

# **ASPECTS OF THE QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT IN BIHAR**

**Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the award of the Degree of  
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

**RAJESH KUMAR SINGH**

**CENTRE FOR HISTORICAL STUDIES  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY  
NEW DELHI - 110067  
1990**



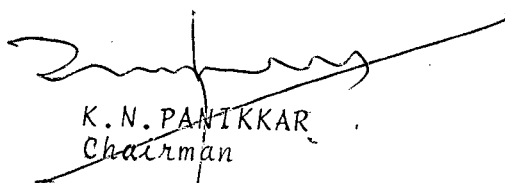
# JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

NEW DELHI-110067

Centre for Historical Studies

## CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled  
 "Aspects of the Quit India Movement in Bihar"  
 submitted by Rajesh Kumar Singh is an original  
 work and has not been previously submitted for a  
 degree at this or any other University. We  
 recommend that this dissertation be presented  
 before the examiners for consideration of the  
 award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

  
 K.N. PANIKKAR  
 Chairman

**CHAIRPERSON**  
 Centre for Historical Studies  
 School of Social Sciences  
 Jawaharlal Nehru University  
 New Delhi - 110067



MRIDULA MUKHERJEE  
 School of Social Sciences  
 Jawaharlal Nehru University  
 New Delhi - 110067

TO PARENTS

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am greatly indebted to my supervisor Mrs. Mridula Mukherjee who gave me a great deal of her time and supervised my work. She outlined the logic of my arguments more clearly for me. Beside she critically examined and discussed my views on various aspects of this dissertation, corrected its innumerable mistakes, and in the process taught me the basics of research technique.

I have benefitted immensely from my discussions with Prof. Bipan Chandra and Mr. Aditya Mukherjee. Even if this work does not do it credit this student was shaped by the centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University. I owe my thanks to Ali Raza Rizvi and Kumar Sunjeet with whom I studied from my college days and shared perception on various issues. We spent many hours discussing the dissertation and more profound subjects. These provided considerable intellectual stimulation.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge my debts to my other friends who gave of themselves selflessly towards my dissertation. Among those were Padmaja Taragi, Prema Gera, Ragini Panikkar, Mukesh Sinha, Rajesh Prasad, Murali Dhar, V. Rajagopal, Gautam Pandey, Shyam Sunder and Dinkar.

Profound thanks are also due to the staff of The National Archives of India and The Nehru Memorial Museum and Library New Delhi, The Bihar State Archives, Patna and the JNU Library.

*I would like to thank Mr. A.K. Seth who at very short notice has typed competently from a very muddled draft.*

*I am dedicating this dissertation to my parents for always standing by and encouraging me in all my endeavours.*

*In the end I would like to acknowledge whatever mistakes that occur as strictly mine.*

*Rajesh Kumar Singh*

RAJESH KUMAR SINGH

# C O N T E N T S

	<u>PAGE_NO</u>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	
INTRODUCTION	i - iv
CHAPTER I BACKGROUND OF THE MOVEMENT	1 - 39
CHAPTER 2 HAPPENINGS	40 - 89
CHAPTER 3 ORGANISATION, DIRECTION AND THE SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF THE MOVEMENT	90 -118
CONCLUSION	119-123
BIBLIOGRAPHY	124-128

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

This dissertation is an enquiry into the extent and nature of Quit India Movement in Bihar. The study begins with the circumstances leading to the Quit India Movement and concludes with an evaluation of the nature of the movement. The period is important not merely because it covered a thick cluster of events, but also because it witnessed processes which shaped the destiny of the Sub-continent.

Quit India Movement was launched in the most extraordinary period of the second world war and one of the major reasons for its launching was India's involvement in the war without her consent. In India the war saw an unprecedented acceleration in the growth of political consciousness, gave a great momentum to the nationalist movement and made the question of independence the Central point of Indian politics. Not satisfied with the attitude of the British government, the Congress came forward with the Quit India demand which, with the arrest of national leaders, was followed by a mass upheavel on a very wide scale.

It is generally agreed that the Quit India Movement is one of the landmarks in the struggle for freedom. Here an attempt has been made to assess some aspects of the movement. A study of the organization, leadership and crowd behaviour established that the anti-British struggle had acquired primacy over all other social conflicts. Without doubt, the popular nature of the 1942 movement, as manifested in Bihar, was a factor in the British decision to Quit India. Nationalism had acquired a momentum of its own during the movement. This is apparent from the pattern of the Quit India Movement in this region during which people revolted even without the formal leadership of the Congress.

Chapter 1 focusses on the general background of the movement at the All-India level beginning with the resignation of ministries in 1939. All the important events that took place from September 1939 upto the early part of 1942 are analysed and discussed. In particular an effort has been made to explain what factors led the Indian National Congress to change its stand from non-embarrassment vis-a-vis Government's war effort to active



opposition and why the Cripps Mission failed. It also gives an exposition of the circumstances that led to the emergence of the Quit India Movement after the failure of Cripps Mission.

The nature and extent of central direction of the movement has also been examined along with political and ideological preparations for the movement. Congress and Gandhi's stand on fascism during this period, has been discussed at length. Similarly, we have tried to evaluate Congress and Gandhi's position on the issue of non-violence. We have also attempted to examine the nature and significance of 'Individual Satyagraha'.

Chapter II deals with Popular upsurge in Bihar consequent on the arrest of the Congress leaders and the nature of the Government's response towards the movement. An attempt has been made to give an extensive account of all the three phases of the movement. A district-wise account of the happenings has been presented. It also covers the underground resistance movement and its organizational network. We have emphasised on the nature of and the response generated by the Constructive Programme during the movement since it happens to be

one of the grey areas of the movement. Along with it, the nature and significance of parallel administration has also been discussed.

Chapter III examines the issue of whether Quit India was a spontaneous mass movement or whether the Congress was responsible for it. It also assesses organizational preparations and strength of the movement. An attempt has also been made to trace the social composition of the movement.

We conclude with a discussion of some general issues, such as, the Central thrust of the movement, whether it was nationalist or not, and also whether it represented a change on the basic strategy of the national movement - the strategy of non-violent hegemonic struggle.<sup>1</sup>

---

1. Bipan Chandra, Indian National Movement: The Long Term Dynamics, pp. 16-53.

## Chapter - I

### Background of The Movement

---

A watershed in the history of the Indian National Movement, the quit India movement was in many senses a straw in the wind. For a fortnight or so during August 1942, when the movement was at its peak it nearly brought the British Government to its knees. Although, by no means intended to be the last struggle in actuality it turned out to be the proverbial last straw which broke the camel's back. It was now amply clear to one and all that the British would henceforth be ruling merely to formalise what had already become an eventuality - a withdrawal. The latter when it actually came in August 1947, within five years of the launching of the movement, proved that the anticipation was not entirely unreal.

The historian's attention to this movement is however not proportionate to its significance. So far there has been relatively little detailed work on Quit India Movement, though this can hardly be ascribed to the 'elitism' of the historians as a class, as suggested by

some.<sup>1</sup> Paucity of sources was indeed a major constraint and with greater availability in recent times of private papers and official documents as well as of published selections of speeches, correspondence, etc., there has been a corresponding increase in awareness among historians about the Quit India movement.

The Quit India Movement had many remarkable features. It displayed an unparalleled and unprecedented mass participation in the freedom struggle. It was the ultimate culmination of the national movement, which was fought in the name of Gandhi but at the same time witnessed mass violence. It succeeded in mobilising active support and sympathy from almost every section of Indian society. The movement was launched in the most extraordinary circumstances of the second world war and the most brutal kind of repression was inflicted upon it. This brutal repression also probably indicated the considerable erosion of colonial ideological hegemony.

Some of the most fundamental questions relating to any movement, such as its causation, nature and impact, its

-----

1. Stephen Henningham, 'Quit India in Bihar and Eastern U.P. : The Dual Revolt', in R. Guha (ed) Subaltern Studies, Vol. II, p. 136.

objectives, strategy, nature of leadership and social composition, are yet to be answered with reference to the Quit India movement with any degree of acceptability due to the paucity of research. Besides, it is only when adequate local-level or regional-level studies are available that such questions can adequately be answered. My attempt will be to contribute to this process by studying the movement in one region - Bihar.

However, before going on to an examination of the movement in Bihar, it is necessary to look at some general issues at the all-India plane. These are : (1) the circumstances which led to the movement ; (2) the timing; (3) the nature of central direction or leadership in the movement and (4) Congress stand vis-a-vis fascism. Later these issues can also be explored at the local level.

In this context we are deliberately avoiding the term 'cause' because the basic cause for the Quit India Movement was the same as that for the national movement of which it was one part - the existence of an exploitative foreign power which had brought about the 'colonisation' of Indian society and the increasing cognition of this fact by larger and larger sections of the Indian people.<sup>2</sup>

2. See Bipan Chandra, Indian National Movement : The Long Term Dynamics, pp. 6-7.

It is only within this broad 'causal' framework that the importance of 'circumstances' leading to a particular movement should be seen. This is important to bear in mind otherwise it might lead us to apparently true but in actuality false conclusions such as the movement was launched because Cripps' mission failed or that had there been no world war and consequent association of India with the war, there would have been no movement.

Coming specifically to circumstances, the resignation of Congress ministries as a protest against the unilateral association of India in the War was followed by a 'lull of the most striking character'.<sup>3</sup> Gandhi and the dominant Congress leadership felt that there did not exist in the country an atmosphere for an immediate struggle. Neither the masses were ready nor was the Congress organizationally in a position to launch a struggle. This view was summed up in the resolution placed by the Working Committee before the Ramgarh session of the Congress in March 1940. The resolution after reiterating the

-----

3. Linlithgow Papers, IOR, MSS EUR. E. 125/9, Linlithgow to Zetland, 4 Jan. 1940.

Congress position towards the War and asserting that 'nothing short of complete independence can be accepted by the people', declared that the Congress would resort to civil disobedience 'as soon as the Congress organization is considered fit enough for the purpose, or in case circumstances so shape themselves as to precipitate a crisis'.<sup>4</sup>

Despite a stepped-up campaign of anti-war speeches, Congressmen generally showed no inclination to commence a mass movement. Even six months after the Ministries had resigned, Linlithgow could write quite confidently:

I still doubt very much if the old man wants to get into Civil Disobedience early or if the Congress are really prepared for it.<sup>5</sup>

But resignations did provide an opportunity for the Congress to put its house in order.

On the other hand, Government was busy acquiring draconian powers through a series of ordinances. It took

-----

4. Gandhi, CW, Vol. 71, Appendice VI, pp. 440-41.
5. Linlithgow Papers, IOR, MSS, EUR. E/125/9, Linlithgow to Amery, 29 March 1940.

away the freedom of speech, the press and the right to organize associations. Nationalist workers, especially those belonging to the left wing, were harassed, arrested and imprisoned all over the country.<sup>6</sup>

In this situation, the patience of the Congress leadership was getting exhausted. Near the end of 1940, a strident demand arose within the Congress for launching a new movement. Gandhiji decided to <sup>start a</sup> limited satyagraha on an individual basis by a few selected individuals. In his insistence on non-embarrassment, Gandhi prohibited mass participation in the Satyagraha. Its aim was to protest only against the curbing of free speech and oppose contributions to war effort. The aims of Individual Satyagraha were explained by Gandhiji in a letter to the Viceroy :

The Congress is as much opposed to the victory for Nazism as Britishers can be. But their objective can not be carried to the extent of their participation in the war. And since you and the secretary of state for India have declared that the whole of India is voluntarily helping

-----

6. General background of the movement discussed in the next few pages is based on following secondary sources unless otherwise stated; Francis G. Hutchins, Spontaneous Revolution : The Quit India Movement; Sumit Sarkar, Modern India; Bipan Chandra (ed) India's Struggle For Independence; Chandan Mitra, Political Mobilisation and the Nationalist Movement in Eastern U.P. and Bihar, 1937-42 (Unpublished).



the war effort, it becomes necessary to make clear that the vast majority of the people of India are not interested in it. They make no distinction between Nazism and the double autocracy that rules India.<sup>7</sup>

Selected leaders who offered Satyagraha had to shout a stipulated number of slogans after giving the local authorities notice of their intention to offer Satyagraha and thereafter court arrest without resistance. Individual Satyagraha had a dual purpose - while giving expression to the Indian people's strong political feeling, it gave the British government further opportunity to peacefully accept the Indian demands. Because of their anti-Nazi feelings, Gandhiji and Congress were still reluctant to embarrass the British war effort by a mass upheaval.

Faced with growing criticism of the manner in which the movement was being conducted, Gandhi displayed characteristic stubbornness. He insisted that the Satyagraha was not about quantity but quality, and declared that he was prepared to let it continue 'indefinitely'.<sup>8</sup> By 15 May 1941, more than 25,000 Satyagrahis had

-----

7. Gandhi, CW, Vol. 73, p. 72.

8. Gandhi, CW, Vol. 74, p. 398.

been convicted for offering individual civil disobedience. Considering the restricted nature of the movement the above mentioned figures prove the large scale response generated by the movement beyond doubt. This is particularly obvious if we compare the figures with the all India figures of arrests made during Civil disobedience movement of 1930 totalling approximately 90,000.<sup>9</sup> The total figure of 25,000 is astonishing considering the fact that government deliberately avoided arrests in the later phase of the Satyagraha.

Individual Satyagraha being symbolic in nature, kept congress flag flying and Press attention got diverted towards congress activities even during the days of impending international crisis. People were being politically aroused, educated and mobilised and the Congress organization was being put back in shape. This assessment of individual satyagraha is significant in the light of the general tendency to dub it as meaningless and fruitless without any understanding of the core of the movement.

In December 1941, Gandhi called for a 'Christmas Truce' in the Satyagraha campaign. He was now under

-----

9. Sumit Sarkar, Op. cit., p. 300.

intense pressure from all quarters to review his strategy, especially in the light of the changing war situation. In January, 1942, the AICC finally called off the Individual Satyagraha Movement and agreed to resume talks with the government. Most Congressmen still in prison were released within a few weeks.

Events moved very fast in 1942. Japan quickly overran the Phillipines, Indo-China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Burma. It occupied Rangoon in March 1942. War was brought to India's doorstep. The Government was increasingly concerned by the perceptible decline in public morale as the war drew uncomfortably close to India's borders.

The Indian leaders, released from prisons in early December, were worried about the safety and defence of India. They were also concerned with Soviet Union and China. Anxious to defend Indian territory and to go to the aid of the Allies, the Congress working committee passed a resolution offering to fully cooperate in the defence of India and the Allies if Britain agreed to give full independence after the war and the substance of power immediately.

As the war situation worsened Britain was pressurised to seek active cooperation of Indians in the war. To secure

this co-operation, the British government sent to India in March 1942 a mission headed by a cabinet minister Stafford Cripps. Even though Cripps announced that the aim of British policy in India was 'the earliest possible realization of self government in India', the draft declaration he brought with him was disappointing. The declaration promised India dominion status and a constitution making body after the war whose members would be elected by the provincial assemblies and nominated by rulers of princely states. Secession was accommodated by the provision that any province would have the right to sign a separate agreement with Britain regarding its future status.

Negotiations finally broke down. The Congress objected to the provision for dominion status rather than full independence, the representation of princely states in the constituent assembly nomination and the provision for partition of India. On the other hand, the British government also refused to accept the demand for the immediate transfer of effective power to the Indians and for a real share in the responsibility for the defence of India. The motive behind the mission is obvious from Churchill's explanation to Linlithgow :

It would be impossible owing to unfortunate rumours and publicity and the general American outlook to stand on a purely negative attitude and the Cripps Mission is indispensable to prove our honesty of purpose. If it is rejected by the Indian parties... our sincerity will be proved to the world...<sup>10</sup>

An important reason for the failure of negotiations was inability of Cripps to bargain and negotiate. He had been told not to go beyond the Draft Declaration. Stafford Cripps returned home in the middle of April leaving behind disappointed and embittered public opinion. Cripps had aroused high expectations in India because he was known to support the cause of Indian freedom and his friendship with Nehru was public knowledge. His failure, consequently, caused great frustration. It had succeeded in postponing the direct confrontation for the time being, but its ultimate and inevitable failure brought a much greater desperation. Sitaramayya, the official historian of the Congress records :

The reaction to the failure of Cripps Mission was so sweeping in range and so piercing in intensity that people began to doubt whether poor Cripps was a victim of stab in the back by British government or whether Crafty Cripps

---

10. Churchill to Linlithgow, 10 March 1942, N. Mansergh (ed), Transfer of Power, Vol. I, pp. 394-5

was the willing agent of a policy of "Machievellian dissimulation, profound hypocrisy and perfidy that knew no touch of remorse", as DeQuency would say.<sup>11</sup>

The failure of Cripps mission in April 1942 made it clear that Britain was unwilling to offer an honourable settlement and a real constitutional advance during the war, and that she was determined to continue India's unwilling partnership in the war effort. This popular willingness was enhanced by a growing feeling of an imminent British collapse. The news of Allied reverses and British withdrawls from South-East Asia and Burma and the trains bringing wounded soldiers from Assam - Burma border confirmed this feeling.

One major reason for the leadership of the national movement thinking it necessary to launch a struggle was the feeling that people were becoming demoralized and in the event of a Japanese occupation, might not resist at all. In order to build up their capacity to resist Japanese aggression, it was necessary to draw them out of this demoralized state of mind and convince them of their own power.

-----

11. B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, History of Indian National Congress, 1935-47, Vol. II, p. 332.

Above mentioned circumstances ensured a marked change in Gandhi's tone and he started talking in terms of the coming struggle and imminent withdrawal of British from India. This is evident from relevant parts of Rajendra Prasad's letter to Anugrah Narayan Sinha :

Gandhiji is of the opinion that if the British go away we will have to devise some means so we should tell the British government frankly to go away and withdraw their army from India. This can not be satisfied so long as public opinion is not raised with one voice. We must be ready to face the worst which may arise out of it and that would bring out a new life to the country.<sup>12</sup>

It is further attested by Gandhi's letter to a British friend in which he referred to the failure of the Cripps Mission and remarked :

The whole thing has left a bad taste in the mouth... My firm opinion is that British should leave India now in an orderly manner and not run the risk that they did in Singapore and Malaya and Burma. The act would mean the courage of a high order, confession of human limitations and right doing by India.<sup>13</sup>

- 
12. Dr. Rajendra Prasad from Wardha on 6th May 1942 to Babu Anugrah Narayan Sinha; P.N. Chopra (ed) Quit India Movement-British Secret Report, p. 22.
13. M.K. Gandhi to Horace Alexander, 22 April 1942, Gandhi, CW, Vol. 76, p. 60.

Same view was expressed in some other writings that followed as well. Jawaharlal Nehru also pointed out that Mahatma Gandhi's speeches and writings for some time were marked by "a new urgency and passion" and "the hint of action" instead of symbolic protest had much to do in preparing the psychological background for it.<sup>14</sup>

A closer look at Gandhiji's own writings bears out Nehru's assertion. For example the draft of the resolution which he sent to the Congress working Committee meeting at Allahabad in April 1942 testifies to this changed mood. Though his resolution was not fully acceptable to the working committee and there were differences of opinion on it among its members, yet its substance was incorporated in the resolution which was finally passed by the working committee for the adoption at the A.I.C.C. meeting.

This resolution repudiated the idea that freedom could come to India through the intervention of, or invasion by a foreign power. In case foreign invasion took place it must be resisted. In the circumstances in which Indian

-----

14. J.L. Nehru, The Discovery of India, pp. 397-99.



people stood, such resistance could only take the form of non-violent non-cooperation as the British government had prevented the organisation of national defence by the people. In places where British and the invading forces were fighting, no obstacle was to put in the way of British forces. Judging from their attitude, the British government did not need any help from us beyond non-interference. They desired our help only as slaves, a position which Congress could never accept.

Resolution further confirmed that India was opposed to Fascism as well as Imperialism. India would obtain her freedom through her own strength and would retain it likewise. Not only the interest of India but Britain's safety and world peace required that Britain must abandon her hold on India.<sup>15</sup>

Besides, popular discontent, a product of rising prices and war time shortage was gradually mounting, which, according to Sarkar, created a 'new popular mood'.<sup>16</sup> It was certainly sensed by Gandhi. The War years witnessed

-----

15. Indian National Congress Report of the General Secretaries, March 1940-October 1946, pp. 39-40.

16. Sumit Sarkar, op. cit., p. 391.

enormous rise in prices. The index for wholesale prices (Base : 1914 = 100) jumped from 108 for all commodities in 1939 to 307 in 1943.<sup>17</sup> The marginal elements of rural society, less affluent tenants and agricultural labourers in particular were severely affected. Apart from the actual price rise, the situation was also aggravated by the unavailability of foodgrains and other essential commodities. In U.P. for example land revenue collections fell well below normal because peasants were apprehensive about marketing their grain. This significantly contributed to the growing sense of uncertainty and insecurity.

Combined with this was the impact of a racist evacuation policy followed by the British in Malaya and Burma. Letters from Indians in south-east Asia to their relatives in India were full of graphic accounts of British betrayal and their being left at the mercy of the degenerate Japanese.

Rumours played a significant role in erosion of popular faith in the stability of British rule. People

-----

17. A.K. Ghosh, Prices and Economic Fluctuation in India, 1861-1947, p. 48.

withdrew their deposits from banks and post offices. This was particularly marked in Bihar and U.P.

There were two kinds of rumours in circulation in various regions of Bihar. One set of rumours predicted imminent British collapse. For instance, in Muzzafarpur district in July a blind sadhu was said to have predicted the end of the British Raj in '3 months and 13 days'.<sup>18</sup> The other set of rumours indicated the superiority of Japanese which in turn reinforced the belief that the British rule was about to collapse. For instance, the Chief Secretary's report said " There is no improvement to report in the general public feeling ... According to District Magistrate of Gaya, the general conclusion arrived at by the people is that the Japanese have succeeded in cutting off China from India and that the Burma road which was originally intended to be the lifeline of China has now become the line of Japanese invasion".<sup>19</sup> Similarly the S.P. of Sahabad district reported that "many ordinary people believe Japanese to be Hindus and therefore, there is no need of any fear from a Japanese invasion".<sup>20</sup>

- 
18. Home Political File No. 18/4/42, Fortnightly report sent by Bihar Government for the 1st half of April 1942, N.A.I.
  19. Home Political File No. 18/5/42, Fortnightly report sent by Bihar government for the 1st half of May 1942, N.A.I.
  20. Home Political File No. 18/4/42, Fortnightly report sent by Bihar government for the 2nd half of April 1942, N.A.I.

People showed tremendous interest in axis broadcasts, particularly when Subhash Chandra Bose started addressing the people from there. In many cases rumours floated around this time could be directly traced to Axis broadcasts.<sup>21</sup> Axis broadcasts sympathised with the Indian cause and claimed their military superiority over Allies. British withdrawals from South-East Asia and Burma provided validity to their words.

The combined effect of all these rumours was so strong that as late as September 1942 people believed that "aircrafts seen coming over, which were really sent for reconnaissance, belonged not to the British but to the Germans and Japanese and were carrying Indian political leaders."<sup>22</sup>

Two facts are crucial here. The first is Chandan Mitra's observation that these rumours did not play any important role in other parts of the country.<sup>23</sup> The second is Sarkar's observation that eastern U.P. and north and west Bihar were traditionally one of the principal catchment

- 
21. Home Political file no. 18/1/42, Fortnightly report sent by Bihar government for the 1st half of January 1942.
22. Home Political file no. 18/ 9/42, Fortnightly report sent by Bihar government for the 1st half of Sept. 1942.
23. Chandan Mitra, op. cit., p. 20.

areas for Indian migrant labour to south east Asia.<sup>24</sup>  
 These two facts were probably responsible for the severity of Quit India Movement in Bihar. Returning labourers brought with them the message of imminent collapse of British rule.

Referring to the 2nd half of May, 1942, a Government report said :

There is no improvement to report in the general public feeling. Defeatism and anti-British feeling, encouraged by enemy broadcasts and by objectionable speeches are still pronounced. The unfathomable impression caused by the passage of trains through North Bihar containing sick and wounded from Burma front is now likely to be strengthened by the unexpected return of labour which had only recently been recruited for the military roads in Assam. These labourers are returning in many cases with sores in their feet and in a condition which shows they have not been well cared for in the journey. And on their return the tale is spreading that many of them are victims of Japanese air raids in Assam.<sup>25</sup>

Two incidents that were reported during the same fortnight illustrate the people's reluctance to go

---

24. Sumit Sarkar, op. cit., p. 392.

25. Home Political file no. 18/5/42, Fortnightly Report sent by Bihar government for the 2nd half of May 1942.

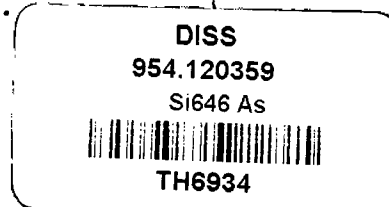
anywhere near the war zone and their apprehension at the proximity of soldiers. At Samastipur 5 engine drivers, who had been ordered to take their engines to Katihar for delivery to Bengal and Assam railway refused together with their firemen and Khalasis to do so and their engines had to be driven there by British firemen and drivers.<sup>26</sup> At Mandar near Ranchi the village tank was inspected by a military officer, where upon some of the villagers promptly drained it for the fear that the troops might camp in the locality and harass the villagers.<sup>27</sup>

TH-6934

The role of rumours in the severity of movement in Bihar can not be denied but it must be mentioned that rumours were only the product of circumstances. People were already in anxiety and tension about the happenings on national and international plane which emerged out of extra-ordinary situation. Chandan Mitra appropriately substantiates the role of these rumours in his paper "In these rumours we have an interesting example of a rural society evolving its own myths and beliefs to cope with a threatening reality. In 1942, as on earlier occasions when

26. Home Political file no. 18/5/42, Fortnightly Report sent by Bihar Government for the IInd half of May, 1942.

27. Ibid.



an unfathomable crisis appeared to loom, rumours and myths evolved in accordance with what people believed was inevitable".<sup>28</sup> He further adds that " popular opposition to British rule especially its immorality was underlined through the rumours and myths with people believing what they wanted to believe."<sup>29</sup> Hence, it can be said that rumours were only the outward manifestation of mass psychology and before any mass mobilisation this process is evident.

Ofcourse this is not to suggest that the decision to launch the Quit India Movement or even its elemental fury was merely a function of aforesaid political, economic and what Althuseer would call 'over-determining' factors.

#### THE TIMING OF THE MOVEMENT

During and after the upsurge, the British in documents like Tottenham's 'Congress responsibility for Disturbances' (February 1943) sought to prove that Gandhiji deliberately synchronised his movement with a possible

-----  
28. Chandan Mitra, op. cit., p. 20.

29. Ibid.

Japanese attack either to fish in troubled waters or in the hope that it would be easier to arrive at a settlement with the Japanese which would leave India in a state of independence.

It is important here to note that Tottenham's conclusion was based merely on assumptions and he failed to provide any concrete evidence in his support. The fact that Singapore, Rangoon and Andamans fell respectively on 15 February, 8 March and 23 March and first sign of change in Gandhi's mood came on the 19th of April in an article in Harijan does not take us very far. A few things should be noted in this context. First, the formal failure of Cripps Mission was evident only by the end of the first week of April. Secondly, this charge ignores the consistent anti fascist stand of the Congress throughout the 1930's and 40's as well as numerous reiterations of sympathy for Russia and China and support for allied cause. 'I do not want to be the instrument of Russia's defeat nor of China's', Gandhi declared even in his 'Do or Die' speech.<sup>30</sup>

More important in this regard is Wickinden's

-----

30. Tendulkar, Mahatma, Vol. VI, p. 209.



conclusion.<sup>31</sup> Though he agreed that some of "Gandhi's observation did have Japanese flavour", he made it clear in his report that Gandhi never wanted the British domination to be substituted by that of the Japanese.' Whatever difficulties there are in assessing the working of Gandhi's

- 
31. The genesis of Wickenden's Report on the Disturbances of 1942-43 may be traced to the publication of a pamphlet entitled "Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances of 1942- 43" by British government. It was stated that Government did not purport to disclose all information and there was a large volume of evidence. It was therefore decided to select an independent judicial minded officer to marshal evidence and present it in connected and readable form and to report how far in his opinion the unpublished material corroborated the conclusion reached in the pamphlet and how far the whole body of evidence establishes the responsibility of Congress. The Government of India in consultation with British Government selected T. Wickenden, I.C.S., Judge in Central Provinces, to prepare the report. He completed his report on 29 November 1943. See P.N. Chopra (ed.), op. cit., p. 3.

mind, there can never be any two views on his high devotion to India's independence not merely independence from Britain but independence as a sovereign state among sovereign states'.<sup>32</sup>

Gandhi's resolution submitted to the Allahabad working committee contained the statement that Japanese aggression would be resisted.<sup>33</sup> It should also be noted in this context that while Gandhi conceived his idea of the movement at the end of April 'Climatic and Geographical factors made any Japanese invasion before November 1942 at the earliest most unlikely'.<sup>34</sup>

L.S. Amery, Secretary of State, in his minute dated 17 September 1942 to the Prime Minister mentions that "there is no evidence that he has actively intrigued with the Japanese, though he has referred publicly that a "free India would negotiate with the Japanese".<sup>35</sup> Wickenden's conclusion has been corroborated by the Transfer of Power documents, which were not available to him.

- 
32. Wickenden Report, P.N. Chopra (ed) Quit India Movement - British Secret Report, p. 32
33. N. Mansergh (ed) Transfer of Power, vol. II, p.613.
34. Wickenden Report in P.N. Chopra (ed) Quit India Movement - British Secret Report, p. 32
35. N. Mansergh (ed), op. cit., p. 874.

## CONGRESS STAND ON FASCISM

Controversy generated by Tottenham, in which he has indicted Gandhi for his opportunism and softness towards fascism, makes it imperative to have a thorough examination of Congress as well as Gandhi's position vis-a-vis fascism. Gandhi wrote to Chiang Kai-Shek " I am straining every nerve to avoid a conflict with British authority. But if in the vindication of the freedom which has become an immediate desideratum, this becomes inevitable, I shall not hesitate to run any risk, however great..."<sup>36</sup> He further wanted to make it perfectly clear that "we want to prevent in every way Japanese aggression, I would personally agree that the allied powers might, under treaty with us, keep their armed forces in India and use the country as a base for operations against the threatened Japanese attack."<sup>37</sup>

From the above excerpts it is apparent that Gandhi did not visualise any contradiction between British withdrawal and his anti-Japanese stand. Nehru was disoriented initially due to the entry of the socialist world along with

-----

36. Gandhi, CW, vol. 76, p. 223  
M.K. Gandhi to Chiang Kai-Shek on 14 June 1942.

37. Ibid.

Allies into the war. But finally reconciliation took place since there was no difference among them regarding the objective. Gandhi conceded Nehru's demand for Allied military presence in India. As he wrote "if it is deemed necessary by the allies to remain in India to prevent Japanese occupation, they should do so, subject to such conditions as may be prescribed by the national government that may be set up after British withdrawal."<sup>38</sup>

Gandhi and Nehru shared the view that without the attainment of freedom of India, it would be futile to think in terms of liberated and independent world society. Congress leadership asserted the viewpoint that demand for British withdrawal was not actuated by a desire to embarrass the British, but to enable India to defend herself and help the Allies in winning the war by bringing India's whole hearted support to Allied cause Congress working committee passed a 1200 word resolution restating de novo the Congress position and Congress demand for the withdrawal of the British power so as to enable India effectively to become an Ally of the United nations and fight the aggressors.<sup>3</sup>

-----  
38. Gandhi, CW, Vol. 76, p. 255.

39. Home Political file no KW to FW, 33/33/1942, Hindustan Times dated 6 August 1942.

Jawaharlal Nehru repudiated that he was not in favour of Quit India. His only concern was regarding the armed forces in India for their withdrawal would mean the opening of doors to Japan, but now Mahatma Gandhi had given a satisfactory explanation.<sup>40</sup>

Nehru made his position clear in no uncertain terms:

I want India to be free so that she can play her great part in advancing peace and prosperity throughout the world. Let me emphasize that this is not going to be a struggle for Swaraj for its own sake but a struggle for the sake of facing the imminent danger and to survive, and if we keep quiet now the ineptitude of the government will embroil us in a hopeless mess and cause great misfortune to China and Russia.<sup>41</sup>

In 'a message to every Japanese' Gandhi condemned the Japanese attack on China in strong words :

Our appeal to Britain is coupled with the offer of free India's willingness to let the Allies retain their troops in India. The offer is made in order to prove that we do not in any way mean to harm the Allied cause, and in order to prevent you from being misled into feeling that you have but to step into the country that Britain has vacated. Needless to repeat that if you cherish any such idea and will carry it out, we will not fail in resisting you with all the might that our country can muster.<sup>42</sup>

---

40. Ibid., dated 5th of August 1942.

41. Ibid

42. Gandhi, CW, Vol. 76, P. 330, "To Every Japanese, Harijan dated 26th July 1942.

From the above account it can be concluded that Congress remained anti-fascist throughout and same was the case with major political leaders. At the height of struggle against the colonial state in 1942, Gandhi on the one hand referred to the "powerful elements of fascism in British rule" and on the other hand the "fundamental difference between fascism and even this imperialism which I am fighting".<sup>43</sup> Thus the allegation of Gandhiji's profascist sympathies seems to be founded more on the desire of the British government at that time to discredit Indian nationalism before world public opinion than on any factual basis.

At the lower levels also, the Congress maintained its anti-facist stance. For example, the Bihar government reported to the centre "There have been anti-Japanese and anti-axis speeches accompanied by shouts for Subhas Chandra Bose".<sup>44</sup> It implies that nationalist and anti-fascist sentiments were being expressed simultaneously and Bose symbolised the militant wing of nationalism despite his being

-----

43. Gandhi, CW, vol. 76, pp. 400 and 439.

44. Home Political file no. 18/5/42, Fortnightly Report sent by Bihar government for the 1st half of May 1942.

in league with Axis powers, since he was fighting for national independence and not for the replacement of British rule by that of some other country's. During his visit to Japan, he had persuaded Japanese Prime Minister Tajo to announce publicly that he had no territorial designs in India.

Congress did not see any contradiction between its opposition to British imperialism and its support to allied cause. To them it was one progressive and inter-related process. In their perspective, Indian independence was a prelude for the end of fascist threat. Congress remained anti fascist throughout and came out in full vigour the moment socialism was threatened "It was not to embarrass the British people that our whole scheme was planned, but to enable the people to resist whoever wanted to dominate India whether it be the British or Japanese"<sup>45</sup> wrote Dr. Rajendra Prasad.

---

45. Rajendra Prasad, Mahatma Gandhi and Bihar, p. 120.

## QUESTION OF CENTRAL DIRECTION

Ever since the publication of Tottenham report, the controversy as to whether or not the Quit India Movement was centrally organised has not ceased to persist. What has particularly dumbfounded the experts and the laymen alike is the violent character of the movement. For some it naturally means that programme followed by the participants was not sanctioned by the Gandhi-led Congress. The British government however thought otherwise. Tottenham in his report basing himself exclusively on Gandhi's speeches and writings in the months preceding the movement attributes the violent character exclusively to Gandhi.<sup>46</sup> He, however, failed to see that during this period, Gandhi on a number of occasions made it a point to emphasise the non-violent character of the movement.<sup>47</sup> Wickenden takes this ambiguity into account and perhaps justifiably concludes that to an ordinary man Gandhi seemed a different man.<sup>48</sup>

- 
46. Tottenham, 'Congress Responsibility for Disturbance (February 1943) N. Mansergh (ed) Transfer of Power Vol. II, p. 74.
47. Wickenden cites Gandhi's non-violent utterances during the period at length, P.N. Chopra (ed) op. cit., pp. 35-68
48. Wickenden Report, P.N. Chopra (ed), op. cit., p.36.



Wickenden argues that though before the disturbances broke out, a specific programme had been framed, the movement on the whole had a definite blueprint, "The very fact that the disturbances held fire in the beginning and then suddenly took on force and direction, as from about August 11", he says, "is an effective answer to the spontaneity argument".<sup>49</sup>

Some facts pertaining to the movement in Bihar reveal otherwise. As we will see later on, in Bihar the 1st Act of sabotage was committed by the crowd which had assembled in front of Secretariat at Patna on the 11th noon and was subsequently fired at. Patna thereafter witnessed widespread sabotage throughout evening and night of 11th August. Would Wickenden argue that the crowd at Patna got instructions from Bombay to do so between the morning and the evening of the 11th of August?

Thus it will be in the fitness of things to examine both the issues in detail. Firstly, taking up the issue of Non-violence, there is more evidence than can be digested to establish the stand of Gandhi and Congress on the issue.

-----

49. Wickenden Report, P.N. Chopra (ed), op. cit., p.210.

Gandhi wrote :

I may be enveloped and overwhelmed by the flames that threaten all of us. That is why I have decided that, even at certain risks which are obviously involved I must ask the people to resist the slavery. But even that readiness, let me assure you, depends on the non-violent man's unflinching faith. All I am conscious of is that there is not a trace of violence in the remotest corner of my being, and my conscious pursuit of Ahimsa for the last fifty years can not possibly fail me at this crisis.<sup>50</sup>

The Congress stand regarding violence is also clear from its report. The AICC said :

The Congress is pledged under Gandhi's leadership to non-violence for the vindication of India's freedom... (it) firmly believed in the policy and practice of non-violence not only in the struggle for Swaraj, but also in so far, as this may be possible of application in free India.<sup>51</sup>

Just before his departure for prison Gandhi had scribbled a note and give it to Pyarelal. These were his last instructions. According to Tendulkar, the note said:

Let every non-violent soldier of freedom write out the slogan 'Do or Die' on a piece of paper or cloth, and stick it on his clothes, so that in case he died in course of offering Satyagraha, he might be distinguished by that sign from other elements who do not subscribe to non-violence.<sup>52</sup>

50. Gandhi, CW, Vol. 76, p. 371.

51. Resolution Passed by A.I.C.C., Gandhi, CW, Vol. 76 p. 424.

52. Tendulkar, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 216.

According to Government report the message was slightly different :

Every man is free to go to the fullest length under Ahimsa by complete deadlock strikes and other non-violent means. Satyagrahis should go out to die and not to live. It is only when individuals go out to seek and face death that the nation will survive. Karenga Ya Marenga.<sup>53</sup>

Despite being different versions of Gandhi's last instructions, it is clearly evident from both versions mentioned above that Gandhi had an unflinching faith in nonviolence. People were permitted to do whatever they liked, the only restraint was that of non-violence. He did not cross that barrier even under enormous pressure and changed atmosphere of 1942. Gandhi himself wrote in Harijan "You may know that it will be a mass movement of a strictly non-violent character and then you can fill in the details. It will include all that a mass movement can include".<sup>54</sup>

At the local level, non-violence was interpreted in various ways and the most common interpretation

- 
53. Tottenham, 'Congress REsponsibility for Disturbances', N. Mansergh (ed), op. cit., vol. II, p. 74.
54. Gandhi, CW, Vol. 76, pp. 289-90.

was that any action capable of embarrassing the British government, minus killing, came under the purview of non-violence. Dr. Rajendra Prasad decided to frame a programme atleast for Bihar so that it could work as a guideline in case of arrest of the leaders. It was decided that if all leaders were arrested, people would conduct themselves according to that programme and it was emphasised that non-violence should not be discarded at any cost.<sup>55</sup>

Hence, it can be said that at the most non-violence was reinterpreted and its scope was expanded but it remained one of the basic elements. This was necessitated by the urge to make it complete and effective. Gandhi contended that the movement was to be an intense mass movement without restrictions on those who might join it, that it was to include everything which had been done before in civil Disobedience campaigns and probably other things as well, though it was repeatedly laid down that it was to be of a non-violent character.<sup>56</sup>

55. Rajendra Prasad, Atmakatha, pp. 588-89

56. Gandhi, CW, Vol. 76, pp. 289-90.

Two pieces of evidence are often cited in favour of the argument that August Movement had a violent blue print. They are the 12 point programme of A.I.C.C. seized by the government on 11th August and the Andhra circular. The 12 point programme which Wickinden after meticulous research succeeds in ascribing to A.I.C.C. ended nevertheless with significant words "ending of foreign rule is our objective, subject to inexorable condition of non-violence".<sup>57</sup> There was no mention of any act of sabotage and violence and the movement was directed to follow the traditional pattern of Satyagraha. Another evidence put forward is the so called Andhra circular. It included in its programme, stopping of trains by pulling alarm chains, cutting telegraph and telephone wires besides picketing of liquor and foreign cloth shops, organising labour strikes, non-payment of taxes. However, all this was supposed to be a part of the "5th Stage" of the movement which the circular did not specify when it would begin.<sup>58</sup>

---

57. P.N. Chopra (ed), op. cit., p. 10.

58. Reproduced in Congress Responsibility for the Disturbance in India, 1942-43, pp. 46-47, N. Masergh (ed), op. cit., Vol. II.

More importantly, there is nothing to link the circular with A.I.C.C. Maulana Azad, the Congress President disowned the responsibility in his letter to the Viceroy dated 13 February, 1943 " we know nothing of this and can not believe that improper instructions against the fundamental principles of Congress could have been issued by any responsible congress authority ".<sup>59</sup> Paul Greenough says that the circular was based on Gandhi's uncirculated A.I.C.C. draft.<sup>60</sup> This seems highly improbable because the circular is dated Bezwada, July 29, 1942, and Gandhi's draft on the other hand was penned on the morning of August 7.

The fact however that such circular were floating can not be denied. How is this to be explained? One view often put forward is that these circulars might be the result of Amery's broadcast shortly after the arrest of Congress leaders on the 9th of August. Wickenden is of the view that some such talk to the effect of sabotage was in the air during the months preceding the movement.<sup>61</sup>

59. P.N. Chopra (ed) op. cit., p. 11

60. Paul Greenough, Political mobilization and the underground literature of the Quit India Movement, 1942-44, Modern Asian Studies, July 1983, p. 360.

61. P.N. Chopra (ed) op. cit., pp. 75-86.

If this is believed to be true, it can be argued that these circulars might have been the handiwork of those congressmen who escaped arrest on 9th August and with whom non-violence was never a matter of creed; it was merely a policy. Members of Congress in interpreting Gandhi's meaning were undoubtedly at the same time giving their own.

This however does not mean that we agree with Wickenden's conclusion that the movement had a central programme of sabotage for there is no evidence to show that such circulars had any direct impact on the actual happenings. This is a very crucial factor because the existence of circulars per se does not prove any thing unless its direct bearing is simultaneously shown. And it is at this point that Wickenden's conclusion loses much of its sting. For as we have shown in the context of Patna, the very course of events suggests

that there was little planning at the central level. Secondly the uniform pattern of the movement rather than showing any central programme suggests the uniform penetration of nationalist sentiment.

As mentioned earlier, Amery charged Congress with hatching a conspiracy which intended to disrupt communications, destruction of public property, unrooting of railway lines

and so on. Government had prepared a list of 36 items which intended to create serious trouble for the government. The list comprised of :

Formation of wherever possible of a parallel government.. general social boycott, particularly of individual Britishers, who are to be harassed in every possible way... withdrawal of money from banks... Gandhi to declare himself a rebel, to disclaim British nationality and to fast unto death... Demolition of bridges... incitement of government servants including police and village servants to resign.. stopping of trains on railways by pulling communication cards and any other non-violent means... Interference with telegraph and telephone communications including cutting of telegraph wires... Mass ticketless travel on railways.<sup>62</sup>

The fact is that there was nothing new in these items and all of them had been applied in the past in one form or another. But Amery's publicity of the charges made people believe that Congress had such items on its agenda. Various underground revolutionary groups and organisations exploited this confusion by issuing pamphlets calling for mass sabotage in the name of Gandhi and AICC.

-----  
62. Home Department (Political) (I) 3/15/42.



## Chapter - II

### Happenings

---

The movement can be broadly divided into three phases overlapping each other. The beginning of the second phase did not imply complete cessation of first but only indicated that from then onwards that was the predominant trend within wider spectrum. Moreover the tempo and techniques varied from region to region.

In Bihar, the first thing that strikes one is the fury and intensity of the movement in the state. This is nowhere more evident than in the daily reports sent by Linlithgow to Amery. On the 16th of August, of all places, Bihar appeared to be the major storm centre to Linlithgow.<sup>1</sup> The next day he writes, "we are left here with what in my judgement is the most serious outbreak of any of those with which we have had to deal viz. Bihar."<sup>2</sup> On 22nd August "Bihar is still the worst point".<sup>3</sup> and on 23rd of August

- 
1. N. Mansergh (ed), Transfer of Power, Vol. II, document no. 567, pp. 730-31.
  2. Ibid., document no. 577, pp. 739-45.
  3. Ibid., document no. 607, pp. 782-83.

"Bihar is the only centre of first class importance at the moment".<sup>4</sup> Infact the situation was so hopeless from the governments point of view that Stewart, the governor of Bihar seems to have "lost count of time and days and dates"<sup>5</sup> and is reluctant to comment at all.

"Having only a short time ago attempted an appreciation of the situation which was entirely wrong,<sup>6</sup> I am loathe to embark on another."<sup>7</sup>

#### FIRST PHASE

For the first few days, to be more precise, from 9th to 11th, the movement in Bihar went along traditional lines. There were processions, hartals, meetings and picketing of schools and courts almost all over Bihar in urban centres. Students <sup>and</sup> intelligentsia played a major role in this phase.

- 
4. Ibid., document no. 613, pp. 791-92
  5. Linlithgow Papers, MSS, Eur. F. 125/49, Stewart to Linlithgow, dated 22nd August 1942.
  6. N. Mansergh(ed), op. cit., Vol. II, document no. 508, pp. 658-60.
  7. Ibid., document no. 612, pp. 787-91

In Bihar, things started taking shape with Dr. Rajendra Prasad's arrest. Profusely garlanded, Dr. Rajendra Prasad was taken to Bankipur jail amidst shouts of "Quit India", "Gandhiji ki Jai" and "Rajen Babu ki Jai".<sup>8</sup> On his arrival at Patna in morning of the 10th of August, from his village Maur, Shri Srikrishna Sinha was arrested at the residence of Shri Sarangdhar Sinha and Anugraha Narayan Sinha was also arrested on the 11th of August. Both were kept in Bankipur jail.<sup>9</sup>

Immediately on hearing the arrest of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Patna students organised themselves to lead a large procession, which was joined by others as well. They held a meeting under presidentship of Shri Suraj Deo. Speeches were delivered by some of them expressing support for the congress policy and programme, condemning the arrest of Dr. Rajendra Prasad and appealing to the students in general to come forward and join the fight for freedom. A resolution was passed to organise a general strike in schools and colleges.<sup>10</sup>

---

8. Home Political, file no. 18/8/42, Fortnightly report sent by Bihar government for the 2nd half of August, N.A.I.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

It is significant to note that from the 10th of August groups of students and other workers seized some trains and moved in them from place to place to disseminate the gospel of the revolution and to make people in rural areas familiar with all the items of programme. Such moving trains, called Swaraj trains, accelerated the spread of the movement in many of the districts.<sup>11</sup>

## SECOND PHASE

From all accounts it appears that the situation took a violent turn from the night of 11 and 12 August after the firing incident at Patna in front of secretariat in which seven students were killed.<sup>12</sup> What followed there after has been described graphically by Stewart. After the firing he writes :

Though the firing checked the crowd attack, the crowd went back in an ugly mood in the evening and throughout the night engaged in widespread sabotage and road obstruction, the thoroughness of which had to be seen to be believed. Telegraph

- 
11. Baldeo Narayan, August Kranti, pp. 42-47.  
 12. These seven students were Umakant Pd. Sinha (Class XI of Ram Mohan Roy Seminary), Ramnandan Singh (Class XI, same school), Satish Prasad Jha, (Class XI, Patna collegiate) Jagat Pati Kumar (2nd year student of B.N. College/Devi Pala Chaudry (Class XI, Miller H.E. High School) Rajendra Singh (Patna High School) and Ramgovind Singh (Poon Poon H.E. Scholl); R.R. Diwakar (ed), Bihar Through the Ages, p. 668.

pales complete with their full equipment of wires were pulled over and branches of trees a foot and over in diameter were chopped down. This was not the work of five minutes or an hour but nevertheless no information came into headquarters that this wholesale destruction was going on.<sup>13</sup>

The crowd did not remain content with disrupting merely telegraph and telephone communication. "Since issuing my appreciation today, serious reports have come on of major interference with railway lines around Patna. It is clear that organised attempt is being made on a large scale to take over railway lines on both sides of Patna and to arrange a really major interruption of communications.<sup>14</sup> Patna infact was cutoff completely for a few days from other districts except Gaya with which it could be connected only by "Tiger Moth" planes belonging to Bihar Flying Club.<sup>15</sup>

With intense perturbation in the minds of men a mass movement could not be far off. Infact the logic

-----

13. N. Mansergh (ed) Transfer of Power, Vol. II document no. 612, pp. 787-91.
14. Ibid., document no. 555, pp. 707-08.
15. Ibid., document no. 612, pp. 787-91.

of events was inexorably driving the country to the ways of revolution, though the wheel of government repression had been moving on. Mahatma Gandhi's speeches and writings for sometime marked by a new urgency and passion and the hint of action instead of "symbolic protest", had much to do in preparing the psychological background for it.<sup>16</sup>

From 12th onwards which in all likelihood marked the beginning of the 2nd phase of the movement, the conflagration soon engulfed the entire state (Chotanagpur division being the only possible exception). Two features distinguish this phase from the earlier phase as far as the course of movement is concerned. First, along with the urban centres, where however due to the heavy repression the movement ceased to be violent the entire country side ~~empted~~<sup>erupted</sup> into open rebellion. Secondly, in addition to tampering with communication lines, in this phase, police and railway stations, post-offices and several other government buildings were also

-----

16. J.L. Nehru, The Discovery of India, pp. 397-99.

attacked. Peasants replaced students who, according to a report :

After having played the part in leading the initial phase... scattered into the interior villages... inciting the lawless elements... directed and assisted by those Congressmen, both right and left wing who have managed to evade arrest and have gone underground in their villages. <sup>17</sup>

The fortnightly report from Patna says : 'by 25th August, although the city area was quiet', there was widespread violence and sabotage in the interior. <sup>18</sup>

A district-wise account follows. <sup>19</sup>

- 
17. Linlithgow Papers, MSS Eur, F. 125/49, enclosure to a letter written by Stewart to Linlithgow, dated 22nd August 1942.
  18. Home Political, file no. 18/8/42, fortnightly report sent by Bihar Government for the 2nd half of August.
  19. For our entire discription of events all over Bihar - district wise following sources were consulted, unless otherwise stated;
    - Home Political , file no. 18/8/42 (Poll I) Fortnightly Report sent by Bihar Government for the 1st and 2nd half of August 1942, N.A.I.;
    - Home Political, file no. 18/9/42 (Poll I) Fortnightly Report sent by Bihar government for the 1st and 2nd half of September 1942, N.A.I.:
    - Home Political, file no. 18/10/42 (Poll I) Fortnightly Report sent by Bihar Government for the 1st and 2nd half of September 1942, N.A.I.
    - Home Political, file no. 3/30/42 (Poll I) N.A.I.
    - Linlithgow Papers, MSS, EUR F 125/49 Stewart's letter to Linlithgow dated 22nd and 25th August;
    - K.K. Datta, Freedom Movement in Bihar Vol. III, pp 59 - 230.

## DISTRICT WISE ACCOUNTS

## A. PATNA

On the 13th August, two R.A.F. Officers were dragged from a train and killed. Their bodies after being stripped off their clothings were taken through the bazaar. The first of several attacks by airplanes was made on a crowd dismantling railroad tracks and bridges at Kajra. At Bihta, on the 15th, 40 wagons of British troops rations were burnt. At ~~Mokameh~~ Mokameh, the European Anglo-Indian Community was attacked and had to take refuge on a steamer in midstream and the Roman Catholic Church was wrecked. At Naubatpur, the sub inspector opened fire on a crowd inflicting 40 casualties. The police stations at Bakhtiarpur and Phulwari were burnt to the ground and one chanda abandoned in anticipation of a fresh attack.

On the 14th of September in Patna, undertrial political prisoners assaulted a warden at the camp jail and on the next day 11 of them went on hunger strike. An attempt was made to burn Masaurhi Police Station, and Bikram police station was attacked. Maner villagers placed obstructions on the trains at Mokameh and Mokameh ghat railway stations were looted. The post-office



at Ekangar sarai and railway stations at Ekangar sarai and Ranibhawan were burnt. National flags were hoisted at Ekangar sarai and Islampur police station. At Hilsa a mob recovered <sup>the</sup> Congress office, which the government had seized.

The growing severity of the government policy and measures added fuel to the fire and aggravated the intensity of popular upheaval. Large mobs assembled at various places and continued to attack police stations, railway stations, post-offices, liquor shops, excise offices by considering these to be the symbols of British imperial authority. Leaflets exhorting the people to push ahead continued to be secretly circulated.

Even firing could not cower down the people. Thus after firing by police at Naubatpur on 14th August, the subinspector of police reported, "deterioration in law and order. The public in general boycotted the police officers and stopped the supply of foodstuffs to the police". <sup>The sub-inspector of police</sup> at Bikram opened fire upon a party which sought to attack the local police station, killing and wounding several.<sup>20</sup>

20. K.K. Datta, Freedom Movement in Bihar, Vol. III pp. 86-95.

Police rightly felt that there was still considerable underground feeling which might burst forth any moment. Shri Jagat Narayan Lal and some others were moving in the Naubatpur area "keeping up the spirit of the public against the government. On 25th August, two rails were removed from the Patna - Gaya line and fish plates from Patna city - Patna junction line.

**B. SAHABAD**

From Dehri-on-sone it was reported that official residences of all were burnt by mob on 14 August. On 15 August - an attack was made on the Buxar jail. On the same day, the treasury and police stations at Bhabua were surrounded by a riotous mob. On 16 while a detachment of M.M.P. was working its way by road from Arrah to Divapur, it was obstructed by a crowd on the 12th September, the police making enquiries in Jagdishpur police station were attacked by a mob headed by a Patna student. On 13 a village patrol encountered a party attempting to cut the railway track near Karisath and put it to flight. On the 14th a mob rescued three political prisoners from police custody in Nawnagar police station. It was also reported that "practically all post-offices, canal offices, excise shops, warehouses and railway stations throughout the district have been looted."

## C. GAYA

In Gaya town, the police had to open fire twice on the 13th of August on a mob which invaded the Kotwali police station, on 16, Arwal police station was attacked, the furniture and the records burnt and the building and officer's quarters set fire to. The situation in the country side was described by S.P. as deteriorating rapidly". At Ghosi, a mob attacked the police station, the office of the subinspector of schools, the branch post-office, the liquor shop and also the branch post offices at Hulasganj and Sahobigha.

All telegraph and telephone communication were cut, Railway lines were damaged inspite of military patrols and the Chakand railway station was burnt. Some prisoners were rescued at Tikari. The Railway station, the police station and the post office at Warsaliganj were attacked so was the Dakbungalow at Hulasganj. The on national flag was hoisted on the police station and the post office at Imamganj. On the 21st of August a large body of men attacked the post office and liquor shop at Nabinagar of Aurangabad subdivision. The S.I. of police fired on the people thereby wounding some persons. But he himself was soon overpowered and assaulted by lathies.

On the 22nd of August Nabinagar police station and national flag was hoisted on its building.

The National flag was hoisted on the police station and the post-office at Kawakole of Nawada subdivision. During the movement following police stations in Gaya district were evacuated : Atri, Goh, Nabinagar, Kutumba, Kurtha, Arwal, Ghosi, Gurna, Imamganj, Dumaria, Govindpur, Kawakole, Warsaliganj and Pakribarwan.

#### D. MUZZAFARPUR

The worst attack appears to have been on Katra police station which the mob looted and burnt killing one constable and seriously injuring the S.I. and the rest of the staff. The Minapore police station was set on fire and the officer - in-charge was burnt alive. On 15 August a large mob after burning and looting the railway station and goodshed at Hajipur, attacked the sub-jail and released all the prisoners. On <sup>the</sup> same day a large number of people marched in a procession, under the leadership of Shri Basudeo Narayan Singh Khalifa, to the Lalganj Police station, brought it under their control and hoisted the National flag on its buildings. Shri R.N. Pandey, sub-deputy magistrate, then at the thana,

surrendered to them. They hoisted national flag also on the sub-registry office and post-office. At Belsand the people drove out the police staff and occupied the police station.

A detachment of British troops was posted at Sitamarahi and the Europeans of Riga mill were brought to Sitamarhi. Even then the people hoisted the national flag on the buildings of court the police station and the sub-jail at Sitamarhi and ousted the police staff at the Bairagnia police station. National flag was hoisted at the Sahebganj police station. As a contemporary government report remarked "police stations in danger areas were evacuated and concentrated in safer places. Normal functioning of government ceased" there. The superintendent of Police of that area reported to his authorities on the 16th of August "The situation throughout the district is grave and bridges all over have been badly damaged and all in police stations are looking up for the posting armed police for safety of the government properties and their lives". The commissioner of Tirut informed the Chief Secretary on the 17th of August " In this district the situation at Hajipur has become very bad, and I think it may become necessary to declare martial law there... our policy is to keep the place in a state of defence collect

outlying Europeans and gradually reestablish communications and control from here. In the present circumstances the civil authorities have not got control of all parts of the districts at any rate".<sup>21</sup> On 18th August several police stations in Sitamarhi sub-division, such as those at Bela, Sheohar, Pupri and Majorganj were invaded by mobs and their records were destroyed. At Majorganj "the mob arranged an ass and compelled the S.I. to ride on it but he managed to run away".<sup>22</sup>

The European staff of the Belsand sugar factory and other Europeans there were brought to Muzzafarpur for safety. The Paru police station was attacked on the 22nd of August and the police staff there evacuated for Baruraj.<sup>23</sup> The railway lines between Sarai and Hajipur and Muzzafarpur and Kanti were damaged. On 24th August, a large mob assembled at Bangaon, attacked the S.D.O. of

21. Ibid., pp. 106-16

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., The Commissioner of Tirhut had already decided that for the time being the police station at Sahebganj, Paru Lalganj, Patepur, Mahnar, Seohar, Sonbarsa, Majorganj, Sursand, Minapur and if necessary that of Bela should be closed; Letter from the District Magistrate Muzzafarpur to the Chief Secretary Bihar, 17th August 1942.

Sitamarhi, police inspector, a havaldar and S.D.O's Chaprasi and captured their guns and revolvers. On 27th August, a formidable police force was sent to open up police station at Belsand. But they could not stand against the people collected there and retreated to Parsauni, situated about six miles from Belsand. As late as 11th September, telegraph wires were cut at Hajipur. It was not till the middle of September that the police stations in Hajipur subdivision could begin functioning again. In other parts of Muzzafarpur district, the police stations could not function before the 2nd week of October

E. SARAN

The situation throughout the district and at Chapra was described as 'critical'. The mob attacked Digwara police station, where the police were evicted, the records burnt and the building taken over as a Congress office. A large mob invaded the court premises at Siwan on the 15th August. A report received on the 20th August stated that one British officer and 4 British, other ranks, part of a detachment deputed for protective duty at Marhowrah had been killed and their weapons seized.

Hartals, processions, meetings, attacks on railway stations, post offices and other offices and hoisting of national flags, damaging of railways, telegraph and telephone wire were spreading with rapidity from one place to another. On the 15th of August a large mob of several thousands raided the Sonapur Registration Office and then sacked the railway station there. On 16th of August, National flag was hoisted on the Bhorey circle building of Hathwa Raj and on the police station and registration at Marhowrah. Ekma Railway station was set on fire and a parallel government was set up by the workers.

The superintendent of police, Chapra, reported on 15 August "the situation had degenerated utterly and complete chaos and lawlessness prevail." Referring to the situation, commissioner of Tirhut wrote to the Chief Secretary on the 17th of August "The situation there is getting almost entirely beyond control". A large number of men, coming from different villages, organised a meeting this day at the Marhowrah factory, when one officer and some men of York and Lancashire regiment sought to disperse it forcibly and fired shots, they themselves were overpowered and some of them were killed. The Siswan police station was evacuated that day. Shri Jaglal Chaudhry was



then moving in the villages in that area, organizing the people to oppose the troops and to carry on the movement even in the face of their bullets and bayonets. On the 20th of August Ekma police station was invaded and its records destroyed. Same was the fate of Gopalganj police station and national flag was hoisted.

Eight police stations in Saran district were evacuated by their staff. In the first week of September there was considerable underground agitation. Infact some of the local leaders, not yet arrested were doing their best to raise the enthusiasm of the people in the interior of the district and to encourage them to face the troops boldly.

#### F. CHAMPARAN

Champaran was relatively quieter in Tirhut division. By 21st of August, apart from disruption of railways, molestation of European women and an attempt to burn the registers of a school at Mothihari, nothing else was reported. On 25th however, it was reported that a "spirit of violent aggression still persists." The Commissioner had to do a good deal of firing at Bettiah a few days ago". At Sitamarhi on the 22nd, the subdivisional officer and

inspector of police were held up in their car and beaten or speared to death. The Bar and Mukhetar association at Betiah boycotted courts from the 17th August. Police stations at Kesaria, Dhamha, Govindganj, Dhaka, Mudhubani, Ghorasahan, Ramnagar, Lauriya, Shikarpur, Bagaha and Raxaul were occupied by the people. National flags were hoisted on the buildings of some of these and also on Shikarpur excise warehouse. The post-offices at Dhaka, Kesariya, Sagauli and at some other places and many liquour shops were also ravaged by the people.

#### G. DARBHANGA

On the 12th of August, a mob attacked Jainagar police station and the sub-inspector had to fire his revolver in self-defence, killing one man. A train conveying reinforcements for the staff at Jainagar was held up by the mob at Madhubani. The Agricultural Institute at Pusa was attacked by a large mob which burnt the cattlesheds and 4000 maunds of flaxstraw. On the 9th of September it was reported from Darbhanga that " during period of disturbances all police stations except five in the district were attacked and in most cases records and furniture burnt."

In August large number of radios were seized.<sup>24</sup> Communications were dislocated in the Singhwara area under the leadership of Shri Kulanand Vaidik and Shri Karpuri Thakur. Some people of Tarsarai looted the entire goods shed of the station containing 200 bags of sugar.<sup>25</sup> The Muhammadpur railway station was raided and its papers and furniture burnt. The sub-inspector of Railway Police fell under the control of the people, but was released when he tendered resignation and joined national workers.<sup>26</sup> The bridges of Padhari, Dashauta, Ramauli and other neighbouring places were pulled down.

Kharari was an important centre of the people's activities at that time. Inspired by Smt. Janki Devi of this place, the workers hoisted the national flag on the building of post-office at Hathauri by defying the police. All the papers of the Biraul Post office, with the exception of those relating to money matters were burnt and the bridge at Nautal was pulled down.<sup>27</sup> Telegraph

- 
24. Ibid., p. 161  
 25. Some Congressmen did not like it and tried to restrain people from such looting; Baldeo Narayan, August Kranti, p. 112.  
 26. Ibid., p. 114.  
 27. Ibid.

wires were cut over a long distance and railway lines removed east of the Dalsing Sarai thana.

Firing incident west of Samastipur involving many lives, made the situation extremely tense. Shri Sidheswar Prasad, President of the Bar Association, sent a strong protest against it, on behalf of the association, to the authorities, intimating to them their resolve not to go to the court for fifteen days. Between 14th and 20th of August, 1942, following police stations were taken possession of by the people. Bahera, Singhia, Madhepur, Jhanjharpur, Phulparas, Madhwarpur, Kajauli, Jalley, Harlakhi, Ladania, Biraul out post and Laukhi Beat House. When a mob attacked Singhia police station, the sub inspector fired on them, but was himself overpowered and killed.

#### H. BHAGALPUR

On 11 August telephone wires were cut in Bhagalpur town, On the 19th Bhagalpur was reported to be out of hand. On 4 September, prisoners in Bhagalpur jail murdered and burnt the Deputy Superintendent and several other jail employees. All channels of Communication from Bhagalpur had been effectively cut off. Excited mobs seized railway stations, police stations, post offices etc. and set fire to some buildings, at various places in the district. The

Sabour Agricultural Institute and Nathnagar Silk Institute were virtually lost to the government. Infact government authority at Bhagalpur was openly set at naught "it was impossible", wrote the commissioner in his letter to the chief secretary dated 14th/15th November", for a drummer even to show his face near Shujaganj to make announcement regarding curfew etc."

J. MONGHYR

In the portion of the district south of the Ganges, there was widespread interference with communication, including East Indian Railway loopline. In the north of the district there were attacks on Ballia, Gogri and Khagaria police stations. At the latter places the mob also wrecked the excise warehouse, the registration office and the railway station and attacked the Imperial Bank building. Fire had to be opened on mobs at Khagaria, Mansi and Gogri where the office of the I.G.S.N. Company was looted. A 500 foot breach in a railway embankment 20 miles east of Mansi was discovered. On 16 August, National flag was hoisted by the people on the buildings of the Sheikhpura Registration office and Barbigha Police station. The District Magistrate observed in one of his reports about the movement "By the 16 August, except for the fact

that situation within the municipalities of Monghyr and Jamalpur had been under complete control from 14 August, the gravity of the general situation in the district had probably reached its climax".

Railway, telegraphic stations including subdivisions had been isolated and complete anarchy and chaos were reported to be reigning in the interior. No police man or court peon was bold enough to go into the interior; Police officers coming with alarming reports appeared in plain clothes saying that if they had come in uniforms, the uniforms would have been torn, they would have been molested and the letters snatched away. The subdivisional officers were sending repeated requests for immediate assistance saying that even court buildings and the treasuries were threatened and the lives of Government servants were in danger. Local news sheets such as "Azad Hindustan" began to be circulated and exhorted the people to carry on their fight.

J. PURNEA

Lawlessness was reported to be general. Attacks were made on the Dharhara police station, where the mall, khana was broken into and the records burnt. Katihar police station was also attacked where the crowd was

that situation within the municipalities of Monghyr and Jamalpur had been under complete control from 14 August, the gravity of the general situation in the district had probably reached its climax".

Railway, telegraphic stations including subdivisions had been isolated and complete anarchy and chaos were reported to be reigning in the interior. No police man or court peon was bold enough to go into the interior; Police officers coming with alarming reports appeared in plain clothes saying that if they had come in uniforms, the uniforms would have been torn, they would have been molested and the letters snatched away. The subdivisional officers were sending repeated requests for immediate assistance saying that even court buildings and the treasuries were threatened and the lives of Government servants were in danger. Local news sheets such as "Azad Hindustan" began to be circulated and exhorted the people to carry on their fight.

J. PURNEA

Lawlessness was reported to be general. Attacks were made on the Dharhara police station, where the mallakhana was broken into and the records burnt. Katihar police station was also attacked where the crowd was

dispersed by firing. In a report dated the 15th of August it was reported that "our last report from the collector of Purnea was somewhat disappointing". On 16th August, the post offices at Rupauli and Tikapatti were raided by a mob. A number of branches were made on Jogbani - Purnea Railway line. The Jankinagar railway station was raided. At Kasba, people rescued some persons from police custody in the presence of armed police. On the same day Barari police station was raided, its papers were removed and furniture burnt. Telegraph wires were cut at various places. ON 18th August, meeting of national workers of Purnea had been held in the Sarsi middle school under the presidentship of Shri Baidyanath Choudhry. The following resolutions were passed :

- 1) On 23rd August the work of dislocation and wreckage should be done by giving notices before hand.
- 2) On 25th August all the thanas of the district should be raided, the National flag should be hoisted on them and their property be kept in a well-protected place.
- 3) The National flag was to be hoisted on the buildings of Purnea collectorate on 27th August and the court there was to be brought under national control.



In accordance with the principle of non-violence, the District magistrate and the thana officers were to be apprised before hand of their resolve to raid. It was also arranged that the leadership of such activities in the district should first be assumed by Shri Laxmi Narayan Singh Sudhansu. If he was arrested then it should be taken by Shri Baidyanath Choudhary and on latter's arrest it should pass on to Shri Basudeo Prasad Singh.<sup>28</sup> In the night of 17 August national workers from Katihar burnt Sonali police station and raided the post-office there.

K. HAZARIBAGH

This district was reported to be 'quiet' except for the usual student demonstrations on the first few days. On 14th August, a procession, mostly of students moved round the court buildings and damaged some glass-panes here and there as also glass panes of post-office and station club. Processionists removed the Union Jack from the Deputy Commissioner's Court buildings and hoisted there the national flag. On 15 August a party of political prisoners being escorted from Madhupur made disturbances at Giridih and stones were thrown by the mob at the railway

---

28. Ibid., pp. 134-35.

station. A large procession moved at Dhanwar on 17 August under the leadership of Shri Punit Rai and Shri Narsing Marwari and some people hoisted the National flag on the local post-office in the Bermo police station. On same day, at Bermo police station two control and three telegraph wires were cut from a mile post at about quarter of a mile post.

#### L. PALAMU

As a protest against the arrest of a highly popular leader like Shri Jadubans Sahay, Daltanganj Bazar observed complete hartal on 17 August "in which Muslim shopkeepers joined"<sup>29</sup>. Here movement started on 11 August with processions on the streets and in the court compound. Students wanted to hoist the national flag on the court building, but were prevented from doing so by Police Lathi charge<sup>30</sup>. From 11 August, Daltanganj was virtually cut off from outside railway and telegraphic communications. About 50 men from Chainpur including about 20 Adivasis, came to Daltanganj with National flag.

-----  
29. K.K. Datta, op. cit., p. 222

30. Ibid.

## M.       SANTHAL PARGANAS

The situation was quiet for some days, but thereafter there was considerable uneasiness in Godda subdivision, owing to reports of happenings in the Bhagalpur district which it borders. On the 14 August, students created a disturbance at Madhupur railway station. In the evening, subscriptions were collected from shopkeepers in the town under threat and at night damage was done to signal wires and railway carriages.

In September it was reported that the "agitation is mostly confined to the Sapha Hor's group who are the red shirt followers of local Forward Bloc leader.. and they are primarily occupied with destruction of liquor shops than anything else.

In the Deoghur subdivision, the post-office and the police station at Sarwan was raided and their papers burnt. A parallel administration had been opened by the people at Sarwan. On 18, Sarath police station and post office was locked up by the people and national flag was hoisted on these buildings. The subdivisional officer of Deoghar reported to the Deputy Commissioner at Dumka on the 25th of August. The Situation has become extremely

serious and I would request you to come here with as many military men as possible immediately".

Santhals and Paharias joined it in large numbers with profound zeal. Particularly remarkable were the activities of SaphaHors. On 25 August 1942, a party of the people, mostly of SaphaHors Santhals and Paharias under Shri Patnaik and Shri Krishna Prasad burnt the Dak Bungalow and the Forest Guwar's quarters at Alubera and damaged the materials in the Alubera outstill. The same party proceeded to Dumeorchi and set fire to Dak bungalow and forest guard's quarters there. On 5 September a party of Santhal workers burnt the liquor shop at Barmaisa and market there was closed as a protest against the arrest of some leaders. But by mid September normalcy was restored in the area.

N. DHANBAD

This district was also reported to be quiet till the 15th of August, when telegraph wires were cut and two telephone junction boxes damaged near Sijua. On the 16, a large mob attempted to attack Katras police station and railway station. At Jharia, on the 17th, it was reported that "after a Congress meeting at which several speakers advocated violence, the mob tore down telephone lines, set fire to the post office and stormed the railway station".

## 0. JAMSHEDPUR

Although the labour situation was reported to be quiet, many labour leaders such as John, Treta Singh were arrested on the charge that they were trying to incite the labour. On 14<sup>th</sup>, Students and C class apprentices procession was dispersed by lathi charge and leaders arrested.. One and a half days strike by Tata's clerks". On the 20th, the working class as well as the supervisory staff went on strike demanding that a national government should be set up at the centre on the 3rd of September, 100 policemen struck work on the ground that their pay was insufficient. They were reported to be instigated by a head constable who was known to have congress sympathies.

In Ranchi and Singbhum, with a few exceptions, situation was reported to be quite. In Ranchi district, 5000 copper miners struck at Mushabani. Chotanagpur, on the whole, was reported to be quiet. In Ranchi during the 1st half of October, "Police on two occasions had to disperse parties who had assembled, armed with bows and arrows, with the intention of raiding a dak-bungalow and destroying mission houses".

As we have already pointed out this phase of the movement reached its peak in August itself, although isolated cases of sabotage continued thereafter. By the end of September,<sup>31</sup> even these sporadic cases ceased to take place. The reason was of course the government repression which came down heavily on suboteurs. By October, Bihar's jails were crammed with 27,000 prisoners, double their rated capacity. We enclose herewith statistics which should give some idea of the actual happenings :

STATISTICS CONNECTED WITH CONGRESS  
DISTURBANCES FOR THE PERIOD ENDING  
31st December 1943

CATEGORY	BIHAR	TOTAL
A. Govt. Servants (excluding those of the Central Govt.)		
(1) POLICE		
a. No. of occasions on which police fired	96	601
b. No. of casualties inflicted (fatal)	166	763
c. No. of casualties inflicted (non-fatal)	508	1941
d. No. of casualties suffered (fatal)	26	63
e. No. of casualties suffered (non-fatal)	342	2012
f. No. of defections from Police	205	216
(2) OTHER GOVERNMENT SERVANTS		
g. No. of attacks on other govt. servants (fatal)	4	10
h. No. of attacks on other govt. servants (non-fatal)	87	364
i. No. of defections from other govt. services	4	22

31. Infact as early as 25th August, Stewart reported to Linlithgow that "we are not getting reports of the gathering of huge mobs such as carried over the earlier attacks on police stations and other government property". Linlithgow Papers, MSS Eur F.125/49 N.M.M.L.

CATEGORY	BIHAR	TOTAL
B. Damage of Property (excluding Central Govt. property)		
a. No. of police stations or outposts etc., destroyed or damaged	72	208
b. No. of other govt. buildings destroyed or damaged	103	749
c. No. of public buildings other than govt. buildings e.g. Municipal property, schools and hosiptals	92	525
d. No. of important private buildings destroyed or damaged	119	273
e. Estimated loss to government	354720	2735125
f. Estimated loss to other parties	495231	3007274
C. Cases of Sabotage		
a. No. of bomb explosions	8	664
b. No. of bomb or explosives discovered without damage	218	1319
c. No. of cases of sabotage of roads	169	474
d. No. of cases in which collective fines were imposed	16	173
e. Amount of collective fines imposed	2660765	9007283
f. No. of sentences of whipping inflicted	340	2562
g. No. of arrests made	16202	91836
h. No. of local authorities superseded	3	108

32

32. Home Political, file no. 3/52/43 (Poll I), N.A.I.

## THIRD PHASE

Arrival of troops marked the beginning of the third phase i.e. the terrorist phase. The earlier role of mob was now taken over by individuals and small groups who however continued to indulge in some kind of sabotage. No new forms of struggle seem to have been evolved. On the night of 18 November, a young 'loafer' was found in possession of a list of officials to be killed.<sup>33</sup> Yogendra Shukla<sup>34</sup> also says that he intended to kill the D.I.G. Brooke. However, by and large individual killing was not resorted to in this phase.

Following are some of the important incidents<sup>35</sup>:  
 In November, it was reported that 27 cases of hand grenades had been stolen from the ammunition dump at Jamalpur.<sup>36</sup>

- 
33. Home Political, file no. 18/11/42, Fortnightly report sent by Bihar government for the 2nd half of November.
34. Account of Yogendra Shukla, Dr. K.K. Datta Papers, Account No. 410, Oral History Section, N.M.M.L.
35. Home Political, file no 18/11/42, Fortnightly report sent by Bihar government for the first and second half of November 1942; This note takes into account all terrorist activities recorded on the next two pages, unless otherwise stated.
36. Ibid., 1st half of November



These were supposed to be in the hands of terrorist organisation of which the leading spirit appears to be Basawan Singh, a convict in the Patna Bomb case who was underground. It was reported that "six revolvers have been stolen from an ordnance depot near Ranchi" and were suspected to be in the possession of a dangerous gang of extremists.

On October 19, a country made pistol with ammunition and some .380 bore revolver cartridges were recovered from a house search in Patna district. On October 26, 17 boxes of mill grenades were recovered in a jungle near Jamalpur in Monghyr. On October 29, a live bomb and ingredients for the manufacture of explosives were discovered during the search of a homeopathic dispensary in Gaya.<sup>37</sup> On November 9 came the dramatic escape of 6 prisoners from Hazaribagh Central jail - five of whom were described as of "an extremely dangerous type"<sup>38</sup>

-----  
37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

Secret underground revolutionary activities had already commenced in different districts of Bihar and persons sponsoring these were trying to collect arms and ammunition. At Daltonganj, police arrested 14 persons in the second half of October, 1942, on the charge of organising "terrorist" plans and in the possession of one of them they seized a bundle containing among other things two loaded revolvers and 23 rounds of ammunition.<sup>39</sup> On 14 November, 1942, Shri Narsingh Narayan Azad, a prominent socialist who was absconding, was arrested at Gaya and police got six live cartridges from him. Considerable underground activities were continuing in the Sahabad district.<sup>40</sup>

From Bihar a good number of political workers went towards the Nepal Tarai and found shelter and sympathy there in certain quarters. Some of them collected their arms and ammunition, spears and other weapons.<sup>41</sup> On the 27th and 29th September, 1942, the District Magistrate of Muzzafarpur wrote to the government suggesting that the

---

39. Ibid.  
40. Ibid., 2nd half of November.  
41. Ibid., 1st half of November.

Nepal government may be requested to issue instructions to their officers not to encourage such persons and to prevent them from holding meetings. Of course, the Bihar government immediately took steps to secure the local cooperation of some of the Nepal authorities across the border in rounding up the leaders who had taken refuge in Nepal. Bihar government reported that "so far the joint operations conducted by our police and troops on the Nepal frontier in co-operation with Nepalese authorities for the arrest of wanted men have produced poor results".<sup>42</sup> Some Nepal officers, particularly at the lower level were still sympathetic towards them and Bihar police complained of this attitude on their part.<sup>43</sup>

Jay Prakash Narayan one of the escapees of Hazari Bagh Jail, was in particular responsible for organising resistance movement of terrorist nature. He tried to give an organised shape to the movement by publishing a

-----

42. Ibid., 2nd half of November

43. Home Political file no 18/12/42, Fortnightly report sent by Bihar Government for the 2nd half of December 1942.

series of letters titled "To all fighters of Freedom", "A.B.C. of Dislocation" and "Instructions, sabotage and communications"<sup>44</sup>.

As a result, a network of the underground resistance movement spread out widely in Bihar. Ex-terrorists like Suraj Nath Chaube, Parasuram Singh Parath Brahmachari and Siaram Singh became leaders of local guerilla bands. The northern strip of Hazari Bagh district and eastern part of Gaya district became important centres of underground activities. A training camp for the guerillas was also set up in the jungles of Banka sub-division. In Chotanagpur, the guerillas were inciting the aboriginals to participate in the movement. Swaraj Panchayats were formed at Sonbarsa in Tirhut Division and at Bhagalpur. A large number of political prisoners escaped from the jails during the last part of December 1942 to join the guerilla bands. The guerillas in Muzzaffarpur were trying to form a parallel government there. The whole village of Dhanaur was under the control of the guerillas.<sup>45</sup>

- 
44. Home Political, file no. 3/68/43, N.A.I.;  
Home Political, file no.18/11/42, N.A.I.;  
Home Political, file no.18/12/42, N.A.I.;  
Home Political, file no.18/3/43, N.A.I.
45. Home Political, file no. 18/12/42; fortnightly report sent by Bihar government for the 2nd half of December 1942, N.A.I.

In place of disorganised mass movements, we have now strongly formed groups of brave and courageous and resourceful cadres, working day and night planning and executing numerous and varied raids on the enemy. In December 1942, appeared a review of the programme entitled 'The Freedom Struggle Front', under the influence of Congress socialists, which envisaged a joint enterprise and a common stand. In December 1942, Bihar government had traded a circular, said to have been issued by Shri Basawan Singh "Containing instructions for the destruction of Government buildings and communications, opposition by direct action to the levy of collective fines, creation of dissatisfaction in the army and police, collection of arms and ammunition etc".<sup>46</sup> In Bihar, Congress Socialist party became quite active and distributed leaflets like 'our struggle', 'The Last Struggle' and 'The Azad' to propagate their own principles.

With the object of training bands of workers, Jay prakash proceeded to Nepal with Shri Suraj Narayan

-----

46. Ibid., First half of December 1942.

Singh and Vijaya. Here he organised the Azad Dasta or guerilla bands for serving the whole country. As means for the victory of the revolution against British, Azad Dasta was to carry on work of dislocation and paralyse alien administration. Nepal, being outside British Indian territorial limits, was to be the all India centre of Azad Dasta. It is stated in Saharsa record<sup>47</sup> that Shri Kartik Prasad Singh took Jayaprakash to his relation Shri Rameshwar Singh in Barsain in Nepal and arranged for their food and shalter. He then took his party to Bakro. At a place know as 'Bakro ka Tapu' was raised a temporary bomboo built hut thatched with straw, where Jayprakash was to stay to control the central organisation of Azad Dasta.

In Bihar proper the most active revolutionary group was 'Siaram Dal' after the name of its leader Shri Siaram Singh. The party have four objects in view - collection of money, collection of arms, trainig of the people and organising the people to be able to oppose British government effectively. The guerilla activities of this party kept the

---

47. Letter from Additional S.P., Saharsa to A.D.M., Saharsa, 10 August, 1944, quoted in K.K.Datta, History of Bihar, vol. III, p.273

government machinery in that area perplexed for two years. Infact, if police and military terrorised the people, the Siaram Dal then proved to be a terror for the Government Officers. This party laid great stress on people's organisations in the areas over which it moved. It helped in the organisation of Panchayats and Defence parties in many villages. In the region around Bihapur, they set up a sort of parallel government.<sup>48</sup> The party tried to gain recruits from students also.<sup>49</sup> At village Bethu he addressed a meeting exhorting the people there to organise village panchayats and to do their best to uproot the British authority. Government officers, the chowkidars and Dafadars were addressed to consider themselves as servants of the people. Shri Siaram Singh accompanied by Shri Partha Brahamchari and some others appeared at Tilakpur on 14 July 1943, and told some people that "despite the big reward of Rs.5,000 offered for his arrest, he would never be arrested as the public were on his side and the police had no power against him."<sup>50</sup> On 29 August 1943, Shri Siaram Singh with about 150 young followers raided the

-----

48. Dr. K.K. Datta Papers, Oral History Section, N.M.M.L.
49. - A detailed account of Siaram Singh's movements is available in his diary; quoted in K.K. Datta, History of Bihar, Vol. III, pp. 275-88
50. Home Political, file no. 18/7/43; Fortnightly Report sent by Bihar government for the 2nd half of July, 1943.

Sonbarsa police station, the staff of which were very oppressive on the people and where arms had been kept. In exchange of gunfire Sardar Nityanand Singh, Shri Arjun Singh, Shri Faudi Mandal, Shri Ladoo Sharma and Shri Ramavtar Jha died on the spot.

The movements of Siaram Dal perturbed the government staff and they took recourse to all sorts of precautionary and repressive steps for the arrest of its workers. Of these we get a clear idea from the following correspondence of the Magistrate of Bhagalpur to the government dated 26 June, 1944 " The action taken by me and my predecessors, in addition to general co-operation with the police has been through the use of collective fines, appointment of headmen, detention orders, proclamation of rewards, cancellation of arms licenses and grant of weapons in suitable cases, compensation to victims and arrangement of troop marches through the affected areas".<sup>51</sup>

Of some other revolutionary groups, then working in Bhagalpur area through guerilla tactics and methods

-----

51. See, Dr. K.K. Datta, Freedom Movement in Bihar, Vol. III, p. 282.



of violence, mention may be made of Parshuram Dal and the other organised by Mahendra Gope. In Santhal Parganas, there was much excitement among Saphahors in the month of April 1943. On 23 April police arrested one of them at Runga Bungalow. As a consequence Saphahors attacked the police party and succeeded in releasing their men and police had to retreat.<sup>52</sup> Some of the Saphahors were hunted out and arrested by the Police. But there were renewed activities among the Saphahors in November 1943.<sup>53</sup>

However with the arrest of Jayaprakash Narayan in September 1943, the movement practically collapsed, although it continued for some time in 1944 also.

Thus the movement in Bihar can be divided into three phases. The first phase was predominantly or rather wholly urban and was characterised by processions, strikes, picketing and other such forms. The second phase was marked by unprecedented violence and although predominantly rural in nature, also saw some other urban

-----

52. Home Political, file no. 18/5/43, Fortnightly Report sent by Bihar government for the 1st half of May 1943.

53. Home Political, file no. 18/11/43, Fortnightly Report sent by Bihar Government for the 2nd half of November 1943.

centres erupting into violent rebellion. The third phase was different from second phase in so far as the mob was now replaced by individuals or small organised groups. This phase was also characterised by some ambitious programmes and organisations but they by and large remained confined to paper.

The second phase was by far the most important phase and it was this phase which the British dreaded most. Although our earlier account more or less gives a true picture of the actual course of events and various forms of protest during this phase, it is important to recapitulate them because our account, based as it was largely on the official reports, has missed out certain other important forms of protest :

#### FORMS OF PROTEST

1. By far the most obvious, most widespread and most widely recognised form was sabotage of communications of all types - telegraph, telephone, roads and railways. As regarding the last, all over 250 miles of main line of E.I.R. which ran in this province, there was widespread disruption. In addition, Patna-Gaya, Arrah-Sasaram and Bakhtiarpur-Bihar

light railways were extensively damaged. The Grand chord line and the E.I.R. Loopline were also damaged. The N.W.R. had also suffered very badly.<sup>54</sup>

2. Attacks on government buildings which included police stations, railway stations, post-offices, courts and in some cases schools and colleges were another important form of struggle during this phase.

3. In tribal areas such as Palamu and Santhal Parganas destruction of liquor shops was the most important form of protest.

4. The subversive propaganda through leaflets was another common although little known form of struggle. Infact this form was most important in those urban centres which quietened after the initial outburst. This form also continued to be very common during the last phase also. In September when the movement was dying out it was reported that "subversive leaflets continue to appear from time to time at widely separated places, many of them purporting to emanate from Bihar Provincial Congress Committee."<sup>55</sup>

-----  
54. Linlithgow Papers, MSS Eur F.125/49, Report sent by D.I.G. (Bihar) - Enclosure to a letter to Linlithgow dated 22nd August.

55. Home Political, file no. 18/9/42, Fortnightly Report sent by Bihar government for the 1st half of September 1942.

"There is still much underground propaganda chiefly directed towards non-payment of taxes and rents and subversive leaflets continue to circulate freely".<sup>56</sup>

One of these called a 'warning to Traitors' was addressed to government servants and warned them to desist from 'atrocities' or pain of being killed.<sup>57</sup> As late as November-end, "the main nuisance of leaflet propaganda" still persisted. Many Indian Gazetted Officers received copies of a 'Do or Die' cyclostyled leaflet in official covers. Some European official received copies of "Quit India".<sup>58</sup> In Chotanagpur division which was otherwise quiet, leaflets were recovered from an ex-employee of the Rural Development Board whose object was to 'stir up the trouble among the aboriginals'.<sup>59</sup>

Some of these leaflets, apart from attempts at direct incitement also sought to create some such impression

-----

56. Home Political, file no. 18/10/42, Fortnightly Report sent by Bihar Government for the first half of October 1942.

57. Ibid.

58. Home Political, file no. 18/11/42, Fortnightly Report sent by Bihar government for the 2nd half of November 1942.

59. Ibid.

as could be harmful to the British cause in the long run. For example some leaflets conveyed the impression that an allied victory would be followed by a world wide revolution whereby India will gain her freedom. Some leaflets gave message to the effect that if Britain is victorious, she will take vengeance on those who have impeded war effort. Accordingly they sought to underplay allied successes by representing the Axis rout in Libya as strategic withdrawal in order to attack Great Britain in greater force and the Japanese defeat in Salomans as due to concentration on the frontiers of India.<sup>60</sup>

#### CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME AND PARALLEL GOVERNMENT

One of the least known aspects of the Q.I.M. is that in some areas, some people, when violence was the order of the day, were quietly giving shape to Gandhi's constructive programme. This is nowhere more evident than in the account of Ramesh Jha, a clerk in Patna Secretariat who after the firing incident, took leave, reached his village (in eastern Bihar) and decided to work the Gandhian programme. He says :

-----  
60. Ibid.

I set it in motion. We held a public meeting of about 20 villages and appealed to them to have a Panchayat in every village based on adult suffrage, each Panchayat to consist of 5,7 or 9 panches according to the population, having a sarpanch and a mantri... In my village out of the nine members five were backward and scheduled classmen and 4 caste Hindus... The village Panchayat met every week... There was no need of Thanas and courts and all the parapharnelia that they entail at public cost.<sup>61</sup>

This man was so fascinated by the success of his programme that he says "if they (i.e. leaders) take to constructive programme they would materialise the dream of the sage (i.e. Gandhi) in no time."<sup>62</sup> Ramesh Jha's is not the only case. There were several such camps being run in that area. Other persons associated with similar tasks were Pandit Chedi Jha, Babu Chitra Narayan Sharma and Babu Ram Bahadur Singh<sup>63</sup>. Attacks on Ganja, Tari and liquour shops were one of the essential ingredients of constructive programme. Patna Town Congress Committee appealed to Kisans and Workers to organise their own Panchayats in the villages.<sup>64</sup> Workers set up parallel

- 
61. Account sent by Ramesh Jha, Dr. K.K. Datta Papers, p. 7, N.M.M.L.
62. Ibid., p. 10.
63. Ibid., p. 6
64. Bihar Provincial Congress Committee Papers, Sadaqat Ashram Patna.

government at Ekma in Saran district. In many areas of Muzaffarpur, national workers set up a parallel administration through their own courts and police stations under their own officers and the machinery of British administration was paralysed.<sup>65</sup> A parallel administration had been set up by people at Sarwan in Deoghar subdivision. It was a sort of People's rule in this area.

These attempts were aimed at building up a structure of national administration from the bottom, to be run by people. A report from the Magistrate of Champaran dated 18 November 1942, mentioned the distribution of such leaflet in that area advocating the formation of Panchayats in villages to look after village affairs, cessation of quarrels and litigations and protection of the poor and hungry. Such village Panchayats were asked to present collective front against government excesses. More elaborate instructions for constructive activities were circulated through Bihar Provincial Congress Committee Circular No. 12. The relevant points in this were the following :

-----

65. A letter from the Superintendent of Police, Muzaffarpur to D.I.G., C.I.P. Bihar dated 8th November 1942; quoted in Dr. K.K Datta Freedom Movement in Bihar, Vol. III, p.110.

1. To establish Gram Panchayats and Gram Seva Dal.
2. To maintain unity and establish contact with outside people.
3. Every circle should send two Mukhias to organise a thana and should meet once a week. From each unit two elected persons should be sent to form a subdivisional organisation and each subdivision should send two representatives to form a district.
4. It is necessary to have a volunteer organisation consisting of 11 persons in every village, circle and area.
5. Congress workers and volunteers should try to check litigation by bringing the parties to an amicable settlement and strengthen the village Panchayats by their enthusiasm and sacrifice.
6. Payment of taxes of any kind should be stopped.
7. The use of Charkha should be propagated. Spinning should be arranged otherwise a time may come when it will be difficult to procure cloth.<sup>66</sup>

---

66. Bihar Provincial Congress Committee Papers,  
Circular issued in October, 1942, Sadagat Ashram



Several Police Stations remained under the control of Congress workers for a month and a half or more. In many villages they formed defence parties to protect the people against the forces of disorder and confusion, established village Panchayats for the transaction of administrative works and tried to regulate the prices of necessities of life to relieve hardships of common people.

In the Patna district, Shri Dwarka Prasad Arya of Khusrupur in Fatwa thana organised an effective defence party and successfully resisted for some time various elements of disorder.<sup>67</sup> Fatehpur in Malsalami thana near Patna was an important centre, where a parallel administration was managed. The head office of BPCC temporarily functioned from here.<sup>68</sup> In the Gaya district, people in certain parts of Jahanabad subdivision tried to manage their own affairs and to curb anti-social influences. A revolutionary government was also set up under the presidentship of Shri Jaglal Mahto in the area bordering on Palamu and Hazaribagh districts. In Sahabad district,

-----  
67. Freedom Movement Collection; Bihar State Archives

68. Ibid.

a large number of thanas passed under Congress control and in villages within their jurisdiction panchayats decided disputes and defence organisations kept watch in the night.

In Saran, a board of several members called 'Swatantra Mandal' was formed. The board worked through village panchayats on which rested the newly built administrative structure. Above the village Panchayat was thana panchayat and all these were under the control of Mandal Panchayat.<sup>69</sup> It also comprised of village Defence Department and volunteers Department or Sevak Dal. Thus Panchayats were established in numerous villages. They discharged various administrative functions keeping in view the people's interests. Market rates were under strict control and supervision. This trend was evident in almost all the districts.

Banka sub-division in Bhagalpur district was an important centre of constructive activities. In the Amarpur thana, people formed a sort of 'national government'.<sup>70</sup>

-----  
69. Ibid.

70. Home Political file no. 18/10/42, Fortnightly Report sent by Bihar government for the first half of October 1942.

In Bihar, Supaul, Saharsa and Madhipur, national workers did their best to carry on constructive activities. The entire edge of the constructive programme was directed towards self reliance and reduction of dependence on colonial institutions. It was directed against the poverty of the masses. Constructive work was within the reach of any one who was desirous of contributing his might to the cause of the country.<sup>71</sup>

Even during the terrorist phase silent constructive work was continued and efforts were being made by those outside prison to carry on national activities. Leaflets were frequently distributed asking people to observe 'independence day', emphasising the Congress programme of starting 'Swaraj Loan Fund', exhorting the people to stop paying rent and revenue, boycott courts and organise Panchayat system. Special arrangements were made on the occasion of Independence day which was celebrated on 26 January 1943, at different places in Bihar with solemnity by Prabhat Ferries, Processions and hartals.

-----

71. Gandhi, CW, vol. 55, p. 429; There were many who could not, for a variety of reasons go to jail and took to constructive work.

## Chapter - III

### Organization, Direction & Social Compositon Of The Movement

---

I had said earlier that regional level evidence can be used to verify the validity or otherwise of some general propositions about the Quit India Movement. I shall now examine the question of whether the movement was a spontaneous outburst or an organised rebellion with the help of evidence from Bihar, supplemented by some other pieces of evidence.

#### ORGANIZATION

The Congress had been preparing organizationally for the movement. Congress leaders visited far flung areas, streamlined party organisation and indulged in massive propaganda war against the government. Gandhi himself, through the Individual Civil Disobedience campaign in 1940-41, and more directly since early 1942, had prepared the people for the coming battle which he said would be 'short and swift'.<sup>1</sup> Gandhi sent his

---

1. Gandhi, CW, Vol. 76, p. 295.

own emissaries to Bengal, Orissa and Bombay to prepare the ground for the coming movement. He sent Khursheed Ben Naoraji, Meera Ben, Ram Manohar Lohia and Mridula Sarabhai to different provinces.<sup>2</sup>

From the end of April and during the months of May and June, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Shri Shrikrishna Sinha and other congress leaders of Bihar toured its different districts to educate and prepare the people for immediate struggle. They addressed numerous meetings in which explicit reference was made to the coming ordeal.<sup>3</sup> They further explained the real motives of the British government and also the nature of the Japanese menace and emphasised the duty of Indians to free themselves from the clutches of the former and oppose the encroachment of the latter through non-violent resistance.

On 11 May 1942, Dr. Rajendra Prasad visited Chapra and addressed a public meeting in which he asked people to carry on constructive works and to arrange for storage of grain.<sup>4</sup> During the first half of May, two well-attended

-----  
2. P.N. Chopra (ed.) op. cit., pp. 23-24.

3. Home Political file no. 18/5/42 & 18/6/42, Fortnightly Report sent by Bihar government for the months of May and June 1942.

4. Ibid.

political conferences were held, one at Ranka in Palamu district and the other at Kudra in Sahabad district.

At Kudra, chief speakers were Shrikrishna Sinha and Shri Krishna Ballabh Sahay, who impressed upon the audience the urgent need of forming village defence parties and enrolment of greater number of Congress members.<sup>5</sup>

A meeting was held at Patna city on the 30th of April under the presidentship of Anugrah Narayan Sinha for organisation of Raksha Dal.<sup>6</sup> Anurgrah Narayan Sinha, Jagjivan Ram and Jagat Narayal Lal visited Mokameh on 27 June and besides speaking on the war situation emphasised the need for forming village defence parties.<sup>7</sup> A largely attended meeting of combined socialist, Congress and Kisan elements was held on 10 July at Hasanpura in Saran district at which some speakers exhorted the audience to join the forthcoming mass movement under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership.<sup>8</sup>

-----  
5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Home Political file no. 18/7/42, Fortnightly Report sent by Bihar government for the first half of July 1942.

8. Ibid., Second half of July 1942.

After their July meeting at Wardha, the Congress Working Committee had not infact placed before people any definite programme to be followed by them in the contemplated fight. It was however suggested that it would include all that was needed for a non-violent struggle and that people should be prepared for subsequent developments. Before the meeting of A.I.C.C. at Bombay Dr. Rajendra Prasad took the necessary steps to acquaint the people of this province with content and significance of Wardha resolution and to sound their views on it. The Provincial Congress Committee had an emergency meeting here on 31st July. Though indisposed, Dr. Prasad made a spirited speech before the committee and all present there realised that the Bombay meeting of the congress was to take a highly significant decision.<sup>9</sup>

In a meeting which was addressed by Anugrah Narayan Sinha at Anjuman Islamia Hall Patna, the students were asked to prepared themselves for the coming struggle. Patna Town Congress Committee indicated to people that this was the last fight for freedom and such a golden opportunity

-----

9. K.K. Datta, Freedom Movement in Bihar, Vol. III pp. 25-26

shall never repeat itself.<sup>10</sup> Through the efforts of Congress leaders, 60 congress meetings were held in Palamu district from January to July 1942. On the 15th of February 1942, Anugrah Narayan Sinha was invited to inaugurate the volunteer corps. In April 1942 Srikrishna Sinha was invited to preside over the District Political Conference, which was attended by thousands of people including a large number of labourers and kisans.<sup>11</sup>

Bihar government reported to the centre "The war situation and the Congress propaganda are said in some districts to have had an adverse effect on recruiting."<sup>12</sup> Its effect is further attested by another report "There are probably very few people who now think that we can win the war and the idea that the only hope of doing so is to take help from the Congress on any terms has been sedulously spread."<sup>13</sup>

- 
10. Ibid., p. 51
  11. Home Political file no. 18/4/42, Fortnightly Report sent by Bihar government for the second half of April 1942.
  12. Home Political file no. 18/3/42, Fortnightly Report sent by Bihar government for the first half of March 1942.
  13. Ibid., Second half of March 1942.



The congress civil defence organization, to the popularization of which most of the recent speaking has been directed, is now beginning to make some progress at least on paper. Officers have been appointed to areas in a number of districts and the number of volunteers is increasing. It appears to be old congress volunteers under the new name. Their claim that their object is the protection of all communities and not increase of congress hold is repudiated outside their own circles.<sup>14</sup>

Congress was opening its branches in the interior and vigorous campaign was going on for the enrolment of members in order to increase the strength of organization. Congress pleaded for the formation of parallel organizations in order to attain self-sufficiency for the people and to reduce dependence on the government. Congress was trying to replace governmental influence by taking up various social welfare works and by creation of various organization to look after the people.

Congress leadership realized the limitations of the urban based movements from its past experiences and consequently it emphasized on extensive preparations in the rural areas. This is also apparent from the following quote from the A.I.C.C. document

-----

14. Ibid.

The most extensive and significant field of work lies in the countryside, where our peasantry offers the biggest reserve of manpower and where village economy is threatened with imminent breakdown. Let peasant representatives in villages be approached by our central agents. The agents themselves must be selected from tried workers of existing organizations and parties, such as the spinners association and Krishak-Prajas, who have already established connections in the interior. Let them select initial targets for assault in each village or group of villages.<sup>15</sup>

In this respect Gandhi repeatedly emphasised the role of awakening the people<sup>16</sup> and declared that people can have Swaraj for the asking when they have attained the power to make it.<sup>17</sup> It was easy to curb an urban based movement but the government simply could not contain each and every village rising on its own under the formal banner of Congress. Ramnandan Misra was organising secret congress corps to carry on the Satyagraha movement. The People's volunteer brigade was the nucleus in Bombay and Ramanandan Mishra was organising a similar

- 
15. Home Political file no. 3/83/42, "The Freedom Struggle Front", a document containing directives for the Congress movement purporting to have emanated from Bombay A.I.C.C. group.
  16. Gandhi, CW, Vol. 68, p. 319.
  17. Gandhi, CW, Vol. 64, p. 194.

corps in Bihar without giving it a special name.<sup>18</sup>

#### DIRECTION

If there was any central plan then we would expect Rajendra Prasad atleast to be aware of it. Therefore, Rajendra Prasad's statements become important in this context. In a letter dated 20 August, Stewart writes to Prasad immediately before the movement. At a meeting of the working committee of the Provincial Congress Committee on the 21st and 22nd of July Rajendra Prasad, who had recently visited Gandhi and Wardha, announced that Gandhi was determined to launch a movement which would take the form of general defiance of the law and the authority of the government. On the 27th of July, Prasad, alluding to Cripps broadcast, is reported to have said that it would make Gandhi more desperate and that the contemplated movement would be to all intents and purposes an open rebellion. On the 30th of July, Stewart writes, it was common talk among local congressmen that Gandhi would appeal to his countrymen to create a state of anarchy. On the 31st of July, Prasad explained Gandhi's views as

-----

18. Home Political file no 3/31/42 - Poll (I)

being that a Japanese invasion was inevitable, in which case India would meet the same fate as Burma and Malaya. If India had to perish, it would be better for them to do so in defence of their country's freedom. Gandhi, therefore, wanted an open rebellion and had great hopes of a response from the villagers.<sup>19</sup>

The above evidence indicates that neither Rajendra Prasad nor local level congressmen were sure of the exact nature of the movement and there was more speculation than information regarding the mood and intentions of Gandhi. There was a general feeling that the coming movement would be in the nature of complete rebellion but nowhere do we find any trace of a central programme for the movement.

This is precisely why Stewart expressed his inability to Linlithgow in "procuring any direct evidence showing Gandhi's personal responsibility"<sup>20</sup> and instead writes "the course of events very strangely suggests that there was in existence a plan of action to sabotage

-----  
19. Linlithgow Papers, MSS Eur F 125/110, Stewart to Linlithgow, August 26, 1942, N.M.M.L.

20. Ibid., Enclosure I to the above letter

communications but, if it was a congress plan, I do not believe that it was known in advance to anyone outside a very close circle of the leaders. It was certainly not a conspiracy which extended into the villages and included those who so heartily lent themselves to sabotage and looting. Up to the last, influential members of the Congress were in the dark as to the nature of Gandhi's plan.<sup>21</sup> Infact Stewart held left-wing students responsible for the programme "...If there was a scheme as I believe there was it was set in operation by the student class of left-wing tendencies who may independently have been thinking along similar lines".<sup>22</sup> Stewart interestingly attributes the failure of the intelligence system to the fact that there was no preconceived plan.<sup>23</sup> What better proof can one give in favour of the argument that the movement had no central direction.

Congress had provided freedom of initiative to the lower level workers and to the masses in earlier

- 
21. Linlithgow Papers, MSS Eur F 123/110, Stewart to Linlithgow, 16 September 1942, N.M.M.L.
  22. Ibid.
  23. Ibid.

movements. In 1942 this freedom was even greater. Once the movement had been ideologically and politically prepared and then initiated by the leadership or headquarters; the lower level Congress organs and cadre were to carry out the actual movement giving full play to their innovation and initiative. There were only two apriori conditions or restrictions :

The movement must start only when initiated by the leadership and must stop when the leadership has so decided; and that it must remain non-violent.<sup>24</sup>

The higher leaders were clapped in jail. But even those who remained out side acted primarily as coordinators or rather as clearing houses for information. 'The movement was open to initiative and innovations at the ground level and was crucially dependent upon them'.<sup>25</sup> Whatever secret or underground organizational structures developed were at the initiative as well as the level of local cadres.

The then congress president Abul Khan Azad revealed the Congress thinking later :

-----  
24. Bipin Chandra, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

25. Ibid.,

From 14 July to 5 August, my time was taken up in a series of meetings with the Congress leaders from different parts of the country. I wanted to impress upon them that if the government accepted our demand or at least allowed us to function, the movement must develop strictly according to Gandhiji's instructions. If, however, the government arrested Gandhiji and other Congress leaders, the people would be free to adopt any method to oppose the violence of the government in every possible way. So long as the leaders were free and able to function, they were responsible for the course of events, but if the government arrested them, it must take the responsibility for consequences.<sup>26</sup>

The decentralised character of the movement is also obvious from a document titled "The Freedom Struggle Front",<sup>27</sup> which supposedly emanated from the Bombay A.I.C.C. group. I give below a few excerpts :

Gandhiji called out to each individual to feel free. The appeal was to the individual direct and response was from the individual direct " This feature invested the movement with spontaneity, flexibility and deathlessness, an eternal and all embracing quality which was thrillingly unique in its national and international possibilities. It eschewed collective massacre and entailed minimum bloodshed".<sup>28</sup>

-----  
26. Azad, n. 31, pp. 81-82.

27. Home Political file no. 3/83/42 : "The freedom struggle Front", a document containing direction for congress movement, purporting to have emanated from Bombay A.I.C.C. group.

28. Ibid.

It is apparent from above except that the movement was decentralised and scope of central direction and control was strictly limited. As the document contained :

The detailed application of the general principles in concrete acts and manoeuvres must be left to the primary fighting units.<sup>29</sup>

It further added :

The purpose of machinery was to outline the general policy and direction and to provide a loose and flexible coordination of the work of already established parties, groups or individuals, to whom the widest discretion is to be left in carrying out day to day programme.<sup>30</sup>

This decentralisation was provided in order to safeguard the movement against the government suppression as the document suggests "in administration as in programme, the greatest decentralisation should be provided for. In that, rather than in secrecy for which the scope is strictly limited in a movement of this character lies the biggest safeguard against suppression".<sup>31</sup>

---

29. Ibid

30. Ibid

31. Ibid



Thus there was full scope for initiative, innovation and creativity at the mass level of the movement. Hundreds of the local level pamphlets and patrikas were completely autonomous in format, content and distribution. After the arrest of well known and tried leaders, the movement came under the direction of local congressmen, who perforce had no guidelines to fall back upon and therefore gave full expression to their innovative faculties. 1942 was a step forward from the earlier movements led by Gandhi because the leadership officially sanctioned local and individual autonomy of the participants in the struggle. The resolution passed by the A.I.C.C. on 8 August 1942 stated :

A time may come when it may not be possible to issue instructions or for instructions to reach our people, and when Congress Committees cease to function at all levels. When this happens, every man and woman who is participating in this movement must function for himself or herself within the four corners of the general instructions issued. Every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide.<sup>32</sup>

---

32. Gandhi, CW, Vol. 76, p. 461.

However, the fact that the Quit India Movement had no central programme issued by Congress does not however mean that the movement had nothing to do with the Congress. Two things are important in this regard. First, in most of the cases, even when and where it took a violent turn, congressmen were in the level. Second even where known Congressmen were not in the lead and leadership was emerging spontaneously, the identification with Gandhi and the Congress was always emphasized.

There are many instances to show that the mob indulging in loot and arson was led by Congressmen. "The mob responsible for disturbances in the Kadamkuan area of Patna on 12 August was instigated inter alia by Jagat Narayan Lal, Jagjivan Ram (both parliamentary secretaries during the Congress ministry), the sister of Rajendra Prasad and Baldev Sahaya (Baldev Sahaya has just resigned from the post of advocate general), Chakradhar Saran, secretary of Rajendra Prasad and Chabunath Pande.

Members of B.P.C.C. were active in supplying food and water to the participants during the damage to Kadamkuan. The mobs responsible for looting and arson at Bihta were encouraged and led by Shri Shyamnandan Singh

M.L.A. A largely attended meeting was held at Jharia on the 17th of August, which was presided over by a leading local Congressman - Purushotam Chauhan. One of the leaders of the mob which invaded the collectorate and judges court at Monghyr on the 11th of August was led by Nirapada Mukherjee, a leading local Congressman. Jaglal Choudhry, ex-minister of excise, was reported to have been personally involved in mass attacks at Garha police station in Saran district. Jamuna Singh, a local Congress pleader, addressed a meeting at Chapra Town Hall on the 17th of August at which he exhorted the audience to sabotage. Immediately after, the mob went and burnt the locoshed.

Gulraj Patel, president of the Town Congress Committee, Hajipur who escaped from Hajipur sub-jail when it was broken into by a riotous mob, was reported to be moving about in the interior of the sub-division encouraging villagers to continue to destroy communications and raid government buildings. Congressmen in the Godda sub-division of the Santhal Parganas were reported to be actively encouraging the Santhals to rise in revolt. The first fruits of this propaganda were the burning of the police station, post-office and Raj Katchery at Mahagana

and the looting of the bazaar at the same place. Sheo Shankar Singh, nephew of the ex-premier, spoke at a meeting held at Monghyr on the 13th of August urging the audience to take possession of the treasury, the post office, police station and railways. Immediately after this, a section of the crowd invaded the Purabsarai railway station broke up the furniture and destroyed the records.<sup>33</sup>

These pieces of evidence show that Congressmen were very much active in the movement. They were not only active but in the lead and were even exhorting people in many instances to commit sabotage. Simultaneously, in the course of the movement, spontaneous leadership was also emerging which once again refutes the argument that the movement had central direction or rigid organization.

Take the case of Ramesh Jha, the clerk in Patna secretariat who after the firing incident, left Patna and headed for his village by boat. On the way, his boat took anchor at Bidhipur, and he was taken to the village. While supper was being made, he took advantage of the intervening time and addressed the villagers on the

33. Linlithgow Papers, MSS Eur F 125/110, Stewart to Linlithgow, dated 26 August 1942.

implications of the movement. "From a clerk," he writes, " I became a leader".<sup>34</sup> This is a significant statement in the sense that such spontaneous leadership was emerging all-over Bihar.

It is obvious that Ramesh Jha was not responding to any centrally organized authority or programme. And yet, people responded with full vigour. What is important is that even in cases where leadership was emerging spontaneously, the link with Gandhi or Congress in whatever form was always there. In the above example, as we have discussed elsewhere, Ramesh Jha, resorted to a typically Gandhian programme.

The popularity and pervasiveness of nationalist slogans is shown by the fact that " in several cases of essentially criminal nature the dacoits shouted political war cries such as 'Swaraj Ho Gaya' or 'Gandhiji ki Jai'".<sup>35</sup> The main slogan at the labour meetings and processions were "Bharat Mata Ki Jai", "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai", "Mazdoor Dal Ki Jai".<sup>36</sup>

- 
34. K.K. Datta Papers, Oral History Section, Account No. 410 sent by Ramesh Jha, P.5, N.M.M.L.
35. Home Political file no. 18/9/42, Fortnightly Report sent by Bihar government for the second half of September.
36. Ibid.

This is precisely the reason why we believe that the Central thrust of the Quit India Movement was nationalist. The interpretations of Gandhi's instructions varied from place to place but he remained what Chandan Mitra calls the 'symbol of mainstream nationalism'.<sup>37</sup>

### SOCIAL COMPOSITION

The widespread impact of the movement is also evident from the nature of the participation. There was hardly any section of society that remained completely untouched by its force. The involvement of all sections of the peasants, as well of the middle and lower classes of urban society is beyond dispute. I discuss at some length, therefore, the position of some of those sections and classes whose participation in or even sympathy for the national movement and especially for a movement in which violence was used, is not beyond dispute.

### BUREAUCRACY

As for bureaucracy, Stewart at least was of the opinion that, except for the constabulary, his other officers had performed considerably well. About Gokhale, the only Indian Commissioner, he wrote that " he had done well".

-----  
37. Chandan Mitra, 'Contours of Popular Protest : The Quit India Movement of 1942', pp. 34-39 (Unpublished).

Similarly, he was satisfied with the work of district officers (District Magistrates & Superintendents of Police). In particular he praised one Mr. Bakshi- an Indian I.C.S. Officer posted at Monghyr. He was also satisfied with the performance of subdivisional officers other magistrates, the subordinate police (D.S.Ps, S.Is).<sup>38</sup>

There were however some glaring cases of dereliction of duty."At Bhabua when the troops were sent to the assistance of subdivisional officer, it found both friend and foe (including the police guards) fast asleep". Similarly when Jharia station in the coal fields was burnt, "sub-deputy collector sat by with a force of armed police and did not lift a finger to interfere". At Jamshedpur, the additional S.P. was found to be "wavering".<sup>39</sup> This surprised Stewart because only 18 months ago that same officer had distinguished himself greatly in the Bihar Sharif Communal riots. Obviously, to Stewart, the difference between a nationalist upsurge and a communal riot was not clear - both were law and order problems.

-----  
38. Linlithgow Papers, MSS Eur F 125/110, Stewart to Linlithgow, 16 September 1942, N.M.M.L.

39. Ibid.

The advocate General Baldev Sahaya resigned saying that "I feel in the circumstances (obtaining in the country) I may not be able to fulfil the duties attached to the office".<sup>40</sup> This was on 11 August. Next day, his sister was found instigating a crowd at Patna. Mrs. Sucheta, Kriplani while absconding often stayed with her cousin, an I.C.S. Officer, at Patna.<sup>41</sup>

As for the ordinary constabulary, they seem to have lost faith in the government. On return from the secretariat firing, Bion's (Inspector General of Police of Bihar) first remark to Stewart was that "his constabulary had not their heads in their work."<sup>42</sup> Stewart reported that "It is a byword in Patna that when the orgy of destruction started in Patna on the night of 11 August, the police were interested but wholly inactive supporters."<sup>43</sup> From Saran and Muzzafarpur districts also come reports of police unsteadiness. The superintendent of Police, Chapra reported on the 15th of August 'the situation has degenerated utterly and

- 
40. Linlithgow Papers, MSS Eur F 125/49, Telegram to viceroy dated 11 August.
41. Francis G. Hutchins, Spontaneous Revolution, p.297; Ramnandan Misra says that on the night of 23rd of September, he entered the house of Mr. L.P. Singh, I.C.S., D.M. (Cuttack) to convey the revolutionary message of the Congress.
42. Linlithgow Papers, MSS Eur F 125/110, Stewart to Linlithgow, 16 September 1942.
43. Ibid.



complete chaos and lawlessness prevail. Regarding the attitude of the lower police, the superintendent observed 'we have been watching the attitude of the constabulary for the last two days and regard their attitude with grave apprehension'. The armed police is probably better in this respect, but we do not put much reliance on the thana, town outpost and ordinary reserve men. They are likely to fail us in a crisis.<sup>44</sup>

At Hajipur, Shri Akshay Kumar, a teacher of the local high school, had resigned his job and was leading the students by organising their processions and in some other ways.<sup>45</sup> In Darbhanga, the sub-inspector of Muhammadpur railway police fell into the hands of the crowd, but was released when he tendered his resignation and joined national workers.<sup>46</sup> Shri Shukhan Dushadh and Shri Bhagwat Gahlaut of Madhupur post office resigned their posts. On the 15th August two police constables at Kamtaul gave up their uniform and arms to the police party and

-----  
44. K.K. Datta, Freedom Movement in Bihar, Vol. III, p. 60.

45. Ibid.

46. Baldeo Narayan, August Kranti, p.114.

joined the people. On the 20th August, 150 Civil court clerks at Gaya resigned.<sup>47</sup> The government officers at Sitamarhi suspected that some constables "were showing signs of disobedience and have congress sympathies"<sup>48</sup>. The officer incharge of Barsoi Police Station of Purnea district helped people in organising a meeting there.

The evidence cited above indicates that the hold of the colonial state over its own apparatus was considerably undermined. Indian members of the bureaucracy were overwhelmed by the national appeal. A large number of officials actively helped the movement at great risk.<sup>49</sup>

What it all points to is that bureaucracy in 1942 could not remain unaffected by the all pervasive nationalist ideology. Obviously it would be too much to expect all of them to have resigned enmasse. It would certainly have been a heroic task. But that does not mean that their not

---

47. K.K.Datta, OP cit., pp. 101-102.

48. Ibid., P. 151, Letter from District Magistrate Muzzafarpur to the Chief Secretary Bihar, 17 August, 1942.

49. Bipan Chandra, OP cit., pp27-28. Achyut Patwardhan in an interview he gave to Bipan Chandra and his co-researchers that one of the three members of the team of top officials deputed to control 1942 movement in Bombay actively helped the nationalists.

doing so amounted to treachery or betrayal. Because of the obvious cost involved in resignation it is not expected of government servants to resign enmasse - especially in a hegemonic struggle. Even if they express their nationalist sentiment 'vicariously', it should be considered an achievement of the movement not its failure. It is in this context that the statement of Ramesh Jha such as "in times of revolution Government servants are the most treachrous"<sup>50</sup> or "in Gardanibagh, forces of reaction proved superior to those of revolution"<sup>51</sup> should be read. These are understandable out-bursts of a man who has left his job to participate in a revolution. For him naturally anybody who has not done so is treachrous. In a fit of emotion, he fails to recognise the significance of the fact that he managed to get the signatures of 35 colleagues<sup>52</sup> condemning the secretariat firing. For 35 government servants to have agreed to condemn a government action was certainly a big achievement - even if Ramesh Jha, perhaps justifiably would not agree with us.

#### CAPITALISTS

The capitalist attitude is best typified by the attitude of the Tatas. On the 20th of August, their employees

---

50. K.K.Datta Papers, Account sent by Ramesh Jha, P.4.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid., P.3,

(labour, foremen and supervisory staff) went on a strike demanding a national government at the centre. This strike was taken recourse to without any prior information at all to Tata Directorate. Naturally, Stewart was surprised how "so complete a strike should have come about without any previous warning or hint".<sup>53</sup> His doubt that Tata Directorate were not so ignorant of the possibility of the strike was perfectly justified and so was his deduction that "there is a strong Bombay side Hindu element on the Board who as much from political sympathies as from business sense, might be prepared to tolerate present loss in order to ensure future favours under a Congress regime."<sup>54</sup>

#### LANDLORDS

As for landlords the governor bemoaned that in the whole province only 'Raja Bahadur Ranka gave active support.'<sup>55</sup> Darbhanga and Dumraon were condemned by Stewart as 'spineless'.<sup>56</sup>

-----  
53. Linlithgow Papers, MSS Eur F 125/49, Stewart to Linlithgow, 25 August 1942.

54. Ibid.

55. Linlithgow Papers, MSS Eur F 125/110, Telegram sent to viceroy dated 22nd September 1942.

56. Ibid., Letter to Linlithgow dated 16 September.

Others were no better. "Landlords in their endeavour to keep on the right side of the Congress have delivered themselves bound hand and foot to their natural enemies."<sup>57</sup> In fact he was so critical of Maharaja Darbhanga that he decided to tell him frankly across the table what he felt about him and his general attitude. The landlords' attitude of support or at least neutrality towards the movement might also explain why they were not made targets of attacks by the crowds despite the total breakdown of law.

In fact, one of the most remarkable features of the Quit India Movement was that private property was not attacked. The target of attack was limited to the symbols of British authority. Despite eruption of widespread violence peasants did not put forward their agrarian demands and no anti-zamindari violence took place. Henningham points out that "infact peasant participation derived from loyalty to Congress sympathy with nationalism, antagonism to the police and the feeling that collapse of British rule was at hand."<sup>58</sup> Target of attack was limited to government symbols and government property but this was

-----

57. Ibid., Letter to Linlithgow dated 19 September

58. S. Henningham, 'Quit India in Bihar, and Eastern U.P.: The Dual Revolt, in R. Guha (ed) Subaltern Studies II

done under unifying banner of nationalism and loyalty to Congress. Peasant response did not emerge from any agrarian demand and the only thing on agenda was the capture of power from imperialist regime and establishment of nationalist government. This movement demonstrated total subsumption of secondary contradictions or internal class conflicts by the primary contradiction with imperialism.

#### ABSENCE OF COMMUNAL INCIDENTS

Another important feature of this movement was that despite totally paralysed administration no communal incident took place. It exposed the hollowness of government's claim that British presence was essential in order to avoid communal tension. Absence of communal clash in a situation of virtual anarchy proved that imperialist claim of indispensability of British rule in a multi-religious society was a farce. In all reports during the movement one phrase is reported in communal column 'nothing to report'.<sup>59</sup>

Government report noted that "it was the outcome of widespread belief that Gandhi and other Congress leaders had issued special instructions that no attempt be made to

-----  
59. Fortnightly reports for the entire movement period appended to Home Political files.

coerce Muslims into participating but that no proof of such instructions had been found. It further observed that "Hindu restraint had been largely responsible for the absence of communal strife."<sup>60</sup> There is no doubt that particular attention was paid by local leaders to avoid any communal tension and special care was taken by them to guarantee the security of Muslims.

Although Muslims as a group did not participate in the movement but we do have evidences of individual participation by them. Abdul Jalil played prominent role in hoisting national flag on Tajpur police station. Daltanganj bazar observed complete hartal on 7 August, "in which Muslim shopkeepers also joined"<sup>61</sup>. When on 19 August, a patrolling police party reached Sakri, some young men snatched away two rifles from them. Hatim Ali kept the bayonet of one of the rifles in the Khadi Bhandar of the Charkha Sangh where he was employed. On the 20th August some soldiers came there and rushed to the shop. Hatim Ali charged Mr. A.J. Salisbury, who guided the military, with the bayonet, by which the latter was

-----

60. Home Political file no. 5/3/43, 1943.

61. K.K. Datta, Freedom Movement in Bihar, Vol. III p. 152, Report of Deputy Commissioner Palamu to the Chief Secretary, 18th/20th December 1942.

slightly injured. He ordered firing from which Hatim Ali died instantaneously.<sup>62</sup> Muslims also faced repression by the government. The house of Gaffur Mian, a congress worker of Nabinagar thana was burnt. Similar was the fate of Mian Sarfuddin and Hamid Mian of Mahnar thana.

---

62. Baldeo Narayan, August Kranti, p. 113.



## Conclusion

It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the Quit India Movement in Bihar was truly an all-encompassing nationalist movement. Even when its programme in many cases was 'un-Gandhian', the name of Gandhi and Congress was on everybody's lips. It was this strong nationalist sentiment which above everything else lay behind the elemental quality of the movement in Bihar. Stewart hit the nail on the head while explaining to Linlithgow the background against which the situation should be viewed :

Bihar is the most Congress ridden province in India and allegiance is owed not to the provincial leaders of the party but to Gandhi himself... Through their tenure of office Congress ministry placed in the forefront of their programmes the amelioration of the lot of cultivator and what they achieved undoubtedly consolidated their position amongst the villagers. At the same time they lost no opportunity of preaching the doctrine of hatred. It was only to be expected that whatever might be the views of the individual of the wisdom or desirability of civil disobedience there would be widespread and unhesitating obedience to the dictates of Gandhi; or to what these dictates were understood to be.<sup>1</sup>

-----

1. Linlithgow Papers, MSS Eur F 125/110  
Stewart to Linlithgow, 16 September,  
N.M.M.L.

Thus it can be said that the central thrust of the August movement was nationalist. The victory was symbolic and it was achieved through the capture of symbols of British invincibility. What it confirmed, however, was that Congress in future could successfully plan for the seizure of power if the British refused to obey the popular will. It was great morale booster for freedom fighters. Though the British succeeded in restoring law and order by the deployment of army but the amount of resources used in the process was enough to show that it could not be repeated easily. The gravity of the situation can be imagined from the writings of Viceroy himself. He wrote to the British government that "I am engaged here in meeting by far the most serious rebellion since that of 1857, the gravity and extent of which we have concealed so far for the reasons of military security."<sup>2</sup> It is evident from the above account that government had no illusions about the popular mood.

It was infact a fight to the finish. Now, there was no scope left for bargaining between congress and the

-----

2. N. Mansergh (ed) Transfer of Power :  
Vol II, pp. 835-54, Linlithgow to Churchill,  
telegram dated 31st August 1942.

government on the issue of independence. As Mridula Mukherjee points out "the great significance of this historic movement was that it placed the demand for independence on the immediate agenda of the national movement".<sup>3</sup> It was a clear cut signal for the British to look for an honourable withdrawal. The message was conveyed to them and their retreat was confirmed.

However, since the Quit India Movement did not immediately culminate in a British withdrawal, therefore some historians, such as, for example, Chandan Mitra have tended to miss the significance of the movement in this respect. In Chandan Mitra's words "The irony was that once 'victory' was achieved, the Congress leaders did not know what to do" <sup>4</sup> and that "the rapid collapse represented the limitation of the mobilization process itself. He does not understand that it was in the nature of things that the victory, if at all, would be ephemeral because it was symbolic. What is above all important in a hegemonic struggle is that victory was achieved - no matter for a second or for a minute. The problem arises

- 
- TH-6934
3. Mridula Mukherjee, Chapter 35 titled 'The Quit India Movement and the INA' in Bipan Chandra (ed) 'India's Struggle for Independence', p. 470.
  4. Chandan Mitra, op. cit., p. 36.

when Quit India is seen as an alternative strategy, which it was not. It was an integral part of the same strategy of hegemonic struggle, except that the form of the pressure exerted on the colonial state was of a different order - and that too largely because of the peculiar conditions created by war time restrictive laws, etc. Because force was used, the strategy had not shifted to one based on force - which is what Chandan Mitra expects and is therefore disappointed.

In 1942, almost anyone who claimed to be revealing the congress programme in a way which confirmed the general perception of a doomed and collapsing Raj was followed. These new men were drawn from peasant mobs which they addressed but with an outlook shaped and widened by the events and the images of the National movement. Their call to destroy the government was accepted as a Congress message.

It has been established beyond doubt that the central thrust of the Quit India Movement was nationalist. In the course of the movement no internal contradiction was expressed. It drew a response from all sections of the society and the unity was based on a mobilisation around

nationalist symbols. In fact, the explanation of the movement can never be complete without recognising the strong emotional component. It is also clear that the nationalist hegemony over the movement as epitomised by Gandhi and the Congress was complete.

There has been some constriction in the way the relation between the peasantry and the nationalist leadership has been examined.

Thus it is imperative to explore the long term strategy of Congress for the transfer of Power. The pattern prevailing over the long term was that of consolidation of social support by the Congress through winning the right to mediate in social relationships on a nationalist and representative state which challenge the colonial state. This was marked out in the countryside of Bihar in the 'truce' period inaugurated by Gandhi - Irwin Pact of 1931 and in the period of Congress ministry. In 1942, the peasantry rallied to express its identification with the hope it had from Swaraj government.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## PRIMARY SOURCES

## A. MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

Private Papers

Dr. K.K. Datta Papers, oral history section,  
N.M.M.L., New Delhi.

Ramnandan Misra Papers, N.M.M.L.

Linlithgow papers, (microfilm), N.M.M.L., New Delhi.

Institutional Papers

All India Congress Committee Papers, N.M.M.L.

Bihar Provincial Congress Committee Papers, Sadaqat  
Ashram, Patna.

Official Records

Home Department (Political), These include Fortnightly  
Reports and some Judicial Records; National Archives  
of India (N.A.I.)

Political (Special) Department, Bihar State Archives  
(B.S.A.)

Freedom Movement Collection ( This consists of files  
of various departments including Home, Police and  
Judicial), B.S.A.

## B. PRINTED SOURCES

Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vols. 71 to 77.

Mansergh, Nicholas (ed), The Transfer of Power, Vols I - VIII,  
London, 1970-79.

Indian Annual Register 1939-46, N.N. Mitra (ed.)  
Calcutta

SECONDARY SOURCES

Azad, A.K., India Wins Freedom, Calcutta, 1959.

Bhuyan, A.C., The Second World War and Indian Nationalism: A Study of the Quit India Movement; Ph.D. Thesis submitted in J.N.U., SIS, 1972.

Bose, N.S., 'The Indian National Movement; an Outline, Calcutta, 1965.

Bose, S.C., The Indian Struggle, Calcutta, 1964.

Chandra, B., Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India, New Delhi, 1981.

Chandra, B., Communalism in Modern India, New Delhi, 1987.

Chandra, B., India's Struggle For Independence 1857-1947,

Chandra, B., Indian National Movement : The Long Term Dynamics, New Delhi, 1988.

Chopra, P.N. (ed) Quit India Movement : British Secret Report, 1976.

Coupland, R., The Cripps Mission, London, 1942.

Das, A.N. (ed.), Agrarian Movements in Twentieth Century Bihar, New Delhi, 1982.

Datta, K.K., History of Freedom Movement in Bihar, 3 Volumes, Patna, 1958.

Desai, A.R., Social Background of Indian Nationalism, Bombay, 1959.

Dhanagare, D.N., Peasant Movements in India, 1920-1950, Delhi, 1983.

Dhanagare, D.N., Agrarian Movements and Gandhian Politics, Agra 1975.

Diwakar, R.R., Bihar Through the Ages, Bombay, 1959.

Dutt, R.P., India Today, Bombay, 1947.

Ghosh, A.K., Prices and Economic Fluctuations in India, 1861-1947, New Delhi, 1979.

Guha, R (ed.) Subaltern Studies Vol. I, Writings on South Asian History and Society, New Delhi, 1982.

Guha, R (ed), Subaltern Studies II, Delhi, 1983.

Harcourt, Max, "Kisan Populism and Revolution in Rural India : The 1942 Disturbances in Bihar and East United Provinces", D.A. Low (ed), Congress and the Raj, New Delhi, 1977.

Hardiman, D., 'The Quit India Movement in Gujarat', C.S.S.S., Calcutta, 1983, unpublished.

Hauser, W., The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, 1929-42 : The Study of An Indian Peasant Movement, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1961.

Henningham, Stephen, Peasant Movements in Colonial India North Bihar 1917-42, Cambara, 1982.

Henningham, Stephen, "Quit India in Bihar and the East United Provinces : The Dual Revolt", in R. Guha (ed), Subaltern Studies II, Delhi, 1983.

Hutchins, Francis G., Spontaneous Revolution : The Quit India Movement, Delhi, 1971.

Hutchins, Francis G., India's Revolution : Gandhi and the Quit India Movement, Harvard University Press, 1973.

Jha, H., "Lower Caste Peasants and Upper Caste Zamindars in Bihar (1921-25): An analysis of Sanskritisation and Contradiction between two groups", Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. XIV, NO.4, 1977.

Low, D.A., 'Introductoin : The Climatic Years, 1917-47 in D.A. Low (ed) Congress and the Raj, London, 1978.

Low, D.A. (ed), Congress and the Raj : Facets of the Struggle 1917-47, New Delhi, 1977.



Majumdar, R.C., History of the Freedom Movement in India, Calcutta, 1963, 3 volumes

Mathur, Y.B., Quit India and the struggle for freedom, New Delhi, 1979.

Mitra, C., Political Mobilization and The Nationalist Movement in Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, 1937-42  
D.Phil Thesis Oxford University, 1983.

Mitra, C., Contours of Popular Protest : The Quit India Movement of 1942 (Unpublished)

Narayan, Baldeo, August Kranti.

Narayan, Jaya Prakash, To all Fighters of Freedom, Letter no. 2 (Calcutta, 1943), Towards Struggle Bombay, 1946.

Nehru, Jawahar Lal, Discovery of India, Bombay, 1972.

Nehru, Jawahar Lal, An Autobiography, London, 1936, reprint, Delhi 1962.

Niblett, R.H., The Congress Rebellion in Azamgarh, 6 August - September 1942, Allahabad, 1957, ed. S.A.A. Rizvi.

Pandey, B.N., Indian nationalist movement, 1885-1947; Select documents, London, Macmillan 1979.

Pandey, G. "Anticipation of power : The Bhojpur Region in 1942", C.S.S., Calcutta, June 1983, Unpublished.

Pandey, G. The Ascendancy of Congress in Uttar Pradesh, 1926-34 : A Study in Imperfect Mobilisation, Delhi, 1978

Panigrahi, D.N., Quit India and the Struggle for Freedom, New Delhi, 1984.

Pouchepadass, J., "Local leaders and the intelligentsia in the Champaran Satyagraha (1917) : A Study in Peasant Mobilisation", Contributions to Indian Sociology, No. 8, 1974.

Prasad, Amba, The Indian Revolt of 1942, Delhi, 1950.

Prasad, Rajendra, Autobiography, Delhi, 1957.

Prasad, Rajendra, Mahatma Gandhi and Bihar

Pyarelal, Mahatma Gandhi, The Last Phase, 2 volumes  
Ahmedabad 1956.

Rasul, M.A., History of the All India Kisan Sabha,  
Calcutta, 1974.

Sahai, Govind, 42 Rebellion, Delhi, 1947.

Sanyal, Hitesranjan, "Quit India Movement in the  
Medinipur District", C.S.S.S., Calcutta, 1983,  
Unpublished.

Saraswati, Shahjanand, Kisan Sabha Ke Sansmaran ,  
Patna, 1940.

Saraswati, Sahajanand, Maharudra Ka Mahatandav,  
Patna, 1950.

Sarkar, Sumit, Modern India, New Delhi, 1983.

Seth, Hiralal Quit India Reexamined (Lahore, 1943).

Siddiqi, M.H., Agrarian Unrest in North India,  
New Delhi, 1978.

Singh, Darbara, Indian Struggle, 1942 (Lahore, 1944).

Singha Radhika, Aspects of the Quit India Movement  
in Eastern U.P., M.Phil dissertation, CHS JNU,  
New Delhi, 1986.

Sitaramayya, Pattabhi, History of the Indian National  
Congress, Vol. 2, 1935-47, Bombay, 1947.

Tendulkar, Mahatma, 8 volumes, New Delhi, 1969.

Venkatramani, M.S. and Shrivastava, B.K. Quit India :  
The American Response to the 1942 struggle, New Delhi.