargesheet over the Breaches of Truce

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact presented the Congress with an opportunity to engage the Government in a dialogue about breaches of the Pact. The novelty was that while earlier the Congress would attack the Government for its various acts of omission and commission without the Government being obliged to publicly rebut its charges, the Pact made it possible for it to present its complaints as 'breaches' of the Pact and thus oblige the authorities to respond. The Congress, as is clear from the following account, took full advantage of this opportunity of engaging the Government in a public debate and constantly putting it on the defensive. Every instance of Government oppression was now a 'breach' of the settlement, which was used to put the Government in the dock. Since the Congress had published a list of complaints, the Government of India also published its answer to the charges in the Gazette of India, extraordinary dated August 24, 1931. There were two schedules. Schedule A contains the complaints in which specific provision of the Settlement had



not been observed. While schedule B contains complaints of general character which did not relate to the breaches of specific provision of the Settlement, but which purported to show that the Local Governments were pursuing a policy of oppression against the Congress and its members.

Schedule A -

- I. Sitla Prasad Tayyal, a teacher in the Cantonment School, Meerut, was suspended from service for political causes, but when he applied for reinstatement, his application was rejected.<sup>36</sup> In its answer the Government said that he was dismissed and dismissal of Government servants did not come within the scope of the Settlement. It also said that his appeal was dismissed by the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief and the Cantonment Board, and that it would be unreasonable to ask the Cantonment Board to reconsider a case which would not be covered by the Settlement.
- II. Kashi Prasad Dikshit, a clerk in the Government Press, Allahabad, applied for reinstatement, but his application was rejected.<sup>37</sup> Government said that when he

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36. A.I.C.C. F.G.-140 (KW II)/1931, Notes for Rejoinder to U.P. Government.

37. The Leader, August, 21, 1931, Allahabad, Aj, Aug. 16, 1931, Benares.

applied for reinstatement the post had already been filled permanently.

III. The Congress charged that undertakings not to take part in any future campaign were being demanded from students intending admission.<sup>38</sup> The Government said that no breach was involved since the Settlement contained no provision relating to the readmission of the students. The only undertaking required of expelled students was that they would abide by the disciplinary rules of the institution.

Schedule B :

I. At Bijhari in Muttra (Mathura), on May 20, 1931, bands of policemen raided the houses of practically all the Congress workers, insulted the women and snatched away national flags. 18 persons from the village were challaned under Section 107. In this regard the Government said that the police were sent to the village to arrest 18 suspects of dacoity, and that no complaint against the police was lodged on time. Krishna Chandra, Secretary of Muttra D.C.C., made these allegations but refused to substantiate on oath before the

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38. Ibid, and also in AICC. F.G. -140 (KWII)/1931.

Sub-Divisional Magistrate.<sup>39</sup>

II. At Naujhil (Muttra), a peaceful meeting on June 26, was forcibly dispersed. Those who refused to disperse were physically dragged away. One Ghure Lal fainted as a result of lathi blows. Government in its answer contradicted the charge and said that villagers objected and tried to prevent the meeting.<sup>40</sup>

III. At Rayam, Rahimtullah, a Congress volunteer, was beaten with shoes by the local police on July 10, 1931, and ordered to leave the village. About 53 Congress workers and all the office-bearers of Muttra D.C.C. were being prosecuted. The Government said that there was no complaint of alleged shoe-beating and only 5 Congress workers were prosecuted against. The Figure 53 included 18 suspects of dacoity and 16 persons in a case of brick-throwing during the Muharram festival.<sup>41</sup>

IV. All prominent workers of the Sultanpur D.C.C. were proceeded against under Section 144. Government said that the Deputy Commissioner took action against them

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39. A.I.C.C., F.53/1931, Breaches of Gandhi-Irwin Pact. The Leader, August 21, 1931, Allahabad.

40. A.I.C.C. F.53/1931, Breaches of Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

41. A.I.C.C., F.G.-140 (KWII)/1931, Notes for Rejoinder to U.P. Government.

because they were preaching non-payment of rent and inciting the tenants against the landlords.

V. In Barabanki district a general order under Section 144 was applied to whole areas. Blank orders under Section 144, signed by the D.M., were given to the Police Inspectors. 300 such cases under Section 107 were pending in Court and 135 such cases were reported from Rae Bareli. In the orders it is specifically mentioned that the prosecution is for carrying on Congress activities and would be withdrawn if the accused offer to pay full rent, apologize to the Zamindars and remove national flag from their houses and cease to enroll Congress volunteers.<sup>42</sup> The Government said that blank orders were issued to prevent itinerant agitators from holding meetings, but the Deputy Commissioner had directed that such orders should not be issued.

VI. In Barabanki, the Deputy Commissioner went to Dadra on June 7, 1931, asked the people to leave the Congress, got Gandhi caps removed, warned tenants against wearing caps, etc.<sup>43</sup> Government denied the charge but said that The Deputy Commissioner had gone to investigate a

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42. A.I.C.C., F.53/1931, Breaches of Gandhi-Irwin Pact. The Leader, Aug.21, 1931, Allahabad.

43. Ibid.

complaint by Zamindars that their lives were in danger. The Deputy Commissioner issued the order that the boycott of Zamindars must cease.

VII. At Bhudari on 22nd June 1931, the Sub-Inspector of Ramnagar Police Station pulled down the national flags, took away Congress papers, arrested three men from the village and threatened others. The Government denied the charge but said that the Station Officer of Ramnagar made arrests under Section 107 Cr.P.C. in order to prevent a breach of peace.<sup>44</sup>

VIII. In Basti district the Magistrate openly asked people not to put on Gandhi caps. A worker was thrashed for objecting to such an order. The Government denied this charge as well.

IX. In Gonda district, Kunwar Raghavendra Pratap Singh was threatened with harassment by the Deputy Commissioner if he did not stop Congress work. Action under Section 144 had also been taken in this district.<sup>45</sup> The Government admitted that Raghavendra Pratap was told that if he continued to carry on speeches and actions which were breaches of the Settlement, action would be taken

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44. A.I.C.C. F.G. - 140 (KWII)/1931, Notes for Rejoinder to U.P. Government.

45. A.I.C.C. F. G-140 (KWII)/1931 Notes for Rejoinder to U.P. Government.

against him. Complaints of general action under Section 144 was denied.

X. In Bahraich district, under the pretext of private complaints of Chaukidars, Zamindars and their agents, Congress workers were arrested and convicted. Government denied this as entirely untrue.

XI. In Barabanki, Taluqdars assured of Government help started their barbarous method of collecting rent. A tenant lost his eyes and broke his nasal bone, while a pregnant woman was beaten until she was unconscious.<sup>46</sup> Government said that this was because of a lathi fight between a party of Zamindars and a party of volunteers who incited tenants not to pay rent.

XII. At Nanpara in Bahraich, the Police and Zamindars combined to beat the Congress volunteers, and they burnt the houses of several volunteers. Government said that at village Chandela and Aghaiya, the police and estate servants, who had gone to make arrests, were attacked by the villagers with the object of rescuing the arrested persons, and the crowd had to be dispersed. The Allegation of the burning the houses was denied.<sup>47</sup>

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46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

XIII. At Baraipur village, in Gonda district, the police and the estate people surrounded the village in the first week of May 1931, and asked the villagers to pay up the rent immediately. They were beaten and 23 of them arrested under Sections 323, 325 and 147 of the I.P.C.. On the third day there was another raid on the village by the state authorities with a force of 250 men. Women were roughly handled, stripped, naked and dishonoured. Grain was taken away and auctioned for nothing.<sup>48</sup> The Government denied these allegations.

XIV. A man had died as a result of a beating administered by the estate Zilladar and his men. Government accepted this as true and said that a Chamar who refused to pay his rent was beaten by two estate peons and subsequently died on 28th June at Ramgarh.<sup>49</sup> A case under Section 302 of the I.P.C. had been registered against them.

XV. At Simaria in Gonda, for 3 days no one was allowed to draw water from any well until part-payment was made. 19 men were prosecuted for having used force against the Thekadar's men. Here, too, women were ill treated.

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48. A.I.C.C. F. G-140 (KWII)/1931 Notes for Rejoinder to U.P. Government, also in H/P, F.53/1931, Breaches of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. See also The Leader, Aug.21, 1931, Allahabad.

49. Ibid.

These allegations were also untrue, said the Government.<sup>50</sup>

XVI. In Allahabad district, it was alleged by the Congress that several zamindars had realized by force the full rent and had not passed on the remission to the tenants. In this district, it had been a common practice with the zamindars to beat the tenant, thrash him with sticks and shoes, and harass him in all possible ways. In this context, the Government agreed that certain zamindars have collected the full rent without passing on the remission to tenants but denied the use of force by them.<sup>51</sup>

XVII. Congress also complained that the Government has been conniving at the excesses of the zamindars. Congress gave an example from Gorakhpur district -- "Zamindars Param Hans Singh and Kewal Kishore Singh of Siswa Bazar, on 31st April 1931, raided the village Khesradi, Gidvapal, Mansachhapra, Ahrauli with 150 badmashes, looted the property belonging to Rajabali, Nabboo Lunia, Bhimal and Chauker." In Rajwara Village, Zamindar Rama Narain, with the help of police fired

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50. A.I.C.C., F.53/1931, Breaches of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. The Leader, Aug. 21, 1931, Allahabad.

51. Ibid.



upon the Kisans. One man died as a result of that.<sup>52</sup> The Government said that a case under Section 395, I.P.C., was registered but later withdrawn by the villagers saying that nothing had been stolen. The incident at Rajawar was still under investigation.

XVIII. In Rae Bareli, in several hundred cases the Quirk Amin, supported by the Police, had terrorised the Kisans. Government said that it was unsafe to send the Amin without a police guard, but so far as the Deputy Commissioner was aware, there had been no terrorising of Kisans.

XIX. In Unao District, Vishambhar Dayal Tripathi published the allegations of tenants made before an enquiry held by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate into the happenings at Pipri (allegation of beating, breaking open houses, insult of women, looting etc. by zamindars) which, if they are not true, would make them libellous. Local Government replied that it had already ordered the Deputy Magistrate to file a criminal complaint for defamation against Vishambhar Dayal.

XX. In Agra remissions were allowed to only those tenants who declared themselves against the Congress. This charge too was denied by the Government.

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52. Ibid.

Thus it appears that most of the Congress charges were denied by the Government as untrue. But the Congressmen too did not rest with the Local Government's answer and they gave their own arguments which are available in "Rafi and Pant's Note for Rejoinder to the U.P. Government".<sup>53</sup> The on-going debate between the Government and the Congress continuously reminded the people of their new ability to interrogate the Government.

## VI

### Congress and the Peasants

In order to consolidate its position Congress not only criticized the rent remission as inadequate and demanded for more, but also took extra-ordinary and bold steps in putting up two Police Stations and one Tahasildar in Muttra district in an attempt to set up parallel Government.<sup>54</sup> These were basically attempts to establish the Congress as an intermediary between the peasant and the Government. Congress Courts were set up along with the Police Stations and the villagers were encouraged to bring their cases

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53. A.I.C.C. F. G-140 (KWII)/1931 - Notes for Rejoinder to U.P. Government.

54. F.R. (1), April, 1931, H/P, F. 18/4/1931.

before this court for the redress of their grievances, instead of going to ordinary courts.<sup>55</sup> By the middle of April it became obvious that the Congress was pursuing a definite policy of which the objects were -

- a. To consolidate and extend Congress influence in rural areas in preparation for any contingency that might arise, the settlement being regarded as a truce only.
- b. To intervene between Government and land owners in regard to the payment of land-revenue, and between landlords and tenants in regard to the payment of rents.
- c. To establish institutions parallel to those of Government where conditions were favourable.<sup>56</sup>

In October 1931, Mr. Sunder Lal, a Congressman, circulated a scheme for parallel Government to be implemented in Barabanki district. The scheme of parallel Government was based on a three-tier system.

- I. Pargana Panchayat - consisting of village panchayats under the control of a Mamalatdar.
- II. Tahsil Panchayat - It was above the Pargana Panchayats and its head was to be a Tahsildar.

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55. Ibid.

56. H/P, F.33/37/1931, Revised Indictment Against Congress in U.P., pp.45-46.

III. District Panchayat - It was above the Pargana and Tehsil Panchayat. It was headed by a Chakladar.

The school teachers and the patwaris were to be enrolled as officers of these panchayats. Among the duties of the panchayats, one most significant was, "to try and turn women into leaders so that when the men are arrested in the next war, the women may become leaders. The English will not arrest women. In this way all should try to increase the power of Congress".<sup>57</sup>

Although Civil Disobedience as such was withdrawn and the peasants and tenants were supposed to pay the rent, but because of the slump in prices and crop failure they were unable to pay the rent. Zamindars and Taluqdars committed inhuman atrocities and excesses to collect the rent from the tenants. District Congress committees collected such complaints and sent them to U.P.P.C.C. and A.I.C.C. The A.I.C.C. passed on these complaints to Government in form of 'Rafi and Pant's Note for Rejoinder to the U.P. Government'. To give a few examples of such atrocities : At village Par-Kham of Muttra district, a tenant and his aunt were taken to the Zamindar's house, and humiliated. And all this for arrears of Rs.12/8. Eventually he pawned his aunt's orna-

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57. Ibid. p.46.

ments to borrow money.<sup>58</sup> In the same village, Rangilal, a boy of 12 years was taken to the zamindar's house, made to sit in a crouching position for two hours and released only when his mother pawned her ornaments. Ramchand, an old man of 70 years, who had paid rents for Kharif, was taken to the zamindar's house and asked to sit in a crouching position. Being an old man, he could not do so, hence was beaten and became unconscious.<sup>59</sup> Balwanta, a man of 80 years, was shut up in a room and kicked and beaten with shoes and made to swing by a piece of cloths tied, he became unconscious.<sup>60</sup> Giasia, the son of Balwanta, was dragged to the zamindar's house on 11 September, and beaten. He was released only after his 4 oxen and 1 buffalo were caught hold of and sold.<sup>61</sup> Similarly Jaggan Nath of the same village was taken to Garhi and harassed and was released only when he sold his cattle and paid Rs.12/19.<sup>62</sup> But these instances are not the all. There are innumerable instances of atrocities and barbarous repression done to peasants and tenants in Rae Bareli, Barabanki, Sultanpur, Saharanpur, Sitapur, Bahraich,

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58. A.I.C.C., F.G-140/1931, U.P. Agrarian File.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

Gonda, Gorakhpur, Agra, Allahabad and many other districts.<sup>63</sup>

Home/Political files and regional Newspaper illustrate that the villagers and the tenants did not always subdue to oppression of police and zamindars but occasionally resisted, defied the Government orders and sometimes assaulted the officials. For example, in the first half of April when a Police Sub-Inspector went to investigate a murder case in Manjhanpur Police Station of Allahabad, he was beaten by the crowds and villagers.<sup>64</sup> Similarly in Shahjahanpur district when two Sub-Inspectors went to investigate a robbery case, one was attacked by the whole villagers, while other was left unconscious and snatched off his revolver.<sup>65</sup> In Agra a Qurk Amin gone to realize irrigation dues, was attacked on June 20.<sup>66</sup> In Rae Bareli, a revenue officer was attacked, police opened fire in which two were killed and others wounded.<sup>67</sup> In Kapurthala estate of Bahraich district, a Qurk Amin and certain State official were assaulted.<sup>68</sup> In the

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63. Ibid.

64. F.R. (1), April, 1931, H/P, F.18/4/1931.

65. F.R. (2), April, 1931, H/P, F.18/4/1931.

66. F.R. (2), June, 1931, H/P, F.18/6/1931.

67. F.R. (1), July, 1931, H/P, F.18/7/1931.

68. Ibid.

second Half of May, Rae Bareli, Barabanki, Pratapgarh, Unao were reported to be troublesome areas. According to an estimate of Deputy Commissioner, in Rae Bareli, 13000 Congress volunteers and 960 villages had hoisted the Congress Flags.<sup>69</sup> The above instances portray that quite often villagers defied and assaulted police and zamindars when the later went to collect rent with force. More often than not, the tenants and villagers were dragged into false charges of dacoity and robbery in an attempt to suppress tenants and to curb the Congress activities in the rural areas.

Unlike Bihar in United Provinces, the majority of Zamindars were Muslims while peasants and tenants were Hindus. So whenever there occurred a clash between zamindar and tenants, it was often referred as a communal riot by the British administration. As the Civil Disobedience came to an end with the Pact, now the peasants were supposed to pay the land revenue demand and rent. But as the Congressmen were taking up the cause of tenants and peasants on account of their bad economic condition so they also advised them not to pay the rent if it was beyond their capacity. This, from the Government point of view, was to incite tenants against their landlords and to stop this, Deputy Commissioner,

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69. F.R. (2), May, 1931, H/P, F.18/5/1931.

issued the order under Section 144 Cr.P.C.<sup>70</sup> The Local Government was caught into dilemma as to whether help the zamindars in collecting the rents or not. This is manifested in the report of Kunwar Jagdish Prasad, Secretary to the U.P. Government which is being quoted here at length:

If the Government exerts pressure on behalf of landlords in collecting rents, we may have to face a general combination of tenants against landlords, with the grave consequences not only to the peace of the Province but to landlords themselves. If, on the other hand, support is not given to landlords, we may encourage a mentality on the part of tenants which may result in a spirit of resistance against the payment of rents which may persist even when prices improve.<sup>71</sup>

During the period of Truce, in Allahabad district, Manjhanpur Tahsil was considered as the worst effected area. A clash between Muslim Zamindar and villagers resulted in the death of 6 men of Zamindar, all Muslim.<sup>72</sup> In another case, in Gorakhpur district, when a Zamindar accompanied by a Sub-Inspector went to investigate a dacoity case, a large number of people collected and attacked the Zamindar and his party, the Sub-Inspector had to open fire, the crowd dispersed, one was killed.<sup>73</sup> In Soram and Phulpur

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70. F.R. (1) May, 1931, H/P, F.18/5/1931.

71. F.R. (1) June, 1931, H/P, F.18/6/1931.

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.



tehsil of Allahabad, and in Barabanki, Zamindars were attacked and murdered. The Local Government portrayed it as law and order problem, and concluded that all this was due to the fact that considerable number of Congress volunteers were working in the villages, spreading contempt of authority, sowing dissention between landlords and tenants, and generally pursuing the policy of the Congress contained in the circular of March 10, 1931.<sup>74</sup> Thus we see that whenever a clash between Muslim Zamindar and Hindu tenant occurred in the United Provinces, the Government attributed this to the Congress organisation and its workers and unlike Gyanendra Pandey it did not draw a rigid line between local militant workers and the responsible leaders of the Congress.<sup>75</sup>

## VII

### Slump in Prices and No-Rent Movement

The year 1931 also witnessed the unprecedented fall in prices and local calamities which rendered the peasants and tenants vulnerable. Magnitude of fall in prices may be

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74. H/P, F. 33/37/1931, Revised Indictment Against Congress in U.P., (Issued by the Local government on December 15, 1931) p. 38.

75. Pandey, G, Ascendancy of Congress in U.P. 1926-34: A study in Imperfect Mobilization, O.U.P., Delhi, 1978, p. 182.

guaged through the following index of prices of principle food crops over a period of time.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Price Index</u>
1880 - 1885	100.00
1891 - 1895	148.00
1896 - 1900	183.00
1901 - 1905	156.00
1896 - 1905	169.00
1906 - 1910	237.00
1911 - 1915	227.30
1916 - 1920	309.00
1921 - 1925	315.00
1925 - 1928	327.00
1930 - 1931	135.00 <sup>76</sup>

The Price Index shows that the prices prevalent in 1931 were below the level of prices in 1891. In May 1931, the Government announced Rs.12.25 lakhs as general remission in land-revenue, of which 5.75 lakhs were in canal rates and Rs.3.5 lakhs for taccavi.<sup>77</sup> But this did not solve the problem and soon the Government realized that the slump was more than a passing phase. So the Government (U.P.) appointed the 'Rent and Revenue Committee' to go into the rent remission issue. The Committee taking 1900-01 as base year argued that since the prices had gone back to the level 1900-01 so the rent should be curbed to that level and, therefore, it recommended Rs.4.12 crore as rent remission

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76. AICC, F.G.-140/1931, U.P. Agrarian File.

77. The Leader, May 3, 1931, Allahabad.

which was accepted by the Government.<sup>78</sup> But there were two conditions:

- i. No remission was to exceed more than 8 annas in a rupee.
- ii. No-rent was to be reduced below the 1900-01 level. This meant the absence of any relief for the many occupancy tenants in Agra whose rents had not risen in the thirty years before the depression.

The Congress criticised the rent remission as inadequate on the following grounds. It mentioned that during the 11 year of soaring prices from 1920-30, the annual collection of rents (both current and arrears) was only 79 percent in Agra and 90 per cent in Awadh of the net current demand, or at 82 per cent for the whole province. If one compares this figure of 82% with what the Government expects tenants to pay this year, when prices have fallen by more than 55 per cent, the hollowness of Government remission is exposed. The current demand for 1931-32 was Rs. 19.40 crores, out of which Rs.4.12 crores were to be remitted, the balance to be collected being 80% of gross demand. In the normal times when prices were at peak, the tenants could with difficulty pay Rs.82 only out of every Rs. 100 on account of rent, but

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78. Aj, November 4, 1931, Banaras, Pandey, G., op.cit. p.167.

in this year of phenomenal slump, the Government expects to believe that 80 per cent can be realized. "Can blindness and folly go further than this", the Congress asked. Rent must be reduced by 55% in order to establish equilibrium between rents and prices.<sup>79</sup>

Whenever it demanded the rent remission for tenants, it also asked for the proportionate relief in revenue demand to the landlords and zamindars.<sup>80</sup> Without revenue remission, rent remission to tenants would not have been possible, as the zamindars would not pass the rent remission to them without getting relief in revenue demand. The U.P. Government while granting Rs.4.12 crores as rent remission, gave Rs.1.09 crores as remission in revenue demand for the whole of the province.<sup>81</sup> This reduction in revenue demand was not in proportion to remission and rent but in proportion to the total loss of combined revenue from Sir and Khudkast land as well as reduced rentals. A break up of the revenue remission is given below.

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79. AICC F.G-140/1931, U.P. Agrarian File.

80. Leader, May 3, 1931, Allahabad.

81. Aj. November 8, 1931, Benares, also in Pandey G., op.cit., p.167.

### Remission in Revenue Demand

#### Agra Province

Meerut Division	-	16,46,000
Benares Division	-	2,26,000
Agra Division	-	13,16,000
Rohilkhand Division	-	11,97,000
Allahabad Division	-	3,75,000

Total for Agra Province = Rs. 76,47,000

#### Awadh Province

Lucknow Division	-	16,67,000
Faijabad Division	-	16,20,000

Total for Awadh Province = Rs. 32,44,000

Total United Provinces =Rs.1,09,41,000

Whenever the Government pressed the Zamindars for the revenue demand and took strong action when the latter failed to deposit the revenue demand, the National Congress condemned the Government action. For example, Raja of Kalakanker had paid Rs.50,000/- out of his Kharif revenue demand of Rs. 90,000/- for the year 1931. The balance could not be paid due to difficulty in collecting the rent. The Government forefeited and attached his moveable property.<sup>82</sup> Similarly the Raja of Bhidari had paid 75% of his Kharif demand. Yet his motor car and other property were attached for non-

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82. Aj., May 7, 1931, Benares, also in The Leader, June 19, 1931, Allahabad.

payment of the remaining revenue demand.<sup>83</sup> The Congress criticized the strict method of revenue collection from zamindars and Rajas because, being pressed by the Government for the revenue demand, these zamindars and landlords resorted to all kind of means, legal and illegal, to wring out as much as possible from the tenants.

In most of the district of United Provinces, Congressmen were holding Kisan meetings and organising peasants. In these meetings they criticized rent-remission as inadequate and asked for more and also advised the kisans not to pay the rent if they could not. To mention a few of them, in the villages of Rae Bareli, Sitla Sahai and Mata Prasad were organising Kisan meetings. In these they said that the present remission of 25% was not sufficient and that it should be brought down to the level of present prices.<sup>84</sup> In Unao district 35000, kisan gathered at Pannalal Park on April 19, 1931. Here the meeting was chaired by Pt. Lakshmi Shankar Vajpai. A resolution requesting the Government to remit 60% of rent and to suspend the canal dues was passed unanimously.<sup>85</sup> In Saharanpur district, too, cultivators from

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83. The Leader, June 19, 1931, Allahabad.

84. The Leader, April, 12, 1931, Allahabad.

85. The Leader, April 20, 1931, Allahabad.

100 villages held a meeting on May 10, and passed similar resolutions requesting the Government to remit the canal dues at least by half for the present Rabi crop.<sup>86</sup> At Victoria Park in Lucknow District a Kisan meeting was held. It was attended by as many as 5000 kisans. Here printed forms in the shape of a questionnaire asking how the Government remission would effect the kisans were distributed and got filled by the kisans.<sup>87</sup>

There were innumerable such Kisan meetings in the various districts of the Province. Sometimes these meetings were disturbed by the Government and the leaders were served with prohibitory orders. In Barabanki district, Baba Ram Chandra and Anjani Kumar were served with orders under Section 144. Rae Bareli District Kisan Sabha in a meeting at Gowra on May 14 unanimously passed resolutions demanding the reduction of rent and condemning the action of the Government in serving orders under Section 144 on Baba Ram Chandra.<sup>88</sup> Similarly, in Lucknow, batches of kisans were arrested. 17 of them were prominent village workers of the Congress. The reason for their arrest was that they were advising tenants to pay only 8 annas or 10 annas in the rupee and

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86. The Leader, May 16, 1931, Allahabad.

87. The Leader, May 20, 1931, Allahabad.

88. The Leader, May 22, 1931, Allahabad.

that too only if the zamindars gave the receipt for full payment. Else they should deposit their rent in the Bank.<sup>89</sup>

The above instances clearly indicate that the Congress leaders were 'taking up the cause of the peasants, and organising them for resistance and asking the Government for more rent remission on economic grounds. The Local Government was afraid that the no-rent campaign of the previous year (of Civil Disobedience Movement) would be continued in a different form this year as well.<sup>90</sup>

Fortnightly Report for the first half of May, 1931, indicates that the Congress influence was very strong in Allahabad, Barabanki, Rae Bareli and Pratapgarh. Here the Congress meetings and the Kisan Sabhas were advocating partial payment of rent.<sup>91</sup> Mahatma Gandhi after meeting Sir Malcolm Hailey, the Governor of U.P., on May 22, 1931, issued his famous Manifesto to U.P. Kisans on May 24, in which he asked the tenants not to pay more than 8 annas of rent in case of statutory tenants and not more than 12 annas of rent in case of occupancy tenants, if the landlords were

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89. The Leader, July 4, 1931, Allahabad.

90. F.R. (1), March, 1931, H/P, F.18/3/1931.

91. F.R. (1), May 1931, H/P, F.18/5/1931.



willing to give a receipt for full payment.<sup>92</sup> This undoubtedly adversely affected the rent collection.<sup>93</sup> Meanwhile the U.P. Government announced a total rent remission of Rs.4.12 crores. But the Congress condemned the rent remission as inadequate and on September 19, Allahabad District Congress Committee appointed a Sub-Committee to examine the rent remission. The Sub-Committee recommended that rent remission should be Rs.10 crores instead of Rs.4.12 crores as proposed by the Government. It also said that the arrears should be wiped out and there should be no future ejection of the tenants if they failed to pay the rent.<sup>94</sup>

On September 23, 1931 the Congress brought out a report titled 'The Agrarian Distress in the United Provinces' in which it showed that in Jhansi, Gorakhpur and Lucknow divisions, the tenants' holdings were cultivated at a loss on the basis of present prices and, therefore, they should pay no rent at all.<sup>95</sup> The Government did not heed these recommendations but rather intensified the repressive methods of

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92. Aj., May, 25, 1931, Benares, The Leader, May 25, 1931, Allahabad. See also F.R.(2) May 1931, H/P, F.18/5/1931.

93. F.R.(1), June, 1931, H/P. F.18/6/1931.

94. H/P, F.33/37/31, Revised Indictment Against the Congress in U.P.

95. F.R. (2), September, 1931, H/P, F.18/9/1931.

rent and revenue collection in collusion with landlords and zamindars.<sup>96</sup>

On October 15, 1931, the Allahabad D.C.C. accepted the recommendations of the Sub-committee and asked the U.P.P.C.C. to authorise it to start a defensive no rent campaign in Allahabad.<sup>97</sup> The Congress and the Local Government both knew that this kind of no rent-campaign once launched would not be limited to Allahabad alone. Meanwhile Mahatma Gandhi cabled from London to Nehru, authorising the latter to take necessary steps to meet the situation. A Kisan Conference under P.D. Tandon was held at Prayag (Allahabad) on October 23 which passed the following resolution :

"This Conference places on record the view that in case the Government does not adopt suitable measures for meeting the condition, the tenants of the whole district will oppose the Government by resorting to a 'no-rent campaign', and in this matter they will gladly carry out the instructions of D.C.C."<sup>98</sup>

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96. H/P, F.33/16/1931. (K.W.)

97. H/P, F.33/37/31, Revised Indictment Against the Congress in U.P. Also see, H/P, F.33/36/1931,- Agrarian Situation in U.P. Threat of the Congress to Renew Civil Disobedience Movement in Allahabad District.

98. Aj. Oct. 25, 1931, Benares and also in H/P, F.33/37/1931.

Jawaharlal Nehru met the Commissioner and the Collector of Allahabad and told them that the remission in Allahabad district had not been in accordance with the general formula adopted in the Government Resolution on the subject but the Government expressed its inability to reopen the discussion or to do any substantial modification as it would delay the collection of the Kharif rent. Regarding the cancellation of arrears of rent it said that it (Government) was uncertain as to what to do until it had some experience of the effect of reductions in rent, recently announced.

On November 15, 1931, the U.P.P.C.C. passed a resolution condemning the Government's response as thoroughly unsatisfactory and authorising the Allahabad D.C.C. to advise agriculturists to withhold the payment of rents and revenue during the pendency of present negotiation.<sup>99</sup> On November 22, the U.P. Government refused to engage in any further discussion unless this resolution of U.P.P.C.C. was suspended. On December 2, 1931 the Government finally withdrew the offer of discussion.<sup>100</sup> Finally, the U.P.P.C.C., on December 5, 1931 at Lucknow, passed the Resolution definitely authorising the local committees of

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99. Aj., November, 18, 1931, Benares.

100. Aj., December 2, 1931, Benares.

Cawnpore, Unao, Rae Bareli, Etawah, in addition to Allaha-  
bad, to commence a 'no rent campaign'.<sup>101</sup>

Thus we find that a no rent campaign was launched in U.P. while the Pact stood intact. But this time it was started not as a political weapon of Civil Disobedience Movement but on economic grounds and as a result of economic depression and the Government's failure to cope with the worsening economic situation. Whenever the Government alleged that the Congress was breaching the Pact, the latter pleaded its innocence and argued that it was taking steps only because of economic crises and depression.

### VIII

#### Promulgation of New Ordinances and Resumption of the Civil Disobedience Movement

As mentioned earlier, the U.P.P.C.C. had authorised the local Congress Committees on December 5 to launch a no rent campaign, to suppress the campaign, an ordinance was promulgated on December 14, 1931.<sup>102</sup> The Ordinance gave special powers to District Magistrates to deal with the no rent

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101. H/P, F.33/37/1931, Revised Indictment Against Congress in U.P. also in H/P, F.33/36/1931.

102. F.R. (2) December, 1931, H/P. F. 18/12/1931.

campaign. It was extended to Barabanki on December 23 and to Pratapgarh and Sultanpur on December 29 and 30 respectively.<sup>103</sup> Before this New Ordinance, the District Magistrates of 5 districts (where no rent campaign was to start) were instructed on December 7 to proceed against any Congress speakers intending to advocate non-payment of rent by issue of order under Section 144.<sup>104</sup> P.D. Tandon and Krishna Kant Malviya were arrested in Allahabad for defying the Section 144.<sup>105</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru and T.A.K. Sherwani were arrested on December 26 while they were on their way to Bombay to receive Mahatma Gandhi from the second R.T.C.<sup>106</sup>

When Mahatma Gandhi learnt of the promulgation of new Ordinances in the United Provinces, Bengal and N.W.F.P., heard the suffering of Bardoli peasants and also that the repression by the Government had continued inspite of the Delhi Agreement, he cabled at once to the Viceroy asking for an explanation for the said Ordinance but got very startling response from the Private Secretary to Viceroy, saying: --

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103. Ibid.

104. H/P, F.33/36/1931 - Agrarian Situation in U.P., Threat of Congress to Renew C.D.M. in Allahabad District.

105. Aj., December, 20-23, 1931, Benares.

106. Aj. December, 27, 1931, Benares.

His excellency feels bound to emphasize that he will not be prepared to discuss with you the measures which the Government of India... have found it necessary to adopt in Bengal, U.P. and N.W.F.P. These measures in any case be kept in force until they have served the purpose for which they were imposed - namely the preservation of law and order to good Government.<sup>107</sup>

Finding the response of the Viceroy unsatisfactory, the C.W.C. called upon the nation to resume the Civil Disobedience Movement on December 31, 1931.<sup>108</sup>

### CONCLUSION

From the above discussion it is evident that the Gandhi-Irwin Pact did not lead to a betrayal of peasants, as argued by certain scholars. The Congress in the United Provinces, while utilizing the truce as an opportunity to consolidate its position and put its house in order, took up the cause of the peasants, and acted as an arbiter between the Government and the tenants. It ultimately launched the no-rent campaign when the Government failed to grant adequate rent remission.

The U.P. Government time and again alleged that the Congress was violating the Pact by resorting to the no rent

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107. Tendulkar, D.G., Mahatma, Vol.3, Publication Division, Government of India, New Delhi, 1951, p.153.

108. Ibid. p. 154.

campaign in different guise, while the Congress on its part argued that it was only taking up the cause of the peasant in the worsening economic situation. So the Congress was in the advantageous position because the Government hesitated to repress it openly as the Pact stood intact, while the Congress continued its activities on the economic ground.

One of most remarkable things that happened during the truce period in United Provinces was the establishment of parallel authority by the Congress in Meerut and Barabanki districts. This sort of parallel Government by the Congress stimulated the prospect of future Government in the people's mind. The people begun to see that it is through Congress office and Congress courts they could secure rent and revenue remission for themselves. The Government recognised the Congress's right to be the spokesman of peoples' grievances. All these increased the Congress influence among the Indian people. In Gramscian terms of hegemonic struggle, this sort of parallel authority immensely increased the Congress hegemony among the people and led to the loss of British hegemony and eroded the notion of British invincibility. For the National Congress this was a great achievement.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**MADRAS PRESIDENCY**



The Madras Presidency consisted of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Desh and Malabar. The first phase of Civil Disobedience Movement in Tamil Nadu was launched by C. Rajagopalachari by his famous salt march from Trichinopoly to Vedaranniyam where he broke the salt law on April 30, 1930.<sup>1</sup> In Andhra, A.Kaleswar Rao, Mutnuri Krishna Rao and Pattabhi Sitaramayya, accompanied by villagers, went to the Bundur sea-shore at 12 noon on April 6, 1930 and collected salt. They came back and held a huge public meeting at Bundur where A.Kaleswar Rao separately showed the salt and proclaimed: 'this is the medicine for swarajya', and then that salt was distributed among the public.<sup>2</sup> Bundur and Chollangi emerged as strong centres of Salt Satyagrah in whole of Andhra. In Kistna, East and West Godavari districts thousands of Satyagrahis flocked to the Sibirams (military style camps) at Cocanada, Sitanagaram, Rajahmundry, Bizwada and Bundur. Guntur, Vizagapatam, Nellore and Ganjam districts also

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1. Sarkar, Sumit, Modern India, Macmillan, Delhi, 1983, p.299.

2. The Hindu, April 8, 1930 and Andhra Patrika, April 9, 1930, quoted in Atlury Murali, 'Social Change and Nature of Social Participation in National Movement in Andhra' - 1905-34. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis submitted to Centre for Historical Studies, J.N.U., 1985, pp.660-61.

participated in the movement.<sup>3</sup> In Malabar, K.Kelappan, the hero of Vaikam Satyagraha, organised the salt march from Calicut to Poyannur to break the salt law,<sup>4</sup> while P.Krishna Pillai, future founder of the Kerala communist movement, defended the national flag in the face of police lathis on Calicut beach on November 11, 1930.<sup>5</sup>

With the signing of Gandhi-Irwin Pact on March 5, 1931, the Civil Disobedience movement was suspended. The Government released the majority of political prisoners. The Pact not only permitted the nationalists to carry on peaceful picketing of liquor and foreign cloth shops, but also allowed the people to collect salt for consumption purposes. The Congress on its part had undertaken that 'picketing shall in future be peaceful, non-political and unaggressive'.<sup>6</sup> Special instructions were issued to the district officer and the District Magistrate to take no notice what-

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3. The Hindu and Andhra Patrika, March 28 - April 20, 1930, quoted in Atluri Murali; op.cit., p.661.

4. Chandra, Bipan, et.al., op.cit., p.272.

5. Sarkar, Summit, op.cit., p.300.

6. Govt. of Madras, strictly confidential, D.O.No.138-5, Fort St. George, dated March 6, 1931, in History of Freedom Movement, File No.66, Extract from Secret Files relating to Civil Disobedience Movement. 1931-32, pp.483-4. (Hereafter referred to as H.F.M.-C.D.M.).

soever of picketing unless and until it threatens serious disorder or danger to public peace.<sup>7</sup>

The pact was seen in Andhra as a great victory for Gandhi and the national movement. The 'Kistna Patrika' in its editorial on Gandhi-Irwin Pact wrote:

There is no argument on one thing, The Government had agreed that the strength of the Congress is invincible. Without the cooperation of the Congress, constitutional reforms could not be carried on. There is no other way but to accept this even by the British Parliament (Ministry) ..... the whole future is for new creation. With Congress cooperation and consent a new political system is going to be established. This responsibility and gain was achieved by the Congress after waging a war for one year.<sup>8</sup>

#### I

1. **Strengthening of Congress Organization and Extension of Political Activities to Princely States : -**

As mentioned earlier (Chapter 1), the Nationalist leaders expressed in unequivocal terms that the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was merely a provisional settlement or truce in the prolonged struggle for independence. This is also evident from the speeches of C.Rajagopalachari and J.M.Sengupta at

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7. D.O.No.151-9, Store House Hill, May 3, 1931, in H.F.M.-C.D.M. pp.484-5.

8. Kistna Patrika, March 7, 1931. (Translated from Telugu to English), quoted in Atluri Murali, op.cit., pp.696-97.

the Kerala Provincial Conference held on May 3, 1931.<sup>9</sup> The congressmen used the truce as an opportunity to put their house in order, strengthen the Congress organization, build new organisations and also extend Congress activities to the princely states. To intensify the picketing and boycott propaganda the Congress City Boycott Committee was formed in Madras City.<sup>10</sup> There was also a Women's Swadeshi League for women to conduct the picketing. Picketing was also started in the areas/districts hitherto immune to the picketing. In Andhra Desh, from May onwards, the Congress begun in earnest the task of revamping its organization. Old committees were revived, new Congress Sabhas were formed in many places and serious attention was directed to recruitment of Congress members and the raising of funds. By May 16, 1931 around 2000 people had enrolled themselves as Congress members in the West Godavari district alone. In the same period, 3500 people took Congress membership in East Kistna district.<sup>11</sup> The growth of Congress membership in East Kistna district is demonstrated by the following table.<sup>12</sup>

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9. F.R. (1), May, 1931. H/P, F.18/5/1931.

10. ibid.

11. Kistna Patrika, May 16, 1931, quoted in Atluri Murali, op.cit., p.708.

12. Kistna Patrika, August 29, 1931, quoted in Atluri Murali, op.cit., p.708.

### East Kistna District

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Date	No. of Congress members newly recruited
16 May	3500
30 May	6500
13 June	7133
20 June	7218
11 July	7795
18 July	8035
25 July	8026
29 July	8372

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There was also an extension of political activities to the princely state of Travancore. In the first half of March there was a movement in Alleppey to boost the boycott of British cloth. This movement was worked from a Congress office run by K.Kumar, an ex-Satyagrahi convict and well known agitator.<sup>13</sup> On May 8, 1931, three Congressmen from Trichinopoly with other local colleagues organised a public meeting in Pudukkottai Town Hall of Travancore state to facilitate the extension of the Congress programme in the State.<sup>14</sup> In May 1931, Jawaharlal Nehru's visit to the Travancore State also gave a fillip to the Congress activities

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13. Ibid.

14. F.R. (1) May, 1931, H/P, F.18/5/1931.

there.<sup>15</sup> Earlier, immediately after the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, in Travancore state, a meeting was held on March 22 under Shaik Thampi Pavalar to welcome 17 released Satyagrahis. Next day a meeting took place at Edulkudi under the same president, who said that the pact was merely temporary and that the Second Round Table Conference would be held and if the Indian terms would not be complied with, the civil disobedience movement would recommence.<sup>16</sup>

So far as picketing of foreign cloth in Travancore is concerned, in the last half of April, nine foreign cloth shops were picketed in Alleppey alone.<sup>17</sup> It continued there unabated till May 1931 and was expected to begin any day at Quilon and at Trivandrum in the beginning of August 1931.<sup>18</sup> In the second half of November the picketers dressed in a new fashionable light green cloth shirt and Gandhi-cap were reported to be marching to and fro shouting Inquilab Zindabad in Travancore.<sup>19</sup> Thus it becomes evident that the Congress did strengthen its party machinery by forming new associations and committees and also extended the picketing

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15. F.R.(2) May, 1931, H/P, F.18/3/1931.

16. F.R.(2) March, 1931, H/P, F.18/3/1931.

17. F.R. (2) April, 1931, H/P, F.18/4/1931.

18. F.R.(2) May, 1931, H/P, F.18/5/1931.

19. F.R.(2) November, 1931, H/P, F.18/11/1931.

to a princely state where the Congress activities were banned earlier.

## II

### Youth Leagues and their Role

There seems to be apparent change in the character of the youth movement during the period of the Truce. Youth Leagues as independent organizations slowly declined due to the persistent efforts of the Congress leaders, who were more or less successful in converting to the Congress creed practically all the members of the youth league in the Presidency.<sup>20</sup> However, after the suspension of Civil Disobedience in March 1931, some of these youth, who were earlier under the strong influence of revolutionary ideas, again became critical of the Congress. This was also due to the failure of Gandhi in saving Bhagat Singh and his comrades from being hanged. To quote an interesting Telugu pamphlet on Bhagat Singh's death written by Bulusu Ramajogu Rao :

Oh! the Ornament of Bharati youth! Oh, the Ocean of virtue! Oh, Brother and Friend! You have sacrificed honour, wealth and life of the Altar of Motherland worshipping here feet. You are going to see more youths of the

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20. G.O.No.844, Notes on Political Situation in the Madras Presidency, Pub. (Gen.) Dept., Government of Madras (G.O.M), p.163, quoted in Atluri Murali, op.cit., p.710.

sort, while being honoured with crossing of swords.<sup>21</sup>

But large sections of the youth continued to participate in Congress activities. In fact, in connection with picketing of liquor and foreign cloth shops, National Flag Day, Prabhat Pheries, etc. the youth were very active in Tamil Nadu, Andhra and Travancore state. Students and youth boycotted the schools and colleges in Travancore and other places to take part in the picketing.<sup>22</sup> In the summer vacations, many students came forward to participate in the picketing. The Tamil Nadu Youth Conference held a meeting at Madura on June 6, 1931; with Mrs. Lakshmi Pathi in the chair, and resolutions referring to the boycott of foreign cloth were passed.<sup>23</sup> In Andhra, the main centres of youth activities were North Arcot, Bellary, Guntur, Kistna, Godavari and Nellore districts. Altogether six youth conferences were held during 1931. In these conferences, as for example at the Nellore Youth Conference on June 13, speeches were delivered stressing the need for self-sacrifice and

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21. Pamphlet No.216/9, dated April 9, 1931, from C.W.E. Cotton, Chief Secretary to GOM, to the Secretary to the Govt. of India, New Delhi in HFM-CDM, B.No.66, p.611.

22. F.R.(1), April, 1931, H/P, F.18/4/1931.

23. F.R.(1), June, 1931, H/P, F.18/6/1931.



participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement.<sup>24</sup> In Travancore state, in the second half of the August there was an underground movement to organise a Youth League among the boys in the schools and colleges of Trivandrum and as a preliminary step cells were formed in various classes.<sup>25</sup>

There was also an increase in revolutionary terrorist tendencies among the youth during 1931. the Government observed :

In Andhra also several youth have been imbued with revolutionary ideas but no organisation has materialized .... The seeds of violence were sown by Manoranjan Gupta, now a detainee under the Bengal Ordinance, by visits to Northern cities by Andhra youth after the Congress session at Karachi and by contact with Northern revolutionaries in the jail of this Presidency during the Civil Disobedience movement.<sup>26</sup>

New youth organisations also came into being in Andhra during 1931. The prominent one were:<sup>27</sup>

Name of organisation	Date of formation
1. The Bapalla Youth League, Guntur	5.1.1931
2. The Youth League, Nellore	12.5.1931
3. The Andhra Ratna Yuvakajan Samiti, Nellore	31.5.1931
4. The Youth League, Bezwada	3.11.1931

24. G.O.No.844, Notes on Political Situation in Madras Presidency, HFM, G.O.M., op.cit., pp.165-67.

25. F.R.(2), August, 1931, H/P, F.18/8/1931.

26. G.O.No.844, HFM, G.O.M. op.cit., pp.168-69.

27. Ibid, pp.167-88.

It was this Andhra youth who through regular conferences outside the jails took up the Resettlement issue and organised the peasantry to protest against the implementation of enhanced land revenue and water-cess rate.<sup>28</sup> An interesting example was the Andhra Youth Conference held at Guntur on June 13, 1931, presided over by Maganti Bapaneedu. In his speech, the President was said to have extolled the work of revolutionaries and threatened the Government with 'Satyagraha' in the event of its insisting on payment of enhanced taxes in Kistna, East and West Godavari districts'.<sup>29</sup>

### III

#### Picketing of Foreign Cloth Shops

Since the Gandhi-Irwin Pact provided for peaceful picketing, it continued during the period of the truce. In the first half of March the picketing of foreign cloth shops continued but now the women became prominent. In Madras City it was led by Durgabai and Mrs. Cousin. In Bhimavaram and Ellore in West Godavari District it was started for the

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28. Satyahasrayana, Kambhupati, History of Communist Movement in Andhra, vol.1., p.158.

29. G.O.No.844, Notes on Political Situation in Madras Presidency, H.F.M., G.O.M., op.cit., p.167.

first time.<sup>30</sup> It continued in the second half of the same month in Madras city, Malabar, Kistna and West Godavari districts. In the first-half of April it was still going strong and even showing some signs of intensification in the West Godavari and Malabar districts. Picketing also began in Guntur, Nellore, Vizagapatam, Tinnevelly and South Kanara districts. In Madras city it was confined to women while in Bhimavaram of West Godavari district a number of Kshatriya women hitherto observing purdah were recruited for the purpose. In Mangalore 32 women assisted by 10 volunteers initiated the picketing campaign while in Bezwada and Masulipatam of Kistna district they were no less prominent.<sup>31</sup> In Ganjam district the local Congress leaders persuaded dealers to give up their foreign cloth. In the month of April the picketing was extended to districts where it had not been in evidence earlier and also to those districts where it had gained a footing previous to the pact.<sup>32</sup>

There was a slight decline in the picketing of foreign cloth shops from the month of May.<sup>33</sup> It continued in June and July but now with less vigour because of the preference

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30. F.R.(1) March, 1931, H/P, F.18/3/1931.

31. F.R.(1) April, 1931 H/P, F.18/4/1931.

32. F.R.(2) April, 1931, H/P, F.18/4/1931.

33. F.R.(1) May, 1931, H/P, F.18/5/1931.

given to liquor picketing and also because of scarcity of funds. Still instances of picketing were not lacking and it was intact in Ellore in West Godavari district and in other areas of Andhra Desh in the first half of the June.<sup>34</sup> Sometimes confrontations between picketers and shop-keepers also occurred and the District Magistrate issued orders restricting the scope of picketing at Chirala in Guntur, Tanjore and Coimbatore districts.<sup>35</sup> In July the picketing of foreign cloth in Madras city was abandoned temporarily in favour of liquor picketing. Despite the shortage of resources, it continued in Tinnevelly, West Godavari, Vellore and North Arcot districts.<sup>36</sup> During the first half of August the picketing was directed against the liquor shops. In Alleppey in Travancore state the activities of the Congress in regard to foreign cloth picketing had been going incessantly.<sup>37</sup>

From the month of September 1931, the picketing of foreign cloth began to lose its vigour and intensity because now the attention of Congress leaders and volunteers shifted towards the agitation against the Resettlement Order and to

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34. F.R. (1), June, 1931, H/P, F.18/6/1931.

35. F.R. (2), June, 1931, H/P, F.1/6/1931.

36. F.R. (2), July, 1931, H/P, F.1/7/1931.

37. F.R. (1), August, 1931, H/P, F.18/8/1931.

liquor picketing.<sup>38</sup> Yet the picketing continued intermittently during the month of October and got some fillip in the first half of November during the Deepavali festival.<sup>39</sup> Thus it is apparent that the picketing of foreign cloth continued more or less in the whole of the Presidency throughout the truce period and at several places it was even more intensive than during the first phase of Civil Disobedience Movement.

#### IV

##### Picketing of Liquor Shops

Picketing of liquor shops started in Madras presidency in a low key but later gathered momentum. In the first half of April it was on small scale, with one example of aggressiveness in Tinnevely where a drunkard was obstructed by two volunteers.<sup>40</sup> In the second half of the same month it was marked in West Godavari and Malabar while in Nellore district the summer vacation provided a number of school boys for liquor picketing. During the month of May peaceful picketing of toddy shops started at Tiruttani and by the end

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38. F.R.(2), Sept., 1931, H/P, F.18/9/1931.

39. F.R.(2), October, 1931, H/P, F.18/10/1931.

40. F.R.(1), April, 1931, H/P, F.18/4/1931.

of the month sales of liquor stopped and at least one shop was completely closed.<sup>41</sup>

In July the full strength of picketers was directed towards the boycott of liquor shops, and the Congress leaders were keen on these shops being successfully picketed and the renters persuaded to refrain from bidding. Madras Government was puzzled over the fact that the renters too were ready to snatch at the opportunity of getting their shops at reduced rentals and were consenting to the picketing with this end in mind. In Madras city, the picketing of cloth shops was abandoned temporarily in favour of liquor picketing.<sup>42</sup> In the month of August it was at its peak. Picketing of the auction sale of liquor shops was foiled by the imposition of Section 144 in West Godavari and in Kavvur while in Tuticorin picketers were caned by the police.<sup>43</sup> In the second half of the same month, picketing on the whole was peaceful but there were some sporadic disturbances. At Conjeevaram and Sembian in Chingleput district, and at Kuppam in Chittoor, Section 144 was used to disperse the picketers. Prohibitory orders were also issued on the occa-

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41. H/P, F.30/30.1931 - Complaints Concerning the Picketing and Buycott in Madras Presidency.

42. F.R.(2), July, 1931, H/P, F.18/7/1931.

43. F.R.(1), August, 1931, H/P, F.18/8/1931.

sion of the Ellore and Kavvur toddy auction sales.<sup>44</sup>

To intensify liquor picketing, social boycott was also resorted to in the Tanjore and Salem districts. In this context, C.Rajagopalachari said that the Government could not interfere if a drunkard was declared an out-caste and compelled to pay a fine before being reinstated.<sup>45</sup> In the month of October liquor picketing continued on the same scale with two incidents of aggressiveness in the suburbs of Madura Town. Toddy shops in Salem and North Arcot districts were set on fire.<sup>46</sup> Picketing of liquor continued throughout November as well with sporadic instances in Tanjore, Madura and Guntur districts.<sup>47</sup>

From the above account it is evident that the picketing of liquor shops continued vigorously all over the Madras presidency. Licencees failed to pay the rental for many months and expected receipts fell into arrears. C.Rajagopalachari's letter to Sardar Patel, the President of A.I.C.C., also gives the same impression. It mentions that on the basis of two months' receipts, the Secretariat of the Madras Presidency calculated a deficit of Rs. One crore and a

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44. F.R.(2), August, 1931, H/P, F.18/8/1931.

45. F.R.(1), September, 1931, H/P, F.18/9/1931.

46. F.R.(1), October, 1931, H/P, F.18/10/1931.

47. F.R.(2), November, 1931, H/P, F.18/11/1931.

quarter in the Excise Revenue. In the Presidency as a whole, 3000 out of 9000 toddy shops were still unsold by 24 September 1931. The sales so far held had fetched an annual rental of Rs.50 lakh where as in the previous year the toddy shop rentals amounted to Rs.1.50 crores.<sup>48</sup>

v

Agitation Against the Resettlement of Land Revenue

The Madras Government, following the recommendations of Resettlement Officer, decided to enhance the rates of rent and revenue in the Kistna, and in the East and West Godavari districts in July 1931.<sup>49</sup> The first objection to this move was expressed in the Legislative Council when an adjournment motion was passed against this.<sup>50</sup> On the advice of the Legislative Council, the Madras Government appointed a representative Enquiry Committee to enquire into the economic facts of the districts concerned and its unanimous verdict was against any increase in the assessment. But the stubborn Madras Government did not budge. Their insistence on increasing the assessment at a time when the abnormal

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48. C.Rajagopalacharies letter to Sardar Patel, dated 29.9.1931, in H/P, F.33/30/1931.

49. F.R.(2), July, 1931, H/P, F.18/7/1931.

50. F.R.(1), August, 1931, H/P, F.18/8/1931.



fall in agricultural prices had already made the conditions of agriculturists miserable, led to a situation of confrontation.

The ryots in these districts started holding meetings and conferences requesting the Local Government not to enhance the rates of revenue. In West Godavari alone 30 conferences and hundreds of meetings were held in which people from all shades of opinion participated and resolutions condemning the enhancement of assessment were passed.<sup>51</sup> The Congress leaders identifying themselves with the grievances took a very active part in the agitation against the enhancement in West Godavari district. A.P.C.C. and D.C.C.s. of the three districts also passed resolutions protesting against the enhancement. In these districts Ryots Associations and Ryot Sangams were formed.<sup>52</sup> Local Congress leaders took part in these Ryots Associations and the professed idea of these activities was to influence the Government to alter its decision by the presentation of monster mass petitions. The Government, however, feared that

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51. Ibid.

52. F.R. (1), September, 1931, H/P, F.18/9/1931.

the promoters of these associations had in their mind the utilization of these organisations for a no-tax campaign.<sup>53</sup>

But neither the Government's statement that the enhancement would be gradual nor its promise to consider the economic depression prevailing in the areas before they levy the first anna in next December satisfied the ryots or the Congress who wanted the Government to give up the enhancement altogether.<sup>54</sup>

The Madras Government not only announced the enhancement of land revenue but also did its best to convince by its propaganda that there was a section among ryots who supported the new settlement. For this the Government authorities started a counter propaganda (against the Congress) to create public opinion in favour of the new enhanced rates. Mr. Venkatraman Rao Naidu, Deputy Collector of Ellore, called a meeting of his subordinates on October 13 and told them that Rao Bahadur Ganja Garu would convene a public meeting on 18 October 1931 in the Y.M.H.A. Hall at Ellore to organise a District Peoples Party for the exposition of truth about the Resettlement.<sup>55</sup> Mr. Naidu also began

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53. F.R.(1), October, 1931, H/P, F.18/10/1931.

54. H/P, F.33/45/1931. Congress Activities in Districts of Madras Presidency.

55. Ibid.

visiting the villages accompanied by a police force with a view to set up the Peoples Associations to accept the enhanced rate of revenue. In many places he got signatures of acceptance through official pressure.

On 18 October 1931, in the meeting at Y.M.H.A. Hall where some Congressmen were also present, Mr. Venkatraman Naidu (Chairman) said that some agitators were misrepresenting the fact about the resettlement and the present meeting was concerned to counteract that agitation and to explain the truth. At this Mr. D. Navin Raju (Congressman) asked whether those who believe that the enhancement was unjust would also speak. The President (Mr. Naidu) of the meeting denied that and further said that some propagandists were also preaching to the ryots not to pay the taxes. This was opposed by D. Narain Raju, Bapineedu, Pattabhi Sitaramayya and many others. Upon this the President, Mr. Naidu, declared that the Congressmen constituted as unlawful assembly. And when they continued their protest against the President's statement, they were called one by one and arrested.<sup>56</sup>

Venkatraman Naidu's action in presiding over the meeting and suddenly converting himself into the Magistrate to

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56. Ibid.

get such prominent leaders arrested on such trivial grounds was simply meant to frighten the people. This was also evident from the District Magistrate, Mr. Subhash Naidu's statement on the next day:

See what will be the fate of those who oppose us. They will be arrested by the police. Do not be afraid. I am behind you. You carry on the work of Peoples Party. Let these fellows preach non-payment of tax. You can with your pay purchase ten acres of land each. I shall get Mohammedans from Punjab to purchase those fellows' land.<sup>57</sup>

The resettlement proposals of the Madras Government had been a smouldering issue throughout the period 1928-31. Even though the issue did not develop into a no-tax movement, there was considerable propaganda by the local Congressmen against the enhanced land taxes. For instance, "when the Civil Disobedience movement (1930) was at its height", it was reported in the Government sources that, "there was much open talk about the non-payment of taxes in the Andhra districts, when volunteers toured about the villages inciting the ryots to withhold his revenue. There was, however, no organised campaign".<sup>58</sup> But this propaganda acquired a

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57. ibid.

58. Notes on the Political Situation in the Madras Presidency in 1930 by c.B.Cunningham, I.G.P., Madras, in G.O.M., pub. (Gen.) Dept., G.O.Nos.215-216, March 2, 1931, p.91, quoted in Atluri Murali op.cit., p.714.

somewhat sharper tone with the announcement of the implementation of the new settlement rates from 1 July 1931 and developed into an organised movement with people like N.G.Ranga taking up the leadership, who had till then, despite his strong "nationalistic views", not given expression to them beyond contributing a few articles to the newspapers.<sup>59</sup>

There were signs of an emerging peasant movement in the Kistna and Godavari districts right from the beginning of 1931.<sup>60</sup> For instance, as the nationalist press highlighted, the Government's decision to implement enhanced land revenue taxes at a time when prices of paddy "had fallen from Rs.70 or 80 to Rs.30 per candy", had its impact on the peasant movement in Andhra.<sup>61</sup> The A.P.C.C., apprehending the fact that the implementation of new enhanced rates of tax might create an alarm among the people and thus breach the provisions of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, pleaded for not enhancing the taxes at least on that ground. However, the Government did not heed their appeals. The Andhra

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59. A C.I.D. Report on N.G.Ranga's anti-Govt. and Civil Disobedience Activities, S.F.No.735, dated May 14, 1931, in HFM-CDM, B.No.66, p.621, quoted in Atluri Murali, op.cit., p.715.

60. Kistna Patrika, 25 April, 1931, quoted in Atluri Murali, op.cit., p.715.

61. Stoddart, Brian. pp.121-22.

leaders Konda Venkatappayya, Kashinadhuni Nageswar Rao, etc. then went to Bombay to consult Gandhi but the latter (Gandhi) advised them not to take up any no-tax movement officially on behalf of the Congress.<sup>62</sup> This ambiguity in Congress policy gave scope to the local level Congress leadership with their peasant background and strong social and economic roots in land in the rural Andhra to intervene and channalise the peasant discontent into a legal form of action, different from a direct no-tax campaign.

From June 1931 onwards, serious efforts were made by local Congressmen to link up problems arising out of economic distress and the enhanced rates and build up the peasant movement. The peasant movement took off the ground with the organisation of the first Andhra Peasant-Protection Conference at Tenali on June 5, 1931 under the presidentship of Gudduvalli Ramabrahman, whom N.G.Ranga has described as "an ardent Congressman and an enthusiast of the peasant movement".<sup>63</sup> This conference was held specially for the ryots of Kistna and Guntur districts. It was here for the first time that the "demand for a moratorium on all agricultural debts" was put forward. This soon

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62. The Hindu, June 20-28, July 18, 1931, quoted in Atluri Murali, op.cit., p.716.

63. Ranga, N.G., Autobiography, op.cit., p.135. Kistna Patrika, June 6-13, 1931, quoted in Murali, p.717.

became a very popular and powerful demand all over the Madras Presidency.<sup>64</sup> To quote N.G.Ranga:

"This conference at Tenali was followed by many district and Taluq Ryots conferences all over Andhra, led by me and many others of the Kisan minded Congressmen or the politically conscious Kisans who began to line up with me. Thus spread that peasants protection movement of 1931. The new word moratorium gained currency and the whole of the countryside began to wake up".<sup>65</sup>

Simultaneously, N.G. Ranga, Gottipati Brahmaiah of Divi, Darolu Narayan Raju of West Godavari district, V.Satyanarayana and V.Kameswara Rao of East Godavari, and many others took up the resettlement issue in the delta districts of Andhra. A series of village and taluq ryot meetings were organised. Ryots volunteers were enrolled and new village Kisan Committees were formed. "A few of those followers of Gandhi who had taken part in Bardoli Kisan Satyagrah, such as Kaka Kalelkar and Dr.K.C.Kumarappa, were invited to tour (the Kistna, Guntur and Godavari) districts and give their messages". Thus, recalls Ranga, "we prepared the field for starting the No-Tax Satyagrah".<sup>66</sup> At

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64. Ranga, N.G., Autobiography, op.cit., p.135.

65. Ibid. pp.135-6.

66. Ibid., pp.136-7, Kistna Patrika, July 4, 1931, quoted in Ataluri Murali, op.cit., p.719.

Kaikaluru, one ryot conference was held on August 6, 1931, presided over by K.Venkataratnam Chowdary. Here too it was decided to form village ryot committees to protest against the attachment of the peasants' property, for in several villages due to economic depression they could not pay even the old revenue rates.<sup>67</sup>

The growing strength of the peasant organisations and constant political propaganda put the Government on its guard. For as they rightly perceived, "it is necessary to distinguish between constitutional agitation and unconstitutional methods more specially a no-tax campaign, which had been hinted at, if not definitely advocated, by some speakers. It is hardly necessary to emphasize the seriousness of a no-tax campaign; it cuts at the root of the Government".<sup>68</sup> It was this fear which prompted the officials to formulate a strategy : "Any attempt to start a no-tax campaign must be nipped in the bud and there must be no hesitation in taking action promptly."<sup>69</sup>

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67. Kistna Patrika, August 15, 1931, quoted in Atluri Murali, op.cit., p.719.

68. Strictly Confidential, D.O.No.544-S, dated 18 Sept., 1931. Letter from G.T.H.Bracken, G.O.M., in HFM-CDM, B.No.66, pp.489-90. A similar apprehension is also expressed in F.R.(1) Sept., 1931, H/P, F.18/9/1931.

69. Ibid.



Despite the potentiality of a no-tax movement, due to the wrong strategy followed by the peasant leadership the ryots showed, 'no indication .... to take part in a no-tax campaign'<sup>70</sup> at that specific point of time, for the peasant leaders like N.G.Ranga tried to organise the peasantry without reference to the Congress organisation and the Civil Disobedience movement. For instance, in his speech on August 31 at the Ellore Taluq Ryot's Conference, he advocated :

The Government has viciously resolved to impose these taxes. It is necessary that we should protest against the taxes imposed. It is our duty to resort to all kinds of methods. We shall not see whether non-payment of taxes are constitutional or not ... we must declare war after trying all peaceful methods. I believe there will be the need for non-payment of taxes. Unless we resort to this, the Government will not yield.<sup>71</sup>

But interestingly, the methods he advocated before embarking on any non-tax campaign were those of a constitutional fight from within the Legislative Council and petitions, the two forms which had failed earlier. He also

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70. Fortnightly Report, dt. FSG, 3rd Oct., 1931, pp.4-19, quoted in Atluri Murali, op.cit., p.720.

71. N.G.Ranga's speech was recorded and translated by a C.I.D., Special Branch and the extracts are reproduced in H.F.M.-CDM, B.No.66, p.628. See also resolutions of Standing Committee of Andhra Provincial Ryots Associations held at Madras on August 2, 1931.

advocated at Edupugallu, Bezwada taluq, Kistna district on September 2, 1931 that the "ryots should resist the resolution of the Government and question the Government. The ryots would succeed if they insist upon a fresh enquiry .... What we should ask the Government is this. Arrange an impartial enquiry or cancel' the 3 annas enhancement, otherwise we must tell the Government definitely that we shall not pay the enhanced tax. If we do not do this our sons and grandsons will decry".<sup>72</sup>

This attempt of Ranga, at a time when the official sanction of A.P.C.C. was not forthcoming, might have developed the peasant organisation but did not produce any substantial movement, for an 'agitation for a no-tax campaign in the Godavari and Kistna was at the time no part of the official Congress programme'.<sup>73</sup> Despite these constraints, the local Congressmen were active in taking part in the organisation of ryot's associations in their bid to influence the Government by the presentation of monster mass petitions.<sup>74</sup> Accordingly in November a hartal was organised

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72. Ibid., p.628.

73. F.R.(1), October, 1931, H/P, F.18/10/1931.

74. Ibid.

and mass petitions were presented to the Government. To quote :

Resettlement agitation in the Godavari and Kistna districts was mainly directed during the fortnight (2nd half of October) towards organising a hartal on November 1st and the presentation of mass petitions to the Government on that date. In East Godavari the speeches delivered at ryots' conferences have become more restrained, their purport being that the ryots can not pay the enhanced rates and must do their best to convince the Government of this. Similarly in the Kistna district where ryots associations are still being formed, resolutions were passed requesting the Government not to levy the resettlement rates. In west Godavari the main activity .... has been to protest against the counter-propaganda launched by the local authorities, described by the supporters of Congress for no very clear reason as 'unconstitutional'.<sup>75</sup>

There were serious factors which might have influenced the leaders to go for a non-agitational form of protests. From mid 1931, there were grain lootings in the villages by the labouring classes. For instance, in September it was reported by the Madras Government that :

The situation is aggravated by the prevailing economic depression and the shortage of money. The labouring classes, comprising mainly of "depressed", are in many cases hard put to it to keep themselves until the next harvest. On September 14 a granary at Kalidindi was looted and when the next day a party of

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75. F.R.(2), October, 1931, H/P, F.18/10/1931, 1st November was observed as 'Re-settlement Day' to protest against the enhanced rates.

police headed by an inspector went to investigate, they were surprised, attacked and routed by a number of Adi-Andhras.<sup>76</sup>

Similarly in a village in neighbouring district of Guntur a mob of about a thousand Adi-Andhras looted two granaries and removed about 250 bags of paddy ... the police opened fire when attacked by the mob, killing one and seriously injuring two of the rioters.<sup>77</sup> There are many more instances of such occurrences indicating grave rural tension.

Atluri Murali in his thesis has expressed the view that because of the rural tension expressed in the form of grain looting the local leadership did not take up the no-tax campaign.<sup>78</sup> But at present stage of my research, with the limited data and information available to me I am not in a position to say clearly why the local leadership did not launch the campaign. It could be that the local leadership did not want to break the truce or that they were still preparing for the campaign when the repression came. Yet one noteworthy feature was the mushroom growth of the peasant organisations all over the districts. It was at

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76. F.R.(1) September, 1931, H/P, F.18/9/1931.

77. F.R.(2), September, 1931, H/P, F.18/9/1931.

78. Mual, Atluri, op.cit., p.714.

this juncture, fearing the eventuality of a militant no-tax campaign which "would cut at the root of the Government", that the Government resorted to repressive measures in November 1931. All the peasant leaders were arrested. Duggirala Balarama Krishnayya was arrested at a meeting in Gudivada attended by 300 ryots. N.G.Ranga, Dandu Narayana Raju, Lakkaraju Subha Rao, Bapineedu and others were also put behind bars.<sup>79</sup> There were widespread protests against the arrest of the leaders.<sup>80</sup> With the resuming of Civil Disobedience movement by Gandhi on January 4, 1932, these protests were structured into the general political movement.

## VI

### Repression by the Government during the Period of the Truce

To check Congress activities, the Madras Government and its authorities promulgated prohibitory orders and bans to stop meeting, procession and the hoisting of flags. First in this context was the instruction of Brakenburry, the

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79. Fortnightly Report, dated Nov.18, 1931, No. p.4-23, Pub.(Gen.), p.93, for detail see Kistna Patrika, November 18, 1931, quoted in Atluri Murali, op.cit., p.724.

80. Ibid., By November it was reported that in East Kistna district alone there were 160 village ryot committees with 10,000 membership.

District Magistrate of Chittoor district to all village officials on 22 August 1931.

The instruction is quoted at length here:

It is published in the newspaper that the pact between Gandhi and the Government has been broken. You must hereafter consider that the Congressmen are the enemies of the Government. Every action of theirs namely meeting, procession, propaganda etc. must be put down without being carried in the least. Severe actions will be taken against the village officers who are negligent in this matter.<sup>81</sup>

Similarly, on 28 August 1931, an order under section 144 of I.P.C. was served on the President and the General Secretary of the Taluq Congress Committee, Tiruttani, prohibiting public meetings, processions and demonstrations.<sup>82</sup> The Sub-Magistrate of Kuppam, R.N. Naidu, asserting that a fundamental principal of the Congress was that it must be recognized as an intermediary between the Government and the people and that the display of the National Flag was part of this aim, issued prohibitory orders on 27 August 1931 directing Sundarajan of Cheminayani Pallar and all other supporters and adherents of the Congress party and volunteers to abstain from holding,

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81. Instruction of District Magistrate, Chittoor, to all village Officials in H/P, F.33/30/1931.

82. A.I.C.C., F.32/1931, H/P, F.33/30/1931.

organising or attending any such function within the revenue jurisdiction of Kangundi Taluq of Chittoor district and to abstain within the same from displaying at any public place any so called National Flag or emblem except the Union Jack for a period of 15 days from that date.<sup>83</sup>

There are a lot of other examples to show that the Madras Government prohibited and prevented Congress activities. For instance, Swaminarayananda Saraswati, a member of A.P.C.C. and A.P.W.C., launched a volunteer camp for picketing Akhabari shop at Kurnool where the drink habit was rampant. As illicit sale of liquor were going on at unlicensed places, particularly at the prostitutes' houses, he organised the picketing there as well. He was issued prohibitory orders under Section 144 of I.P.C. by the S.D.M. Kurnool on 16 November 1931.<sup>84</sup> He sought advice from A.P.C.C. whether he could disobey the order, but the General Secretary wired him not to disobey until A.P.W.C. meets and decides the issue. He did not disobey but, as some volunteers continued to picket, he was prosecuted under Section 188, I.P.C. for disobeying the order. Again, on 28

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83. H/P, F. 33/30/1931.

84. H/P, F.33/45/1931, in the article 7 of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact the place of picketing was not confined to the shops alone.

November 1931, the S.D.M. issued a prohibitory order against Swami and the volunteers under Section 144 in Kurnool and Nandikotukus.<sup>85</sup>

## VII

### The Issue of Breaches of the Pact

There were complaints and counter-complaints over the non-observance of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. The Government alleged that the Congress were violating the pact. But the Congress too accused the Government of breaching the provisions of the pact. We will first discuss the charges made by the Government.

The Government argued that the Pact did not give any concession in the matter of picketing but merely permitted it within the limit of ordinary law, a position which did not require the special sanction of the Government either in the form of a pact or otherwise. This position, therefore, secured as it was by the ordinary law, existed as much before the C.D.M. began. In fact, however, the picketing was much more intensively practised than it was in 1929.<sup>86</sup> The Government claimed that this showed that there

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85. Ibid.

86. H/P, F.33/30/1931. Complains Concerning Picketing and Boycott in Madras Presidency.



was an element of temperance reform in the picketing of liquor shops and an element of economic ambition in foreign cloth picketing but that both aspects of picketing still had a political momentum, if not a political motive, particularly so far as the High Command was concerned. Most of the Government's complaints purported to the incidence of violence or aggressiveness in connection with the picketing. Some of them were as mentioned below.

In Anantpur renters complained to the District Magistrate that though the volunteers were peaceful, rowdies of the town helped them by obstructing customers, breaking toddy bottles and pots.<sup>87</sup> In Chittoor district, people complained that the picketers molested the visitors to liquor shops by catching hold of their hands and feet. An order under Section 144 prohibiting the picketing was issued but later cancelled. Similar kinds of complaints involving physical obstruction to customers were also reported from North Arcot, Coimbatore, West Godavari, South Kanara, Coonoor, Salem and Tanjore districts.<sup>88</sup> In Guntur district at Chirala, volunteers are said to have obstructed a cart carrying bales of foreign cloth. There was also a counter

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87. Ibid.

88. Ibid.

complaint of insult, abuse and violence against the merchants by the volunteers.

After the complaint that the picketers were becoming aggressive at Vizagapatam and Vijayanagaram, the District Magistrate called local Congress leader who agreed to take steps to ensure that the picketing was more peaceful.<sup>89</sup>

Thus we see that the most of the Government complaints against the Congress over the breaches of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact related to the incidence of physical obstruction, assault of drunkards and very rarely in violence. Almost all of them occurred in connection with picketing of foreign cloths and liquor shops. The Congress, too, had its complaints against the British Government and some of these concerned picketing. We shall now turn our attention to the Congress complaints.

### Congress Complaints

#### A. Interference in the Picketing of Auction Sale :

Members of Tanjore Bar Congress office were ordered out of Taluq office compound on 6 August 1931 when they were there at the time of the auction sale. Prohibitory orders were also issued in Shigali Taluq office on 8 August and at Conjeevaram on 13 August prohibiting the picketing of auc-

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89. Ibid.

tion sale.<sup>90</sup> This was a breach of the provisions of the Pact as it had provided for peaceful picketing.

B. Interference with the Picketing

The police had seized umbrella, tiffin carriers and canvas-shades from volunteers picketing at Koilpatti in Tinnevely district.<sup>91</sup> At Tuticorin they objected to putting on a bright light by the volunteers during the dark hour at the time of picketing.

In Tanjore district, the police official imposed an arbitrary rule of 100 yard distance from the toddy shop for the volunteers intending the picketing.<sup>92</sup> The Number of volunteers was also questioned. The picketers were compelled to give their names to the police prior to the picketing works. Even the citizens of Koilpatti in Tinnevely district who supported the picketing in their town were not spared and were charged with nuisance cases.<sup>93</sup> Sometimes volunteers while returning after the picketing work were arrested,

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90. H/P F.33/30/1931, Complaints Concerning Picketing and Boycott in Madras Presidency.

91. A.I.C.C. F.G.-140 (KW II)/1931.

92. H/P F.33/30/1931, Complaints Concerning Picketing and Boycott in Madras Presidency.

93. AIIC, F.G-152/1931, Picketing File, also in AICC F.53/1931.

taken to the Magistrate and sentenced without giving time for defence to the accused.<sup>94</sup>

C. Ban on the Congress

To curb the Congress activities, several Magistrates in Madras Presidency issued orders under Section 144 directing specific individuals and adherents of the Congress to abstain from holding meeting, procession and hoisting of the Congress flags. Order served on the Presidents of Kalahasti Talug Congress Committee and Narayanavaram Talug Congress Committee, both in Chittoor district may be cited as a few examples.<sup>95</sup> In Tinnevelly district, a Sub-Inspector is reported to have said on 27 September, 1931:

Congress meetings are unlawful, people are prohibited from giving food or lodging and grain or other articles to Congressmen. No one should attend the meeting at which they make speeches. All persons disobeying this will have to incur penalties and troubles.<sup>96</sup>

Orders prohibiting the hoisting of the National Flag were issued on the ground that the Congress had claimed to be the intermediary between the people and the Government.

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94. H/P F.33/30/1931, Complaints Concerning Picketing and Boycott in Madras Presidency.

95. AICC, F.33/1931, Breaches of Truce After the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

96. H/P F.33/30/1931. Complaints Concerning Picketing and Boycott in Madras Presidency.

In many cases the hoisting of National Flag was interfered with without any prohibitory orders. The Government justified these orders on the ground that the hoisting of the National Flag at the Congress meeting put illegitimate pressure.

D. Village Officials

Although the Pact provided that all the Government employees who resigned during Civil Disobedience movement would be leniently treated and reinstated to their jobs, if the posts were not filled permanently, but the following cases display contrast.

- i. Mr. Arunachal Mudaliar, a village official resigned from his post to join the Civil Disobedience movement. He was released under truce but when he applied for reinstatement he wasn't.<sup>97</sup>
- ii. Nagalingam Pillai, made to resign for his Rs. 5 donation to Salt Satyagraha, was not reinstated. If participation in Civil Disobedience movement was to be excused, a case like this, might have been reinstated. Similarly Sivanantraaj also was not reinstated.<sup>98</sup>

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97. AICC, F.4/1931, Maxwell-Gandhi Correspondence, U.P. Agrarian Situation, Liquor Picketing etc.

98. Ibid.

iii. R. Ramaswami Iyengar, an Amin of court of a Subordinate Judge of Kumbhkonom, was dismissed on the ground that he participated in serving water and light refreshment to Satyagrahis, his restoration was refused on the ground that he did not resign but was dismissed.<sup>99</sup>

iv. Thyagraj Thevar of Panel (Tanjore) was debarred as permanently disqualified for village Karnam's post on the ground that he sold his 14 cent worth of land to another man who used it as a camp for Salt Satyagrahis.<sup>100</sup>

#### E. Pension Issues

Sir Jogannath Pauthak's case: the pension of this Deputy Tahsildar was withheld on the ground that his son had connection with Civil Disobedience movement. After the pact the pension was restored, but for some unexplained reasons the amount due from January 16 to May 19, 1931, the period from cancellation order until restoration has not been paid.

#### F. Release of Prisoners

i. Senda Mangalam Case:- In this case 19 persons were convicted under Section 143 I.P.C. for a mere anti-drink village assembly in Salem district. Assembly

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99. Ibid.

100. Ibid.

was peaceful with no riot or force. The Provincial Government refused to consider the case for release.<sup>101</sup>

ii. Bodinayaknur Case :- In Madura district, 11 out of 13 prisoners were only convicted of stone throwing by unidentified person from a large crowd. All boys of 20 years or under; were refused to be released.<sup>102</sup>

iii. Komarapalayam Case : (In Salem District) In this case 25 men were convicted on the basis of joint liability of an unlawful assembly and stone-throwing Although they had already spent one year in prison. Amnesty in this case too was refused.<sup>103</sup>

#### G. Salt Concession

In respect of Salt Clause while the privilege was already limited by the prohibition of conveyance by carts or otherwise, an additional arbitrary limitation was sought to be made in the Salt tracts of Madras Presidency. A five mile radius was insisted upon even though the villagers were walking and taking salt without using any cart.<sup>104</sup> The original Settlement contained no provision to

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101. Ibid.

102. Ibid.

103. Ibid.

104. Complaints made by C.Rajagopalachi, President of T.N.P.C.C. in H/P, F.3/3/1931.

exclude carts but it was introduced later as a concrete method of defining the word 'adjoining'. A further limitation of distance was, therefore, unjustifiable.

## VIII

### Resumption of Civil Disobedience Movement

By the end of November it was apparent to the Congressmen that they would have to resume the Civil Disobedience movement in the very near future. The unrest among the peasantry in U.P. and the Government's failure to order more rent and revenue remission, and failure of IInd Round Table Conference further strengthened this feeling. Meanwhile, preparations for the resumption of Civil Disobedience movement were going on incessantly. K.F. Nariman, addressing a Youth Conference at Tiruppur, accused the Government of having deliberately broken the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.<sup>105</sup> Several other Congress meetings were held welcoming Gandhi back and protesting against the New Ordinances which were considered to be a portent of the future repressive policy of the Government. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya had been touring South India recruiting on behalf of Women Seva Dal and urging her audience to be ready for the resumption of Civil Disobedi-

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105. F.R. (2), December, 1931, H/P, F.10/2/1931.



ence movement.<sup>106</sup> In Kistna district secret meetings were being held by the Congress Committees and Ryot Sangam Committees at which preparations for a 'no-tax campaign' were discussed.<sup>107</sup> A Sibiram intended to be the headquarters of the campaign was opened at a village near Bezawada.<sup>108</sup> A new training camp at Chirala in Guntur District and another in South Kanara were organised for the volunteers of the Seva Dal. C.Rajagopalachari and Satyamurthi had been touring through several districts exhorting people to be prepared to begin the struggle if Gandhi desired it. The return of Mahatma Gandhi from the second Round Table Conference, promulgation of new ordinances by the British Government, the arrest of Nehru, Sherwani and other prominent leaders, the Viceroy's refusal to discuss the promulgation of new ordinances with Mahatma Gandhi which led to the resumption of Civil Disobedience movement by the National Congress, have already been described in Chapter I.<sup>109</sup>

### Conclusion

Although the National Congress had called off the Civil Disobedience movement under the provisions of the Gandhi-

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106. F.R.(1), December, 1931, H/P, F.18/12/1931.

107. F.R.(2) December, 1931, H/P, F.18/12/1931.

108. Ibid.

109. See Chapter one of this Dissertation specially pp.

Irwin Pact, it was not inactive during the truce period. The Congress was infact taking up peasant grievances and building up peasant resistance in whatever way it could within the limits imposed by the provisions of the Pact. This we saw in the case of Ryot's Association and Ryot Sangam Committee in Kristna, East and West Godavari districts of the Presidency where the Local Government had ordered the Resettlement enhancing the amount of rent and revenue.

Congress also strengthened its organisation and party machinery, extended the political activities in the Princely State of Travancore and other areas where it was previously either absent or not so prevalent. So the Congress utilized the truce period for the preparation of the next round of struggle. As regards the picketing, it was accepted by the British authorities and also borne out by the facts that the picketing both of foreign cloth and liquor shops was more intensive and effective during the truce period than during the first active phase of Civil Disobedience Movement.

So far as the alleged breaches of the Pact is concerned, it is clear that the most of the Government complaints against the Congress were related to physical obstruction or violence in the picketing but looking at the Congress complaints against the Government one can easily see that the Congress had far more to complain about as

regards breaches of the Pact, but the Government's loud complaints about breaches were because they wanted an excuse to break the Truce which the bureaucracy had never liked.

As regards the issue of the betrayal of peasantry or of restraining them from struggle, I do not find any reference in my primary sources so far as the political activities of the Congress during truce period in Madras Presidency is concerned. Rather it would appear that the Congress was organising peasants and tenants in Kistna, East and West Godavari districts of the Presidency against the resettlement of rent and revenue. It prepared the ground for a 'no-tax campaign' in these districts. With the resumption of Civil Disobedience movement by Mahatma Gandhi on January 4, 1932, these protests and resistance against the resettlement were structured into the general political movement.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**BOMBAY PRESIDENCY**

In the year 1931, Bombay Presidency included in its territory not only the Bombay metropolitan area but also Gujarat, Maharashtra, Sindh and Karachi. In the first phase of the Civil Disobedience Movement - the metropolitan Bombay remained the principle centre, where Gandhi caps filled the streets and volunteers in uniforms were posted for picketing with the same regularity and orderliness as police constables; and massive processions were brushing aside the ordinary functions of the police control of traffic.<sup>1</sup> In Maharashtra, Sholapur was the storm centre where textile workers went on strike on May 7, against the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi, attacked all symbols of the Government authority and established a virtual parallel Government in the city<sup>2</sup> which could only be dislodged with the imposition of martial law after May 16, 1938.<sup>3</sup>

But the most dramatic occurrence that stole the show of Civil Disobedience Movement was the non-violent heroism at Dharasana on the Bombay coast on May 21, 1930. Here a band of 2000 Satyagrahis with Sarojini Naidu, Imam Saheb, and Gandhi's son Manilal in the front rank, faced the most

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1. Sarkar, Sumit, Modern India, Macmillan, Delhi, 1983, pp.296-97.

2. Ibid., p.288.

3. Chandra, Bipan, et.al., India's Struggle for Independence, Penguin, New Delhi, 1989, p.274.

brutal police repression.<sup>4</sup> The significant mode of protest was that if one column of non-resisting Satyagrahis fell down in facing the police assault, the injured would be replaced by another column. It is said that no one raised a hand in defence and by 11 A.M. the toll was 320 injured and two dead.<sup>5</sup> In the words of Webb Miller, an American journalist:

In eighteen years of my reporting in twenty countries, during which I have witnessed innumerable civil disobedience riots, street fights and rebellions, I have never witnessed such harrowing scenes as at Dharasana.<sup>6</sup>

In Gujarat, the villagers in Bardoli taluq of Surat district, in Jambusar of Broach district and also in Kheda district refused to pay the land revenue demand as part of a no-tax movement.<sup>7</sup> Due to police atrocities thousands of villagers left their homes and took shelter in the neighbouring princely state of Baroda. The police did not spare even Vallabhbhai Patel's eighty year old mother, who sat cooking in her house in Karamsad; her cooking utensils were

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4. Ibid., pp.274-75.

5. Ibid., p.275.

6. Tendulkar, D.G., Mahatma, Vol.3, Publication Divisions, Govt. of India, New Delhi, 1951, p.41.

7. Chandra, Bipan, et.al., op.cit., p.277.

kicked about and filled with kerosene and stone.<sup>8</sup>

With this brief overview of Congress activities in the first phase of Civil Disobedience in Bombay Presidency, we now move on to the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. We first try to find out what was the general reaction to the Pact and then take up the question of what was actually happening at the grass-roots level during the truce period. Did the Nationalists leader observe the Pact in passive manner or were they active in strengthening their organisation putting their house in order for the next round of the struggle for the independence? Also, what was the Government's attitude towards the pact and the Congress, and to what extent did it change its earlier policy of repression?

## I

### General Reaction towards the Gandhi-Irwin Pact

In Bombay the general attitude towards the Pact was very satisfactory and many Congressmen and commercial circles heartily approved of the Pact. However, a feeling of dissatisfaction was also noticed in the younger generation and among the extremist in the Congress. Youth of Communists views carried on propaganda against the pact on the ground

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8. Ibid, p.277.

that it did not improve in any way the condition of workers and peasants whose leaders were rotting in the jails.<sup>9</sup> Also there was some disenchantment with the Pact as it did not secure the commutation of death sentence passed on Bhagat Singh and his comrades.

#### Gandhi-Irwin Pact as Truce

Congressmen treated the Pact not as a final settlement but as a truce. They wished to use it as an opportunity to consolidate the Congress position and prepare for the next round of the struggle. This is evident from the letter of Jawaharlal Nehru, the General Secretary of A.I.C.C., to all P.C.C.s, dated April 4, 1931, in which he described the truce as "an opportunity to put the house in order, to keep the groups of trained and disciplined Congress volunteers, to resume the struggle when the time comes".<sup>10</sup> The statements and speeches of Mr. Sardar Patel, President of A.I.C.C., K.F.Nariman, President of B.P.C.C., and those of Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya also corroborate the same. For instance, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, speaking in a public meeting at Esplanade Maidan on March 8, 1931, in response to criticism levelled against the C.W.C., said :

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9. F.R. (1) March, 1931, H/P., F.18/3/1931.

10. Pt. Nehru's letter to all P.C.Cs, dated April 9, 1931, in H/P., F.33/1/1931.



There was nothing wrong in laying down their arms while questions concerning the future constitution of India were being discussed at the IInd R.T.C. The fact that the truce overtures were made by the Government showed that they had realized the force behind the Congress movement. If they could carry on discussion without loss of dignity, it would not be right to make the people suffer unnecessarily. The Congress had accepted the idea of Federation as it would tend to unite British India and Indian States.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, K.F. Nariman said during the National Week (6-12 April) that, "although they had differences of opinion about the result of the negotiations which Mr. Gandhi was carrying on, their duty was not to swerve from the straight path but to keep up the war mentality so that if necessary they should be able to start the fight with redoubled vigour".<sup>12</sup> Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya said that 'the Truce placed them in a better position as the 'legitimate right of the people to picket foreign cloth and driving out the drink evils had been secured under the truce term and if the picketing of these two things are peacefully and effectively carried out the truce would soon be translated into triumph'.<sup>13</sup>

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11. F.R. (1) March, 1931, H/P., F. 18/3/1931.

12. F.R. (1) April, 1931, H/P., F.18/4/1931.

13. The Bombay Chronicle, June 15, 1931.

## II

### Congress Organisation and Extension of Political Activities

The Congress used the truce period to consolidate its position and to extend its party machinery. At Borivli near Bombay, Seva Dal Camp and Officers' Training Camps were opened on 3rd and 10th of May to train and educate Congress volunteers and youth to carry out the Congress work methodically.<sup>14</sup> Here the course of the training included physical exercise, infantry drill, methods of village organisation and propaganda, ideals and methods of work of Hindustani Seva Dal, etc. 55 candidates from various provinces were taking part in the training programme. In a meeting of A.I.C.C. held in the first half of July at Gandhi Bhuvan (Bombay), The Hindustani Seva Dal was recognised as the Central Volunteers Organisation of the Congress.<sup>15</sup> Congress Working Committee in its meeting at Gujarat during 8-11 September decided to form a Seva Dal for women and Mrs. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya was appointed its Central Organiser pending the appointment of a Central Women's Council.<sup>16</sup> She was also entrusted to organise a Central Women's Camp at

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14. F.R. (1), May, 1931, H/P, F.18/5/1931.

15. F.R. (1) July, 1931, H/P, F. 18/7/1931.

16. F.R. (1) Sept., 1931, H/P, F.18/9/1931.

Hubli to train 10-15 women instructors from all provinces for a period of 4 months at a cost of Rs.1000.<sup>17</sup> A Congress Democratic Party, representing the minority in the Congress was established at Karachi with the aim of democratizing the Congress organisation and to undertake a scheme of village reconstruction.<sup>18</sup> These examples show that during the truce period, the Congress was striving to strengthen its organisation so that when the time came it could launch its struggle with more strength and vigour.

#### Prabhat-Pheries and Other Activities of Hindustani Seva Dal

Wherever there was a training camp for Congress volunteers, there were morning Prabhat Pheries just as in the first phase of Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-31). For example, Volunteers of Hindustani Seva Dal Camps held at Borivli near Bombay went on Prabhat Pheries on May 11 and sang the National Song prescribed for them.<sup>19</sup> Gandhi was also informed about the activities of Hindustani Seva Dal (HSD) camp and the nuisance caused to the public by the revival of Prabhat Pheries.<sup>20</sup> The P.C.C.s of the Bombay Presidency asked the Provincial Seva Dal to have a minimum

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17. F.R. (1) Oct., 1931, H/P, F.18/10/1931.

18. F.R. (2) July, 1931, H/P, F.18/7/1931.

19. F.R. (1) May, 1931, H/P, F.18/5/1931.

20. F.R. (2) May, 1931, H/P, F.18/5/1931.

of 6000 trained and certified Sainiks (Congress Volunteers) by the end of December.<sup>21</sup> Of these 6000, Bombay and Karnataka were to have 500 each, Maharashtra 300 and Sindh 100. Several volunteers' camps were opened in the Presidency during the first half of October. In Bombay city there were 8 such camps while in other parts of the Presidency, 16 volunteers at Bijapur, 35 at Balakot and 25 at Golgali camps were being trained. In Belgaum district a lathi class of 12 students at Bail-Hongal was opened. 62 volunteers were getting training in Ahmedabad.<sup>22</sup> The number of volunteers trained by the Hindustani Seva Dal during the three month, from August to October 1931 is shown in the table given below.

Area	Sainiks	Boys/Girls under 18	Women	Total
Bombay	70	100	80	220
Gujarat	63	Nil	35	98
Karnataka	220	125	Nil	345
Maharashtra	37	50	15	102

In Ahmedabad, the first volunteers' training camp came to an end on 7th November when 59 male volunteers out of 66, and 24 female volunteers out of 29, were declared to have

21. F.R. (1) Oct., 1931, H/P, F.18/10/1931.

22. Ibid.

passed the necessary examination.<sup>23</sup> A volunteers' and instructors' camp was also proposed to be opened in Surat district on December 1, 1931.<sup>24</sup>

#### Hoisting of The National Flag

Since there was no provision in the Truce forbidding the hoisting and salutation of the national flag, hence the Congress leaders encouraged the people to hoist the national flag on their houses, Government buildings and public utilities. A Flag Week (April 26-May 3) was observed in Bombay. On one occasion 2000 people gathered and Sarojini Naidu performed the hoisting ceremony,<sup>25</sup> while K.F. Nariman addressed a meeting of 5000 at the Chaupati on April 26 and appealed to the people to hoist the Congress flag on their houses.<sup>26</sup> A film named "Khudkishan", in which salutation of Congress flag was depicted, was banned by the Bombay Board of Film Censors. The B.P.C.C took a very strong note of that and marked that if the Board does not lift the ban, the B.P.C.C. would exhibit not only one film but a number of films showing the National flag and face the consequences

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23. F.R. (1) Nov., 1931, H/P, F.18/11/1931.

24. Ibid.

25. F.R. (2) April, 1931, H/P, F.18/4/1931.

26. Ibid.

and that the Board had no business to dabble in politics.<sup>27</sup> On July 13, 35 Desh Sevikas assisted by K.F. Nariman (himself a member of Municipal Corporation) went to the Municipal Corporation Hall carrying 3 flags and attempted to hoist it. Eventually an amendment to adjourn the question (hoisting of Congress flag on Municipal Corporation) until the R.T.C. had concluded its work was carried by 49 votes against 27. Yet the Desh Sevikas succeeded in hoisting the Congress flags on the municipal flag staff after the meeting, but it was soon removed by the Government.<sup>28</sup> The 'All India Flag Day' was observed on August 30 and on this occasion flag salutation ceremonies were held in different wards, followed in the evening by a procession and a public meeting at Tilak Maidan presided over by K.F. Nariman where the people were told to continue to hoist the national flag and carry out the Congress programmes regardless of what happened at the R.T.C.<sup>29</sup>

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27. The Bombay Chronicle, Bombay, June 18, 1931.

28. F.R. (1) July, 1931, H/P, F.18/7/1931.

29. F.R. (2) Aug., 1931, H/P, F.18/8/1931.

### III

#### Picketing of Foreign Cloth Shops

Since peaceful picketing was allowed under the provisions of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, so the Congress leaders and workers tried to carry it out during the truce period, though the Civil Disobedience Movement (in which picketing was an effective instrument) was withdrawn formally. Picketing of foreign cloth began in a mild form in the beginning of March and involved no physical obstruction of any kind. From March 10 onwards, picketing of foreign cloth shop was carried on by women in Mulji Seth and Mangaldas market. There were also reports of picketing from Sindh and the suburbs of Bombay.<sup>30</sup> In April there was no marked change in the picketing but there were reports that the Desh Sevika Sangha was enrolling new members for the purpose.<sup>31</sup> In Ahmedabad picketers resorted to hunger strike in front of cloth shops and hunger striking was also resolved upon by the Foreign Cloth Boycott Committee in Karachi.<sup>32</sup>

In Poona, the Boycott Committee after sealing the stock of foreign cloth in Bonvi Chowk and Kapalganj in Rawivar-

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30. F.R. (1) March, 1931, H/P, F.18/3/1931.

31. F.R. (2) April, 1931, H/P, F.18/4/1931.

32. F.R. (1) June, 1931, H/P, F. 18/6/1931.

peth, took to picketing the shops of foreign cloth in Budharpeth, the most busy place in the city.<sup>33</sup> In 1930, the dealers in foreign cloth in Poona had declared that they would not order fresh stocks for one year and they had observed this faithfully. In 1931 again the Congress requested them to sign the Congress pledge and as a result of that many of them came forward willingly to sign the pledge and handed over the stock of foreign cloth, if any, with them.<sup>34</sup> However, contrary instances are also available, as in the case of 40 merchants of Dharwar who formed an Association to protest against the Congress pledge campaign and declared a strike on June 23 as a token of that protest. By the end of July, however, the Commissioner of Police reported that there was little improvement in the sale of foreign cloth and only a few orders were being sent to England.<sup>35</sup> In the Northern part of the Presidency in Sindh, picketing continued in Larkana, Nawabganj and Thar Parker districts and the boycott propaganda was carried on vigorously with several instances of inflictions of fines on recalcitrant dealers being reported.<sup>36</sup>

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33. The Bombay Chronicle, July 20, 1931.

34. Ibid.

35. F.R. (2) July, 1931, H/P, F.18/7/1931.

36. Ibid.



Between August and October 1931, picketing of foreign cloth remain on a low key and the focus shifted to the picketing of liquor and toddy shops. From October, the picketing of foreign cloth again picked up momentum and continued till December. Sholapur, Karnataka, Bombay city, Surat and Ahmedabad were some of the centres of intensive activity.<sup>37</sup>

Thus from the above facts and information it is evident that picketing continued throughout the truce period. From March to July it was intensive, from August to September moderate, but from October to December it again resumed its earlier vigour and zeal.

#### IV

##### Picketing of Liquor Shops

Like the picketing of foreign cloth shops, the picketing of liquor and toddy shops also continued during the truce period but it was more extensive and extreme than that of foreign cloth. It started in a moderate way but later on picked up the momentum. By 13 March 37 liquor and toddy

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37. F.R.(2) October, 1931, H/P, F.18/10/1931, F.R. (1) November, 1931, H/P, F.18/11/1931 and F.R.(2) November, 1931, H/P, E.18/11/1931.

shops were being picketed in Bombay city.<sup>38</sup> In April there were scattered instances of violent picketing in Dungri and Dhanori village of Bulsar taluq.<sup>39</sup> In Surat district the police force was used to foil the activities of volunteers picketing liquor shops.<sup>40</sup>

In May, a parallel picketing was also started by the volunteers of the Azad Party on 13th instant in Bombay whose main motive was to blackmail and extract money from the shop-keepers. The B.P.C.C. disowned any connection with the Party and its doings.<sup>41</sup> Picketing in other parts of the Presidency continued on peaceful lines except for some isolated instances in Kanara and Ratnagiri districts.<sup>42</sup> After the party election of B.P.C.C. in May, D.C.Cs were instructed to collect the particulars regarding the number and locations of liquor shops in their respective wards and volunteers were enrolled for the honorary work.<sup>43</sup>

On 29th June the B.P.C.C. under the leadership of K.F.Nariman launched the liquor boycott campaign and 251

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38. F.R. (1) March, 1931, H/P, F.18/3/1931.

39. F.R. (1) April, 1931, H/P, F.18/4/1931.

40. F.R. (2) April, 1931, H/P, F.18/4/1931.

41. F.R. (1) May, 1931, H/P, F. 18/5/1931.

42. F.R. (2) May, 1931, H/P, F.18/5/1931.

43. F.R.(1) June, 1931, H/P, F. 18/6/1931.

volunteers, including the leaders of B.P.C.C., picketed 132 liquor and toddy shops.<sup>44</sup> The Congress instructed the volunteers to picket peacefully and requested shop-keepers to inform the B.P.C.C. if the pickets were in any way rowdy or objectionable. No complaints were received by the police except one in Kolaba where a customer was assaulted.<sup>45</sup> Picketing of liquor-shop was at its peak during the month of July and first half of August. From July 10, there had been 400 volunteers daily and the highest number was reached on 13th July when 459 volunteers picketed 279 liquor shops.<sup>46</sup> 150 toddy shops were closed following the failure of the shop-keepers to renew their licences for the current year.<sup>47</sup>

There was definite change in the character of liquor picketing from September. Picketing continued, but on a low key, till December. Thus we can say that the picketing of liquor shops was moderate from March to July. From July to the first half of September it was at its peak, the climax being between July and the first half of August. From September to December it again became moderate.

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44. F.R.(2) June, 1931, H/P, F.18/6/1931.

45. Ibid.

46. F.R.(1) July, 1931, H/P, F.18/7/1931.

47. F.R.(2) July, 1931, H/P, F.18/7/1931.

Social Boycott of Loyal Officers and Patels

During the first phase of the Civil Disobedience Movement (April 1930 to March 1931) many village officers and Patels had resigned from service and joined the Civil Disobedience Movement. Their posts were filled by temporary and new loyal officers and Patels. But the Government had agreed to reinstate the earlier Patels and officers if their posts were not filled permanently. But it did not reinstate all the Patels and it was seen that loyal Patels appointed temporarily were treated as appointed permanently. And many loyal Patels also purchased the forfeited lands of Khatedars.

The Congress directed that all such people be socially boycotted. The lead was given by Sardar Patel, who told the people of Ras in Kaira district on March 9, 1931, "to see that they must repent, for it, so long as they do not repent, we should not have any connection with them".<sup>48</sup>

Social boycott took various forms. It included denial of the services of the barber and the washerman. Sometimes, the Congress picketeers used to go to the house of the loyal Patel and obstruct the removal of paddy or rice which had

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48. F.R. (1) March, 1931, H/P, F.18/3/1931.

been purchased by him. On another occasion a loyal police Patel took his cotton from gin to gin but no one was ready to process his cotton. This, too, was as a form of social boycott.<sup>49</sup> In Valod Mahal, a Muhammadan who had purchased the confiscated land was boycotted and told that the boycott would continue until he returns the property, apologizes and pays a fine to the Bardoli Ashram. A few Mohammedans paid Rs.5 as fines saying that they were too poor to bear the loss which would fall on them by inevitable refusal of the gin owners to accept their cotton.<sup>50</sup>

During the active phase of Civil Disobedience Movement many of the Khatedars and peasants from Bardoli and Valod Mahal fled to neighbouring princely state to escape the Government oppression. When they came back as a result of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact they found that their crops had suffered and had yielded very meagre produce, hence they were not in a position to pay the land revenue demand. Bardoli Ashram functioned as an intermediary between such hijrati peasants and the Government authorities. Peasants brought their applications here and the Ashram tried to get revenue remission for such peasants.

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49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

Bardoli Ashram also helped organise the social boycott of those who took the post of resigned Mukhis and Patels and those who purchased the confiscated land of Khatedars. At a meeting of Congress leaders held in the Ashram on March 21, 1931, it was decided that the chhavanis or camps should be reopened in the villages and the main activities of the Civil Disobedience campaign should be resumed.<sup>51</sup> It also helped those hijratis who incurred losses as a result of Satyagraha movement. By April 24, 1931, the Ashram had collected Rs.21,000 and a part of this amount was distributed among the Hijratis.<sup>52</sup> By the end of August it had disbursed about Rs.27,000 in the Borsad taluq of Kaira district in Ahmedabad.<sup>53</sup>

## VI

### Revenue Collection Under Government Pressure and Police Atrocities

Provision of Delhi Settlement (16 B) provided that the peasants who were willing to pay revenue demand but were unable to pay would be treated leniently. But the C.W.C.

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51. F.R. (2) March, 1931 H/P, F.18/3/1931.

52. F.R.(2) April, 1931, H/P, F.18/4/1931.

53. F.R.(2) Aug., 1931, H/P, F.18/8/1931.

while in session in Bombay on June 8, came to know that the notices of fines were issued against the peasants of Bardoli who could not pay their revenue demand. Mahadev Desai went to Bardoli and consulted the District Collector who promised to go to Bardoli and make a personal enquiry. Meanwhile, the Mamlatdar of Bardoli accompanied by a police party, raided the villages of Bardoli and Valod Mahal, threatened the farmers to attach their property and exacted the arrears of the revenue.<sup>54</sup>

The District Collector came to Bardoli on 16th July to conduct a personal enquiry, but what he did in the villages was totally different. Some villages were raided by the police party during his engagement in Bardoli, and some in his very presence.<sup>55</sup> The month of July is the peak time for paddy transplanting and peasants were in their fields during day-time. Taking advantage of this situation, the Revenue officers, along with the Police party, raided 16 villages during 16-22 July, misbehaved with the villagers and compelled them to either borrow money or sell their property in order to pay the revenue demand.<sup>56</sup> Police guards were posted

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54. The Bombay Chronicle, July 27, 1931.

55. Ibid.

56. H/P, F.33/39/1931, Bardoli Enquiry: Congress Report.

at the exit of the villages and neither the men nor the cattle were allowed to go out of the villages.<sup>57</sup>

Bombay Chronicle of July 27 reported the police atrocities in the words of Rambhai Jivanji of Varad: "Mamlatdar came in the village on the 8th instant accompanying D.S.P., S.I of police, 22 policemen, Talatis and Vethias. They entered my house in my absence and demanded the arrears from my son Naranji who told that it was not his concern but that of mine and he informed that I was in my field. The Mamlatdar then ordered the talati to call for police and attach my property". This farmer, reports Bombay Chronicle, had paid the revenue to the Government before this happened. "I had paid the total revenue of the current year in the month of May. It was Rs.401 .... I paid that amount also by incurring a debt".<sup>58</sup>

Similarly, in the case of Ismail Saire, of Bardoli, his house was ransacked in his absence, his wife and two daughters scolded, all the belongings were pulled out of house. He also claimed that he had paid the revenue for the current and the last year and that only a small portion of revenue

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57. A.I.C.C., F.32/1931, Correspondence between Patel and Mr.Emerson ---- Atrocities by the Government.

58. The Bombay Chronicle, July 27, 1931, also in A.I.C.C., F.32/1931, Correspondence b/w Patel and Mr. Emerson regarding the Atrocities by the Government. See also H/P, F.33/39/1931, Bardoli Enquiry: Congress Report.



for the year of severe frost was in arrears.<sup>59</sup> But the worst was in Vankaner (22 July) when the Mamlatdar came and in the absence of any male member scolded and threatened an old woman, who mortgaged 3/4 bighas of her land and paid Rs.78.<sup>60</sup> Although the Government later accepted the enquiry for only 11 villages, the Congress insisted that there were 16 villages where the police was used to collect the revenue demand and the Khatedars were compelled either to mortgage their land or to borrow.<sup>61</sup> The following table furnished by Mr. R.G. Gordon, the special Enquiry Officer,<sup>62</sup> itself displays the magnitude of coercion involved, and that too keeping in the mind the fact that the collection of revenue was the duty of the Revenue officer and not that of the police.

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59. The Bombay Chronicle, July 31, 1931.

60. Ibid.

61. H/P, F.33/39/1931, Bardoli Enquiry, Congress Report, and also in A.I.C.C. paper.. F.32/1931 - Correspondence between Mr. Patel and Mr. Emerson Regarding Atrocities by the Government.

62. Ibid. Table includes only 7 villages, remaining 4 were left out to be taken later but then the Congress withdrew from the Enquiry, hence no enquiry and tables regarding the rest 4 villages.

Villages	Revenue Officer	Police Officer	Date of visit
1. Rayam	Mamlatdar	1.D.S.P. 1.S.I. 6.Constable	July 17, 1931
2. Moti Falod	Mamlatdar	5 Constable	July 18, 1931
3. Timberva	Aval Karkun	1.S.I 6.Constable	July 20, 1931
4. Vaghech	Collector Mamlatdar	1.D.S.P. 1.S.I. 5.Constable	July 20, 1931
5. Pardi Khadod	Aval Karkun	1.S.I. 6.Constable	July 21, 1931
6. Khoj	Aval Karkun	1.S.I. 6.Constable	July 21, 1931
7. Bardoli	Aval Karkun	1.S.I. 5.Constable	July 22, 1931

## VII

### Congress Charge Sheet

Congress had published its complaints against the Government over the alleged breaches of the provisions of Delhi Settlement. In response to this the Government also published its answer in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary, on August 24, 1931. There were two Schedules in it. In schedule A were the complaints by Gandni and the Congress which violated the provisions of the Delhi Settlement, while

in Schedule B, there were general complaints which did not violate the provisions of the Delhi Pact but which purported to show that local Governments were pursuing a policy of oppression against Congress and its members. This Gazette contains the complaints from all over British India, but here we will confine ourselves to the complaints and the answers relating to Bombay Presidency alone.

#### Schedule A

- i) The first complaint refers to Government permission to allow the sale of liquor at unlicensed places and at unlicensed hours, thereby defeating the peaceful picketing of the Congress volunteers. The local Government said that this was allowed only in Ahmedabad because there picketing was organised by the labour union, and picketers noted the name of the customers and, having ascertained their place of employment, secure their dismissal, but now the number of extra shop was under reduction. It also said that a return to normal condition would be difficult as long as the picketers' methods include the dismissal of customers detected in the act of purchasing drink.
- ii) In Surat district, the Congress complained, when private parties have withdrawn the complaints against the Congress volunteers, they have been egged to press the

complaints. The Government flatly denied any such case to its knowledge in which the complainants have been induced by the police officers not to withdraw their complaints when they were willing to do.<sup>63</sup>

iii) In Bulsar of Surat district, 5 people were asked to pay fines for having used land for non-agricultural purposes (volunteers camp). Local Government said that in this regard the collector has instructed not to levy the penalty under the Land Revenue Code for unauthorised use of land, but to levy non-agricultural assessment only.<sup>64</sup>

iv) Purchasers of confiscated land intending to reconvey them to the original owners were being dissuaded from doing so by the police authorities in Surat. Local Government in this context at one place says that, it has no information regarding police dissuading the purchasers of confiscated land, while at the same time it admits that it has issued instructions that the Government officers should adopt an entirely neutral attitude in negotiations for the restoration of land, which indicates that the Government officers were dissuading the purchasers from restoring the land.

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63. A.I.C.C., F.53/1931. - Breaches of Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

64. A.I.C.C., F.53/1931, Breaches of Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

- v) Patels and Mukhis in Gujarat appointed for 5 years or until further orders were being treated as permanently appointed. In this case Gandhiji contended that such appointments should be treated as temporary, and men appointed to them dismissed and the former incumbents reinstated under para 19 of the settlement. Local Government said that the appointments "until further order" have only been confirmed where there was definite promise made to the Patel or Mukhi that he would be confirmed if his conduct was satisfactory. Regarding the appointments for 5 years, it said that under paragraph 19 of the settlement, each such case was to be considered on its merit, the principle being that the vested interest of the third parties should not be disturbed and this principle precludes the dismissed without reasons before the expiry of 5 years of officers who have been appointed for that period.<sup>65</sup>
- vi) In two cases, a Mukhi of Ras and a Patel of Valod, charged with stolen property, destruction of colleges, bribery and misappropriation of public funds, still continue to function as village officers. The local Government said that in the case of the Mukhi of Ras,

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65. The Bombay Chronicle August 24, 1931, also in A.I.C.C paper F.53/1931 - Breaches of Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

the enquiry was still going on, while in that of Jahan-gir Patel of Valod, Mamlatdar went to enquire into the allegations against him and told the people that no action could be taken against him unless he was informed of the allegations and allowed to lead evidence to rebut the allegation. As for his being a party to the police raid, he only did his official duty.

vii) The Congress complaint was that several Talatis in Jabalpur and Kaira were not reinstated whereas one in Bardoli was not reinstated for having taken part in the Civil Disobedience Movement. The Government said that the number of Talatis not reinstated was 11 and in 10 of these cases the post had already been filled and in the remaining one, the Talati was not reinstated because he had been dismissed for repeated insubordination. In Surat, 5 talatis were at issue. The Government maintained that here the number of posts was due for reduction in accordance with the recommendation of 'Retrenchment Committee' of 1922-23 and these posts were gradually being absorbed as vacancies occur. It was not possible, said the Government, to create appointments which had been abolished owing to their superfluity.<sup>66</sup>

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66. A.I.C.C., F.53/1931, Breaches of Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

- viii) The Congress pointed out that two Deputy Collectors, about whom Gandhi and Irwin had agreed that they should not ask for reinstatement but should apply and be given pensions, have applied unsuccessfully. Bombay Government said that the understanding in the case was that the Government of India should address Local Government on their behalf and this was done. It was said that the matter was within the discretion of Local Governments who were unable to do anything for the persons concerned as they had not earned a pension under the rules.
- ix) Dr. Sinha and Mr. Chandulal of the Medical Department were not reinstated and their application was rejected by the Surgeon General without showing any reason. The Government said that Mr. Sinha was a temporary employee in the Central Prison at Sabarmati. His services were dispensed with because of a letter in which he wrote that he considered it a crime and sin to continue in Government service and that he had made up his mind to refuse to cooperate with the Satanic Government whose very foundation is based on immoral principles.<sup>67</sup> His application was rejected in first instance but the

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67. A.I.C.C F.53/1931, Breaches of Gandhi-Irwin Pact and also in A.I.C.C. F. C-140 (KW II)/1931.

order for further consideration had been issued. Mr. Chandulal resigned "in view of many atrocities and acts of injustice done by the Government". His post had been filled permanently at once and it was therefore not possible to re-instate him.

x) Pension of a 70 year old school master in Dholka (Ahmedabad) had been forfeited. The Local Government replied that Mr.M.M.Bhatt was a school master and Secretary to Dholka Taluq Congress Samiti. His activities as a volunteer continued until he was convicted and sentenced to 15 months rigorous imprisonment under 117 I.P.C. on July 5, 1930. As his activities amounted to grave misconduct, restoration of pension does not come under the settlement.<sup>68</sup>

xi) S.P.Joshi, a Temporary Supervisor (P.W.D.), not reinstated. The Government answer was that in his case, in the light of clause 19 of the Settlement, the Government has decided to remove the ban and any application which Mr. Joshi may make for reinstatement will be considered on its merit.

**Schedule B** - The complaints under this head did not involve the alleged breaches of the settlement. These mainly

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68. Ibid.



relate to the students who participated in the last Civil Disobedience Movement and were expelled or rusticated from the Government schools and colleges. Government said that the order had been issued to withdraw the circular which expelled the students from Government schools and colleges. Also, the forfeiture of scholarship of the student's who participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement.

## VIII

### Gandhi Week

Mahatma Gandhi's birthday was celebrated as Gandhi week (2-8 October) to propagate the use of Khaddar and to dispose the large stock of Khaddar accumulated in the hands of the All India Spinners Association.<sup>69</sup> The idea was to have 1500 persons to buy khaddar worth Rs.1000 each.<sup>70</sup> In Bombay city, Sardar Patel himself took the charge of Gandhi week and organised musical concerts and exhibition of national films, proceeds of which were used to meet the expenses of the week.<sup>71</sup> The result of the week was that Rs.1,41,091 were collected or promised in Bombay City and Bombay Suburban

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69. F.R.(1) Sept., 1931, H/P, F.18/9/1931.

70. T.O.I., Sept. 16, 1931, also in F.R.(1) Sept., H/P, F.18/9/1931.

71. F.R. (1) Oct., 1931, H/P, F.18/10/1931.

districts towards khaddar funds. In Gujarat it was Rs.1.50 lakhs.<sup>72</sup> According to the Congress estimate Rs.8,20,000 worth of Khaddar was sold in the whole of India during the week, of which Bombay alone contributed Rs.2,45,000.<sup>73</sup>

## IX

### Bardoli Enquiry

Under the Delhi Pact, the Congress had agreed to participate in the IInd R.T.C. but meanwhile there was police coercion and atrocities in revenue collection in Bardoli and Valod taluqas. So Mahatma Gandhi said that he would not go to London to attend IInd R.T.C. unless the Government orders an enquiry into the Bardoli wrong. Ultimately, realizing the futility of holding the R.T.C. without the Congress participation, the British Government instructed the Viceroy to secure Gandhi's participation in R.T.C. and as a result of that the Viceroy agreed at the eleventh hour to appoint Mr. R.G.Gordon, an ex-I.C.S., as special Enquiry Officer to enquire into the Bardoli case.<sup>74</sup> Mahatma Gandhi sailed for

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72. Ibid.

73. F.R.(2) Oct., 1931, H/P, F.18/10/1931.

74. Daily Mail, August 21, 1931, London; extracts from this news paper were quoted in The Bombay Chronicle, Aug.22, 1931.

the IInd R.T.C. on August 29 as India's sole representative.<sup>75</sup>

A. Congress Version of the Bardoli Enquiry - The enquiry began on 5 October by Mr. R.G.Gordon at his Dak Bunglow in Bardoli. Mr. Bhulabhai Desai, Bombay advocate stood as Congress pleader, while Dewan Bahadur Thakoram, the public prosecutor of Surat, came in on behalf of the Government.<sup>76</sup>

Mr. Gordon was to enquire basically into three issues -

- i) Whether Khatedars in the villages concerned were compelled to pay revenue at a rate higher than that adopted in other villages of the same taluq.
- ii) Whether these demands were enforced by coercion through the police.
- iii) What was the sum, if any, so exacted.

Mr. Bhulabhai Desai furnished a list of 16 villages to be admitted for the enquiry but Mr. Gordon and the Government pleader accepted only 10 and one more later. Hence 11 villages in total were considered, leaving the remaining 5 for later consideration. The basic argument of the Congress in the enquiry was that the Bardoli peasants were forced to borrow for the payment of land revenue under police coer-

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75. The Bombay Chronicle, Aug. 28, 1931.

76. H/P, F.33/39/1931, Bardoli Enquiry; Congress Report, also in F.R.(1) Oct., 1931, H/P, F.18/10/1931.

cion, which was an open breach of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Congress pleader Mr. Bhulabhai Desai insisted on the 'No Borrowing Standard' i.e. "no defaulter was obliged to pay except from his own depleted resources and therefore he was not obliged to pay if he had to borrow for the purpose of paying".<sup>77</sup>

The background to this stand taken by the Congress was that after considerable collection of land revenue demand in Borsad and Bardoli taluq had been done, defaulters' notices were issued on several Khatedars of the above two taluqas, though time and again Mahatma Gandhi had publicly called upon the peasant to pay up the taxes according to the measures of their respective ability. But this did not mean that they were obliged to pay by incurring debt. As Gandhiji said to the Khatedars of Kaira district, "No Khatedar is obliged to pay revenue by incurring debt".<sup>78</sup> Regarding the Khatedars who suffered due to the Satyagraha or Hijrat, he said:

1. Whether the Khatedar has gone to hijrat or not but if he has suffered substantially by reason of Satyagraha movement such Khatedar is not obliged to pay revenue by incurring debt.

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77. Ibid.

78. H/P, F.33/39/1931, Bordoli Enquiry; Congress Report.

2. Those who have not taken part in Satyagraha movement or having taken such part have not suffered substantially, the duty of such Khatedar is to pay the revenue even if it becomes necessary to incur debt for such purposes.<sup>79</sup>

As to the question of ability to pay, Gandhiji had said that this was ability to pay without having to resort to borrowing after the peasants' actual tangible means were exhausted and Mr. Perry, the District Collector of Kaira district, agreed with that view.<sup>80</sup> Mr. Bhulabhai Desai, to put his case in strong terms, first quoted the clause 16(B) of the Delhi Settlement, which is as follows:

"Moveable property, forfeited or attached in connection with the realization of land revenue or other dues, will be returned unless the Collector of the district has reason to believe that the defaulter will contumaciously refuse to pay the dues recoverable from him within a reasonable period. In deciding what is a reasonable period, special regard will be paid to the cases in which the defaulter, while willing to pay genuinely, requires time for the purpose, and if necessary the revenue will be suspended in accordance with the ordinary principle of land revenue administration".<sup>81</sup>

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79. Ibid.

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid.

Basing himself on this provision, Bhulabhai Desai argued that under the terms of the agreement, the Government had no option but to suspend the dues of defaulters who, while willing to pay, genuinely required time for the purpose. Such instructions, he said, must presumably have been issued by the Government of India as well as the local Government. The defaulter has to satisfy two conditions.

- 1(a) An expression of willingness to pay, which he may do by conduct in particular by paying over a small sum of money towards the dues recoverable from him.
  - (b) His genuinely requiring the time for the payment of the balance.
2. An investigation as to his depleted resources on account of all reasons including the effect of the Civil Disobedience Movement.

Thus Mr. Bhulabhai Desai argued that his (Congress) case was that no defaulter was to be obliged to pay except from his own depleted resources and therefore he was not to be obliged to pay if he had to borrow for the purpose of paying.<sup>82</sup> But during the course of cross-examination of the first Government witness, Mr. Bhulabhai Desai applied for the production of all Government documents relating to the issues in the case, but this was objected to by the

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82. Ibid, also in T.O.I., Oct.16, 1931.

Government pleader, and even the counterfoils of revenue receipts, of which counterparts were issued to Khatedars, were denied. As the inspection and production of Government documents were denied by the special enquiry officer, Sardar Patel felt that such an enquiry was worse than useless and he, in full agreement with Bhulabhai Desai, withdrew from the Enquiry on 13 November 1931 and issued a notification stating that hereafter there is no need to take notice of any communication from the Enquiry Officer in connection with this enquiry.

B. Government Version of the Bardoli Enquiry : - There is not much difference between the Congress and Government versions of the Bardoli enquiry proceedings upto November 13, except over the withdrawal itself of the Congress from the enquiry. Over the withdrawal issue the Congress argued that the Government was fully conscious that the Congress case would be amply borne out if the relevant documents were allowed to be produced and this is why its demand was rejected. Mr. R.G.Gordon, on behalf of the Government, issued an order on 13 November, 1931 stating that the Congress, after having upto date conducted the whole case on the basis of 'no borrowing standard', has now come forward to say that they did not know what the standard was and had none to put forward. Hence the request for the papers was merely a

finishing enquiry with the object to go through the Government papers in order to find some ground for a case against the Government on the basis of the evidence provided by the Government itself.<sup>83</sup>

After the withdrawal of the Congress, the special enquiry officer decided to present no more witnesses, but continued the enquiry. 11 villages were admitted for the enquiry, of these 8 were in Bardoli taluq and remaining 3 in Valod Mahal. Evidence was recorded for the first 7 villages, and then the Congress retired and with them the prospective witnesses from the remaining 4 villages. Notices were issued in these 4 villages giving them an opportunity to make complaints independently, but no one came forward within the time fixed, so these villages were left out of consideration in the Report of Bardoli Enquiry Officer. The table below displays the number of Khatedars and the amount of revenue collected on the date of Revenue officers' visit.

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83. H/P, F., 33/39/1931, Bardoli Enquiry, Report of Special Enquiry, Report of Special Enquiry Officer.



Village	Total Khatas	Resident Khatedars	Complainants Khatedars	Amount collected from 57 complainants	
				Rs.	Anna Paises
1.Rayam	148	69	11	431.10.0	
2.Moti Falod	136	76	6	493.5.0	
3.Timberva	166	91	10	420.6.0	
4.Paradi	134	100	6	331.8.0	
5.Khoj	114	95	9	469.1.0	
6.Vaghech	114	83	10	414.2.0	
7.Bardoli	504	479	10	242.4.0	
7 villages	1316	993	62	2802.4.0	

It is alleged that in every case the complainant Khatedars who numbered 62 out of 146 from whom the collections were made at the time of visit, had to go out and borrow for the purpose of paying the amount of land revenue collected on that day. 5 of these complainant Khatedars paid the sum (Rs.319.14.0) after the date of the visit and nothing on that date. This sum is not included in the Table given above. So the actual number of Khatedars in Mr. Gordon's Report, who paid on the date of the visit is 57, which formed, according to Mr. Gordon's Report, only a small fraction of the total number of all Khatedars visited. Mr. R.G.Gordon's Report is as follows:

- 1) Large amount of unauthorised arrears of land revenue were due against the majority of these Khatedars. In

Moti Falod, all complainants except one had paid not a pie of assessment for the previous two years. Villagers in Rayam and Khatedars in other villages too confessed that they had sworn not to pay any assessment in that year so long as Mr. Gandhi and Patel were in jail. At the same time, however, they had no reason to give why they did not pay when these gentlemen were released.

2) Regarding the coercive methods, Gordon said that the only coercive measure employed was that of distraint of movable property and even this was done in only 3 cases, two in Rayam and one in Vaghech, and in only one of these 3 cases it was carried through, as in the other two cases the Khatedars paid some revenue and the property was released. The only Khatedar whose property was distrained was Mr. Dayakala of Rayam.<sup>84</sup>

3) Regarding the Kunbi cultivators who went on migration (Hijrat) and whose crops suffered, Gordon said that if other Hijrati Khatedars can pay, there is no reason why these particular Khatedars should be exempted, unless they show special reasons. Nearly 50% of alleged loans came from near relatives of the Hijratis, proving that

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84. H/P, F.33/39/1931, (K.W.) Bardoli Enquiry, Report of Mr. R.G.Gordon, Special Enquiry Officer.

they as a class can pay the assessment by the evidence of the loans borrowed from the Hijratis.

4) Regarding the evidence of borrowing, Mr. Gordon made following points :

i) In 25 out of 57 of cases, the lenders were the close relatives of the borrowers (uncle, cousin) and this is merely a temporary family arrangement and not borrowing in a true sense.

ii) In no case was the lender a Shahukar (money-lender). There were cases of a Goldsmith, a Blacksmith and a vegetable seller who lent money, but no Shahukar. Mostly the persons who lent money in six Kunbi villages were all Kunbis of the same villages, except in the case of Timberva, where 6 out of 10 Khatedars went out miles into the Gaikwari territory in heavy rain, or in one case in Bardoli, to borrow.

iii) In only 5 cases any documents of lending was produced, while in majority of the cases it was done on the basis of an oral understanding.

iv) In most of the cases, the Khatedars got the loan without any difficulty, on mere promise to pay at the harvest. In one case Rs.250 was borrowed from a man from Gaikwari territory without even knowing the man and without offering any security.

v) In every case about which evidence was given, the interest rate was stated to be only 6 percent.

vi) Though the Khatedars complained that they had to borrow sums amounting on the average to Rs.50 per head for the payment of land revenue, yet they have no hesitation in spending far larger sums on other occasions (marriage and other social functions) either out of their own funds or by borrowing while not paying land revenue.

Thus Mr. Gordon reported that the picture presented by the witnesses was certainly not that of a helpless peasantry driven to raise loans from money-lenders at high rates of interest; but of Khatedars who borrow in a friendly way from their relatives or from the people who are not in any sense of the term a money-lender. And in his general conclusion of the Report he denied the allegation that the Khatedars were forced to pay revenue at a higher standard than that adopted in other villages of the same taluq. Regarding coercive methods he said that the only coercive method was that of using the police to call the Khatedars to see the Revenue Officers and to tell them not to go to their fields or let loose their cattle till they have done so. Regarding the third issue of the enquiry, namely the excess amount paid, he said that it did not arise.

So it is clear that once the Congress withdrew from the Enquiry, there was no check on its proceedings and Mr. Gordon concluded whatever he wished. No Congress leader or Khatedar took any notice of the Bardoli Enquiry Report. Nevertheless it is crystal clear that the police was used for the revenue collection in Valod and Borsad taluq. Since most of the Khatedars borrowed money on an oral understanding and could not produce any written documents for that, Mr. R.G.Gordon concluded that there was no borrowing at all in real sense. But this was not the case, and in most of the cases the Khatedars had borrowed or mortgaged their land to pay the revenue demand, a fact accepted even by the special Enquiry Officer, though in an implicit manner.

X

**Conclusion** : - In Bombay presidency, generally speaking, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was hailed as a victory for the Congress and its leaders. Prisoners released from the jails were welcomed as winners of the war, but there was also some disenchantment among the young and the extremist groups over the pact as it did not secure the commutation of the death sentence passed on Bhagat Singh and his companions.

So far as the Congress activities are concerned, the picketing of foreign cloth and liquor shop, hoisting of national flags, Prabhat Pheries and other organisational work by the Congress volunteers continued unabated throughout the truce period in Bombay presidency. There was social boycott of those who took the post of resigned Mukhis and Patels and those who bought the confiscated land of Khatedars. The Congress also took very strong note of raid by Revenue Officers along with police force in Bardoli and Valod Mahal for the collection of revenue demand. Mahatma Gandhi was so much puzzled over this oppression on peasants in revenue collection that he refused to attend second R.T.C. unless the Government ordered an impartial enquiry into the Bardoli wrong.

Notwithstanding the fact that it had called off the movement, the Congress leaders took up economic issues and demanded the revenue remission for the peasants who had suffered due to Satyagraha or migration. Hence, instead of bluntly denying the revenue demand to the Government, the Congressmen were asking for revenue remission on economic grounds, which in essence was more or less the same thing because in both the cases the Government was denied revenue demand. Moreover during the truce period the Congress also strengthened and consolidated its organisation and party machinery.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact was hailed as a victory for the Congress and its leaders. There was widespread jubilation specially over the concessions regarding the manufacture of salt for consumption, release of political prisoners and peaceful picketing of foreign cloth shops. The general opinion was that the Congress had won a victory while the Government had sustained a defeat. As the Chief Commissioner of Delhi, in his letter dated 30 January 1931 to the Secretary, Home Department, Government of India noted. "The effect of release of members of Working Committee (of Congress) I should assess as follows : In India the view is Sarkar Hargai - Government has sustained a defeat. The reasons given in His Excellency's announcement are ignored. Events have compelled a climb down".<sup>1</sup>

If this was the reaction when the top leadership was released for participating in the talks, the reaction to the actual Pact can well be imagined. The people felt that as they have achieved their objective, the struggle has been worth its while. But despite this enhanced political prestige of the Congress, there was also some disenchantment among sections of the youth and the left wing over the

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1. Letter of Chief Commissioner, Delhi, to Secretary, Home Department, Government of India, Delhi, dated, 30 January 1931 in H/P, F.5/45/31 & KW.



Settlement as it did not secure an amnesty for all political prisoners, including revolutionaries, and more specifically because it did not secure a commutation of the death sentence passed on Bhagat Singh and his comrades. But this hostile attitude towards Gandhi and the Pact also tended to melt away with the successful conduct of the Karachi Congress and the appointment of Gandhi as the sole representative of the Congress at the second Round Table Conference.

In the overall Congress strategy for Independence, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact could be seen as a halt en route, a breathing space, a marking of time. The National Congress did not treat the Pact as a final settlement but only as a truce and as an opportunity to put its house in order, to consolidate its position and strengthen the party machinery. During this non-movement phase, the Congress concentrated mainly on extending its activities to areas hitherto immune (such as the princely state of Travancore) reviving the old Congress committees, and forming new Kisan Sabhas and Kisan panchayats as in rural U.P., and ryots associations and ryots sangams as in the Andhra districts of Madras Presidency. Serious attention was given to the task of recruiting people as Congress members and volunteers. There was enormous growth of Kisan Sabhas and ryot sangams in rural U.P. and Andhra region of Madras Presidency. To give a few

example, in the Salon Tehsil of Rae Bareli district of U.P., there were 426 Kisan Panchayats, 2100 members and 1825 volunteers in May 1931. At that time the district as a whole had 840 Panchayats, 32 Congress offices, 8040 Congress members, 13081 volunteers and 1019 villages with Congress flags.<sup>2</sup> Similarly the East Kistna district alone in Madras Presidency had 160 village ryot committees with 10,000 membership.<sup>3</sup> A minimum of 6000 trained and certified Congress Sainiks (volunteers) were to be raised by the end of December 1931.<sup>4</sup> Resolutions on Fundamental Rights passed at the Karachi Congress gave a further fillip to Congress social base. Thus the national movement extended and widened not only its political horizons but also its social base and gradually opened itself upto the influence of all classes in society.

Picketing of foreign cloth and liquor shops continued unabated throughout the truce period in all the three provinces under study, though of course, with some overlapping, for sometimes the picketing of foreign cloth was more domi-

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2. Pandey, G., The Ascendancy of Congress in U.P. 1926-34: A Study In Imperfect Mobilization, O.U.P. Delhi, 1978, p.41.
  3. Kistna Patrika, November 10, 1931, quoted in Atluri Mruali's Thesis, p.724.
  4. F.R (1) & (2) April, 1931, H/P, F. 18/4/1931, also in F.R.(1), October, 1931, H/P, F. 18/10/1931.

nant than liquor picketing while at other times the former was abandoned temporarily in favour of the latter. The picketing of liquor shops was very intensive in Madras Presidency where it brought down the toddy shop rentals from Rs. 1.50 crores in 1930 to Rs 50 lakhs in 1931.<sup>5</sup> Picketing of foreign cloth was so effective in Bombay Presidency and United Provinces that 50% mills in Lancashire and Blackburn districts of U.K. had stopped their Indian weaving sheds and about the same percentage of weavers were rendered as unemployed.<sup>6</sup> Indian merchants and cloth dealers also helped in picketing by consenting to the Congress pledge and agreeing not to deal with foreign cloth.

In this context the merchants of Bezwada went a step further and formed a merchant association which resorted to social ostracism of any merchant who dealt with foreign cloth, and thereby helped the Congress picketing of foreign cloth shops. In Bombay Presidency, particularly in Gujarat, loyal officials and Patels who took the post of Mukhis and Patels who had resigned during Civil disobedience and those who purchased the confiscated land of Khatedars were

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5. C. Rajagopalacharia's letter to Sardar Patel, dated 29.9.1931, in H/P, F. 33/30/1931.

6. The Leader, July 12, 1931, Allahabad.

socially boycotted. In this context the Bardoli Ashram, also played a very significant role.

So far as the peasants and their grievances are concerned, the Congress took up the peasant's cause in all the three provinces. In United Provinces, because of unprecedented fall in agriculture prices and local calamities, the peasants were most hit and were unable to pay the rent and revenue demand. Here the Congress, criticised the Government's rent and revenue remission as inadequate on the ground that there had been 55% decline in prices since 1901 hence rent and revenue should also be reduced by that proportion. The Congress acted as an arbiter between zamindars and tenants as far as rent payment was concerned and also between the Government and the zamindars so far as revenue demand was concerned. It was in this context that Mahatma Gandhi issued his famous Manifesto to the U.P. Kisans on May 24, 1931, advising them to pay only 8 and 12 annas in a rupee as rent for statutory and occupancy tenants respectively and that too when the zamindars were willing to give the receipt for full payment. Ultimately the Congress launched a no rent and no revenue campaign in December 1931, when the U.P. Government failed to concede the Congress demand for more rent and revenue remission. In Madras presidency, in the Andhra Districts there was an organised

campaign, ever since May 1931, against the Madras Government's proposal to enhance the rent and revenue demand in the Kistna, East and West Godavari districts. While in Bombay Presidency, more specifically in Gujarat, the Congress took up the economic issues and demanded revenue remission for those peasants who had suffered as a result of the Satyagraha (of 1930) or hijrat (peasants migration to neighbouring princely states to escape the Government repression in revenue collection). But the most startling thing that happened in this Presidency was the raid of Revenue officials accompanied by the police force to 16 villages of Bardoli and Valod Mahal during 16-22 July 1931, compelling the villagers and khatedars to pay the revenue demand and most of them did so by incurring debts or selling their property. Mahatma Gandhi was so concerned over this repression that he staked his attendance at the Second Round Table conference on the Government's agreeing to conduct an impartial enquiry into the Bardoli wrongs. This compelled the British Government to order an enquiry under R.G. Gordon, an ex. I.C.S. All this was happening while the truce stood intact.

Thus the notion that the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was a betrayal of the peasants and it curbed their militancy is incorrect on two grounds. Firstly there was no independent

peasant movement building up outside the Congress framework. Secondly the no-rent and no-tax campaign as it existed in various regions continued even after the Settlement under the guise of 'economic struggle'. The Government complained that in U.P., for example, while discussion between the Congress and the local Government were still in progress, the Provincial Congress Committee authorised the no-rent campaign which was pursued vigorously in the later half of 1931.

An important development that occurred during the truce was the establishment of parallel authority by the Congress in United Provinces. This was a clear attempt to set up a kind of parallel authority to the British Government. Peasants and villagers brought their complaints to these Congress courts instead of going to ordinary courts. The Congress would take these complaints to the British Government and thus secure redress for their grievances. Bardoli Ashram did the same thing for the hijrati peasants of Bardoli in Gujarat. Thus the Congress acted as an intermediary between the Government and the peasant. The Government though grudgingly, recognised the Congress right to be the spokesman of the peoples grievances. The people saw in this parallel authority the prospect of the Congress becoming the future Government. This undoubtedly increased the Congress

influence in the popular mind. For the National Congress, it was a great achievement because in terms of ideological and hegemonic struggle, it further eroded the Government's fear and influence from Indian minds and in turn increased the Congress influence over them.

There were complaints by the Congress against the Government over the alleged breaches of the provisions of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and vice-versa. It was the Congress which first published its charge-sheet against the Government. But the Government too published its answers to these charges in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary, on August 24, 1931. There were two Schedules in this. Schedule A contained the Congress complaints in which the specific provisions of the Settlement were broken and the local Government answers to these complaints. Schedule B contained the complaints which did not involve the specific provision of the Settlement, but which purported to show that the local Governments were pursuing a policy of oppression against the Congress and its members. From the Congress point of view, most of its complaints centred around the issues of non-reinstatement of resigned Mukhis, Patels and other Government officials, non-restoration of licences seized, non-release of political prisoners, ban on the Congress and its activities, police intervention in picketing

work, Government's permission to allow the sale of liquor at unlicensed place and hours, thereby defeating the peaceful picketing of the Congress volunteers, police and landlord's atrocities in rent collection and arbitrary interpretation of salt concession etc. Most of the Government's allegations about the Congress were regarding misbehaviour, physical obstruction and sometimes violence in the picketing, and the use of carts and other vehicle in the carriage of salt, etc.

Both the Congress and the Government accused each other and defended their own case. For example, the U.P. Government time and again alleged that the Congress was violating the provisions of the Pact by resorting to no rent campaign in a different guise. But the Congress on its part pleaded its innocence and argued that it was taking up the issue of the peasantry only because of its worsening economic condition.

The theory of Gandhi-Irwin Pact being a betrayed of the people's struggle survives even today and the most detailed evaluation of the first phase of Civil Disobedience Movement and the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in which it culminated has been made by Sumit Sarkar in his article 'Logic of Gandhian



nationalism'.<sup>7</sup> The basic point that he makes is that Gandhi cut short the spontaneous upsurge of the people by deciding to negotiate with the Government and thus furthered bourgeois interest, whose object naturally was to utilize the pressure of the mass movement to extract concessions from the colonial state. He quotes letters which show pressures from Indian businessmen and remarks on the significance of their dates coinciding with Gandhi's decision to negotiate with Irwin.

To characterize the negotiation as a surrender to the pressure of capital or rural conservatism is to seek an oversimplified solution. It can not explain at all why Gandhi should have called for the resumption of Civil Disobedience Movement after the collapse of the Second Round Table Conference and why the Congress should have permitted Jawaharlal Nehru to continue the no-rent campaign in U.P. almost throughout the period of truce. Moreover, he overlooks the fact that in July 1930, (before sections of peasantry had become a source of disquiet and could thereby be assumed to have become a threat to the Gandhian movement, and a whole eight months before business pressures were applied) Gandhiji told Jayakar that he "thought the time was

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7. Sarkar, Sumit, 'The Logic of Gandhian Nationalism, Civil Disobedience Movement and the Gandhi-Irwin Pact', in Indian Historical Review, vol.3, No.1, July 1976.

ripe for negotiation and that he could persuade his colleagues of this".<sup>8</sup>

The problem with Sumit Sarkar's treatment of the Gandhian movement is his failure to locate the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in the context of the overall strategy of the national movement which was that of Struggle-Truce-Struggle. Seen in this context, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact appears as a negotiated settlement necessitated by the long term strategy of the movement. No mass movement can be sustained indefinitely in a state of upsurge and the exigencies of mass involvement necessitate an organisational re-connaissance and reassembling of the fighting forces. This fact was accepted by Jawaharlal Nehru when he wrote, "as no mass movement could be kept alive indefinitely, it was natural that it should become stale, need reinvigoration and therefore, a period of respite."<sup>9</sup> In this context truce was a respite, a breathing space, so that the Congress could launch the next phase of struggle with doubled vigour and enthusiasm.

Gyanendra Pandey criticize the Pact on the ground that having worked large number of peasants up to a fever pitch

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8. Brown, Judith M. The Role of a National Leader : Gandhi Congress and Civil Disobedience 1929-34 in D.A. Low edited, Congress and the Raj, London, 1977, p.137.

9. Nehru, Jawaharlal, An Autobiography, London, 1936, p.238.

in late 1930 and early 1931 the Congress suddenly called off the campaign. What the peasants got from the Satyagraha was not clear, he says. It is true that there was no apparent relief to the peasantry in the provisions of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact but at the same time it would be erroneous to believe that in order to honour the terms of truce the Congress did nothing for the peasantry. As shown in Chapter two, the National Congress did take up the issue of Kisans in U.P. during the truce period and asked for more rent and revenue remissions on economic grounds and ultimately resumed no-rent campaign on December 5, 1931 when U.P. Government failed to grant more rent and revenue remission. All this was happening while the truce stood intact.

But the even more controversial argument which Pandey puts forward is that of two levels of politics within the national movements. The first level is that of the elite leadership of the Congress and the other of the local level militants and the people. The militancy is explained by the actions of gross-root level workers and peasants and the responsible leaders are assumed to have played their restraining role. But this arbitrary division of the Indian National movement into 'elite' and 'subaltern' streams appears doubtful on the following grounds. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, there was no separate militant peasant

movement building up outside the Congress organisational framework which was hindered by the elite leadership. Secondly, the local level militants and workers were nothing but Congress volunteers and rank and file workers in rural areas and as such were part and parcel of the Congress. Thirdly, the National Congress being a responsible organisation committed to non-violence as part of its strategy might denounce the violent deeds of a few local militants and workers but this did not mean that the vast majority of local militants and peasants were not integral parts of the movement led by the Congress. Fourthly, whenever a clash between zamindars and tenants occurred in U.P. the Government attributed this to the Congress organisation and its workers and unlike Gyanendra Pandey it did not draw a line between local militant workers and responsible leaders of the Congress.

Moreover, his own facts and data are against his formulation because, on the one hand, he argues that at the height of agrarian crisis, the U.P. Congress leadership declined to throw its weight behind the protesting peasants,<sup>10</sup> while on the other, he accepts the fact that the Nehru's message to the Rae Bareli peasants and more specifi-

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10. Pandey, G., op cit. p.198.

cally Mahatma Gandhi's Manifesto to the U.P. Kisans on May 24, 1931, contributed to the general turbulence.<sup>11</sup>

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact thus emerges as a temporary political settlement between the Congress, which represented the Indian National Movement, and the Government of India, which represented British imperialism. The very fact that the Government was forced to the negotiating table and had to deal with the representatives of the Indian people on equal terms was a victory for Indian Nationalism. The people did see it as a victory and the Congress was quick to use the opportunity to strengthen its hold and consolidate its forces. It also creatively used the Truce period to project itself as an intermediary between the people and the Government, not as an impartial intermediary but as one partisan to the people. It also built up the spirit of resistance by taking up innumerable instances of oppression and objecting to them and demanding redressal. In fact, it was during the Truce period that the Congress first began to resemble a Government of the future.

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11. Ibid. p.180.

## **APPENDIX**

## Appendix A

Following is the proposed draft<sup>1</sup> of statement accepted by Mr. Gandhi and Governor-General in Council on March 4, 1931, which came to be known as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

1. Consequent on the conversation that have taken place between His Excellency, the Viceroy and Mr. Gandhi, it has been arranged that the Civil Disobedience Movement be discontinued, and that with the approval of his Majesty's Government certain actions be taken by the Government of India and Local Governments.
2. As regards constitutional question, the scope of future discussion is stated, with the assent of his Majesty's Government, to be with the object of considering further the scheme for the constitutional Government of India discussed at the Round Table Conference. Of the scheme there outlined, Federation is an essential part; so also are Indian responsibility, and reservation or safeguards in the interest of India for such matters as, for instance, defence, external affairs, the position of minorities, the financial credit of India, and the discharge of obligations.

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1. Viceroy's telegram to Secretary of State, dated 4 March 1931, Viceroy's Private Papers, Acc.No.3895, India Office Records, N.A.I., New Delhi.

3. In pursuance of the statement made by the Prime Minister in his announcement of 19th January 1931, steps will be taken for the participation of the representatives of the Congress in further discussion that are to take place on the scheme of constitutional reform.
4. The settlement relates to the activities directly connected with the Civil Disobedience Movement.
5. Civil Disobedience being effectively discontinued, reciprocal actions will be taken by the Government. The effective discontinuance of the Civil Disobedience Movement means the discontinuance of all activities, by whatever method pursued, and in particular the followings.
  - i. the organised defiance of the provisions of the law.
  - ii. the movement for the non-payment of land revenue and other legal dues.
  - iii. the publications of news sheet in support of Civil Disobedience Movement.
  - iv. attempt to influence civil and military servants or village officials against the Government or to persuade them to resign their posts.
6. As regards the boycott of foreign goods, there are two issues involved, firstly the character of the boycott and secondly, the method employed in giving effect to



it. The position of the Government is as follows. They approve of the encouragement of Indian industries as part of economic and industrial movement designed to improve the material constitution of India, and they have no desire to discourage method of propaganda, persuasion or advertisement pursued with this object in view, which do not interfere with the freedom of individuals or are not prejudiced to the maintenance of law and order. But the boycott of non-Indian goods (except of cloth which has been applied to all foreign cloth) has been directed during the Civil Disobedience Movement chiefly, if not exclusively, against British goods, and in regards to them has been admittedly employed in order to exert pressure for political ends.

It is accepted that a boycott of this character and organised for this purpose will not be consistent with the participation of representatives of the Congress in a frank and friendly discussion of constitutional questions between representatives of British India, of Indian States and of His Majesty's Government, and political parties in England, which the settlement is intended to secure. It is, therefore, agreed that the dis-continuance of Civil Disobedience connotes the definite discontinuance of the employment

of the boycott of British commodities as a political weapon and that, in consequence, those who have given up, during a time of political excitement, the sole or purchase of British goods must be left free without any form of restraint to change their attitude if they so desire.

7. In regards to the method employed in furtherance of the replacement of non-Indian by Indian goods, or against the consumption of intoxicating liquor or drugs, resort will not be had to methods coming within the category of picketing except within the limits permitted by the ordinary law. Such picketing shall be unaggressive and it shall not involve coercion, intimidation, restraint, hostile demonstration, obstruction to public or any offence under ordinary law. If and when any of these methods are employed in any place, the practice of picketing in that place will be suspended.
8. Mr. Gandhi has drawn the attention of the Government to specific allegations against the conduct of the police, and represented the desirability of a public enquiry into them. In present circumstances the Government see great difficulty in this course and feel that it must inevitably lead to the charges and counter charges, and so militate against the establishment of peace. Having

regard to these considerations, Mr. Gandhi agrees not to press the matter.

9. The action that Government will take on the discontinuance of the Civil Disobedience Movement is stated in following paragraphs.
10. Ordinances promulgated in connection with the Civil Disobedience Movement will be withdrawn. Ordinance No.1 of 1931, relating to the terrorist movement does not come within the scope of this provision.
11. Notifications declaring associations unlawful under the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908 will be withdrawn, provided that the notifications were made in connection with the Civil Disobedience Movement.

The notifications recently issued by the Burma Government under the Criminal Law Amendment Act do not come within the scope of this provision.

- 12.i. Pending prosecutions will be withdrawn if they have been filed in connection with Civil Disobedience movement and relate to the offences which do not involve violence other than technical violence, or incitement to such violence.
- ii. Same principle will apply to proceedings under the Security provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code.

- iii. Where a Local Government has moved any High Court or has initiated proceedings under the Legal Practitioners' Act in regard to the conduct of legal practitioners in connection with Civil Disobedience Movement, it will make application to the Court concerned for permission to withdraw such proceedings provided that the alleged conduct of the persons concerned does not relate to the violence or incitement to violence.
  - iv. Prosecutions, if any, against soldiers and police involving disobedience of orders will not come within the scope of this provision.
- 13.i. Those prisoners will be released who are undergoing imprisonment in connection with Civil Disobedience Movement for offences which did not involve violence other than technical violence or incitement to such violence.
- ii. If any prisoner who comes within the scope of (1) above has been also sentenced for a jail offence, not involving violence, other than technical violence, or incitement to such violence, the latter sentence also will be remitted, or if a prosecution relating to an offence of this character is pending against such a prisoner, it will be withdrawn.

iii. Soldiers and Police convicted of offences involving disobedience of orders - in the very few cases that have occurred, will not come within the scope of amnesty.

14. Fines which have not been realized will be remitted where an order for the forfeiture of security have been made under the security provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code, and the security has not been realized, it will be similarity remitted.

Fines which have been realized and securities forfeited and realized under any law will not be remitted.

15. Additional police imposed in connection with Civil Disobedience Movement at the expense of the inhabitants of a particular area will be withdrawn at the discretion of the Local Government. Local Government will not refund any money, not in the excess of actual cost that has been realized, but they will remit any sum that has not been realized.

16(a) Movable property, which is not an illegal possession, and which has been seized in connection with the Civil Disobedience Movement under the ordinances or the provisions of the Criminal Law, will be returned, if it is still in the possession of the Government.

- (b) Movable property forfeited or attached in connection with the realization of land-revenue or other dues will be returned, unless the collector of the district had reasons to believe that the defaulter will contumaciously refuse to pay the dues recoverable from him within a reasonable period. In deciding what is a reasonable period, special regard will be paid to cases in which the defaulter, while willing to pay, genuinely require time for the purpose, and if necessary, the revenues will be suspended in accordance with the ordinary principles of the land-revenue administration.
- (c) Compensation will not be given for deterioration.
- (d) Where Moveable property has been sold or otherwise finally disposed off by the Government, compensation will not be given and the sale proceeds will not be returned, except in so far as they are in excess of the legal dues for which the property may have been sold.
- (e) It will be open to any person to seek any legal remedy he may have on the ground that the attachment or the seizure of property was not in accordance with the law.
- 17(a) Immoveable property of which possession has been taken under ordinance IX of 1930 will be returned in accordance with the provisions of the ordinance.

- (b) Land and other immoveable property in the possession of Government, which has been forfeited or attached in connection with the realization of land-revenue or other dues, will be returned unless the collector of the district has reason to believe that the defaulter will contumaciously refuse to pay the dues recoverable from him within a reasonable time. In deciding what is a reasonable period, special regard will be paid to cases in which the defaulter, while willing to pay, genuinely require time for the purpose, and if necessary, the revenue will be suspended in accordance with the ordinary principles of land-revenue administration.
- (c) Where immoveable property has been sold to third parties, the transaction must be regarded as final, so far as Government are concerned.
- (d) It will be open to any person to seek any legal remedy he may have on the ground that the seizure or the attachment of the property was not in accordance with the law.
18. The Government believe that there have been very few cases where realization of dues has not been made in accordance with the provisions of the law. In order to meet such cases, if any, local Governments will issue instructions to District Officers to have prompt en-

quiry made into any specific complaint of this nature, and to give redress without delay if illegality is established.

19. Where the post rendered vacant by resignation have been permanently filled, Government will not be able to reinstate the late incumbents. Other cases of resignations will be considered on their merits by Local Governments who will pursue a liberal policy in regard to the reappointment of Government servants and village officials who apply for reinstatement.
20. Government are unable to condone breaches of existing law concerning the salt administration nor or they able in the present financial conditions of the country to make substantial modifications in the Salt Acts.

For the sake, however, of giving relief to certain of poorer classes, they are prepared to extend their administrative provisions, on lines already prevailing in certain places, in order to permit local residents in villages, immediately adjoining areas where salt can be collected or made, to collect or make salt for domestic consumption or sale within such villages, but not for sale to, or trading with individuals living outside them.



21. In the event of Congress failing to give full effect to the obligations of this settlement, Government will take such actions as may, in accordance, become necessary for the protection of public and individuals and the due observance of law and order.

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