

Chapter I

Tryst With Betrayal

Date:	August 15, 1947
Place:	New Delhi
Occasion	Swearing in Ceremony of the Governor General of Independent (?) India
Source	File No 75/3/47 – Public (B) of the Ministry of Home Affairs, “Viscount Mountbatten – Indian Dominion Swearing in Ceremony”

Oath of Allegiance

“I Rear Admiral Viscount Mountbatten of Burma do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King George the Sixth, His Heirs and Successors according to Law. So Help Me God”

Oath of Office

“I Rear Admiral Viscount Mountbatten of Burma do swear that I will well and truly serve His Majesty King George the Sixth, His Heirs and Successors in the Office of Governor General of India. So Help Me God”

Once the Governor General of Independent India took this Oath of Allegiance and Oath of Office as prescribed in the Fourth Schedule of the Government of India Act 1935, he proceeded to administer a similar Oath of Office to his Council of Ministers.

The issue of the Council of Ministers swearing allegiance to the King without offending the people had been debated in 56th Meeting of the Viceroy’s Staff Meeting of July 26, 1947. An ingenious way had been found to ensure that they could swear allegiance to the King without making it obvious to the People. It had been decided that they would swear allegiance to the King by making a reference to the Constitution of India or the Government of India Act 1935, which started as under:

“ Be it enacted by King’s Most Excellency Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lord’s spiritual and Temporal...”

Once the small issue of establishing the Sovereignty of King George the VI over Independent India was put beyond a shadow of doubt, the self proclaimed Prime Minister – since there was no provision for the post of a Prime Minister in the Government of India Act 1935 at the Federal level, went on to wax eloquently about a Tryst with Destiny.

Nehru knew the fraud that was being committed on the unsuspecting people, for he said,

“Many years ago, we made a tryst with Destiny. We had taken a pledge, a vow. Now the time has come to redeem it. But perhaps the pledge has not been yet redeemed fully though stages have been reached in that direction. **We have almost attained Independence**”

Pray, what is “almost attained Independence”. There are certain absolute values in life with no scope for halfway measures. Either a human being is a virgin or he/she is not. Either a Nation is Independent or it is not.

Nehru sought to overcome the problem by going on to say that:

“After a few moments, the Assembly will assume the status of a fully free and independent body and will represent an independent and free country”.

For the record – the Constituent Assembly did assume Powers of Governance of the Country. It refrained from assuming Powers of Sovereignty.

If the Constituent Assembly did come to represent “an independent and free country” on August 15, 1947

- Why did it refrain from appointing the Head of the State – the Governor General of India.

The appointment of the Governor General of India was notified on August 15, 1947.

Order No 75/3/47-Public (B) read that:

Ordered that the following Proclamation be published in the Gazette of India: “Whereas His Excellency Rear Admiral the Right Honorable the Viscount Mountbatten of Burma ICG PC GMSI GMIF GC VO ICCB, DSU has been appointed by **His Majesty** to be the Governor General of the Dominion of India and assumed the said office, the said appointment is hereby notified.”

- Why a Grade C Confidential Telegram No 38 – GG of October 9, 1947 had to be sent to seeking **His Majesty’s** approval for appointment of Ambassador of USSR to India.
- Why was Dr. Tara Chand appointed as **His Majesty’s Ambassador** for India to Afghanistan in 1948.
- Why did the Government of India recognize the Prerogative Powers of the King by seeking to place the self Proclaimed Prime Minister of India ahead of Presidency Governors Outside their charge in the “Royal Warrant of Precedence on August 22, 1947, when the country was up in unprecedented flames of communal passions.
- Why was the Governor General of India required to give his assent to every act of the Constituent Assembly in the name of “**His Majesty**”. Even the adoption of the Constitution of India has been assented to by the Governor General of India in the name of “**His Majesty**”.

Once these facts are known, even a child would say that Mr. Nehru’s assertion on August 14, 1947 that “After a few moments, the Assembly will assume the status of a fully free and independent body and will represent an independent and free country” represents a claim not founded on facts.

Government of India knows the truth. It may choose to propagate the myth that we became Independent on August 15, 1947. However, when faced with facts, it chooses to duck the issue.

On January 4, 2005, Abhinav Bharat submitted a Representation to the Government demanding August 15 be not considered as Independence Day.

Our representation was in compliance of an order dated December 23, 2004 in WP 2947 of 2004 of a Division Bench of the High Court at Mumbai. The Government was required to dispose off the Representation by a reasoned order within six weeks. It could have easily rubbished our claim if the History as taught today is true. It preferred to risk committing Contempt of Court by not complying with the orders of the Court.

The Court repeated its order on April 20, 2005 in WP 682 of 2005, terming the non compliance as unfortunate. Once again six weeks came and went. When this was brought to the notice of the Court, it preferred discretion to valour and passed a “No Order”. Even the Supreme Court has so far refrained from ensuring compliance with the order of April 20, 2005 passed by the Division Bench of the Bombay High Court.

Incidentally, a State called Bombay or Madras or a Presidency of Calcutta no longer exists in an Independent Republic of India. But the courts retain their British names not by accident but due to the fact that these High Courts do not owe their existence to Constitution of India but to Letters of Patent issued by the British Monarch!!!! A plea to this effect was officially taken by the High Court of Calcutta to avoid application of provisions of Right to Information Act 2005.

This book therefore seeks to take the case to the undisputed Sovereign of the Indian State – The People of India. It seeks to lay bare the shocking story of the Tryst with Betrayal that has not yet ended even in 2015. The purpose is to ensure that that People of India are made aware of facts so that they can demand an end to this sordid affair. Hopefully, the Government of the day will respond far more positively than the one in the past.

In order to know the full story, we have to go back to 1939 – the Outbreak of the World War II and study the events that followed.

Chapter II

The War and the Western Civilisation

The outbreak of the Great War caused a great deal of excitement in the country. Somehow, everyone who mattered seemed to have realised that the tide of events was going to make decisive changes in the affairs of men. It is in this surcharged atmosphere that the real colours of the Revolutionaries and the Congress High Command led by Gandhiji came to fore in a manner so glaringly that it is a shame that later attempts to cloak the realities have proved to be unfortunately so successful.

It was in April 1936, that Nehru had thundered in his Presidential address at Lucknow session of the Congress: “Every war waged by imperialist powers will be an imperialist war whatever the excuses put forward; therefore we must keep out of it”. In its election manifesto issued in August 1936, the Congress had reaffirmed the opposition by making it clear that ‘India cannot fight for freedom unless it is free herself.’ It may be worthwhile to recall that this election manifesto had been prepared to fight elections under the Government of India Act 1935 which made no pretensions of according Dominion Status, while Absolute Political Independence remained a taboo. So why had the Congress decided to participate in such elections after demanding Absolute Political Independence in 1929? Best left unanswered.

Once the basic ideal of Absolute Political Independence was compromised, others followed. When the time came to ‘fulfill the pledge’ both the stalwarts of Congress – Gandhiji and Nehru proved to be sorely wanting. In the first week of September 1939, Gandhiji wrote: “ I am not just now thinking of India’s deliverance. It will come, but what will it be worth if England and France fall, or if they come victorious over Germany ruined and humbled?”

Nehru went a step further and made it clear that in his view India should not only offer sympathy but unconditional support to Britain. Vallabhbhai Patel spoke in the same vein.

It was the redoubtable Subhas Bose, who stood firm in defiance against this emotional chatter and pointed out that the official policy of the Congress since 1927 had been to deny any co-operation to the British in the event of a War.

It was now time to put the stated policy in practice. The mood of the people was no doubt with Subhas. The magic of Gandhi was not without limitations and he knew it only too well. By 15th September 1939, the Congress Working Committee took a clear stand against an unconditional participation in the War effort. By 10th October, the All India Congress Committee went a step further and demanded declaration of Indian Independence.

This turn around served to fool the people but astute leaders like Setalvad, Savarkar, Ambedkar and Jamnadas Mehta saw through the game. They pointed out that “the attitude of the Congress in the matter of the present war is on the face of it insincere and unreliable. Only a few days before the last resolution (on 15th September) of the Congress Working Committee, its prominent leaders sang a totally different tune...the resolution of the Working Committee was apparently dictated *by the desire of not being outdone by the Forward Bloc of Mr. Subhas Bose.*”

If it sounds harsh, consider the following historical facts. It was on 10th October 1939 that the Congress demanded declaration of Indian Independence but it was not until the 9th August 1942, a good three years later that it decided to launch a struggle to force the issue. Official history does not enlighten us on the reasons for this delay but we shall later try and get at the truth. In the meanwhile, let us first see if there was any merit in the emotional outburst of Gandhiji in favour of the British at the onset of the War.

“The Indian people have no quarrel with the German people or the Japanese people or any other people, but they have a deep rooted quarrel with the systems which deny freedom and are based on violence and aggression.” Few, if any would seek to contest these sentiments so elegantly expressed in the Nehru drafted Congress Working Committee resolution in that fateful September of 1939.

We shall only try to ‘Walk the Talk’ as they say. What were these systems *which sought to deny freedom and were based on violence and aggression*. Were these systems the inventions of the perverted Nazi minds? The Congress appeared to believe so. For it was quite prepared to throw the country wholeheartedly into the thick of the battle field if only the British were to declare India independent and thereby hand over the power to the Congress.

The consequences of participation in the War of an India that was free or otherwise on the Poorest of the Poor does not seem to have bothered the Congress high command. For Nehru, it was an article of faith that the British were fighting the evil forces of Fascism and Nazism and therefore deserved all help of an Independent India - ruled of course by none other than himself.

It is strange that the Irish people, who were so close to these defenders of the faith; bound to them by ties of history and blood remained unmoved by the struggle and refused to share Nehru’s enthusiasm. Considering that they were geographically next door neighbours of the British, it was indeed queer that they remained unmoved even as the Nazi bombs rained death and devastation on London and resolutely decided to remain Neutral. Perhaps, they were immoral people unworthy of being a part of the civilised world. Or perhaps, they were better judges of the British character than Mr. Nehru - the Indian prince.

By the early nineteenth century, Potato had become the staple diet of large sections of Ireland’s rural population. A vegetable rich in vitamins and protein, it grew easily in the moist Irish earth. In the six decades after 1780, Ireland experienced a demographic explosion – an increase of nearly 300 per cent. Yet, with the exception of Ulster, she experienced little industrialization to absorb the surplus numbers. On top of this, the Irish society was clamped by a body of repressive legislation, which blocked many obvious solutions to her distress. Conditions on the land had been atrocious for longer than anyone remembered. Until 1829, Catholic Irishmen were not even allowed to buy land, and few had money to do so. Anglo-Irish landlords, often absentees, demanded high rents or deliveries in kind on pain of instant eviction. Evictions were enforced by the military, which customarily razed or tumbled the houses of defaulters. Irish peasants had no security, and little incentive to work.

Ireland was the home of squalor-with large ragged families living in mud huts with no furniture – in company of the pigs.

Between 1845 and 1849 Ireland suffered one of Europe's worst famines. The fungal blight *phytophthora infestans* decimated the potato crop in three successive years. In 1846, the prices were controlled and public works started to provide employment. Soup rations were also distributed.

A Whig Ministry took power in London and the relief works were stopped, as it did not believe in disrupting the market equilibrium by state intervention. As the crop failed for the third time in 1848, human exodus out of Ireland became a flood. Ragged families garnered their last strength to walk to the ports. Many collapsed on the roads. Others perished in the overcrowded steerage holds of the ships. They landed on the docks of New York and Montreal racked with fever, stomach cramps and Anglophobia to die in droves. In the meanwhile, in Ireland landlords continued to collect rents. Even as the shriveled corpses littered the fields and children lay dying in the workhouses, grain export to England continued under armed protection.

Within a short span of four years, the island's population had decreased by a quarter. A million died of hunger, while another million had emigrated. The British Government's final relief measure in August 1849 was to send Queen Victoria and Prince Albert on state visit to Ireland. Nehru may have overlooked the small detail but the Irish people till this date can not forget that it all happened when Ireland was very much an integral part of the United Kingdom.

In the mid nineteenth century, the British Empire was at its zenith of glory. United Kingdom was the very center of Europe – called the Powerhouse of the World. Yet this Catastrophe was allowed to take place within its own borders! What kind of a nation was it that allowed this to happen to its own people without so much as blinking an eyelid?

Come the year 1900 and an age had arrived in which, as Kennedy says, "The global dominance of the West, implicit since da Gama's day, now knew few limits". What is it that happened in next fifty years? The paradox of scientific progress aimed at improving material comforts together with a growing disdain for human life."

Let us look at the first fifty years. In the World War I, some 8 million soldiers lost their lives, while during the World War II, the numbers of the dead increased to 14 million. It is particularly during the World War II that civilian population became a legitimate military target and some 27 million civilians lost their lives, almost 2 civilian death for every loss of life of a soldier.

By the time Hitler finished his own dance of death, another six million innocents had paid with their lives for the crime of being Jews. In all some 55 million Europeans (Yes! Europeans! For the Asian and African deaths have not been counted in these statistics) had perished in Wars.

Move on another fifty years and what do we find? Even more material progress. Yet even less security for the human race. How many of us would care to be reminded of the fact that one individual alone has the power of life and death over all of us - the President of the United States of America. It is comforting to deny the reality that a rogue American President can rain death and destruction all over the world at the press of a button untrammelled by any force anywhere.

It is less comforting to remember the reality that President Nixon was all too aware of this aspect of his powers during the final days of his Presidency racked by the Watergate scandal.

Does the Western concept of progress necessarily imply use of systems, which make most lethal instruments of violence and aggression available to the most progressive nation. Is this how the global dominance of the West, implicit since da Gama's day, was secured?

Chapter II (a)

A Dark Age Begins, 1492 - 1660

If there has been one theme that has remained constant in all the conflicts that have rocked Europe in last five hundred years, it is the bid for mastery of the Continent by one nation or the other. Rather by one national elite or the other over every one else. Driven by a quest for power, every European elite has, without a moment's self doubt, made full use of every scientific discovery, every celebration of victory of reason, of intellect to suppress all those who are not a part of its charmed circle. None of the elite has shown more than a passing concern even for those who share the same nationality but fall outside its charmed circles.

The output of the best of its people has been shamelessly exploited to emerge as The Master Race. The non-European societies were taken to be the slave tribes, whose very purpose of existence was to make the means available for the sake of the European masters. Violence, wanton cruelty and aggression were considered necessary evils for what passed for Progress. It is not surprising then that the very violence wanton, cruelty and aggression that was unleashed against the more primitive societies for hundreds of years came to haunt the Europeans themselves in the Twentieth century. What else can explain the awful dance of death and destruction that befell on the European civilization in the first half of the Twentieth century delivering death that had no reason or purpose. Or the fact that ever since 1945, Europe as well as the world has been forced to live under the shadow of Armageddon at a moment's notice.

It is not without reason that Eric Hobsbawm has chosen to call this as An Age of Extremes. Nor is this being said with the benefit of hindsight. For by 1939, record of some 400 years of European disregard for other human beings was there for anyone to see. Only the most gullible or an absolute idiot could believe that the European powers could go to War against each other for such abstract concept as propagation of democracy in the world at large. What they were fighting for were their own vital interests. All else be damned.

A free or an unfree India had no business to take part in a War, in which the sole purpose of the antagonists on both sides was to exploit the resources of the world for their own benefit – paying scant consideration to other people. A desperately poor country suffering from hundreds of years of exploitation was in no position to help anybody whether it was being ruled by the British or the Congress.

Let us go back to the late Fifteenth century – the days of da Gama. The Orient had always tantalized the Europeans. The image of the East as conjured up from fragmentary tales of travelers, portrayed extensive eastern empires possessing fabulous wealth and vast armies. Spurred on by these images, the Europeans dreamt of reaching these fabled places. The two dominant powers of Europe in the fifteenth century, Spain and Portugal were in a race to find a trade route to these fabled lands. Christopher Columbus was the first to set sail from Spain on 3rd August 1492. Sailing westward, he reached Bahamas on 12th October. After travelling further down to Cuba, he returned to Spain proclaiming to have found a route to India. That his claim was incorrect was known even in his lifetime but his discovery of the Americas was to prove quite lucrative to Spain. For they soon realized that the Americas held an extraordinary wealth of their own. By 1519 the Aztec Empire of the Mexico was won. The Aztec leader had welcomed Spanish explorer Cortes with gifts taking him to be their returning Priest God. What the Aztec leader got in return from the European invader was imprisonment and death. Other ruthless Spaniards conquered Inca Empire in Peru by 1533, looting its treasure and killing the people.

As the two enormous territories were won for the Spanish Emperor, colonial governments were established in Mexico and Peru. Well into the Seventeenth century, the wealth of these new lands would fill the Spanish coffers enabling it to play the role of a formidable military and political power in Europe.

The first export from Americas consisted of the Gold looted from the treasures of Aztecs and Incas. Soon silver was discovered to the misfortune of the locals as well as the African inhabitants. Initially, the locals were made to slave in the silver mines. Soon brutal mining conditions, bloodshed and starvation decimated the peace loving people. More hardy factors of production had to be found. There were enough Man-animals in the jungles of Africa.

A million Negroes soon found themselves chained, with little room to breath or move, in ships bound for the New World of the Spaniards. A quarter died but enough survived to make up for the local population that had perished. Now the mines could produce Silver uninterrupted. By 1620, some 10,000 tons of Silver had been shipped to Europe.

Meanwhile, their European rivals – the Portuguese, were not far behind. Their own *Columbus* was Vasco da Gama, who sailed East for 4500 miles and reached Calicut on 22nd May 1498. The expedition yielded a profit of 60 times the original value of the Portuguese merchandise sent. Da Gama's next expedition was loaded with arms and merchandise. His men shattered any resistance of the infidel inhabitants to Portuguese excursion into the spice trade. With greatest brutality, da Gama ravaged cities to burn and pillage whatever lay within his path; prisoners were mutilated and slaughtered.

With such shining examples to follow, the other Portuguese explorers did not lag behind. With their base in India, they pushed eastwards. By 1509, they had penetrated to the Spice Islands (now in Indonesia). The capital of the Portuguese territory was founded at Goa by 1515. Trading facility was established at Macao, not far from Canton in China. The Portuguese successes in the East continued for a long time as bases were established not only at Goa but also at Aden and Hormuz in the Persian Gulf. As the Spanish and the Portuguese ships docked at their home ports laden with Silver, Spice and other exotic eastern goodies, the importance of possessing overseas territories was driven home to one and all contenders for power in Europe. Each newly acquired land came to be viewed as existing solely for sending its wealth to the mother country. The local inhabitants were merely factors of production, who could be substituted as and when required by new supplies from elsewhere. In 1519, the Spanish Habsburg Empire emerged as the European super power. Emperor Charles V ascended the throne as the Holy Roman Emperor and as the ruler of Habsburg lands in Austria. Thus, the twin centers of Habsburg power in Madrid and Vienna came under a common ruler. For over next fifty years, only Portugal France and England remained outside the orbit of the Habsburg Empire. By 1580 Portugal had been annexed and the mastery of Europe lay in the Habsburg grasp but it was the Dutch revolt aided by English and the active opposition of France, that tilted the scale against this incipient superpower.

We shall briefly look at these events not because there is anything new to discover but to satisfy ourselves that none of the challengers to the Habsburg might gave any consideration, whatsoever, to the plight of the poor inhabitants of its overseas territories.

Of course, no study of the Sixteenth century can be complete without the story of the Roman Inquisitions. It is of interest to us for it shows that it was not as if that the Europeans were particularly cruel to the inhabitants of the colonies. They could be equally so to their own people.

The Church had exercised a major influence on the affairs of state in Europe for hundreds of years but as the Fifteenth century drew to a close, the reputation of the Church was in decline. The nadir was reached during the papacies of Alexander VI (1492 – 1503) and Julius II (1503 – 1513). Alexander's passions were gold, women and the careers of his bastard children, while Julius loved nothing better than War and conquest.

In 1509, Rome was visited by a young Augustinian monk from Wittenberg in Saxony – a German province, Martin Luther, who, was shocked to the bones by what he saw. Within ten years, he was to be the head of the first Protestant revolt. Rome, to him, was the seat of sodomy and the beast of Apocalypse. On 31st October 1517, he nailed a sheet of 95 arguments to the door of Wittenberg's castle church. He was summoned by the Spanish Emperor Charles V to appear before the Imperial Diet in 1521. Luther defended himself with fortitude:

*Hier stehe ich. Ich kann nicht anders.
Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise.*

A ban pronounced by the Diet against Luther could not be enforced. Religious protest was turning into political revolt. Yet this same revolutionary had no sympathy for a peasant revolt (1524), which he condemned by publishing 'Against the Murderous and Thieving Hoards of Peasants', trenchantly defending the social order and the rights of the princes. The peasant rebels were crushed in a sea of blood.

The religious dispute continued to simmer. At Augsburg in 1530, a measured summery of the Protestant beliefs were submitted. The Emperor set deadline of April 1531 for recantation of the confession of Augusburg. In response, the Protestant princes formed their armed league. From then on the division of the Church into the Catholic and the Protestant camp, was clearly defined.

Around this time, King Henry VIII of England initiated moves, which resulted in the formation of the Church of England that recognized no authority of Rome. Driven by an obsession to have a male heir, he asked for divorce from his wife Catherine, the aunt of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. The Pope fearing the wrath of the Emperor refused to grant the annulment of marriage. An enraged King of England, who had once denounced Luther, now turned his back to Rome.

Long before Luther first raised the call for reform, many devout Catholics had been concerned about the need to correct the abuses in the Church. Luther's own call for reforms was a part of this general concern for reform but no one had imagined starting a new Church. By 1540, the attitude of Catholic leaders everywhere was hardening. They became convinced that the Protestants had inflicted a grave damage upon the Church and concluded that the Protestants were heretics and deserved to be treated as such. In 1542, Pope Paul III, was persuaded to establish Roman Inquisition. Hereafter, burning the heretics at stake became an accepted way of settling theological disputes amongst the Christians.

In England, Henry VIII was succeeded by his nine-year son, who soon died before being an adult. In 1553, Mary, the daughter of Henry and Catherin ascended the throne. Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Crammer, who had helped confirm the reformist character of the Church of England, was burnt at stake by Mary in 1556. Mary's efforts at reintroducing Catholic Church in England were annulled by her half sister Elizabeth, who succeeded Mary. From 1559 to her death in 1603, she held the Protestants and Catholics at bay, consolidating the Church of England. She kept on coyly refusing the marriage proposals of the Spanish Emperor Philip II even as she hired pirates to loot the Spanish silver coming in from the Americas.

Meanwhile in France, the religious divide provoked the French Wars of religion, which were spectacularly unreligious. These began in 1562 with a massacre of Protestants as they were holding a service near Vassy. Horrendous bloodshed and atrocities were committed by both the sides. The most notorious was the infamous St. Bartholomew's Day massacre. Starting with the murder of 3,000 Protestants on 24th August 1572, some 20,000 more were butchered in the next few days. These brutal murders served to save France for the Catholic Church, even as the religious Wars continued to cause devastation till 1629.

What struck a mortal blow to the ambitions of Spain to be the most dominant power in Europe was the revolt of the Netherlands, where Protestant beliefs had struck roots. In 1560, Antwerp was the richest place in Europe. Maintaining peace here was therefore vital for Spain but driven by religious fanaticism, the Spanish authorities acted unwisely. By pressing for a stepped up role for the Inquisition, demanding further taxes and rejecting demands for religious toleration, they alienated the Dutch. In 1567, serious religious trouble erupted in Antwerp. Some 10,000 Spanish troops were called in to crack down on the heretics. The dreaded Duke of Alba was also called in to root out the Infidels. Alba established himself as the head of Council of Blood, which soon became infamous for dispatching religious suspects to being burnt at the stake with little hearing. In 1568, two Dutch Dukes from the House of Orange brought in troops from Germany but the Netherlands did not rise in revolt against Spain. The Dukes were defeated. Alba proceeded to impose an additional tax on the Dutch, which invited a violent reaction. The Spanish soon found themselves faced with a revolt from the whole of citizenry.

The Netherlands War of Independence took a heavy toll of the Spanish Empire. In 1584, as Antwerp was captured, the English entered the War on the Dutch side. Faced with Anglo – Dutch alliance, Philip II of Spain decided to strike a crushing blow. An invincible armada of 130 ships and 30,000 people set sail to Netherlands. It was met by the English fleet off the coast at Plymouth in July 1588. For ten days, the English relentlessly pursued and harassed the Armada. At this point, the nature chose to assist the English. As the Armada was harboured in shallow port at Calais, the English sent in their fire ships to burn the Spanish fleet. A raging gale

assisted the English and ravished the Armada. A battered fleet eventually returned to Spain but the Anglo – Dutch alliance had won the day. The War was to last till 1648. The conflict tested the resources of the Dutch but did not exhaust them.

From 1590, their economy was growing fast. The Dutch unsentimental approach to the problems of raising resources proved to be a big boon. To the disgust of their British supporters, Amsterdam traders would willingly supply goods to their mortal enemy, Spain if enough profits could be made. Taking a lesson from their enemies, they also embarked on an overseas expansion. Dutch colonies were founded at Amboina in 1605 and Ternate in 1607; factories and trading posts were established around the Indian Ocean, near the mouth of Amazon in South America and in Japan. With its function as shipper, exchanger and commodity dealer for Europe – including as we have seen, for its own enemy Spain – Amsterdam soon became the center of international finance. From time to time, it did not hurt the Dutch economy if it could capture the Spanish bullion, as it did in 1628. The War ended after an eighty-year struggle - with Dutch independence. The Dutch were soon to celebrate their new found freedom from the Habsburg masters with wars against their former alliance partner – the English.

Even as the Spanish war against the Dutch raged unabated, trouble broke out in Germany. In 1618 the Protestant rebels overran the Prague castle and murdered two of the officers of the Bohemian King. With this began another bout of religious wars that unleashed a fresh wave of horrors in Europe. As the fortunes of the rival religious armies ebbed and flowed, people sought explanations from the supernatural forces for their plight and witch hunting became a popular sport to the misfortune of any suspect. Religious fanaticism reached new heights as both Catholics and the Protestants employed thought police to curb the deviant in their flock. By the time the Thirty Year War ended in 1648 with the Treaty of Westphalia, a third of Germany's population had been slaughtered and economic depression, political fragmentation, plague, famine and massive physical destruction plunged Germany into an abyss from which it would not recover for centuries.

Fearful of the growing clout of Spain, France attacked Spain in 1635, even as Spain was engaged in a mortal War to spread the Gospel in the heretical lands of Germany. Catholic brotherhood was more fragile than human greed; providing an additional cause to shed blood, cause starvation and untold human misery. The annexed Portugal started its own War of Independence in 1640 against Spain, which was to go on for next three decades. England which had witnessed a Civil War (1645–1649), joined the French in 1655, finally forcing Spain to sue for peace. By 1659, the Spanish era in Europe was over.

The era of the great conflict had witnessed several scientific advances. Navigational science made great advances. Map making became refined. Development of the hourglass came to the aid of the sailors. New ideas on metallurgy and mining came to fore. Mercury-amalgamation process lead to an efficient extraction of Silver. Galileo published his work in 1632, in which he upheld the Copernicus theory of Earth revolving around the Sun. Other leading thinkers, Descartes and Bacon similarly advocated rejecting the authority of tradition and changing the scientific method. Even the dreaded Roman Inquisition could not hamper the spread of ideas of Galileo. The Western society came to accept that every natural phenomenon could be explained by Science paving the way for secular progress.

All the progress of Science and Intellect, however, failed to come to the aid of those poor inhabitants of Africa. Their export to Americas was only aided by the advances in navigational science. The slave trade increased three folds in the Seventeenth century and some 3,000,000 humans were sent in chains to work in the mines and Sugar plantations of the European masters. New mining process only increased the burden of the wretched miners. Cruelty to them became even more important to increase production of valuable silver. All the marvelous inventions of the Europeans – the firearms, ships, precision instruments had only one purpose. To subdue and conquer other people. No wonder, the Europeans were unwelcome, wherever they went. For they respected neither the local traditions, laws nor the people themselves. A society that could burn its own at stake could hardly be expected to improve the lot of those it considered Subhumans. If there was one thing that the Europeans learnt, it was the fact that overseas territories were crucial to their own material progress and a vital factor in their unbridled quest for power.

For instance, war against the Dutch cost Spain some 218 million ducats more than half of which was financed by the revenue from the West Indies. Indeed, the Dutch had responded to this, not only by their own colonisation programmes but also by launching attacks against the Spanish overseas possessions in Brazil, Angola and Ceylon. Thus, even as it fought for its own freedom, it was actively seeking to subdue other free people.

Spain may well have given up its claim to Superpower status by 1659 but there was to be no question of giving up its colonial empire. Even in 1700, it had the largest empire in the world. Its possessions included the Philippines, most of South and Central America, save for Brazil, which belonged to Portugal, Mexico, Florida and the West Indies.

Development of scientific temper in the Western world was to have its fall out in the World of Realpolitik. It can not be a mere accident that the religious warfare in Europe ended soon after the infamous prosecution of Galileo in 1632. The era when the Austrian-Spanish axis of Habsburg powers, representing the Catholic forces kept on fighting the Protestant states and France – which appeared to be neither; was over in 1659. Henceforth, calculated Realpolitik, rather than religious convictions, dictated the determination of policy. The alliances were to be even more shifting and countries which were friends in one war would be foes in the next. If the European nations had one ambition in common, it was to have as many Colonies as possible. For this, they were quite willing to dine with the Devil. The days of secular ' progressive ' policy had arrived.

Chapter II (b)

Anglo-French Struggle For Colonial Exploitation 1660 - 1815

With the eclipse of Spain in European affairs, France at long last got the chance to bid for European supremacy. The French rise was in no small measure due to accomplishments of Louis XIV (1638 – 1715). He established centralised system of justice, taxation and control. His policy of reducing the standing army of nobles and consolidating these into one royal army represented a major step in the development of modern state. His Minister of Finance, Colbert believed that France had to be the recipient of gold and silver in exchange for domestically produced goods. To stimulate the French economy, Colbert invested much of the tax revenue in building up domestic industry. Soon other European governments came largely to react to the French foreign and domestic policies; they emulated French accomplishments and came to look towards France for cultural inspiration. In the late Seventeenth century, most other European powers had seen better days. Spain, Dutch, sovereign cities of Italy, Germany, Austria - all had suffered greatly in the Thirty years (1610-1648) of religious strife.

This left England to curb the French ambitions, just as France had acted to spike the Spanish bid in the earlier period. The English bid could not begin till it had settled its conflict with its erstwhile ally – the Dutch. Great jealousy had existed against the English in commercial circles of the Dutch leading to War first in 1652, then in 1665 and once again in 1672. In these conflicts the English and the French allied against the Dutch. The Anglo – French alliance was possible in no small measure due to the fact that the English King Charles II (1660 – 1685) was in receipt of an annual sum of £ 200,000 from the French Sun King, to finance his luxuries and keep his country out of war against France. Spain, which attempted to challenge France, found no English support and was roundly defeated in 1683. After the death of Charles II, the British Parliament deposed James II in an almost bloodless coup and put William of Orange on the throne. Henceforth, prerogatives of Monarchy came to be severely curtailed by the Parliament.

From 1689 to 1815, seven major Anglo–French wars were to follow throwing the continent in turmoil repeatedly. It is not our intention to go through the details of each one of these, for these are better available elsewhere. Our purpose would be served by looking at the broad trends. None of these Wars had anything to do with the salvation of the sufferings of those in colonies, whose exploitation had been initiated by the Spanish and the Portuguese, since 1492. In some ways, the French and the English were far worse. For instance, it was true that the Spanish and the Portuguese sorely mistreated the native populations and imported slaves. Their methods in the West Indies differed from those of the British and the French, who never recognised the human beings or the immortal soul in these living chattels. While the Spanish and the Portuguese in Brazil acknowledged the existence of a soul and even had their slaves baptized into the Church, and in some cases even paid them wages, the English and French saw no reason to treat them as anything other than beasts which could be replaced quickly and cheaply, if they could no longer work the plantations. The records from Barbados suggest that the death-rate among the slaves outpaced the birth rate nearly six to one. No protests against such treatment were ever raised. Unlike most Spanish Catholic clergy, the English Protestant clergymen took little interest in changing the consciences of their flock. Even the early Quakers, who visited the plantations of the Caribbean, never registered a protest against these indignities and lamentable conditions.

The First war that lasted between 1689 – 1697 saw a general return to prewar status quo. Tremendous cost was paid to merely blunt the French ambitions in Europe and erode its sea power. An Anglo-Dutch-German tradition of keeping France out of Flanders and Rhineland was established. Little else changed.

Hardly had peace returned, when Europe was once more plunged into war, the Spanish War of Succession (1702 – 1714). Provoked by French efforts to secure exclusive concession for its traders in the Spanish Empire and desire of Louis XIV to put his grandson, Philip V on the Madrid throne. The War once again ended in a stalemate. Philip V was recognised as the Spanish king but with a proviso that the kingdoms of Spain and France could never be united.

French nation had been chastened by horrific costs of the war, which apart from those killed on the battlefield included a sevenfold increase in the government debt. Dutch power declined with severe loss of life during wartime to a population of 2 million, which remained static during the entire period.

The real beneficiaries were the English. They gained Gibraltar, Minorca, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Hudson Bay and trade concessions in the Spanish Empire. *A valuable trade concession being grant of monopoly on slave trade.* The British were unchallenged at sea. With increasing overseas possessions and a strong navy to protect the trade, seeds of the British Empire that was to emasculate the world were sown by the end of this conflict.

An Anglo-French détente lasted for the next quarter of a century. An isolationist Britain had cautiously kept out of the continental affairs, refusing to be provoked by a French attack on Austria in 1733 and a French move into Rhineland. By 1739, the French were once again looking to recover their pivotal position in Europe. While the English had remained unconcerned at the plight of their allies at the hands of the French, they grew concerned at the clashes with the French ally, Spain in the Western Hemisphere. Conflicts over rich colonial trade and the rights of their settlers were not to be overlooked. With the resultant Anglo-Spanish War, which started in October 1739, the two antagonists were once again ready to take up arms in a fight that was to last for next nine years but which produced no decisive result. Overseas possessions of the rival powers in West Indies, up the St. Lawrence River, around Madras, along the spice routes were considered fair game for attack without the least concern for the locals.

Even as a truce was signed in 1748, the conflict between the English and the French overseas settlers continued. By 1755, it was clear that the struggle was not merely for Ohio, Mississippi valley regions in America but for Canada, the Caribbean, and India – almost for the entire world outside Europe. The stage was now set for a decisive conflict over the overseas possessions between the Franco-Austro-Russian alliance and the Anglo-Prussian combination with Spain and the Dutch opting to remain neutral.

The seven-year war Anglo-French war (1756-63) was to be decisive in laying the roots of the British exploitation of the world that was to remain unhindered till the outbreak of the Second World War. The Prussian army subsidized by the British held fort on the continent, while the Royal Navy ran riot on the high seas. The superiority of British seamanship was made manifest time and again. It imposed an all weather blockade upon France's Atlantic ports, and had sufficient surplus force to mark Toulon and regain maritime supremacy in the Mediterranean. The French maritime trade was thus effectively throttled while the British trade could increase every year bringing enhanced revenue. By 1759, French colonies were falling into the British hands across the globe. French influence in India was effectively eradicated, as we have seen (refer - The British Mutiny of 1857) earlier in 1761.

When Spain cast its neutrality aside and entered the war in 1762, the British gleefully helped themselves to its colonies in the Caribbean and Philippines. By the time the French sued for peace, British domination of the world outside Europe was complete, even after it returned captured territories to France and Spain.

Like animals, the people in the non-European countries found their masters changing without any regard to the local wishes, aspirations or needs. The point that they were no more than chattels that existed for the benefit of their masters was being painfully driven home time and again. No European state could afford to be so enlightened as to worry about their welfare, for as the French minister remarked:

“In the present state of Europe it is colonies, trade and in consequence sea power, which must determine the balance of power upon the continent. The House of Austria, Russia, King of Prussia are only powers of second rank, as are all those which cannot go to war unless subsidized by the trading partners.”

Thus, if you had no colonies, you could not go to war on your own. If you could not go to war on your own, you counted for nothing in the European scheme of things. For ability to go to war was the most prized national ability for the Europeans.

If the fourth Anglo-French War (1756-63) decided the contours of the World in the Nineteenth century by establishing the British as the dominant colonial power, the fifth Anglo-French War (1776 – 1783) was to have far more wide ranging repercussions. It was to decide the fate of the World in the Twentieth century. It is out of this war was to rise the United States of America as an independent republic. Finally, it seemed that the French had hurt their rivals, where it mattered the most – possession of overseas territories. For the loss of rich North America was not a small matter. Unfortunately, for the French, even as America was lost to their continental rivals, the Indian possessions were taking its place. Moreover, the exports to United States remained booming and the French soon had nothing to show for their adventure but a burgeoning national debt as the cost of the war had been more than the total costs of France's three previous wars taken together.

The crisis in France came to a head when a bankrupt King summoned a long neglected Parliament, Estates-General, to his aid. After opening on May 4, 1789, events took a life of their own. Equality of men was proclaimed. Amidst ringing cries of *Liberty, Equality and Fraternity*, Bastille was stormed on 14th July. The French revolution was underway.

It would be out of place to recall the whole story of the revolution, which provided issues of liberal and radical democratic politics for most of the world. For our purpose, it is sufficient to take a look at the response it produced from the ruling aristocracy of Europe. England with its so-called emphasis on rule of law and the power of the Parliament should have been the first to side with the outbreak of this revolutionary fervour. Such naïve hopes had no place in European Realpolitick. William Pitt, the British Prime Minister, who encouraged free trade but, discouraged freedom of speech outside the walls of Parliament, led a coalition of Russia, Austria, Prussia and Spain against the French Republic in 1793. This formidable combination was thought to be capable of overrunning a France in a disarray rather quickly. What the European leaders had not reckoned with was neither the fervour of the French troops fired by the revolutionary zeal nor the attraction of the Revolutionary ideas to their own troops. By 1795, the first coalition had floundered much to the surprise of many.

The British were shaken by their losses in the West Indies. By 1797, the Bank of England suspended cash payments and naval mutinies were reported at Spithead and Nore. Yet, the British system held ground. As Spain and the Dutch joined the French, their colonies at Colombo, Malacca, in the East and the West Indies and the Cape of Good Hope, could be and were captured; providing new markets for British commerce and additional bases for its naval squadrons. The French bid to threaten route to India via Egypt and its attack on Ireland proved to be luckless. These setbacks emboldened the French enemies to launch a second coalition in 1798 against it. By now, the French revolution had lost much of its luster with the acquisition of territories and browbeating of its neighbours. Portugal, Naples, Russia, Austria, Turkey joined the British. Prussia remained aloof. Continental stalemate continued as the avowed aim of the coalition to bring France to its knees floundered once again. The story in the Overseas territories was, however, different. The French lost Malta. Their Indian ally Tipu Sultan was killed in 1799, Egypt was overrun. By the time an uneasy peace returned in 1801, the British were more secure in overseas territories than ever before.

The French revolution was the first ever genuine people's movement. Far from helping it flourish, the British had made every attempt to crush it aligining with some of the most reactionary rulers of the time. It failed to crush the movement but succeeded in derailing it, as the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte showed. Nor was this its only success. On far more practical ground, it used the resulting confusion to grab even more territories. The French revolution had been made use of by the British jackal to enlarge its circle of prey.

The final round of the seven major Anglo-French wars was fought between 1803 to 1815 and was the most severe of them all. Midway during the War in 1810, the French domination of Europe was complete. The British were left with no ally in Europe between Portugal and Sweden. The mastery of the continent gave Napoleon the unprecedented opportunity of ruining the nation of bookkeepers. Their goods were banned in Europe. At this critical juncture, the British relations with the Unites States also worsened, affecting their exports. London docks were now overflowing with unshipped goods. Unemployment soared, as did the national debt.

If the British survived to live for another day, it was only due to the lifeline of the vast overseas territories in Asia, Africa and the West Indies, accumulated by the British over the last hundred years, including that most lucrative latest addition – India in 1803. The additions during the War such as Santo Domingo, which had once been responsible for 75% of the French colonial trade, did not hurt the British cause. The colonial resources played a major if often, overlooked, role in enabling the British to fend off their most determined foe.

By the time Napoleon was finally defeated and forced in exile by 1815, the British mastery was complete. Several of the British allies had been uneasy about the prospect of defeating him roundly for the fear of leaving the British unchallenged but his own refusal to compromise left no one any choice. In the end, not only did he destroy himself but also ensured the supreme victory of his greatest enemy. By 1815, it was said of Britain that:

“She is mistress of the sea and neither in this dominion nor in world trade has she now a single rival to fear.”

From 1492 to 1660, the Spanish bid for supremacy was sustained by the flow of silver from Peru and other colonial possessions. In the period 1660 to 1815, the French bid collapsed as it failed to beat its rival in accumulation of the overseas territories. For, on a straight one to one comparison, the British stood no chance. The French strength rested firmly upon indigenous materials, its large and homogenous territories, its agricultural self-sufficiency and population exceeding 20 million, yet it was beset by a far smaller opponent. True, the British were financially far more disciplined than the French but that could only help it raise loans at 3% compared to the 6% paid by the French. From where did the British find money to repay the debt? The answer lies in its ever increasing trade. The British markets in the West Indies, Latin America, and the Orient including India, were not only growing faster than those in Europe. Such long haul trades were also more profitable besides having other beneficial spin off effects as enabling London to emerge as the world-wide provider of such value added financial services as marine insurance, bill discounting etc. For in the final run up to 1815, the British exports rose spectacularly; £ 21.7 million in 1794 to £37.5 million in 1804 and finally to £44.4 million in 1815. The booming trade not only resulted in a jump in the

revenues from the Custom and the Excise duties from £13.5 million in 1793 to £44.8 million in 1815. The growing prosperity yielded a nine-fold increase in the property taxes reaching £14.6 million by the end of war in 1815. Such sums were not inconsiderable. To put the matters in perspective, the increase in property taxes alone amounting to £13 million equaled the subsidies given by the British to their allies in 1813. As a matter of some interest to Indians, it is worth recording that cotton goods had become Britain's principle exports. What it did to the weavers in Bengal is another story, which has never bothered the European conscious.

With a faster economic growth arising out of the Overseas trade, by 1800 the British government could raise more revenue from taxes in absolute terms than could the French government from a population twice as big. Even Kennedy, who has considerably discounted the role of colonies in the economic prosperity of England, has been forced to conclude: "the fact remains that overseas expansion had given the country unchallenged access to vast new wealth which its rivals did not enjoy". One may add, giving it that decisive edge it desperately needed to defeat a military genius like Napoleon.

So the British won. But it is clear that the struggle was without any pretence for improving the lot of the colonies. If anything, it was to exploit them even more. The only issue being, who would have the honour of doing so. Let us take a look at the figures behind the Anglo-French struggle.

British Wartime Expenditure and Revenue 1688 -1815

Figs in £(000)

Inclusive Years	Expenditure	Income	Loans	Loans as % Of Expenditure
1688-97	49,320	32,766	16,553	33.6
1702-13	93,644	64,239	29,405	31.4
1739-48	95,628	65,903	29,724	31.1
1756-63	160,573	100,555	60,018	37.4
1776-83	236,462	141,902	94,560	39.9
1793-1815	1,657,854	1,217,556	440,298	26.6

What stands out is the following:

- For over 125 years, the British government could have hardly had the money for the welfare of its own people. For year after year, it had to keep on spending more money than its revenue merely to meet the costs of its aggression.
- Enormous profits must have been made but the life of workers could not have but been pitiable. It, therefore, comes as no surprise to learn that the whole families were forced to work to avoid starvation. With working days stretching over 12 hours a day, the average workers family life could not have been much to write about.
- Such a state would have necessarily employed repressive measures to control crime for which the existing social conditions provided a fertile breeding ground. This is borne out by the fact that in 1815, some 200 crimes were punishable by death. Justice seemed to have been based on an Eye for an Eye principle.
- The average cost of the first Anglo-French War was a mere £5.4 million per year. By the seventh war, it had shot up to £72 million per annum or by over thirteen times. More costs demanded even more income, which meant more acquisitions and thus bringing even more people under the yoke of European exploitation.

Thus, we find that the very structure of the Western World was built on a never-ending vicious cycle of violence, cruelty and aggression.

Are we running the risk of flippantly discounting the role of Industrial revolution aided by a spurt in scientific progress and innovation in the growth of Britain as an economic and political superpower? Before we try and answer this, let us first realise that Spinning mills, steam engines and more importantly the scientific temper from which these innovation flowed; were no doubt crucial elements of the British progress. But they offered little competitive advantage in a struggle against another European nation as the long drawn struggle with the French showed.

Indeed, as we have seen by 1810, Napoleon had succeeded in virtually driving out the British from the Continent. What tilted the balance against him was his lack of control over the colonies. Moreover, the point that we seek to make is a little different.

The British society or for that matter the entire European society used its scientific inventions to improve its material well being with no consideration to the rights and needs of the people other than their own ruling elite.

The Europeans were not the first to invent the Gunpowder or even the use of canons. It is well known that the honour belonged to the Chinese. As early as 1420, the Ming navy had some 1,350 vessels. The Chinese even went on some seven overseas expedition between 1405 to 1433. The flotilla consisting of hundreds of ships carrying thousands of men, visiting ports of Malacca and Ceylon to Red sea entrances and Zanzibar. Though, they insisted on the local rulers acknowledging the supremacy of the Chinese Emperor, they are neither known to have plundered nor murdered in their voyages. Sophisticated banking and credit network was known to have existed in India for ages. Yet, these societies did not launch any bid for global domination. Traditional historians have belittled this aspect rather than seek to understand the reasons for the failure of the Europeans to follow their example.

It is impossible to accept that the Europeans had a divine right to loot and plunder the world for improving their lot, merely because they had discovered the scientific tools to do so. For once, the existence of colonial empires and their limitless exploitation came to be considered as an integral part of being Progressive in the European society; continual warfare could not but follow as in fact did follow.

Each War being fiercer than the last. Each drawing into its orbit a larger segment of the society than the earlier. Each being more expensive than the one before. Each preparing the ground for the next to follow.

It is thus not scientific progress that set the Europeans on their path to global glory, for it could have been theirs in a far more humane manner. It is with wanton brutality and callous disregard to all that makes human life noble that they took to the center stage of the world. European hegemony of the World as it happened is a blot on the face of humanity, something for them to be ashamed of, rather than to glory in.

We have so far studied three hundred years of history to come to this inescapable conclusion. Were the developments in the next hundred and twenty five years any different? Did any European nation behave in a manner befitting the noble ideals of human race before the outbreak of Second World War? Let us now examine this.

Chapter II (c)

European Shadow Darkens 1815 –1870

Science and technology forged ahead as never before. Whole new continents of knowledge were mapped out. Inventions of the telegraph in 1835, the telephone in 1877 and the radio in 1896 was to be the forerunner of the evolution of the global village, a century later. The value of superior communication was most tellingly demonstrated by the record monies which Nathan Rothschild is said to have made on the London stock exchange on 19 June 1815, having used a special yacht to bring the news of Waterloo many hours in advance of his rivals.

Repeated conflicts in Europe ended with the ouster of Napoleon and relative peace on the Continent endured as no nation or an alliance now sought to seriously challenge the British control of the seas till the final decade of the century. The European leaders were chastened by the horrific costs of the war that had ravaged the continent unabated since 1793. They now turned their attention to the development of a transoceanic and transcontinental trading and financial network that centered around Western Europe in general and the Great Britain in particular. Colonial acquisition continued to be the key to development of an integrated global economy. Once again, the scientific advances were put to great use in conquest of more and more people. The spectacular growth of global economy went hand in hand with the ever-enlarging British Empire. It is estimated that between 1815 to 1865, the empire grew at an average annual pace of 100,000 square miles. The military penetration and economic exploitation were two sides of the same coin. For a polity that held profit and power as the Goal - trade and dominion were inseparable.

By 1860, the Great Britain. not only had an Empire ‘On which the Sun never set’ but with a 2 per cent population was responsible for 20% of world’s commerce. Its share in the trade of the manufactured goods was as high as 40%. By 1865, the Victorians could exult: “The plains of North America and Russia are our corn fields; Chicago and Odessa our granaries; Canada and the Baltic are our timber forests; Australia contains our sheep farms, and in Argentina and on the western prairie of North America are our herds of oxen; Peru sends us

her silver, and the gold of South Africa and Australia flow to London; Hindus and the Chinese grow tea for us, and our coffee, sugar and spice plantations are all in the Indies. Spain and France are our vineyards and the Mediterranean our fruit garden; and our cotton grounds, which for long have occupied the Southern United States, are now being extended everywhere in the warm regions of the earth”

Leave alone the wretched souls in the colonies, even their own Irish breathe, having been decimated by the Potato famines, a decade earlier; could be forgiven if they boiled in anger at this insensitive outburst of Imperial arrogance. The royal beast could be aroused to a ferocious, snarling state if its trade was interrupted by anyone. It is time; we look at the Chinese sufferings during the Opium war, a little more closely.

The Chinese had used opium as a medicinal drug for over a thousand years. With the rise of British influence in India after the grant of Diwani to Clive in 1765, the British took to exporting Indian opium to China in a big way. They could use the opium supplied to pay for the Chinese export of Tea and Silk. Thus as more and more Chinese became addicted to Opium smoking, East India Company benefited for higher export of Opium to China meant lesser demand of Silver to pay for the Chinese goods. In 1770, China imported some 500,000 lbs. of Opium. With growing conquest of India, which was complete by 1803, the East India Company trade with China boomed. By 1830, the Chinese consumption had increased five fold and again doubled (or a ten fold increase over 1770) in less than ten years to reach 5,000,000 lbs. by 1840. The British were in the happy situation of paying marginally to the opium growers in India, whose prices and output were state controlled and getting valuable Chinese goods virtually for free. As an additional bonus, the Chinese now had to export Silver to obtain Opium for the demand exceeded the supply of Tea and Silk. A more profitable and less ethical way of commerce could hardly be devised by the Devil himself

The Chinese government understandably took alarm at the rising Opium trade, which was not only financially ruinous but was also gnawing at the vitals of their society by inducing an opium stupor on soldiers and youth. Their action of deciding to impose an absolute ban on Opium trade was no more than the similar action of Governments around the World today banning drug trafficking. Lin, a provincial

official, was appointed as Imperial Commissioner, who arrived in Canton in March 1839 and proceeded to impose the ban with vigour. He warned the Chinese inhabitants to stop smoking Opium and ordered the Western merchants to surrender all their opium stocks. They complied with great reluctance. Lin had the opium mixed with lime, dissolved in salt water and flushed out to sea. Lin even sent a letter to Queen Victoria appealing her to stop the dirty trade. He was neither the first nor the last to discover that the lure of profit overrode all moral considerations in the British scheme of things. They choose to go to War rather than accept a legitimate demand of a sovereign government.

The European firepower overwhelmed the Chinese. Once again the scientific advances were used to trample upon considerations of humanity. By the terms of the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, five ports, Canton, Amoy, Foochow, Ningpo and Shanghai were opened to foreign trade and residence. The foreigners were to be exempt from Chinese laws. Hong Kong was ceded to the British and as an added humiliation, the Chinese government had to pay for the opium destroyed by Lin as well as pay an indemnity of 21 million Mexican dollars to meet the debts of the Merchants who had been inconvenienced. All attempts to loosen the grip failed. In 1860, a multinational alliance of British, French, Americans and Russians trooped into Peking. They sacked and burned the Emperor's summer palace forcing new concessions. Opium could now be imported at a fixed rate of 30 taels per Chest (125 lbs.). The Chinese humiliation was complete. Henceforth, China was to be a semi colony of the European powers

The Chinese story is not unique. It is merely a dramatic illustration of ruthless manner in which the Imperial powers pursued their hegemonic ambitions. There was no scope for harbouring any illusions. Yet, there was to be no lack of such gullible people.

In the middle of the Nineteenth century, the British nation was at the pinnacle of success. Surprisingly, even in its hey days, it suffered from a crucial weakness. Even as it drew in enormous amount of raw materials and foodstuffs and sent out vast quantities of manufactured goods, it suffered from a trade gap in visible goods. This gap was as much as £30 million in the years between 1855-59. This was to keep on increasing, making the nation dependent on the earnings from

Invisibles to finance the trade gap. Its ever-present need for the earnings on the Invisibles to fill the resulting void was always to remain its Achilles' heel. Once the Second World War was over with the Japanese surrender in August 1945, the primary concern of the British Cabinet was to keep its ship afloat in an era when the Invisible earning had dried up and the gap in the Visible Goods widened. A desperate British elite had no other option but to give up those of its colonies, where the income had dried up and only the costs remained. This fascinating story of unraveling of an Empire is detailed in the "Moving Away from the Gandhian Monopoly".

The unchallenged global domination of the British in the Nineteenth century enabled it to milk the colonies. The burden of conquering the Empire had fallen in the earlier century, as we have seen, on the British working class, for whom the ruling elite had no money left after meeting the costs of the Wars. It was to be the lot of the unfortunate souls in the colonies to bear the cost of sustaining the Empire. The colonies were not only a source of the raw materials or markets for the British exports. They were also to provide the Capital, which their masters needed by paying for a variety of charges, the most notorious being the Home Charges. These represented nothing more than the subject people paying their rulers for the privilege of being their slaves. This imperial tribute was then reinvested abroad, mainly in the colonies in the form of loans or secured investments, where returns were guaranteed so that more earnings on the Invisibles could flow back. This is no idle conjecture but backed by hard numbers.

Capital of some £6 million was annually exported from India to Britain in the decade following the victory at Waterloo in 1815. This increased to £ 30 million by the middle of the century. By the time Queen Victoria was proclaimed as the Empress of India in 1877, the flow had become a torrent and increased to well over £ 75 million. By 1880, the British overseas investments were some £ 1,000 million and as much as £ 4,000 million on the eve of the First World War. Kennedy marvels at the generosity of the British in thus exporting Capital and helping their subject nations build up infrastructure like the Railways in India, which served to lower the British competitiveness in the long run.

Such an analysis does not take into account the reality, that ‘In the long run, all of us would be dead anyway’; thus there are always limitations on how much of a long-range view one can keep. The British competitiveness may well have been lowered over the long run by such investments but the short run consequences were far more important. The British investments in India for Railways came at a very heavy cost to India, for a 5% return was guaranteed, which was much higher than the return available elsewhere. Such invisible earnings thus not only paid for the gap in Visible goods but also enhanced the British prosperity at the cost of India.

It was Napoleon who had insisted, “My power depends on my glory and my glories on the victories I have won. My power will fail if I do not feed it on new glories and new victories. Conquest has made me what I am and only conquest can enable me to hold my position.”

At least, he was honest. The same sentiments were etched in the minds of the British elite, who, however, took great pains to hide it behind the cloak of good intentions. They knew well Colonies were what had made their small island state a Great Power. If they were given up, their pretensions would be brutally exposed. Thus Ministries came and went but the British polity remained unrelentingly focussed on retention of the colonies. In securing this non-negotiable objective, they became shameless champions of maintaining the post-Napoleonic balance of power on the Continent. Thus quadruple alliance of Russia, Prussia, Austria and Britain was to operate against all upstarts and new comers. The 1815 settlement arrived at Vienna Conference was designed to prevent change and actually designed to put the clock back. The victors were terrified of the least concession. Even limited gradual reform was viewed with suspicion for one never knew when it could snowball into an unpredictable revolution. France was admitted to this conservative gang but continued to be viewed with disdain for its turbulent revolutionary character. The French style democracy with its emphasis on Republican form of government was: “the disease, which must be cured, the volcano that must be extinguished, the gangrene which must be burned out with a hot iron.”

It comes as no surprise then to find that Britain gave no support to the liberal movements of the time. It watched unconcerned as the Austrian army crushed Italian resistance in Piedmont in 1823 or did nothing to prevent the French military move into Spain the same year to restore King Ferdinand his former powers. The Russians could use troops to suppress the Hungarian revolution in 1848, with scarcely a protest. Likewise, the British played no major role in the fate of Piedmont in the critical year of 1859. The Indian bid for freedom in 1857 naturally invited a savage response as interests crucial to it were at stake.

By early 1850s, the arch enemy of the British – France had begun to cause alarm across the English Channel. It seemed strong and confident. Banking, railway and industry had seen considerable progress. Its swift intervention against Austria for the Italian cause was decisive. The French colonial empire spread over West Africa, Indochina and the Pacific was well served by its expanded naval fleet. The rise of Prussia around this time under the able leadership of Bismarck was seen to be providing a cost-effective check on the French ambitions.

As Prussia defeated the Austrians in October 1866, it was the turn of the French to grow alarmed. When it attempted in July 1870 to crush Prussia, the upstart, it was simply beaten into submission by the superb Prussian war machine and had to surrender within the next two months. The English remained out of the struggle; happy to see their foe humbled; little realizing that from here on the road lay slowly but surely to the First World War.

Chapter II (d)

New Claimants to Share the Loot 1870 – 1939

Germany

The rise of a new powerful state in the very heart of Europe was bound to set off powerful tremors in the Continent. The sheer speed and the extent of the German growth was dazzling. As Lord Welby was to remark in June 1914 “the Germany they remembered in the fifties was a cluster of insignificant states under insignificant princelings”; now within one man’s lifetime it was the most powerful state in Europe and still growing.

As early as 1870, it had a population larger than France. Soon, it had more miles of railways, better organised for military purposes. Science and education became wide spread. The German technical education, universities, scientific establishments and chemical laboratories were found to be without an equal. The resulting industrial revolution was leading to production of coal, iron and steel which exceeded the French totals in 1871 itself, creating large-scale firms such as Krupp steel and armaments combine. Soon its performance in the newer industries of electricity, optics and chemicals was well ahead of its rivals. Siemens and AEG employing 142,000 people dominated the European electrical industry. German chemical firms led by Bayer and Hoechst, produced 90% of the world’s industrial dyes. The exports tripled between 1890 and 1913 aided by a merchant navy that was the second biggest in the world. On the eve of the First World War, it had overtaken Britain in every aspect other than colonial possessions, which remained economically negligible.

If ever a proof was needed, that European economic prosperity could be attained by harnessing the power of Science and Technology and need not necessarily involve the Colonial exploitation; the German progress was a living example.

Nevertheless, if the natives of the colonies were to look at Germany for deliverance, they would have been living in a fool's paradise. For what were the German emotions? Admiral Tirpitz argued that Germany's industrialization and overseas conquests were as irresistible as a natural law. The German Chancellor Buelow declared, 'The question is not whether we want to colonize or not, but that we must colonize, whether we want it or not'. Germans were deeply resentful that the world was shared and they were left empty handed.

If after 1898, the German navy was transformed into the second biggest navy in the world, which quite overawed the rival French or Russian Fleets – if by 1914 they were spending over \$ 442 million on army – it was not to come to the aid of people elsewhere; it was to wrest the right to exploit them. Here was a nation that had lain fragmented over centuries unable to exercise much influence, either in Europe nor indeed over its own destiny. Through a remarkable burst of technological explosion, it had raced to the top rung of nations without colonial exploitation. Yet, instead of rejoicing in its achievement; it was so resentful at the denial of an opportunity to loot people that it had begun to arm itself to the teeth, to make up for the lost time.

Japan

If the rise of Germany in the middle of Europe was a startling phenomenon, emergence of Japan as a power to reckon with, from the middle of the Pacific Ocean, was no less so. Let us take a brief look at this fascinating story.

Like many other Oriental societies, Japan preferred to keep itself out of the race for global domination. By an edict in 1641, the Japanese ruler – Shogun had forbidden interaction with the outside world. For about two hundred years, it had remained in a jealously guarded seclusion, keeping itself abreast of developments in the world through the regulated visits of Chinese, Dutch and the Portuguese traders at Nagasaki. In this era of 'Great Peace'; agrarian base witnessed a remarkable expansion with an estimated doubling of cultivated land between 1615 to 1730. Remarkably for the time, population growth was consciously curtailed but had, nevertheless, reached about 30 million by the turn of the Eighteenth century, which was more than that of Germany or France.

Paper currency, credit facilities led to sophisticated financial structure boosting economic growth despite the self imposed retreat from the world. A high degree of urbanization prevailed. Edo, the Shogun capital was a city of close to one million inhabitants, making it larger than contemporary London or Paris. There were two other major cities, Osaka and Kyoto with a population of about 300,000 besides some 50 smaller ones. It is this peaceful world that was shattered by the American demands that Japan open their ports to the foreigners and enforced by the Gunboats of Commodore Perry in 1853. Several unequal treaties followed but the Japanese gave up no territories nor allowed the foreigners to take over tariff administration unlike their Chinese neighbours. Yet, the Japanese honour was hurt and amends had to be made. Led by a political oligarchy of about 100 young men, Japan was to begin the era of Meiji restoration by 1868. Japan took to learning from the West with a vengeance. Some 3,000 foreign advisors were hired between 1858 to 1890 but with a jealous concern for their own identity, each of the advisor was placed under a Japanese supervisor, whose job was to learn what the foreigner had to offer and send him packing as soon as possible.

With a relatively well-developed economic base, infusion of the western ideas served to catalyze the economic growth. Cotton spinning, using latest machinery and silk production became the prime capital producing industry. New seeds, fertilizers and equipment helped raise the agricultural production. Economic growth was not the only outcome of its interaction with the West. The other western habits followed. For a society that had remained at peace with the world for over two hundred years now was to become remarkably aggressive. With an army of 200,000 people and a navy of 28 vessels, it went to war against China forcing it to cede Formosa and Liaotung Peninsula besides paying a large indemnity. Soon Russia, France and Germany joined forces against it to relinquish its claim upon Liaotung Peninsula. Nevertheless, the power and the killing instinct displayed by this once peaceful nation enabled it to gain recognition of England as an ally by 1902. Two years later it went to War with Russia to protect its interests in Korea. The spectacular defeat of the Russian navy in the Straits of Tsushima in May 1905 created a sensation. Korea was annexed as a colony in 1910. By 1914, it had gained recognition as one of the top ten leading powers of the day. The progress of Japan as a *Modern* nation was complete

Italy

The readers would no doubt recall that the revolutionary story of Mazzini had been read with almost religious fervour by the Indian revolutionaries. Thus, with the history of a long and determined struggle for freeing itself from the yoke of foreign rule, an independent Italy could have possibly been the beacon of hope for the oppressed people all over the world. Alas. This was not to be.

Surely, its economic progress after winning independence from the Austrians was remarkable. It may not have been in the same league as the Germans but it was impressive enough for Italy to be considered a Great power within a decade of its independence. In the north Italy, iron and steel, shipbuilding, automobile manufacturing as well as textile industry grew. Urbanization gathered steam. There was progress in the agriculture as well. By 1914, its national income of \$ 4, 000 million was a quarter more than that of its erstwhile master- the Habsburg empire, while per capita income was almost double.

However, the ideals of Risorgimento, hailed by the native and admiring foreign liberals had not taken roots in the Italian society despite a century long revolutionary ferment. Italy, with an army of 345,000 and a navy with a Warship tonnage of 498,000 was now harbouring commercial and according to the ethos of the times, expansionist ambitions in the Alps, the Balkans, North Africa and elsewhere.

The idealism of Mazzini was lost and Italy was now only too happy to line up in the company of its erstwhile masters for the sake of Progress. Singling out Germany, Japan and Italy as the nations out to loot the world is apt to be misunderstood. They have been cited for being countries from whom, an aggressive, violent behaviour that had become the norm in Europe for hundreds of years was not expected. It was Bismarck himself, who had declared Germany to be satiated power soon after the German unification. Its industry and trade had grown to be amongst the world's best; with few colonies to exploit. Japan had a historical tradition of being a peaceful nation. Italy was born out of revolutionary ferment. Yet, tragically, they chose to join the Anglo-French imperial powers in the race to be the most successful exploiter of non-European nations.

It was not on any principle of democratic freedom that the European nations clashed with each other in the two Great Wars of the Twentieth century but on the issue of the principle of freedom to loot the people unhindered by any competitive rivalry. **It is this fundamental truth that the Congress appeared to have not understood, when it offered conditional support to the British imperial campaigns in 1939.**

The Run up to the First World War and Thereafter

Creation of Germany, formidable as it was; by no means was the only legacy of Bismarck to the world of diplomacy. In 1879, he began formation of fixed military alliances in what seemed to be peace times as he established an Austro-German alliance. Italy was drawn in the alliance by 1882. This triple alliance came to be counterbalanced by a Franco-Russian alliance as they worried that the great German diplomat had pushed them into isolation.

The German restraint vanished after the retirement of Bismarck in 1890. Bellicose German statements and its naval race forced the arch European rivals – the French and the British to come together in 1904. The alliance stood the strain of Russian-Japanese conflict in 1905. In 1907, an Anglo-Russian entente was forged. From then on, an open conflict between the two rival alliances was a mere matter of time. With a worldwide rivalry, there were enough and more flash points.

The War broke out in August 1914 in the Imperial Chancellery with German Kaiser declaring War against Russia. It was not to end before the surrender of the Japanese in August 1945. The two decades after 1918, when the first phase ended were really not decades of peace but rather the interim period for rest and recuperation before the launch of the final assault.

The 1914-1918 War saw the Bismarckian alliances largely hold with the exception of Italy, which defected to the English side in 1915, while Berlin found Turkish support. United States watched the self-destruction of the European powers from the sidelines for nearly three years. Only the German announcement of unrestricted U boat campaign against their merchant shipping and secret German offers to Mexico for an anti-American alliance, made the US president cross

the Rubicon and enter the War in April 1917. Later in the year, on 6th December, Russians bowed out of the conflict following the Bolshevik revolution. The first round was finally over in October 1918. By this time, four Emperors, The Tsar in Russia, Kaiser in Germany, Caliph of Ottoman Empire in Turkey and Franz Josef of Austria-Hungry had lost their thrones. The Japanese, though technically at war with Germany took no part in the European operations but merely helped themselves to the German possessions in China and the Central Pacific.

The conflict consumed over US \$ 80,000 million and took the lives of around 60 million men, women and children. Such an appalling scale of destruction had never been seen before. Strange was the nature of the progress that was set off with the voyage of Columbus.

Some semblance of international order was sought to be restored on 28 June 1919 by the Treaty of Versailles. But that was not to be. Its harsh terms only fuelled the German nationalism and aided the rise of the Nazi. United States of America, which was now, replaced Britain as the world's biggest creditor nation preferred not to ratify the treaty and retreated into international isolationism; it would not even join it's own brain-child, the League of Nations. This seemingly strange attitude of the Americans deserves some attention.

The United States of America

Throughout our discussions so far, we have not taken into account the American factor in the international arena. The reason is simple, though sounds strange. Right through the whole of the Nineteenth century and most of parts of the early Twentieth century, it had preferred to keep itself out of the world stage. The reasons were eminently sensible.

A country that had commanded less than one per cent share in the World manufacturing output, when it became independent in 1789, had by 1900 transformed itself into a global colossus. By this time, it accounted for a little less than a quarter of world's manufacturing output. It had exploited its rich agricultural lands, vast raw materials and the marvelously convenient technological wonders – the railways, the steam engines, mining equipments to develop its natural wealth.

Its firms like the International Harvester, Singer, DuPont, Bell, Standard Oil, enjoying enormous domestic market and economies of scale were often the best in the world. This was a nation that had no time to fritter away on issues that were none of its concern.

When the occasion demanded, it had no second thoughts in enforcing its will. If the opening of the Japanese ports was necessary for its shipping, well the Japanese better do it. If someone like Spain was foolish enough to clash with it; it could only lose its colonies. It is only when its own backyard was threatened, that it participated in the War after watching the contestants bleed themselves to death for years. As can be seen from the figures, it had the clout to force the Wilsonian concerns of democracy and self-determination on unwilling European powers. It chose not to, for the issue was not of any strategic concern to it.

Key National Statistics 1914

	National Income in US \$ million	Population in million	Per Capita Income
Unites States	37,000	98	377
Britain	11,000	45	244
France	6,000	39	153
Japan	2,000	55	36
Germany	12,000	65	184
Italy	4,000	37	108
Russia	7,000	171	41
Austria-Hungary	3,000	52	57

Unlike all other participants, the War did not damage its mighty economic engines. They only went into an overdrive accelerating the pre-war process of leaving the Europeans far behind. After playing a brief, but decisive role in the international arena, it opted to once again concentrate on its domestic affairs. These affairs demanded serious attention after the Wall Street crash of 1929. In 1933, value of its manufactured goods had shrunk by a quarter.

Great firms like Westinghouse lost two third of their sales between 1929 – 33. Fifteen million Americans had lost their jobs and were without any support. No wonder, that the idea of intervention in the messy European affairs became even more distasteful.

United States in 1934 banned grant of loans to any foreign power that had defaulted on its war debts. In 1935, an arms embargo in the event of a war was decided upon. A little later came prohibition of loans to any belligerent nation. With 1937, Neutrality Legislation, United States had not only decided to remain neutral but also cut the British lifeline of credit to the American markets. This did not mean that America was prepared to abandon its trade. For instance, its severe disapproval of fascism in Italy did not stop the Americans from increasing their petroleum supplies to it for commercial profit.

The rise of Hitler to power in Germany or the consolidation of fascist regime in Italy were issues of peripheral concern to a nation struggling to rebuild its economy devastated by the great recession. Hitler first tore up the peace treaties in 1935 and later moved into Rhineland, German province occupied by the French since 1919. About the same time, Japanese openly assaulted China. All this was found distasteful but unworthy of forcing a policy change. For at this time, the American economy had once again slumped. Germans helped themselves to Austria and Czechoslovakia, while Italy could move into Albania (April 1939) without stirring this giant to action. Even in the face of outbreak of large-scale hostility between the major European powers in September 1939, the Americans saw no reason to get involved. When it later threw the lifeline of Lend Lease to a beleaguered Britain struggling to stave of bankruptcy and defeat, it took great care of its own economic interests. For instance, no Lend Lease goods could go into exports nor could similar British made goods go into overseas market. It is difficult to see, but for a direct assault on American territories, such as on Pearl Harbour in 1941; what could have provoked the Americans to actually go to War.

The American policy of isolationism had paid them rich dividends. In 1937, it had a national income of US \$ 68,000 million. By itself, it was richer than both the warring camps taken together. For the income of the Anglo-French block amounted to US \$ 32,000, while the German, Japan and Italy commanded resources of US \$ 27,000.

It is not as if the Americans were being pursuing a policy of immorality leaving the British and French to save the world from the ravages of Nazism or Fascism. It is only that they saw through the Imperial game quite clearly. The much-touted League of Nations was no more than an elaborate fig leaf for the Anglo-French imperial interests. The German threat had not prevented the break down of World Economic Conference nor hindered the Anglo-French-Americans from erecting their own currency and trade blocks. By 1935, both the British and the French took unilateral steps to cover their flanks. French concluded a pact with the U.S.S.R, while British signed a naval agreement with Germany. Mussolini's open aggression against Abyssinia was neither halted by the British nor the French for their own considerations. The French wanted to keep Italy out of the German camp, while the British did not wish to get involved in the Mediterranean imbroglio and take their eyes off the dangerous moves of Japan in the Far East.

Both - the British as also, the French well knew that they could not afford another major war. They had nothing to gain and plenty to lose. With the result, they desperately sought to *appease* Germany so as to establish a durable European balance of power, leaving them free to carry on with colonial exploitation. In September 1938, the British Prime Minister, Chamberlain even traveled to Munich in order to satiate Hitler and returned to a cheering nation, happy to have averted a War. No wonder, Stalin grew wary of the Anglo-French alliance and made a direct pact with Hitler. Right through 1939, the Anglo-French attempts to strike a deal with Hitler continued. It is only when it became clear that Hitler wanted nothing short of their hide itself, that they took to war.

In this background, where was the place for anyone in the World to delude himself with the illusion that the Democracies of the World were taking on the evil forces of Fascism and Nazism and therefore deserved help from all possible quarters. It only spoke of either extreme naivete or excessive fondness for the British. Which of the two ailments did Nehru or Gandhi suffer from in September of 1939 is best left for the readers to judge. Indeed, Nehru who was bubbling with enthusiasm on the eve of the outbreak of the War, eager to help the British had his illusions shattered. As, he cooled his heels in the British prison at Ahmednagar after his arrest in August 1942, had this to say:

“But, as the war developed, it became ever clearer that the western democracies were not fighting for a change but for a perpetuation of the old order. Before the war they had appeased fascism. Not only because of the fear of its consequences but also because of a certain ideological sympathy with it and an extreme dislike of some of the probable alternatives to it.”

It is another matter that this realisation about the nature of the conflict did not dawn for a good three years after the War had erupted. It dawned only when this international Do-gooder was thrown behind the bars. The three years in which the Congress had, by the own confession of Nehru himself: “deliberately followed a policy of non-embarrassment and such action as we had indulged in had been in the nature of symbolic protest.”

Thus, by its *deliberate policy of non-embarrassment*, the Congress between 1939 – 1942 had only served the British cause of upholding the old order of exploiting India. The internment certainly seems to have cleared Nehru’s mind, for he says:

“Nazism and Fascism were no sudden growths or accidents of history. They were the natural developments of the past course of events, of empire and racial discrimination, of national struggles, of the growing concentration of power, of technological growth which found no scope for its fulfillment within the existing framework of society...a time came when further expansion endangered the basis of the social structure, and then the upholders of that structure became claimant and aggressive and became organised themselves to oppose change....And there were also they began to assert that democracy, though good as an ideal and desirable in their own home lands, was not suited to the peculiar conditions prevailing in their colonial dominions. So it was natural consequence for these western democracies to feel some kind of an ideological bond with fascism, even when they disliked many of its more brutal and vulgar manifestations.”

Viewed in the background of this candid confession, the Nehru-Gandhi led Congress in that fateful autumn of 1939 must stand convicted, at the alter of times, of squandering a wealth of opportunities, the immense cost of which continues to be paid by the country.

None of the able political opponents of the Nehru-Gandhi Congress needed a dose of the British prison to clear their minds. They were very clear. If England and France could keep on negotiating with Hitler till he left them no alternative. If the blood brother of Britain, Ireland could keep itself out of the War. If the mightiest nation with the longest history of republican form of government, the United States of America thought it wiser to keep away from the Anglo-French-German-Japanese fight over the colonies, what business had India to offer any help to the British war effort under any circumstances, when any Statesman of the time well knew that the War would ruin the British economy and disband large parts of the British Empire.

On the eve of the War, if Savarkar offered help to the British, it was, as we shall see later, with a not too hidden motive to further the cause of Independence.

If Subhas Bose joined the Japanese to drive the British out of India, it was not because he was a sinner. He saw that as an opportunity to realize the Goal of Absolute Political Independence.

Jinnah had offered neither help nor opposition but, called for further clarifications. To gain time and advance the cause of the Muslim League.

If Ambedkar joined the Viceroy's Council, it was to make sure the Untouchables were not subjected to further atrocities.

All these leaders were only being as practical as any other leader of any major nation of the world. They were merely making full use of the Hitler sent opportunity to advance the causes that were dear to their hearts and in their view in the best interest of the nation that they represented.

Finally, the War was also an opportunity to examine the very nature of the Western concept of progress. For what is Western Progress, if not:

“His face is turned towards the past. Where we see a chain of events before us, he sees a single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon ruin till they reach his feet. If only he could stay to wake the dead and to piece together the fragments of what has been broken! But a storm blows from the direction of Paradise, catching his wings with such force that the Angel can no longer close them. This storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris at his feet grows into the sky. This storm is what we call progress.”

Chapter III

Political Betrayal Leading to Pakistan Resolution

In India, one of the most startling developments after the outbreak of the War in 1939 was the passage of the Pakistan resolution by the Muslim League on 26th March 1940. On that day, the Muslim League at Lahore demanded that:

“Resolved that it is the considered view of this session of the All India Muslim League that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designated on the following basic principle viz. That geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the North-Western and Eastern Zones of India should be grouped to constitute ‘Independent States’ in which the Constituent Units shall be autonomous and sovereign.”

What did the League want – One Muslim State or more; the resolution appears to have been purposely vague. In the words of Dr. Ambedkar: “Does the Resolution contemplate that these Muslim provinces after being incorporated into States, will remain each an independent sovereign State or will they be joined together into one constitution as members of a single state, federal or unitary? On this point, the Resolution is rather ambiguous, if not self-contradictory. It speaks of grouping the zones into ‘Independent States in which the Constituent Units shall be autonomous and sovereign’. The use of the term ‘Constituent Units’ indicates that what is contemplated is a Federation. If that is so, then the use of the term ‘sovereign’ as an attribute of the Units is out of place. Federations of Units and sovereignty of units are contradictions. It may be that what is contemplated is a confederation. It is, however, not very material for the moment whether these Independent States are to form into a federation or a confederation. What is important is the basic demand namely, that these areas are to be separated from India and formed into Independent States.”

The original Pakistan Resolution and the explanation provided by Dr. Ambedkar is of great importance. In India, there has been a tendency to dismiss Jinnah and his two nation theory as the work of a lunatic, particularly after the birth of Bangladesh in 1971. Indians should try and understand that birth of Bangladesh or even further break up of the existing state of Pakistan into several states would not invalidate the League Resolution of 1940. So long as these breakaway parts remain in existence as Independent States, away from India, Jinnah's Two Nation Theory continues to remain valid. Now, this does not mean that India has to embark on a mad venture to try and conquer these states by force. The sheer lunacy of this project would be apparent to even the most rabid Pakistan hater in India. There is only one way that India can Invalidate the Jinnah theory. It is by creating a State that Jinnah himself would have been proud to live in. What would such a State be like? Certainly not a fundamentalist state, which was never Jinnah's ideal even after the birth of Pakistan in 1947.

The present day Indians and Pakistanis need to be reminded that such a State that would do Jinnah proud would be one in which no Nationalist leader needs to turn communal merely to ensure that he is not elbowed into wilderness on account of his nationalist policies. A State that would have resolution of disputes by settlement and not by appeasement as has been the Congress credo. A state that suffers from no communal riots. A State in which no citizen suffers from any social, cultural or legal discrimination on account of his or her religion.

It is with an eye on the future that we need to study the underlying reasons behind the ideological transformation of Jinnah from one who fervently believed in the Unity of the Country to one who spearheaded the movement for its break up. The relations between India and Pakistan can not improve in the years to come, nay they are condemned to remain locked in bitter enmity, unless they can understand the reasons for the ideological transformation of Jinnah. The worst enemies of Jinnah have never suspected him of being a tool of the British, a pawn to further their policy of Divide and Rule. Nor was he ever touched by a trace of corruption.

Indeed, as Dr. Ambedkar said of him: “It is doubtful if there is a politician in India to whom the adjective incorruptible can be more fittingly applied...No one can buy him. For it must be said to his credit that he has never been a soldier of fortune. The customary Hindu explanation fail to account for the ideological transformation of Mr. Jinnah”.

If Jinnah was driven merely by political ambitions, he would not have waited for 20 years to demand Pakistan. The tragic story of the manner in which Jinnah was thrown out in the post-Tilak Congress by Gandhiji in 1920, is now known to us. For years thereafter, he remained a votary of Hindu-Muslim Unity. Neither, did he fight shy of enlarging scope of his demands on behalf of the Muslims. Indeed, how could he? The Congress Policy of appeasement meant that Jinnah would have had to commit political *hara kiri* if he was to stick to the terms of the Lucknow pact. When the Congress was prepared to concede far more than the terms of the Lucknow Pact, how could he, as a leader of his community, demand less than what the Congress was willing to offer. After the Lucknow Pact, which had conceded most just demands of the Muslims, the Congress needed to have followed the Savarkar philosophy of :

If you come, With you, if you don't without you, and if you oppose, in spite of you – we will continue to fight for the national freedom.

Instead, as we all know, Gandhiji kept on humiliating nationalist leaders like Jinnah and kept on appeasing the worst elements of the Muslim society. This, by itself, did not lead to the ideological transformation of Jinnah. This was a slow evolutionary process in the mind of Jinnah driven by the antics of the Gandhi Congress. Nor was he the only one who had come to believe that given the then prevalent state of relations between Hindus and Muslims, they constituted two nations. Giving him company were leaders like Savarkar and Dr. Ambedkar. This did not necessarily mean that they had to live in Independent states. So, why did the Will to Live together with Hindus dissolve in Jinnah's mind ? There are some painful facts to first acknowledge.

The Two Nation Theory & The Dissolution of the Will to Live Together

Jinnah, Savarkar & Ambedkar

The story of the Unholy Alliance between Gandhiji and the British has now been told for it is backed with evidence. Back in 1930s, the clinching evidence may not have been available but the tell tale signs were there for all to see. As we know, Mr. Gandhi had to face popular outrage after the hanging of Bhagat Singh in 1931. An outrage that died soon enough. Pact with Irwin produced no more than a futile Gandhi visit to London. A visit that seemed to have been more devoted to taking over the reins of leadership of the Untouchables from Dr. Ambedkar than to further the cause of Independence. A post visit farce of a fast to save people who did not want to be saved is all that Mr. Gandhi had to show. A fast followed by calling off of the Civil Disobedience without achieving any of the goals. Savarkar, the old foe of Mr. Gandhi, was finally released in 1937, after 27 years of internment to be virtually cold shouldered by the Gandhi led Congress. Yet, nothing seemed to shake the reverence that the Hindu mind appeared to have for this wily old fox. This is what seemed to have amazed Jinnah the most. As if this was not enough, the Congress as an organisation seemed hell bent on having monopoly over political power in the country notwithstanding its democratic pretensions. Before we try and understand the Congress perfidy that led in no small measure to the dissolution of the Will to Live Together, we need to understand that Jinnah was not the only one who had come to believe that given the then prevalent state of relations between Hindus and Muslims, they constituted two nations. Of course, it was only Jinnah who insisted that the two nations must necessarily live apart for in his case the Will to live together had dissolved due to Congress perfidy. For Savarkar, there was no question of living separately.

The views of Dr. Ambedkar represented the moderate voice. We shall first consider the views of Dr. Ambedkar. His views appear to have been shaped largely by the communal disturbances that rocked the country in the Gandhi era that started in 1920. He noted of instances after instances of animal passions let loose in the communal riots. The tempers on either side, he noted ruefully, were tempers of warring nations. He despaired of a solution as the Congress kept on appeasing

the Muslims and they in turn kept on enlarging the scope of demands. On the other hand, when it came to a settlement, sharing of power with secular Muslims like Jinnah, the Congress bared its dictatorial fangs. By 1940, Dr. Ambedkar was convinced that a stage was reached when 'hereafter the Hindus and Muslims must be treated as two nations'.

And now for the views of Savarkar. We ought to be duly cautious in considering his views, particularly those expressed after his release in 1937. Twenty-seven years of internment had taken its toll. Fourteen years had been a term of harsh imprisonment. An unending daily routine of hard labor. Making ropes out of coconut shells from dawn to dusk, when by the time night fell, the hands were full of painful sores. Nor did the night bring respite. Many a times, particularly at Andaman, where he spent eleven years, silence of the darkness was pierced by the screams of boys being raped by their warders. When they were tired of seeking such unnatural pleasures, the warders sought to please their masters by heaping abuses on this dangerous rebel. It did not of course help that the warders were amongst the worst elements of the Muslim society. Possession of books or pencils invited harsh reprisals. His release in 1924 had brought some relief but the ban on his political activities had continued. By the time, he became a free man, he had the mortification of seeing the man – Mr. Gandhi, who was an unabashed admirer of the Raj in 1910, being now revered by the masses as a Messiah of the Freedom struggle. It is a wonder that on release; Savarkar could still retain his sanity and razor sharp intellect. The years of difficulties had left their scars. Certain amount of toxins could be noticed in his speeches and writings. In consideration to the hardships, he had been subjected to; we need to take into account his views after subjecting them to detoxification. Once this is done, the sheer brilliance of his arguments shine forth and which provide a useful guide even today.

The very term, Hindu was subject to various interpretations in a manner that the term Muslim was not. So first of all he set about defining the term Hindu as a person: “..who regards and owns this Bharat Bhumi, this land from Indus to the seas, as his Fatherland as well as his Holy land:- i.e., the land of the origin of his religion, the cradle of his faith.”

This all-encompassing definition included the Buddhists, the Jains, the Sikhs, the tribals etc. by not insisting upon belief in the sanctity of the Vedas as an essential element in the qualification as a Hindu. As matter of interest, virtually the same definition has been placed on the statute books in Independent India.

He refused to include Muslims, Christians, Parsis and the Jews in his definition of Hindus. One doubts, if these communities were or are in any case, too keen to be called Hindus. Next, he defined the term Hindutva. A term in his opinion, more or less akin, to Hindu Polity. A comprehensive term that refers not only to the religious aspects of the Hindus but also includes their cultural, linguistic, social and political aspects as well. Once the basic definitions were in place, in the very first address as the President of Hindu Maha Sabha held at Ahmedabad in 1937, he propounded his views on Hindu-Muslim question. He said:

“Several...politicians commit the serious mistake in supposing that India is already welded into a harmonious nation, or that it could be welded thus for the mere wish to do so. These our well meaning but unthinking friends take their dreams for realities....When the time is ripe you can solve them; but you can not suppress them by merely refusing recognition of them. It is safer to treat deep-seated disease than to ignore it. Let us bravely face unpleasant facts as they are. India can not be assumed today to be a Unitarian and homogenous nation, but on the contrary these are two nations in the main, the Hindus and the Muslims in India.”

Thus, Jinnah, Ambedkar and Savarkar were all in agreement that the Hindus and the Muslims constituted different nations. There was a difference in their respective solutions. Jinnah wanted creation of Independent Muslim States but only after being repeatedly spurned by Mr. Gandhi and the Congress alike. Ambedkar wanted the creation of Independent Muslim States to be accompanied by transfer of population. Savarkar was firm on maintaining the Unity of the Country. Yet, he was no mad fanatic bent on suppressing the minorities. His unadulterated views on the position of Non-Hindu minorities under the Swaraj were as under: “When once the Hindu Maha Sabha not only accepts but maintains the principles of ‘one man one vote’ and the public services to go by merit alone added to the fundamental rights and obligations to be shared by all citizens alike

irrespective of any distinction of Race or Religion...But as practical politics requires it and as the Hindu Sanghathanists want to relieve our non Hindu countrymen of even a ghost of suspicion, we are prepared to emphasise that the legitimate rights of minorities with regard to their Religion, Culture, and Language will be expressly guaranteed: on one condition only that the equal rights of majorities also must not in any case be encroached upon or abrogated.”

The frankness, boldness and definiteness of Savarkar’s stand was in stark contrast to irregularity, vagueness and indefiniteness of the Congress. Savarkar had the courage of conviction of staking out his position for all to see. A position that can hardly be called anything but most fair. For, what he stood out for was a settlement and not appeasement. Here was a leader in the mould of the great Tilak. Here was a leader that Jinnah could have done business with in the same manner that he had done with Tilak two decades earlier. It is matter of great pity that the Hindu India chose to follow Mr. Gandhi and not Savarkar.

In memorable words, Dr. Ambedkar offered his masterly analysis of cogent reasons for development of the dissolution of the Will to live together in the minds of Jinnah and the other Muslims.

“What has the Congress done to annoy the Muslims so much? ...there are undoubtedly two things which have produced the clash : (1) the refusal by the Congress to recognise the Muslim League as the only representative body of the Muslims, (2) the refusal by the Congress to form Coalition Ministries in the Congress Provinces.

On the first question, both the Congress and the League are adamant. The Congress is prepared to accept the Muslim League as one of the many Muslim political organisations.....but it will not accept the Muslim League as the only representative body of the Muslims. The Muslim League, on the other hand, is not prepared to enter into any talks unless the Congress accepts it as the only representative body of the Musalmans of India. The Hindus stigmatize the claim of the League as an extravagant one and try to ridicule it. The Muslims may say that if the Hindus would only stop to inquire how treaties between nations are made, they would realize the stupidity of their view. It may be argued that when a nation proceeds to make a treaty with another nation, it recognises the Government of the latter as fully

representing it. In no country does the Government of the day represent the whole body of people. Everywhere it represents only a majority.... The League may not represent the whole body of the Muslims but if it represents a majority of them, the Congress should have no compunction to deal with it for the purpose of effecting a settlement of the Hindu-Muslim question.....the Congress may not recognise the League. It must, however, recognise either the National Muslims or the Ahrars or the Jamiat-ul-Ulema and fix the terms of the settlement between the two communities. Of course, it must act with the full knowledge as to which is more likely to be repudiated by the Muslims – an agreement with the League or an agreement with the other Muslim parties. The Congress must deal with one or the other. **To deal with neither is not only stupid but also mischievous.**

On the second issue, the Muslim demand has been that in the cabinets there shall be included Muslim Ministers who have the confidence of the Muslim members of the legislature. They expected that this demand of theirs would be met by the Congress if it came in power. But, they were sorely disappointed. With regard to this demand, the Congress took a legalistic attitude. The Congress agreed to include Muslims in their cabinets, provided they resigned from their parties, joined the Congress and signed the Congress pledge. This was resented by the Muslims ...

They regarded it as a breach of faith....they argue that the words ‘member of a minority community’ can have only one meaning, namely, a person having confidence of the community. The position taken by the Congress is in direct contradiction with the meaning of this clause and is indeed a covert attempt to break all other parties in the country. The demand for signing the Congress pledge can have no other intention. This attempt to establish a totalitarian state may be welcome to the Hindus, but it meant the political death of the Muslims as a free people... The Congress reply to these accusations by the Muslims is twofold. In the first place, they say that coalition cabinets are inconsistent with collective responsibility the cabinet. This, the Musalmans refuse to accept as an honest plea.”

Who would accept this as an honest plea, one would like to know?

“The plea was even dishonest, because it is a fact that in the provinces where the Congress was in a minority, they did form Coalition Ministries without asking the Ministers from other parties to sign the Congress pledge. The Muslims are entitled to ask ‘if coalition is bad, how can it be good in one place and bad in another? The second reply of the Congress is that even if they take Muslim Ministers in their cabinet who have not the confidence of the majority of the Muslims, they have not failed to protect the interests of the Muslims.....In making this reply, the Congress High Command seems to have misunderstood what the main contention of the Muslims and the minorities has been. The quarrel is not on the issue whether the Congress has or has not done any good to the Muslims and the minorities. Their quarrel is on an issue which is totally different...Exclusion from political power is the essence of the distinction between a ruling race and a subject race....it must be said that this distinction was enforced by the Congress while it was in saddle....Are the Hindus to be a ruling race and the Muslims and other minorities to be subject race under Swaraj?...”

That the ruling community has done good to the ruled is quite beside the point and is no answer to the contention of the minority communities that they refuse to be treated as a subject people....The Congress High Command does not seem to realize that the Muslims and other minorities care more for the recognition of their self-respect at the hands of the Congress than mere good deeds on the part of the Congress....

It is no use saying that the Congress does not recognize the distinction between the ruler and the ruled. If this is so, the Congress must prove its *bona fides* by showing its readiness to recognize the other communities as free and equal partners. What is the test of recognition? It seems to me that there can be only one – namely, agreeing to share power with the effective representatives of the minority community. Is the Congress prepared for it? Everyone knows the answer. The Congress is not prepared to share power with a member of a community who does not owe allegiance to the Congress. Allegiance to the Congress is a condition precedent to sharing power. It seems to be a rule with the Congress that if allegiance to the Congress is not forthcoming from a community, that community must be excluded from political power...”

The cogent arguments of Dr. Ambedkar leave no room for any defense of the Congress actions or to wail against the dissolution of the Will to live together in the mind of Jinnah. Here was a leader, Mr. Gandhi, who was in an Unholy Alliance with the national enemy – the British but who continued to be revered by the Hindu Society, even when he allowed Bhagat Singh to be hanged with nary a protest. Even, when he cold shouldered Savarkar, whose sufferings for the cause of the nation were second to none. Forget about sharing power with those who were not prepared to sign the Congress pledge, he was not prepared to share power with duly elected President of the Congress itself. Yet the gullible Hindu Society treated him like a Messiah.

Dear readers, picture ourselves in the shoes of Jinnah, how many of us would like to live together with such a society. The answer is not pleasant, particularly to a Hindu mind. Before, we next time wail against the Pakistan resolution of 1940, we might like to remind ourselves of these unpleasant truths.

The Outbreak of the Great War, the Pakistan Resolution that was in essence a motion of No Confidence in the leadership of Gandhi led Congress did not appear to have injected any sense of urgency in the Congress. Subhas Chandra Bose kept on goading the Congress High Command into action. But right up to August 1942, the Congress policy was not to disturb the British War effort. In other words, not to come in the way of the British loot of India. Mr. Gandhi's Flip Flop show continued to ruin the country.

Chapter IV

The Gandhi Congress Response to the World War II

The truth be told the manner in which the Gandhi Congress reacted to the unfolding developments on the World War front amounted to nothing more than Betrayal of Independence. This was time to take advantage of the situation and get what was good for the nation – Absolute Political Independence. Yet, the Congress followed a policy that favoured the British interests. From 1939 to 1942, it launched no serious movement to liberate the country. Finally, when it did so in August 1942, it was done in a half hearted manner. This is what we shall come to in a short while.

Let us first of all disabuse ourself of any illusions that the British considered Indians worthy of being considered their equals, which alone would have merited the consideration that the Congress gave them in their hour of crisis by refraining to launch any serious movement to dislodge them from power. Consider for instances the farce of Indian representation that was enacted in 1942, when the British faced a life & death crisis. Even in this dark hour, they kept their most loyal Indian servants away from any real decision making; while enacting an elaborate charade of giving them entry into the War Cabinet itself.

The Farce of Indian Representation in the War Cabinet

The Nazis have been rightly reviled for the rapacious manner in which they looted the resources of the territories conquered by them. The British have not even been suspected of indulging in something as uncivilised as looting the countries they ruled. How could they be so suspected, when they were so civilised as to have their very subjects represented in their War Cabinet. The sanctum sanctorum of the Imperial decision making process. What was the reality? As usual a little different than the British would like the world to know.

Let us not worry about the non-representative character of the people who were to be nominated to attend the meetings. Let us accept that since the nomination was to be made by the Viceroy, he could not be expected to nominate any Indian with any subversive intentions. Let us accept that the nominated representatives would be as they say

More loyal to the King than the King himself. Let us simply focus on the manner in which these most loyal British subjects were treated. For their treatment in London would be the litmus test of the genuineness of the British intentions towards India. If they were to be fairly treated, then there was substance in the claim of British sense of Justice and Fair Play. Let us not be biased in our evaluation. Let us not be hasty. Let us try and understand the facts.

On 1st February 1942 as the Japanese were on the verge of over running the British territories in the Far East and were in a position to threaten India, the Secretary of State proposed that the number of Indians in the Governor - General's Executive Council be increased from 7 to 9, while retaining the number of Europeans at 4. He also strongly supported the Viceroy's proposal that a Member of his Council should be posted in London to represent the views of Government of India in the Imperial War Cabinet.

The proposal was discussed in the War Cabinet meeting of 5th February 1942. The British Cabinet accepted the proposal that two Indians, one representing the Government of India and the other representing Indian States, should attend the meetings of the War Cabinet at times when the War effort, with special reference to India, was under discussion, on the same general terms as Australia and other dominions. Churchill was quite happy to equate Australians with the Indians, as he said it would keep 'Australia's nose out of joint.'

At this time, Australia had already secured the right to be heard in the War Cabinet in the formulation and direction of policy. Thus, the only Cabinet Meetings from which the Australian representative could be excluded were those dealing exclusively domestic matters of U.K. Now, the Australians feared that their right to attend Cabinet Meetings were going to be curtailed; if they were going to be equated with the Indians. Indeed, the Australian representative, Mr. Bruce, went so far as to privately inform senior British officials that 'if he is treated on precisely the same terms as Indian representatives, this will make mockery of the attendance of the Australian accredited representative at the War Cabinet.'

The Australian resentment soon reached such proportions that a note had to be put up to Churchill regarding the rights of various Dominion representatives to attend the Cabinet Meetings. It was suggested on the 16th July 1942 that Mr. Bruce as well as representatives from other White Dominions should be invited to far more meetings than the Indian Representatives. A suggestion that was approved by the Prime Minister in blatant violation of the pledge given by his own government in the House of Commons on 12th February 1942 that the Indian representative shall have the same status as the Dominion representatives.

With this approval on the 19th July 1942, not only Churchill was in breach of the privilege of the House of Commons but had also accepted the contention of Mr. Bruce that the Indian representation on the War Cabinet was to be a mere farce.

If there remained any doubt about the farcical nature of the Indian representation in the War Cabinet, here is some more proof. As the time came near for the arrival of the Indian representatives in London, the British Civil Services went into a tizzy. What kind of meetings even in relation to India were they to attend, what papers were they to see, where were they to be given an office. The Cabinet Secretariat went into action and a flurry of memos were exchanged.

The question of which meetings they were to attend was soon settled. It was decided that they were to attend only the Monday meeting of the Cabinet. The Agenda of the meeting was to be so arranged as to exclude any item that was unsuitable for the Indians. There was to be no question of the Indian representatives attending any meeting where internal Indian affairs were to be discussed. Their access to papers proved to be a thornier issue. If they were to be given secret telegrams for and from Viceroy, they would have access to information that was routinely denied to the Governor – General’s Council back home. For in India, the access to really secret information in India was given only to the Commander-in-Chief, the A.O.C.-in-Chief, and the Governor of Burma. On the other hand there were difficulties in withholding from Indian representatives’ news which would be common property to others attending Cabinets including Dominions representatives.

An ingenious way out was soon found. It was agreed that as a general rule Indian questions for decisions were not to be taken at Monday meetings of the Cabinet, which were the only meetings to which the Indian representatives were going to be invited.

The matter assumed urgency as the date of the arrival of the Indian representatives in India came near. The British Civil servants burned the mid night lamp to find a way out secure in the knowledge that form and status were of utmost importance in India – not the substance. The distilled wisdom of the British establishment found its way into the pen of that great Imperialist Winston Churchill, who issued a note to the Cabinet. This note dated September 7, 1942 is a classic case of British double speak and bears reproduction in full.

“The Indian Representatives at the War Cabinet

We may expect the arrival, during this week, of His Highness the Maharaja Jam Sahib of Nawanagar and the Honourable Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar, representatives of India at the War Cabinet. The invitation was a generous gesture to loyal Indians and we should make the most of it. They must be treated in every possible way as Dominion representatives, and I know my colleagues will show them every courtesy and consideration.

But let me sound one note of warning. Though, I shall naturally invite them to attend our Monday Meetings on general war affairs, it must not be assumed that I shall feel able to invite them to Meetings where Indian affairs are to be discussed. We have already had several such meetings, and may have more, at which the presence of Indian representatives would be highly embarrassing. I suggest we should bear this point in mind in any personal conversations we may have with the Jam Sahib and Sir Ramaswami and avoid giving them the impression that they have a right to attend all War Cabinet Meetings, or necessarily to be present when Indian matters are under discussion.”

What a way of being generous with the loyal Indians. If the Cabinet had nothing but the good of India at heart, how could the presence of the loyal Indians be highly embarrassing. More was to follow:

“It will, of course, follow that they will not receive all papers circulated to War Cabinet Ministers. No doubt my colleagues will bear this also in mind. A Note is annexed indicating the classes of papers which they will receive.”

The British were meticulous to a fault when it came to maintaining form and status. The Ministers were instructed that communications to the Indian guests were to be as under:

- Lt. Col. H.H. the Maharaja Jam Saheb of Nawanagar, GCIE., KCSI.,ADC.
- Diwan Bahadur Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar, KCSI.

Letters addressed to them were to begin with “My dear Maharaja Sahib” and “My dear Sir Ramaswami”. Even as a peon in the Cabinet Secretariat was privy to more information than these revered Indians, they were to be addressed in conversation as “Your Highness” and “Sir Ramaswami”

This charade continued till the British fortunes in War improved and was brought to an abrupt end by a terse Personal Minute from the Prime Minister dated 29th June 1944:

“I think the Indians should quit about the end of July at the latest. Our numbers are very large. A little space would be valuable.”

The Indian Sahibs and Sirs were thus thrown out to make more space for the British butts. The Imperial sanctum sanctorum was rendered pure once again after years of defilement by the dirty Indians.

Moving from Age of Innocence to Age of Betrayal via Age of Collaboration

The Gandhi Congress reaction to the War can be said to fall in three phases.

The first phase may be described as the Age of Innocence - for all the naïve hopes which the Congress leaders seemed to harbour in their hearts. It began with the outbreak of the war in September 1939 and lasted up to the Ramgarh Congress session in March 1940.

By the end of March 1940, only the most imbecile minds could still have any faith left in the British War Intentions. Yet, Mr. Gandhi persisted in helping the British. Thus the period from April 1940 to April 1942, when Sir Cripps left India can be said to be the Age of Collaboration.

The third and the last phase that began in April 1942 and ended in August 1942 is nothing but the Age of Betrayal – pure and simple. Why are we being so harsh? Let us take each of these phases for consideration.

The Age of Innocence: September 1939-March 1940

A very interesting report of the British Intelligence Bureau (IB) is available that sums up, the activities of Gandhi Congress in the Age of Innocence. We shall now use the report as well as other papers available from the Public Record Office of the British Government to reconstruct the story of the Age of Innocence. The IB report noted that the Congress High Command under Gandhi's leadership set to work with customary subtlety and fineness to build up the Congress case step by step to appeal to the idealist abroad as to discomfit the Leftists at home. Indeed, the covering note of the report pointed out that the outward hardening of the attitude of the Congress had been as a result of the steady and ever increasing pressure from the Left. This small sentence lays bare the Congress reality.

Note the term, *outward hardening of the attitude*, is not lightly used. For when we take a peek at behind the scene activities in the Congress, what strikes the eye is the manner in which the Congress Right led by Mr. Gandhi was forced, much against its wishes, to take an anti-British stance. This was only on account of non-relenting pressure from the Left. The steady and ever increasing pressure.

What is that the Left was demanding. Not a recourse to Violence. It's most popular leader Subhas Chandra Bose had been reminding the High Command that it was the publicly stated policy of the Congress ever since 1927 that it would not take part in any Imperialist War, much to the discomfiture of Mr. Gandhi who was keen to help the British. Giving Bose strong support were the Congress Socialists and the Communists. Let us look at the facts.

The Congress Working Committee met at Wardha soon after the outbreak of the War on September 14th 1939 and issued a long statement. It protested against India being dragged into the War without being consulted and called upon the British Government to declare its War Aims. Unless these aims were in India's national interests, the Congress was not to support the British. The Secretary of State was later to make the following caustic comments on this statement:

“ The Working Committee's statement of September 14th, with its obvious spirit of bargaining which the Congress leaders have by specious reasoning attempted to conceal, was perhaps not universally approved in the Congress circles.”

Naturally, the All-India Congress Committee at its meeting at Wardha on October 9th and 10th went further and held that any support to the British would amount to endorsement of the Imperialist policy and demanded Independence. In the meanwhile, Mr. Gandhi's genius was at work. On 15th September 1939, he was distressed to find that his view of offering unconditional support to the British was thrown out by the Congress. Later in October, he was happy that the AICC had not laid down a time limit for the British Government to act. Fortunately, for the nation; Mr. Gandhi's moves were being countered by the Leftists.

We owe our thanks to the Secretary of State for informing us that: “The Congress Socialist Party and other extremists, while trying to stiffen Congress resistance to co-operation, are restraining themselves from commitment to an open campaign of agitation until the attitude of the Congress is known, but while they are endeavouring to keep their place within the movement they express their determination not to accept any agreement for co-operation with Great Britain should that be decided by the Congress. The Communist Policy is still to have no open breach with the right wing and to use the Congress Socialist Party platform, but underground preparations are being made for an active war resistance campaign. In Bombay on October 2nd Communists called a one-day general strike as a protest against participation in the war. “The strike,” the Secretary of State cryptically noted, “was not unsuccessful.”

The British response to the Congress demand was made in the form of a Statement by the Viceroy on the 17th October 1939, which gave away nothing. The Congress Working Committee then met in Wardha on October 22nd and 23rd. It is at this meeting that the provincial Congress Ministries were advised to resign. For the first time, the term Civil Disobedience entered the Congress vocabulary. In November, 1939, Jinnah made an offer of settlement to the Congress for the period of the War. The terms were as under:

- Coalition Ministries in the Provinces.
- Legislation not to be forced through if two thirds of the Moslem members of a provincial Lower House were opposed.
- The Congress flag not to be flown on public institutions
- Understanding about the use of Bande Mataram
- Congress to cease it's wrecking tactics against the Moslem League.

He further urged the Congress to accept the Viceroy's offer to expand the Executive Council subject to agreement in the Provinces. The Working Committee met again at Allahabad on November 19th and 23rd and some fruitful discussions appear to have taken place. But a major stumbling block was the Congress insistence on the League signing the Congress pledge. The Congress at this point rest contented with expressing readiness of the Congressmen to launch Civil Disobedience.

Jinnah had drafted his statement calling upon the Muslims to celebrate day of Deliverance after the Congress Ministries resigned but he was waiting for Ministry to be formed in Assam before releasing it. By a coincidence, the article appeared when the peace talks were in the air. Jinnah was to issue a statement explaining this. A misunderstanding with Gandhi seems to have put paid to this plan and the Muslim League celebrated 22nd December 1939 as the Day of Deliverance.

In the meantime, the Congress Right emissaries like Birla were warning the Viceroy that 'pressure of the left wing might soon get out of hand. The Viceroy reported that Birla informed him: "We could readily, he said have defense, commercial discrimination and the like settled outside in whatever way we liked so long as the Right Wing and the Working Committee could be assisted to get away from the

Left. What we ought to do is to promise a Constituent Assembly which in actual fact would never come into being.....In compliance with his main proposition he suggested that the wise thing would be for us to work things out in detail and secure the agreement of Gandhi behind the scenes before obtaining any public declaration of policy. Some concessions would be probably necessary to Gandhi e.g. over election of states' representatives. Gandhi's technique at present to accept any statement however extravagant emerging from the Left Wing and proceed to put his own interpretation on it. He was already interpreting the phrase 'Constituent Assembly' and the longer he continued to do so the less objectionable I should find the Constituent Assembly. He begged me to make an appeal to Gandhi." The Viceroy does not seem to have been too impressed with this information and he curtly informed Birla that "he and his friends quite over-estimated the strength of their position at the moment."

The Working Committee of the Congress met again in Wardha in December. Once again Gandhiji's views against embarrassing the British seems to have prevailed. Thus, the Congress appeared to have been caught in the cross-fire between Gandhiji and the Leftists. Gandhiji would not allow Action and the Leftists would not allow a Compromise. At this juncture, the Viceroy stepped in and made an announcement on the 10th January 1940. The so-called important announcement was immediately welcomed by Mr. Gandhi, who sought an appointment with the Viceroy. The Viceroy reported to London:

"Gandhi's gambit is not wholly unexpected, but I doubt very much whether it represents the whole truth. I suspect myself that Rajendra Prasad and Nehru have stiffened his mind, but if he relapses to being their mere mouthpiece it is not going to make it very easy for me to do business with him as profitably as might have been the case."

Independence, here and now was the Congress demand. The Viceroy was not even talking of a Dominion Status, what was Mr. Gandhi meeting the Viceroy for? To strike another Unholy Alliance with the Raj? This would not come as a surprise given the history of 1929. But as I do not have any papers to back me up, I would refrain from saying so just as of now.

The Congress Working Committee which met in Wardha between 19th January to 22nd January 1940 expressed strong opposition to Gandhi meeting the Viceroy as it rightly saw nothing new in the Viceroy's Statement of the 10th January. It even refused to give him any mandate for discussions with the Viceroy.

The intrigues within the Congress knew no end. Some Misra who was travelling with Vallabhbhai Patel appears to have informed the Secretary of the Governor of the Central Provinces in Nagpur that he expected the Congress to resume office by March. He even appeared to have promised that should the British offer a proper settlement, the Congress Ministers would not hesitate to deal firmly with the Leftists as a quid pro quo.

As the battle for the soul of the Congress raged, the Independence Day, 26th January, came near. Mr. Gandhi went out of his way to warn the people that forthcoming Independence Day celebrations must not be mistaken for declaration of Civil Disobedience. He also advised against student or labour strikes on the day. So keen was Mr. Gandhi that nothing should disturb his proposed meeting with the Viceroy. With this, the Viceroy informed the Governors against interfering with the celebrations. If all that the Congress wanted to indulge in was some tokenism, they were welcome to have their farce, seemed to have been the Viceroy's reasoning. Thus passed unsung the 10th Independence Day celebrations.

The Raj preparations for the forthcoming Viceroy-Gandhi meeting were in full swing. On 24th January 1940, the Secretary of State telegraphed the Viceroy in connection with his forthcoming meeting with Gandhi. He said;

“I need not remind you that the preamble of the Act of 1919 always contemplates India as an integral part of the British Empire. I ought, however, to explain that the Dominions Office here are always reluctant to deny as to assert ‘right to secede’ owing to fear of trouble with South Africa and Eire.

So far India is concerned all our pledges relate either explicitly or implicitly to future development of India within the Empire. Obviously these pledges included no promise of a status outside the

Empire or of a Constitution intended to take India out of the Empire.
“Words Dominion Status have no meaning apart from the Empire.”

In order to be doubly sure, the Viceroy got instructions on the 2nd February 1940 laying down the parameters beyond which he was not to go without further reference to the Cabinet. The parameters included a vague promise of Dominion Status at an early date, promise at ‘some time in future, at all events after the war, consultations with Indians’. He was also advised against using the phrase ‘Independence within the Empire’. He was to use the phrase ‘Self Government within the Empire.’ Self Government within the Empire at some distant future date was all that the Raj had to offer to India in the winter of 1940 – nothing more. Undeterred by all opposition, Gandhi kept his appointment with the Viceroy on the 5th February. The Viceroy made the offer that he was authorised to. Gandhi made it clear that it did not meet his case. He went on to make the following points to the Viceroy:

- The gap between us was still so great that further discussion would not be profitable at present. The whole business was something that had to (?) grow. He was quite sure that in due time it would develop in a direction which would make the resumption of negotiations fruitful.

An assertion that left the hapless Viceroy shaking his head in wonder. ‘I am quite frankly at a loss to know quite what underlies his attitude.’

- He could not make terms with Ambedkar, who did not represent all Mahars.

If the support for Ambedkar was so low amongst the Untouchables, how come Mr. Gandhi had accepted his signature as sufficient to conclude the Poona pact and save his own life, one may ask.

- Moslem League would not receive support of all the Moslem masses, and his own influence with the Moslems, dating from the days of the Khilafat agitation was still great.

What an astounding claim. Mr. Gandhi was not content with being a mere Mahatma of the Hindus. He also seemed to believe that the Muslims also revered him on the same lines. No wonder, there was no meeting point with Jinnah.

- He had refused to yield to appeals of extreme sections to authorise and direct action on their part and said he was in no hurry to declare war. While he could not say what would happen at Ramgrah next month, he was anxious to avoid difficulty there, with particular reference to Civil Disobedience, and he said he was very hopeful of succeeding in doing so.

What a leader and what a great man. The British slap him and he still refuses to feel insulted. The British are busy raping his nation and making it clear that they would continue to do so. Yet, this good man was in no hurry to declare war on them. No wonder the British have lionized him.

Enough and more efforts had been made from September 1939 to February 1940 to find some honourable way of helping the British but they had banged the door shut on the face of the Congress Right. All that remained was now to accept that the Leftists had been right all along and declare war. A point conceded by the Congress President, Abul Kalam Azad on the 20th February 1940, when he categorically stated that delay in launching the movement for making peaceful settlement had been justifiable but it was not justifiable to postpone it very much longer, not at any rate beyond the Ramgarh Congress. The Working Committee met at Patna from February 28th to March 1st to review the fruitless visit of Gandhi to Delhi.

By the time, the Congress went to Ramgarh for its annual session, the official line of the Congress was crystal clear. It had categorically rejected Dominion Status of any variety and demanded Absolute Political Independence . At the same time, the fact that Great Britain was carrying out the war fundamentally for Imperialist ends and for the preservation and strengthening of her Empire, was also recognised. All signs pointed to the start of a titanic struggle. A struggle that was not to be. For the only worry of the Congress General seems to have been to indefinitely prolong the Civil Disobedience. Forget the tools of violence, the man did not even want to use Non-Violence. On 20th March 1940, the Congress met at

Ramgarh and called for Complete Political Independence and expressed itself against being a party to the War. For all the brave talk the Gandhian sting came in the tail of the resolution. It said; “The Congress withdrew the Ministries from the provinces where the Congress had a majority in order to dissociate India from the war and enforce the Congress determination to free India from foreign domination. This preliminary step must be naturally followed up by civil disobedience, to which the Congress will unhesitatingly resort as soon as the Congress organisation is considered fit enough for the purpose, or in case circumstances so shape up as to precipitate a crisis.”

Pray, who was to certify that the Congress was now fit enough for the purpose. Who else, but the Congress leader, Mr. Gandhi. This was made amply clear in the Resolution.

“The Congress desire to draw the attention of Congressmen to Gandhiji’s declaration that he can only undertake the responsibility of declaring Civil Disobedience when he is satisfied that they are strictly observing discipline and are carrying out the constructive programme prescribed in the Independence pledge.”

Mr. Gandhi was thus successful in his attempt *to avoid difficulty there, with particular reference to Civil Disobedience*. The promise made to the Viceroy on the 5th February was going to be kept. For now, he alone was going to decide when to declare war on the British. The angry young men of the Left Wing, who were anxious to begin the struggle for Independence, were given a unique penance for their urge to stop the British loot of the country. These naughty children were told to sit quietly in a corner and spin Khadi. If they did it well enough, perhaps Mr. Gandhi would permit them to go ahead.

The IB report aptly summed the situation. It said: “The dominant voice has been Gandhi’s; his is the master mind in control of the Congress machine. The technique is skillful...the ‘leftists’ are led to believe that direct action is inevitable while the ‘rightists’ are warned that in the absence of perfect discipline and implicit obedience to Gandhi’s doctrine such action is bound to end in disaster.’

Truly the Age of Innocence ended in Ramgarh on 20th March 1940

The Age of Collaboration: March 1940 – March 1942

The Congress and the Hindu society may have been in the thrall of the Gandhi magic. Others were not going to be taken for a ride. The resolution brimming with fire on intentions and completely vague on action must have seemed to be the final proof of the Gandhi perfidy and gullibility of the Hindu Society to Jinnah. He crossed the Rubicon and demanded Pakistan four days later.

Let us put ourselves in Jinnah's shoes and look at the things. He was faced with the prospect of living in a society, where the majority community seemed to be placing a very high premium on the antics of a hypocrite. One who demanded Independence but was not willing to launch a struggle for the same unless his own leadership was secured against the Leftist threats. One whose hold over the Hindu mind was complete. So much so that even the Leftists felt bound to follow his utterly directionless lead. Why should Jinnah allow his community to fall prey to the tricks of this wily fox, or any such similar person, who may later follow in his footsteps. The only way of securing the interests of his community appeared to be to demand Independent Muslim states. This was his conclusion – right or wrong, but one not arrived on an impulse. One arrived at after nearly twenty years of exploring all other avenues.

No wonder, thinking men in 1940 termed the Pakistan Resolution as a Counsel of Despair. The British were naturally jubilant. Indeed, on 18th April 1940 in the House of Commons, Mr. Benn explained that:

“In the Congress resolution and in Mr. Gandhi's speech there is reference to civil disobedience...The civil disobedience that may come out of this might not be Mr. Gandhi's passive kind at all. The last time our party's Government were in office we had to face Civil Disobedience, but the Moslems were in it then. It was a vast movement and very difficult to handle. Now the Moslems are not in it and are fiercely resisting it. What is likely to happen if the Congress take this misguided step will be that what begins as a protest against the British rule will finish as fight between Moslems and Hindus. I had a bitter experience of that. There was in 1931 a movement to boycott British goods. It started with a small disturbance in Cawnpore between some pickets at shops and some demonstrators.

That was intended as a demonstration against British goods but it ended in a first class Hindu-Moslem clash in which about 300 people were killed and 1000 injured.”

Nor was Mr. Benn alone. Dire warnings were also expressed that in the event of any struggle against the British, India would witness civil war on a scale not seen in India for hundreds of years.

We need to keep these views in mind and return to them in studying the events of August 1942. Did this prophecy come true and if not who deserves the credit thereof ?.

The two year period that followed Ramgarh Congress to the arrival of Sir Cripps in India is singularly barren in terms of any effort by the Congress to secure Independence despite the British having made it all too plain that they considered the Congress demand beyond the pale of reason.

The War seemed to tilt towards the Germans, particularly in the period starting from April 1940. Germans overran Denmark and Norway. The British troops had to conduct humiliating retreat from Dunkirk in France across the channel. Some 335,000 British troops, who were sitting ducks for the German Airforce were finally taken to safer shelter in Britain between 20th May to 5th June 1940. An operation that became a by-word for an ignominious retreat.

Churchill assumed powers as the Prime Minister on 10th May 1940 but could only helplessly watch the French capitulation to the Germans on 22nd June 1940.

The Gandhi, Nehru chatter about helping the British in their hour of distress assumed shrill notes. According to these worthies, Civil Disobedience as an action, was not even an option to be considered under these circumstances. It did not disturb them that the British even in their hour of defeat were not prepared to consider giving up the Indian loot. How could they, for it was so vital for their own existence! Now, Mr. Gandhi came up with another red herring. He insisted that the War was inherently evil and the Congress or India could not participate in it under any circumstances. This insane plea was too much even for the Congress to accept and it chose to publicly disassociate itself from Mr. Gandhi on this issue in July 1940. Around

this time, his dislike for Jinnah came out in the open. As he realised, that he could not emotionally blackmail Jinnah into accepting his tantrums, in an article on 15th June 1940, he accepted that: “It is an illusion created by ourselves that we must come to an agreement with all the parties before we can make any progress. He seemed to have finally accepted the Savarkar logic;

With you, Without you or Inspite of you, we will fight for Independence.

But it is really too much to expect that he would have also publicly accepted that he was wrong and that his foe was right.

Hitler continued his offensive in Europe. On 8th August 1940, he began relentless pounding of London in a bid to bomb the British into submission. The War raged in Europe as well as North Africa. By the end of 1940, the Germans had conquered Rumania, Hungary and Yugoslavia. For the first time since the days of Napoleon, had a single nation held such an unchallenged sway over Europe.

In India, the Congress finally decided to launch Civil Disobedience. Typically, it was a muddled approach. Mr. Gandhi chose the issue to be, not Independence of India but the right to preach openly against the War. Moreover, it was to be a token effort. Individual leaders were to court arrest after making anti-war speeches. From 17th October 1940 to over a year later, this mockery of a struggle went on.

It came to be severely criticized by many as it was seen to be driven by the twin desire of not creating any real problems for the British as well as to dampen the national enthusiasm for the efforts of Subhas Chandra Bose.

1941 came and went. The Gandhi Congress remained firm in its resolve to help the British cause and not start any major struggle for national independence. The British had offered no hopes, no change in their position, no slackening of the loot, which had been in fact intensified. But, our champions of World Peace and a Just International Order refused to lose their illusions.

1941 was, however, to witness three major events that were to cause a significant change in the fortunes of nations and of course decisively influence the pace of events in India. These three epoch making events, listed in the order of their occurrence were:

- The Escape of Subhas Chandra Bose from his internment in Calcutta in January 1941.
- Invasion of Russia by Germany on 22nd June 1941
- The Japanese attack on the forces of United States in Pearl Harbor on 10th December 1941.

It is well known that the Russians came to provide the Men and the Americans Money; which caused the decisive defeat of Germany in the Second World War. What is less known is the manner in which these three events interacted with each other to cause dismantling of the British Empire in India. We will take up the implications of these events on the fortunes of India, as we go along.

For the moment, it would suffice to understand the British views regarding emergence of India as an independent nation. We already know that in January 1940, all that the British were willing to concede was a vague promise of Dominion Status sometime in future. Even as they took the American Lend –Lease money to sustain their bankrupt economy, they continued to maintain that Americans keep their hands off the Indian issue.

Churchill went so far on 9th September 1941, as to assert that the Atlantic Charter that had been jointly issued by the British and the Americans in respect of sovereign rights of people all over the world did not apply to India.

An assertion which profoundly shocked those like Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, who had been the greatest champions of unconditional aid to the British War efforts.

As Majumdar noted: “If Britain had made a deliberate resolve to antagonize all sections of public opinion of India, she could not devise anything more suited to the purpose than this speech of Churchill.”

It is another matter, that even this failed to move Mr. Gandhi to launch mass Civil Disobedience. One and a half years had passed since the Ramgarh Congress but, the Congress had yet not become Fit Enough for this grand project. That seems to have been the verdict of its Mahatma.

Let us now come to the Prime Minister's Minute of 13th December 1941. It is this Minute that lays bare the British Intentions towards India in all its naked glory.

The readers would no doubt note that this is what Gandhi, Nehru had to show for their two year old policy of not embarrassing the British in the prosecution of War.

The less said about the essential goodness of the British intentions after reading this Minute, the better it would be.

Prime Minister's Personal Minute

10 Downing Street
Whitehall

SERIAL NO M 1103/1

Secretary of State For India

Sir E. Bridges

“The Viceroy should be warned that no change in our policy can be made without full Cabinet discussion beforehand, and that he should in no way lead himself to any of these overtures at this stage.

The ex-Premier of Madras had the whole Government of that vast province in his hands. At the order of the Congress caucus, he threw it down and deserted his post in the heat of war. The dangers of bombardment and invasion are now very near India. The Japanese are at the gates. Let Mr. Rajagopalacharia resume his responsible duties before prating about ‘real power’.

Personally, I would rather accord India independence than that we should have to keep an Army there to hold down the fighting races for the benefit of the Hindu priesthood and Caucus.

I do not see any prospect of changing the declared policy on which we have agreed during the war, and I should not myself prepared to take the responsibility of throwing India into confusion or burdening the House of Commons with legislation of a highly controversial character”

W.S.C.
13.12.41

The same Churchill was to change his colours in 1942, as the Japanese captured his beloved possessions in the East. Singapore, which was hitherto considered impregnable, was overrun with ease on 15th February 1942. Malay followed suit and they entered Burma. On 7th March Rangoon fell. On 11th March 1942, in a remarkably blunt statement, he announced in the House of Commons that:

“The crisis in the affairs of India arising out of the Japanese advances has made us wish to rally all the force of Indian life”

There was to be no illusion, it was only due to Japanese advance that the British wished to rally all the forces of Indian life. It had nothing to do with the Gandhi Congress Policy of not embarrassing the British.

The Age of Collaboration had also ended.

Age of Betrayal April 1942 –August 1942

“Every man is free to go to the fullest length under *Ahmisa* by complete dead-lock, strikes and all 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. *Karenge Ya Mareng.* (We shall do or die)”

This was the stirring message that Mr. Gandhi sent out to his countrymen shortly before he was arrested. The nation-wide fury unleashed once the Congress leaders had been locked up, shook up the British as never before. It did not bring them to their knees but left them badly shaken. So shaken were they that after the War, they took the earliest flight back home. Such has been the legend of the Freedom Struggle that the Indians have been brought up in.

Naturally, the Communists, the League, the Hindu Maha Sabha and their leaders together with Dr. Ambedkar, who kept away from the Struggle, have come to be branded as traitors. How much of this legend passes the test of truth? The national fury, the disquiet of the British has been all too real. No less real has been the lasting impact left on the British mind that a restive India could henceforth be kept down only by application of force on an unprecedented scale. Nevertheless, many uncomfortable questions remain.

The first relates to the fact that after the War the British did not certainly take the first flight back. They took their own time. Not less than two years passed after end of the War before the British left after securing all their interests. 1942 could have left them shaken but does not seem to have dented their resolve to rule India.

The second is the unaccountable gap of two and a half years after the Age of Innocence ended at Ramgarh in March 1940 to the launch of the Quit India Movement of 1942. In this period, the British had made India spent the following sums for their sake in addition to spending an equal amount on its own defense in relation to the War, which had nothing to do with her national interests. Now is the time to tabulate the costs of this delay:

Recoverable War Expense

1939	Rs 40 million
1940	Rs 530 million
1941	Rs 194 million
1942	Rs 1083 million (on a pro-rata basis for four months)

Thus, India had given out a loan of Rs 1,847 million (about US \$ 555 million) to the British by the time Mr. Gandhi got around to starting the struggle. To put the matters in perspective, the sum represented 2.2 times the total revenue of the country in 1938. Take another comparison. On 22nd July 1941, the Chancellor of the Exchequer told the House of Commons that the President of United States had authorised a loan of US \$ 425 million bearing an interest of 3% p.a. repayable in 15 years. This was against a collateral of British investments in securities of US Corporations listed on the New York Stock Exchange worth US \$ 205 million, Unlisted Securities worth US \$ 115 million and capital stock of 41 British owned US Insurance

Companies worth US \$ 105 million. The first charge on the income from these securities was for the repayment of loan. This arrangement was considered as Generous. Consider, the Indian terms: less than one percent interest, repayment term uncertain, collateral zero. This was not Indian generosity. This was British loot, a point we have already dealt with earlier. It can be argued that the British would have made India lend this money, even if Civil Disobedience had been launched after outbreak of the War. This is probably true. But, the fact remains, the British made India lend this money to them even as the Gandhi policy was not to embarrass the British. This makes him as well as the Congress which danced to his tune an accomplice in the loot.

In order to understand the depth of the national fury that the British had to face during this period, let us look at the telegram dated 30th October 1942 from the Viceroy;

“Though there have been no major incidents, isolated interference with communications by cutting telephone wires, removal of fish-plates etc continues and there is a disturbing (not yet confirmed) from Central Provinces that a gang of skilled saboteurs operating on the main railway line is probably inspired by the enemy agents. Calcutta has been quiet and districts of Bengal appear to be settling down. In Ahmedabad mills have not yet resumed work and firing with minor casualties was necessary on two occasions. In North West Frontier following picketing of courts Red-Shirt leader, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, has been arrested. **So far the country appears to have taken bombing in Assam and Bengal very calmly..”**

Earlier, on 8th October 1942, the Secretary of State, Mr. Amery had admitted in the House of Commons that mobs were machine gunned from air on 15th, 16th, 21st and 22nd August and 6th September. Bombing, spraying machine gun bullets from airplanes on unarmed civilians were resorted to in order to impose the British Raj.

Surely the British were giving the Nazis a run for their money in the contest for being the Most Brutal Power in the world.

What we need to examine is not how much the Quit India Movement succeeded in shaking the British but, something far more fundamental. If the people were so angry that they had to be cowed into submission by use of airplanes, how come they failed. Mr. Nehru

provides a truly bizarre explanation. According to him, “India had failed in that final test when strength and power count and all else is mere quibbling and irrelevance. She had failed not only because of British armed might and the confusion produced by the war situation in people’s minds, but also because many of her own people were not prepared for that last sacrifice which freedom requires.”

By official records, 1,028 people had been killed in the disturbances. Nehru himself felt that close to 10,000 people were murdered by the Raj. So the lament of Nehru in respect of people not being ready for that last sacrifice, is completely incorrect in the case of people at large. Or perhaps, his lament is addressed to the Congress leaders. In their typical fashion, they had coined the fiery slogan of Do or Die but neither Did nor Died.

Let us pursue our inquiry further and understand the reasons for the failure of the Quit India Movement of 1942 to dislodge the British from India. Let us start with the visit of Sir Cripps, who came in March 1942 and left in April after the vague promises that he had to offer were unanimously rejected in India.

Once, we have read the British Prime Minister’s Personal Minute, which seems to have aroused no opposition in the Imperial Establishment; we can easily see that the failure of the Cripp’s Mission was preordained.

In the meanwhile, something very strange was happening in India. The rapid advances of the Japanese in the East particularly the fall of Singapore, had caused a tremendous stir in the country. The strongman of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew has vividly described the psychological impact of this epoch making event in the servile East Asian community:

“The looting of the big houses and warehouses of our British masters symbolised the end of an era. It is difficult for those born after 1945 to appreciate the full implications of the British defeat as they have no memory of the colonial system that the Japanese brought crashing down on 15th February 1942. Since 1819, when Raffles founded Singapore as a trading post for the East India Company, the White Man’s supremacy had been unquestioned.....There was no question of any resentment. The superior status of the British in government

and society was simply a fact of life. After all, they were the greatest people in the world. They had the biggest empire that history had known, stretching over all time zones, across all four oceans and five continents. We learnt that in history lessons in school. To enforce their rule, they had only a few hundred troops in Singapore.....The British put it out that they were needed in Malaya to protect the Malays.....A small number of prominent Asiatics were allowed to mix socially with the white bosses, and some were appointed unofficial members of the governor's Executive Council or the Legislative Council. Photographs of them with their wives appeared in the papers, attending garden parties and sometimes dinners at Government House, bowing and curtsying before the governor and his lady, the woman duly wearing white gloves, and all on their best behaviour. A few were knighted, and other hoped that after giving long faithful service they too would be honoured.

They were patronised by the white officials, but accepted their inferior status with aplomb, for they considered themselves superior to their Asiatics.”

This was the Malaya and Singapore that 60,000 attacking Japanese soldiers captured, together with more than 130,000 British and Indian and Australian troops. In 70 days of surprise, upsets and stupidities, British colonial society was shattered, and with all the assumptions of the Englishmen's superiority. The Asiatics were supposed to panic when the firing started; yet they were the stoical ones who took the casualties and died without hysteria. It was the white civilian bosses who ducked under the table when the bombs and shell fell. It was the white civilians and government officers in Penang who on 16 December 1941, in the quiet of the night fled the island for the 'safety' of Singapore, abandoning the Asiatics to their fate. British troops demolished whatever installations they could and then retreated. Hospitals, public utilities and other essential services were left unmanned. There was no fireman to fight fires and no officers to regulate the water supply. The whites in charge had gone. Stories of their scramble to save their skin led the Asiatics to see them as selfish and cowardly. Many of them were undoubtedly exaggerated in retelling and unfair, but there was enough substance in them to make the point. The whites had proved as frightened and at a loss as to what to do as the Asiatics, if not more so. The Asiatics had looked to them for leadership, and they had failed them. The British built up myth

and their inherent superiority so convincingly that most Asiatics thought it hopeless to challenge them. But now one Asiatic race had dared to defy them and smashed that myth.”

60,000 Japanese soldiers were all that took to bring the British to their knees, even when they were outnumbered two to one. Whatever, Lee Kuan Yew has said about the Malay society was equally true of the Indian society. There was, however, a big difference. The so called India elite were no doubt in a race to out servile the Malayans. However, the masses led by a vocal and restive middle class needed no Japanese victory to convince them of the hollowness of the British myth of superiority. Over four decades had passed since the Great Tilak had lit the torch of liberty in India. The fires of the same torch were now in the hands of Subhas Chandra Bose, who was breathing fire from the Berlin radio calling upon his countrymen to overthrow the yoke of British Imperialism.

Now, in the post Singapore Fall era, it would have been politically suicidal to be seen to help the British. The barrenness of the individual Civil Disobedience had become visible to one and all. The Gandhi Congress had to do something or yield to the Leftist lobby.

A change in the tone and tenor of Mr. Gandhi’s writing was apparent. On 26th April 1942, he demanded that the British withdraw from India and not worry about what would be its fate. An AICC meeting was held in Allahabad from 29th April to 2nd May, where it passed a resolution demanding British withdrawal from India and preached the novel theory of non violent resistance to Japanese invaders, who were now coveting Delhi from their bases in Rangoon. Nehru, who had been advocating armed resistance to counter a possible Japanese attack, also fell in line.

The Leftist lobby had already been weakened by the departure of Subhas Chandra Bose in 1941. Once Russia had become a British ally, the Communist had come under a great deal of ideological pressure to fall in line and abandon their struggle against the British in India. Their inclination became public when on May Day, the top Communist leaders in Punjab accepted their release from the British jails. The Leftist threat to Gandhi leadership was now in disarray. Only the Congress Socialist Group remained. They were not to rest content unless the Congress began a struggle. They were voicing the

aspirations of the People and could, therefore, not be silenced easily. The old fine tuned technique of ‘Running with the hare and hunting with the hound’ came handy. On one hand, Mr. Gandhi breathed fire. From May onwards, the tone of Gandhi’s outburst became more and more shrill. On 7th June, he confessed:

“I waited and waited until the country should develop the non violent strength necessary to throw off the foreign yoke. But my attitude has undergone a change. I feel I can not afford to wait any longer...That is why I have decided that even at certain risks which are obviously involved I must ask the people to resist slavery.”

On the other, there was to be No Preparation, No Action Plan; nothing but mere rhetoric.

Consider what Azad, the Congress President, himself has to say: “I reached Wardha on 5 July and Gandhiji spoke to me for the first time about the ‘Quit India’ movement. I could not easily adjust myself to this new idea....I had been in favour of organized opposition to the British at the outbreak of the war...Gandhiji had then not agreed with me. Now that he had changed, I found myself in a peculiar position. I could not believe that with the enemy on the Indian frontier, the British would tolerate an organized movement of resistance...”

The poor Congress President knew that this was possibly the worst moment to launch a Non Violent Mass movement. But his pleas fell on deaf ears. He pleaded with his Mahatma to let him - the Congress President, know the plan of action. What preparations were the Congress to do in what was bound to be Struggle of Life and Death. Even a child knows that a cornered cat is a dangerous animal. Here the Congress was being asked to take up an unarmed fight against a badly wounded Imperial animal. It was being asked to give up the very food – the Colonial Loot, which had sustained it over centuries. It was bound to be ruthless.

The People at large were not deterred by the thought of fighting the animal but they had a right to be armed – if not with Arms, than at least with a well thought out co-ordinated plan of action. This was the least that they were entitled to.

The Congress President knew that the Congress was under an obligation to prepare the people for this fight. But the Mahatma was unmoved by such considerations. Azad records: “When I pressed him to tell us what exactly would be the programme of resistance, he had no clear idea.”

Nor was Azad alone in being perplexed. He had the excellent company of his friend Nehru, the heir of Mr. Gandhi. Even he says: “Neither in public nor in private at the meetings of the Congress Working Committee did he hint at the nature of the action he had in mind.”

What kind of a General is this, who was leading his troops into the battlefield without any plan, without any preparations with nothing but a Prayer on their lips at the very moment when the enemy had nothing but the Devil in his heart.

If the present Government of India really believes in this Sainly approach, it should order some Prayer books and not Guns, the next time when a conflict breaks out in a place like Kargil.

The Government of India may or may not choose to follow the Gandhian approach but the Congress certainly did. On 14th July, the Working Committee demanded that the British rule in India must end immediately. On 24th July 1942, the Government revoked its eight year old ban of the Communist Party of India, after it publicly vowed to help the British War Cause. The Communist tiger had been tamed. It had turned into a domestic cat. A sin for which it has never been fully forgiven by the Indian people.

Never were the chances of a Non Violent struggle succeeding lower. Any challenge at this time had to be ‘a foolish and inopportune challenge, for all the organized and armed force was on the other side, and in greater measure indeed than at any previous time in history. However, great the numbers of the crowd, it can not prevail in a contest of force against armed forces. ‘It had to fail unless those armed forces themselves changed their allegiance.’ Not my words friends but those of Nehru himself.

Never was the Left Challenge to the Gandhi domination of the Congress more feeble. The restive Indian people could let their steam off without threatening the hold of Mr. Gandhi on reins of Congress leadership. The moment to strike had arrived. And the General did not falter. Late in the night, on 8th August 1942, the long awaited 'Quit India' call was given by the Congress. As Mr. Gandhi said: "Every one of you should from this moment onwards consider yourself a free man or woman and act as if you are free... I am not going to be satisfied with anything short of complete freedom. We shall do or die in the attempt."

According to Nehru's estimate some 10,000 people died. Not one of them was a prominent leader of the Congress. I am wrong of course, one Prominent Congress leader, its past President, who was thought to be unfit for the post, did die in the attempt to free his motherland - Subhas Chandra Bose, whose inspiring story we shall turn to in a short while.

What exactly did Mr. Gandhi meant to do on the 9th August 1942, if he had not been taken into the protective custody of the British? We do not have to speculate. His very own heir can enlighten us.

"Neither in public nor in private at the meetings of the Congress Working Committee did he hint at the nature of the action he had in mind, except in one particular. He had suggested privately that in the event of failure of all negotiations he would appeal for some kind of non-cooperation and one-day of protest hartal or cessation of all work in the country, something in the nature of one-day general strike, symbolic of a nation's protest. Even this was a vague suggestion which he did not particularize.....In their concluding speeches, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the Congress President and Gandhiji made it clear that their next step would be to approach the Viceroy, as representing the British Government, and to appeal to the heads of the major nations, for an honourable settlement."

This appeal would have no doubt failed. So what was Mr. Gandhi to do next?. A Day's Hartal – is that all – is that a Life and Death Struggle for Freedom – Is that *Kareng Ya Mareng* ? Mr. Gandhi was spared the embarrassment by the protective custody of the British. After all for three years, he had caused them no embarrassment. They had a debt to repay and they did. What of the

People? As Nehru says: “But those crowds had not prepared for the contest or chosen the time for it. It came upon them unawares and in their immediate reaction to it, however, unthinking and misdirected it was, they showed their love of India’s freedom and their hatred of foreign domination.”

The Communist had played into the hands of Mr. Gandhi. Their folly had enabled him to launch a movement that he dared not as long as they were in it. There is otherwise no rational explanation for the two and a half years gap between the Ramgarh Congress of March 1940 and the Quit India Movement of August 1942.

A delay in which the Gandhi Congress became a willing accomplice in the British loot of India, all for the sake of ensuring that the Left Lobby of the Congress does not take over the reins of Congress from Mr. Gandhi.

Some 10,000 people died in the Foolish and Inopportune bid that Quit India Movement was. But the legend of the Mahatma became Immortal for leading a Movement that was foredoomed to failure. What did Mr. Gandhi do once he was in the British protective custody.

Did he fast unto death for the cause of Complete Freedom – for was he not pledged to Do or Die ? He does seem to have been stricken by the sight of the blood of some 10,000 people on his hands. He began one of his most inexplicable fasts. A fast of 21 days for Self Purification. The fast began on 10th February 1943 with Gandhi in good spirits but by 17th February, his condition had become critical. Candy and two other Government doctors reported that he would not last beyond February 21st and might collapse suddenly even before then. A considerable agitation started for his release but the Government would not relent. Arrangements were even made for his funeral and to deal with the resulting disturbances. On 21st February, Gandhi was on the death’s door but suddenly took better and by 25th, he was out of danger. He completed his fast on 3rd March without causing any further anxiety. The phenomenon greatly added to his stature as a Mahatma but did little to convince the medical fraternity. It remained convinced that one of his attendants surreptitiously added Glucose to his water without his knowledge. The fast, completed with or without the Glucose, may have added to his aura as a Mahatma but

did nothing to further the cause of Independence for which 10,000 people had laid down their lives since 9th August 1942. He failed to win any concession from the Raj. The outcome of the fast was a personal triumph for the Viceroy Linlithgow, who had stood firm and even refused to release him despite a clamour for the same.

The Quit India Movement has one aspect that has been ignored so far. This was the first Gandhi led Movement that was actively opposed by the Muslims. In 1920, they were in it. In 1930, they were indifferent to it. Yet, the communal disturbances on considerable scale had become an integral part of the Indian society. If the communal disturbances could occur in 1920 and 1930 then it was legitimate to fear that in 1942 widespread disturbances bordering on Civil War would erupt. People like Mr. Benn had already expressed such apprehensions.

Yet, the reality is nothing happened. Communal peace remained unbroken. It can not be a coincidence that for the first time the Muslim leadership was in the hands of Jinnah unlike in 1920 or 1930.

Half a century and more has passed since the time the Communists wrote themselves out of history books of Indian Freedom struggle. It is difficult today to visualize that their challenge to Gandhi leadership in 1942 was for real. Let us, therefore, now examine this aspect of the Indian history.

Chapter V

Rise and Fall of Communism in India

Communism took roots in India in early 1920, when Russian trained Indians came back to spread the gospel of the new revolutionary doctrine. By 1924, the revolutionary plans of the Communists resulted in trial of their leaders at Kanpur. The Raj ensured conviction of four leaders. But it was to ruefully note later that: “The importance of the case ...lies more in the fact that the public thereby became accustomed to hearing openly what the Communists leaders had hitherto only dared to whisper. Faith in Communism was established as no offense, and the fear of law against Communism was largely removed; the immense power of mass action as a political weapon became recognised by nationalist intellectuals of advanced views....Communism began to earn appreciative comment in questions which could not be dismissed as irresponsible.”

The Communists on their part learnt the folly of some of their methods. They began to propagate the cause of nationalism as distinct from their earlier espousal of Internationalism as a panacea for all the ills. The slogan ‘Workers of the World’ acquired a more acceptable local meaning. The new approach enabled the Communists to spread their tentacles far and wide. Nor was this the only reason. The British were aware of the real source of their strength. They realized that the Communists source of strength lay not only in their inexhaustible energy but also in the capacity of their leaders of middle class upbringing and the party workers to identify themselves completely with the classes whose cause they sought to uphold. Their acceptance of a frugal, even squalid, standard of living was the counterpart of the Congress approach to masses based on Gandhi’s mysticism and the homely appeal of Khaddar and the spinning wheel.

A secret British report on their activities noted: “From their unimpressive headquarters the Indian communists are making their bid for national power in India. Padding about barefoot through the dingy halls...they go about the other multifarious activities of an Indian political party. They certainly have no front of prosperity in the material sense but I believe, they suffer no inferiority complex on this account. They have a very go-ahead air.”

By the end of 1927, communist agitators brought about simultaneous upheavals in several of India's Industrial centers; in three years Communist theory was translated into practice in Bombay, Bengal and Upper India, which continued to be the hotbed of revolutionary activity – both the Communist and the non Communist variety but united in the love for Independence; for a long time thereafter. The efforts of the Communists succeeded in bringing about simultaneous upheavals in several of India's industrial centers. As the spread of Communism continued unabated in public utility services and industries, the Raj, by the end of 1928; was alarmed to see the Red flag of communism flying in the nerve centers of its organisation. Communism with its strident demand for Indian Independence and abolition of every vestige of feudal and imperial interests in India, was a cancerous growth that had to be cut off.

The growing clout of the Communists was amply demonstrated by storming of the Calcutta Congress in 1928 by these red flag wavers of Independence. The public outpouring of intense desire for Independence, which we have seen earlier unnerved Motilal Nehru and Gandhi. Gandhi had to tie himself in knots to somehow postpone the day of reckoning. As the wily Gandhi bought time up to 1929, the Raj went into action to eliminate their common enemy. The heavy hand of the Raj fell on the Communists with the start of the Meerut trial in March 1929. The trial gained them wide sympathy of nationalists. Nehru and Ansari joined the committee set up arrange for the defense of the Meerut detainees. Even Gandhi paid a visit to them in the jail.

The removal from the scene of all the capable and experienced leaders caused a serious set back to the Communist movement, leaving Gandhi leadership unchallenged on the national scene during the crucial years following the passage of the Independence resolution by the Lahore Congress in 1929. This proved to be a temporary if crucial respite both for the Raj as well as for Gandhiji. The Communists soon bounced back.

In March 1934, a comprehensive Communist thesis was prepared by Dr. Adhikari, one of the ablest of Meerut convicts. It laid down that individual strikes were to be transformed into general strike; this was to be accompanied by a peasant campaign against the payment of rents, by a nationwide agitation in favour of complete independence,

and by the spread of revolutionary propaganda amongst the police and army; the second stage was to be the overthrow of British imperialism, the princes and landlords by means of an armed insurrection. As was their wont, the Communist proceeded to implement the doctrine. A general textile strike was called on 24th April 1934, which received overwhelming response all over the country particularly in Bombay. Spread of revolutionary propaganda in the Army was sought to be done by striking an alliance with the Gadhar Party of the Sikhs, which had proved to be such a great headache to the Raj during the First World War.

The situation became alarming for the Government and it banned the Communist Party of India on 23rd July 1934. Thus, the British did in India what the Nazi were out to do in Germany. Ruthlessly stamp out the Communist influence. Imperialism and Nazism seemed to have a common Enemy. Nor was the banning of Communist parties in their areas of influence, the only thing they had in common. The Nazis had disfranchised the Jews on the ground that they were an inherently inferior race. The British insisted on ruling India by insisting that the Indians were inherently incapable of governing themselves. Sensitive Britons like Mr. Sorensen had warned against advancing such puerile arguments, rightly holding in the House of Commons on 26th October 1939 that: “We are putting forward a proposition which will eventually land us into the position now occupied by our enemies.”

A comment that was too true to be discussed and was therefore heard and forgotten.

In October 1939 the Second World War was already underway. The Nazis were openly recognised as enemies. This had not always been the case. In the same debate as Mr. Soresen, Mr. Gallacher pointed out: “The Prime Minister and his supporters in this country tried to get history to go in a particular direction but it refused to do so. They gave submarines to Germany to use in the Baltic against the Soviet Union. Now they are being used against Britain. Germany had no submarines five years ago. It was the policy of the National Government that provided them. The whole idea of arming Hitler and strengthening him was to turn him against the Soviet Union.”

The antipathy against Communism was Ideological and therefore of the highest order. With the Nazis, it was merely a question of competing for the bigger share of Colonial loot. There was no difference in the goal. What else can explain arming of Nazis by the British against Soviet Union. No wonder then that the Raj in India came to look at the Communist Party as its most potent enemy. Nor did the Communist Party in India help the matter by refusing to be a paper tiger.

The ban on the Communist Party only made it change its tactics and made it even more dangerous. A three week strike of the Calcutta Dock Workers was organised in November 1934 to mock at the ban. A railway strike planned for May 1935 miscarried but the British were astute enough to note by May 1935 that notwithstanding the ban, the havoc wrought by the Meerut proceedings was being repaired and the Communist Party was regaining its momentum. In 1935, the Communist party decided to overcome the limitation imposed upon its activities by the legal ban by infiltrating the Congress. It decided to send its most committed and capable cadre as individual members into the local units of the Congress. These Communist agents were to aid the process of crystallization of a national revolutionary wing within the Congress. The shelter provided by the Congress enabled the Communist to carry out their independence struggle relentlessly. In March 1936, they were able to organise a strike in Calcutta which lasted for six weeks and involved more than 170,000 workers. The Raj was horrified to note that the Communists had skillfully concentrated their attention on workers in key positions, whose absence from duty brought the factory or the mill to a stand still.

In the beginning of 1937, they opened a United Front with the Congress Socialist Wing giving a flip to their activities. Leading lights of the Congress like Jay Praksh Narayan, Jawahar Lal Nehru were sympathetically inclined towards the Communists. The Left wing inclinations of close associates of Nehru were so extreme that the Congress Right Wing choked in horror. By October 1937, the Communist influence had spread far wide. United Province, the Bombay Presidency, Punjab and the province of Bengal went Red.

The Bombay leaders were practically defying the Congress Ministries in arranging strikes in the cotton areas, even as they nominally operated within the ambit of the Congress. Spreading unrest amongst the industrial workers to propagate the cause of Independence was not the only thing the Communists were after.

They also took to organising agrarian unrest as well. The alliance of the Communists with the Gadhar Party took concrete shape in the form of Kirti Lehr Group headquartered at Meerut. The underground Bombay headquarter of the Communist was very active in supplying it with propaganda material. The Meerut center became the focal point from where the Communist activities radiated far and wide under the benevolent eyes of the Congress Ministry in U.P. Most dangerously for the British, it also made contacts with the serving Indian soldiers.

The Communist within the Congress became bold enough to openly try and wrest the control of the Congress Socialist Wing in 1938. They were barely beaten back. The attempt unnerved the Congress Right Wing. Four Congress Socialists resigned in July 1938 from the Working Committee, who declared that the Communist Infiltration had gone very far. They were now in a position to control the Congress. Jawahar Lal Nehru made the same point in 1939, when he warned that : “There are a few, somewhat new to the Congress, who while apparently agreeing, plan differently...The proposed policy is to embed themselves in the Congress and then to undermine its *basic creed and method of action*. In particular, the continuance of the technique of non violence is to be combated, not obviously and patently but insidiously and from within.”

Nehru seemed to confuse Basic Creed and Method of Action. His objection for the Communist activities related on the face of it to the Method of Action i.e. the technique of non-violence. One presumes the basic creed of the Congress since the Lahore resolution of 1929 was to wrest *Absolute Political Independence*. The Communist were in no way prepared to compromise on the Basic Creed unlike the Right Wing and therein lay the conflict not merely over the Method of Action.

Within a short span of four years, the Communists had made their presence felt in the Congress. As the British realized with a growing sense of despair that a surprising number of Provincial and local Congress Committees were either Communists or their sympathizers. They were now in a position to dictate the actions of the Congress. The One-Day strike organized in Bombay in October 1939 had been forced by the Communist elements. A very strong element within the Congress was in a position to act on the fiery rhetoric of the Right Wing. It was only bidding its time. As a matter of strategy, it had decided not to launch any struggle unless it was authorized by the Congress Working Committee. This was an eminently sensible strategy as the division of nationalist pressure could only be to the detriment of the cause of Independence. Of course, once the struggle began, it considered itself free to adopt the most suitable Method of Action to fulfill the Basic Creed i.e. attainment of *Absolute Political Independence*. If the Method involved the use of Violence, so be it. Nor were they alone. Their enemies knew that in 1939, the Forward Block of Subhas Chandra Bose, the Communists, various terrorist organizations like Anushilan Samiti, Jugantar, Hindustan Socialist Republican Army were so closely inter connected and inter-mingled as to make any defined distinction in Left Wing of the Congress virtually impossible.

The Left Wing united in its objective of attainment of Independence by Armed Violence undertook detailed preparations. The programme included collection of arms and ammunition, the arrangement of safe hiding places for arms and shelter for underground workers, collection of information in respect of police stations, the names of arms licensees and wealthy residents, the timings of the trains carrying Government money.

British knew the outlines but had to wring their hands in despair as the details eluded them. The Communist now took to openly taunting the Gandhi Congress leadership over its reluctance to launch Civil Disobedience after the outbreak of the War. The Communists rightly pointed out that the Right Wing leadership was fully conscious that once launched, the Mass movement would slip out of their control. Unlike in 1930 or 1932, the Left Wing was in a dominant position and capable of transforming the Civil Disobedience into a revolutionary movement that would accept no compromises.

It is this fear of losing control over the Method of Action that Gandhi was even prepared to delay the fight for attaining the Basic Creed of the Congress *Absolute Political Independence* - until such time as he was in a position to control the flow of events.

When the Ramgarh Congress met in March 1940, the battle for the soul of the Congress was on. Revolutionary pamphlets including banned Communist literature was being distributed in large quantities. Absconding Communist leaders like P.C. Joshi were moving about in secrecy at Ramgarh. Hectic Left Wing activities continued to ensure that the Right Wing was not in a position to offer any Compromise deal to the British. The Communist Party had made up its mind to continue its efforts to force the Working Committee into mass movement but not take any precipitate action. A mole confidentially reported to his British Masters that according to P.C.Joshi, Gandhi wanted the militant elements i.e. Bose, the Socialists and the Communists out of the way before starting any movement.

The outcome of the Ramgarh Congress was a well known stalemate. The Left Wing successfully stalled any compromise over the Basic creed but, Gandhi continued to hold the Congress and the nation to ransom by his obdurate insistence on *Absolute Non Violence* as against the national demand for *Absolute Political Independence*. The Communists continued to vigorously propagate the cause of *Absolute Political Independence* while Gandhi continued to hold fast his belief in *Absolute Non Violence* He had to resort to all kinds of machinations to ward off the pressure to launch the Mass Movement resolved at by the Ramgarh Congress session. The British continued to suck the economic vitality of the nation in no small way due to the Gandhi policy of not embarrassing the Government.

It is in this atmosphere that 1940 gave way to 1941. By January 1941, Subhas Chandra Bose had flown out of his cage temporarily easing the difficulties of Gandhi but a crippling blow on the national cause was dealt by Hitler's invasion of Russia. The British had tried their best and failed to curb the Communist influence in the country. Now, the Communists proceeded to do exactly that for the British. In an act of *hara kiri* they proceeded to help the British and fell from the pedestal they had occupied for two decades. A fall from which they have not recovered half a century later.

The Communists had always suffered from the criticism that they took orders from their masters in Russia, orders that could even be detrimental to the national interests. The Communists had strenuously denied the allegation as baseless. They maintained that if the 'Workers of the World could Unite', it would only further the national interests. Hitler's attack on Russia in June 1941 placed them in acute dilemma. As the Russians allied with the British, the Communist International propounded the thesis that what had been so far a War to further the cause of Imperialism had suddenly become transformed into a 'People's War'. A War that demanded the participation of the Communists all over the World to further the cause of the Allied forces. In simple English, the Communists in India were now being told that the British were no longer an enemy but a friend. Their War effort in India, therefore, deserved help and not hindrance.

The tiger, which had been stalking its prey, waiting for a chance to pounce on its prey was suddenly told that it was not supposed to hunt the prey but, instead provide it with fodder, A more complete turn around could not have been asked for.

A secret message to this effect was carried to India from Russia by one Achar Singh in late November 1941. The Home Minister wanted to set him free so that he could make a public appeal to his underground comrades. The Intelligence Bureau warned against such a naïve move. It insisted that Achar Singh be sent to jail in Punjab, where he could discuss this message with his jailed comrades. The British knew that the jailed communists maintained their line of communication with their comrades outside. They rightly felt that a message coming from within the jail would carry more conviction than one delivered by a person, who would seem to have purchased his freedom for the sake of the highly controversial message. This dubious policy soon yielded results. As early as 10th January 1942, the Home Department knew that the Communist Directorate in Bombay had decided with obvious reluctance and after severe disagreement within the Party ranks to renounce their 'Anti War' policy. This Directorate had been the bane of the British. Churning out propaganda material with vigor, dispatching it all over the country and managing to remain untraced despite the best attempts of the Government. It was not the British power but the Communists themselves, who managed to stop their own activities.

The British remained wary despite the official change in the party policy. It was aware that those who genuinely believed in the new policy were in a minority. The party as a whole remained hostile to the British War effort. Mian Iftikharuddin, President of the Patna Student Conference, had deliberately left the chair when the resolution for unconditional support to the War effort was passed. Fact remained that amongst many of the revolutionaries in India, love for Indian Independence overrode their loyalty to the Communist ideal. They were in no way interested to start helping the British merely because of the Nazi attack on Russia. The British were therefore in no great hurry to revoke the ban on the Communist Party imposed in 1934. They were in the meanwhile delighted to see that the Communists had started losing ground in several provinces as a result of their new official policy.

The Congress Socialist Party, the allies of the Communists in the Congress Left Wing, continued to follow the more rational policy that the best way of helping Russia was to ensure that the British Imperialist interest do not gain ascendancy. They therefore remained resolutely Anti War. The violently antagonist attitude of the Left Wing groups led to pitched battles in the Pro War meetings. In a particularly unfortunate incident, S.C.Chanda was stabbed to death at Dacca in March 1942, in one such a conflict. From the Sublime to the Ridicule, the Communist journey had begun.

The British were not the only one to be encouraged by the disarray in the Left Wing. Gandhi, who had been fighting shy of launching the Civil Disobedience since March 1940, was similarly emboldened. His writing grew firmer and tone strident. He was at last free to take steps without overtly worrying about a Left Wing threat to his leadership.

On May Day, the Punjab Government released several important Communist leaders. Release of other important leaders followed. The ban on the Communist Party was removed on 24th July 1942. It was now firmly Pro War and therefore Pro British. The dramatic turn-around of the Communist tiger into a domestic pet was an opportunity not to be missed. This was the time to strike and ensure retention of the reins of leadership. The Army was not prepared, the challenge was Foolish and Inopportune, defeat was sure. But these were small considerations.

The Army may be defeated. Independence could not be attained but the important thing was the Army would not ever think of changing its General. With this, the Quit India Movement was launched within a fortnight of the removal of the Communist threat. Undaunted by the unnerving odds, the people gave full vent to their anger against the British rule. This was to be no picnic. Whatever Gandhi may have planned, a token one day strike was out of question. The prominent leaders neither Did nor Died but, thousands certainly laid down their lives. The British repression made even the Congress Socialists abandon their line of Non Violence. Even as the Communist as a Party opposed the Quit India Movement, the rebels in its ranks broke the party discipline. The struggle soon assumed titanic proportions, one which could not be put down without use of such war weapons as bombing and machine gunning the crowds demanding Independence. The situation which developed is best described by the statement published by the Government of India in March 1943: "On the morning of August 9th Mr. Gandhi and other Congress leaders were arrested in Bombay and simultaneously throughout the country a round up of important Congressmen took place....First reactions to the arrests were surprisingly mild. On 9th August there were disturbances in Bombay, Ahmedabad and Poona but the rest of the country remained quiet. On August 10th disturbances occurred also in Delhi and a few towns in United Provinces; but still no serious repercussions were reported from elsewhere. It was from August 11th that the situation began to deteriorate rapidly...in almost all cases these were directed either against communications of all kinds (including railways, posts and telegraphs) or against the Police. Moreover, these outbreaks started almost simultaneously in widely separated areas in the Provinces of Madras, Bombay and Bihar, and also in the Central & United Provinces. Finally the damage done was so extensive as to make it incredible that it could have been perpetrated on the spur of the moment without special implements and previous preparations; and in many instances the manner in which it was done displayed a great deal of technical knowledge. Block instruments and control rooms in railway stations were singled out for destruction; and the same technical skill appeared over and over again in both selection of objects for attack-on the railways, in P& T offices and lines, and on electric power lines and installations-and also in the manner in which the damage was carried out. On the other hand-and this is a significant fact-industrial plant and machinery, even where it was fully employed on Government work, escaped any serious injury.

The position was at one time became extremely serious in the whole of Bihar..and in the eastern parts of the United Provinces. In these areas the trouble soon spread from the big towns to the outlying areas...For a considerable period, Bengal was almost completely cut off from Northern India, while communications with Madras were also interruptedIt was indeed significant that the areas in which the disturbances took the most serious form were also the areas of greatest strategic importance. Not only did they contain the center of India's coal supplies, stoppage of which would have immediately paralyzed all transport, trade and industry but also lay immediately behind those parts of India which were obviously exposed to enemy attack.....

Everywhere the Congress creed of non-violence was ignored...there were no communal clashes-and the whole picture was much more one of calculated venom directed against selected objectives than of indignant people hitting out indiscriminately....Bombs made their appearance in Bombay, the Central Province and the United Provinces...some of a highly dangerous type, were in use on a fairly extensive scale, particularly in Bombay..."

Such meticulous planning and execution could be the work of only one organisation, the Communist. No one else had devoted so much time and energy to the violent overthrow of the British in India. Most unfortunately, it was not the organisation as whole that was participating in the Struggle. Only the Communist rebels were in the battle field together with the Congress Socialist leaders such as Jay Prakash Narayan. These brave unsung warriors were fighting a battle on two fronts and therefore losing. It was not only the British who they were fighting with. Incensed by the activities of the rebels, the Communist leaders, who toed the party line, were busy helping the British hunt their own comrades.

From March 1940, it was Gandhiji who blocked the Independence movement. From August 1942, the infamy belonged to the Communists. There is no getting away from this blunt painful reality. They had a golden opportunity to prove that they took orders from no one outside India but they not only squandered it but also proved their critics right.

Even now, it is not too late to apologise for their actions and own up their mistake. It is not too late to acknowledge the glorious role of the Communist Rebels who defied their Party line and nearly brought the British to their knees. This is the least that can be done for these long departed souls. The Communists in India only need to look at the fortunes of their comrades in Vietnam to realise what an opportunity they missed in India. Even as the Communist in India fell from their lofty heights in 1942, Ho Chi Minh went from strength to strength.

The Communists came to prominence in Vietnam in late 1931, when they unleashed a fierce well directed struggle to throw out the French colonial power. The attempt came within an inch of succeeding. But in the end, the Colonial power regained its dominance and meted out harsh treatment to its foe. The able leadership of Nguyen Ai Quoc-Nguyen, the Patriot or as he later came to be known as Ho Chi Minh, stood it in good stead. While, he was not able to stave off the virtual decimation of the Party in the short run, he was able to ensure that French victory was not complete. The Communist structure within the country remained intact.

The Communist ideals attracted leading cadres from middle class background and within an astonishingly short time, they had succeeded in creating a truly mass movement. The Party was able to bridge social and regional barriers. No less important was the fact that they had come to view modernisation of Vietnam not merely as a national necessity but also an important part of the revolutionary transformation of the entire colonial world. Ho Chi Minh was very clear that the Communist Internationalism and National Interests could not be contradictory. As he said: “The French imperialists...have resorted to every underhand scheme to intensify their capitalist exploitation in Indo-China....They increased their military forces, firstly to strangle the Vietnam revolution, secondly to prepare for a new Imperialist war in the Pacific..thirdly to suppress the Chinese revolution, fourthly to attack the Soviet Union because the latter helps the revolution of the oppressed nations....(If) *we give them a free hand to stifle the Vietnamese revolution, it is tantamount to giving them a free hand to wipe our race off the earth and drown our nation in the Pacific.*”

If only the Indian Communists had also understood this basic truth, they would not have allowed their love for Russia to come in the way of Indian Independence. During the War, after the fall of France, the colonial power in Vietnam was exercised by the French Government in Vichy which was beholden to the Axis power. The Japanese did not therefore need to occupy Vietnam, unlike the Dutch controlled Indonesia. The French and the Japanese coexisted in Vietnam during the War as allies. They bid to instill respect for the Colonial power by seeking to subject the urban youth to persistent propaganda and indoctrination. This was a futile attempt for the youth were already under the spell of the Communists. The French opened the doors of the University of Hanoi to the Vietnamese youth. The education only served to make them radical nationalists. The collapse of the pro-Axis French Government forced the Japanese to resurrect Bao Dai from his French imposed exile and install him as the nominal Emperor of Vietnam.

Banned both by the French and the Japanese, the Communists laid the groundwork for their comeback across the border in China. With a far better grasp of the declining fortunes of the Japanese, Ho Chi Minh strategically placed the Viet Minh military force in the northern part safe from the reach of the Japanese garrisons, after the French power dissolved in March 1945. When Japan surrendered in August, his was not only the best organised force but was also the only one untainted by collaboration with either French or the Japanese. From here on his eventual triumph was a matter of mere time.

Chapter VI

Savarkar and Bose

A review of the era of 1939 – 42 can only leave us with despair once we realize the manner in which the cause of national Independence was betrayed first by Gandhiji and then amazingly by the Communists. I refuse to include Jinnah in this list. He may have demanded Pakistan in despair but did not demean himself by being servile to the British. But, there is no reason to be despondent. There were also people whose activities would make us proud.

Let us look at them. First and foremost we shall proceed to look at the activities of that old war horse – Savarkar. He was now one of the few leaders left on the national scene, who had carried the torch of freedom even in the First World War. His experiences with the Raj had firmly convinced him that while all efforts against the Raj were welcome, in the final analysis, it was only an appropriate use of Force that would compel the British to relinquish their control of India. His study of Mazzini's techniques had led him to the conclusion that a Great War provided two golden opportunities to a slave nation seeking to be free.

In a conflict of life and death, the occupying power had no choice but to enlist as many people as possible, even those from the slave countries, in the persecution of the war. Thereby, providing an opportunity to the youth of the slave country to learn the vital art of using firearms. An art that was otherwise totally denied to them. An art that could not be made to be unlearned merely because the hostilities had ended. This rare opportunity had therefore to be seized. It was important to learn to use guns and the art of making bombs. Even if as a first step to further the cause of the master nation. Once people knew how to pull the trigger, changing direction of the barrel of the Gun was then a simple process.

The other opportunity during the Great War for the Slave nation was the designs of enemies of the master nation with whom it was engaged in a struggle. As practitioners of Realpolitik, such nations were on the look out for every opportunity to advance their own cause. Nations, who in normal times, would not dream of helping slave nations, were in such War times more than willing to do their

bit. Such a help could be made use of by the slave nation to escape the tyranny of bondage. The enemy of the Master nation was doing no favour to the Slave nation by helping it. Nor was the Slave nation in any way indebted to it for extending help. It was a simple matter of 'Enemy's enemy being one's friend'. Nothing more, nothing less. The real world revolves around such hard facts.

Italy had become a free nation after hundreds of years of slavery once Mazzini and Garibaldi followed such practical considerations. So could India. Ever since, Savarkar had begun to carry the torch of Freedom since the turn of the century, nothing had happened to shake his conviction. If anything, the events in the world had only reinforced his beliefs. He had watched helplessly from his cells in Andaman, the opportunity pass him during the First World War. Nothing would come in his way now. Of this, he was determined.

Savarkar had been a great proponent of Hindu-Muslim unity. Indeed, his assertion that the events of 1857 marked the end of Hindu-Muslim War was in no small measure responsible for the inhuman treatment he got. His book, proclaiming that the Hindus and Muslims were blood brothers in the post 1857 Bharat remained banned in 1939. However, much water had flown in the Ganga since 1910, when he was packed off to the British jails. A state of intense communal disturbances had overtaken India after the Khilafat movement led by Gandhi in 1920. This had placed people like Jinnah and Savarkar in a peculiar position.

A secular, nationalist Muslim leader like Jinnah had been driven to demand more and more protection for his community after despairing of the hold of a wily and cunning Gandhiji on Hindu minds. After having studied the facts presented so far, even the die-hard fans of Gandhiji will not be in a position to lightly dismiss Jinnah's opinion of him as being baseless. Savarkar was no Mahatma. Had anyone called him so, he would have been appalled. He was as much a practical politician as Jinnah. In the surcharged atmosphere, he knew whatever, the compulsions behind the change of Jinnah's stand; he had to play the Power Equalization Game. If it meant, his being branded as a Hindu Leader and not a national leader like Gandhiji, so be it. He was for a Settlement with the Muslims. The Congress policy of Appeasement left him cold. Settlement was possible, only when any one community was not unfairly disadvantaged.

In 1939, the Hindus were unfairly disadvantaged in a crucial matter – representation in the army. Something that did not worry a pacifist like Gandhiji but was a major cause of concern to a practical person like Savarkar. Why Savarkar alone, Dr. Ambedkar was equally worried.

The British had always insisted on keeping politics out of the army. What they did was but natural for them. By keeping out politics, what they meant was to keep out national aspirations. Where would they be if the Indian soldiers turned disloyal? The War of 1857 had taught them crucial lessons. We have seen earlier in the ‘British Mutiny of 1857’, how Sir John Lawrence held that the *Mutiny* was the result of the Native Army being united in one vast brotherhood, with common fatherland cutting across language, religion and caste barriers. The question that haunted the British was how to ensure that such a thing could not occur again. The need for a Native Army itself was indispensable but how to ensure its loyalty. In other words, eat the cake and have it too. The solution was, as always, ingenious.

Even as the British cried themselves hoarse about the need to keep Politics (read national aspirations) out of the Army; they proved to be master strategists.

The pre-1857 Bengal Army was essentially a Brahmin and Kshatriya army of the Ganges basin. The so called martial races of India – the Sikhs, Gurkhas, Punjabi Muslims, Dogras, Pathans, Garhwals, Rajputs had furnished few recruits. It is with this army that the British had conquered India. There was no official restriction on the enrollment of any particular tribe or caste or region. The only exception to this were the **Punjabis and the Sikhs**. Their recruitment was placed under a severe restriction by the Government. The number of Punjabis in a regiment were not to exceed 200, of whom not more than 100 could be Sikhs. The Sikhs could hardly be accused of not being fit for military service since they were amongst the last to be subdued by the Imperial power. Indeed therein lay the rationale for the restriction. Up to 1857, the Sikh loyalties were not yet proven. A single year changed all this. People who had been militarily found competent, indeed whose exploits had laid the foundation of British Raj were declared as Non Martial. People not fit enough to be Soldiers. The tribes that had played their part in upholding the Raj now came to be favoured.

The Imperial intentions were as usual cloaked behind some fancy doctrine. In 1879, Lord Roberts held that ancient military spirit had died down in people of Bengal, Madras and the Maharashtra. Thus was born the mischievous doctrine of the so-called Martial and the Non-Martial races of India. The doctrine was rightly held to be arbitrary, artificial and as foolish as the Hindu Caste system by Dr. Ambedkar.

Punjab and the North West which together with Nepal, Garhwal and Kumaon had provided less than 10% of recruits in the pre 1857 Bengal Army accounted for no less than 53% within one year i.e. by 1858. On the other hand, the people of Ganges Basin who had been more than 90% of the 1857 found their share dropping to less than 50% in the same period. Only those who demonstrated loyalty to the Raj could find a place in the native army. So called martial traits of the races had nothing to do with this.

1857 was not the only time the communal composition of army underwent a drastic change. Sikhs, who had proved to be so loyal in 1857, became somewhat suspect after the revolutionary activities of the 'Gadhar Party'. In 1914, they occupied the place of pride in the army accounting for about 20% of the strength. Once, Punjab was rocked by the ferment of revolution, the Imperial policy reoriented itself. By 1930, Sikhs who, as late as 1914, had the highest share of army recruits found themselves in the third place with their share dropping to 13.58%.

By 1930, the Muslims from the North West were being favoured by the Raj. They had accounted for 17% of the army in 1919 before the outbreak of the Khilafat Movement. The abrupt withdrawal of the Movement by Gandhiji and the subsequent disillusionment of the Muslims with the Congress was soon reflected in the army intake. By 1930, their share had grown to 29%.

The information about communal composition of the army was freely available till 1930. Thereafter, it came to be cloaked in secrecy. The reasons were not far to seek. Once again the Raj was involved in a mammoth exercise to change the nature of the Indian army. The change was comparable to that in 1857, when the representation of the Ganges basin was halved.

Between 1930 and 1939, the Government consciously more than doubled the share of the Muslims from Punjab from about 22% to something in the region of 60 to 70%. The real figure remained hidden as the Government stonewalled all attempts to get this information. But the preponderance of the Punjabi Muslims in the Indian army was a well known fact even as their exact percentage remained unknown.

It is obvious that either the Punjabi Muslims were considered the most loyal Indians or, at least, the least disloyal. Otherwise, it is impossible to explain this phenomenon. A unique one since 1857. For after the outbreak of the *Mutiny* the British had taken great care to see that the Indian army was so organised as to perpetuate the provincial and religious divisions so that they could never once gain get infused with an unifying sentimentt.

Given the fact that the Punjabi Muslims were an important element of the Pakistan scheme, such a preponderance in so vital a wing as the army could not but be a source of great anxiety to anyone who had any common sense. Jinnah was alive to the advantages offered by this. After the outbreak of the War, he demanded that the increased army intake due to War should not affect the existing Muslim representation.

The Gandhi Congress as usual preferred to be blind to the dangers posed by this situation. It fell to the lot of Savarkar to rectify the matters. He undertook whirlwind tours to preach the cause of Hindu militarisation. Undeterred by being called a Recruiting Agent, he relentlessly advocated that the Hindu youths should join the armed forces. As he said:

“Forces beyond their control have compelled the British Government to trust you with arms and ammunition. Formerly youths had to rot in cells for being in possession of pistols, but today the Britishers are placing rifles, guns, cannons and machine guns in your hands....do not worry about bonds and agreements...You can write new bonds and agreements on it when the time comes. Mind, Swaraj will never come to you, although you may cover the entire earth with paper resolutions. But if you pass resolutions with rifles on your shoulders, you will attain it.”

In this programme, Savarkar met with great success. The Indian Army which was 200,000 strong at the outbreak of the War rose to a strength of 2,000,000. Not only that by 8th of July 1943, the communal composition of the Indian Army had once again undergone a change. The Muslims now had a share of 34%, while the Hindus together with Gurkhas and the Sikhs had a share of 60%. This was more in line with the overall share of these communities in the Indian population than in 1939. Power Equalisation had been successfully attained. This was the public part of his activities.

Criticized by the Muslim League for its very success. Damned by the short sighted Congress as aiding the British. These 2,000,000 Indians were to contribute in no small measure to the national cause as we shall see shortly. Along with this public part, Savarkar was actively pursuing a secret agenda. For once, dear readers, permit me the luxury of telling a story which is backed by no papers or documents but only by the fading memory of an old man, my neighbour – Savarkar’s son. The story he told me is fascinating. Some of it is known, some remains unknown to-date. Fortunately, I have been able to have this corroborated by an even older man - Shri S.P. Gokhale, a very close associate of Savarkar, who had heard it first hand from Savarkar himself. Both of them have since passed away but only after reading my book “Freedom Struggle – The Unifinished Story” that described their part. In fact Shri. S.P.Gokhale was good enough to give Abhinav Bharat a donation of Rs 10,000/- after having read the book in its entirety.

First of all, let us take up the known part. Ras Bihari Bose was, as we know, an old associate of Savarkar. One who had sought to avenge the harsh treatment of revolutionaries by throwing a bomb on the Viceroy on 23rd December 1912. Despite the dragnet spread by the British, he continued to outwit the Police. He had even sought to direct the Gadhar Party revolution in Punjab caring two hoots about the fact that if he was caught, hanging was his fate. After the failure of the attempt, he had retreated to Japan, where he spent his time in exile. When Savarkar was finally released, this old friend was most happy and he wrote an open letter to him. This much is known.

Now the unknown or rather the less known part. As the war clouds gathered in Europe, the revolutionary blood in Ras Bihari Bose’s veins asserted itself. He wrote a secret letter to Savarkar. The letter

was delivered through a Japanese Buddhist monk who was residing in the Buddhist temple at Worli in Mumbai. A temple that has survived the onslaught of urbanisation and can be seen even today. In this letter, written sometime in 1939, Ras Bihari informed his comrade that Japan was soon to enter the War. This was a golden opportunity to rally the Indian cause. Ras Bihari had made use of his extensive contacts in the Japanese society to win sympathy for the Indian cause. But his Japanese friends wanted a proof that revolutionary fire was still raging in the hearts of the Indians. They therefore insisted that a prominent Indian visit Japan seeking such a help. They had promised Ras Bihari to help the Indian cause militarily in such an event. Savarkar was therefore urged to play his part in the new revolutionary plot hatched by this old rebel. The letter was kept in a trunk under Savarkar's bed. In the War times, possession of such a letter invited certain death on charges of treason. Very few of his associates were privy to this dangerous information.

It was out of question for Savarkar to attempt to leave the country. For one, the age was not on his side. A fifty eight year old body which had suffered much abuse for over fourteen years was in no position to undertake such a rigour. More importantly, a convicted revolutionary like Savarkar was under a close watch of the British. Any attempt by him to leave the country during wartime for a destination remotely in the direction of such a country as Japan would have immediately aroused suspicions. Savarkar, ever vigilant, looked around him. One potential candidate appeared to be Hedgewar, the founder of the R.S.S. He had been involved in the Bengali revolutionary activities earlier. Apparently an approach was made on these lines but, Hedgewar turned it down as he felt that the work of consolidating the Hindu society was more important than this unlikely scheme.

The only other suitable person was Subhas Chandra Bose. In 1940, after the Ramgarh Congress was over, Subhas was busy consolidating his Forward Block. In June, he came to Bombay to meet Jinnah. The meeting with Jinnah was futile as Jinnah plainly told Bose he was not prepared to have any discussion with him since he had no national standing. The Forward Block was an organisation that was restricted to Bengal. Subhas could not represent Congress, which had imposed a ban on him. Nor could he represent the Hindus for that position belonged to Savarkar as the President of Hindu Maha Sabha.

Subhas therefore decided to meet Savarkar, whom he had met earlier as the Congress President. The meeting took place on June 22, 1940 at Savarkar Sadan in Mumbai, the very place where I am writing this.

It is in this meeting that Savarkar informed Subhas of the approach made to him by Ras Bihari Bose and pleaded with him to flee to Japan and take up the mantle of liberating India with the Japanese help. The only programme which Subhas had in his mind at this time was to launch a struggle to remove the statute of Holwell, the famous narrator of the story of the Black Hole of Calcutta. Savarkar took pains to dissuade Subhas from wasting his energies on such futile causes which were sure to lead to his imprisonment and thus deprive him of the much needed freedom to pursue higher goals. Subhas politely heard out his senior revolutionary colleague but made no commitments. The Japanese plan appeared to have intrigued him but no more. He went back to Calcutta and as was his wont threw himself fully in the agitation to get the offending statute of Holwell removed. The youthful emotions had triumphed over the cold calculations of the senior revolutionary. The British Government was too happy to find an opportunity to lock up this dangerous rebel. Soon Subhas found himself cooling his heels in the British jails. Now the words of Savarkar started ringing in his ears. Gandhi Congress had in the meanwhile, launched its sterile programme of Individual Disobedience. Now Subhas made up his mind to leave India but Japan was an unknown land. Europe, where he had established several useful contacts during his earlier exile, beckoned him. The added attraction in Europe was the presence of Emily, the German girl, whom he had married secretly during a previous visit

Once the resolve took shape in the mind of Subhas, there was no looking back. He began a hunger strike on 26th November. As he became serious, the Government was forced to release him on the 5th December 1940. He was allowed to go home but nevertheless continued to be under confinement. Subhas had earlier made some tentative preparations to leave India via Peshawar. These now came in handy. In a thrilling escape that made him a legend, Subhas flew out of the British custody. In the manner of Shivaji's escape from the custody of Aurangzeb, some three hundred years earlier, he gave out that he was ill. Then he appeared to be renouncing the world and busy in solitary meditation, where no one could disturb him.

On 26th January 1941, his family announced that Subhas was missing. By this time, he had crossed over to Afghanistan and was on his way to Kabul. His travails did not end for Kabul was infested with British spies. After remaining hidden for two months, he was able to fly to Berlin via Moscow in March 1941. He was lucky that Hitler had yet not attacked Russia and as such this route was still open.

The high drama of his escape and his eventual reappearance in Berlin created a stir in India and increased the prestige of the Left Wing amongst the people making it even more difficult for the Gandhi Congress to reach any agreement with the Raj which fell short of Independence. This can not obscure the reality that his stay in Berlin from March 1941 to February 1943 was singularly unsuccessful in materially advancing the cause of Indian Independence. Soon after he landed in Germany, the Japanese began their rapid advance in the East while the German army seemed to be overrunning Russia with ease. With all aces in their hands, the Axis powers had little use for Subhas, who was made to cool his heels having little to do except make some anti-British broadcasts on Berlin radio. The quick march of the Germans in Russia came to an end by December 1941. The Soviet began their winter counter offensive and recovered a considerable territory. With the War in Europe evenly poised in summer of '42, the Axis powers finally found time to see this Indian visitor. Subhas was able to meet Mussolini on 5th May 1942 and then Hitler himself on 29th of the same month. Neither Italy nor Germany paid any heed to his demands that they should make a declaration in support of Indian Independence. Subhas found his hopes of winning any support for his plans to form an Indian National Government in Exile being dashed to ground. His efforts to enlist the Indian Prisoners of War to the national cause did not bear much fruit. Nor were the Germans in any way being supportive of his plans to go to Japan. He seemed to have merely changed places from a British to a German prison, albeit one that was more comfortable.

In this dark hour of despair, if Subhas could hold on to his sanity, the credit goes in no small measure to his wife Emily. It was she who nursed him and kept his hopes alive. Her tender care kept this great revolutionary alive in body and spirits. It is during this stay, she gave birth to Anita. This was the last time Subhas was ever to enjoy marital bliss. Barely was the child two months old that Subhas finally got an opportunity to be free from his enforced stay at Berlin.

By end of 1942, the tide of War seemed to be slowly shifting in favour of the Allies. The full weight of the American muscle was making life difficult for the Axis powers. Japanese expansion in the East had reached its zenith and was now under defensive pressure. The British were meeting their first success in North Africa, where Rommel was roundly defeated in October '42. Russia was proving to be the nemesis of Hitler in the same way as it had proved to be of Napoleon hundred and forty years before. By mid September 1942, the German forces were at the gates of Stalingrad. But the Russians held their ground despite overwhelming odds. By November, they had launched a counter offensive encircling the Germans. The hunters had become the hunted. Cold, hungry and demoralised, the German army at Stalingrad surrendered, in what was a humiliating defeat for Hitler, on 31st January 1943.

By now, it was more than clear that the Germans had no conceivable use for Subhas. With reverses in Russia, it was clear that the Germans were not going to be in a position to threaten India via land. It was better to send him to Japan, where he could be used more profitably by the Japanese to hurt the British. Subhas on his part was only too happy to leave. It meant leaving his wife and child behind but that was a small price to pay for the cause of his nation. On 8th February 1943, Subhas boarded a German submarine at Kiel after bidding farewell to a teary eyed Emily and a smiling two month old Anita, too young to realise the happenings around her. He was never to see them again.

The submarine travel in wartime was a dangerous and hazardous affair. Death hovered around but fought shy of devouring Subhas. He was transferred in mid sea from a German to a Japanese submarine off the coast of Madagascor on 27th April 1943. This took him to Sabang in May. From here he was flown to Tokyo, where he finally met Ras Bihari Bose for the first time in his life. By June the news of his presence in Japan shook India. On 2nd July 1943, he flew to Singapore along with Ras Bihari. Here on the 4th July Ras Bihari formally handed over the command of Azad Hind Fauj or the Indian National Army, to Subhas amidst thundering applause. *Netaji* – the leader had arrived.

From Calcutta to Kabul to Moscow and then on to Berlin and Kiel. From Kiel to Madagascar via Cape of Good Hope to Sabang and then to Tokyo. From the heart of Japan to Singapore. All in wartime. Each step of this journey was full of hazard. Death, a whisker away. At Calcutta, he left behind his family. At Kiel, he left behind Emily and Anita. All of them for ever. Something, he knew all too well. Only the bravest of brave, only the most committed could even dream of embarking on such a venture. Here was Subhas, who not only dreamt of doing so but turned it into a reality. No wonder, Netaji of July 1943 was the Greatest Living Indian Legend.

Only a gnawing thought remains. If only Subhas had listened to Savarkar in June 1940. Subhas could not only have begun his struggle three years earlier but saved himself a lot of trouble. Compared to the journey he undertook, travel from Calcutta to Singapore was more akin to travelling to the backyard. But then Subhas was a romantic revolutionary and not a cold calculating strategist. This was both his strength as well as his weakness. Savarkar was no different. If only he had not traveled to London from Paris on 13th March 1910 to court a sure arrest and a political exile of 27 years! It is perhaps in the nature of a revolutionary to be an emotional fool, if he stops being so, he ceases to be a revolutionary. A man saner than Subhas would no doubt have traveled to Singapore directly from Calcutta and not via Berlin. But then a man saner than Subhas would neither have come within 100 kms of a convicted criminal that Savarkar was in the British Raj. So let us put these thoughts of armchair experts like us aside and proceed with the story. But before we do so, it is important to understand the efforts taken by Ras Bihari Bose to create an organisation capable of delivering a death blow to the British and hand it over to a younger, more capable colleague on the 4th July 1943.

Sometime during the latter half of the First world War, Ras Bihari Bose had fled from India after the Gadhar Party revolution failed under a false passport issued in the name of P.N.Tagore. Using this, somehow, he was able to reach Japan but his troubles were not yet over. The British spies got a wind of his presence in Japan. At this time, Japan was a British ally. It, therefore, appeared a simple matter to extradite this exile, a dangerous criminal who carried a big award for his capture. Ras Bihari was no easy game. He stuck an alliance with a Japanese underground organisation – The Black Dragon. Its

leader Toyama stood firm against any attempt by the Japanese Government to capture Bose. Eventually, Toyama got Bose married to Toshika, the daughter of his devoted follower Ezo Soma. Thus, Ras Bihari became a naturalized Japanese citizen and there was no more question of handing him over to the British. The marriage did not dim his vigour for Indian Independence as was clear from the paper 'Voice of India' that he started. By the outbreak of the Second World War, he had developed enough contacts within the Japanese society to be in a position to push for a military assistance to the Indian cause. The insular Japanese rulers whose disdain for other Asiatic people was well known, could not take this pressure from within lightly. But, it remained a case of two steps forward and one step backward. Forward under the pressure of Bose lobby and backward due to the inherent disdain for all societies other than their own. This was to change only after the arrival of Netaji.

Meanwhile, the other members of the Gadhar Party were not idle. Some of them like Amar Singh were released after serving a twenty five year term. He formed Independent India League at Bangkok with Pritam Singh, another Punjabi exile from the days of Gadhar Party. From October 1941, the activities took shape. On 4th December 1941, Pritam Singh concluded an agreement with a Japanese military officer, Fuzihara; thereby Japan agreed to recognise Indian Independence as well as to make efforts to bring Subhas to the Far East from Berlin. On 9th December 1941, the day after Pearl Harbour, Pritam Singh announced the formation of Independent League of India. As the Japanese overran the British possessions in the Far East, several thousand Indian soldiers became prisoners of war.

One of them was Captain Mohan Singh, a nationalist Indian army officer who hated his arrogant White superiors. Pritam Singh was able to convert him to the national cause by 1st January 1942. Azad Hind Fauj, Indian National Army (INA) now began to shape. The fall of Singapore on 15th February led to capture of 40,000 Indian prisoners. It is from these that Mohan Singh was able to seek recruits to the INA. On 9th March a conference was held in Singapore for Indian representatives from Malay and Thailand. This was a precursor to another conference in Tokyo to be held on 28th March 1942 under the Chairmanship of Ras Bihari Bose. Pritam Singh unfortunately died in an air crash while on his way to Tokyo. Finally a summit Conference was held in Bangkok from 15th June 1942. This was attended by the

representatives of Indians from all parts of the Far East as well as political representatives of Japan, Germany and Thailand. A message from Subhas was read out at this meet. The Conference marked the pinnacle of the achievement of Ras Bihari Bose. Indian Independence League was formally inaugurated with a definite constitution. The object of the League was complete and immediate attainment of Independence of India. Fittingly, he was elected by the Conference as its head. Meanwhile, the work of forming the INA had proceeded apace. It was formally established on 1st September 1942 with Bose as its President and Mohan Singh as its Commander in Chief.

The conclusion of the Bangkok conference was marked by the efforts of the League to obtain a formal acceptance by the Japanese rulers of Indian Independence. This they fought shy of doing. It would be churlish to attribute this only to the desire of Japanese to dominate all other Asian societies. The fact remains that no *Contemporary Prominent* Indian had so far left India for Japan to seek their military help for the Indian cause. Subhas was in Berlin and, therefore, an unknown element. Mohan Singh's credentials were suspect as a former POW could not be expected to command much respect merely because he had turned against his previous employers. Ras Bihari Bose was more of a Japanese than an Indian and now commanded little following in India. For the Japanese, it was reasonable to doubt if the Indians really wanted their Independence badly enough. It appeared to them India was a Slave nation and deserved to be one.

The Officers of the INA were not prepared to tolerate arrogant behaviour of the Japanese. If no prominent Indian leader was joining them, it could hardly be their fault. Matters reached a head in December 1942. The Japanese refusal to hand over the Indian POWs to the INA - the defense wing of the League; was bitterly resented by Mohan Singh and his friends. They disbanded the INA and were soon arrested by the Japanese. Like his friend Savarkar in India, Ras Bihari Bose had to face a peculiar situation. He could see the logic of Mohan Singh's arguments but this was war. Japan had the power to help them fight the British. It was foolish to antagonize them. With a heavy heart, he accepted the resignation of Mohan Singh and revoked his order to disband the INA. From January 1943 to June 1943, he was in the unhappy situation of being man solely in-charge of keeping the fire of freedom burning in the Far East. And this he did resolutely.

Like Savarkar in India, who was taunted as Recruitment Veer, Ras Bihari Bose had to suffer the burden of carrying the cross of being called a Japanese collaborator. In a narrow sense their detractors were right. But their actions were driven by unadulterated love of their motherland. Their personal reputation mattered little to them if it came in the way of their service to the motherland. That was their greatness.

With the arrival of Netaji in Japan, the revolutionary fire roared and dazzled. His elder, Ras Bihari had given him everything he could have asked for – on a platter. On hand was an organisation dedicated to the cause of Absolute Political Independence of India – The Indian Independence League, with activists all over the Far East. There was the INA – its' armed wing capable of striking a decisive blow to the British. Moreover there was the support of a major military power in the world – Japan. More he could not have expected. No doubt there were plenty of problems. The League had suffered in prestige due to the Mohan Singh episode. The INA was poorly equipped and was being primarily used as a propaganda material by the Japanese. The support of Japan was far from complete with an eye on ensuring its own dominance. Subhas was never the one to be afraid of such problems. There was one thing he feared and that was idleness. Ras Bihari had ensured that whatever else he may suffer from, idleness would not haunt Subhas. Now in his avatar as the Netaji, he was going to strike terror in the British heart. This was one Congress leader who really acted on its resolution of 'Do or Die'

Netaji, as Subhas was to be henceforth known, was quick to carry out a comprehensive reorganisation of the INA. Intensive training of six months was given to all newcomers before being absorbed in its ranks. Taking inspiration from the legendary queen of Jhansi – Laxmibai who had made life miserable for the British in 1857, he raised a regiment for the women. They were not to be considered as the Weaker Sex in the INA. Defying gloomy predictions, 156 dedicated girls came forward to enlist.

Today, all kinds of beauty contests are being conducted to select the so called Miss Universe or Miss World – who then become role models for the young impressionable minds.

It is worthwhile to remember if the Real Miss Universe is to be selected, it would have to be from the ranks of these 156 girls or those of similar stock. Those willing to court death for the cause of their nation – not those willing to parade half naked in front of a leering audience parroting glib answers.

The British Indian Army took great care to organise their regiments along regional and religious lines. This had nothing to do with the military logic but had everything to do with the British need to perpetuate divisions amongst the Indians. Such divisions ensured that they could never unite against their British masters. Unity of purpose was of paramount importance in the INA. Netaji well recognised this and therefore made sure that such artificial divisions do not plague the Indian National Army. Nor did he stop with this. The food served to all was the same. The Sikhs ate only the flesh of an animal killed in one stroke while the Muslims maintained that they could eat flesh of only those animals which had been bled to death. Netaji made sure that the nationalist feelings overrode such communal differences in eating habits. In an era, when the Indian mainland appeared heading towards a communal divisions, the Muslims and the Sikhs of the INA were overcoming their religious concerns and eating together. An army, however, dedicated could not live on empty stomach. Netaji knew this well enough. He therefore took to appealing to the patriotic sentiments of the Indians settled in the Far East. An appeal that received an overwhelming response across the regional and religious divisions. One of the biggest contributors was a Muslim-Habib, who donated all his wealth amounting to more than Rs 10 million.

With a better organised League, Netaji was now in a position to demand that the Japanese now recognise it as the Provisional Government of India in Exile. A public meeting was held at Cathay Hall in Singapore on 21st October 1943. A hysterical crowd thronged to cheer the formation of the Provisional Government. This Government won diplomatic recognition of nine countries. Prominent amongst them being Japan, Germany and Italy.

On 6th November 1943, the Japanese Premier announced that Japan would hand over the Indian Islands of Andaman and Nicobar to the Provisional Indian Government.

Netaji paid a visit to these islands on 29th December 1943 and paid his homage to those unfortunate revolutionary comrades whose bones littered the precincts. He also paid a visit to the cell where Savarkar was incarcerated for over ten years. Netaji named these islands as Shahid and Swaraj. The Indian mainland was now within the eyesight.

Unrelenting pressure by Netaji led to Japan opening a campaign to attack the Eastern India. The extreme north eastern Indian cities of Imphal and Kohima were to be the goal of the military expedition authorised on 31st December 1943 by the Japanese Premier. The launch of the attack had in many senses come too late. The Japanese influence had been checked in 1942 itself and was clearly on the wane in 1943. This was to be its last ditch attempt to extend its Far Eastern influence into the mainland India. Nevertheless, the attempt came close to success. Too close for the British comfort. The Japanese who reached the outskirts of Kohima were beaten back by the overwhelming air superiority of the American planes. By 22nd June 1944, the Japanese were trekking back home, squarely defeated. With them went back the Netaji's hopes of military conquest of India.

The Japanese were not alone in this fight. The INA was by this time 20,000 strong but only 10,000 were sent on the front. The Japanese refused to allow more than 6,000 to be actually involved in fighting but even these were not allowed to fight together as a Unit. They were split into 12 divisions and placed under the Japanese command. Some of them fought with ferocious bravery and even succeeded in planting the Indian tricolor flag on Indian soil on 21st March 1943. Not all were so committed. Of the 6,000, some 2,600 returned from the front. 1,500 died of hunger and diseases. 800 were captured as POWs where as 715 deserted to the British ranks. The rest 400 died in the War. The Japanese losses exceeded 50,000 soldiers as against 16,700 of the Allied forces. From the outskirts of Kohima in June 1944, the INA was forced to retreat first to Rangoon and then to Bangkok with the Japanese, fighting, losing, suffering desertions and heavy losses along the way. In the Japanese society with its preoccupation with victory and defeat to the exclusion of everything else, the Imphal campaign did not enhance the reputation of the INA. Neither did the failure of Indians to rise in revolt against the British, when the INA was at its gate fail to leave its mark. Their enthusiasm for the Indian Independence that was never too great, touched its nadir.

The debacle of Imphal was closely followed by serious reverses in the Pacific, where the Japanese lost 480 aircrafts, most of them with the crews and three aircraft carriers in June 1944 during the battle of Philippines Seas. Faced with such defeats, General Tojo's Government resigned on 18th July 1944 to be replaced by General Koiso. The new government was too busy to stave off defeat to pay any heed to Netaji's plea for reopening the Imphal front. In any case the British offensive in Arakan that began on 31st December 1944 put an end to such dreams. Poor Ras Bihari died a heart broken man on 21st January 1945.

Defeat stared in face but Netaji refused to give up. Even the surrender of Japan refused to kill his spirits. He made new plans. Of seeking refuge in Russia and continuing the struggle. He remained convinced that the unity between British and the Soviets was unnatural and motivated only by the fear of Hitler. With Hitler dead, they were bound to fall apart. Accordingly, he took off from Bangkok on 16th August 1945. He is said to have died in an air crash on 18th August at Taipei (now in Taiwan)

The British had taken the INA threat very seriously fearing with good reason that its appeal might entice its front line troops to change their loyalties. The INA infiltrators were considered serious security threat – again with good reason. Counter propaganda had to be concocted but the British could not take liberties like the Americans, who had promised victory over Japan would bring Burma peace and freedom. The British anxious to maintain their Empire wanted to make no such promises. The Colonial Office even protested against this promise of Independence but found it overruled by the Foreign Office which was anxious to keep the Americans in good humor.

The British as a result rested content with talking of Josh (Zeal) programme for the Indian army designed to encourage positive spirit in the troops. Thus steer away from the need to make any comments on the post war political developments. Even excessive vilification of Germans was not done to avoid backlash against the white race in general. References to war being waged for freedom and democracy were deliberately circumspect.

At the end of the War, the British found themselves having 23,000 INA troops on their hands. All could have technically been shot for desertion. Stupidity was never a British vice. These POWs were therefore carefully examined. 4,000 were found to be innocents. They were considered as those who intended to escape from the INA as soon as possible. This still left 19,000 – a sizeable number. 13,000 were therefore considered the ‘Greys’ – who believed in the cause of INA - being misled. What a case of misleading which kept these people loyal to a cause that was facing sure defeat since June 1944!! They were left off with a light punishment.

Try as they may, the British found no ground to whittle the hard core believers in the INA below 6,000. These dirty Indians had to be hanged and made a horrible example. As they tried to do so, they suddenly realized that Netaji may have been no more but his legacy remained to haunt them. His spirit remained alive and kicking. The Congress came to the same realization and moved quickly to appropriate him.

Destiny was taking its revenge on the Gandhi Congress. Subhas alive could be spurned, thrown out but, a Dead Netaji had to be revered – for people would not tolerate anything less. A fascinating story that we shall now study.

Chapter VII

The Indian National Army (INA) and Independence

The outbreak of the War in 1939 had made it clear to the British that once the War ended, there was no way they could hold on to power in India in the same manner as before. India had become far too politically restive. The first debate in the House of Commons on India on 26 October 1939, following the outbreak of the War had speakers openly voicing views that real power would need to be transferred to Indian hands **within 12 months** of the end of War. A position that His Majesty's Government itself accepted in the Cripps Mission proposals of April 1942 which envisaged setting up of a Constituent Assembly immediately on the cessation of the hostilities. An offer that was hedged with too many Ifs and Buts to be acceptable to any shade of popular opinion in India but, the point was driven forcefully home. In 1929, Irwin had spoken of Dominion Status for India as the *Purpose* of British presence in India, carefully keeping it away from the realms of *Policy*. By 1942, the British had been forced to concede that Dominion Status for India would be the *Policy* of His Majesty's Government in the post war era.

If there were any illusions left, they were shattered by the intensity of popular anger in 1942. The Quit India Movement had not been confined to One Day token strike envisaged by Gandhi. His ringing words – Kareng or Mareng, Do or Die, had been taken to heart by the people if not by his own Congress High Command.

With all odds stacked against success, the people had cast their fear aside in a manner that had been truly frightening to the Raj and sobered the Congress High Command. Hence forth there was no way anyone in India could dream of carrying out the struggle against the Raj in a leisurely manner by token strikes.

People were going to hit and hit hard. Realizing this, the Gandhi Congress was now going to make efforts to contain the popular outrage against the British and not seek to fan it. Well aware that the Fire could well devour them along with the British.

This was evident in the utterances of Gandhi upon his release on 6th May 1944. Giving up the call for Do or Die, he now spoke of not offering Civil Disobedience since 1944 was not 1942 – whatever that meant. He called upon the British to hand over power to the Indians by the formation of a national government responsible for civil administration. The Gandhi demand was contemptuously rejected without a squeak of protest. For the Gandhi Congress, *Kareng* or *Mareng* had died with the martyrs of Quit India Movement.

The British were too painfully aware that the spirit of *Kareng* or *Mareng* may have died for the Gandhi Congress but it lived on in India. The fire may have died down but the smoldering embers could burst into flames at any moment. The events of 1942 had shown how tenacious their hold on India had become. Now the wretched Bengali who had caused them no end of trouble ever since his refusal to join the coveted Civil Services of the Raj. Subhas was lurking across the border. The Japanese may have been driven back from Imphal in June 1944 but the Netaji led INA had captured the minds and hearts of ordinary Indians. Their aura grew even as they trekked further and further away from Indian borders. The sufferings and privations they endured enhanced their popular appeal.

The INA may have been in military terms a rag tag force of 20,000 men and women. It may not have passed the Samurai code of honour calling upon those who were defeated to commit *hara kiri* but their threat to the British Raj in India was very real. In sheer numbers, they represented as much as 10% of the peace time strength of Indian army. To the British, they were the scoundrels, who had overcome every taboo in the Indian society, every division that had helped them to rule India. Even as Jinnah and Gandhi bickered over the terms of Hindu-Muslim settlement, the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims soldiers in the INA dined and died together. Savarkar had spoken of 1857 as the time when the Hindu-Muslim War had ended. Now there was no need to look so much back in time. Even in 1944, quarter of century after Gandhi injected the venom of Khilafat politics in the Indian polity, the Hindus and Muslim were fighting together against the British. Joining them were the Sikhs, who had since the days of Gadhar Party had wiped clean the stigma of 1857.

The numbers of the INA, sizeable as they were, were not the only concern of the British. The very idea they represented, that the Hindu, Muslims and Sikhs could join together in vast brotherhood, was the very antithesis of what constituted the foundation of the British Raj in India. INA was no longer a mere idea, it was a living reality. Netaji had seen to that.

Alive to the danger of an explosive situation that could eradicate the British interests in India, the Viceroy, fully supported by the Commander-in Chief, the Home Member, and the eleven provincial Governors represented to the War Cabinet in September 1944, on the need to make an early move to satisfy Indian aspirations, at least in a small measure. The Viceroy, Lord Wavell was proposing that :

- A Conference of Leaders be called to discuss the formation of a national government.
- Establish in near future, a national government in India with representatives of major political parties.
- The national government be a step towards Dominion status for India.

The simple minded soldier that Wavell had apparently taken the Cripps proposals at their face value and sought to improve them in a bid to make them more palatable to the Indians. The proposal appeared to have no scope for maintaining any residual British influence in India. Their loyal pets, the Indian princes, were being thrown to the nationalist dogs. Nor had the stupid soldier taken care to ensure that the best British minds be also made an integral part of the Indian Government being *Racial minorities* in India. With such major lacunae, no wonder that the proposals were rejected out of hand by the War Cabinet. For my innocent friends, the Deputy Prime Minister, Clement Attlee fully supported the Cabinet and was in fact one of the principal actors in rejecting the Wavell recommendations.

The dogged Wavell refused to take a No for an answer and insisted on being heard. He, therefore, pressed the Cabinet to allow him to return to London, a suggestion that was not welcomed.

In India, political maneuvering continued unabated. Gandhi encouraged the Congress leader Bhulabhai Desai to come to terms with Jinnah regarding the formation of a Government at the Center in which the Congress and the League were to have a 40% representation each with the balance 20% being kept aside for other minorities. The proposal meant that the Congress was to repudiate its August 1942 resolution of Quit India. Desai's bid for power came to a naught when both Gandhi and Jinnah disowned their support. This story is best read elsewhere. What is interesting is that Desai had insisted that his colleagues then in Jail be released only **after the Government was formed**. Such was the depth that the Congressmen were now willing to sink to.

The British reactions to these proposals were no less illuminating. When the Viceroy forwarded the outline of the Desai-Jinnah proposal, the British establishment in London saw red. They were horrified to find that Wavell was proposing that in future the Viceroy was to rest content with accepting in his Council, the persons that the Indians nominated. The Cabinet appeared unanimous in their view that this would result in their accepting the principle of Parliamentary Executive at the Centre in India – a prospect that was clearly unwelcome. Wavell became increasingly impatient at the delay in being invited to London. On 12th March 1945, he sent a telegram to the Secretary of State commenting: "I really must know soon when H.M. Government is prepared to receive me. I see no occasion to wait for Jinnah's recovery (**he is said to have pleurisy**) and I have (?) decided in any event not to see Desai again before coming home."

The so called best kept secret of Jinnah's terminal illness was a fact that was well known to the British establishment *since March 1945*. The telegram seemed to have annoyed Attlee and he informed the Secretary of State that the Viceroy could not be called home till about June. It appears that the soldier in Wavell threatened to resign, whereupon an ingenious solution was found. He was invited to come back immediately but made to cool his heels till May. Wavell, who finally got to visit London on 23rd March 1945, returned to Delhi on 4th June and finally made an announcement about holding a Leader's Conference in Simla for the purpose of forming a national government, one in which the British would continue to hold decisive power.

By 14th July 1945, the failure of Simla Conference stared at the face of the participants. Wavell's efforts floundered at the defiance of Jinnah and his contempt to have anything to do with the Gandhi Congress. Jinnah has been roundly criticised by all and sundry in India for his obdurate attitude. Wavell has similarly been rebuked for giving Jinnah a veto. No doubt there is some truth in this.

What passes comprehension is the lack of debate at any great length on the decision of Gandhi Congress to attend the Simla Conference. Once it had crossed the Rubicon and demanded that British should Quit India on 8th August 1942, it had no business to attend any meeting with the British to discuss anything other than grant of Immediate Independence. This certainly was not on offer at Simla.

Much had happened since August 1942. Not the least of which was the manner in which the millions had been done to death by hunger in Bengal by the British. The cruel deliberate policies by which the financing of the war was done in complete disregard to its impact on the local population. Leave alone anything else, not even an apology for the Bengal famine deaths was on offer at Simla.

There was only one reason alone other than grant of Independence that needed any discussions with the British and that was the early repayment of the Sterling Loans (Balances), India's loan to the British. Even this was not on the Simla agenda. More of the Sterling Loans later.

So what were our friends in Gandhi Congress worthies doing at Simla in the first place? They were there only to make a grab for power. To set in motion the process of Betrayal.

Netaji was as yet still alive. From Singapore, he had pointed out in a broadcast on 20th June that the Wavell Declaration made no mention of Independence. Swaraj, he angrily reminded his Congress colleagues, was not limited to Indianisation of the Executive Council of the Viceroy. He called upon Indians to protest against the Wavell scheme on 5th July 1945.

The Gandhi Congress had no answer to the biting question that he raised - 'Why were they (the Congress) prepared to attend the Simla Conference. What happened to Do or Die Resolution.?'

The voice of Subhas always very inconvenient now became intolerable. He had to be silenced and quickly.

This is exactly what happened in next two months. Very very conveniently!

Chapter VIII

Murder Most Foul

On August 18, 1945, following the defeat of Japan, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was on his way to Tokyo to negotiate laying down of arms by the I.N.A to the Americans on honourable terms. His choices were then limited. Giving in to the British was out of question. As a friend of Japan, he could face only unending hostility in either Russia or China. America offered a much better choice. It had replaced the British as the World's leading superpower. More importantly, Netaji headed the Government of Free India, which had been felicitated on its formation by the President of Ireland. The strong Irish lobby in America could therefore be counted on ensuring an honourable treatment to the INA.

The Americans, for whom Netaji was a prized catch, offered a safe passage to the Japanese bomber carrying him as it undertook an **eight hour flight in a No Flight Zone** from Tourane to Formosa. The prospect of Netaji in America was nothing short of an unmitigated disaster to the British. Formosa was the last place where they could hope to harm him. As the flight landed at Taihoku (Formosa) at about 13.00 hrs on August 18, they were ready to strike. At 14.00, the plane being refueled was rocked by an explosion.

Habibur Rehman (Agent B 1269) who accompanied Netaji and his boss in the INA (Agent B 1189) must be held to be responsible for the explosion. What rankles is the unfortunate fact that a road named after the British Agent B 1189 stands **in the heart of Mumbai**.

Furious Americans hit back by removing an injured Netaji to Taihoku Camp No 5 and within few hours made arrangements to keep up the charade of Netaji's death in the blast. An injured Japanese Gunner of the ill fated bomber, who could speak English was admitted to hospital and passed off as Netaji.

The Hospital was a mere ten minutes away from the airport but "Netaji (?)" was admitted only at 17.00 hours – a full three hours after the blast.

Shadowy agents of death took over. The Gunner, who was practically normal for four hours after admission, passed way at 23.00 hours. The two pilots of the bomber, were treated in the hospital - discharged as fit on September 5, 1945 and died three weeks later of the wounds they had recovered from!!!. Habibur Rehman was taken in custody by the Americans, tutored to give the version of the blast that his British Masters would have liked to believe.

By September 1945, the Secretary of State for India was happy to note “by all accounts, this (death of Netaji) must be true”.

The Americans had there own agenda to fulfill. Soon stories of Netaji being alive in USSR started circulating. It was not long before MI5 of the British Secret Services discovered the truth. Netaji had not died in the air crash as they had been led to believe. He had survived their murderous attack.

By May 1946, despite the efforts of the Cabinet Mission, the British hold over India hung by a thread. Preparations to evacuate the British civilians from India were underway. Should Netaji were to return to India, all was lost for the British.

In desperation, MI5 now approached the American Consulate in Mumbai for help in May 1946, through Lt. Col Hennessy Chief of British Military Intelligence, Bombay. According to Hennessey “ the hold which Bose had over Indian imagination was tremendous and that if he **should** return to this country **trouble** would result which in his judgment would be **extremely difficult to quell**”.

The request was forwarded to the Secretary of State, Washington DC by Airgram A-175 of May 23, 1946. On June 20, 1946, the Chief of Division of Foreign Activity Correlation, Department of State, was cryptically informed that “ A search of the files in the Intelligence Division reveals that **there is no direct evidence** that SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE was killed in the airplane crash at Taihoko. Formosa **despite** the public statement of the Japanese to that effect.” He was also informed that “nor is there any evidence available to Intelligence Division which would indicate that the subject **is** still alive.”

It is clear that Netaji who was alive upto May - was killed in June 1946 to protect the British Imperial Interests, which at this time coincided with those of the Americans. **Do we need to say who committed this murder most foul ??.**

What followed is even more shocking. On September 9 1946, the US Intelligence intercepted a message that Forward Block was going to recommend Netaji to be the President of Indian National Congress on September 23, 1946. The information, considered so sensitive was meant only for those Military and Civilian Officials specifically authorized to receive the same; was communicated to the British. The information came to be filed in Case No 810002. Curiously, immediately thereafter, Nehru announced the death of Netaji in a great hurry. A red faced Sardar Patel was - on October 3, 1946 forced to admit that the Government had not conducted any inquiry into the alleged death of Netaji and had no view on the subject. **So what was the source of Nehru's statement that Netaji had died?**

There may be some of us who will no doubt say that the account given above is merely the product of my overactive imagination. They may want to obtain the one file in Record Group 319, Department of Army, Investigative Records Depository, Personal File on Subhas Chandra Bose that the National Archives and Records Administration, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, Maryland 20740-60001 Unites States of America was kind enough to send me. Enough material exists in this file to lend credence to the account of the last days of Netaji as described above. Yes! There is no conclusive evidence that would corroborate my account. Nonetheless, Mr. Steven L.Hamilton, who was kind enough to send the file to me, was most helpful in stating that "of note for your further research efforts, the first few pages of this file contains a listing of other documents in the US Federal records relating to Subhas Chnadra Bose".

These other documents are:

1. Memo dated 16th September 1945 on Subhas Chandra Bose from A3 to the Japanese Government.
2. Memo dated 20th September 1945 from AG to Japanese Government on Habibulllah Rahaman Aide de camp
3. Memo dated 22nd September 1945 to CCIO on Chandra Bose
4. Memo dated 3rd October 1945 from A.S.G for Files

5. Memo dated 9th October 1945 from 442 CIC to G-2 “Rptd death of Chandra Bose” copy ltr to ALF dtd 20 Aug 45. **Case No 810002.**
6. Memo dated 9th October 1945 from CLO Tokyo to the Imperial Japanese Government on Subhas Chandra Bose
7. Memo dated 23rd October 1945 from Liaison Committee Tokyo for the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy to Col F.P. Juneon, G.S.C., G -2 “ **Submittal of photographs in regard to Subhas Chandra Bose**
8. From SACSEA of 1st November 1945 to CINC on Radio report on 6 persons desired
9. Memo for record dated 5th November 1945 from Chief CI to SACSFA on Radio report on 6 persons desired.
10. Memo dated 15th November 1945 from Chief CI to British Staff Secretary ‘Subhas Chandra Bose **with 5 photographs re death of subj** in pocket of this file”

Much as I tried, I have not been able to access these documents. Case No 810002 seems to be the key to the solution. It is in this file that the memo of 9th October 1945 as also information about Subhas Bose contesting for the post of Congress President, of September 9, 1946 was filed.

Will the Government of an Independent Sovereign Republic of India, that is Bharat, ever demand the relevant documents from the Government of USA??

Accident or murder, death or as the folklore goes imprisonment in Russia, what ever was the truth; the fact remains a Voice that was full of unadulterated Patriotism, A Voice that was most inconvenient to the Gandhi Congress was heard no more after 18th August 1945. This was a tragedy of the highest order – of this there can be no doubt.

Chapter IX

The Post Netaji Era

Now, we will follow through with the developments right till the time Nehru was successful in grabbing the reins of power on 15th August 1947. We have at our disposal, every single paper that was placed for the consideration of the British Cabinet. Every single record of discussions on the subject in the British Cabinet. We will use only two simple criterion in making an evaluation.

- Were the British under a Labour Administration making any real effort to give India Absolute Political Independence? For nothing else was ever acceptable to the revolutionaries. For the Indian people themselves were now not willing to settle for anything less. Every drop of blood that any revolutionary shed anywhere in the cause of his/her nation in the long saga of freedom from 1857 to 1945 now demanded retribution. No person, however great, could come in the way of Indian Independence. Dominion status that in 1928 was acceptable to Congress was a Dirty and Dead word.
- Were the British under a Labour Administration making any amends for the bad old ways of their Tory predecessors? The famine dead in Bengal demanded justice. They demanded that their deaths should not be in vain. How could this be ? One real way was to ensure that the British debt to India be immediately settled on a commercial basis. Let us concede for a second that India needed to be generous in her settlement with the British. Surely, she could not be more generous than the Americans, the richest country in the world. So what could India accept in the case of her forced lending? The amount at this point was a sum of Rs 15,070 million or £ 1,130 million. The most India could do was to be as generous as the Americans had been and :
- The forced lending had to stop immediately in the same manner as the American Lend-Lease had on 2nd September 1945 with cessation of the hostilities

- The loan had to be denominated in US \$ terms, as Sterling was now a worthless currency. Thus, the Indian loan was actually US \$ 4,520 million.
- The loan had to carry an interest rate of 6% p.a. Since Indian government itself was paying a 3% on the money it borrowed to lend to the British; the British obligation was to pay at least an additional 3% interest.
- The loan needed collateral. In other words, the British investments overseas worth US \$ 4,520 needed to be pledged to the Indian Government with India having first charge on the income of such securities towards repayment of the loan principle.
- The duration of the repayment could be spread over 15 years.

On 22nd July 1941, the United States of America had given a loan of a mere US \$ 425 million on precisely these terms. The British Chancellor of Exchequer had been overcome with joy Here was India prepared to be as generous in respect of an amount 10 times greater. The British should have been kissing the feet of Indians in gratitude. What a hope!!

Any sincere British move towards Political and Economic settlement on the lines outlined above needed discussions with the British on details. Communal settlement would follow. If these were not on offer, forget discussions, there was no question of even entering a room where the British were sitting. British obduracy on these matters could be fought only with Do or Die struggle. In the same manner as 10,000 people, who had laid down their lives in 1942. In the same manner as Netaji and his INA soldiers done. There was no room for prevarication. No room for compromise. It is on these parameters that we shall judge the actions of Gandhi Congress during the period that followed up to 15th August 1947.

Did the Labour Party ever make a Real and Sincere offer to settle the issue with the Indian leaders ? A Real and Sincere offer had to pass the twin test of Political and Economic Settlement as defined earlier. Let us see.

Following the failure of the Simla Conference which took place as the British electorate was in the middle of giving the boot to Churchill, the first time the Indian matter came up for discussions before the Labour Government was on 20th August 1945.

The Secretary of State had recommended that Viceroy be authorised to hold Provincial and Central elections be held as a step to the formation of the Constituent Assembly. This Assembly was an essential part of India being granted Dominion Status. Independence was not even mentioned.

The Cabinet agreed to hold the elections but refused to talk about the formation of the Constituent Assembly. Wavell was called back to London on 24th August for consultation. On 11th September 1945, the Cabinet grudgingly agreed to announce the intention of the His Majesty's Government to convene the Constituent Assembly, the authority of which was to be limited by drawing up of a treaty between Great Britain and India. Thus, the British appeared to be in no hurry to even consider the grant of Dominion Status to India at an early date. The leisurely pace could have continued as in the past but now it was not Gandhiji, who set the pace. It was the spirit of Netaji which was in-charge. That made all the difference. The realization rudely dawned on the British Government in its cabinet meeting of the 27th November 1945.

The announcement to hold elections and the decision to hold the trials of the INA prisoners came more or less at the same time. Neither Nehru nor Congress had ever expressed much enthusiasm for the INA. Nehru had gone to the extent of saying that he himself would lead an armed resistance to Subhas should he succeed in reaching India with the Japanese. Now, the Congress, as indeed all other parties realised that the INA had become a national symbol. To support the British trials of the INA, was to invite political oblivion. All the political parties duly jumped into the fray for their defense. To the growing horror of the British, they found that an ill trained, ill equipped INA was easier to take on in the jungles of Burma. The public trials of its officers in the famed Red Fort was quite an another matter. It was giving rise to emotions that no one could control. Emotions that threatened to destroy the Raj.

The British, the Gandhi Congress, the League all struggled to contain the fall out of the INA trials for their own petty purposes. None to promote the cause of an independent secular India.

The INA trials began formally on the 5th November 1945. The popular outrage forced the major political parties to call for an INA week to be celebrated in protest. At stake were the lives of three INA officers, Shah Nawaz Khan, a Muslim, Prem Sehgal, a Hindu and Gurubax Singh Dhillion, a Sikh. The Bharatiya people saw through the crude British game of appearing to be even handed forcing their quarrelling political leaders to join hands. The popular agitation reached dangerous levels when for the first time in the history of the freedom struggle, the Forward Block, the Congress, the Muslim League and the Communists joined hands to participate in street level agitation.

This miracle took place in Calcutta on 21st November 1945. Anthony Read had thus described what followed: “A lathi charge was met with brickbats and stones, whereupon the police opened fire, killing two students and wounding 33. Calcutta Corporation employees were already on strike for more pay and many of them, especially Communist-led transport workers, took to the streets in support of the students. Sikh taxi-drivers and workers at many factories joined in. Cars, buses and lorries were set on fire, barricades thrown across the streets, trains stopped by crowds. It took two days to restore order, by which time police had been forced to open fire 14 times, killing another 33 people and injuring some 200. Seventy British and 27 American soldiers were also injured and 150 police and army vehicles were destroyed.”

The events in Calcutta came as no surprise to Wavell. They only corroborated his assessment communicated to the Secretary of State on 6th November that: “We are now faced in India with a situation of great difficulty and danger....they (Congress) have now passed to a disclosure of their programme, which is briefly, to contest elections, to serve an ultimatum on His Majesty's Government, and, in default of its acceptance, to organise a mass movement on the 1942 lines but on a much larger scale....either there is a secret policy which includes use of force or the more extreme leaders are out of control...Patel said: ‘Congress was not going to sit quiet after the elections and wait for the convenience and pleasure of the British Government. The

Congress would demand immediate and final solution..’, Nehru said a day earlier that: ‘revolution is inevitable’...I believe that the Congress are counting on the INA as the spearhead of their revolt...The object of the rising that the Congress leaders have in mind would be the expulsion of the British...**I must accordingly, with the greatest gravity warn His Majesty’s Government to be prepared for a serious attempt by the Congress, probably next spring but quite possibly earlier, to subvert by force the present administration in India....**The main Congress demand would, I suppose be the grant of immediate independence to India....”

The Viceroy therefore asked for an assurance that HMG would not surrender to the Congress Ultimatum for grant of Independence. He also sought approval to use heavy hand with such measures as declaring martial law over greater parts of the country, which he felt were necessary to crush the Congress revolt. At the same time, he cautioned HMG against moving to curb the Congress prematurely as he felt that in the inflamed atmosphere prevailing in the country, it would prove to be a case of the Cure being worse than the Disease.

In this report there is something that is quite revealing. He recorded his conversation with Nehru on the 3rd November 1945. The INA trials were to begin on the 5th November. Nehru was personally a member of the defense lawyer team but the INA did not seem to be on his mind. For the Viceroy laconically noted:

“He did not mention the INA nor did I”

So much for Nehru’s professed concern for the INA. The Viceroy’s letter was reviewed by India and Burma Committee of the British Government on the 19th November. The Committee advised the Secretary of State that the Viceroy should be instructed to rope in the services of Mr. Gandhi in the hope that he would be able to ‘exercise a moderating influence on the Congress leaders’. Never had the Unholy Alliance of Mr. Gandhi with the British been put on the paper with more brutal honesty than this. Moderating influence to seek what? Dilute the demand for Immediate Independence!! The Committee also felt that while there was to be no question of giving in to a Congress Ultimatum, the Viceroy had to take into account the fact that:

'Congress after the elections in all probability be the majority party and it would not be possible to treat them an irresponsible party claiming power'.

Never was Independence so near. The trials of the INA had changed the mood of the country totally. The Iron frame of the Raj, the coveted Civil and Police services, were now largely in the Indian hands, who were increasingly worried about the prospect of facing new national political masters after the British were expelled. They were in no position to curb the popular anger. It is this realisation that forced the Viceroy to tread gingerly against the Congress. All that the Gandhi Congress was to do was to issue an Ultimatum and the anger of the people would have ripped apart the Raj. A reality well understood by the India and Burma Committee. It had been forced to conclude that the Congress was not to be treated as an irresponsible party despite the fact that it was demanding immediate Independence, preaching violence.

The grave situation that was brought to the notice of the British Cabinet, was discussed in its meeting of 27th November 1945. The contents were considered Top Secret, so secret that the records of discussions were not circulated even to the Cabinet members but recorded in the Secretary's Standard File of Cabinet Conclusions. The discussions were quite acrimonious but no one had any better solution to offer. HMG had no choice but to announce in the House of Lords on 4th December 1945 that the Dominion Status for India was an *Immediate Goal*.

It had taken nearly ten years, from 1929 to 1940, for the Dominion Status to move from *Purpose* to *Policy*. All it took was less than a month of the INA trials for the *Policy* to become an *Immediate Goal*. Netaji, wherever he was, could not have been happy. His fight was for Absolute Political Independence not Dominion Status of any variety. This was still not forthcoming.

The Congress has a lot of explaining to do to the nation. First the criminal delay from the resolution at Ramgarh in March 1940 to finally launching Quit India Movement in August 1942. Two and a half wasted years. Now from November 1945 to August 1947. What was the Congress waiting for ? Why did the Congress fight shy of restarting the Quit India Movement?

The Congress duo, Nehru and Patel, breathed fire but failed to act in keeping with their own pronouncements.

How come Gandhiji's moderating influence so successful that the Congress kept on compromising on the basic issue of *Absolute Political Independence* ?

The results of the elections to the Central Legislative Assembly were announced. The results shattered whatever illusions that the Congress had about its support base amongst the Muslims. Riding on the crest of popular enthusiasm generated by the INA trials, the Congress secured 91.3% of votes cast in Non-Muslim constituencies. The Muslim League won 86.6% of the Muslim votes. The so called nationalist Muslims were routed. The two nation theory accepted by Savarkar, Jinnah and Ambedkar was vindicated. What was needed was a Netaji to point out that while the Hindus and the Muslims had many differences, there were also issues that united them in defense of their common motherland. Even if they constituted two nations, it did not necessarily mean that the Will to Live together had dissolved. What was needed was pragmatic handling, acceptance of fair share of power. What Congress offered was moralistic preaching, intense personal dislike of Jinnah, a compliment he returned in full measure and less than honest struggle to achieve its own stated goal – Absolute Political Independence. Neither was it honestly fighting the British to achieve its own stated goal – Absolute Political Independence nor was it honestly trying to make a settlement with the Muslims.

Tilak, whose memories Jinnah even now cherished, was long dead. Savarkar was ailing and did not command popular backing. Netaji who could have effectively united the two warring nations, had been removed from the national scene.

The seeds of a gigantic tragedy were being sown. Partition was becoming a distinct reality but the horrors of accompanying communal holocaust were not yet foreordained.

By January 1946, the Indian problem had assumed serious dimensions. Ever since the start of the INA trial, the British were living in the dread of the possibility that they would be expelled from India by force.

How long could they count on the ‘moderating influence of Mr. Gandhi’ to hold their position? HMG had to take matters in its own hands. It had after all never been the British policy to depend on any one individual.

On 22nd January 1946, the British Cabinet decided to send three ministers of Cabinet rank to visit India and work out a settlement of the Indian question in a manner most consistent with the primary British interest.

The primary British interest was very clear. It was clear to them by now that the days of the Raj were over. The Indian people were not going to tolerate them any longer. Now, the choice was only between a dignified retreat, making a virtue out of a necessity or an ignominious ejection. The British were naturally most keen to avoid a debilitating reverse. For if, they were to suffer such a reverse, their day of reckoning in Egypt, Palestine, Middle East, Burma, Ceylon, Malaya; indeed in all parts of the world where the British were present; would have arrived all too soon. Not only was India one of their biggest Creditors but also home to a major portion of their remaining Overseas investments. Its revenues were paying salaries and pensions of a large number of Britons. The social implications of such an expulsion on the domestic society were issues of serious concern. If it meant tying up the time of three of its most senior ministers, it was well worth the trouble.

1946 was a trying time. Anti British flames threatened to engulf India. At the same time spectre of famine also haunted the Raj. In the meanwhile, Lord Keynes was once again pointing out that the British coffers were empty and called upon the Cabinet to deal with this stark reality that would not go away.

India exploded in February 1946. Massive demonstrations were held in Calcutta on 11th February 1946 following the conviction of an INA officer- Abdul Rashid. The student alliance representing the entire spectrum of political ideologies, the Congress, the Muslim League and the Communist once again took to the streets. Communist Labour Unions also joined in. A virtual Martial Law was proclaimed in the city. By 14th February, more than 200 people had been killed in police firing. Dacca witnessed strikes from 13th to 18th February. A wave of unrest, a feeling of intense anger against the British was rippling

across the nation. The long simmering unrest in the Indian armed forces broke out with the naval mutiny in Bombay on 18th February, 1946 which later spread to Karachi. Union Jack was torn down in ports across the country and Congress, League and Communist flags were flown in its place. The Airforce stations also witnessed serious disturbances. In the five days that the ratings held out in defiance in Bombay, it was now the turn of the civilians to turn violently anti British. Strikes were organized through out the city to demonstrate sympathy with the Mutineers. In an attempt to bring the situation under control, the Police and Military went beserk. Over 200 people were mowed down in the city. Repercussions of this brutal action were felt across the nation.

It now appeared that the end of the Raj was in sight. Events seemed to prove the prophecy of the Viceroy on the 6th November 1945 that the Congress would make a serious attempt to attain Independence at the earliest by the Spring of 1946. The nation waited with bated breath to hear the call to renew the Quit India Movement. If there was a moment to make amends for the *Foolish and Inopportune* Challenge of August 1942, certainly February 1946 was the moment. The nation waited in vain. The moment came and went unheeded. Where the Viceroy seems to have gravely erred was in his assessment of the inner working of the Congress – the capacity of Gandhi to ‘exercise a moderating influence on the Congress leaders’.

It was true that a section of the Congress was certainly most anxious to demand and attain Independence fully supported by the people. It was also true that this section did not constitute the Congress High Command led by Gandhi, which in fact appeared to be working at cross purposes with those demanding full and immediate Independence. The Muslim League seemed to be suffering from the same disease.

The explosion of the popular outrage over the continuing British rule in India seemed to have a curious impact on the principal political parties, the Congress and the League. They appeared shaken to find that their influence over the masses seemed to count for little. To their eternal shame, they seemed to join the ranks to curb and not promote the popular enthusiasm for Independence.

Jinnah told the Muslim seamen to lay down the arms, while Gandhi chided them for setting a bad example to the nation. For once, the famously antagonist duo seemed to be of one mind.

The Raj continued to exercise power in India but for how long would it be able to do so was something that was not clear – not even to itself.

Chapter X

The Cabinet Mission March 1946-June 1946

The British Cabinet started making preparations to send its three Cabinet Ministers to India as decided on 22nd January 1946, in what has come to be known as the Cabinet Mission. Proposed Directives to the Cabinet Mission were circulated to the Cabinet on 7th March 1946 under express instructions that no Cabinet Minister was to retain a copy after the meeting took place on the 8th March. The Secretary of the Cabinet had been directed to recover all the copies. What has been so secret that none outside the charmed circle of the British Cabinet of 1946 was allowed set his eyes on this document for fifty years. The reason is easy to see once we acquaint ourselves with this document. For, it also contains the explanation on the genesis of the conflict between India and Pakistan that continues to this very day. Let us get straight to the facts without further ado.

It has been the corner-stone of the Indian belief that it was Jinnah, who was given the power of Veto to block all progress towards Independence, a veto that he so skillfully used to ensure the formation of Pakistan. Paragraph 2 of the proposed directive explodes this myth straightaway. It reads:

- 2 “You should pay every attention to the claims and anxieties of minority parties, and do your utmost to obtain their consent to any agreement. But, you are authorised to come to an agreement within the terms of this Directive with those whom you consider to represent best the views of the major political parties and provinces, and the Government will be prepared to take the necessary steps to give effect to the arrangements so come to.”

Poor Jinnah. Far from being given any Veto, the British were quite prepared to ditch him. They knew well, he had no love lost for them. He may have hated Gandhiji but that did not mean, he wanted to perpetuate the British rule in India. The dislike it appears, was mutual.

This part of the proposed Directive was the evidence of British acceptance of the fact that at this time, it was the Congress which held all the cards. It alone had the organisation capable of reaching out in the nook and corner of the country. The deal, if any had to have the consent of the Congress even if that from the minorities was not forthcoming.

What was the deal that could be of any interest to the Congress? One that included Absolute Political Independence and the Commercial settlement of the Indian loan. In 1946, there was one more factor – the pressing need to avoid reoccurrence of the famine. We will see later the callous manner in which the British would treat the matter of avoiding the famine. Let us see the manner in which the Cabinet Mission was to deal with the other two issues. Paragraph 5 is illuminating.

5 “You have the liberty to say that His Majesty’s Government will be prepared to recommend to Parliament any constitutional arrangement for granting of independence and self-government to India, provided that it incorporates the following cardinal points:

- (a) Some form of protection must be included either by constitutional or treaty provisions for protection of religious and racial minorities.
- (b) Satisfactory provision must be made for the defense of India and the Indian Ocean area.
- (c) Paramountcy must not be handed over to an Indian Government.
- (d) Satisfactory means must be devised for winding up the financial position of India and Great Britain arising out of the present regime.”

The British did not leave anything to chance. So, during the discussions on the proposed directives, which were approved in toto; in the Cabinet on 8th March 1946, the Cabinet Mission was left in no doubt in respect of winding up of the financial position.

The Secretary of State clarified that the financial settlement covered issues like the payment of civil and military pensions and the disposal of India's accumulated sterling balances. The Prime Minister made it amply clear that 'there was no question of offering at this stage any concession on the financial side in order to secure a political settlement'. He need not have bothered. The thought of asking for such a linkage did not cross the minds of the Indian political elite, far removed from the pangs of hunger that racked the shriveled bodies of their fellow citizens. This included that Great champion of the poor – Gandhiji.

It is with this mandate that the Cabinet Mission came to India. The exact nature of the mandate may have been unknown but the essence could be gleaned from their actions.

We now need to ascertain if by the mere fact of their visit to India, did anything change? Did the Congress have to call for a break in the struggle for Independence? In the anti INA trial phase, Patel had thundered that the Congress was not going to sit quiet after the elections. Nehru had called for complete liquidation of the British rule in India and insisted that India must not wait for next move of the Labor Government. Pant had exclaimed that Freedom would not be a gift from the Labor Government. Patel, Nehru, Pant; three of the senior most Congress leaders had taken a firm stand against further delays. Complete Independence, here and now, was the national mantra. What did the Mission have to offer? First the financial matter.

The British concept of a satisfactory means of winding (not sinding as stated in the memo) up the financial position can be understood very easily. It meant making more and more money available to it without demurring. The American Lend-Lease was terminated once the hostilities had ended on September 2, 1945 but the Colonial tap continued to remain open for the British. In the period, September 1945 to March 1946; the British had made India extend to it, an interest free loan of Rs 2,170 million or US \$ 650 million. There was to be no discussion on these issues. The Prime Minister had himself been very firm. Thus, on the financial front, the Cabinet Mission had nothing to offer.

Now on the issue of Absolute Political Independence. On this front, also the position was far from satisfactory. The British were prepared to grant Independence but subject to four major riders. Namely, they wanted British representation in Indian Government for that is what racial minorities were all about. Nor is this a mere conjecture. In a note to Attlee on 5th January 1945, R.A. Butler had made this very clear. He said: “There is no need at all why the best British should not be treated as a minority and included in the interim central government. They would not be there of course(!), as cat paws of Whitehall, but be those who represent some interest in the country.” The concern for Indian defense is touching till one understands what it really meant. Once again thanks to the wonderful British habit of documenting their thoughts, we do not have to speculate. The British view on the subject was spelt out in great clarity by the Chiefs of Staff in their report to the Defense Committee of Cabinet on 12th June 1946. They said:

“In considering the military implications of our future policy with regard to India, we must bear in mind that in any future war our strategic requirement in India are that she should be a main support area (i.e. we should be in a position to have recourse to her industrial and man-power potential) and that we should be enabled to use her territory for operational and administrative bases and air staging posts. It is therefore important that India should be secure both from external aggression and internal disorder. For defense purposes it is essential that she should remain a single unit.”

Little wonder that Jinnah had no veto any longer. India had to remain one so that its men, money and material could be available to the British in their emergencies. India had to remain one so that it could protect British interests in the Middle East and the Far East.

And now the issue of the Paramountcy. For this was going to determine the fate of 100 million Indians who lived in the so called Indian Princely states. The Paramount Power in India from whom the British seized power in 1857 was the Moghul Emperor, Bahadur Shah Jafar. The princes and petty Kings who survived 1857, were the ones who either remained neutral or actively opposed the commands of the Moghul Emperor. Given that, the very source from which they derived their legitimacy to rule was abolished, these surviving petty kings and princes had no *locus-standi* to exist except at the sufferance

of the usurper of power – the British. The British themselves were ruling India by force, a fact plainly conceded by the Indian Viceroy Linlithgow in a moment of unguarded candor. His telegram to the Secretary of State read: “The Cabinet will I think agree with me that India and Burma have no natural association with the Empire, from which they are alien by race, history and religion, and for which as such neither of them have any natural affection and both are in the Empire because they are conquered countries which had been brought there by force, kept there by controls....”

If the British themselves were ruling by force and therefore had no legitimacy how could the creatures who existed at their mercy – the petty Indian Kings and princes, have any? Whatever pretensions, they may have had to rule had vanished the moment they supported the Usurper of power – the British, in defiance of their national sovereign, the Moghul Emperor.

The Congress had always maintained that they were leading an agitation for Independence of India as a whole. They refused to sanctify the British division of the country into British India, the part which was ruled directly by them and had a population of 289 million spread over eleven provinces covering two third of area of the country. The other being the so called Princely India or the Indian States which was ruled by the British through their henchmen – the petty Kings and princes, which had a combined population of 98 million spread over 565 petty kingdoms covering one third of the country’s area.

One of the reasons for the Congress rejecting the Cripps proposals in 1942 was the unsatisfactory nature of its proposals in respect of the Indian States.

The Congress Working Committee had passed the following resolution on 11th April 1942:

“The complete ignoring of ninety millions of people in the Indian States, and their treatment as commodities at the disposal of their Rulers, is a negation both of democracy and self-determination. When the representation of an Indian State in the constitution-making body is fixed on a population basis, the people of the states have no voice in choosing those representatives, nor are they to be consulted at any

stage while decisions vitally affecting them are being taken. Such states may in many ways become barriers to the growth of Indian freedom, enclaves where foreign authority still prevails, and where the possibility of maintaining foreign-armed forces has been stated to be a likely contingency and a perpetual menace to the freedom of the people of the states as well as of the rest of India.”

The British, on the other hand, made a great show of following the Treaties and Sanads that they had exchanged with these imposters to keep the Congress influence out of the Indian States. They insisted that such Treaties and Sanads were inviolate, even while knowing the untenable nature of their arguments. R.A.Butler’s note of 5th January 1945 submitted to Clement Attlee had this to say:

“I proceed from the basis, though go further than the Simon Report... I have always felt that some form of repartition of the Indian provinces is essential in order to create units consisting of both British-Indian and Indian State territory and inhabitants, which can create a form of Government all-embracing within themselves that comparative religious quiet may be obtained and that the units created may be economically viable.....The states may well be anxious about these proposals, but I frankly feel that many of the small states are anachronisms and must find their salvation by coming to an understanding with their British-Indian neighbors. This is particularly the case where parcellations of territory is most complicated...I do not see why the States should not be brought to the idea of coming to an understanding with British-Indian units...’

Absolute Political Independence demanded that the successor Indian Government needed to assume the powers of paramountcy in respect of the whole of the country. A third of the country area could scarcely be kept out as a British relic. The same Attlee who had acted on the part concerning the representation of the British in the Central Government in the note he had received from Butler on 5th January 1945, took no note of the part concerning the proposed integration of Indian Princely states with the British Indian territory. The Cabinet Mission was expressly forbidden to offer the Status of a full successor government to the Indians by denying it the power of paramountcy over the princely states. The entire scope of the Cabinet Mission Plan was to exclude any hint of a suggestion to integrate the Princely states with British India and thus remove these anachronisms.

Moreover, there was to be no talk of election of the representatives of the Indian States. Thus 100 million people, living on some 1/3rd of the country were being kept out of the scope of democratic process, keeping the power of their autocratic rulers intact.

The British motive could only have been to ensure that some residual British influence could still be maintained in India. Once again let us stick to hard facts and not speculate. In an appreciation of the possibilities in India, the Viceroy had this to say in May 1946: “The rulers of States are perplexed and anxious; they realise that their former protectors, the British are going, that they will be subject to agitation of the Congress and that the end of their autocracy and easy living is in sight.

In any conflict or disturbances, the States would in all probability remain generally friendly to the British. Hyderabad for instance would welcome retention of British troops in Secunderabad and Mysore would certainly be unlikely to raise any objection about their remaining in Bangalore; these two places have important airfields which might be of great value to us.....Kashmir, Baluchistan and the Punjab States would remain within the British sphere of influence in the North –West...”

The Cabinet Mission arrived in India on 24th March 1946 with a clear mandate. They were to leave on 29th June. For three months, three senior ministers of the British Cabinet camped in India hoping to find a way out of the Indian impasse. This was a war of nerves. Was the Congress going to make the British play as per the rules they set in tune with national needs or were the British going to make the Indians dance to their tunes. It was an eyeball to eyeball confrontation. Who was going to blink first?

The national turmoil since the start of the INA trials on the 5th November 1945 culminating into an open naval mutiny in Bombay and Karachi on the 18th February 1946 had convinced the Congress High Command that they could not hope to control the anger of the people, were they now to reopen struggle against the British. If they ruled out the path of agitation against the British then they had to make a settlement with Jinnah so as to present a united front to the British.

Jinnah was after all an Indian, even if he now wanted his community to live separately. Nor was he a man of straw, a British puppet. He was undoubtedly the leader of the Muslims. If the Congress suspected him of being a Communal monster, then it should have fought him to the bitter end. But the fact is Jinnah was no communal monster. If he was one he would have ensured that India had a blood bath of the likes never seen before; in August 1942. This was after all the time when a British Government anxious to put down the Congress inspired revolt would have easily looked the other way if the Muslim hoodlums had started bashing up the Congress volunteers. A government which could take to bombing its own people could do anything. 1942 was the only civil disobedience movement that did not lead to communal unrest contrary to all apprehensions.

In the summer of 1946, Gandhi had become the biggest stumbling block in a settlement with Jinnah. As the Viceroy rightly noted in his secret report to the Cabinet that the Muslim League was deeply suspicious of the Congress under its present leadership. He felt that in case, the Congress got rid of Gandhi, the League could possibly co-operate with the Congress. A Netaji was now sorely needed but there was none. In the absence of a Netaji, there was only one way of making Jinnah see reason. This was the Savarkar approach of accepting the two-nation theory, which in any case appeared to have been vindicated by the election results. If the Congress could accept this, then it was easy to see a way out.

Canada stood as a bright example of two antagonist nations, the English and the French, living under the same roof peacefully. If the English and the French could do so, why not the Hindus and the Muslims. But a prerequisite was to accept that Jinnah was right. So were Savarkar and Ambedkar. Gandhiji was patently wrong. And this was too much to expect from the Nehru, Patel led Congress, for whom life began and ended with Gandhi.

The Cabinet Mission offered them a way out. It proposed on 16th May 1946, a three tier federal structure for India with fairly autonomous groups of provinces. A structure more suited to nations aspiring to live under a common roof than the components of one nation living together. A structure that meant acceptance of a two nation theory by the Congress and giving up the demand for Pakistan by the League.

The proposal envisaged formation of an interim government at the Centre and setting up of a Constituent Assembly for drafting of a Constitution. Nevertheless, important riders remained. The power was to be handed over to the Indians on a Dominion Status being subject to a treaty being signed between the Constituent Assembly and the United Kingdom. No doubt to settle such issues as the Sterling Balances in a manner favourable to the British. The petty Indian princes, the British puppets were to nominate representatives to the Constituent Assembly, leaving the 100 million Indians outside the orbit of democracy. Thus, the principle national objections to the British schemes remained unresolved.

There was only one response that the Congress driven to fulfill its basic creed – Absolute Political Independence could have given to the Cabinet Mission. That is to ignore it as soon as its intentions became clear. The Directive to the Cabinet Mission may have been secret but their proposals were dead giveaways. Ignore the Cabinet Mission and reignite the Quit India movement. This struggle was essential to make sure that the Imperial designs of the British were thwarted. The national need of the hour was clearly to intensify the Quit India movement, not keep on talking with the British, who were not making any effort to satisfy the national political or economic aspirations. However, if the Muslim League agreed to participate in the Constituent Assembly, it was worthwhile to accept the proposals, if only to present a United front to the British. For once the machinery of the Constituent Assembly was set in motion, the British would have been in a very tight corner in respect of enforcing their Will on the Nation.

Jinnah accepted the proposal on 6th June 1946. Now, was the opportunity to make a common front and defeat the British intentions. What the Congress did was unforgivable- instead of conspiring against the British, it chose to try and sabotage the League acceptance. The AICC met on 6th and 7th of July 1946 in which it decided to accept the Cabinet Mission Plan despite the opposition by the Socialists.

On 10th July, the newly elected Congress President, Jawahar Lal Nehru, suddenly realised that the Congress was not prepared to accept any British imposed limitations on the sovereignty of the Constituent Assembly.

This realisation dawned three days after the Congress accepted the Cabinet Mission proposals with the same limitations, making his motives suspect not only to the League but also to all others. In the Constituent Assembly, he claimed that ‘what we (the Congress) do there (in the Constituent Assembly), we are entirely and absolutely free to determine.’ In other words, it was not committed to any agreement with the League. He thus virtually disowned those parts of the Plan, which had been the basis on which League had agreed to accept the Plan. Nehru has been widely condemned for this intemperate outburst. Majumdar had this to say of Nehru’s conduct.

“These words might have been legally and constitutionally true, but if Nehru was determined to scare away Jinnah, he could not have devised a better or more ingenious plan.”

Nehru’s conduct was the proverbial last straw on the camel’s back for Jinnah. He was never again to trust the Gandhi Congress. By 29th July 1946, the League withdrew its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan. This, in sum and substance, is the public story of the Cabinet Mission.

What seems to have irked Jinnah the most is the capacity of Gandhi and Nehru to be legally correct but devilishly encroaching on the rights of the others. Nor was Jinnah the only one to be so angered. What the Congress did in that fateful summer of 1946 was unforgivable. If it had the courage of conviction, it should have fought the British. If Jinnah was such a devil, it should have had nothing to do with him. Either of this would have been far more preferable. It did neither. What it did was to appear legally correct but at the same time seek to undermine the League in a dubious manner and let the British escape out of the tight corner.

In 1937, it had insisted on the League members joining Congress as a precondition to being taken in Ministries. Now, that the League was too strong to be so shabbily treated, it tried to be devious. It first accepted the unacceptable proposals of the Cabinet Mission to put the Muslim League off guard and then proceeded to put its own interpretations on the proposals without giving a damn if the League agreed with it or not.

If the Cabinet Mission proposals were acceptable on the 6th July, how come they suddenly became unacceptable four days later?

If, what the Cabinet Mission was offering was unacceptable, and it indeed was, as we have seen, why did the Congress talk to it at all?

Why did it not renew the call for Quit India movement? Many inconvenient questions, but no answers.

The Congress did not even attempt to fight the British despite the fact that their offers fell far short of the national demand. The truth is that the very power that the Congress had come to acquire in 1946 petrified Gandhiji and his cohorts. For the power of the Congress came from people's love for Independence. It was a sacred sword. Once drawn from its sheath, it was not amenable to any compromise. Anyone, however great, who dared to come in the way of Independence was going to be cast aside. The Gandhi wing of the Congress, which came to control the levers of power within the Congress in the absence of such challengers such as Netaji, who was no more and the Communists who were discredited due to their great U turn of 1942; now sought to play safe. In the process they sold the dream of Independence down the drain.

What was a politically awake India capable of in the summer of 1946? It was certainly capable of throwing the British into the seas – lock stock and barrel. A fact that the British were well aware of. Something that filled them with dread. For a disaster in India was going to painfully expose their pretensions to be a Super power. If India went, so would Burma, Ceylon and Malaya. Egypt would no doubt follow suit and kick them out. Palestine was seething with unrest anyway. With India gone, the whole British edifice in the Middle and Far East would have crumbled like a pack of cards. If this was gone, who would give them Dollars to buy food or supply them goods with a mere promise of payment. India had to be let go --that was sure but this had to be done in a manner that would bring Great Britain prestige and glory. Not shame. This is what was behind the Cabinet Mission proposals. The British knew that they were running the risk of facing a United Congress-League front if both accepted their proposals. But, they had no choice. The alternatives were far worse.

Let us take a look behind the curtains to see what was transpiring in the British camp. How close to despair had they come. How they had escaped from a sure ignominy by the skin of the teeth due to Incompetence, Arrogance and Timidity of the Gandhi Congress, which seemed bent on helping the British at the cost of Indian national interests.

By June 1946, the best laid plans of the British appeared to be going hay wire. On 3rd June, the Cabinet received a telegram from the Cabinet Mission reporting an extremely serious situation in India. The telegram alerted the Cabinet to the situation that may have to be faced in either of the three eventualities listed below and the consequences of which were very serious for the British. The three eventualities were:

- Rejection of their proposals by the Muslim League
- Rejection of their proposals by the Congress.
- Rejection of their proposals by both.

The Mission found the first possible situation, the least serious. In case of the League rejecting the proposals, they were proposing to hand over the power to the Congress leaving the protection of minorities to the good sense of the Congress. They considered the situation arising out of the Congress rejection to be far more serious. The third – rejection by both the Congress as well as the League, was a plain and simple disaster for them. The British were jittery because they were well aware that:

“The Indian army could not be counted to act as a whole if it were called upon to deal with either a full scale Congress revolt or a declared Muslim League Jihad. The Civilian servicemen are tired and discouraged and loyalty of the police would be uncertain.”

They were being especially wary of the Congress because they realized that an opposition from the Congress could develop into a mass struggle on 1942 lines, but far more widespread and organised. The Communist involvement in the post INA turmoil had made it very clear that they were itching to make amends for the 1942 blunder. An opportunity that both the British and the Gandhi Congress wanted to deny them.

The report of the Cabinet Mission created a stir. A special meeting of the Cabinet was called to discuss solely the Indian situation. The meeting took place on 5th June 1946. Not surprisingly, the discussions were buried in the Secretary's Standard File of Cabinet Conclusions. It was clear to the Cabinet that, let alone being in a position to meet a joint Congress-League agitation, it was in no way possible to crush an agitation sponsored by the Congress alone. The administrative machinery in India had become extremely weak. For economic, military and political reasons, it was out of question to commit any new British troops to control the Indians for any extended period. That they had to get out was now very clear. The Cabinet Mission had even suggested 1st January 1947 as a possible cut off date. Every single drop of the blood shed by the Indian Martyrs was coming to haunt the British.

To their credit that even in this hour of gloom and despair, they resolved that: "We must at all times avoid a situation in which we had to withdraw from India under circumstances of ignominy after there had been widespread riots and attacks on Europeans. It must be clear that we were going freely and under no compulsion."

They knew that they could count on the Gandhi Congress to help them achieve this objective. If they were not to withdraw from India, in the face of the organised opposition, then they had to maintain the existing form of government. The Cabinet minutes record: "There was a strong support for this proposal, which would involve maintaining the existing form of Government. It was realised, however, that the extent to which it would be possible to follow such a policy must depend on the Indian reaction to it. If in fact it evoked widespread resistance, the policy would have to be modified, if only because it would involve very substantial reinforcement of our troops which we would have great difficulty in finding. But would there in fact be widespread resistance necessitating repression of the type which neither the Mission nor the Cabinet favoured? It was difficult to predict the Indian reaction, *but was there not a powerful element in the Congress which would resist a course leading to chaos and anarchy and throw their weight against the more irresponsible sections of the Congress.*"

It appears that the Cabinet was quite confident of finding a strong support from the **Responsible** Congress men, anxious to serve the British interests against their own **Irresponsible** colleagues eager to throw the British out. Therefore, they decided not to rush into a decision on the basis of the Cabinet Mission report, as : “In general, the Cabinet felt that it was difficult to take firm decisions as to means of meeting a situation which had not yet arisen and which seemed in fact to be several moves ahead.”

Nevertheless, the British knew that they faced an exceedingly difficult situation and the support from their *Responsible friends in the Congress* could not be counted upon to provide them succor. The revolutionary tide was far too strong. The Cabinet decided to have a detailed examination of the options available to them. These were discussed in the Cabinet Meeting of 17th June 1946.

The Cabinet Mission had considered that in the event of a breakdown of the negotiations, the British Government could deal with the resulting serious internal disorders by adoption of one of the following five courses:

- Complete Withdrawal as soon as possible
- Withdrawal by a certain date, 1st January 1947
- Appeal to the United Nations
- Maintaining overall control throughout India
- Giving Independence to Southern and Central India and maintaining the existing position in North West and North East India.

The first option was completely ruled out being incompatible with the British interests. The second was supported by Cripps but opposed by the other two Cabinet Ministers. The third was studied in detail by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. According to him, the matter could be referred to the UN Security Council in the first instance by the Government of India, in effect by His Majesty's Government since the latter was *de facto* and *de jure* , the responsible government for India. Say on grounds of the Hindus and the Muslims being hostile to the British in particular and the Europeans in general, In the second instance by the Government of some other state on grounds of Indian situation threatening international peace.

A move to the Security Council by any other government could be easily checked by the use of the Veto. However, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs warned that: “It must be emphasised that if the Government of India or His Majesty’s Government took the initiative of appealing to the Security Council in this way, they would have abandoned their sovereign authority over India and would have invited the United Nations Organisation to assume that responsibility. The political consequences of this action would obviously be incalculable, from every point of view. In particular, we might be certain that the Soviet Government, who by their veto power could prevent any action in a sense favourable to the British interests, would seek to draw her own profit from the situation. The military aspects is rather for the Chiefs of Staff, but it seems likely that in the event of the Council being in principle ready to take military action to restore peace in India, the Soviet Union being the only country which would be both ready and able to supply the necessary number of troops. The result of such an appeal to the Security Council might therefore amount in practice to handing over the Empire of India to the Soviet Union.”

The Secretary lent his weight against the first two options on grounds of practical disadvantages far outweighing the possible advantages. The only advantage he could see was the sympathy that they could hope to get from liberal internationalist circles, who would be impressed with the sincerity of the British. Such sympathy, the Secretary scoffed at as being of little consequence and in any case being far outweighed by the implications of the loss of prestige in far wider circles. Moreover, he felt that even the American Government would be appalled if the British chose to abandon their interests in India without seeking safeguards.

This left only the last two options, neither of which the Secretary noted were free of considerable disadvantages. The last two options were the subject of a detailed study by the Chiefs of Staff. Their separate study was based on the following two basic considerations:

- A mass movement sponsored by the Congress would be extremely hard to be put down.
- The Princely States in India would remain pro-British during the period of disturbances.

Next, they proceeded to examine the reliability of the Indian Armed Forces. This is what they had to say: “We consider the reliability of the Indian Army as a whole, including those in garrisons outside India, is open to serious doubt. This even applies to the Gurkha units....The Royal Indian Navy and Royal Indian Air Force cannot be regarded as reliable. There is some danger that the elements of shore establishments in the former may be actively hostile....A few units of the R.I.A.F. may be depended on, but ground crews, particularly in or near large towns, are unreliable.”

With the reliability of the Indian Army open to serious doubts, the Chiefs examined the feasibility of holding down a restive India as a whole by force. They opined that in the event of a Congress sponsored movement and decision to hold India by force, the British troops in India, which were in the process of being demobilised, would have to be augmented by as much as five Divisions. In addition, there would be need for nine Brigades of British troops to replace Indian troops in Malaya, Burma, Hong Kong, Japan, Dodecannese and Iraq. The sources of such reinforcements were:

Middle East	One Division
Greece	Two Divisions
Italy	One Division
Germany	One Division and Seven Brigades

The Chiefs cautioned that the dispatch of troops from the Middle East would leave the British exposed in an area which was expected to witness serious disorders, a concern that was heightened by the possibility of an unsatisfactory conclusion of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty negotiations. In Greece, withdrawal of two Divisions would leave the area denuded of any British military presence. In Italy, the only reserve Division available for supporting forces in Venezia Guila would have to made available for India. The tapping into forces in Germany would leave the British troops halved – an unacceptable proposition. Thus, in each of these theaters, the repercussions of sending troops for duty in India were very serious for the British interests. As if this was not enough, the administrative services in South East Asian Command were manned by the Indians, who would need to be replaced, which was sure to result in administrative chaos.

Army was not the only wing of defense forces that was to be affected by this. The Navy and the Air Force resources were to be adversely affected by the Indian situation. In addition, the large scale movement of troops was sure to disrupt the Export, Import programme as it would involve 110 dry cargo ships for one voyage to India. No less serious was the implication for the morale of troops. They were all eagerly awaiting a discharge to go home after years of being on the battlefield. A fresh battle field commitment was the last thing they wanted.

Thus, from a purely operational point of view, the British had not a hope in the world to keep on holding on to India by force in the event the Congress decided to start a fight. This was the conclusion of the Chiefs of Staff as reported to the British Cabinet in June 1946.

Nor, were the Chiefs enthusiastic about the last option – a partial withdrawal from India. This option needs a little elaboration before we come to the views of Chiefs of Staff on the same. The Cabinet Mission had suggested that in the event, the Muslim League accepted their proposals and Congress opposed, the British should withdraw from six Hindu provinces, namely – Madras, Bombay, Central Province, United Province, Bihar and Orissa. In effect, these six provinces were to become six independent states and the British were to withdraw into Bengal, Punjab, Sind and Baluchistan to regroup their forces. This plan called for holding on to the ports of Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Karachi; airfields of Hyderabad and Bangalore and also Delhi. The withdrawing British troops were to escort the Europeans to these places, from where they could be evacuated. The Cabinet Mission made this suggestion being fully aware that this plan was illegal and involved throwing their puppets, the Indian princes, to the wolves.

Regardless of these considerations, the Mission was prepared to recommend this as the least Unsatisfactory and sought to defend it as an Emergency measure.

The Chiefs of Staff pointed out that even this plan hinged around the co-operation of the Congress. For, if it decided to oppose the plan, the withdrawal of the British troops would be fraught with grave dangers and the requirement of troop reinforcements would remain at about five Divisions with all the attendant repercussions in the Middle East,

Germany, Italy and Greece. Moreover, they pointed out that the provinces of Punjab and Bengal, which had sizable Hindu minorities, were sure to witness communal conflicts, which would need additional troops to control. They therefore stated that from a military point of view, such a plan, unless the cooperation of Congress was secured, was completely unacceptable.

Thus, each of the Five alternatives that the harassed Cabinet Mission could think of were found to be suffering from serious defects. None seemed to be capable of protecting the British interests in a manner that was even remotely acceptable. In each of the alternatives considered, the power of the Congress to cause the British grief comes out all too clearly. The power was not the personal fiefdom of any of its leaders. It was given to them in sacred trust by the people to fight for freedom. Their failure to use this power at a critical juncture in the history was nothing short of betrayal of this sacred trust. The British days in India were numbered from the day that the INA trials started – 5th November 1945. Any day that they managed to extend their stay after this was a bonus to them. The wonder is not that they left on 15th August 1947. The wonder is that they managed to stay that long and the biggest tragedy is that they departed in a blaze of glory. Not only did they depart in glory but they managed to make sure that all their interests were secured. How did they manage to do so? Let us continue with our story.

In the middle of June 1946, the situation was so serious for the British that in the meeting of 17th June, the Cabinet decided that the Minister for Transport was to make plans for emergency evacuation of the British women and children from India. In principle no more women or children were to be permitted to leave the United Kingdom for India. At the same time, an appearance that all was normal had to be kept up. So some 250 children and women, who had booked their passage were to be allowed to proceed for canceling their travel at this late juncture would have sent off alarm bells. If the situation went out of hand in India and these 250 were unfortunately came to any harm, the blame could easily be palmed off to the Indians.

Who was to know of the role of the British Cabinet in deliberately sending them to what now constituted War zone?

One other decision was no less revealing. This was the inclusion of Sarat Bose, the brother of Netaji Bose, whose shadow loomed large on India. The British realized that in the formation of the Interim Government, if the Cabinet Mission was successful, the Viceroy may be pressed upon to have him included in the Government. The Congress High Command could not risk alienating the popular sentiment by ignoring the brother of Netaji from the Government. The Confidential Annex of the Cabinet Meeting recorded: "Though the first Hindu (Congress) reaction seemed favourable, there was reason to fear that the Congress party would make difficulties about accepting the invitations. It was possible that , to ease these difficulties, the Viceroy may be pressed to include Sarat Bose in place of one of the other Congress representatives. There were objections to his inclusion on account of his past activities" such as being the brother of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, "and the Viceroy and the Mission had therefore sought guidance on whether, if this point was pressed, the Viceroy should yield." The Cabinet was very clear, it decided that "While realising to the full the objections to the inclusion of Sarat Bose in the interim government, the cabinet felt that it would be a mistake to jeopardise the successful conclusion of the negotiations simply on this account."

Sarat Bose could be dealt with on another day. As a matter of record, Sarat Bose was indeed included in the interim government to start with. Soon to be thrown out in less than three months. It appears that the Congress High Command and the British Cabinet were of the same mind when it came to Sarat Bose. Too strong a symbol to be ignored in the surcharged atmosphere of 1946. A show to be made about giving him the importance due to the brother of Netaji; to be got rid of at the first available opportunity.

By the time, the Cabinet Mission returned to the United Kingdom by the end of June 1946, the threat of British being thrown out of India had considerably reduced. The League and the Congress seemed more keen to score over each other rather than join forces with each other to fight the British for the national interests.

Not one of them seemed in the least bothered about the fate of the hungry millions.

Even as the Secretary of State for India kept on harassing his colleagues in the Cabinet for sending food grains to India, the high and mighty of the League and the Congress were squabbling over petty matters.

What appeared to be bothering these worthies was whether or not the Congress could nominate one Muslim in the quota of seats allotted to it in the Interim Government. The secular Congress insisted it could. The League angrily rejected the contention bolstered by the fact that the elections had clearly established that it was the League and not the Congress, which represented the Muslims. The millions, who knew no religion in their hunger were left to fend for themselves.

In the meeting of the 5th July 1946, the Cabinet Minutes tell us:

“Questions were asked about the possibility of disturbances in India in near future. At one point during the course of the negotiations certain military dispositions had been made against the possibility. Was it necessary that they should still be continued?”

The views of the Mission were that the feeling of insecurity was much less than it had been a month ago but that this improvement might not last if the Viceroy failed in his attempt to form a coalition Government”

The Cabinet Mission had given the British a reprieve. That was much more than what could have been hoped for in February when India seemed to be on the verge of a revolution or even in June when it appeared that the Congress would restart the Quit India movement.

The British had given away nothing. Neither Complete Independence nor a smallest hope on the satisfactory settlement of the Sterling Balances. They had not even sent a single grain to India, which had famine at its door steps. Blissfully unconcerned with this, the League and the Congress seemed most anxious to let the British off the hook by continuing their stupid fight with each other.

Chapter XI

The Mother of All Betrayals Nehruvian Grab for Power

The infamous press conference of Nehru rebutting the basic premise on which the acceptance of the Cabinet Mission proposals stood was the proverbial ‘last straw on the camel’s back’ as far as Jinnah was concerned in his relations to the Gandhi Congress. He was never to trust them again. From here on, the journey on the road to partition of the country was inevitable.

What certainly was not predestined was that the parting of ways would involve rape, murder and massacre of hundreds of thousands of the innocents on either side of the divide. That the Transfer of Power would set off unending caravans of millions of refugees trekking off to an alien land – to an uncertain future in conditions of abject poverty. That, it would be a **Transfer of Power** from the White to the Brown hands and not **Absolute Political Independence**. That the sacrifices of the revolutionaries and the dreams of the millions would be so cruelly betrayed by the very man, who had once stood shoulder to shoulder with Netaji, as his senior colleague, taking on the might of his own father as well as his Guru. In the process setting off in motion, a train of events that would ensure that the two parts of the nation would forever remain locked in a cycle of mutual hate. As if this was not enough, the Transfer of Power in this ghastly manner appears to have been purchased with the promise of a favourable treatment of the Sterling Balances – the forced saving of the nation during the War years. Favourable, not to the inhabitants of the Indian sub-continent but, to the British masters.

Yes! Jawahar Lal Nehru has much to answer for being the person primarily responsible for the happenings in that crucial period of history – July 1946 to August 1947. Nor can the guilt of Jinnah be denied, if not as a conniver than at least as an accomplice. The power play between these titans of the era, has left behind a legacy that continues to haunt generation not yet born.

There was only one solitary exception. Mohandas Karmchand Gandhi – No! Mahatma Gandhi, for no other word describes his action more aptly during the last phase of his life, was now an embarrassment to his nominal followers. The Congress Working Committee, no longer deemed it necessary to either involve him in the decision making or extending even the basic courtesy of keeping him informed. As his Secretary Pyarelal wrote in his diary on 25th June 1946; referring to the meeting of the Congress Working Committee and the Cabinet Mission: “Bapu not being a member was not sent for and did not go. On their return nobody told Bapu a word about what happened at the meeting.”

Majumdar noted: “Of course, Gandhi still remained a popular idol but he had ceased to count in the Indian politics – a fact that became more and more noticeable during the last phase of the negotiations with the British.”

Mahatma Gandhi during this phase of life seemed to have transcended the normal human barriers and had moved on to a metaphysical phase of what the ordinary mortals like us call ‘Supernatural Existence’. Most of his actions were simply incomprehensible to people living on a much lower plane. Take for instance, his experiment of testing his own control of sexual desires by sleeping naked alongside his grand niece and openly writing about it, to the horror of the puritan Indian elite.

Or for that matter, his act of staking his life to control the raging communal fury in the post partition Calcutta. One of his noblest fast that actually shamed hoodlums- both Hindus and Muslims, into giving up violence. It is impossible, and I say this with all honesty, for us ordinary people, to evaluate his actions in the last phase of his life. I have been exceedingly critical of his actions in the period before this. Yet, I have nothing but reverence for the post July 1946 Mahatma Gandhi. In this final phase, he had given up his Lust for Power that made him do strange things earlier.

The Saint in him had finally triumphed over the Politician, making him as Godlike as is humanely possible.

Nehru and Liaqat Ali Khan, the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, are reported to have said: “Our People have gone mad” on witnessing aftermath of some of the more brutal murders after partition. It were not the People, but the Leaders, who had gone stark raving Mad.

Sadly, the first to lose his balance was Jinnah. For years, he had been a moderate restrained person shunning the dangerous path of arousing mass hysteria. In the evening of his life, his tuberculosis battered body was slowly withering away. Also, withering away in his eyes was the promise of an honourable place for his community in an India that was at last throwing off the yoke of British slavery. He therefore issued a call for Direct Action.

On 29th July 1946, the Muslim League passed two resolutions withdrawing its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission proposals. The first resolution rightly pointed out that the Congress had made its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission proposals conditional upon its own elastic interpretation. The second resolution said:

“Never have in the whole history of the League done anything except by constitutional methods and by constitutionalism. But now we are obliged and forced into this position. This day we bid goodbye to constitutional methods.” The resolution pointed out that throughout the fateful negotiations with the Cabinet Mission, “the other two parties, the British and the Congress, each held a pistol in their hand, the one of authority and arms and the other of mass struggle and non-cooperation.” It, therefore, said: “Today, we have also forged a pistol and are in a position to use it.”

True, Jinnah had been given enough and more provocation by the Congress particularly by Nehru during the Cabinet Mission negotiations. Nevertheless, the fact remains that a shrewd man like Jinnah could not have been unaware of dangers inherent in the use of such loose terms. The use of such loaded terms as Pistols particularly in the context of the surcharged atmosphere that then prevailed, showed a regrettable loss of balance.

The rejection of the Cabinet Mission by the League was Godsent to Nehru. Now, he could proceed to form an interim government, headed of course by himself, unencumbered by the irritating presence of his foe.

In this mad rush to grab power, he neither bothered about the fact that a party that had called for Quit India in 1942 could not assume power under the British Monarch, unless in a strategic attempt to buy peace with the Muslims. Nor did he care two hoots about the dangers he was courting by ignoring the most powerful representative of the Muslims. If Jinnah had lost his balance, Nehru must be said to have taken complete leave of his senses.

The power grab by Nehru was most enthusiastically supported by the British. On 31st July 1946, the Secretary of State reported to the Cabinet that the India and Burma Committee had felt that notwithstanding Muslim abstention, the HMG must proceed with the Constituent Assembly as well as formation of the Interim Government, if necessary without the Muslim League. The Committee indeed came to conclude that: “We could not allow a minority to stand in the way of the progress of the majority.”

For years, the British had insisted that they could not hand over power to the Indians unless the minority problem was resolved. Now, when it suited them, they were quite happy to throw the minorities to the mercies of the Congress for it suited them. We have already seen how much they had dreaded the prospect of facing a Congress led agitation. By co-opting the Congress leaders, they were making sure that their interest would be protected. This also enabled them to avoid the worst case scenario - open opposition of both the Congress as well as the League. If this were to happen, the possibility of their being thrown out of India by force would have become all too real. Thus, sacrificing the minorities was a small price to pay if it brought the Congress into their camp.

The Congress did decide to play the ball. With this the decks were cleared for Jawahar Lal Nehru to assume the reins of power by swearing allegiance to the British Sovereign in blatant disregard to all that he himself had stood for. An incensed Jinnah called for observing Direct Action Day on 16th August 1946. Time it seems had come to use the Pistol. Jinnah, to be fair, did his best to restrain his followers. He called upon them to conduct themselves peacefully and in a disciplined manner and not to play in the hands of their enemy. The reality was anything but peaceful, particularly in Bengal.

On 8th August 1946, the Secretary of State had warned his colleagues that the food situation in India was very serious. Widespread disaster and large scale famine were around the corner in India. This was causing him sleepless nights. On the other hand, all that Nehru and Jinnah appeared to be losing sleep over was how to grab power. We, thus, had the strange spectacle of a British Minister being more concerned about the welfare of the Indian people than the so called Indian leaders themselves. It is another matter that the British Cabinet proved to be as callous about the Indian welfare as the Indian leaders themselves, by throwing out the proposals of the Secretary of State.

It was on 16th August 1946 that India got a glimpse of what lay ahead. An India without the British was at the door step but this was a Future that was very different from that envisaged by any Freedom Fighter. What is that happened on the 16th August 1946 in Calcutta. The *Statesman*, an English Daily, thus described the Darkness that fell on this Jewel of the East: “What befell India’s largest city last week was no mere communal riot... For three days the city concentrated on unrestrained civil war. The primary blame lies upon the Muslim League Cabinet and particularly upon the Chief Minister (Suhrawardhy).”

The culpability of the League Ministry in Bengal was clear. It had declared 16th August as a Public holiday and encouraged the hooligans of Calcutta’s underworld to believe that they had the license of the Government to behave as they liked. A license that had left nearly 5,000 people dead, over 15,000 injured and about 100,000 homeless. The role of the Muslim League Ministry has been commented upon and rightly condemned. So has the role of the British passivity in not taking energetic steps to control the situation. What has been completely escaped censor has been the role of the British Cabinet in not heeding the dire warnings of the Secretary of State in respect of consequences of not making adequate food grains available to India.

In the aftermath of Calcutta, a half-hungry populace seemed to have been affected by the communal virus. In town after town, in village after village people took to rioting. The people living on a starvation diet less than that had been made available by Hitler to the Jewish inmates of Auschwitz took offense even where none was intended and communal fires raged in the country.

The scenes of Hindus-Muslims taking to streets together, protesting against the trials of the INA officers became a distant memory.

Meanwhile, neither Nehru nor Jinnah had thought it fit to visit Calcutta – both being too busy to offer solace to the people being affected by their power games. A visit to Calcutta was left for the Viceroy, Wavell to undertake, who returned badly shaken by the depths to which the so called human beings could sink. To be fair to Jinnah, not even his worst detractors have levied an allegation that the Calcutta orgy of violence had been instigated by him. Indeed in the days to come, Surawardhy seemed to have fallen out of favour with him and came to be sidelined in the League.

The grisly Calcutta massacre seemed to serve a purpose. British came to realise the folly of antagonising the League and pulled out all stops in order to secure its presence in the Interim Government overriding half hearted protests from Nehru. On his part, Nehru utilised this as an opportunity to drop Sarat Bose from the ministry to the delight of the British, who as we have seen had no love lost for him. Thus, Jinnah got his foot hold in the center of power, Nehru had already secured his seat. The British could rest easy with their position, lot more secure in India than in June, when a *Dunkirk* had stared at them in the face. Now, they could afford to ignore all the dire warnings of their Secretary of State in respect of the food shortages looming large in India. They had their henchmen in place to deal with the situation. The only losers in the whole bargain were the people of Bharat driven to madness by the explosive cocktail of hunger and communal virus. But who had time to worry about them?

None other than the Mahatma. Indeed, his stature seemed to grow in inverse proportion to his increasing irrelevance in the political arena. Desperately, he wandered around in Bharat seeking to apply bandage to every wounded sore. But, the bleeding nation had too many sores even for a Mahatma to heal. Fully conscious of the gigantic odds facing him, the old man well past the ripe age of seventy five kept on going about the task with an equanimity that leaves one stunned in wonder and amazement. In his old age, he seemed to be in a rush to atone for the every wrong that he had inflicted on the nation.

In the meanwhile, the British minds were trying to make best use of the reprieve that they had obtained – to protect their interests in every possible manner. The manner in which they went about doing so is best illustrated by the case of the Indian Civil Service, the ICS as they were popularly called. The Officers of the ICS, the incorruptible lot that had emerged as the so called steel frame of the Raj had to be taken care of. The integrity of these Officers had been ensured by paying them salary and pensions far in excess of that paid to their counterparts anywhere in the world. The icing on the cake was provided by the life style of a Nawab, that they could lead during their tenure in the country. They were the people who symbolised the might of the Raj to the general populace. As the moment of truth - the transfer of power, came near, it was feared that the days of the ICS, were numbered. For it was inconceivable that it would be life as usual for them under any nationalist government. A fear that proved to be groundless but that is another story.

What is it that these best paid Civil servants had to show for their efforts of more than a century and a half. A nation that could not feed its own. A nation that had the highest illiteracy rate in the world with a bare 12% of the people being able to read or write. The other evils are too well known to be repeated again. By the principle of Pay for Performance, a nationalist government would have been in order to **recover** monies paid to these fat pigs. Yet, we had the seemingly strange spectacle of the Secretary of State proposing to pay compensation to these well fed animals for the fear that they were going to get their just deserts in a future not too distant. Critical examination would have revealed that the British were indeed following the principle of Pay for Performance. Pay from the Indian revenues and Performance for the British. After all, it were these very officers, who had carried out the difficult task of making sure that the power and prestige of the Raj was maintained at all times in India, through the thick and thin of the ferment of the freedom struggle. Barring a few, what in their eyes were very few dishonourable exceptions like Subhas Bose, none of the ICS officers had ever defiled their service by joining the freedom struggle. It is these officers, who had maintained the peace of a grave yard in the country so that their British masters could carry off the loot from India unhindered by the pesky nationalist protesters.

The Secretary of State, therefore, circulated a note on 15th November 1946 in respect of the proposed compensation for the Officers of the Indian Services as a result of the termination of the British rule in the near future. The note accepted that officers benefited from an unusual pension system. After a service of 25 years, every member of the ICS was eligible for a pension of £ 1,000 p.a. which was inflation indexed. With the British rule coming to an end, members of the ICS were going to suffer, for even a Congress government in an India free from the British rule was not going to be so generous to them. It could hardly afford to, for even the pay of the British Civil Servants in the United Kingdom paled in comparison to their cousins in India. The note, therefore, proposed to offer compensation to the ICS Officers, for the loss of career and prospects, the total cost of which was estimated at £ 10 million.

The sum of £ 10 million, Keynes would have screamed was an enormous sum of money and probably represented the difference between hunger and half a meal for the millions subsisting on a diet of less than 1,000 calories a day. But then Keynes would have been soothed by the fact that the compensation was payable by India and not by the British. India was thus being asked to offer compensation to those who were looting her, as the opportunity to do so (i.e. loot her) was not going to be available in future. The matter was discussed in the Cabinet on the 19th November and the Ministers who had paid no heed to the repeated pleas of the Secretary of State for diverting food grains to India; now had no hesitation in approving his proposals for compensating the ICS officers.

In the meanwhile, the British efforts to maintain a semblance of order so as to complete an orderly retreat from India came to be threatened by the growing discord between the League and the Congress, till matters came to a stage that the functioning of the Interim Government came to be paralysed. For years, most of the Indians including me, have believed that it was the intransigence of Jinnah that alone was responsible for the discord. In our eyes, Nehru was the hero who could do no wrong. Facts are slightly different.

The Indian political situation that had not caused much anxiety to the British Cabinet for over a quarter of a year returned to haunt the British in December 1946. Jinnah had made sure that the League claims to a share of power at the Center were not ignored. Next, he set

about making sure that Pakistan would become a reality. After publicly repudiating the Cabinet Mission proposals Jinnah could not be faulted for his attempts. He was only making every possible attempt to achieve his stated goal. He, therefore, refused to have the League representation in the Constituent Assembly that was to be convened from 9th December 1946 unless certain clarifications regarding the procedure to be adopted were forthcoming in advance. This was an eminently sensible precaution after the inflammatory press conference of Nehru on the issue in July. Bitter public wrangle broke out on the issue between Nehru and Jinnah that threatened to derail the British plans.

Interestingly, the British agreed privately that Jinnah's position was sound but did not publicly say so for the fear of antagonizing the Congress. Prudently, they decided on 25th November, to invite the Indian leaders for discussions to London.

The Indian leaders visited London in the first week of December. It was a strange sight. Political giants of India trooping in the Imperial capital not to demand Independence but to settle their own petty squabbles. One can only hang one's head in shame.

The British Cabinet was briefed by the Prime Minister Attlee about the outcome of the discussions on 10th December. Attlee, if anything, was a friend of Nehru. Yet this is what he had to say.

“It was impossible to be confident that the main political parties in India had any real will to reach an agreement between themselves. **Pandit Nehru's** present policy seems to be to secure complete domination by Congress throughout the government of India. If a constitution was framed which had this effect, there would certainly be strong reaction from the Muslims. Province with a Muslim majority might refuse to join a central Government on such terms at all; and the **ultimate result of Congress policy might be the establishment of that Pakistan** which they so much disliked.”

Right or wrong, this was the frank opinion of a third person who was otherwise well disposed towards Nehru. It had to be an honest opinion otherwise, it would not have lain buried as Confidential Annex in the Secretary's Standard File of Cabinet Conclusions.

Partition was becoming more and more of a reality, not only because of Jinnah but also due to the power lust that seems to have blinded Nehru. The growing distrust and inability of the Indian leaders to work together, was leading to a very dangerous situation.

“The Prime Minister warned the Cabinet that the situation might so develop as to result in civil war in India, with all the bloodshed which that would entail. There seemed little realisation among the Indian leaders of the risk that ordered government might collapse... One thing was quite certain viz. that we could not put back the clock and introduce a period of firm British rule. Neither the military nor the administrative machine in India was any longer capable of this”

Nearly four decades after the Great Tilak had rekindled the torch of Bharatiya Freedom, the anger against the British had reached such a level that it was no longer possible to subdue the Bharatiya nationalism as the British evidently realised. Not after the British coffers were emptied by Hitler. In this moment of great national triumph, the aspirations of the people were being sold down the street by the very Leaders who claimed to represent them. If this sounds harsh consider the fact that at this time in the life of the nation, there were certain non-negotiable issues of national concern, namely

- Treatment of Sterling Balances on a commercial basis between India and the British.
- Taking over power from the British as a Paramount power, in other words do away with the Indian Kings and Princes, who were no more than mere British puppets.
- Attaining Absolute Political Independence.

What were Nehru and Jinnah fighting about? The fight was certainly not in relation to any of these national issues. The squabble was about Power. Nothing more.

For too long, we have been misled into believing that the dispute was between a secular Nehru, who stood for a United India and a communal Jinnah who was bent upon dividing the country based on a false two nation theory.

First of all, as we have seen, it was not merely Jinnah who spoke about Hindus and Muslims being two separate nations.

That by itself need not have dissolved the will to live together. After all, Savarkar, who also held the same views as Jinnah, had himself proclaimed that Hindus and Muslims had become blood brothers since 1857 and suffered inhuman treatment lasting over a quarter of century for daring to do so.

Nor was there any need to go back in time. In 1946, the INA story had become imprinted on the national psyche. The story of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs fighting together for the national cause was too recent in the memory. If there were differences between the Hindus and the Muslims; there were also common bonds. Even if one accepted the extreme view that the difference were so acute as to make these communities different nations; it did not necessarily mean that they had to live apart in mutual hostility.

The issue was far more mundane. Elections had demonstrated that while the Hindus reposed their faith in the Congress, the Muslims had done so in favour of the League. Jinnah had no pretensions of being a leader of the Hindus. The Congress was, however, unable to swallow the bitter pill of a complete repudiation of its leadership by the Muslims and was playing the role of a very poor loser. That there were Muslims in the Congress was quite beside the point. The fact remained; the Congress Muslims commanded no following in their community. Jinnah had led the Muslim League to a position of undisputed leadership of the Muslim community. He was entitled to a certain respect. Congress could no longer treat him shabbily as it had done since 1920 but old habits die-hard. Nehru continued to live in the make belief world of his own making deluding himself that the real sympathies of the Muslims were on his side. Somehow, he seemed to believe that he had a divine right to rule the country and was attempting to impose his own domination on the Government, as his own friend Attlee shrewdly realised; hurtling the country down on the road to disaster.

The reason for the British concern over the consequences of this unseemly fight between Nehru and Jinnah did not arise from a humanitarian angle. They had their own axe to grind. On 24th December 1946, the Prime Minister submitted a note on Indian Policy to the British Cabinet. The note included a blunt admission of the ground realities in India by the Viceroy. In his own words:

“We are not in a position to maintain British rule in India beyond 31st March 1948, and possibly not for so long.....Our present authority in the country has declined owing to our announced intention to hand over power to India....the British members are few, tired and dispirited by political opposition. As a result we can not in certain provinces at any rate maintain the administration if the Congress withdraws its co-operation....We may at any time be involved in what is virtually a civil war between Hindus and Muslims....no improvised measures to cover a short period of years can amend the situation....The alternatives are therefore to withdraw from India or to reassert our authority. Withdrawal would have to be phased process spread over about 12 months.”

The Viceroy did not rule out the option of staying back in India but he pointed out that it could be done only if the British had the will to stay on for at least next 15 years backed by troops drawn from all over the world. The India Burma Committee ruled out this option as politically impracticable. More importantly, it noted:

“Apart from this the British troops are not available.”

The Committee next considered the recommendations of the Viceroy in respect of phased withdrawal. According to Wavell, a cut off date after which the British would withdraw from India as a whole, had to be announced. As a first phase, the withdrawal was to be completed from the four Southern provinces, Madras, Bombay, C.P. and Orissa leaving the power in the hands of the Congress Ministries. The next phase was to be planned after taking into account the developments in the first phase. If the Congress still did not reach an agreement, power in U.P. and Bihar was to be given over to the Congress, while the power in Muslim majority provinces of Punjab, Bengal, Sindh and the North West Frontier Province was to be given to the League. Wavell earnestly hoped that the shock of British withdrawal from four Southern provinces would force the Congress and the League to come to an understanding.

Poor Wavell, who was essentially a soldier, had evidently no idea about the directives to the Cabinet Mission. Namely, Paramountcy was not to be handed over to a successor Indian Government and the treaty to be concluded in respect of protecting British financial interests including those of Sterling Balances before handing over the

power. His proposals raised issues on all these accounts. Nevertheless, the India Burma Committee could see no way out and was forced to recommend to the Cabinet that by the end of January 1947, an announcement be made in the Parliament setting 31st March 1948 beyond which the British Rule in India would cease to exist as well as to begin withdrawal from the four Southern provinces. The Indian states of Hyderabad, Mysore were to be eventually declared as Independent states living on the sufferance of the Congress Government in the Southern states.

The proposals were considered in the special meeting of the Cabinet called to discuss a single line agenda – India, on the eve of new year, 31st December 1946. The Prime Minister’s note created a furore. Several Ministers became agitated with the proposed announcement. They held the view that the announcement was bound to be regarded as beginning of the liquidation of the British Empire – clearly an unacceptable proposition. The records of the discussion bear reproduction:

“It would be bound to have serious repercussions in Burma, Malaya and elsewhere...The Foreign Secretary thought that the announcement proposed would have serious repercussions in the Middle East. He recalled that in the negotiations with Egypt we had claimed that it would not be practicable for us to withdraw our troops from that country before 1949. How should we reconcile this claim with a statement that we were prepared to evacuate the whole of India by the spring 1948.

*The general feeling of the Cabinet was that withdrawal from India need not appear to be forced upon us by our weakness nor to be the first step in the dissolution of the Empire. On the contrary this action **must** be shown to be the logical conclusion, which we welcomed, of a policy followed by successive Governments for many years.”*

The Cabinet discussion therefore forced a reconsideration of the proposed announcement. By 4th January 1947, the recast statement had been sent for the consideration of the Cabinet by the Prime Minister. The substance remained unaltered but the form underwent a change. It was made out that as if due to efforts of the successive British Governments, that the British were to leave India not later than middle of 1948.

The possibilities of phased withdrawal from the Southern provinces, independence for Indian states of Hyderabad and Mysore were hidden behind the meaningless platitudes.

The focus had now changed to making Virtue out of a Necessity. This was the last British game in India – played all too successfully; one must sadly admit.

The recast statement was considered in the Cabinet on 8th January 1947 and approved. However, the Prime Minister suggested that the actual issue of the statement be deferred for the time being as there remained some possibilities of the Congress-League reconciliation. By now, it was becoming more and more clear that an unbridgeable gulf existed between the soldier Viceroy and the political establishment in London. The question was fundamentally one of approach.

The *stupid* soldier did not understand the value of keeping up appearances. He did not think in terms of trying to make Virtue out of Necessity. The *idiot* just kept on thinking about the risks involved in maintaining Form over Substance. It was time to bring him home.

The expected reconciliation between the Congress and the League failed to take off. By 13th February 1947, the Cabinet authorised the Prime Minister to issue the statement in respect of the cut off date for British withdrawal from India. At the insistence of Lord Mountbatten, the new Viceroy of India, the last date for British presence in India was fixed at June 1948 instead of Middle of 1948.

Wavell angered by his summery dismissal attempted to play spoil sport and bombarded London with telegrams to postpone the announcement, in complete reversal of his earlier stand.

The Cabinet had no choice but to convene a meeting, which took place on 18th February 1947 to consider the new stand of the dismissed Viceroy. It decided to stick to its guns and leave it to the genius of their new wonder boy, Lord Mountbatten to get them off the Indian mess.

Permit me, dear readers to use a simile that may sound offensive but is being used merely because it is so apt. India in late 1946, early 1947, had become a used condom with no more utility to offer. It had to be discarded. Unfortunately, it had become stuck and therefore endangered a very delicate part of the British anatomy. *Foolish* Wavell had proposed a castration. No wonder, he got the boot. What was needed was a skillful surgeon, who would set the British free from what had become a very painful union. Who could do this better than Louis and Edwina Mountbatten, who by their own admission, had spent a life time jumping in and out of other people's beds. What became of India was of no consequence for what is the fate of a discarded used condom if not the garbage dump.

Mountbatten assumed the office of the Viceroy and the Governor-General on 24th March 1947. Just before the assumption of office by Mountbatten, an interesting discussion took place in the Cabinet on 6th March on the issue of the Sterling Balances. It discussed points that were likely to be raised in the House of Commons that day on resumption of the debate on India.

“The Chancellor of Exchequer said that it was possible that Mr. Churchill might refer to the question of India's sterling balances. If so, he would argue that a substantial part of **this debt** should be wiped out in consideration of our defense of India during the War.”

This is one of the very few places that the British records accept that Sterling Balances represented the fact that British were indebted to India.

This is not all. Note the views expressed by the Chancellor, for it clearly shows the unanimity in the British establishment on the pressing British need to whittle down this debt as much as possible:

“Though Mr. Churchill might put this claim in an extreme form, it was important that nothing should be said by the Government spokesman which would prevent the Government from using this argument in the forthcoming negotiations with the Indian Ministers about these sterling balances.”

Contrast this care taken by the British to safeguard their vital financial interests, to the resounding silence that the Indian politicians, whether Jinnah or Nehru, maintained on the issue – as if it was there was something vulgar about asking the British to promptly repay the debt they owed to us. Reams and reams of papers are filled with the torturous, acrimonious debate on one seat here or there in the cabinet for the League or the Congress but nary a word about the Sterling Balances, India's loan to the British.

Sterling Balances was just one of the issues. The obscene idea of compensating the ICS for not being able to help the British loot India was not given up either. On 13th April 1947, the Prime Minister himself – no less, took up the issue. The last time this issue was discussed, the readers would recall, in November 1946 when the Cabinet had accepted the Secretary of State's proposals. As per these proposals, both the British and the Indian officers were to be compensated equally. The Finance Ministry in Interim Government, headed by the League Member, Liaquat Ali Khan, had strongly protested against this. It had spiritedly told the British, that while it had no objection to the HMG compensating the European officers from *their monies*, it saw no reason for Indian officers to get compensation even from the British Government to serve under an Indian Government. A view point that was accepted by the British Establishment save for the Secretary of State who kept on insisting that no distinction could be made between the European and the Indian officers as a matter of principle. He was told in the Cabinet meeting of the 14th April that *'apart from the merits, there were strong arguments of expediency on the side of accepting the views of the Government of India.'*

Only on one issue the Cabinet saw no reason to accept the views of the Indian Government. This was in respect of who was going to foot the bill for this compensation.

“The Chancellor of Exchequer stressed the fact that acceptance of the scheme....did not necessarily imply that the cost of the proposed compensation would be borne by His Majesty's Government: the source from which the money was to be found still remained a matter for negotiations with the Government of India.”

Let us get back to the story of the glamorous playboy, Mountbatten, the new Indian Viceroy. He had arrived in India with certain instructions. These were, as the Prime Minister was to later record in his memo on the Indian Policy to the Cabinet on 22nd May 1947;

“To do his utmost to secure the general acceptance of the Cabinet Mission’s Plan. If this proved impossible he was to report by the 1st October on the steps which he considered should be taken for handing over of power in June 1948.”

If these were his instructions, to report back by 1st October on the feasibility of the acceptance of the Cabinet Mission plan, how come India was partitioned in a great hurry by 15th August – a good two and a half months before the period given for securing the acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan expired. The reasoning given by Attlee in his note of the 22nd May was as under:

“Since his arrival in India Lord Mountbatten has had a prolonged series of conversations with the leaders of Congress and of the Muslim League and has also conferred with the representatives of the Sikhs. His conversation has convinced him that there is no prospect of acceptance of the Cabinet Mission’s plan or of a Union of India on any other basis. He is also convinced that a very early announcement of His Majesty’s Government’s intentions as to the manner in which power will be transferred in 1948 is essential if widespread and uncontrollable communal disturbances, especially in the North-West Frontier Province and the Punjab, are to be avoided. The India and Burma Committee are fully satisfied that this diagnosis is correct and that a further initiative on our part is essential.”

A Playboy arrives in India in March. His significant contribution to the Indian cause included blowing up the shrine built in memory of the INA martyrs in Singapore after it was recaptured by the British. Within two months, he comes to the conclusion that the Unity of India is impossible. He proposes to announce *the manner in which power will be transferred in 1948 to avoid widespread and uncontrollable communal disturbances, especially in the North-West Frontier Province and the Punjab*. The India and Burma Committee sagely nods head in agreement. Prime Minister calls for *further initiative* on part of the British. What do these wise men do?

We all know the answer. Announce not the manner in which the power was to be transferred in 1948 but proceed to chop the country in two within next three months. Widespread slaughter on a truly horrifying scale is what results. Were these men plain stupid or so evil that they decided to teach the Indians, who were demanding Independence, a truly horrible lesson and, therefore, did this plainly insane thing deliberately. It would be so nice, if we had only the British to blame but the reality is far different, far more painful.

Let me make a confession. I had always been ambivalent towards Mahatma Gandhi. My emotions about him kept on undergoing change all the time. When at a young age of sixteen, I read the then still banned arguments of Nathuram Godse, his self confessed assassin, I became very angry. Later on, when I read the miracle that he brought about in Calcutta, after partition, I became deeply impressed. Even in my writing so far, the readers would notice this ambivalence. Some times I call him Mahatma, sometimes Gandhiji, sometimes plain Mr. Gandhi. It is not accidental. The prefix varies with my assessment of his actions during the period under question. Least, the readers have forgotten, I have confessed to a deep abiding respect for his actions in this period, my amazement at his growing morale stature even as his political relevance diminished.

However, as far as Nehru is concerned, till very recently, my feelings have bordered on hero-worshipping. The man who built educational institutes all over the country, in one of which I have studied. The man who spread the scientific temper in a superstition rid country. Handsome hero, riding the white horse attempting to take the country forward at a pace few could keep up with. So much so that I have visited Teen Murti Bhavan at Delhi, where he once stayed at least three times in reverence during my college days. Nothing had prepared me for the dark side of Nehru that came to light in the research that I had embarked upon.

The irrelevant Mahatma was being a maverick once again in April 1947. He has been reviled, condemned and finally even murdered for the sin of not preventing the partition of the country. The Hindu mind set is forever looking for either an Avatar or a Scapegoat to slaughter without taking into account a simple fact. Even a Mahatma is only human. He can do only so much. There was not much that even Jesus could do once his own disciples betrayed him, except walk in dignity

to be nailed on the Cross. The Mahatma's fate was no different. Tired and sick of the hate and enmity that seemed to fill the environment with its poison, the Mahatma sought a way out. His typically ingenious solution for the communal tangle was simple. He pleaded with Mountbatten - Make Jinnah, the Prime Minister, Let him choose his own Cabinet. This was the solution to avoid partition, which he knew would lead to a national disaster.

The Congress was aghast. There was no reason to be. Jinnah was one of the senior most leaders of the country. In age and experience and practical wisdom, he soared far above the Congress nominee – Nehru. In a country, where a heavy premium is even today placed on age, it was below dignity for Jinnah to work under Nehru. On the other hand, there should have been no problem for a far younger Nehru to work under an elder Jinnah. Jinnah was incorruptible and a doughty fighter for a cause that he held dear to his heart. The cause of the Indian nation was something very dear to him. His demand for Pakistan stemmed from the despair at the Congress underhand tactics. If only somehow, the desire to live together could be rekindled in his heart, he could be the man to lead the country out of communal morasses. True, he had made a bad judgement in the case of Direct Action but then so had the Mahatma himself in supporting the dubious cause of Khilafat. One mistake in a long illustrious career spanning over four decades could not be used to condemn a man and paint him as a villain.

Once before, such a suggestion had been made but the author was a political light weight – Rajagopalacharya. This time it was far more serious. The Congress could afford to take liberties with the Mahatma up to a point. But it well knew, if the matters came to a head, the old bones packed enough power to blow them all away. The people were with the Mahatma, even as the state power had been captured by the Congress.

Nehru appears to have lost his mind by the prospect of losing power. He fought the Mahatma's proposals tooth and nail. This much is known. He did something far more sinister, that remains unknown and comes as a severe blow. Let us go straight to the minutes of the Cabinet Meeting that took place on the 23rd May 1947. It is in this meeting that decisions which have locked India and Pakistan in a cycle of never ending mutual hate, were taken.

“During the last fortnight, however there had been a further development of major importance which put the whole matter in a different light. While Jinnah had always claimed that Pakistan would wish to remain within the British Commonwealth, it had been the policy of the Congress Party that India should be a sovereign independent republic and they had secured a resolution to that effect in the Constituent Assembly....It now appeared that some of the Congress leaders had become increasingly apprehensive about the grant of immediate independence would involve, and a most significant approach had been made by Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel, who had suggested that in the event of partition Hindu India should be granted Dominion status, at any rate as a temporary measure. They had explained that they would hope to secure the agreement of their supporters to this course by arguing that acceptance of Dominion status would enable power to be transferred to Indian hands at a date substantially earlier than June 1948, and that once she had attained Dominion status Hindu India would be free to secede at any time from the Commonwealth.”

This self-serving argument of Nehru and Patel was so much hogwash. Who else but Nehru, the man who had stood up to his own father in 1929 for the cause of Independence against that of the Dominion Status; knew this better. In December 1946, Nehru had been the author of the resolution in the Constituent Assembly setting Absolute Political Independence as the goal. This was the very man making such a puerile argument in favour of Dominion Status, that they do not need comment. Suffice it to say the entire history of the Congress since 1930 was being turned on its head by these two Congress stalwarts.

Dominion Status, instead of Independence. A partition of the country against the ideal of a United country. By making such proposals, which went against the official party line, it is not an exaggeration to say that both Nehru and Patel were committing what amounted to Treason. For what cause were such far reaching compromises being sought to be made. So that power could be transferred to Indian (read Nehru and Patel) hands.

The Quid pro being sought by the Congress leaders was, as the Minutes tell us, that:

“It must be remembered that the proposals made by the Congress leaders was that Dominion status should be granted and power transferred as early as possible in 1947.”

Give us what we want i.e. Power and we will give you what you want i.e. continued association of the British Crown with India. What was the reason behind this all mighty hurry? It is not far to seek. To deny Jinnah the opportunity of becoming the Prime Minister of a United India, for unlike Rajagopalacharya, the Mahatma was well in a position to force his solution on the unwilling throat of the Congress. He had to be denied the opportunity to do so and hence these secret sinful treasonous deals were being stuck behind the back of an unsuspecting nation.

For the proverbial coin of silver, Nehru and Patel had no hesitation in betraying their mentor. If Christ was betrayed by Judas, the Mahatma was done in by the two of his most faithful followers – Nehru and Patel. What was in it for the British? The reasons were fairly straightforward:

“This was a most important development and the India and Burma Committee had felt that full advantage should be taken of it. If Dominion status was conferred on the two successor States as part of the plan for the transfer of power, this would greatly ease the difficulties inherent in partition.....More important, it was reasonable to suppose that the Indian political Parties, in the light of practical experience of the advantages of Dominion status would be slow to exercise their right to secede at a later stage. India’s decision would also, no doubt, be closely watched by Burma, who would shortly have to choose between Independence and Dominion status; and Ceylon would also be greatly influenced by the line taken by India on this question.”

This was not all. We shall see later, an India that accepted Dominion status conferred several economic benefits to the British without getting anything in the return. An India that accepted Dominion status enabled the British to pretend that their withdrawal from India had not been forced nor was it a sign of their weakness or to be the first step in the dissolution of the Empire. On the contrary, this action could be shown to be the logical conclusion, which they welcomed, of a policy followed by successive Governments for many years.

What more could they ask for?The Nehru-Patel got what they wanted. So did the British. So it was a Win-Win situation for all except the Insane Mahatma. Is it not? Yes! Except for a small detail. The terrible fate that awaited millions who were going to be the victim of this terrible haste. Their fate was well known in advance.

“The Prime Minister said that communal feeling in India was now intense and it was possible that serious disorder might break out in the Punjab and certain other Provinces at any time after the announcement of the plan for partitioning India. It was the Viceroy’s considered view that the only hope of checking widespread communal warfare was to suppress the first sign of it promptly and ruthlessly, using for this purpose all the force required, including tanks and aircraft, and giving full publicity throughout India to the action taken and the reasons for it. In this the Viceroy had the unanimous support of his Interim Government. It was important that he should also be assured that this policy had the support of His Majesty’s Government.

The Cabinet agreed that the policy which the Viceroy proposed to follow in this matter should have their full support.”

With this decision, the country was sent hurtling down to partition and transfer of power, three months later on that fateful day – 15th August 1947. I need not bother the readers with details that are best available elsewhere. Let us only consider some facts that have remained so far hidden from the public gaze.

Communal rioting that would need use of **tanks and aircrafts** to suppress them, were known to be result from the unnatural hurry that was now being demanded by the Nehru and Patel, blinded by the lust for power. A fact that all the participants, the Congress, the League and the British, of this decision knew. The ruthless suppression that was deemed essential was nowhere to be seen. Forget Tanks and Aircrafts, even the ground troops were not in place. In Punjab, a force of 50,000d troops had been deemed necessary. By the time rioting started, not even 10,000 were in place.

In Bengal, the government had no troops worth the name.

The day was saved by the Mahatma in Bengal. The Man who was betrayed by his own was the man, who staked his life to knock some sense in the heads of those driven mad by communal fury. In an amazing outcome, he actually succeeded in doing so. What can anyone call such a man if not a Mahatma? How one wishes that he had stayed away from the realm of power politics and instead concentrated on social reforms.

In view of the sordid story that has unfolded, permit me dear readers to say that there is nothing to celebrate as far as 15th August is concerned. *It is merely the day when the Nehruvian grab for power succeeded by the Mother of all Betrayals.* Even if we ignore these emotional value judgements, how far is it true that 15th August can be celebrated as the Independence Day ?

Before, we take up this issue, just one more thing. How come Mountbatten remained on as the Governor-General of India, while Jinnah denied him the honour? Somehow, Indians see this as Nehru's greatness and the final proof that Jinnah was the power hungry monster.

First the facts. It is only after Jinnah saw the Congress give up its claim for Independence and collaborate with the British; that he decided to assume the position. He is reported to have said that in Pakistan, it was the Governor-General who held the key to power. This was not the vain boast of an aging old man but the legally correct statement of a shrewd lawyer. The so-called Independence of India Act 1947 does not so much as mention the position of the Prime Minister. Wide-ranging powers were available to the Governor-General, even after the Government of India Act 1935 was amended by the Independence of India Act 1947. It was plainly foolish, at the very least to trust any foreigner, particularly someone like Mountbatten, who commanded a large body of British troops still stationed in the Indian subcontinent with such an exalted position as the Head of State.

Either Jinnah was shrewd to deny and Nehru foolish to offer Mountbatten the honour. Or Jinnah was not as indebted to the British as Nehru was. Which of the two is true is best left for the readers to decide.

Chapter XII

15th August – The Independence Day What Independence

The ordinary Bharatiya citizen will be shocked to realise that 15th August, which is celebrated with considerable enthusiasm as the Independence Day, morally, politically and legally; can not be celebrated as such. The fact is India did not attain Independence on 15th August; it merely became a self-governing colony of the British crown. The British monarch, who till then had the title of **King-Emperor** of India, now became merely the **King** of India. What happened on this day was merely Transfer of Power from the His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom answerable to the Parliament in London to what amounted to His Majesty's Government in India answerable to the Constituent Body in Delhi for most but not all matters. For the King as the national sovereign retained his Preogative Powers which included the power to issue Instruments of Instructions to the Governor General. In the case of conflict between the advice by his Ministers and the Instruments of Instructions, the Governor General was bound to follow the Instruments of Instructions. Thus, the connection to the British Crown was not a mere wrangle about the semantics but had considerable financial implications.

When the dust of celebrations settled down in 1947, the problem of continued association with the British crown began to trouble the national opinion. The dispute between Dominion status and Independence had been settled in the Lahore Congress of 1929. The national verdict had been resoundingly in favour of Absolute Political Independence. The matters had been put beyond any debate by the unanimous passsge of the Objectives Resolution by the Constituent Assembly on January 22, 1947, a resolution moved by none other than Nehru himself. Fact that Nehru and Patel had brazenly turned the clock by over two decades was something that could no longer be hidden. Burma had been least impressed with the Indian example of accepting Dominion status and had univocally declared Independence. Ireland was on the verge of doing so. It was becoming more and more embarrassing to find India still holding on to the British coat tails. Something had to be done. Nehru and his British patrons went to work.

On 28th October 1948, the developments in Ireland and India were the subject of discussions in the British Cabinet – agenda point number 3. What is intriguing is the fact that while the discussions on Ireland were recorded in the Minutes; those on India were not. They can only be found in the Secretary's Standard File of Cabinet Conclusions. What could be the reason for this secrecy in respect of the Indian discussions. First let us see the Irish developments.

The British Government had made all possible efforts to persuade the Irish people to abandon their demand of Independence, holding out the possibility of several practical disadvantages that could result from their decision to declare Ireland as an Independent and therefore a country Foreign to the United Kingdom. Irish people refused to be swayed by British persuasion. The memories of the Potato Famine were far too painful for them to forget, even after the lapse of a century.

“The Eire Government were determined that that Eire should cease to be a member of the Commonwealth and no constitutional status which involved continued membership of the Commonwealth would be acceptable to them.”

Why were the Irish so unyielding, after all the membership of a club is not something that necessarily involves an issue of national prestige. Were they just being too fussy? Well! For those who would like to believe that membership of the Commonwealth was not something to lose sleep over, reminding of some historical facts would be in order. Let us look at what the membership in Commonwealth involved. We have it from the pen of the British Prime Minister himself. In a memo dated 26th October 1947 on Commonwealth Relationship addressed to his colleagues in the Cabinet. He had pointed out that as per the preamble to the Statute of Westminster, members of the Commonwealth *were United by a common allegiance to the Crown*. In other words, a nation could remain a member of the Commonwealth only so long as it recognised the Sovereignty of the British Monarch over its people. This certainly was no small matter. No wonder, the Irish were being so adamant. How could they be expected to forget that the same British Monarch, who they were being asked to continue to regard as their Sovereign, had stood by silently watching millions of Irish people die of hunger.

Our Indian Leaders had no such qualms. For them, the millions who had died of hunger merely a five years before, were of no consequence. If the British Monarch had shown no particular concern for these unfortunate souls, it was no different from their own actions. A perusal of the Minutes is illuminating.

“The Cabinet were informed that the Prime Minister of India had made it clear, during recent discussions in London, that he was anxious to keep India within the Commonwealth, if a constitutional basis could be found which would be acceptable to the Constituent Assembly; and as was shown by a report from India published in the “Times” that morning, public opinion in India on this issue had radically changed in the recent months. During discussions which Ministers had with Pandit Nehru, various suggestions had been made which, taken together, might constitute an adequate basis for India’s continued membership of the Commonwealth in a form acceptable to Indian opinion generally. The precise form of these suggestions was now being further studied by Pandit Nehru but their general effect was as follows.

The King’s sovereignty in India should be regarded as dormant, but not extinguished; no United Kingdom legislation should be enacted to terminate the King’s sovereignty over India and this could therefore be revived by a unilateral act on the part of India at any time. In statements to the Parliaments of the United Kingdom and India, an identical formula would be used to the effect that under the new Indian Constitution, His Majesty would not exercise any of the functions of sovereignty. An historical link with the Crown would be preserved by the enactment, as Indian law, of sections 1,2 and 7 of the United Kingdom Indian Independence Act, 1947. India would adopt the provisions of the British Nationality Act, 1948, in so far as they related to India. The King would conclude with the new President of India an agreement by which he would act as the President’s representative for the protection of Indian citizens in the United Kingdom, and the President would act as The King’s representative for the protection in India of Commonwealth citizens other than citizens of India. In countries where India maintained no separate diplomatic representation, the diplomatic protection of Indian citizens would be undertaken by the diplomatic representatives of other Commonwealth countries.

The King would be regarded as the fountain of Honour for the Commonwealth, and a new Commonwealth Order might be instituted, for which citizens of all Commonwealth countries, including India, would be eligible. **In all future legislation in India, care would be taken to treat Commonwealth countries as a class apart from all foreign countries.”** A promise made good by the Indians by Order under Article 367 (3) by which UK as also no other country is foreign to India for the purpose of Constitution even in 2015, as we shall later see.

Let us not imagine that these proposals were being made by a humble British Government to an all powerful Prime Minister of India, who was going to decide whether or not these stupid proposals merited any consideration. The reality was the other way around. It was Nehru, who made these proposals for the consideration of the British Cabinet. This once doughty fighter for the cause of Independence had so much compromised his own ideological beliefs that he was now making an ass of himself by proposing that the King will be the First citizen of India. For the record the absolutely disgusting suggestion that the King's sovereignty will not be extinguished and lie dormant in India, made by Mr. Krishna Menon and Mr. B.N.Rau, did not form a part of the official note submitted by Nehru to the British Cabinet.

We, thus, had the shameful sight of our own Indian leaders making cringing submissions to the British to keep India within the British fold, knowing fully well that the national opinion was firmly against any such step and refusing to take cognizance of Ireland which rejected any connection with the British Crown. The difference between the attitudes of the leaders of the two countries is vividly brought out in Minutes of one of the British Cabinet Meetings. It said:

“In discussion emphasis was laid on the fundamental difference between the attitude of India and Eire respectively between the attitude of India with the Commonwealth. Eire Ministers were determined to put Eire's secession from the Commonwealth beyond question; the Government of India, on the other hand, were anxious to devise means, compatible with the form of her constitution, by which India could continue to be a member of the Commonwealth, and paragraph 10 of Annex A of C.P. (48) 254 gave hope that in time a closer association could be achieved.”

What is this paragraph 10 of Annex A of C.P. (48) 254 , that gave hopes to the British. This was a part of the Nehru memo to the British Cabinet that said: “These proposals represent a sincere desire to continue the Commonwealth association and what is practical and adequate at present. No doubt as the relationship is not a static arrangement, further development by way of association may take place.”

Despite these sincere Indian attempts to continue to be British slaves, there was a problem. The problem being: “The problem was how to secure the recognition, under international law, of a Commonwealth group which might include States no longer subject to the King’s sovereignty. The difficulty arose from the fact that, at present, international law recognised only ‘His Majesty’s Dominions’ or ‘Foreign countries.’

Notwithstanding the fact that the Irish wanted to kick out the British and the Indians were desperate to keep them or that India had helped the British in their hour of defeat during the War, while the Irish people had kept away; the British were far more fond of the Irish than the Indians. The British Ministers had argued that even if Eire were to extinguish the King’s sovereignty, it could not be treated as a Foreign country for there were ‘many ties of blood, history and intermingling of peoples which bound Eire to the older (read – White) countries of the Commonwealth.’ Where as the case of India was different for ‘these later arguments could not be used in support of a claim that an Asiatic country could still be regarded as not being “foreign” to Commonwealth after it ceased to be a member of the Commonwealth.’

What followed was even more interesting. The cringing appeals from the Indians must have no doubt enormously satisfied the British egos. However, as we have seen so often in the past, the British were far too professional to let their egos and emotions come in the way of their rational decision making process. It was nice to have this appeal from India to maintain the connection but was it in the interest of the British nation. The cabinet therefore invited the Lord Chancellor, in consultation with the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General to consider:

- (a) whether the Nehru proposals would constitute an adequate basis for India's continued membership of the Commonwealth.
- (b) Provide an adequate basis for resisting claims by foreign countries under the most-favoured-nation provisions of existing treaties.

The opinion of the Lord Chancellor and the Law Officers deserves serious study. For, it blows to bits the myth that 15th August 1947 is the Independence Day of India that is Bharat. The suggestion that the King's sovereignty lie dormant and not be extinguished in India may not have been formally made in the Nehru memo but it was certainly something being seriously discussed. This most disgusting proposal essentially meant that the Sovereignty of the King would be revived once the Indian people had cooled down. A show of rebutting the British would be made and soon life would be back to normal. A worst thing than this is difficult to imagine. Fortunately, the Law Officers had the following comments to offer:

“It was suggested to us in the course of some most useful discussions which we had with Mr. Krishna Menon and Sir B.N.Rau that the sovereignty of His Majesty would not be absolutely extinguished but would only be dormant or suspended and might be revived by an appropriate amendment of the Indian Constitution. We have considered this suggestion, which is as **subtle as it is novel**, with greatest care, **but in the end find ourselves with regret quite unable to agree with it.**”

It was the Indians who made this suggestion and the British who turned it down. This is the shocking reality that one has to digest.

The Law Officers opined that once Indian Constituent Assembly passed the Constitution as it had been drafted, His Majesty's sovereignty over India would be fully extinguished in legal terms. India would no longer be a part of His Majesty's dominion and therefore be a Foreign country. Well even in 2015 India does not regard United Kingdom as a Foreign country by virtue of order under Section 367 (3) that Supreme Court of India has refused to strike down telling me “only you seem to have a problem with this – no one else”.

The novel concept of treating His Majesty's sovereignty as dormant would be of no use whatsoever to retain the British connection. The Law Officers emphasized the fact that as the things stood on that date i.e. 28th October 1947, long past the so called Independence Day of 15th August 1947; India was not a country foreign to the United Kingdom in other words - it was not an Independent country. The consequences of this were many.

For example, so long as India continued to be a part of His Majesty's dominion, the Indian citizens entering United Kingdom had several rights and obligations not applicable to a citizen of an Independent country. Right being in respect of eligibility to contest elections, hold office, own British ships and aircrafts and other such things. The obligation being to be called to serve in the British armed forces after two years of residence in the United Kingdom.

The most important consideration for the British of an Independent India was the impact such an event were to have on the system of Imperial Preferences that they had instituted. The Commonwealth countries, being united by common allegiance to the British Crown, were not foreign to each other. They could have preferential trade and tariff arrangements between themselves. To look fair such arrangements on the face of it were mutual. But it was no secret that in case of such arrangements between an industrialized nation like the United Kingdom and an agrarian society like India; could only work to the advantage of the United Kingdom. More importantly, the hypothetical benefit extended by the British to sister dominion nation like India, could not be used as a basis for claiming similar benefit by any other foreign nation.

For instance, let us take the example of Steel. Let us say that India and the United Kingdom had agreed that Steel import into their country from the other would attract a 10% duty. So the British Steel carrying a 10% duty became more competitive than say 20% duty levied by India on imports from all foreign nations. On the other hand, as India had no Steel to export, the possibility of Indian Steel producers threatening the British domestic producers did not arise. Moreover, since this benefit had not been extended by the British to a foreign nation, a steel producer in North America, for instance could claim the right of exporting steel to United Kingdom at the lower

tariff applicable to an Indian producer. Thus, it was a Win-Win situation for the British all the way.

According to the British Law Officers, in case such arrangements continued even after the Indian Parliament extinguished the sovereignty of the British Crown, it would be a most unsatisfactory arrangement. Their opinion ran as under:

“Assuming decision were taken to continue to treat India...as not a foreign country...if preferential treatment were continued to India after the passing of her now constitution, more or less plausible arguments could be put forward in opposition to a claim by some foreign country that that foreign country was entitled to the same treatment under the most-favoured-nation clause. We cannot say that these arguments either could or ought to succeed; indeed we are inclined to take the view that they should not succeed, they would not succeed.”

The Law Officers were thus very clear that once India became a foreign nation, the system of imperial preferences had to end, otherwise, there was a very real danger of other countries asking for and getting similar benefits extended to them. Some of whom could take real advantage of what were only theoretical advantages as far as India was concerned. This was not all. In case, the British succeeded in denying such advantages to other nation, the situation was no better. Other nations could then use the same arguments as used by the United Kingdom to form similar trading blocks and keep the British producers out of their markets. As they said:

“We think it right to add that if they did succeed, they would or might open the way to a claim by e.g. a South American or Arab country that notwithstanding our most-favoured-nation rights under a treaty with that country, that country was entitled to extend preferential treatment to other South American or Arab Countries. We are told that this is a position which South American countries have in the past tried to secure. To support it they would be able to point to a common history-interrupted it is true – of domination by a common sovereign, whether King of Spain or the King of Portugal. They would be able to point to a much greater degree of cultural, linguistic and religious unity than is the case with the Commonwealth, at any rate so long as the eastern dominions form part of it.

They would be able to point to an international organisation in some respects more closely integrated than there is between the members of the British Commonwealth.

And they might be easily able to arrange a common citizenship with at least as much substance behind it as the Commonwealth citizenship will probably have in the Commonwealth if the Commonwealth persists with the new eastern dominions in it. **Up to now we have met this claim by pointing out to the thing they have not got viz. a common allegiance to the same Crown. This we would no longer be able to do.”**

It is on account of these commercial considerations that the British had been so anxious to avoid the possibility of India emerging as an Independent nation, one which did not recognize the all important sovereignty of the Crown. One can understand the British anxiety in persuading India to forgo the option of extinguishing the sovereignty of their King. It is impossible to understand the rationale for Nehru's anxiety to retain this chain of slavery. The Nehru memo had contended that the King of England had waived his right of appointment etc. and generally speaking all the functions of sovereignty in favour of the Indian people in virtue of the Independence of India Act 1947. It is on this contention rests the myth of 15th August 1947 as the Day of Indian Independence. The reason, why we had witnessed such a pomp and show on 15th August 1997; which was celebrated as the Golden Jubilee of Independence.

What do the people, who themselves drafted the Act have to say on this contention. The truth is highly unpalatable but nevertheless needs to be known. The Law officers reply to this contention of Nehru is clear and unambiguous:

“It is not in our view the case that the King waived his functions of sovereignty by the Act of 1947. That Act, it is true, discharged *His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom* from their responsibilities and rights in India on his behalf; but it made clear that there was to be a Governor-General appointed by him and representing him, with the function of assenting ‘in his Majesty's name’ to the laws of the legislature of the Dominion.

Moreover His Majesty has in fact been accrediting the Indian Ambassadors to foreign powers.

If, however, what is meant by the paragraph is that The King, by assenting through his Governor-General, under Section 63 of the Indian Independence Act, 1947, to the new constitution of India, will in doing so waive all functions of sovereignty is indistinguishable from a waiver of sovereignty itself.”

There is no need to take the opinion of the British Law Officers at face value. At the start of the book itself we have seen from the records available in the National Archives of India at New Delhi that everything that the British Law Officers said was factually correct.

It is thus not till the time that the Sovereignty of the British King was extinguished and that of the People of Bharat was proclaimed on 26th January 1950; that India can be truly said to have become Independent.

Even more unfortunately on account of an Executive Order passed under Article 367 (3) of the Constitution of India, it appears that even the contention that the Sovereignty of the British King was extinguished on January 26, 1950 may not be entirely accurate. We shall examine this further.

In the meanwhile, we can celebrate 15th August as the Day of Transfer of Power from the White to the Brown Day or as the Day when Nehru’s ambition was fulfilled or for any other reason.

To celebrate 15th August as the Day of Independence is a historically and legally false proposition.

I say this in this book.

I have said this on oath in WP (lodg) 2004 and WP 682 of 2005

Abhinav Bharat has said this in the representation dated January 4, 2005 made to the Union of India. Despite being obliged by an Order of Court, the Union of India has refrained from disposing off this representation by a reasoned order

I have said this in the Supreme Court of India before a three Judge Division Bench of the Supreme Court of India headed by the Chief Justice of India on January 2, 2006 in the open court, without being contradicted.

No one - Not the Union of India – Not the Supreme Court of India has had the courage to refute this assertion.

How can they?

Ours is the land of **Satya Meva Jayate**.

Indeed, in response to our application under Right to Information Act 2005, the Central Public Information Officer of the Supreme Court of India vide his letter number Dy. No. 252/RTI/2007 dated June 28, 2007 has confirmed **that no official function to mark the Independence Day has been ever held by the Supreme Court of India and that no information is available for the reasons leading to this!!!**

Finally, a Right to Information application revealed the following file noting generated in response to the petition of Abhinav Bharat , WP 682 of 2005 – Para 6 of Note No 12014/4/2005-SR Ministry of Home Affairs (SR Desk) File No 23/5/2005 – Judl & PP (POI III), Ministry of Home Affairs,

“It appears that although Dominion of India came into being on August 15, 1947 as provided in the Indian Independence Act 1947, the King of England continued to be the sovereign power over India until India became a Republic on 26.01.1950”

Need one say more??

Chapter XII

Transfer of Power on August 15, 1947 The Economic Realities

A little known event – the signing of an Agreement took place on 14th August 1947, hours before the Power was transferred from His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to His Majesty's Government in India – Dominion India. A more shocking and startling betrayal of the Nation could not have been envisaged. I am referring to the Financial Agreement between United Kingdom and India. This was the Agreement that led to a criminal squandering of the Sterling Credit that had accrued to India during the Second World War. Let us go clause by clause of this infamous agreement to understand the devilish nature of this final betrayal.

Article I

For the purpose of this Agreement the sterling assets of the Reserve Bank of India shall be taken at the figure of £1,160 million

The bland language of the Article cloaks a financial disaster of the worst kind for India and an unwarranted bonanza to the British. Let us try and understand this sordid story.

First of all, these forced loans that were being extended to the British for the purpose of fighting the War should have ended in August 1945 with the cessation of hostilities in the manner that the American Lend Lease had stopped. We all know this did not happen causing great deal of misery to the suffering people of Bharat.

The Sterling Loans that stood at £ 1,130 million at the end of August 1945 actually increased to £ 1,293 million by the end of March 1946. A further sum of so called Recoverable War Expenses amounting to £ 387 million were shown in India's account from April 1946 to March 1947. There is no record of any British repayments of this debt. Thus, in August 1947, the Sterling Loans of India to the British should have been:

- As on 31st March 1946 £ 1,293 million
- Additions in 1946/47 £ 387 million

Thus the total figure in the Agreement should have £1,293 million + £ 387 million or £ 1,680 million as against £1,160 million. **Where did the missing £ 520 million go?** This was a huge sum of money representing almost 70% of the total money that was required to make India a self sufficient country in respect of Food. By another measure, this money was enough to provide free ration to all the Bharatiya people for Two and a Half years. We all know, none of this actually happened. So, where did the money go? The Reserve Bank History has no clear answer to give. It merely says, without any quantification that the decline in Sterling Balances was on account of:

“Heavy imports of food grains, consumer goods and equipment. There was also some private capital repatriation, largely British.”

Let us take each of the three reasons heavy import of food grains, consumer goods and equipment and ‘some’ private capital repatriation, largely British to understand the reasons in the decline of the Sterling Balances.

- Heavy Import of Food Grains

The story of the decline being largely on account of heavy food grain imports can be safely dismissed after studying the ghastly manner in which the Indian interests were ignored in the whole of 1946; something we will do shortly, in great detail.

- Import of Consumer Goods and Capital Equipment

The Finance Member had stated in his Budget speech in February 1946 that some 150 control measures had been withdrawn. The Hoarding and Profiteering (Prevention) Order of 1943 and the Consumer Goods (Control of Distribution) Order of 1944 lapsed on September 30, 1946. *In a country, where millions were barely able to keep their body and soul together, a laissez faire regime prevailed.* Once again the History of the Reserve Bank is quite useful.

“However, much to his chagrin, the Governor found very soon that his representations to Government in April 1946 had resulted in a more or less complete abandonment of all controls over the import of consumer goods.

The full effects of this relaxation began to be felt in the last quarter of 1946 when imports began to arrive in large quantities. The value of licenses issued during the quarter October to December 1946 for imports from U.S.A. was well over \$ 500 million. Alarmed at the huge orders already placed for such articles as fountain pens, pencils, parachutes, combs, mirrors, imitation jewellery and toilet requisites, the leading Banks themselves, the Governor, found were tightening up their policy.....What was even more disconcerting was that control was still exercised over essential goods such as machinery, tools and agricultural implements for which licenses were only issued on a quota basis to established importers...even these being subject to inordinate delay.”

No wonder, then these imports did the Economy no good. The Governor admitted as much in August 1948. He said:

“From the meager data that is available it would appear that ...improvement in production....is far below expectations, the present output being far short of even the existing productive capacity in the major industries....prevailing shortages of capital equipment....The gap between supply and demand has therefore come to be covered predominantly by a rise in prices.”

- The British Repatriation of Capital

This had been actively aided by the Government policies. History of the Reserve Bank is rather helpful in this regard.

“The Budget for 1946/47 provided various tax reliefs including the abolition of Excess Profit Tax and introduced special initial depreciation allowances in respect of new buildings and plant and machinery for promoting investments....the Government also endeavored to bring about a further cheapening of money. It is hard to say whether this step was motivated only by the desire to fight the threatened slump. In any case, the boom in share and property values resulting from such a policy, reinforced by large tax reliefs was of help to the British investors to sell their holdings at good prices and transfer the proceeds to the U.K.”

We know all too clearly, how precariously the British rule in India was placed in 1946. It, therefore, made sense from the British point of view to give a chance to those who fought shy of taking a risk in an extremely uncertain situation, to take their money home at a handsome profit.

So this was the reality, the real face of India in 1946 even as Nehru and Jinnah fought out for the spoils of power. **Food grains were not available but Toilet paper was – in great abundance.** This is how the long suffering people of Bharat saw £ 520 million of their forced saving being used for the benefit of the British who wanted to take their money home and for the conspicuous consumption of the Indian elite. Their only reward was ever increasing prices of essential goods.

Disappearing millions was not the only issue in the Agreement. **Even the amount agreed upon £ 1,160 million itself was not final.** The Chancellor of Exchequer was quite candid on this issue in the British Cabinet Meeting of 7th August 1947. He had informed the Cabinet that all that had been agreed was that India would be repaid by the end of 1947 - a measly sum of £ 35 million out of a total of £ 1,160 million. Of this, the Indian Government had agreed only £ 15 million would be spent in hard currency i.e. US Dollars. The balance £ 20 million were to be spent in buying goods from the United Kingdom and Australia. He added:

“No commitment for further release after the end of 1947 had been or would be made in the present negotiations **nor were His Majesty’s Government committed to recognise the total of £ 1,160 million.**”

A good £ 520 million is used for fulfilling the commercial interests of the British and their patrons with the gains to the Bharatiya economy being zilch. Then repayment of a pittance from the balance amount of £ 1,160 is magnanimously agreed upon. No further repayment is even promised. Nor is the balance principle itself accepted. What kind of a Loan Negotiation was this?

Yet, this is a small part of the shameful story. The British wanted to make sure that the interest payable on this balance principle was nominal. So far, they had managed this by the legal fiction of the Issue and the Banking Department of the Reserve Bank.

The Sterling Securities kept in the Issue and Banking Department of the Reserve Bank could be treated differently. Those in the Banking Department were liquid and could be deployed to earn interest, while those in the Issue Department were considered frozen and earned no interest. Ever increasing demand of Rupee funds for the British War effort made the Reserve Bank print more and more currency notes for which it had to transfer the Sterling Securities it got from the Government of United Kingdom via the Government of India to the Issue Department. This was due to requirement of the British Statute then prevailing in India, which linked the Rupee to Sterling.

A stage came, when the Sterling Securities in the Issue Department far exceeded those in the Banking Department. With this the average yield on the total Sterling Balances dropped below one per cent and stood at a nominal rate of 0.8101%.

As the British rule in India neared its end, nationalist pressure for delinking the Rupee from Sterling mounted. Amongst other things, it would have meant that the legal fiction of the Issue and Banking Department would have ceased to operate and the entire sum of the Sterling Balances would have been liquid and enabling the Reserve Bank to earn at least the market rate of interest rather than the nominal 0.8101%.

More importantly, there was a pressure from the Americans to ensure that their exports to India did not suffer on account of the enforced linkage of the Rupee to Sterling. The British, therefore, decided to devise a method by which the interest rate payable by them on the Sterling Loans remained minimal. As such, they decided to replace the fictitious Issue and Banking Department difference by Accounts of Reserve Bank in the Bank of England that had the same characteristics. Let us take a look at the next Article

Article II

- (1) The Reserve Bank of India shall open with the Bank of England a new account (hereinafter referred to as the 'No 2 Account') to which the balance of the total assets referred to in Article I above remaining at the close of business on the date of the signature of this Agreement, shall be transferred....

This Account Number 2 effectively replaced the Issue Department. 95% of the Sterling Credits were to remain in this account, virtually frozen. For this account could be operated only for the following purposes:

- (a) Transfer of Ownership of military stores, equipment and fixed assets from the Government of United Kingdom to the Government of India on the 1st April 1947.

The amounts involved were substantial. The British claim was for about £ 375 million. The Indians believed that they got a good bargain, when they eventually settled the claim for £ 211 million. It did not cross the mind of the Nehru Government that since these assets were created in India by the British to fight a War that neither had the Indian consent nor was in its interests; the British should have been asked to carry them away at their own risk and cost. There was no need for the Indian Government to make any payments to the British.

- (b) Pensions paid outside India by or on behalf of Government of India.

At stake were the Pensions payable to the loyal agents of the Raj – The Indian Civil Services, some 16,000 people in all. Indians were not only expected to pay them compensation for denying them the opportunity to loot the country on behalf of their masters but also pay them Pension for having taken the trouble of looting her. In July 1942, the Governor of Reserve Bank, Sir James had estimated that a total sum of some £ 75 million would be required for this purpose. This figure mysteriously rose to £250 million after 1948. Once again the Indians were happy to strike a deal at £ 168 million. Once again the very proprietary of making such an obnoxious payment did not trouble the Indian Government.

This financial mystery of £ 75 million ballooning to £ 168 million would be easy for any first year Commerce student to crack. What the Indian Government had done was to buy an annuity from the British Government. In return, the British Government agreed to pay annual sums to the Indian (?) pensioners.

Thus, the capital sums required to buy the annuity would balloon by the simple method of lowering the interest rate that the British Government was expected to earn on the capital sum. The History of the Reserve Bank of India is cagey about the exact interest rate agreed upon. It only says, it was somewhat more than 0.801%. This was far lower than the commercial rates at the time, which were around 5%.

So not only we paid pensions to those who looted us, we also gave a handsome capital gift of about £ 100 million to their masters to compensate for the loss of future loot as a price of Transfer of Power.

- (c) For transferring the savings of the British citizens, who were going to return to their motherland from India after the Transfer of Power.
- (d) For Capital Transfers of British Investments in India

Thus by transferring, the Indian Sterling Credits to this Account No. 2, the British created a nice nest egg for taking care of all their vital financial interests. On the other hand, small amounts were to be released to the Indians for meeting their vital necessities of life by creating an Account No 1, which replaced the Banking Department.

Article III

- (1) There shall also be established at the Bank of England in the name of the Reserve Bank of India a new account (hereinafter referred to as the 'No 1 Account') to which any sterling received after the date of this Agreement by the Reserve Bank of India in respect of current transactions and any sums transferred from the No 2 Account shall be credited.
- (2) The Government of the United Kingdom shall not restrict convertibility of Sterling standing to the credit of No.1 Account for current transactions in any currency area or for the purpose of any payment to residents of the sterling area.

An amount of £ 65 million was transferred to Account No 1, of which only £ 35 million could actually be used by India for her pressing current needs. It had been specifically and expressly agreed that the Government of the United Kingdom would not restrict the convertibility of this £ 35 million. In other words, India was free to use this entire amount of £ 35 million for any purpose in any currency.

Nevertheless, the Government of U.K. **persuaded** the Indian Government to accept that only 42% of this amount would be considered convertible by the Indian Government. The reasons for this were not far to seek. The Sterling was a fully convertible currency since 15th July 1947. Under the terms, of the Financial Agreement, it had been able to conclude with the United States, the British had been forced to accept this as also many other humiliating conditions all for a loan that was **less** than that being extended by India and which carried an interest of 3%. Or substantially higher than that being paid to India.

On 14th August 1947, the date of this Agreement, there was a run on the Pound. In a complete breach of the agreement that they had signed with the Americans, the British were preparing to suspend the convertibility of Pound. The British position was very precarious and they were in the imminent danger of completely running down their American and Canadian Credit without having anything to show for it. Foreign holders of Sterling were exercising great ingenuity in transferring Sterling into Dollars or Dollar goods even in anticipation of their subsequent needs. As ever, the Indians rushed to the aid of the beleaguered British by forgoing the option of meeting their own national needs and agreed to accept a ceiling on the Convertibility of the available money in this Account Number 1. There were not many such large hearted friends of the British. Their actions forced the British to suspend the Convertibility on 21st August 1947. The total bankruptcy of the British fox was completely exposed.

The Agreement provided that the Reserve bank was free to alter its investments 'in accordance with normal central banking practices'. Once again, the Government of India accepted a limitation that was not provided in the Agreement. It accepted that the Reserve Bank **would not alter the** disposition of its Sterling Credits, which would increase their yield beyond the level which stood on that day.

Since as on that day, the average yield was 0.8101%; this in effect became the ceiling on the yield that the Government could get on its Sterling Credits.

Which nation other than India in the World could borrow money at the rate of 3% and lend it out at 0.8101%?

Unaware of this treachery, ill fed Indians and Pakistanis were sharpening their knives and swords to kill each other, rape and violate each other's women in an orgy of violence, the flames of which would continue cloak this vile act for generations to come. A loan of £ 1,160 million that was not backed by any collateral, where neither the Principle nor Repayment Schedule had been agreed upon; carrying an interest of 0.8101% had been signed sealed and delivered hours before the Transfer of Power was to take place in Delhi. Of course, it is not correct that nothing had been said about Repayment. It had been in principle agreed that nearly a third of the loan would be adjusted against services provided by the British, which Indians had neither asked for nor needed. Payments in respect of Military Stores and Pensions to the ICS officers.

The British had been lent £ 1,160 million or US \$ 4,640 million by India which was in excess of the loan given by the Americans to the British. Wait did I say US \$ 4,640? Did the Agreement denominate the Loan in Dollar terms so as to eliminate the risk in terms of Currency Depreciation? For in the Fall of 1947, everybody knew that Sterling was a worthless currency. This is one more sorry aspect of the Agreement that we need to examine. The damage caused to the Indian national cause by accepting denomination of the Loan in Sterling as against in US dollars.

In August 1947, the Sterling was officially a convertible currency. There was absolutely no legal bar in Indian Government insisting that since the British were hard pressed for Cash, the least they could do was to accept the Loan liability in Dollar terms so that the Indian national progress would not be a hostage to fluctuating fortunes of the Sterling. It is quite illuminating to find that even as the magnanimous Indian Government sacrificed the interests of its own people, the British Elite did not allow such petty consideration as the interests of **their own nation** to come in the way of an opportunity to make money.

This is no anti capitalist, rabble rousing. We already know the fact that ever since the Pound had been declared a convertible currency under the American pressure in July 1947, anybody who held Sterling Assets of any kind was rushing off to convert them into US Dollars or Dollar goods.

On 16th August 1947, the Chancellor of Exchequer was bemoaning the fact that : “The dollar drain has accelerated. In the last six weeks it averaged £ 115 million a week, compared with £ 77 million a week in the second quarter. In the last five working days £175 millions has been lost....The accelerated movement shows that the position as regards foreign holders is getting out of control. They are expressing very great ingenuity in transferring sterling into dollars or dollar goods even in anticipation of subsequent needs. It is only prudent judging by past experience to expect this acceleration to continue; in which event the rest of the Credit will be rapidly exhausted and the country will have very little to show for it.”

It appears that the run on the Pound was led by the financial wizards of the London Banking Community. In blatant disregard to the needs of their own country, the British Financial Community was collaborating with this Capital flight. If only the London Banks were to exercise a voluntary restraint in converting Sterling into US Dollars, His Majesty’s Government would not have been facing dire straits. However, the greed to make more and more money overcame any nationalist scruples that the London bankers may have had. They were in a race to execute the orders of the Sterling holders to transfer the funds to American Account and make available Dollars in lieu of Sterling either on New York or London market. When it came to a crunch, the famed British nationalist fervor counted for zilch, at last so far its Elite were concerned.

The Chancellor of Exchequer, faced with an almost open rebellion from his own colleagues in the financial markets, was forced to propose to the Cabinet that the Bank of England issue instructions to the London Banks to cease such transactions. He was well aware that “this involves breach of the Anglo-American Financial Agreement and of the payment terms that we have signed. But”, he ruefully noted “it is the only way of checking the present drain.”

Moreover, he also knew that “the immediate effect of the action proposed will be felt world wide; countries which have ordered goods from U.S.A. in the expectation of being able to pay for them in Dollars acquired from us would be unable to pay for them; the shock to trading operations of all kinds will be considerable.”

Yet, he had no hesitation in recommending the breach of an Agreement in the interest of his nation. In proposing this action, he was also aware that, “there is some danger that some of our suppliers will retaliate, insisting on being paid in gold or dollars in advance. We expect some difficulty from Argentina...”. He could take comfort from the fact that the docile Indian Government would not join ranks with the uncivilized Argentineans and make life more difficult for the British than it already was. After all, the Indians were not going to build their huts from the ruins of the British castles. Once again, the option of negotiating the Sterling Loan Repayment Agreement in a manner that was consistent with the Indian national interests does not appear to have figured in the Collective wisdom of the Indian Government. The seditious idea of insisting on denomination of the Sterling Loan in hard currency was not entertained. Perhaps, it was too violent one for the minds bred on an unending diet of Non-Violence.

It is a small matter of little consequence that the long overdue devaluation of Sterling took place in September 1949. Overnight, the value of the British currency fell by 30.5% against the hard currency, US dollars. Indian Rupee, which had continued to remain tied to apron strings of its colonial master followed suit by an identical margins. Nearly, a third of the effective value of the Indian assets had vanished into thin air.

The insistence on denominating the Loan in US Dollar was not on account of the fortuitous circumstance of the Sterling being a Convertible currency in August 1947 . There is one more story that remains to be told. The story of the Empire Dollar Pool. The forced loans that the British extracted from the colonies was not the only form of exploitation of that they indulged in. The story of the manner in which the economies of the Colonies had been ruined at the altar of the British economic interests is almost never ending.

The Empire Dollar Pool

In April 1939, as the War clouds gathered over the horizons of Europe, the British Treasury and the Bank of England moved to ensure that the Imperial interest would not be harmed. Well aware of the harsh reality that the Sterling no longer commanded the confidence of the financial community in the world – the place of pride had been taken over by the American greenbacks; they moved to stockpile the American money. This by itself was a perfectly justified move – provided they had drawn up plans of increasing exports to America and curtailing imports, thereby leaving a Dollar surplus. The cunning British jackal knew too well that it was beyond its capacity to do so. So in the manner of its real life cousin in the jungle; it decided to feast on the prey hunted by others. The Bank of England introduced a scheme, which would have done the Devil proud. It required all the Colonies to surrender the Dollars earned by them into a general pool – the Empire Dollar Pool to be under the control of the British Treasury. The reason given out was that this was necessary to conserve the Gold and other foreign exchange of the Empire as a whole. The Pool provided for all contributors to make withdrawals from the Pool in line with their needs **irrespective** of their individual contribution.

This, the British claimed, would ensure that no part of the Empire would suffer undue hardship on account of non availability of foreign exchange during the hostilities that were about to break out. There was to be no question of maintaining and making available accounts of just how much was contributed and how much was withdrawn by whom. It was considered below the dignity of the Empire to look into just how much help was required by whom. Naturally, since the largest hand in the till was the British.

The British Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Sir James Taylor, felt compelled to protest. In May 1939, he pointed out that: “If history is any guide at all, everything points to our ultimate difficulties being not to maintain exchange at its existing level but to prevent it from rising above the present statutory limit.”

In other words, the problems of India during the War were going to be quite different from that of the British. It was going to face –not the shortage but rather abundance of hard currency. The Empire Dollar Pool could not but work to its disadvantage. But Sir Taylor overlooked the fact that the point was not whether it was in India's interest or not. The important thing was that the scheme served the British interests and he soon found himself overruled.

As the War progressed, the prophecy of Sir James was found right on the mark. India did have a favourable balance in the Empire Dollar Pool. For the record, during the period September 1939 to March 1945, India's net contribution to the Pool was of the magnitude of \$ 300 million. Right through the War, the Indian nationalist opinion insisted upon India holding her Dollars herself. An opinion which was rejected by the British Treasury as being in 'radical departure from the basic principle...' Basic principle of India bailing out the British at her own cost.

In June 1942, the British Governor of the Reserve Bank of India sought to placate the Indian opinion by opining that : "He did not think that there was 'any practical danger that these assets will not be convertible into producer goods as and when they are required.'"

What seems to have helped India is the support to the nationalist cause from US commercial circles. They criticised the fact that as India was being made to surrender her surplus dollars to the U.K., the US exporters to India were being shut out of the Indian markets. In February 1944, the Finance Member announced the British Government's acceptance of the principle of starting a nucleus dollar fund.

This was passed off as a magnanimous British gesture for meeting India's post war reconstruction requirement – an integral part of the reciprocal aid arrangement.

In the post war scenario, there was only one sure way of acquiring Producer goods for national reconstruction and that was to have US Dollars. This had been limited to \$ 20 million per annum. Under strong protests, even the British Government in India found it prudent to press for an upward revision of the contribution to US \$ 50 million.

A request that was rejected by the British Treasury. C.D.Deshmukh, who was now the first Indian Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, rightly pointed out that neither \$20 million nor even \$ 50 million had any logical relation to the situation. On December 5, 1944, he wrote to the Government: “The British Treasury officials indicated that the principle use to which our surplus dollars are being put is the strengthening of the backing of gold and dollars of the United Kingdom’s sterling liabilities to the outside world. To a certain extent, this use of India’s surplus dollars is in India’s interests, as it strengthens the currency in which all her foreign assets are held. But it is conceivable that a stage has been reached when all reasonable requirements of this nature are being met, and if, that is the case, then India is entitled to the whole of her surplus, after every possible allowance has been made for contingent liabilities on India’s behalf.

There can be no question of generosity, and if India Office feel that they are accepting on India’s behalf an arrangement which errs on the side of generosity to India and is correspondingly onerous to U.K. then Government would be justified in suggesting that India would be prepared to take over all the surplus, together with all the current and contingent liabilities. I think Government owe it to the public to satisfy themselves that only that amount of dollars is retained by U.K. out of its surplus earnings which can reasonably be regarded as furthering the common war effort.”

The only British response was to describe the sum of US \$ 20 million as ‘a reasonable round sum in all the circumstances’ as the Secretary of State put it. Or as the Finance Member described it in the Budget speech of 1945-46, ‘a fair and valuable concession.’

First, the money is looted. Then if a part of it is returned, it is described as an ‘aid’ or ‘concession’ or what takes the cake, as ‘fair’. Truly, the English words do seem to change their meaning when applied on the eastern side of Suez Canal

All that was returned to India finally was a princely sum of US \$ 40 million in all. One presumes, the Reserve Bank of India took into account this \$ 40 million in its calculation of net Indian contribution of \$ 300 million to the Empire Dollar Pool. Money that the Indians earned and gifted to the British; even as hundreds of millions within its own borders barely managed to live.

Let us now examine the economic implications of the three year delay in securing Absolute Political Independence. We now know all that took place on 15th August 1947 was a Transfer of Power, a power shorn of any economic substance but nevertheless eagerly grabbed by the power hungry leaders of the Congress. It is only on 26th January 1950 that the Revolutionary fervor finally won the day and Bharat was finally declared as Independent Sovereign Republic.

On 15th August 1947, the Indian Sterling Loans amounted to £ 1,160 million. Of this £ 140 million belonged to Pakistan.

Thus, on Indian account the loans amounted to :

- £ 1,020 million or
- US \$ 4,080 million

Let us look at the manner in which this money was repaid.

We will do this computation in hard currency for it is pointless to do the accounting in a currency, which was not trusted by its own people. But before we do so, let us not forget some facts:

- This loan was made available at a tremendous cost to Indian people. Without exaggeration, one can state that millions died of hunger in the bargain. So this was not some body's private property to dispose of in any manner that one thought fit.
- The sheer amount of money was very large in 1947. **To put the matters in perspective free rations could have been provided in all the ration shops of an Undivided India for full five years, with the Indian share alone.**
- These loans had been financed by India at a average cost, as we have seen earlier of about 3%; getting a return of less than 1% on it and thereby giving the British at an Interest Subsidy of 4%.

Cost of Transfer of Power

Period	Opening Balance	British Release	Payments to British	Closing Balance	Interest Subsidy
15/8/47 – 31/12/47	4,080	260		3,820	60
1/1/48 – 30/6/48	3,880	72		3,808	80
1/7/48 – 30/6/49	3,888	324	216*	3,780	79
1/7/49 – 26/1/50	3,859	140		3,719	91
		796			
As on 26/01/50	3,810				

All figures in US \$ million

* Cash payments made to the British on account Defense stores and installations.

Let us ignore the fact that not all British releases were in hard currency. Yet, we find that of the US \$ 4,080 that they owed to us on 15th August 1947; by 26th January 1950, what they had paid back was a mere 270 million Dollars or just about 6.7% of the total amount. Nor is this the end of the Story. India was saddled with a liability of US \$ 223 million that India discharged in 1957-58. Silver that had been given by the United States under Lend-Lease. If this liability is taken into account, the British repayment of loan drops down from \$ 270 million to a mere \$ 47 million or 1.15% Under these calculations, the British liability **stood at US \$ 4,033 million.**

Union of India – A State Where the Sovereignty belongs to the People, is duty bound to take such a view. On the other hand, Dominion India – whose Sovereign was the King of England had to take into account the problems that the view point of Union of India would have posed to its sister Government in the United Kingdom. It, therefore, accepted the British manner of accounting of the loan.

First of all, the Loan continued to be denominated in terms of a worthless currency – Sterling. This shaved off the real value of the Indian assets by 30.5% when the Sterling was devalued in September 1949.

Secondly, the effective Interest Subsidy was never taken into reckoning.

Thirdly, India was forced to pay for Goods and Services, it had never asked for. The pensions of the ICS Officers and defense stores and installations.

Fourthly, the absurdity of making Cash payment to a Borrower for the supposed services given by him, even as he continued to not make even Interest Payments on the amounts borrowed by him, leaves one speechless. I am referring to the Cash Payments made to the British in 1948-49. Finally, the issue of the Lend Lease liability taken over by India was never factored into.

Thus, the official history of the Reserve Bank of India tells us that of the £ 1,020 million that the British owed us on 15th August 1947; they repaid some £ 200 million. Moreover, some £ 268 million was adjusted against pensions and stores. Thus, by 26th January 1950, the large hearted British had repaid some £ 468 million, leaving a balance of only £ 552 million. Thus, they had repaid 46% of the amount due to them.

It is another small matter that even by this calculation, the balance amount of £ 552 million which should have been worth US \$ 2,208 million was now, post devaluation worth only **US \$ 1,546 million**.

The financial implications of the difference between the approach of Union of India and that of Dominion India are staggering. A Sovereign Independent Republic, that Union of India is would have insisted that the British liability stood at US \$ 4,033 million as against the view of Dominion India which accepted that it was a mere US \$ 1,546 million. **Thus, the nation paid a price of something around US \$ 2.5 Billion to ensure that Nehru and Patel could assume reins of power on 15th August 1947.**

What more remains to be said ? Only one thing. All this is not being said with the benefit of hindsight. Nor was this manner of settlement of loan the only option available, even in those trying days.

On March 20, 1946, Mr. J.V. Joshi, the Economic Advisor to the Reserve Bank of India, circulated a memorandum to the Directors, copies of which were also sent to the Government.

He pointed out that the British private investment in India amounted to something like £ 1,000 million which could be taken over by the Government of India, in case the British failed to honor the Sterling Loans.

Such a take over would have really hurt the British very hard. For at stake were the British Management control over firms such as Unilever, Anglo-Iranian Royal Dutch Shell, Imperial Tobacco, Dunlop Rubber, Tate and Lyle, which routinely paid dividends in excess of 25%. The British firms ruled the roost in most sectors of the economy particularly in Petroleum, Rubber manufacturing , Light railways , Matches, Jute, Tea, and Mining. No less important was the fact that in 1947, India accounted for almost 50% of the total British Overseas Investments.

The British economy which had always been dependent on sustaining itself on the profits from Overseas investments would have faced ruin if half of its sources of income were to suddenly dry up.

Thus, the fact is that in 1947, the British had no bargaining power. The tragedy is that the Congress leaders were not even prepared to look at the possibility of making them run for their money. Mr. Joshi's memorandum continued to gather dust in the archives of the Reserve Bank. The Official history offers no explanation for the shabby treatment of this very important document. The possibility of using the leverage of taking over the British investments in India in the Sterling loan negotiations does not seem to have been ever been even explored.

Chapter XIV

The Great British Loot

Notwithstanding the scandalous manner in which the Indian Loans to the British were disposed as seen above, much has been made of the fact that in 1947, it was Britain who was indebted to India and not the other way around. The popular British sentiment is best captured by: “After having been accused for decades of exploiting India, Britain was going to wind up her Indian adventure five billion dollars in debt to her supposed victims”

Five billion dollars continues to remain a huge sum of money even in the twenty first century. So if it was Britain, which owed India this money, surely India can not accuse her of exploitation. So far, we have only looked at the possibility of this money being used for such beneficial activities as investments in agriculture to ensure Indian food security rather than lend it to the British. But then all the apologists for the British rule in India would quickly jump to offer the perfectly ingenious argument that without this money the menace of Hitler could never have been fought.

We know well enough from our study of the European history right from the days of Vasco Da Gama that every war that the European states fought and they were fighting all the time; was a war to advance the cause of their own nation by grabbing more and more colonies. No war was fought to advance the cause of Humanity. Neither the First nor the Second World War was an exception to this. It is only when this fundamental truth is realised that one can understand the nature of the alliances in the War.

Take for instance Japan. It had emerged as a colonial power by the time First World War erupted. A brutal colonial power, the Koreans would add. This did not prevent the U.K. from accepting it as an alliance partner. By the time Second World War started, Japan had begun to have ambitions of devouring the British colonies in the Far East. The nature of the Japanese rulers did not change. The change was only in their intent. The Japanese goal now was not Korea but India itself, changing it from an ally to a sworn enemy of the British. The welfare of either the Korean or the Indian people had nothing to do with this. Or Ireland, for that matter.

By the admission of the British Cabinet, Ireland was bound to it not only by acceptance of ties to a common Crown but, much more. So much so that even after it renounced the sovereignty of the British Crown, it could still not be called a foreign country for it was bound by “many ties of blood, history and the intermingling of peoples”. Yet, these ties did not prevent Ireland from adopting neutrality in the Second World War. Nor the refusal of Ireland to help them, dim the British enthusiasm for their Irish brethren. As a matter of interest, such sentiments about Ireland were expressed in the British Cabinet on 18th November 1948 as we have already seen.

The case of the United States is no less illuminating. It had become the most powerful nation in the World by the turn of the last century but had chosen to keep out of the First World War for years till the Zimmerman telegram forced its hand. The fact that it maintained neutrality in the Second World War till a direct Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour compelled it to enter War is well known.

Each nation was looking at its own national interest. Thus the argument that India had to lend money to the British to fight the Hitler menace on moral grounds does not stand a moment’s scrutiny. The Indians were not alone in offering assistance to the British. The Americans did so too.

Indeed, their assistance predated their entry into the War. They offered assistance to a bankrupt British Government struggling to keep its head above the German onslaught by the famous Lend-Lease Act. By this act, the American Congress authorised the President of United States to ‘Sell, transfer title to, exchange, lease, lend, or otherwise dispose of ..any defense article.’ The initial funds earmarked for this purpose were US \$ 1,300,000,000. This was to rise to an eventual sum of US \$ 11,000,000,000 by the end of the War.

The very preamble of the Act made it clear that this was to be no act of charity. It read, “Be it enacted that this Act may be cited as “An Act to Promote the Defense of the United States.” Nor was this a mere use of semantics as the British were soon to find out. In the words of Paul Kennedy:

“Lend-lease provided succour, but at a cost. Like any bank manager, the United States government felt it necessary to dictate conditions before proffering benefits upon a needy customer. Britain’s gold and dollar reserves were to be rigorously controlled in order to prevent them from rising above the level thought desirable in Washington. No lend-lease goods could go into exports nor could similar British made products be sent to overseas markets lest this provoke resentment in United States business circles.

Not surprisingly, the British exports tumbled further; as Keynes later admitted, ‘We threw good housekeeping to the winds’. In addition, the American perception of the post-war world and the pressure from Washington to arrange Britain’s place in it could not but add to the unease which London felt about its long-term economic future. The American desire to break up the Sterling Block and have full convertibility of that currency; the dislike of the preferential tariffs instituted within the Empire at the 1932 Ottawa Conference; the enhancement of the American share of Middle East oil; and the constant reference to the need to have access to the raw materials and markets of the European colonies, all caused a dubious London to postpone compliance with such requests. Being in such a weakened position – by December 1943 Britain’s sterling liabilities were seven times greater than its gold and dollar holdings – this was not always possible. More and more, the British piper played the tunes required by his American paymaster. The terms of lend-lease demanded by Washington, notes one critical historian, rendered the British economy ‘ill-equipped to resist American objectives at the end of war’. But did London have any other choice than to accept this aid, despite its unwelcome conditions?”

Measured in absolute terms, the financial assistance offered by the Indians was significant even when compared to that given by the Americans. The important point that should not be lost sight of is that the American help came with strings, no strings is too mild a term – came with chains attached.

Nor did the American Government offer a cent’s help if it were not to be beneficial to their nation. For every cent they offered, they made sure that the British did a fox trot, any time they so desired. How does Indian help measure against the criterion of its implications for Indian welfare?

But first, let us see something else. Its use by the British. Let us go to the famous memo by Keynes , ‘Our Overseas Financial Prospects’, written on 13th August 1945. In a brutally frank and refreshingly candid manner Keynes said:

1. “Three sources of financial assistance have made it possible for us to prepare our domestic man-power for war with an intensity not approached elsewhere, and to spend cash abroad, mainly in India and the Middle East, on a scale not even equaled by the Americans, *without having to export* in order to pay for the food and raw materials which we were using at home or to provide the cash which we were spending abroad.
2. The fact that the distribution of effort between ourselves and our Allies has been of this character leaves us far worse off, when the sources of assistance dry up, than if roles had been reversed. If we had been developing our exports so as to pay for our own current needs and in addition to provide a large surplus which we could furnish free of current charge to our Allies as Lend-Lease or Mutual Aid or on credit, we would, of course find ourselves in a grand position when the period of providing the stuff free of current charge was brought to an end.”

Well, who else but Keynes knew that the ‘if’ he was talking about was a big ‘IF’.

3. “As it is, the more or less sudden drying up of these sources of assistance shortly after the end of Japanese war will put us in an almost desperate plight, unless some other sources of temporary assistance can be found to carry us over whilst we recover our breath-a plight far worse than most people, even in Government Departments, have yet appreciated.
4. The three sources of financial assistance have been-
 - (a) Lend-Lease from the United States;
 - (b) Mutual Aid from Canada
 - (c) Credits (supplemented by sales of our pre-war capital assets) from the Sterling areas....

5. In the present year, 1945 these sources are enabling us to overspend our income at the rate of £ 2,100 million, made roughly as follows..:

	£ millions
• Lend-Lease (munitions)	600
• Lend-Lease (munitions)	500
• Canadian Mutual Aid	250
• Sterling Areas	750

In the summer of '45, Keynes was worried that the Americans being Americans, were bound to ruthlessly cut off the Lend-Lease with the surrender of the Japanese. So would the Canadian Aid cease. The credits from the Sterling Areas were he hoped 'more durable'

The so-called Credits were after all what the Sterling Area countries had "been induced to lend to us."

Thus, we have it from the horses' mouth itself – no less than Keynes himself, that the Credits from Sterling Area, more popularly known as Sterling Balances, were a vital part of financing of the current expenditure of the U.K. Unlike the Lend-Lease, they had more uses than to overcome Hitler or the Japanese menace. Nor is there any particular need to take Keynes at face value. The History of the Reserve Bank of India (1935-51) informs us that the Sterling Balances which stood at Rs 15,070 million at the end of August 1945, when the War ended, increased to Rs 17,240 million by end of March 1946 or an increase of Rs 2,170 million. The Cambridge History of India informs us that there was a fresh increase in Sterling Balances during 1946/47 by Rs 516 million.

Thus India was asked to contribute to war cause a sum of Rs 2,686 (2,186 + 516) million, long after Hitler was dead and Japan was nuked into submission. Rs 2,686 million or over 200 million pounds or over 800 million dollars of free money. For what, if not to meet the current consumption of the United Kingdom?

The Americans were not going to be so generous. Once they finished bringing Japan to its knees, they turned the Lend-Lease tap off. If the British were to need any more money, they would have to crawl on their knees – hands folded, head down in reverence.

Am I being melodramatic? One can hardly accuse me of this after reading the details of the Anglo-American Financial Agreement that Keynes negotiated in December 1945. His memo 'Our Overseas Financial Prospects' had convinced the British Cabinet that apart from everything else, forced Credits from Sterling Area Countries, possible sale of gold, increase in exports; they still desperately needed a grant of US \$ 5,000 million from the United States. Soon Keynes was off to Washington with his hat in the hand. The Americans soon made it clear that there was to be no question of any grant. The best they could look at was a loan of \$ 4,000 million. It is from this loan that they would have to set aside \$ 750 million for the liquidation of Lend-Lease. Thus the total new loan was not to exceed \$3,250 million and carried an interest of 2% p.a. The British hopes of a Grant or at least an interest free loan had been belied. Moreover, the loan carried stiff conditions. Sterling was to be made completely convertible. A transitional period of fifteen months was all that was offered. The Sterling Area countries were to have a freer trade with United States than had been hitherto allowed by the British. Tariff reductions had to be agreed to. The British Ministers were incensed. A suggestion was even made that it would be better to borrow from the United States at 3, 4 or even 5 percent than to accept the humiliating conditions. It was even contended that the need of the Americans to lend the money to the British was far more than the need of the British to borrow. This was mere bravado and political posturing and the Cabinet knew this.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs pointed out that he had considered the possibility of obtaining a loan at a higher rate of interest free from the conditions but two things came in the way. The first was that the burden of such a loan would be beyond the British capacity. The second being that the Americans were not interested in giving any loan without conditions even at higher rates of interest. The Chancellor of Exchequer joined in by asking his colleagues to face the unpleasant truth that the failure to reach financial agreement with the United States would be disastrous for the United Kingdom.

What a contrast! America had freed itself from the clutches of the British at about the same time India fell into her orbit. When America became independent in 1789, it ranked nowhere amongst the League of Nations. When India lost her freedom in 1803, she was amongst the leading industrial nations of the world. Some hundred and fifty years later, she was a pauper. Yet, she was made to provide 800 million dollars free of any interest, free of any conditions even as her millions went hungry. America was now the most powerful country in the world. Even as the Americans lent money, they made sure that not only their own interests were secured first but that the British knew their place in the world.

My die-hard British friends would no doubt like to point out that there was no more accretion to the Sterling Balances after 1947. If there was some increment after the War ended, it was probably due to expenses which could only be gradually reduced. They may therefore still like to contend that the Sterling Balances were the British need to combating the evil forces unleashed by Hitler and his cronies. For the benefit of such gullible Imperial fans, I would like to reproduce an interesting table.

**Sterling Balances
1945 –51**

Figs in £ million

U.K. Sterling liabilities to:	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	Increase during 1945-51	
								In Value	In %
Sterling Area	2453	2417	2297	2365	2353	2732	2789	+336	+14
Dependent Overseas Territories	446	495	510	556	583	754	964	+518	+116
Other Sterling Area	2007	1922	1787	1809	1770	1978	1825	-182	-9
Non- Sterling Areas	1210	1284	1306	1055	1064	1011	1018	-192	-16
Total	3663	3701	3603	3420	3417	3743	3807	+144	+4

First of all, years after Germany and Japan were tamed, British continued to extract money in the memory of having defeated them. The Sterling Balances or the Credits U.K. extracted continued to grow. I can not bring myself to use any other word than 'Extracted' for the simple reason that this so called Credits were completely forced with no consideration to its impact on the people who were being so forced to lend money. The Sterling Area countries like India which escaped the British control after 1947, not only stopped giving any new credit but also managed to get some small moneies repaid as we saw earlier. The Non-Sterling Area countries were more successful. They managed to get a 16% repayment as against a mere 9% in case of Sterling Area countries. Miserable was the fate of the countries which the British continued to control.

The African and Malaya peasants continued to toil so that they could sell their produce at the British determined prices to Britain for which all they got were paper securities issued by the Bank of London that neither carried any interest nor were encashable anywhere. The U.K. thus took out goods worth £ 518 million from its colonies long after the War ended under a so called pro-poor Labour Administration offering no payment in return. Nothing but a promise of payment in future. An interest free loan exceeding two billion dollars without any conditions whatsoever. Oh! They did offer something in return. The British were very proud of the fact that they had made available £ 41 million during this period for Colonial Development and Welfare. It is another matter that bulk of the so called development funds was to be invested in such projects as production of Ground Nuts in East Africa on some 100,000 acres of land so that Britain's deficit in fat rations could be reduced.

On 8th February 1946, the Chancellor of the Exchequer submitted a memo on the Balance of Payments for 1946 to the British Cabinet. He pointed out that the picture of the British economy was bad. The overseas income from all sources was projected at £ 700 million while the expenditure was expected to exceed £ 1,500 million. The Import programme required £ 1,126 million while £ 400 million were required for Overseas Military expenditure (£ 300 million) plus other political loans.

The resulting deficit was far too large even after accounting for the American loan and the colonial credits. He, therefore, roped in Keynes to once again try and drill some sense in the heads of his colleagues. The Keynes memo 'Political and Military Expenditure Overseas' was circulated to the Cabinet by the Chancellor of Exchequer with the following terse comment: "I asked Lord Keynes to state, as clearly as he could and as frankly as he chose, the facts of our Overseas Deficit, and their implications for future policy. This he has done, and I circulate his paper to my colleagues. The detailed application of the suggestions is a matter of discussion. But the broad conclusion is unmistakable, and demands urgent action." As usual the razor sharp intellect of Keynes flowed into his pen offering withering criticism that brooked no dissent. Keynes went into the financial details of the various British commitments and concluded that:

- Altogether, without a drastic change of policy, political and military expenditure in the three years 1946-48 might run us into up to £ 1,500 million gross, whilst the minimum net figure in sight on present lines plainly exceeds £ 1,000 million.
- We have, of course, no margin of overseas resources approaching £ 1,500 million. Nor should we have, even if the figure was brought down to £ 1,000 million. The utmost provision allowed for in the calculations we made during the Washington negotiations was £ 600 million for the three years 1946 – 48
- What can be done about it? It is obvious that any proposal sufficiently drastic must encroach on the political sphere. But it is not easy to see that there can be any solution which does not involve the following:
- A virtual cessation of further political loans. We must try and face the fact that we can not lend the money we have not got.....
- A reconsideration of our economic policy towards Germany. It seems monstrous that we should first de-industrialise and thus bankrupt the Ruhr to please Russia and then hand over the territory, or at any rate the industries, to an international body to please France, but that we should alone be responsible for feeding the place.....
- A reduction in our military forces *outside Europe* to 250,000 at the earliest possible..."

As a matter of interest, on the V-J day, the forces outside Europe had numbered 820,000. The implications of this for holding an increasingly restive India were too obvious to be stated.

- “Take the case of Egypt. How do we propose to reply to the Egyptian demand that we should take our troops out of Egypt ? Is it appreciated that we are paying the cost of keeping them there by *borrowing it from Egypt*? What is the answer if Egypt tells us (as, of course, she will) that she is no longer prepared to provide us with the necessary funds? Has this hard fact been faced and answered?
- In the Far East Burma obviously needs looking at again on a realistic basis, and we must try to see whether we can get some free rice from Siam in the future, though Cabinet decided recently that, for the time being at any rate, we should not ask for free rice.”

The British did seem to think, even those like Keynes, who knew better, that they owned the World. Note the statement “we should not ask for free rice” as if any one can. Keynes concluded:

- ...Nothing but waste and humiliation can result from not looking ahead and keeping within our long-run capacity. For there is not the faintest prospect, on any hypothesis, of our being able to carry on our present practices.
- The above summary being limited to our political and military expenditure overseas, takes no account of such claims on our overseas resources as:
 - Subscriptions to the Bretton Woods Fund and Bank
 - Withdrawals of existing sterling balances by liberated countries
 - Any net cost of releasing Sterling Area Balances in the period 1946-51. We can expect to accumulate some further balances during the early part of 1946, and that is why the *monetary* position in respect of overseas finance is not acute in spite of the delay in the American credit.

But we are likely to have to make at least corresponding, and perhaps greater releases in 1947 – 51. In this connection it should be emphasised that our political and military expenditure overseas reduces correspondingly our ability to sustain the sterling Area countries both currently and later on. Thus the result of not curtailing this expenditure must be to make inevitable still harsher treatment of the Sterling Area balances than the severe treatment which will be unavoidable in any case....”

It is interesting to see that here was Keynes making it plain that the British were not going to repay their credits in a hurry or perhaps were even going to repudiate their debts either fully or at any rate partially, for it is difficult to see what *severe treatment* was he otherwise talking about. On the other hand, the Indians had sought to make ‘Assistance to multilateral clearing of accumulated war balances’ as one of the purposes of the International Monetary Fund. Their attempts, though supported by Egypt, were thwarted, by the U.K.

Nevertheless, the History of Reserve Bank India edited by no less than C.D.Deshmukh, the first Indian Governor of the Reserve Bank records:

“Although the Indian request was rejected, the delegation was able to obtain a valuable assurance from Lord Keynes, the leader of the British delegation, to the effect that his country would ‘settle honourably what was honourably and generously given.”

Such naïve faith in the British sense of what the terms Honour and Generous meant!!

Chapter XV

The Modus-Operandi of the Loot

As I tried to understand the manner in which India's status changed from that of a debtor nation to being one of the world's biggest creditor nation, to my great surprise I found any coherent account of this financial transaction very difficult to come by. Most traditional books of the story of how India finally got rid of the British (or was it the other way around) do not so much as even mention this even in the passing. The British have been happy to paint the process of whoever got rid of whom, as an act of their generosity. They could claim that it had always been their intention to one day relinquish the possessions, they had so inadvertently acquired. In 1818, Hastings had noted: 'A time, not very remote will arrive when England will, on sound principals of policy, wish to relinquish the domination which she has gradually and unintentionally acquired over this country.' It is another matter that this 'not very remote time' to give up the domination over India had not even arrived on the British horizons as late as 1937. Nehru was to recount in 1947, 'exactly ten years ago, in London, I had a fight with Linlithgow, the Viceroy. I got so mad I shouted "I will be damned if we don't have our independence in ten years". He answered "Oh no you won't, India will not be free in my time Mr. Nehru, nor in yours either."

On the Indian side, the Congress has been too happy to appropriate the entire credit. There have been many political advantage of turning Gandhi into an icon to be worshipped for having delivered us the gift of independence through his unique non-violent struggle.

It has been left to a German, Dieter Rothmund, to point out the unpleasant truth while commenting on the consequences of the financing of the War. "Thus India had turned from a debtor into a creditor of Great Britain. This was of major political importance for the process of decolonisation. It is easier to grant independence to a creditor whose account one manages than to a debtor whose liabilities one may have to share".

If today, there is ignorance about the manner in which the financing of the War contributed to the process of freedom, the situation in 1947-48 was far worse. Many politicians imagined that the Sterling Balances, which were only one part of the total money raised by India for the War, represented the War debts that India needed to repudiate. The Indian Finance Minister had to repeatedly issue statements clarifying the nature of these Balances ‘for removing the misunderstanding that still seems to persist in certain quarters which have periodically pressed for scaling down of the Sterling Balances on the ground of their being a war debt’.

Had the Indians made a demand for scaling down the balances, Keynes, who, as we know, had called for a severe treatment of Sterling Area balances would have been delighted. The British Chancellor of Exchequer, Dr. Dalton, would have been too happy to oblige. It was he who had thundered before the Brazilian Chamber of Commerce in London in May 1947 that Britain should refuse to take on ‘fantastic commitments which are beyond her strength and beyond all the limits of good sense and fair play’, that the war debts amounting to ‘nominally’ more than £ 3,000 million were an ‘unreal, unjust and unsupportable burden’ and further that they ‘must be very substantially scaled down’.

We shall now attempt to try and clear the mist, no mist is natural and beneficial – a more appropriate word is smog; the smog surrounding the manner in which the Great Britain imposed an ‘unreal, unjust and unsupportable burden’ on the Indian, Egyptian and many other economies compelling them to ‘take on ‘fantastic commitments which were beyond their strength and beyond all the limits of good sense and fair play’.

Let us first be thankful to Dr. Dalton for supplying us the right terminology for describing the Cash that all colonies were made to spend during the war – British Debt. In 1947, **Britain had spent no money**. What Dr. Dalton was fuming and ranting against was the fact that the countries, who had been forced to spend the money against the promise of a future payment, were merely asking the British to make good the promise. If it was so unacceptable for the British to pay for the goods that they had taken, it becomes difficult to understand any logic which can be advanced to support the fact of forcing these poor countries to spend the money in the first place.

Perhaps, we should be so nice and kind as Mr. C.D. Deshmukh, the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, who felt that the Chancellor's speech might well be merely 'a part of a war nerve'; there was no information officially that the UK's attitude to the Indian debt was any different from that expressed earlier. What a strange case of 'War nerves' that should affect someone two years after the War had ended. 'There was no information officially', the classic phrase of the bureaucracy to deny the existence of any unpleasant reality. One of the most important Minister of the British Cabinet makes a public statement and that is not good enough to understand the true intentions of the British. What was the Governor waiting for – a sworn affidavit on a stamp paper testifying that the British Government had indeed changed its mind.

The second point to keep in mind is the fact that the British claim that they had to compel their colonies to spend cash to assist them to fight Hitler does not stand a moment's scrutiny.

We have already seen that they continued to make their colonies spend their money long long after Hitler was safely a part of the history.

Take the case of Egypt, for instance. It was one of the biggest holders of the Sterling Balances. For what cause was Egypt spending money. We have it on the authority of Keynes that the Egyptians were paying for maintaining British troops on Egyptian soil after the War had ended. The Cabinet had no answer to Keynes when he posed: "How do we propose to reply to the Egyptian demand that we should take our troops out of Egypt ? Is it appreciated that we are paying the cost of keeping them there by *borrowing it from Egypt*? What is the answer if Egypt tells us (as, of course, she will) that she is no longer prepared to provide us with the necessary funds?"

The case of Egypt bears some understanding. In 1936, the British government had forced an unequal defense treaty on Egypt permitting them to station their troops in Egypt for the defense of Suez canal. They were forced to agree that the British could involve them in war at any time, if it so suited them. A provision that the British well knew they could not force upon even their self-governing dominions like Australia. This had reduced Egypt to the state of a nominally independent but for all practical purposes, a colony of the British.

As if this was not enough, as even the British Cabinet admitted, “During the war we had enjoyed facilities far in excess of these and we still maintained (on 6th June 1946, a year after the War ended) in the country a large headquarters organisation and air bases for long range attack. ...We could not pretend that the existing Treaty entitled us to all the facilities we now enjoyed”. Do not forget my friends, the cost of the facilities, far in excess of the treaty obligations, being enjoyed by the British was being borne by the Egyptians. So naturally, the British had nothing to complain about.

Not surprisingly and as anticipated by Keynes, the Egyptians grew increasingly restive. They demanded that the British pack their bags and leave. They were never welcome in the first place. Now they were in no position to have their way by force.

This did not prevent them from trying hard. The Foreign Secretary could not agree with the Egyptian demand as he felt that it was essential that British bases were maintained in Egypt to protect the British interests in the Middle East. His cunning response was to work for such an arrangement that would enable the British to make extensive use of the Egyptian man-power in workshops and ancillary services, and thus bring about a much needed reduction in the British expenditure or rather more accurately a reduction in Egyptian subsidies for the British. When this did not work, they conceded that that the British troops would indeed leave Egypt but contended that a minimum of five years was required before the withdrawal could be completed. This was soon scaled down to three years. They even agreed to shift the British Army headquarter out of Cairo so that the ever present sight of the British troops would not antagonise the local people. The Foreign Secretary went so far as to suggest that the British should agree to bear the cost of building the necessary temporary accommodation for the British troops even though the 1936 treaty demanded that Egypt should have built this. The impossibility of insisting on this in 1946 was far too plain for even the Chancellor of Exchequer to see, who agreed to this. At the same time, he warned the Cabinet that “Egypt was the second largest holder of sterling balances about which there would have to be negotiations later on. We should not, therefore, be unduly generous in these negotiations.”

The sly British maneuvering angered the Egyptians. They made it clear that they were perfectly ready to consider any proposal for a treaty between equals. There was no way they were going to agree to accept any provision that would appear to place Egypt in an inferior position. Our purpose here is not to follow through with these negotiations which continued till 1947. We are only seeking to understand the manner in which the British went about making other people pay for their needs as long as they could with no consideration what so ever for the people who were being so made to pay.

With this we now turn to the Loot of India during the War. The conventional wisdom about financing the British War efforts, as blessed by the Reserve Bank of India, runs something like this:

“The fundamental principle of war financing is to divert such portion of the Gross National Product to Government as might be necessary for the defense (of British Interests) effort; the (Indian) community has to make sacrifice ... The problem of war finance which India had to face were not materially different from those of other countries, although the country was not, by far and large, an actual theatre of war. As a dependency, it was called upon to make a substantial contribution to the war effort of the U.K. and allies. This very circumstance, however, also imposed limitations on the ability of the British rulers in India to maximise the mobilisation of resources in a non-inflationary way... While inflation did occur in a substantial way, it was of far less serious magnitude than it looked likely at one stage”

I rubbed my eyes in disbelief. Was this a document prepared by the Bank of England or the official history of the Reserve Bank of India, I wondered. Consider the implications of what is being said here. On one hand, the author accepts that India had to enter the War because it was a dependency, not because it was a theatre of actual war. It had to finance the War not because this was in her interest but because the UK, her master, so demanded. On the other hand, he contends that circumstances made it imperative that the financing be done in a manner that had to be inflationary. But he goes on to pat the fiscal managers of the time, who by the way included the author himself, that the inflation was far less serious than what had looked possible at one stage.

Let us take the very first statement - *The problem of war finance which India had to face were not materially different from those of other countries.*

Well, the first material difference was as the author admits:

“It was the responsibility of the Government of India to find the resources not merely for the Government of India’s own defense expenditure but also for the requirement of the Allied Governments, in particular the U.K. It turned out that the requirement of the Allies were in the aggregate almost as large as those of the Government of India.”

If one ignores British Colonies or nominally independent states like Egypt, there was no free country in the world that had not only to meet its own (?) expenditure but also make similar sums available to others with no consideration for the hardships it imposed on its people.

The United States did pass the Lend-Lease Act but a President who would have asked his people to accept a tenth of Indian sufferings for the sake of Great Britain’s cause would not have only been impeached but may well have been lynched.

Before we try and understand the hardships, the war financing imposed on the Indian people, let us first take a look at the extent of Indian contribution in cold numbers.

Budgetary Position of the Government of India

Figs in Rs Million

Fiscal years	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1940/ 1945
1 Revenue Account									
Revenue	840	950	1,080	1,350	1,770	2,500	336	3,610	13,660
Of which tax Revenue	740	810	770	980	1,250	1,710	2,540	2,820	10,070
Expend.	850	950	1,140	1,470	2,890	4,400	4,960	4,850	19,710
Balance	-10	-0	-70	-130	-1,120	-1,900	-1,610	-1,230	-6,050
2. Aggregate Outlay on India's Account (Revenue and Capital Accounts)									
	940	990	1,210	1,480	3,670	5,040	5,780	5,420	22,610
3. Overall position (including Capital Transactions)									
	20	30	-20	10	20	659	1,830	2,639	5,138
4. Recoverable War Expenditure									
	-	40	530	1,940	3,250	3,780	4,110	3,750	17,360
5. Total of items 2+4	940	1,030	1,740	3,420	6,930	8,820	9,890	9,170	39,970
6. Budgetary balance on Indian and Allied Accounts combined (3-4)									
	+20	-10	-550	-1,930	-3,230	-3,120	-2,280	-1,110	-12,230

These are the cold numbers as authenticated by the Reserve Bank of India. They tell a story that for too long has not been heard. This is the tale of wringing the last drop of any resource that India still had left in 1939 after close to a century and three-quarters of the British exploitation.

If we look closely enough at the numbers, we shall see the desolate eyes of the hungry mothers who helplessly watched their babies give the last dying spasm after days of living on empty stomachs in the sun baked plains of Bengal in that year of death - 1943. They will also show the blank faces of generations of Indians, who grew up and died a wasted life without ever having a full meal. Cheese, butter, fruits, oils that were so vital to the British people were forever to be denied to them.

If we listen carefully enough, we will also hear the screams of women being raped and murdered in front of their families, when bitterness bred and nurtured by years of hunger and malnutrition exploded in an orgy of communal violence in 1946 and 47.

So what do the figures tell us. First thing first. Let us for the time being make the fantastic assumption that India needed to get into this mad struggle for supremacy between the Germans and the British on some moral grounds. Or that the British were the lesser of the evils and we needed to fight by their side so as not to suffer the fate of the Jews in Europe at the hands of Hitler or the Chinese in Asia at the hands of Japanese. We would of course, knowing what we know now, have to take complete leave of our senses to make such an assumption. But, let us do that and assume that India needed to get involved in the war and spend money for her defense. What would this have meant?

It would have meant during the war years, she would have incurred a revenue deficit of Rs 6,050 million. On the other hand, War is known to provide opportunities for economic advancement, as the Americans had shown in the First War. This is an opportunity that was available to India as well. Indeed, we find that, when we take into account the aggregate outlay on her account and set it off against the position of overall availability of finances, we find that the overall position indicates a surplus of some Rs 5,138 million.

Thus the War had provided an opportunity to India to better her lot and India had taken advantage of this. Yet, the reality is the War devastated India. The reasons are not difficult to seek. Just take a look at the item number 4 of the above Table.

Not only was India asked to find money for its own defense in a fight that did not concern her the least, she was asked to find money for others to be able to do so. An enormous sum of Rs 17,360 was spent by her on behalf of others.

This money was spent by her as a loan, a loan that earned an interest of less than a percent or to be precise; 0.8101 percent through an ingenious financial arrangement devised by the cunning British brains.

Dear readers, please look at numbers carefully. You would no doubt **notice that this spending for the benefit of others continued unabated during the 1943, when millions died of hunger in Bengal.**

India had no money for its own hungry people but seemed to have all the money for her masters. Dare we say that bad harvest or not, storm or no storm, there need have been no famine deaths if and only if India had concentrated on the plight of its own people instead of spending money for the sake of others. How dare we say that? How dare we equate the lives of Indians to the needs of the British ?

Under the absurd arrangement forced upon India by the British, we had the truly ludicrous sight of India lending money to the global super power, the United States of America. India was an indirect recipient of the American Lend-Lease aid through UK. The arrangement being that the UK received goods on her account. India in turn provided goods and services, up to the value of goods received on her behalf by the UK, to the US forces stationed in India. By the end of the War, India had supposedly received goods worth Rs 2,000 million. In turn she had to provide food, clothing and other necessities of an equal amount to the American troops on the Indian soil. The Lend-Lease from United States ceased on the VJ day (September 2, 1945) but the reverse Lend-lease by India to the United States continued up to May 31, 1946.

Unanimity prevailed in the British polity on its divine right to loot India. On 28th July 1944 a debate took place in the House of Commons. The British politicians cutting across party lines had agreed that India was a desperately poor country. Yet, it did not cross any one's mind that one immediate way of lessening her poverty was to make sure that she did not have to lend money to others that she herself did not have. Keynes was to argue so eloquently that '*We must try and face the fact that we can not lend the money we have not got*'. When it came to the Indians, he seemed to have lost his good economic sense and insisted that a severe treatment of money lent by the Indians was inevitable in the British interests. What else can one conclude that the British considered the Asians and Africans as sub-humans, who were mere pawns in their Imperial game.

Let us now take a look at some financial wonders. The first - a country that had a normal revenue of merely Rs 840 million before the War managed to raise Rs 13,660 in the six years of War i.e. an average annual revenue of Rs 2,277 million representing an average increase of 171%. It is not difficult to imagine the ruthless measures adopted by the colonial power to raise its revenue so drastically in so short a time or the consequences of these brutal measures on the general population. The expenditure on the other hand increased by an average of 286%. If any one imagines that the Government had suddenly decided to spend more money for the welfare of the people, he had better wake up. More than two thirds of the expenditure was on defense alone.

Moving on to the second financial wonder. Not only does the country manage to increase its own revenue and expenditure, it seems to pluck out of air a total resources of close to Rs 40,000 million for meeting not only its own war time needs but to lend Rs 17,360 million to meet the needs of the others. Considering, that its own revenues were a mere Rs 13,660 million during this period, its lending of an amount that was a quarter more than its revenue must rank as the most bizarre act in the world. The very suggestion of doing something remotely similar would have caused the British Cabinet to collectively choke in horror.

Yet, this is what was demanded of India. When asked for a repayment, all she got was a *most valuable assurance from Lord Keynes, the leader of the British delegation, to the effect that his country would 'settle honourably what was honourably and generously given.*

It is always easy to be generous with other people's money. Leave the immorality, lack of ethics or sheer financial madness of this venture. How was this great Indian rope trick performed? One obvious way for the government was to embark on a large scale-borrowing programme. Charged with the mission of providing necessary resources for the Master in his time of great need, the Reserve Bank cracked the whip and all fell in line. Indian businessmen who wished to curry favour with the Government. Several made a show of making a contribution to later quietly sell off the bonds for a small loss which was more than made up by the pleasure of the rulers in granting them lucrative contracts.

The Indian princes no less anxious to be in the good books of the Viceroy, who had the power of what amounted to matters of life and death over them, also fell in line. Boosted by the inflows from all and sundry, who wished to please the British, the final results of the borrowing binge were as tabulated below:

The War Time Borrowings of the Government of India

figures in Rs Mill

Year Ended March	Gross Borrowings	Loans Redeemed	Net Borrowings
1939-40	160	200	(40)
1940-41	1,120	190	930
1941-42	740	110	640
1942-43	1,040	Negligible	1,030
1943-44	3,160	150	3,010
1944-45	2,220	Negligible	2,220
1945-46	3,290	430	2,860
Total for six years 1940-45	11,570	890	10,680

Of the total borrowings of Rs 11,570 million, the contribution from the State and Central Governments, the Reserve Bank and other banks amounted to Rs 4,820 million. Thus 42% of the total borrowings, being lending from right hand to the left, was Inflationary in nature. **As a matter of record, the average cost of the borrowings was around 3%.**

The financial wonders under the British never cease. What would a financial wizard have to do to attain something similar? Target an increase of 171% in revenues. Increase expenditure by 286%. Borrow an amount almost equal to the increased amount at an average cost of 3% - half of it from within the family. Now proceed to lend an amount equal to 125% of the increased revenue. Get a return of 0.8101 percent on the borrowed amount, thus extend an interest subsidy to the borrower. Proponent of such a fantastic scheme would straight away be packed off to the lunatic asylum. The British made India do this and more.

For even after the increase in revenue and the borrowing programme, there remained a huge gap, some Rs 12,230 million as is seen from the item number 6 of our table. The answer to this was fairly straightforward. The currency note press went into an overdrive, producing all the money that the Government needed.

It is not as if one had to wait for the end of the war to understand that the impact of such lunatic policies must inevitably lead to a disaster. A number of leading Indian economists realised the seriousness of the situation and issued a joint statement on April 12, 1943.

“The Government seems to act as if it is enough for it to take care of its budget deficit while meeting the needs of the British Government by printing more notes. This is a grave misreading of the whole situation and has resulted in an ever-increasing expansion of currency unrelated to the needs of internal production and trade. As a result, the **inflation spiral is already at work in India**....The inflation in India is therefore, a deficit-induced fiat money inflation. It is the **most disastrous type of inflation**....we propose the immediate initial steps of a blanket control of all prices...”

The Government shrugged off the warning. In the end, the official Wholesale price index which stood at 100 in the week ended August 19, 1939 rose to 241.5 by end of the war in August 1945. The major increase took place in 1942 and 1943. The wholesale price index increased by 22.6% in 1942 and 51% in 1943. ‘The official index’, admits the Reserve Bank, ‘no doubt underestimated the extent of the rise...the prices used for compilation of the index did not fully reflect the true level of prices which had to be paid.’ A confession that was completely unnecessary for any ordinary Indian housewife, who had struggled and often failed to make both ends meet.

Proof of the validity of this statement, if any is required, is provided by Rothmund by giving figures for the years when Bengal was to witness the dance of famine deaths. Between 1942 –43, the price of rice in Madras increased from a little less than Rs 6 per maund (37.5 Kg) to about Rs 11. In Bengal, the price of the rice jumped from about Rs 5 and a half to over Rs 14 per maund. Faced with such a massive price increase, what could the poor, who were surviving on a diet of around 1300 – 1400 calories, do but drop dead like flies all over.

It will now take a brave man to argue that it is Hitler, who was to be blamed for the war induced inflation. The price increase was inherent in the manner in which the British chose to finance the war in India despite clear and timely warnings to the contrary. Or perhaps, they would like to explain, how they themselves managed the war with only a 74% increase in prices as against 186% in India.

Let us turn to the Recoverable War expenditure. An amount of over Rs 17,000 million had accumulated against this head. This was over and above a similar amount spent by India for its so-called defense. The correct word for describing the Recoverable War Expenditure would be the Sterling Securities of the Government of India that were lodged by its Bankers, the Reserve Bank of India, with the Bank of England. In March 1946, they amounted to Rs 17,240 million or £ 1646 million. One has to take into account the fact that during the War, by 1946, the Government of India had paid off a Sterling debt of £ 323 million. Thus, the total Indian Sterling earnings amounted to £ 1969 million.

What does this figure represent? In US \$ terms, it was equal to around \$ 7,876 million. A sum more than double the loan of US \$ 3,750 that the United States was to offer to the UK after the end of war and cessation of the Lend-Lease. Not only had the United States made the British to dance to their tunes, impose humiliating terms and wait on tenter hooks, watch from the sidelines - an acrimonious debate in the Congress before its final approval. They had despite all cringing requests from the British, insisted on being paid a 2% interest on the loan. India was on the other hand getting a return of 0.8101 percent **and** was paying at the same time a 3% interest on the money she had borrowed to lend it to the British. Thus, by making this loan available to the UK at 0.8101 percent, India was in effect providing an interest subsidy of over 4% to the British. For a second, just for a second, let us ignore the big cost that India was paying in terms of running down its infrastructure, not being able to provide for the welfare of its people, not being able to make the investments for securing the basic necessity of food security for its people; all for making this loan available to the British.

Even, when we ignore this vital aspect and look at the mere accounting aspect of the transaction, we find that India was paying an interest subsidy of Rs 690 million per year or £ 52 million.

Please note that in this calculation we have ignored the cost of repaying the Sterling debt of £ 323 million . This in an era when Lord Keynes was warning the British Cabinet that relaxation of such amounts as £ 20 million or £ 30 million is a significant figure and far from negligible. Nor had the good Lord lost his mind. Take into account the fact that the weekly offtake of grains in India was 166,000 tons or 8.6 million tons on an annual basis. Take a cost of Rs 15 per maund given by Rothemund as the basis to see that a ton of rice would have cost about Rs 400. In other words, the total cost of the annual rations for the whole of India was not more than Rs 3,440 million or £ 258 million. Now, let us understand the true cost of the interest subsidy of £ 52 million that India was paying. It meant that but for this subsidy India could have made free, yes free rations available to one fourth of its total population eligible for rations. Confront these facts in all their naked glory for they smash to smithereens the myth that the famine deaths in Bengal were inevitable due to severe natural calamities compounded by the abnormal conditions of war. The same war had imposed terrible physical destruction on the U.K. even as it had largely left Indian borders untouched. Yet amidst the bombed out ruins in London, the British government had succeeded in meeting 100% of the physiological needs of its own citizens fully conscious of the fact that millions were dying in India as a result of its own policies.

How did India come to lend such huge sums of money? There were three sources of this. The first was the financial settlement of 1939. The British had always considered Indian revenues as their ancestral property which was available at their whim and fancy. During the First World War, they had even gifted to themselves a princely sum of £ 100 million representing an amount in excess of the annual revenues of the Indian Government. An increasingly restive Indian population made such an outright loot impossible. In November 1939, the British Government concluded an agreement with the Government of India. Accordingly, India was to bear the following costs:

- A fixed annual sum representing the normal net effective costs of the Army under peace conditions.
- An addition to allow for rise in prices

- The cost of such war measures as could be regarded as purely Indian liabilities by reason of their having been undertaken by India in her own interests, and
- A lump sum of payment of Rs 10 million towards the extra cost of maintaining India's external defense troops overseas.

Any expenditure which was not covered by any of the four points above was to be recovered from the British Government. As can be seen, the agreement is subject to an elastic interpretation to the advantage of the rulers. Nor, did they desist from so doing. As Bhatwadekar pointed out in 1944 itself that there grew a clamour in the UK for revision of the terms of the settlement. In the summer of 1943, the Finance Member of the Viceroy's Council paid a visit to London, wherein it was decided not to disturb the settlement but to adjust new items by an elastic interpretation of the principles of the settlement. With this new interpretation, the Government of India's military expenditure grew from Rs 500 million in 1939/40 to Rs 1,828 million in 1943/44.

The second source was on account of the fact that Government of India had taken on the additional task of acting as the agent of British Government for making their purchases of goods and services in India. An agent who charged no commission. An agent, who paid for his local purchases in cash and accepted payment in the form of securities which were not accepted by any one other than the Bank of England, who would also not give any commitment in respect of when it would honour them.

The third was the fact that all export earnings of India were lodged in London. Some £ 500 million were so acquired on account of purely commercial, non-government transactions during the war years. Any hard currency dollar earnings were promptly converted into Sterling security under the guise of conserving the hard earnings of the Empire for the prosecution of the War but in reality to meet the current consumption needs of the British.

It was no wonder that all colonies were the net contributors to the Dollar pool. India was a net contributor to the Dollar pool during the war by a considerable sum of US \$ 300 million. There is no prize for guessing who was the biggest dollar consumer

A novel mechanism was evolved to settle the claims of the Government of India for reimbursement of the expenditure incurred by it on behalf of the Allied powers. A mechanism that ensured that the payment was made, yet not made. In effect, making a virtually interest free credit available to the Government of U.K. free from any conditions, with an unspecified date of payment. It is this mechanism that was to give rise to the Sterling Balances. We shall now seek to understand this in greater detail.

The Government of England would settle the claims of the Indian Government by issuing it Sterling securities. The securities would then be given by the Government of India to its banker, the Reserve Bank of India. It is against these securities that Reserve Bank of India would issue Rupee funds to the Government of India. In such a case, the Reserve Bank held such securities in its Banking Division. Such securities were considered liquid and could be deployed in the purchase of Treasury Bills of the British government, yielding some returns. However, the Reserve Bank could issue Rupee funds in this manner only if its own cash reserve did not fall below Rs 100 million.

As we have already seen, the requirements of the Government of India for Rupee funds were huge. It soon became impossible for the Reserve Bank to keep issuing Rupee funds to the Government of India while maintaining its minimum cash reserve. What now? The answer was of course not that the Government of India would not get Rupee funds to pay for the defense needs of all and sundry. The answer was typically ingenious. When the Reserve Bank had no cash in its till, it had to transfer these securities to the Issue department. Such securities were lodged with the Bank of England, who then permitted the Reserve Bank to print currency against the security of these paper payment of the Government of UK. In turn, the Bank of England froze these securities. In other words, they could not be used to make any investments and thus earned no return. Soon the sterling securities in the Issue department far outstripped those in the Banking department and the average yield on the securities of Reserve Bank of India dropped below one percent.

As Bhatwadekar noted that in 1944 merely £ 200 million were in the Banking department whereas as much as £ 800 million were in the Issue department – frozen and earning no return.

What was to happen if the Government of India had no sterling securities but still needed Rupee funds? It was not possible to issue currency against Rupee security of more than Rs 500 million. This safeguard had been instituted after the experience of hyperinflation in Europe after the First World War. This was simply a problem that required no brains. The offending sub section (3) of section 33 of the Reserve Bank Act was suitably amended by an ordinance issued in February 1941. Now, the Reserve Bank was free to print as many notes as the Government of India wanted against the legal fiction of security of the Government's Treasury bills. Eminent economists like C.N. Vakil were horrified. This was Inflation in its naked form, they warned. Who had the time or the inclination to listen to them? Once again, complete lack of concern for the welfare of Indians came glaringly to the fore. All that was important was that the prosecution of war should go on unhindered. If it meant that the millions of Indians had to go hungry, it was not worth losing sleep over. By any stretch of imagination, meeting the Allied expenditure of the War in India could not be considered a responsibility of the Government of India. Even if we consider that India was in some way so beholden to the British that she had to take on this responsibility, the question that remains, was this the only way in which the financing of war was possible in India. Considering the state of Indian poverty, even if the British Government were to look for rupee finances by themselves in India, it would still have meant exploitation of India. For, why should Indian money have been spent for the British defense and not for its own development? In any event, a suggestion to this effect made by C.N.Vakil was rejected out of hand. His other suggestions that payments be made to India in the form of durable goods and not in paper securities or that India make proper Rupee loans to the Government of UK were angrily dismissed. Suggestions along these lines were also made in a resolution passed by the Board of Directors of the Reserve Bank of India in April 1944 to meet the same fate. How could they consider these suggestions? The supply of Goods to India would have harmed the British economy. Rupee loans would have come with an interest tag much higher than 0.8101 percent that the Sterling Balances carried.

The last suggestion of Vakil that the British liquidate their assets in India was almost seditious. The British overseas investment stood at £ 3,535 million in 1938. By 1945, a third had been liquidated and only £ 1,160 million worth of overseas investments remained. Not one of the investments in India was so liquidated.

Repeatedly, the British Cabinet was warned that the mode of war financing adopted by the British in India was disastrous to the larger interests of the country. Repeatedly, the Cabinet ignored the Indian warnings. I use the word British Cabinet knowingly and deliberately. We have already seen how little the Indians in the Viceroy's Council or even those supposedly in the Imperial War Cabinet counted. The so-called autonomy of the Government of India was a myth. The decision making remained with the British Cabinet. We have this from the pen of the British Prime Minister himself. Once, the Viceroy had stepped out of line. The reprimand was swift and brutal. We have already seen the Prime Minister's Personal Minute dated 13th December 1941 addressed to the Secretary of State, in which Winston Churchill had growled:

“The Viceroy should be warned that no change in our policy can be made without full Cabinet discussion beforehand.”

This very interesting Minute, we have already studied. At this moment it is enough to note that the Viceroy, the Supreme British Officer in India, was so much lower down in the British hierarchy that the Prime Minister would not address him directly. The rebuke was delivered through his boss, the Secretary of State, who himself did not get to attend all the Cabinet meetings. In the meantime, what other conclusion can be drawn than that the welfare, nay the very survival of millions of Indians, was knowingly and deliberately sacrificed by the British Cabinet for the sake of British interests.

In what way is this action any different from that of sending the Jews to the Gas chamber so that the German interests remained secure ?

Demanding that India contribute to the War cause that was far beyond the country's financial capacity, ridiculing any call for lessening the tempo of war financing as absurd, rejecting contemptuously any other alternative mode of financing, repeatedly ignoring the warnings in

respect of the havoc they were wrecking, confiscating export earning; the story is not yet complete. One more horrifying tale is yet to be told. The Colonial policy towards Gold and Silver.

In the early part of the war, the world endeavored to get gold as it could be freely used in any possible emergency. The Reserve Bank as we know used the Sterlings, Indian exports earned to pay off debts ignoring suggestions that it acquire gold. Far from acquiring gold, it actually exported gold. During 1939-42, net gold exports from India amounted to 4.435 million ounces at an average rate of Rs 111 per ounce. When the inflation reared its ugly head due to the British mode of War financing in India, the Government devised a novel scheme.

It took to selling gold on behalf of the government of UK and USA under the pretext of controlling inflation. The authorities were well aware that the limited sale of gold could in no way curb the inflation arising out of the large budget deficits.

Undeterred by such considerations, for the goal in any case was merely to drain money out of the country for the use by the British and their patrons, the Reserve Bank sold some 7.2 million ounces of gold. The average price realised in the sale was Rs 192 per ounce as against Rs 111 per ounce when India sold Gold. The difference of Rs 81 per ounce being once again the subsidy provided by Indians when the Gold was sold. So let us tabulate the cost to Indian economy on account of the Gold sale.

- Subsidy provided by India when it sold Gold at a discount of Rs 81 per ounce. The sale being 4.435 million ounces during 1939-42 or the subsidy amounted to Rs 360 million.
- Profit made by the British and the American Governments on sale of 7.2 million ounces of gold during 1943-46, at a profit of Rs 81 per ounce or Rs 583 million. Ethiopian and Australian governments also made inquiries about selling gold. The Bank of England was prepared to allow such a sale but on the basis of license fee amounting to 50% of the likely profit. No such fees had been levied on the American or British gold sale. Not surprisingly nothing came out of these proposals. Thus, the Indian Government lost out on revenues of at least Rs 291 million.

Taken together, the Gold sale cost the Indian economy at the very minimum Rs 651 million.

The story of Silver is similar. The Government sold some 131 million ounces of silver between 1939 to 1943 at market prices, which went on increasing. At the same time, it exported 199 million ounces of Silver to London at a fixed price of Rs 50 per tola. In June 1944, under a guarantee provided by the British, the United States supplied 226 million ounces of Silver to India under Lend-Lease. The Indian Government sold 50 million ounces of this in the market. The balance silver remained in bullion form and was later returned back to the United States. What were the financial implications of this?

- Silver Subsidy provided by India in exporting 199 million ounces (530 million tolas) of Silver at Rs 50 per 100 tola.

	Average Price (Rs/ 100 tola)	Sale Price (Rs/ 100 tola)	Subsidy/ 100 tola in Rs	Total Subsidy in Rs million
1939-40	55.33	50.00	5.33	7.00
1940-41	62.48	50.00	12.48	16.50
1941-42	66.70	50.00	16.70	22.10
1942-43	94.18	50.00	44.18	58.50
Assuming an average sale of 132.5 million tolas per year				
Total				104.10

- Now the profit made by the British Government on Silver sold by it

	Average Price (Rs/ 100 tola)	Quantity Sold in millions of tolas	Profit/ 100 tola in Rs	Total Subsidy in Rs million
1939-40	55.33	7.98	5.33	0.42
1940-41	62.48	47.88	12.48	5.97
1941-42	66.70	250.04	16.70	41.81
1942-43	94.18	42.56	44.18	18.80
Total				67.00

Thus, the total cost to the Indian economy on account of this silver sale amounted to Rs 171 million. The final bill for the gold and silver sale for the Indian economy came to Rs 822 million or about £ 62 million or US \$ 247 million. What does this figure represent?

Let us follow the good advice of Lord Keynes and count the cost in terms of bacon rations or rather rice rations. The price of Rice in Bengal in 1946 was about Rs 15 per maund (37.5 Kg). Thus Rs 822 million would have enabled the Government to procure about 2,055,000 tons of rice.

Secretary of State for India in January 1946 had desperately stated that India needed to have at least 2,000,000 tons of cereals to avert a famine. There was of course no suggestion that India should be given this free.

Now, we find that if only the British were to take into account the profit that had accrued to them on account of their Bullion policies in India, not only they should have made this available but made it available **free**.

The sordid manner in which the British devoured the Indian economic vitality would put any self-respecting vulture or even a hyena to shame.

The story has been so long that it is worth recapitulating it.

- In 1939, the British dragged India into a War without even a pretence of consulting Indian people. A War that had nothing to do with its interests or welfare in any manner.
- Not only was India made to pay for the cost of its own defense but made to provide for finances necessary to defend the British and their patrons. Sale of gold and Silver, confiscating hard currency earnings, any and every possible method was adopted to drain wealth out of the country.
- The manner of financing the defense of others was done in a manner most injurious to the Indian interests despite repeated warnings and various suggestions of other less evil alternatives.

This was on account of cold-blooded deliberate decisions of the British War Cabinet.

- The Indian representation on the British War Cabinet amounted to no more than a farce.
- The manner of financing led to India extending a loan of Rs 17,240 million at an interest cost of only 0.8101. This meant denial of free rations to a quarter of its rationed populations resulting in a wasted life, for God alone knows how many Indians.
- The very fact that India was made to pay for the costs of others, even as its own people died of hunger meant that the people who so died were as deliberately sent to their death as the Jews by Hitler.

The Noble laurate Mr. Amartya Sen has written a lot about the human cost of Bengal famine. I held him as hero like I once did hold Nehru in high esteem. I even put his photograph on my first book “Freedom Struggle – The Unfinished Story” In all my innocence, I requested him to enlighten the world on the human cost of the manner in which the British financed their war efforts – the debilitating impact of the Sterling loans they extracted from their African and Asian colonies. I was met with stony silence.

Surely if a Mechanical Engineer like me can understand this financial loot, a famed economist like Mr Sen should be able to speak as an authority on the subject. Not that he does not know. He does not want others to know what he does.

And that is very very shameful thing to do.

Chapter XVI

The British Auschwitz

It was in late 1942, some knowledge of the Nazi death camps became available in the West, when the exiled Polish Government in London published information supplied by its underground couriers. The identification of Auschwitz II as the unknown destination to which Jews from all over Europe were being deported, was confirmed from the accounts of five escapees in July 1944.

Auschwitz in the post war period has rightly become infamous for cold and deliberate murder of hundreds of thousands of Jews by the Nazis. The Nuremberg trials nailed the guilty down and managed to punish some of the perpetrators of the dastardly crimes against humanity. It can come as a consolation to no one nor the guilt of Nazis be toned down merely because in 1990, the collapse of Communism made available more credible estimates of the numbers actually killed at Auschwitz. The records released by the State Museum of Oswiecim, the Polish town which had played host to the Nazi horror story, indicate that the victims of Auschwitz numbered about 1.2 – 1.5 million of whom probably 800,000 – 1,100,000 were Jews. The original estimate of more than four million victims, which has become inscribed in the folklore of the Jew persecution, was based on an ambiguous telegram from Moscow responding to the requests of the Western governments after its troops had liberated Auschwitz on 27th January 1945. That the actual figure was much lower could not have been unknown earlier. It suited the Jews to have the higher number floating around as it could only aid their quest to have their own nation in Palestine. The Western governments were too busy keeping the limelight away from their Wartime apathy to the Jews.

On 31st May 1944 a British ‘Mosquito’ reconnaissance plane of 60 Photo Squadron had taken photos of the Auschwitz. One photograph taken on 25 August 1944, a month after the horrors of the Auschwitz were public knowledge; even showed the roof vents of the gas chambers, the chimneys of the furnaces, and groups of prisoners. Yet these photographs were not even developed. They were found unprinted in the archives of US Defense Intelligence Agency thirty years later.

Nor was this an isolated act. Repeated appeals by the Zionist groups to disrupt the operations of Auschwitz by bombing the place fell on deaf ears. One official of the British Foreign Office minuted: ‘a disproportionate amount of time ...is wasted....on these wailing Jews.’

No wonder, they found it prudent not to try and correct a statistical error. After all, murder of one million is no less heinous than that of four. It does not matter if Hitler killed three million or six, the fact remains that the mass murder had an effect that was completely unintended by Hitler. The fires of this disaster steeled the Jews who were finally able to form a nation of their own; ending two thousand years of wandering in the four corners of the world.

The Nazis got their just deserts, the Western governments succeeded in hiding their apathy. The Jews got their own nation; surest guarantee that their race would never again be subjected to a holocaust. The German Auschwitz did serve a purpose.

Let us now turn attention to the British Auschwitz in the Second World War. Wait a minute, did I say a British Auschwitz ? In the Second World War!!! Never heard of it, would be the common refrain. This is the tragedy. The German Auschwitz has been well documented and quite rightly reviled. In this case, as we have seen, even the wildly exaggerated number of deaths have been accepted as the Gospel.

The British Auschwitz has remained uncommented upon. By the term British Auschwitz, I am referring to the Bengal famine of 1943, where the dance of death has merely been sought to be explained away by glib and self-serving explanations.

Before, we try and understand why these explanations would not stand a moment’s scrutiny, let us try and understand the extent of this tragedy. The victims of the German Auschwitz at least had the pleasure of seeing their tormenters get their just punishments. They were to see the rise of their nation from the black smoke of the furnaces of Auschwitz. Their sufferings were not entirely in vain. The lot of victims of Bengal famines was to remain forgotten, with the world not even caring to take a count of their corpses.

So, just how many people died due to that terrible famine in 1943? If one were to believe the figure admitted by the Secretary of State for India, Mr. Amery in the House of Commons during the Consolidation Fund (Appropriation) Bill, Second Reading debate Commons on 28 July 1944, some 700,000 people had died of famine related causes in Bengal Famine. Consider that this was still wartime. Censorship prevailed and there was no television to beam the heart rendering images of men, women and children dying of hunger, it will take a brave man to accept the figure of Mr. Amery at its face value. The Cambridge Economic History of India, talks of some 1,500,000 deaths; almost double the number admitted to by Mr. Amery. Mr. Dieter Rothmund in his book 'An Economic History of India' has rightly pointed out that the figure of 1,500,000 famine deaths can be accepted only if one were to account only for the immediate deaths. If one were to take into account premature deaths of the famine ravished bodies succumbing to the epidemics, the total toll of the terrible Bengal Famine would rise to as high as 3,000,000. A figure as high as the total Jew victims of Hitler during the entire Second World War, when one takes into account the later estimates of Auschwitz tally of victims.

I can already see the tide of protests rising at this comparison. Actions of Hitler were deliberate, while the Bengal famine deaths were merely the foreordained lot of these ignorant Indians, best described as: *“Men and women, plague-ridden and hungry, living lives little better, to outward appearance, than those of the cattle that toil with them by day and share their places of sleep by night.”* And therefore what else could befall such people except that: *“Such Asiatic standards, and such unmechanized horrors, are the lot of those who increase their numbers without passing through an industrial revolution”*

The British had provided a safe and secure administration eliminating the age-old check of War on population growth. The ignorant Bengali peasants did not take advantage of the benevolent British administration to increase their food production but started breeding like rats. They could not but die when the crops failed. The factor of safety in India was nil. What could His Majesty's Government in Britain engaged in a mighty effort to save the world from the depredations of Nazism do? It was all the fault of these wretched man-animals.

Such have been the insidious arguments put forward to wash the blame of these large-scale deaths from the lily-white British hands. So what was the reality?

A good starting point to understand the reality is to study the debate in which Mr. Amery had admitted to the death of 700,000 people. For once the British hypocrisy had been replaced by a refreshing candor. No longer was there any more pretence that the British rule lasting over one hundred and eighty five years had improved the lot of the Indian people. At the very onset, Mr. Pethick-Lawrence admitted that people of India “are desperately poor, malaria ridden, living on impossible standards of life, with an immensely high rate of mortality.”

Yet, these desperately poor people had somehow brought about an economic miracle. For Mr. Lawrence pointed out that “When the War began, India was indebted.....to an amount running into several hundred million pounds. The position has been entirely reversed**India has become one of the greatest creditor countries of the world.**” This reversal of fortunes ‘was one of the greatest problems (for Britain).’

This is strange, is it not? Some of the poorest people of the world manage to pay off their loans running into hundreds of million of pounds and turn into one of the biggest creditors of the world. This should have been a moment of rejoicing. The final proof that the British rule was indeed good for India. All that was now necessary was to ask the Debtors to pay up, use the money for improving the lot of the Indian people. For hundreds of millions of pounds that were now owed to India was a huge sum of money in 1944. To put the matters in perspective, it had been envisaged that an expenditure of £ 1,000 million was enough to finance the entire first five-year plan of India. Why did Mr.Pethick-Lawrence consider that emergence of India as one of the greatest creditors of the world was a *Great Problem* and not a *Great Opportunity*. We need to examine this but first let us get back to the debate.

Following Mr.Pethick-Lawrence was Lieut-Colonel Elliot who bemoaned the fact that “population of India is increasing by about 6,000,000 a year....the factor of safety in India, as a whole, the margin above survival level of the average inhabitant, is very low.”

He then went on to remind the house about the great famine of Ireland a century ago, which had followed a 50% increase in Irish population between 1801 and 1841. His focus on population growth in Ireland as the sole cause for famine, was amazing. For he himself later admitted, that during the famine, George Bentinck and Disraeli had come to the House asking for an expenditure of £ 16,000,000 for industrial development of Ireland. The House had been kind enough to approve an expenditure of £ 620,000 i.e. a mere 4% of what the British Government had itself felt necessary. Mr. Elliot was nevertheless pained that despite this British generosity “Over 4,000,000 people left the country (Ireland) in the second half of the 19th century – 4,000,000 devil’s advocates against this country.”

It was Mr. Schuster, who drew attention to the often overlooked but one of the most important changes that were taking place in the War. “Millions of Indians are in the Armed Forces, and they will come back with new ideas of life and an appreciation of the realities of the present world which may not be fully shared by those whose attention had been turned inwards all the time to India’s domestic problems. No one can say what influence those millions will have on the course of Indian national opinion.” Mr. Schuster was bang on the target as the events in 1945-47 were to prove. Once again, let us get back to the debate.

Mr. Price was amongst those who recoiled in horror at the population explosion that seemed to be then taking place in India. As he said: “What is to be the problem when the population of India is 730,000,000 is a terrible nightmare at which all of us in this House can be frightened.” Well! Mr. Price may have been a little surprised to find that the Indian population which was around 400,000,000 when he spoke has by now crossed 1,200,000,000. India does suffer from many ills but Famines death is not one of them. Let us not be unfair to Mr. Price. For he did call for raising the productivity of Indian agriculture by initiating Land Reforms as well as making an investment of about £750,000,000. **He seemed to be one of those naïve fellows who felt that as “India has now a large credit balance and the financial question will not be as difficult as it was.”**

What was the Indian agriculture situation? India had 610,000,000 acres of cultivable land. Of this a mere 360,000,000 acres were being actually cultivated i.e. only 59%. We are talking about Cultivable land and not Irrigated land. And what were the yields. As pointed out by Mr. Sorren: “average yield of rice is only 800 lbs. per acre against 1,400 lbs. in China, 1,450 lbs. in United States, 2,000 lbs. in Egypt, 2,300 lbs. in Japan and finally 3,000 lbs. in Italy”

Was an investment of £750,000,000 a pipe dream for India? Well, by this time the Indian debtors owed India a little over £ 1,000,000,000. So not only the required investment of £750,000,000 within her reach but she had money to spare if only her Debtors were to pay her the amounts due to her promptly but were they going to do so ? Mr. Sorren had these gems to offer.

“Reference has been made to the £ 1,000,000,000 that has been accumulated in this country since the beginning of the War.” Oh! So India was now the Creditor for Britain and that too by over One thousand million pounds. No wonder, Mr.Pethick-Lawrence saw this as a Great Problem. And what were the British intentions regarding repayment. Again let us turn to Mr. Sorren: “If the Tata Plan (for economic reconstruction of India) itself partly depends on the realisation of the sterling balances accumulating in this country, we have to be very careful how we deal with the matter...we should be careful what we say about these balances.”

Let alone talk of repayment, Mr. Sorren seemed to indicate, that there was something vulgar and obscene about India even thinking of using the money she had lent to Britain to improve the wretched lot of her people.

While Mr. Sorren would have no doubt drawn a number of approving nods, Professor A.V. Hill nearly caused the entire British establishment to choke in horror as he pointed out that: “We have heard about communal difference leading to bloodshed and physical violence. The total number of people killed and injured in communal disturbances is a very small percentage of those we kill on the roads. That, I think gives a true picture of the importance of communal differences in the Indian countryside.”

He then went out to deliberately set out certain facts in a manner designed to make people's flesh creep for "that needs to be done". What were these facts that the good Professor set out. Let us turn our attention to them:

- "The average new born child in India has even chance of living to 22; in Britain and America, the same child has an even chance of living to nearly 70.
- This is not, as is commonly suggested, solely a matter of a high infantile death rate; it is due to a mortality which is 4 to 8 times higher than ours right up to the age of 55.
- There are millions of people who are ill fed. Even among those who are comparatively well fed the standard is much lower than we ourselves would tolerate.
- Many of these things will depend mainly for their solution on the woman...(whereas) only 8% of the female population of India over 5 years of age can read or write."
- The fundamental reason for the Bengal famine of last year is that the factor of safety in India is almost zero."

So starving, illiterate millions living forever on the edge was the Indian reality in 1944 after close to two century of British rule. Perhaps, the Professor was a rabble-rousing communist out to tar the British achievements in India. Surely, his 'flesh creeping facts' were rebutted. Well! Mr. Clement Davies who rose to speak after the Professor had this to say: "I have been a Member of this House for over 15 years and I have listened to every Debate on India and Indian affairs, but I do not remember such a note of unanimity as I have heard to-day, or such a single current of opinion running through all the speeches."

Nor was the Professor disputed on his Facts by any one later in the debate.

Mr. Davies' was kind enough to seek to provide for an explanation for the Bengal Famine. He was unlike Mr. Reed, who sought to prove that "there has been no famine in Bengal-not in the recognised Indian

sense.” The explanation of Mr. Davies ran as follows: “As has already been pointed out, the margin of safety, if it can be so called, in India is so thin that any cataclysm, any change whatever, brings with it inevitably some tremendous disaster. Two hundred million out of the 400,000,000 people in India do not get enough to eat in any event. They are all the time on the verge of a bare existence. Then come bad harvests, a tremendous storm, the loss of 1,500,000 tons of rice from Burma, the taking away of the boats from fishing, the congestion of traffic because of the military situation and needs. All these coming together brought about this tremendous disaster...It was followed by epidemics, which always follow under nourishment and malnutrition, and which took as heavy a toll, if not heavier, than the famine.”

It was this explanation of the Famine that was endorsed by Mr. Amery in his concluding reply. He said : “The causes of the Bengal Famine were fairly and eloquently stated by my hon. And learned Friend the Member for Montgomery (Mr. Davies).”

A nation that owed hundreds of million pounds repays the entire debt, goes on to lend over a thousand million pounds but neither Mr. Davies nor Mr. Amery even bother to refer to this huge drain on Indian resources as being in any way responsible for the Bengal Famine.

Bad harvest, storm, loss of Burma, traffic congestion due to war killed 700,000 Indians of hunger as per the admission of the British themselves. Yet, miraculously these debilitating constraints spared the British and American soldiers stationed in India, who remained well fed even as the Bengalis dropped dead, like flies all over. By the own admission of Mr. Amery, “the immense increase in the Armed Forces, more particularly from this country and the United States, has added, in effect, another province, a consuming but not a producing province, to the problem of India’s food supply.”

India seemed to have money to repay the British as well as lend them huge sums of money but when it came to arranging for food for her own consumption, it had no money.

Once again in the words of Mr. Amery: “The House has been informed that 800,000 tons of wheat will have been shipped to India in the year ending this September. I fully realise that the Indian

Central Food Advisory Council has expressed disappointment with these figures as compared with their own standard of 1,000,000 tons a year of imported grain for current consumption with 500,000 added for reserve. That disappointment is natural in view of India's own grave anxiety. The preoccupations of His Majesty's Government over an even wider field, are no less anxious and critical...All I can inform the House is that question of finding ships for further consignment of grains to India is under active consideration”

India needs a million tons of food grains, which would only partially feed its four hundred million people. It begs to have a reserve stock of a bare half a million and all that Mr. Amery has to offer is platitudes to the nation which is one of its biggest Creditors.

One million tons of food grains and a reserve stock of half a million for a population of 400 million, so by the same logic the British should have been scouting around for ships to import a hundred thousand tons and a reserve stock of about fifty thousand tons for its own population of some 42 million. Yes! We know, the British were better fed than the Indians, so may be the figures should be - import of two hundred thousand tons of grains and a reserve stock of a hundred thousand tons. Keep these figures in mind, dear readers, for they will come back to haunt us later.

What a perfect system. India has all the money in the world to play the perfect host to the Allied troops as well as keep on lending money to the British. When it comes to her own requirements, suddenly the British Government realises there is neither money nor ships to meet even the minimum requirements of India. The Indians better do with 20% less not to talk of building any reserves. Then they bemoan the fact that the factor of safety in India is zero.

If the Nazis thought that they knew everything that was there to know about Exploitation, it was only because they went to their graves blissfully unaware of better systems devised by their smarter enemies across the Channel.

The Indian reality that emerges from a study of this debate is very very disturbing. For this was a debate that took place on the British soil, in the House of Commons, the Mother of Parliaments – not in some rabble rousing street corner meeting. What else can one

conclude but that by 1944, India had sunk to the lowest possible level of economic existence under the much touted British rule.

It was no more than a very pale shadow of a nation that was a leading Industrial nation of the world in 1750. The country was not in a position to produce food to sustain its citizens beyond the ripe old age of 22. A small tremor could send shock waves ripping its social and economic structure as had happened during the Bengal famine.

No Indian had any reason, whatsoever, to thank the British for anything.

For what were the Indians to be grateful to the British?

For its starving millions?

For its illiterate population?

For its zero factor of safety? or

For the fact that there was no food security?

For those, who blamed the breeding habits of the Indians, Mr. Amery had himself some chilling facts to offer. During the period 1924 – 44, Indian population had increased by 27%. The increase in acreage under crops was 10%, whereas the increase in acreage under food crops was only 1%.

If this imbalance could be corrected India could grow its own food. If India could grow its own food, then His Majesty's Government, which had much more weightier issues than the hunger of Indian people to worry about, could be safely divested of its responsibility of finding Ships to transport grains in the middle of a War.

All that His Majesty's Government had to do was to direct the Viceroy to invest some £ 750,000,000 in the Indian agriculture.

It did not have to fund a farthing. The money could have come entirely from the Indian revenues alone. For, if India could lend over 1,000 million pounds to the British, surely a far better use of this money was to invest the 750 million pounds necessary to guarantee a

decent meal to her own people. But, then of course, this was a big 'IF'. The British were fighting for Democracy, against Fascism and Nazism. Their claim on this money was far far more important. If this meant sacrificing lives of a few million Indian niggers, the price was well worth paying.

Let us now come to the strange phenomenon of this pauper nation emerging from the War as one of the largest Creditor nations of the world. First of all let us understand the true implications of what India had foregone by not only repaying some imaginary debts of hundreds of millions of pounds but also lending a thousand million pounds to the British. Were these small sums of money? Let us put the figures in perspective.

- India's 700,000 villages could be connected by constructing 400,000,000 miles of roads at a cost of £ 340,000,000
- Universal education for all boys and girls from 6 to 14 needed an expenditure rising from £ 7,500,000 to an eventual total of over £ 200,000,000 a year
- We already know about the £ 750,000,000 necessary for ensuring food security.

We all know that neither the roads were constructed nor was the money spent on spreading education. The price of denying investments in Agriculture was paid for by the inhuman deaths of millions of Bengalis. This is the price paid by India for the noble cause of fighting a War to maintain the British hegemony in the World.

Secondly, where did the money come from? Take for instance, the Second War Budget of the Central Government presented in the Legislative Assembly on February 28, 1941. It estimated revenue for 1941-42 at nearly £ 80 million pounds and an expenditure of £ 95 million pounds, with defense expenditure alone accounting for £ 63 million.

How could a country with an annual revenue of a bare £ 80 million raise enough finances to complete a financial transaction of repaying and lending hundreds of million of pounds within a short period of five years i.e. between 1939 – 1944. This bit of financial engineering is something that we have already studied.

Suffice to say that it would take a brave man to suggest that anything but financial ruin awaits a country that attempts to embark on such a mad venture as trying to lend an amount equal to twelve times its normal annual revenue within a span of five years, for a cause that had nothing to do with the welfare of its own people. If this lending is a forced process thrust upon it by another country, then what else can it be called but a loot that would put all Chengis Khans of the world to shame.

And what if the process of this forced lending on such a massive scale continues uninterrupted even as a severe famine stalks the country? Surely, then every death occurring due to hunger is a sheer case of murder by the country which is availing this forced loan.

As we shall see, the British did force India to embark on this mad venture with no let up even at the height of Bengal famine. **The Bengal Famine is therefore the British Auschwitz.** The British War Cabinet is as guilty of War Crimes against humanity for the death of millions of Bengali peasants, as were the Nazis for the murder of the Jews. It is to this grisly story that we shall now turn.

Hopefully, enough evidence has been presented to convince my juries, the readers; of the existence of a British Auschwitz. I feel no joy as I come to this the conclusion. A numbness pervades my being and I feel dull and listless.

What is more horrifying? The fact that the British were so unfeeling and inconsiderate towards the Indian life that they did not hesitate to construct their own version of Auschwitz in Bengal. Why for that matter Indian life alone.

The very fact that they accumulated Sterling Balances from all parts of Asia and Africa meant that they were completely indifferent to any human life other than their own. Or the fact that the **British have so successfully hidden the existence of their Auschwitz for so long?**

Chapter XVII

Oh! To Be a British Swine

Bad harvest, storm, loss of Burma, traffic congestion due to War, these have given out as the reason for the terrible famine of Bengal by the British establishment. An explanation that has been swallowed by a gullible Indian public. The truth is a little different.

By 1946, a victorious British nation had every reason to be grateful to India. Not only had it repaid all its loans, lent money but had also made significant contribution to the War effort. This was lauded by Mr. Amery in the following words: “ India’s army has expanded from a nucleus of some 200,000 to 2,000,000 – the largest voluntary Army in the world...Indian Divisions in this war have fought their victorious way from the mountains of Abyssinia to the Appennines, from the waters of Damascus to the Arno. Those who fought with them, and those who fought against them alike, have acknowledged their quality.... I wish time would allow me to go to any length into the immense contribution which India has made to the Allied cause in munitions and military equipment of all kinds-in military equipment of all kinds-in military stores, in textiles, cottons and woolens, leather goods, parachutes, steel, in fact every conceivable element that enters into modern war. I would only sum it up by saying that, measured in terms of money, that material contributions of India has already amounted to some £ 500,000,000.

So let us take a look at the manner in which this debt of gratitude was repaid by the British after the War. 1946 was a bad year in respect of food availability throughout the world. The importing countries needed supplies of some 19 million tons of wheat in the first six months of the year, whereas the available supply was about 12 million tons, leaving a shortage of some 7 million tons or some 37%. It is in this tense atmosphere that on the 30th January 1946, the Secretary of State submitted an alarming report on the Indian Food situation to the British Cabinet.

Let us see what this report says: “There has been a further grave deterioration in India’s food position owing to widespread failure of crops as result of the continued lack of normal winter rains in most of the Provinces. Hitherto the Government of India have asked for

imports of food grains (wheat and rice) in 1946 of 1.5 million tons. Since this figure was calculated, losses were reported up to December of 1 million tons of cereals, offset by an improvement of 1 million tons in Bengal. A further deterioration of another 1.3 million tons has now been reported, involving a net overall deterioration of 2 million tons since the Government of India estimated their import requirement. The Government of India have accordingly asked for an additional 500,000 tons of imports making a total requirement of 2 million tons in 1946.”

Let us do some elementary grade arithmetic first. Government of India asked for 1.5 million tons and then found to its horror that there was a further deterioration of 2 million tons after they had estimated their import requirement of 1.5 million tons. Now if 1.5 million tons was original estimate and there was a further deterioration of 2 million tons, the revised requirement should have been 3.5 million tons and not 2 million as stated in the Memo. Unless, the English and the elementary grade arithmetic that I have learnt is fundamentally flawed. If so, I seem to have company, for the person who originally read the memo seems to have been as surprised as I have been, as is evident from his pencil noting in the margins.

After taking a look at the position of availability of food in each of the Provinces, the memo went on to explain:

“3. Imports of food grains into India during the last few years have never been sufficient to enable the Government to build up the working stocks which they have always regarded as essential to make their position tolerably secure. As a result the Indian Food Department now find themselves without the minimum stocks which they urgently require in order to prevent the occurrence of shortage...Only an acceleration of imports from abroad can enable the Government of India during the coming months to feed the cities and prevent not merely local food shortages, but widespread starvation....”

Thus even as India continued to lend money to the British, it had no money to buy food for its own pressing needs. The same drain of money had prevented investments in Agriculture leading to the need to depend on imports.

- “5. The Government of India have examined the possibility of a reduction of ration scales all over India. Certain reductions are being made, but there is little room for effecting much savings in this direction. The actual off-take of rationed cereals in India is at present under 60% of the potential total on a per capita basis, owing to the fact that the poorer section of the rationed population do not consume the whole ration because of the high prices of the food grains. It is felt that any attempt to reduce the ration substantially on an all India basis would create panic, thus causing the off-take to increase and seriously aggravating procurement difficulties. I should emphasize in this connection that, although the calory value of the cereal ration in India is 1600 calories a day, the average calory value of cereals actually consumed in India is only 1,100 calories a day per head of the rationed population. In India cereals form at least 80% of the diet.”

Let us get our calculators out and see what is being said. If the cereals form 80% of the diet and if the cereals consumption amounts to 1,100 calories, it would not take a genius to realise that the calory value of an average Indian diet could not exceed 1,400 calories under the normal situation. Thus, by the confession of the Secretary of State himself, the daily diet of an average Indian under the British rule consisted of a lower caloric intake inferior to that given to the inmates of Hitler's death camps. Now, the draught threatened even this meager rations. No wonder, he warned that :

- “6. We are thus forced to the conclusion that only imports from abroad can save the situation....Unless assistance can be made available from abroad on a much wider scale the Government of India believe that India will be involved in a famine of a dimension and intensity greater than in 1943...the reoccurrence of famine condition would inevitably provoke widespread disorders all over India....

7 I think that the situation calls for action on the following lines:

- (a) His Majesty's Government should continue to make every effort to accelerate shipment to India of the 400,000 tons of wheat already allotted to India...so that as much as

possible of this wheat may arrive in India before the end of April. Steps should be taken to ensure that supplies are not held up by shortage of shipping.

- (b) The wheat exporting countries should be invited to increase their flour extraction rates to 80% at the earliest practicable moment, thereby releasing more wheat for export...I should support action...to raise the extraction rate in this country.
- (c) H.M.G. should endeavour to secure a larger allotment to India of the world supplies of wheat available during the second half of 1946.
- (d) As soon as availabilities of rice during the second quarter of 1946 can be estimated considerations should be given to India's special claims to receive a large allocation of rice during this period.
- (e) H.M.G. should welcome the proposed visit of the Indian Food Member's delegation to London and give the delegation every possible assistance in their task of presenting India's case in Washington."

This memo is a revelation in itself. India was faced with a Famine, there was a serious food shortage in the world and hence virtually no hope of any additional food grain availability for India. If anyone could make food available to India, it was United Kingdom for its own demand was estimated at 2,515,000 tons.

In other words, the UK requirement for 1/10th of Indian population was same as that of India.

The supplies were expected to be about 2,200,000 tons. Moreover, it always maintained reserve stocks of about 1,000,000 tons. Thus, even if it made 500,000 tons of food grain available to India, it would still have been left with some 200,000 tons of food grain in reserve. Remember this would not have been an act of charity but a merely a small repayment of India's loans. Well! Paying off loans does not seem to have been a major concern for the British.

Moreover, it was quite all right for India to deny herself the need to meet its own requirements forget about the luxury of building any kind of a reserve stock. It was far more important to lend money to the British but for the U.K. to operate without a reserve stock of anything less than a stock of one million tons was unthinkable. Naturally, there was not even a suggestion that some food grains meant for the U.K. should be sent to India.

There was one more possible source of supply of rice to India. At this time, Siam (Thailand) had a surplus rice of 1.5 million tons, which was not available for export due to the insistence of the H.M.G. that it be supplied to Great Britain free of charge!! If it did not want to divert any food grain from the U.K., it could have at least paid up some of the Indian loans, so that India could have bought the necessary rice from Siam instead of going to Washington with a begging bowl. This line of action was not even considered in the British Cabinet.

The memo was considered in the British Cabinet Meeting of 31st January 1946 and expectedly the H.M.G. decided to welcome the proposed visit of Indian Food Member to Washington and did no more for India. By 25th March 1946, the U.K. had been successful in persuading the United States and Canada to release in full its own requirement. Indian quota continued to be short of its requirement. Now the Cabinet deliberated the possibility of securing export of ground nuts from India even as India continued to be threatened by Famine. The Minister of Food saw nothing wrong in this for he had been advised that the extent to which Indians could use ground nuts as a food stuff to replace cereals was limited.

By 10th April, the British Cabinet had devised the means of shifting the responsibility of averting widespread starvation in India to the United States. The British continued to maintain that it was highly dangerous to allow its stock to fall below 800,000 tons, which represented 8 weeks of consumption. Its meeting of the 10th April was important in one more respect. H.M.G. reiterated the principle that its responsibility was not confined to assuring wheat supplies to the United Kingdom alone. It was also responsible to prevent food shortages in other parts of the Empire.

By the 12th April, 1946 it became clear that the U.K. might have a shortfall in supplies between July – September 46 to the extent of some 600,000 tonnes over its stated requirements of 2,515,000 tons. Yet, the H.M.G. decided to divert 100,000 tons of food grains to countries as desired by the United States during the months of April and May.

Once again, the glaring contrast in its reaction to the U.S. pressure and the desperate pleas of India becomes vividly clear. In January, despite being quite comfortable with its own stocks, it did not even consider diversion of food grains to India. Now when the U.S. turned the screws, it suddenly discovered that it had not eight weeks of stocks but something close to twelve weeks of stocks after taking into account stocks in shops and on farms. Once this discovery was made, H.M.G. took the additional precaution of securing the guarantee of the President of the United States and magnanimously made available 100,000 tons of grains meant for it for the sake of other countries. Well, the Indians can take heart from the fact that the H.M.G. was to insist that India was to get some small part of this diverted grain.

The Food situation continued to be grave. With this, the British conservativeness scaled new peaks. By the 17th April, the Minister for Food shocked his Cabinet Colleagues by insisting that a minimum stock of some 1,300,000 (representing over 12 weeks of consumption) tons of food grains was absolutely essential. He, therefore, proposed to introduce rationing of Bread from July. The proposal was deferred. In the meanwhile, the British continued their attempts to please the Americans. They even agreed to raise the grain diversion from the U.K. in April – May from 100,000 tons to 200,000. Certainly, it seems that the prospect of death of millions of Indians hardly dented the British stiff upper lip. On the other hand, a crease on the brow of the American President could make them jump through the loop.

The Minister of Food continued his battle for higher levels of stocks but for once the Cabinet was firm. On 24th April, it ruled that in view of the grave situation in the world, the U.K. could live with stocks of 800,000 tons of food grains or some eight weeks of consumption. The Cabinet continued to fight shy of introducing Bread rationing but accepted other measures of economy such as reducing the weight of Bread loaf, ban on serving Bread with the main meals in the restaurants, increasing extraction rates to 90%.

By May 1946, the Americans had grown tired of the British attempts to palm off their responsibilities on to them, while maintaining large reserve stocks of food grains in their own island fortress. Indeed, the Americans accused the British of holding on to stocks of grains that were considerably higher than any other importing country and even higher than the stocks of the Americans themselves. They now insisted that they would undertake to meet the entire requirement of the British occupied Germany and half the requirement of India only if the U.K. accepted a cut of 200,000 tons in their grain allocation. The British Cabinet had no go but to give in to the American ultimatum. Now, the Minister of Food finally got the support to proceed with the preparations for introducing Bread rationing. The Cabinet approval for the Bread rationing was given on the 27th June, when the Minister of Food informed the Cabinet that the food stocks in U.K. were going to fall to about 513,000 tons in August or just a five week supply. Bread Rationing was to take effect in the United Kingdom from 21st July 1946.

Thus, we find that at no stage was the British Cabinet prepared to accept a food stock of anything less than five weeks of consumption. If it agreed to divert any food grain, it was only against iron clad guarantees. The concern shown by the British Cabinet for the British lives is really touching, when viewed against that shown for the Burmese lives. In the same Cabinet Meeting of 31st January, where the Indian plea fell on deaf ears, the Minister of Food indignantly protested against the insolent refusal of the British Governor of Burma to export 400,000 tons of rice. All that the poor fellow had done was to ask for a guarantee for replacement of the exported rice in case Burma itself was to later face a local famine.

The Minister of Food was livid for, “it would be impossible to concede this claim for absolute priority, since no one could foresee what the world rice situation might be in the second half of the year”. He even accused Burma of not taking into account the even more serious situation in other parts of Asia. In this, he had the full support of the Cabinet. Burma was made to export more rice than it could afford with no firm guarantee of replacement, even if this exporting country was to itself later face famine.

In the British scheme of things, it was time to announce an emergency if there was any danger of its own stocks falling below a six-week consumption level which in any case on a per capita basis was ten times higher than that in the Asian colonies. If others, so much as thought of building up any reserve stocks even at their vastly reduced levels of consumption, they were promptly hauled over the coals. And woes betide those like Siam, who refused to supply free rice to these saviors of the world. On the other hand, if Malaya had no money to buy rice, then it was only a matter to be considered as part of the general problem of providing financial assistance towards rehabilitation of Malaya – not something fit for the British Cabinet to lose sleep over. It was another matter that it was Malaya, India, Burma that were providing Dollars to the U.K. enabling it to buy its grain allocations from the U.S., Canada etc. It was not out of charity that the British Cabinet had accepted the principle that it was responsible for ensuring food availability in other parts of the Empire. This amazing part of the story has already been seen in the Empire Dollar Pool. Let us here, confine ourselves to the sheer availability of the food grains in that fateful year.

As the date for introduction of the Bread Rationing Scheme in the United Kingdom came near, it became clear that the projections of the Minister of Food in respect of the availability of food grains had been alarmist. The low point of stock availability was expected at the end of August. In July, it was clear that even in August, the availability of stocks would be at least a 100,000 tons more than the earlier projection of the Minister of Food. The availability of the food grains after August was expected to be comfortable. Now the Cabinet was vertically split on the Scheme. Even the Prime Minister's intervention did not settle the issue and opinions against the introduction of Bread Rationing continued to be voiced. What seems to have carried the day in favour of introduction is a fear that failure to do so was bound to increase pressure to divert even more grain away from the U.K.

In the meanwhile, the acute Indian problem would not simply disappear. "The Government of India" noted the Secretary of State in his letter to the Minister of Food of the 8th August 1946, "have indeed perhaps been lucky to have got so far...The situation", he warned, "is therefore very serious and must inevitably lead, unless measures can be taken to counter it, not merely to local breakdowns but to widespread disaster and large scale famine.....The Government of

India feel that their main hope of tiding over the disaster lies in augmenting shipments to India from the U.S.A. and they have suggested that this might be achieved by an all around cut of 15 per cent in the programme of other claimants on the United States supplies during August, the United Kingdom giving a lead to the rest by offering to reduce their own programme by this amount for diversion to India”. Famine or no famine, the U.K. was not going to divert any grain. The Secretary of State could not even bring himself around to even repeat the suggestion of Government of India.

As desired by the Prime Minister, this letter was circulated for the consideration by the Cabinet on 10th August 1946. Why was he once again being a prophet of gloom and doom?

A look at the Note on the Food situation in India during the period August to October 1946, sent along with the letter to the Minister of Food; would be of help.

“According to the latest figures provided by the Government of India the total stocks available in India on the 1st August for maintaining the rationing systems for food grains in the deficit Provinces and States were estimated at 1,190,000 tons... the estimated stock position in India....is as tabulated below:

***Estimated Stock Position of Food Grains in India
1946***

	<i>Stocks on 1st</i>	<i>Internal Supplies</i>	<i>Imports</i>	<i>Total Supplies</i>	<i>Offtake</i>
<i>August</i>	1,190	137	261	1,588	720
<i>September</i>	868	111	288	1267	717
<i>October</i>	550	110	251	911	717
<i>November</i>	194				

2. The Government of India calculate the minimum stocks which they require in order to prevent a breakdown in their rationing at six weeks supply, which is equal to about one million tons.”

One million tons of food for a population of 400 million Indians amounted to six weeks consumption, while the same quantity amounted to a ten weeks of consumption for 42 million citizens of the U.K. What kind of scale is this? As if this is not enough, look at the apologetic manner in which this meager stock said to be representing six weeks of requirements of 400 million Indians is sought to be justified.

“In view of the vast territories for which they are responsible, which are comparable with the whole European continent rather than with any individual European country, and bearing in mind the difficulties of communication in India especially during the monsoon, an average level of stocks of six weeks supply, which normally involves a much lower margin in many areas, is not at all an unreasonable requirement.

It will be seen, however, that average stock position on 1st September will fall below the minimum safety level of six weeks of supply; that on 1st October average stock will be sufficient for about three weeks’ consumption and that by 1st November they will have been so seriously reduced that only about one week’s supplies will be available. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that the above calculations assume that supplies from abroad will arrive according to schedule, whereas past experience has shown that for one reason or another, the fulfillment of shipping programme is invariably subject to considerable delay. It is obvious that the Government of India will inevitably be faced with a very serious situation from the middle of September onwards.

3. The figures show that in order to maintain the Government of India’s stocks at the level of six weeks’ supply, it would be necessary to ship, so as to arrive before the end of September, over and above supplies now in sight, an additional 500,000 tons of cereals from abroad, and a further 350,000 tons for arrival before the end of October. This is clearly impracticable to, and we must face the fact that, whatever measures are taken, it will probably be impossible to avoid at any rate local breakdowns of rationing in India from about middle of September onwards. It is suggested, however, that we should at any rate aim at maintaining stocks in India at a level – say of one month’s consumption (about 717,000 tons) – which should enable the Government of India at least to keep food situation

generally under control and to avert a widespread calamity of the dimensions which seem inevitable on the basis of the imports from abroad at present in sight.”

First an apologetic pleading for maintaining stocks of six weeks consumption, then giving it up to settle on four weeks or 717,000 tons, on grounds of practical considerations. 717,000 tons which as per the British standards of consumption represented a mere FIVE days of stock.

4. “It will be seen from the figures in paragraph 1 above that in order to provide the government of India with one month’s stock, it would be necessary to ship in addition to present programmes a further 167,000 tons of cereals for arrival in India before the end of September and yet another 356,000 tons before the end of October, or a total of 523,000 tons over the two months.
5. What measures are open to us to secure the arrival of the additional imports...
6. In view of the time factor, it seems unlikely that any of the measures suggested in paragraph 5 above can have much effect on the situation in India during September....The only further expedient which seems to be an appeal to the United States to make further supplies available for India this month in addition to the 80,000 tons of wheat and flour which they are already providing, but if additional supplies from America are to arrive in time to help in September they must be shipped at once, or at any rate during the next fortnight. If a further 100,000 tons could be obtained this month or early next month from the United States, it might, in conjunction with all the other measures indicated above, enable the Government of India to tide over the situation and prevent a major disaster until the end of October, after which the improvement in internal procurement in India from November onwards as a result of the autumn harvests in Southern India may enable the Government of India successfully weather the storm.”

All that was being sought to provide a ration to Indians that the inmates of Auschwitz may have found inadequate, was 100,000 tons of food for the nation which was *One of the Biggest Creditors in the World*. Was it forthcoming? We move on to 14th August 1946, when it was discussed in the British Cabinet.

By now it was clear that the August end stocks in the U.K. would be in excess of 600,000 tons as against the alarmist forecast of less than 500,000 tons made on the basis of which the decision to introduce Bread Rationing had been taken. The expected availability for the rest of the year was in line with demand. The Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Transport, confirmed that Ships were available. Would the British Government now respond to the frenetic pleas of its own Minister and agree to the diversion of some wheat to India?

Only the most foolish or the utter naïve would have dared to hope. Quite expectedly, the Minister of Food insisted on increasing the already comfortable reserve stocks of the U.K. Let India be damned and the Cabinet concurred. Now that the Americans had become wise to the British game, attention was turned to Argentina. They were accused of holding back export permits for 238,000 tons of maize that India had purchased in order to influence their trade negotiations with H.M.G. The United States was just too big to ignore and attempts to rope them in continued.

In the meantime, there was no question of allowing any grain meant for the U.K. was to go the India way.

Try as it may, the British Government could not get rid of the Indian food problem. Once again on the 2nd September 1946, the Secretary of State was to inform the Cabinet:

“In spite of every effort which has been made during the last three weeks to tap new sources of supply and to expedite shipment of cereals to India there will be a gap on present estimates of 153,000 tons during September and October between supplies at present in sight and what would be required to maintain an average of five weeks’ working stocks in India...What is at stake is not only the lives of millions, but also the whole of India’s political future and her relations with the British Commonwealth.

- 1 “The main possibility which I see of making further contribution towards tidying over the most critical period in India up to the end of October, after which, with the cessation of the monsoon internal procurement in India may be expected to improve, would be to divert to India, say 100,000 tons of wheat out of September shipments from Canada at present destined to the United Kingdom. I fully realise the political and other difficulties of any such decision in present circumstances, but a famine in India would have such grave consequences that I must ask the Cabinet to consider most seriously whether – apart from any humanitarian considerations – this would not be the wisest course to take from the point of view of this country’s own long – term interests. I need hardly point out the political impossibility of taking any steps in the direction of abolishing bread rationing or of reducing the extraction rate in the United Kingdom at a time when millions in India may be forced with starvation.”

This is the third time, a very senior member of the British Government brought before it for urgent consideration, the extent of Indian Food problem. In essence, it was the issue of making food available to Indians at a level which would have been considered starvation diet in any decent country. Nothing, as we have seen, came out of the first two attempts.

Let us see if the Indians were to be lucky the third time around. For, now he was appealing not for the sake of humanitarian angle but the long term interests of the United Kingdom itself. First, the details to understand for ourselves the gravity of the Indian situation.

The stocks of cereals likely to be available to the authorities in India for meeting the ration in the deficit Provinces and States are estimated to be as follows....

“Indian Food Situation

figures in thousand tons

	Opening Stock	Internal Supplies	Imports	Total Supplies	Offtake
August	1,278	154	251	1,683	666
September	1,017	173	249	1,439	683
October	756	139	394	1,289	662
November	627	211	480	1,318	667
December	651	600			

2. It will be seen from the above that the average of the stocks of deficit Provinces and States will fall to under 5 weeks' offtake on the 1st October and to about 4 weeks' offtake on the 1st November and again on the 1st December. Though there is some improvement (due largely to earlier procurement) since the Cabinet last reviewed the position, (on 14th August) the situation remains grave. The Government of India estimate that an average stock level equal to 6 weeks' offtake (about 900,000 tons) and a minimum stock level equal to one month's offtake in each deficit Province and State are necessary to avoid local breakdowns in rationing arrangements. Owing to the size of India it is impossible to get stocks level in all Provinces and States and stocks in some of them will fall much below the averages quoted above. The Government of India judge that they must expect local breakdowns in September, the number of which will go on increasing as the time passes unless larger imports are received. They consider that larger supplies in October may make all the difference between local breakdowns and a general breakdown. The danger spots seem likely to be Travancore, Cochin, Bengal and Madras where rice is the staple diet of the population. In order to bring average stocks up to a level equal to 5 weeks' offtake, i.e. one week less than that for which the Government of India ask, it would be necessary to

ship an additional 153,000 tons for arrival in September/October....If this additional quantity can be provided the position could probably be held generally....In so far as they cannot be provided the period of acute crisis will extend into November and December.

3. In a personal appreciation of the situation the Viceroy has emphasised the danger of the stocks in the hands of any local administration in India falling below one month's offtake...He warns us that if a breakdown occurs shortly after the new Indian political Government assumes power, it is inevitable that the blame would be laid on His Majesty's Government and on the Government of the United States. To the consequent bitterness and recrimination would be added the real danger of breakdown in administration and the creation of a difficult law and order situation at a time when the communal position is at its most menacing."

For years, the Indians had been living on subsistence diet. Now from January onwards, we have it on the authority of the Secretary of State that a grave Famine was stalking India making it difficult for the Government to provide even the incomplete ration of food to the people. In the very first memo of the year on the subject of Indian Food situation, the Secretary of State had warned, "the reoccurrence of famine condition would inevitably provoke widespread disorders all over India....". If in September, "the communal position was at its most menacing", it could not be anything other than the Secretary of States' warning coming true. For, it would not take a Social Scientist to understand that a body racked by pangs of hunger is much more susceptible to being infected by the virus of communal anger.

Thus the persistent refusal of the British Government to make any sincere attempt to provide even the starvation diet to Indians was a major factor in disturbing the social fabric of the country. Did they now make amends or carried on in their Imperial arrogance with the least consideration for Indians.

Time to go further in our quest for a better understanding.

- “4. The Government of India have considered with the Provincial and State Administrators at a conference at Delhi the question of a further reduction in the basic cereals ration of 12 oz. a day. The Conference decided unanimously against this course on the grounds that the 12 oz. ration is itself inadequate under Indian conditionsAlready the ration has had to be reduced locally where it cannot be met, and this tendency is likely to increase. For example, the ration in Travancore is at present 4-4.5 oz. of rice plus 2.5 oz. of wheat and in Bengal as result of the dislocations caused by the disturbances the cereal ration has been temporarily reduced to 6 oz. a day.”

The Government allocates a ration that itself is inadequate, then at places cuts this inadequate ration to half and high prices prevent the poor from buying their quota, the life of the animals in the jungles would have been better than that of the millions of poor in British India.

Getting back to the memo, it looked at the possibility of getting some supplies from Burma, Siam and Indonesia but pointed out that there were several difficulties involved. The United States had done more than its bit and could therefore not be expected to do more. It noted that during the period May - September the total grain shipments to the U.K. were expected to be 1,850,000 tons which was 200,000 tons more than what had been expected in May. It felt therefore that “The most substantial and reliable of the possible means of relieving India’s crisis would be a diversion to India of 100,000 tons of wheat destined for the United Kingdom from North America.”

By this time, the British granaries were bulging with grain. The Minister of Food informed the Cabinet that by the end of September, he expected to have stocks of about 1,000,000 tons of wheat and flour. Now, there were three claimants for the grains:

- The Indian people, whose plight was being highlighted by the Secretary of State.
- The British people, who were being inconvenienced by the Bread Rationing scheme. Their cause was taken up by the Minister of Food, who now pressed for discontinuing Bread Rationing from 14th September i.e. within less than two months of its imposition.

- The British swine, whose cause was taken up by the Minister of Agriculture. He feared that the increase in extraction rate was making less feed stuff available, which would lead to a large-scale slaughter of the pigs. A loss that would not be made good for a long time.

Guess who won in that fateful meeting of the British cabinet on 9th September 1946? Who else but the British Pigs. The Minister of Food lost out on political reasons. And Indians, since when did they count as humans ?

Chapter XVIII

Abhimanyu Betrayed

Shameful Order under Article 367 (3) of the Constitution of India

Abhimanyu was the youngest and bravest of all the Pandavas, the brothers who fought against their cousins in a fight that is immortalized in the epic – Mahabharat. The only Pandava who was killed on the fields of Kurushetra in a treacherous fight, leaving behind a grieving pregnant wife. In one respect, he was fortunate. The shameful manner in which he was killed so much enraged his father, the legendary Arjuna, that he vowed to kill the person responsible, Jayadratha, the very next day and managed to do so with some help from his mentor, Shri Krishna.

In 1942, Gandhiji gave a stirring cry – “Karengē ya Marengē” – Do or Die. The Congress leadership neither did nor died but, as we now know compromised ideals to gain power in 1947.

The only exception was Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, who not only Did but also Died. Like Abhimanyu, he was the youngest Congressman and left behind a grieving wife and a young daughter. It was he who forged together Azad Hind Fauj, the Indian National Army, that came to haunt the British, long after its soldiers had fired their last bullet on the battlefield. We have already also seen the manner in which an injured and ailing Netaji was done to death sometime in the summer of 1946 as a so called Axis War Criminal.

That his murder most foul should remain unavenged is bad enough. What is far more shocking is the manner in which his sacrifice has been laid waste.

Independence of India was a non negotiable article of faith for Netaji. His fight with Gandhiji in 1929 was on account of his unwillingness to accept Dominion Status even as a Goal. Subhas was backed then by Nehru, who stood upto both his own father as also his mentor - Gandhiji. It was also the same Nehru who in 1947 choose to accept Dominion Status as it gave him reins of Power.

Subhas fought once again with Gandhiji in 1939 – not over being the President of the Congress but, over the direction of Congress. Gandhiji wanted to wait for the British woes to subside, whereas, Subhas brooked no delay in his quest to see an Independent India. This time Nehru deserted his old friend. Power was no longer a distant prospect in 1939 as it was in 1929. Realpolitik was now more important than Ideals.

The disappearance of Netaji in 1945 removed whatever obstacles remained. Gaining Power became **the** mission. Nehru had no qualms about being the self proclaimed Prime Minister of His Majesty's Government in India. Nehru had thundered in the Constituent Assembly on January 22, 1947 that “ For long time past we have taken a pledge on Independence Day that India must sever her connection with Great Britain because that connection had become an emblem of British domination”

The same Nehru on the day of the so called Independence – August 15, 1947, swore allegiance to the King by citing the then Constitution of India which was nothing but the Government of India Act 1935 that explicitly recognized the sovereignty of the King of England over India.

Notwithstanding his assertion in the Constituent Assembly, he remained beholden to the King and made all attempts to maintain – not sever India's connection with the Great Britain. We know about the shocking proposal of the members of his Government to keep the sovereignty of the King dormant even after we were to become a Republic.

Netaji – the Abhimanyu of our times, proved as tough to deal after death as before when the issues of principles were involved. The Indian People began to see through the charade of Dominion Status. The demand for severing all connection with the British Crown became impossible to ignore. India was finally declared a Sovereign Independent Republic on January 26, 1950. Any suggestion that India maintains any connection with the British Crown after January 26, 1950 is a blasphemy that must be dismissed without a moment's debate. Our Abhimanyu was fully avenged or so we thought.

It, however, does not appear that the British Government accepts that the sovereignty of the British Crown was fully and permanently extinguished on January 26, 1950. Abhinav Bharat's pointed and specific question to the Commonwealth and Foreign Office of the Government of United Kingdom about the date on which the sovereignty of the British Crown over India was extinguished have gone unanswered.

There is a strange order that was passed on January 23, 1950 under Article 367 (3) of the Constitution of India according to which no country that is a part of the Commonwealth would be considered as a Foreign State. What was the rationale to pass an Executive Order just three days before the Constitution of India was to come in force and that too in respect of something as profound as which State would be considered a Foreign State and which would not be. This order continues to remain on Statute even in 2015.

In AIR 1960 Supreme Court 625 (V 47 C 98), a Constitutional Bench of 5 Judges held that "It is true that in view of the order, Pakistan is not a foreign state for the purpose of Constitution of India. There is, however, a distinction between a country not being regarded as a Foreign State for the purposes of Constitution and that country being a Foreign State for other purpose"

One wonders how can there be anything for the purpose of Constitution and something for other purposes. Everything has to be for the purpose of Constitution.

So the Supreme Court went on to clarify that "In the Constitution of India there are various Articles in which the expression Foreign State appears e.g. Art 18 (2), (3), (4), Art 19 (2), Art 102 (1) (d) and Art 191 (1) (d). It is therefore clear that under the Order, for the purposes of these Articles where the expression "Foreign State" appears that expression would not cover a country within the Commonwealth unless the Parliament enacted otherwise"

Take Art 102 (1) (d). It states that

“A Person shall be disqualified for being chosen as, and for being a member of either House of Parliament if he is not a citizen of India or has voluntarily acquired the citizenship of a foreign state or is under any acknowledgement of allegiance or adherence to a foreign state”

So, if an Honourable Member of Parliament were today in 2015, to swear allegiance to the British Crown – which is not a Foreign State for the purpose of the Constitution, by virtue of the Order under Section 367 (3) of the Constitution of India and on account of the helpful clarification provided by the Honorable Supreme Court of India; he can not be disqualified as a Member of Parliament.

If you think this is the limit, consider the implication of another judgement of the Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court of India. In AIR 1962 Supreme Court 445 (V 49 C 70), it was held that as the citizens of Junagrah before its amalgamation in Dominion of India were ruled by its Sovereign, they were citizens of a Foreign State. In other words, if two States have different Sovereigns, they are States alien to each other.

By implication if two state have the same sovereign then they are not alien or foreign to each other. **So only if United Kingdom and India have the same sovereign, can they be states not foreign to each other.** It is no one's case that the national sovereign of Union of India – the President representing People of India, was ever the sovereign of United Kingdom. On the other hand, the sovereignty of the British Crown over India was explicitly declared on January 1, 1877 and has never been formally extinguished. The proclamation of India as a Republic on January 26, 1950 would normally have resulted in extinguishing it formally but for this strange order under Article 367 (3) which survives on the statutes even as on day. Therefore, there is room to argue, so long as this shameful order survives on the Statute, that the British Crown continues to be the Indian Sovereign. No wonder, the Commonwealth and Foreign Affairs Department of the Government of UK did not want to acknowledge that sovereignty of the British Crown was ever extinguished on January 26, 1950 or otherwise.

That by an executive order, issued three days before the Constitution of India came into force, a serious doubt has been created over the full and final severance of the sovereignty of Bharat with the British Crown, **is the Ultimate Betrayal of the Abhimanyu.**

Who will arise to avenge this betrayal:

- **The Union of India,**
- **The Parliament**
- **The Supreme Court**

Or

- **The Common Man**

As Common men and women, Abhinav Bharat tried to do this by addressing a letter to the Prime Minister of India with a copy to the Leader of Opposition on 28th August 2008 as under:

“This is to bring to your kind notice the following issues of national importance

- (1) The fact that “The Constitution (Declaration as to Foreign State) Order 1950 made under Art 392 (3) read with Art 367 (3)” is Ultra Virus of the Constitution of India

In a Judgment of a Five Member bench of the Hon’ble Supreme Court of India in AIR 1960 Supreme Court (V 47 C 98) it was:

- (i) Held (para 10) that “It is true that in view of the order for the purpose of Constitution of India, Pakistan is not a Foreign State. There is, however, a distinction between a country not being regarded as a Foreign State for the purposes of the Constitution and that country being a foreign power for other purposes”
- (ii) Further clarified (para 11) “In our opinion, this is a fallacious argument because Article 367 (3) itself states that for the purposes of the Indian Constitution Foreign State means any State other than India but the President and therefore before commencement of the Constitution, the Governor – General of India under Art 392 (3) may by order declare any State not to be

a Foreign State for such purposes as may be specified by the order. In the order, the Governor General declared that every country within the Commonwealth was not a Foreign State for the purposes of the Constitution. In the Constitution of India, there are various Articles in which the expression Foreign State appears e.g. Art 18 (2), (3), (4), Art 19 (2), Art, 102 (1) (d) and Art 191 (1) (d). It is clear that, therefore, that under the Order, for the purpose of these Articles or any other Article where the expression, “Foreign State” appears, that expression would not cover a country within the Commonwealth **unless Parliament enacted otherwise”**

The Article 102 (1) (d) reads that “A person shall be disqualified for being chosen as, and for being, a member of either House – if he is not a citizen of India or has voluntarily acquired citizenship of foreign State or is under acknowledgement of allegiance or adherence to a foreign power”

Thus the Judgment has the effect of permitting any person who may be citizen of any Commonwealth Country – Pakistan, United Kingdom or any other country within the Commonwealth – owing allegiance or adherence to it, to continue as Member of the Parliament of Union of India without being disqualified under Article 102 (1) (d) of the Constitution of India.

It is humbly submitted that an Order which permits a Member of Parliament to be under oath of allegiance to say the British Crown without being disqualified is patently against the basic framework of the Constitution of Union of India.

An Order passed by Governor General of Dominion of India over which the British Crown was the Sovereign Power on the admission of the Respondent is a blatant effort to somehow keep alive the connection of Union of India with the British Crown.

Such an order has no place in Union of India. There can not be a more clear case for striking down such an order of Dominion of India, an alien State - without a moment’s delay

It may be pointed out that this Order was passed by the Governor – General of India, who was under no obligation to care for People of India or their Welfare as is clear from his Oath of Allegiance and Office being:

Oath of Allegiance

“I (XXX) do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King George the Sixth, His Heirs and Successors according to Law. So Help Me God”

Oath of Office

“I (XXX) do swear that I will well and truly serve His Majesty King George the Sixth, His Heirs and Successors in the Office of Governor General of India. So Help Me God”

2 In response to an RTI application, we have learnt that the admitted position of the Union of India in respect of the identity of Sovereign Power over India is as under:

(a) In 1947

“It appears that although the Dominion of India came into being on 15 August 1947 as provided in the Indian Independence Act 1947, the King of England continued to be the Sovereign Power over India until India became a Republic on 26.1.1950”

(b) In 1857

“It may be noted that independent India includes territories outside the Moghul Empire. Though, Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Moghul was sovereign over his empire, other rulers were sovereign over their respective kingdoms”

This gives rise to several important questions of Constitutional law concerning the Validity of Treaties of Accession as also the Settlement of Sterling Loans by India to United Kingdom by Dominion of India. These are detailed in the enclosed proposed Writ Petition under Article 32 of the Constitution of India

We believe that it would not be proper and correct to proceed to file the Petition unless the matter has been brought to your kind notice.

We would therefore wait until 4th of October 2008 by which time we sincerely hope that that you would have addressed these issues and that there would be no need to approach the Courts for any relief”

The silence of both the Prime Minister and the Leader of Opposition forced us to file a WP (Civil) 12 of 2009, in the Supreme Court of India in which we raised the following points of law

“Union of India is a State alien to Dominion of India in light of the admission of Union of India that the Sovereign Power over Dominion India was the British Crown. The Petitioner draws this inference from as per the principles enumerated by the Hon’ble Supreme Court of India in **AIR 1962 Supreme Court 445 (V 49 C 70)**.

The Petitioner humbly submits that it therefore becomes the duty of the Union of India to review and take a reasoned stand on such decisions of Dominion of India that are against the interests of Sovereign Power of Union of India namely the People of India.

The Petitioner further states the conclusions of the detailed research done by the Petitioner have not been denied even after an examination by historians and experts of the National Archives of India. The Petitioner therefore humbly submits that the decisions of Dominion of India that Union of India needs to review and take a reasoned stand being against the interests of its Sovereign Power namely the People of India, are as under:

- (a) The Validity of the Financial Agreement signed on 14th August 1947 in respect of Sterling Loans given by India to United Kingdom and which resulted in a loss of US \$ 2,500 million to the Indian State by 26th January 1950. The cost of this loss continues to be paid by poorest of the poor in form of illiteracy, malnutrition and lack of health facilities which could have been created with the money lost.

- (b) The Validity of Treaties of Accession signed by Dominion of India with various Rulers giving them special privileges that continue to act as barriers between the People of India even today for example the provisions of Article 370 of Constitution of India in respect of the State of Jammu and Kashmir.
- (c) The validity of the Executive Order passed by the Governor General of Dominion India on January 23, 1950 under Article 367 (3) of Constitution of India, which has the effect of preventing disqualification of any Member of Parliament under Article 102 (1) (d) of the Constitution of India if he chooses to swear allegiance to the British Crown even today. This position has been confirmed by the Judgment of a Five member bench of the hon'ble Supreme Court of India in AIR 1960 Supreme Court 625 (V 47 C 98)

What happened in the Supreme Court was bizzare as reported by IANS.

“Apex court dismisses Abhinav Bharat plea against old ruling

New Delhi, Feb 23, 2009: The Supreme Court Monday dismissed a plea of Abhinav Bharat, a registered charitable trust, to scrap a 1950 order of India's last Governor-General and a 1960 ruling of the apex court that the two could legally help Commonwealth citizens to become Indian parliamentarians.

A bench of Chief Justice KG Balakrishnan and Justice P Sathasivam dismissed the lawsuit, **saying that neither had India's last Governor-General C Rajagopalachari's order nor the apex court ruling created any problem so far.**

Appearing personally, Abhinav Bharat president Pankaj Phadnis submitted to the court that the erstwhile Governor-General had in 1950 issued an order that no Commonwealth country could be termed as foreign state for the Constitution of India.

Phadnis told the court that the order was passed on Jan 23, 1950, - three days before India adopted its Constitution and turned a republic.

He added that a decade later in 1960, a five-judge bench of the apex court endorsed the Governor-General's order.

The order was ratified during adjudication of a case related to deportation of a Pakistani, who was caught in India for resorting to anti-India activity, Phadnis said.

He said citing the Governor-General's 1950 order, the Pakistani contended that being a Commonwealth citizen, he could not be treated as a national belonging to a foreign country and could not be deported. Though the apex court upheld the Pakistani national's detention and ordered his deportation, it did not strike down the Governor-General's order, said the Abhinav Bharat chief. Rather, endorsing the 1950 order, the bench said that for the purpose of various Articles of the Constitution, including Article 102 (1)(d), the Commonwealth countries cannot be treated as foreign powers, Phadnis submitted to the court.

He pointed out that Article 102(1)(2) of the Constitution deals with the disqualification of Members of Parliament. It provides that a parliamentarian would lose his membership to the house in case he acquires the citizenship of a foreign country or takes an oath of allegiance to it.

Phadnis contended that Article 102(1)(d) along with the 1950 order and the apex court 1960 ruling together create a situation where a Pakistani national or British national may run and win the Lok Sabha election in India, or an Indian parliamentarian can become a citizen of Pakistan or Britain without attracting disqualification from the House.”

For the record, the Prime Minister of India did react to the letter sent to him on 28th August 2008.. The Under Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of Law and Justice vide letter no L -15012/1/2009 Jus dated 9th May 2009 forwarded the letter to the Prime Minister to the Registrar Judicial of the Supreme Court of India. A Review Petition filed citing this letter was dismissed on 11th August 2009. **And the shameful order remains on the Statutes.**

PAYING HOMAGE TO ABHIMANYU

This book started with “Tryst with Betrayal” which exposed how a nation has been fooled into believing that what we got on 15th August 1947 was Independence and not Transfer of Power from the White to the Brown sahibs.

This is not a long forgotten technical matter. The fact that King of England remained the Sovereign of India even after 15th August 1947 is of consequence to this nation even in the Twenty First Century.

For the cost of this fraud that was played upon this nation on 15th August 1947 has been paid in the form the horrific riots of the partition culminating into the murder of Mahatma on 30th January 1948. Nathuram Godse was not a lone ranger. He operated under the protection of a Force 136 operative – Narayan Dattaraya Apte, who had links right upto the Head of the State of Dominion India. The same Force 136 operating under the command of Louis Mountbatten that was had also earlier murdered Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

It is this blood cuddling story of two **Murders Most Foul that Altered Destiny of Nations** in this sub continent that remains to be told and which we will bring to light shortly. Details have been filed in the Supreme Court but as has been the case, so many times in the past on such issues, the silence of the Court is so far deafening.

This blood cuddling story needs to be told to make peace with the past. Horrific partition riots of 1947- 48 were not culmination of centuries old hatred between Hindus and Muslims that should continue to haunt us today but were rather a State sponsored Genocide to further the Imperial cause.

For instance the fury of riots has made us forget the manner in which the Sterling Loans were virtually repudiated by the British causing life long misery to hundreds of millions of people in India, Pakistan and now Bangladesh. What better way for a robber to escape than burn the house he robbed and made sure the two brothers who lived for ages together thought the other was the one who set the house on fire. That is what the British did in 1947. Consider a simple fact. If people did go mad in the summer of 1947, how come not one British life was lost in the massacre that engulfed this country?

After making peace with the past, we will move on to work for finishing the unfinished agenda of the Freedom Struggle – wiping the last drop of tears of misery from every inhabitant of this sub continent. This was the aim of our Freedom Struggle whether the path was of constructive cooperation, non violent resistance or forcing the looters out by use of selective violence.

Neither Bhagat Singh went to the the gallows for the sake of Transfer of Power nor did Savarkar spend the most productive part of his life living the life of an animal in Andamans - for the sake of seeing a Brown sahib replace a white one in Delhi nor did Gandhiji wander from Nokhali to by lanes of Delhi dousing flames of communalism - so that India would continue to have the most malnourished children in the world even in 2015.

The Unfinished Freedom Struggle is what we need to Finish in our Life Time.

That is not the work of one man or women. Be that be Narendra Modi, Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi or for that matter any one person. That requires a collective contribution for attaining some identifiable targets within a specified time frame.

The approach has to be bottom up. Empower the people at the lowest rung of the pyramid. Give them the tools to fight for their cause and they will win the War.

It is not a Lokpal that will eradicate curse of corruption from the body politic. When people who suffer from corruption get voice to make their pain audible to one and all – that the corrupt will pay heed for they would know that not paying heed would land them in jail if not more.

No amount of well meaning Government schemes would help eradicate infant mortality, malnourishment or lack of access to education.

Give the Mother the tools to fight for her child and no one in the world can be more determined than her to make sure that her child gets what she needs.

Fortunately we live in world that now has the technology which can empower people. The benefits of the world of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have to be harnessed to make a social transformation happen.

ICT fueled Social Transformation through Universal Digital Literacy focused on attaining UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is what we need. Lest one asks what are these Millennium Development Goals – a very brief introduction may be in order.

In the Year 2000, some 189 countries made a solemn commitment in the United Nations (UN) to attain the following eight goals in their respective countries by the Year 2015

1. To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. To achieve universal primary education
3. To promote gender equality
4. To reduce child mortality
5. To improve maternal health
6. To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
7. To ensure environmental sustainability
8. To develop a global partnership for development

2015 has come and will go but the ruling elite of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh will renege of this comitement they made to their people. UN Millennium Goals will remain unattained.

ICT fueled Social Transformation through Universal Digital Literacy focused on attaining UN Millennium Development Goals is what I call **Sparking a Million Mutinies**. That is what we need to go forward to make sure that the UN MDGs are attained in our life time – here and now and not in some unknown uncertain future.

We shall build a better future for our children and grandchildren than the one we inherited from our parents and grand parents.

Only that would be a True and Fitting Homeage to the countless Abhimanyu, who gave their all so that we can live in Freedom.