



CHAPTER II

Epoch Making Incidents

During the period of colonial rule flowed series of developments – quiet and violent, domestic and overseas, – generating vibrations both on national and global planes. Genesis of modern banking in India may be traced back to the beginning of the 19th century. So the history is just two hundred years old. Modern industries started raising their heads from mid-19th century in the country although the British colonized her from 1757; – first in the guise of East India Company and then in the name of the Queen. As already explained in the previous chapters, East India Company was mainly engaged in trading. They wanted to use this country and her agricultural products as the unending reservoir of raw materials for their industries in Great Britain and then sell the finished goods in our country at exorbitant prices and thereby causing enormous deprivation to our farmers and the common folk and maximizing their exploitative profits.

How is that existence of even some sort of trade unions in the banking sector is not even one hundred years old! Before we delve deep into the reason let us have a glance over the developments effects of which were reverberating here and elsewhere in trade union and revolutionary struggles.

Three epoch making incidents had their deep impact all over the World including our countrymen under colonial subjugation. Those were: (I) Release of Communist Manifesto, (II) May Day Struggles and (III) Russian Socialist Revolution in 1917.

I. COMMUNIST MANIFESTO

February, 1848 saw the release of the Communist Manifesto in London. Peoples of the world for the first time heard the

immortal call unheard of before – The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. ‘They have a world to win’. Marx and Engels showed that ‘the history of all hitherto existing society had been the history of class struggles,’ and that its development had each time ended in a revolutionary reconstruction of the whole social edifice. The Manifesto ends with a call to the international working class: ‘working men of all countries unite!’ to end class domination of the capitalists.

The publication of the Manifesto also coincided with the outbreak of the revolution in Europe. The revolution began in France. On February 22-24, 1848 the King Louis Philippe was dethroned and a republic proclaimed. The revolutionary storm engulfed most of Europe and parts of Latin America. It was a widespread revolution affecting over 50 countries but failed due to lack of cooperation and co-ordination among them and weak leadership and organization.

IMPACT OF THE ABOVE INCIDENTS - DEVELOPING MOVEMENTS AND ORGANISATIONS

II. MAY DAY STRUGGLES

National Labour Union in America took the historic resolution on ‘8-hour working day’ in August, 1866. In September, 1866 Geneva Congress of the First International also adopted similar resolution on 8-hour working day, demanding further that the same be recognized through suitable legislation. Even Marx highlighted the movement of the National Labour Union for 8 hours’ work a day in the ‘Capital’ - Part I (in the chapter ‘Working Day’) published in 1867. But well before that during 1820’s to 1840’s waves of movements lashed different parts of America for a 10-hour working day as the workers in many sectors e.g. leather, mines, bakery etc. had to labour harder even up to 18 to 20 hours in sub-human conditions; particularly the treatment meted out to women and children workers were indescribable. Once the movement

gradually succeeded in achieving the demand, it acted as a momentum from 1840's onwards for the demand of reduction working hours to 8 from 10. However, the culmination and escalation of the demand witnessed horrifying attacks by the administration and the private capital in close co-ordination, finally leading to the massacre at Hay Market Square on 4th May 1886 and death sentence of several leaders in framed cases. The Second International, held in Paris in July 1889, on centenary year of the Fall of Bastille Fort, decided to observe May 1 every year from 1890 as International Working Class Solidarity Day to commemorate Hay Market incident and-martyrdom of the leaders. And the call reverberates the working class globally even today.

However, the credit for observing the first ever strike on the demand of 8 hour working day goes to the Australian workmen who went on strike on the issue on April 21, 1856. And it is also a matter of pride and jubilation for the Indian working-class that the second strike on this historic demand was observed successfully by 1200 railway workers of Howrah (Bengal) in May 1862, – within just 8 years of railway operation in the zone. A report hailing the movement of the railway workers was published in the 'Somprakash'- a progressive political-economic Bengali journal with which great educationist, one of the pioneers of social and cultural reforms in the country Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar was associated. The journal also highlighted many other movements that took place in different sectors and segments of the workers with due importance; to name a few of such notable movements were – clerical strike in the East India Railway Audit Department in 1862, Barbers' strike in Mumbai and Palanquin-bearers' strike in Calcutta, both in 1863, Horse-carters' strike in Kolkata, Press Industry strike in Mumbai, Butchers' strike in Madras in 1873 etc.

The May Day had its impact very much on the working class here in our country also. The first manifesto for the working class in India was published by AITUC in 1921. And the first May Day in our country was observed on May 1, 1923 in Madras on the beach by Singaravellu Chettiar by tearing off a part of the red Sari of his daughter in absence of a ready red flag.

III. SOCIALIST ORDER

With the success of the world shaking Proletarian revolution in the USSR in November, 1917 covering one-sixth of the globe a great awakening struck working class in Asia, Africa, Latin America etc. A great enthusiasm percolated amongst the people in our country also.

The foregoing developments charted the course of growth of trade union and host of other popular movements in the country such as —

Foundation of All India Trade Union Congress in November, 1920 — the first trade union federation in the country. Establishment of the **ILO** (International Labour Organisation) in 1919 and India's inclusion in the Organisation also had a contributory effect on the foundation of AITUC that ushered in great enthusiasm amongst the middle class intelligentsia and the working class.

Formation of **All India Progressive Writers' Association** (AIPWA) and many such organizations, and also **League Against Fascism and War** (LAFAW) in the international plane with Rabindranath Tagore, Romain Rolland, Einstein, Barbus and others in the 20's and 30's in the last century. All these created a climate for the poets, writers, philosophers, scientists, social workers to raise their voice against colonial misrule and the danger of fascism, expressing their concern and message amongst people.

Birth of **IPTA** (Indian People's Theatrical Association) in 1943 that worked magic as an umbrella organization of cultural bodies with units spread in almost all the states in the country articulating message of rejuvenation, arousing excitement, anti-colonial hatred, anger and spirit to fight colonial misrule and capitalism through their superb artistic performances.

Political Parties coming up :

Gadar Party : When the Bolshevik Party was fighting for Socialist Revolution in Russia, the Gadar Party was founded in Sanfrancisco in 1913 under Sohan Singh Bhakna as President and Prof. Lala Hardayal as General Secretary. In its organ 'Gardar' of November 1, 1913 issue the party, as its objective, called upon the youth of the country - 'to take up arms, rise in insurrection, kill the British'. "The Gadar party which started as a revolutionary nationalist party has, after 1920, become a movement run under Communist leadership" - observed British intelligence. After socialist revolution in Russia the party was very much influenced by communist ideology and established close links with Communist Party in the Punjab and elsewhere in the country.

Communist Party of India : Manabendra Nath Roy along with his wife Velina Trent Roy, Abani Mukherjee and his wife Rosa Fittinghoff, Md. Ali, Md. Safiq Siddiqui and Mandayam Partha Sarathi Tirumalai Acharya assembled at Tashkent and founded the Communist Party of India on October 17, 1920. Md. Safiq Siddiqui was elected as Secretary of the party which was recognized by the Third International in 1921. In India a handful of people in different centres like Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Kanpur, Lahore etc were trying hard to organize communist groups under tremendous odds; – lack of funds, shortage of organizers and literature. M.N. Roy established living contacts with Muzaffar Ahmed, S.A. Dange, Singaravelu Chettiar, Ghulam Hussain (Lahore) etc. The developments on

labour movements in India were reported in The Labour Monthly, edited by Rajani Palme Dutt, a leading member and theoretician of the Communist Party of Great Britain. The British Government became hyperactive and initiated '**Tashkent Conspiracy Case**' and '**Moscow Conspiracy Case**' against the organizers alleging formation of the party at Tashkent and also leveling many frivolous charges.

Conspiracy Cases :

The British Government, to terrorise the communists working in India and stop communist activities during the formative days, instituted a number of cases against the organizers, which are better known as Conspiracy Cases:-

Kanpur Bolshevik Case : The case was filed in 1921 in the court of Kanpur District Magistrate under Sec-121A IPC against M.N. Roy, Ramcharanlal Sharma, Ghulam Hussain, Singaravelu Chettiar, S.A. Dange, Nalinibhusan Dasgupta, Saukat Usmani and Muzaffar Ahmed. The highest punishment awarded under the provision of the Section was Life term Deportation.

Peshwar Conspiracy Case : The case was constituted between 1922 and 1924. Eight persons were convicted under the case. The terms of punishment ranged imprisonment from one to seven years. The accused were - Akbar Shah, Firozuddin, Abdul Mazid, Habib Ahmed, Rafique Ahmed, Sultan, Abdul Kader and Gaohar Rahman. Most of them later on joined either the Communist Party or its mass organizations.

Meerut Conspiracy Case : The case was filed in the court of District Magistrate, Meerut on 15th March, 1929 on charges of treason under IPC 121-130. Punishments of varying degrees were pronounced against 27 communist leaders viz. life term imprisonment for Muzaffar Ahmed; 12 years deportation for S.A. Dange, Phillip Sprat, S.V. Ghate, Keshab Nilkanta Jogolekar, Raghunath Sibrum Nimbkar; 10 years deportation

for Benzamin Francis Bradley, S.S. Mirajkar and Shaukat Osmani, and for many others deportations for 3 years to 7 years.

The All India Conference of the Communist Party of India was held at Kanpur on December 26th-28th 1925. A Central Committee was elected with Jankiprasad Bagerhatta and S.V. Ghate as Jt. Secretary. After acquittal from the Kanpur Conspiracy Case Muzaffar Ahmed participated in the Conference and came back to Calcutta on January 2, 1926 to build up the party in Bengal.

Labour Swaraj Party : The Party was formed on November 1, 1925. The founding leaders were Kazi Nazrul Islam, Hemanta Kumar Sarkar, Qutubuddin Ahmad and Shamsuddin Hussain. Muzaffar Ahmed decided to work through this party and took over charge of the organ 'Langal' as its editor.

Workers and Peasants Party : In 1926 the name of the Labour Swaraj Party was changed as Workers and Peasants Party with Dr. Naresh Sengupta as President and Hemanta Kumar Sarkar and Qutubuddin Ahmad as Jt. Secretaries. The underground Communist Party decided that its members all over India would join the provincial bodies of Workers and Peasants Party and carry out all open communist activities through it. Muzaffar Ahmed took the lead to hold the 1st Conference of the Party on December 21st -24th 1928 at the Albert Hall, Calcutta.

Peasant Movements :

As the political climate was warming up in the country there were peasant uprisings in different parts :

Kayyur : Kayyur is where one of the first Communist peasant rebellions happened and the British hanged four young men for it. Kayyur, the cradle of agrarian revolution in Kerala,

is located in Kasargod District. The debt-trapped oppressed farmers and workers of this village conducted a historic fight against feudalism and British imperialism. Following an incident of a police constable being killed, four brave lads - Madathi Appu, Chirukandan, Kunhambu Nair and Abu Backer were hanged on March 29, 1943.

Tebhaga Movement : Tebhaga literally means 'three shares' of harvests. The movement was so called as it was a movement of sharecroppers demanding two thirds of the produce from land for themselves and one third for the landlords, as all the labour and other investments were made by the sharecroppers and the landowner had virtually no participation in the production processes in terms of working capital input, labour and infrastructure. Secondly, the sharecroppers were traditionally required to stack the harvests at the landowner's place and share the straw and other by-products on half-sharing basis. They refused to obey this. They argued that the harvests would be stacked at the tenant's compound and the landlord would not get any share from the by-product. This unjust and exploitative system of division of the produce came under challenge in 1946-47, when the sharecroppers claimed two-thirds share of the whole produce on the ground of their investment and labour input

Tebhaga movement was organised mainly by the Communist cadres of the **Bengal Provincial Krishak Sabha**. Under their leadership the bargha (sharecropping) peasants were mobilised against the landlord class. Tebhaga movement spread out to nineteen districts of Bengal. However, the movement was most intensely felt in the districts of Dinajpur, Rangpur, Jalpaiguri, Khulna, Mymensingh, Jessore and the 24-Parganas. As apprehended, the landholders called in police and caused many of the tebhaga activists arrested and jailed. But the repression could not subdue the resistance movement. Feeling the pressure many of the landholders withdrew their litigation filed against

the tebhaga activists and came to terms with them. The movement was most successful in the districts of Jessore, Dinajpur and Jalpaiguri. The tebhaga rights were extensively established in Midnapur and 24-Parganas also. The tebhaga struggle was successful in so far as it has been estimated that about 40% of the sharecropping peasants got tebhaga right granted willingly by the landholders.

Telangana Movement : was a peasant rebellion, organized by the Communists against the feudal lords, of the Telangana region and later against the princely state of Hyderabad between 1946 and 1951.

With the Nizam holding on, refusing to join Indian Union, even after the proclamation of Indian Independence, the Communists stepped up their campaign stating that the flag of the Indian union was also the flag of the people of Hyderabad, much against the wishes of the ruling Asaf Jah dynasty.

The revolt started in 1946. Peasant farmers and labourers revolted against local feudal landlords (jagirdars and deshmukhs), who were ruling the villages known as samsthans. These samsthans were ruled mostly by Reddys and Velama, known as doralu. They ruled over the communities in the village and managed the tax collections (revenues) and owned almost all the land in that area. The Nizam had little control over these regions, barring the capital Hyderabad. The Communist led agitation was successful in liberating over 3000 villages from the feudal lords and 10,000 acres of agriculture land was distributed to landless peasants. Around 4000 peasants lost their lives in the struggle fighting feudal private armies. It later became a fight against Nizam. The struggle has occupied a very important place in the history of peasant movement of our country.

Moplah Revolt : The Moplah Revolt or Malabar Rebellion was an armed uprising in 1921 against British authority in the

Malabar region of Southern India by Mappila Muslims and the culmination of a series of Mappila revolts that recurred throughout the 19th century and early 20th century. The 1921 rebellion began as a reaction against a heavy-handed crackdown on the Khilafat Movement by the British authorities. In the initial stages, a number of minor clashes took place between Khilafat volunteers and the police, but the violence soon spread across the region. The Mappilas attacked and took control of police stations, British government offices, courts and government treasuries. The largely kudiyaan (tenant) Mappilas also attacked and killed jenmi (landlords)

The British Government put down the rebellion with an iron fist by deploying British and Gurkha regiments and imposing Martial Law. A noteworthy event during the suppression later came to be known as the “Wagon tragedy”, in which 61 out of a total of 90 Mappila prisoners destined for the Central Prison in Podanur suffocated to death in a closed railway goods wagon.

For six months from August 1921, the rebellion extended over 2,000 square miles (5,200 km²) - some 40% of the South Malabar region. An estimated 10,000 people lost their lives, although official figures put the numbers at 2337 rebels killed, 1652 injured and 45,404 imprisoned; unofficial estimates put the number imprisoned at almost 50,000 of whom 20,000 were deported, mainly to the Andaman Islands, while around 10,000 went missing. Contemporary British administrators and modern historians differ markedly in their assessment of the incident, debating whether the revolts were triggered off by religious fanaticism or agrarian grievances. At the time, the Indian National Congress repudiated the movement. However, contemporary Indian evaluations now view the rebellion as a national upheaval against British authority and the most important political movement in Malabar during the period. In 1971, the Government of Kerala officially recognized the active participants in the events as “freedom fighters”.

The Punnapra-Vayalar uprising (October, 1946) - The coir workers belonging to the Ezhava community waged a war against the then administration led by C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, Diwan of the native state of Travancore. The region around Alleppey was a Communist stronghold and the Communist workers organised a mass upheaval in October 1946 against the authority of the Diwan, and practically established their own government in the region leading to attacks and deaths of Travancore police and government officials. The Diwan declared martial law in Alleppy on October 25, 1946. The Travancore army, supported by the Navy, surrounded the Communists at Vayalar by 27 October to isolate the place, which is surrounded by water on three sides. Once the blockade was in place, the army moved in. It is estimated that at least 150 people were killed on the spot during the army's pincer movement on October 27, and many more succumbed to injuries later. On the same day, at least 130 people were killed elsewhere in the district. The local people and press maintain that many more people were killed and the bodies disposed by the army. Historians like A. Sreedhara Menon estimates that over a thousand people were killed during the Punnapra-Vayalar outbreak. Following the suppression of the Communist local governments, the Travancore police used heavy-handed methods to repress the political movement in the region and detained many activists without any trial.

The Warli Movement was a peasant movement in western India for social and economic betterment of adivasis between 1945 and 1947 in which the woman activist and Communist leader Godavan Parulekar played a most prominent role. She became a part of the strife of the adivasis in her endeavour for erasing bonded labour and their rise in status. The movement was one in a series of movements in which women participated.

Developments in Freedom Movement :

Jallianwala Bagh Massacre - Indian Nationalist Movement

took a new turn after the World War-1 (1914-18). Faced with massive indignation against British Raj and growing anti colonial movement by the people, the British passed the ill-famed Rowlatt Act, providing for arbitrary power of arrest and 'trial' even without a semblance of normal legal procedure. In protest all India Hartal and agitations were organized on April 6, 1919. In the Punjab two Congress leaders Satya Pal and Saifuddin Kitchlew were arrested. To protest these arrests, several thousand people including Baishakhi pilgrims assembled on the Baishakhi Day (13th April 1919) at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar. Under the orders of Brigadier-General R.E.H. Dyer the army unleashed indiscriminate and totally uncalled for firing on the peaceful, unarmed gathering, blocking the only exit from the place and without giving any warning thereby killing over 1.000 men, women and children and injuring many more. In protest against this brutal killing poet Rabindranath Tagore severely criticized this action in his immortal letter dated 30th May 1919 to the Viceroy renouncing his Knighthood, a coveted honour conferred on him by the British Raj. Tagore was, however, alone in his protest at the moment. His letter to the Viceroy which stirred the nation as the voice of the nation's conscience against the barbaric action of the rulers is a precious document in the history of our struggle against British colonialism. However, the episode did not end there. At that time Michael O'Dwyer was Governor of the Punjab. Udham Singh, a brave revolutionary and follower of Bhagat Singh, held him responsible for this tragedy. He travelled to England to avenge it and succeeded by killing Michael O'Dwyer on March 13, 1940 in Caxton Hall In London. Udham Singh was arrested and hanged to death and is respected as a Shahid in India.

Gandhiji in National Movement :

Gandhiji's experiment with 'Satyagraha' started on his return to India from South Africa in January 1915. These experiments

were confined to local issues and areas till 1918. Rowlatt Act provided the opportunity to take Satyagraha on National plane.

Khilafat Movement (1919-1924) : The movement was a pan-Islamic, political protest campaign launched by Muslims in British India to influence the British Government and to protect the Ottoman Empire during the aftermath of World War-1. It won the support of Mahatma Gandhi and Congress because of its anti-British overtones. Thus, in India, although mainly a Muslim religious movement, it became a part of the wider Indian independence movement. The movement was originally led by Ali Brothers – Mohammed Ali and Saikat Ali, among others.

Non-cooperation Movement : Gandhiji issued his famous doctrine of Non-violence Non-Cooperation for mobilizing the people for united mass action against colonial oppression, exemplified by the Rowlatt Act and Jallianwala Bagh massacre. Under his leadership the Indian National Congress launched the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1920. Millions of Indians revolted against the British, boycotting the courts, government services, schools and disavowing titles, pensions and British clothes and goods. The freedom fighters, known as Satyagrahis, peacefully protested authoritarian British laws, and called for India's independence. Many thousands were beaten, tortured and arrested. However, the movement was abruptly suspended in 1922 following an incident of violence in Chauri Chaura in which some policemen were killed by the protesters in retaliation of killing of some Satyagrahis by the police.

On the question of sudden suspension of Non-Cooperation a debate ensued in the Congress and there appeared **twin schools of thought** e.g., No-Changers and Pro-Changers. In 1922, the Pro-Changers led by Chitta Ranjan Das founded the Swarajya Party along with Motilal Nehru but in his death in 1925 the Party virtually failed to develop.

Further Developments : In 1928 in an All Parties Conference a report by Motilal Nehru on '**Dominion Status**' was adopted as the goal for National Movement. However, within a few months Muslim League led by Jinnah rejected the report.

Simon Commission : In 1928 the British Government appointed Simon Commission to report on the political situation in India. As there was not a single Indian member in it, all political parties boycotted it, followed by countrywide protests. When the Commission visited Lahore on October 30, 1928, Lala Lajpat Rai led a silent procession in protest. Under orders of the SP the police lathicharged it and Lala Rajpat Rai was grievously wounded by the SP himself. He did not recover from the Injury and died in hospital.

Revolutionary activities also grew. The Anusilan and Yugantar groups gathered strength. A conference of revolutionary groups was held in Lucknow in October 1924 and '**Hindusthan Republican Association**' was formed. It was renamed as '**Hindusthan Socialist Republican Association**' in 1928 with Bhagat Singh, Chandrasekhar Azad, Shivaram Rajguru, Sukhdev Thapar, etc. in the forefront, leaning more and more towards Marxism. In a bid to avenge the death of Lala Lajpat Rai caused by grievous injury due to assault by Scott, SP of Lahore, Bhagat Singh, in a case of mistaken identity, killed Saunders, ASP of Lahore, on November 17, 1928. On April 8, 1929 Bhagat Singh & Batukeswar Dutta, members of the Association, threw two bombs on the floor of the Legislative Assembly at Delhi. **The Lahore Conspiracy Case** was instituted. The under-trial prisoners started a fast unto death strike. Ultimately, all of them gave up the hunger strike excepting Jatin Das who died after 64 days fast on September 13, 1930. Bhagat Singh and Batukeswar Dutta were hanged to death. However, a handful

of revolutionaries led by Chandra Shekhar Azad continued their activities. Ultimately, Chandra Shekhar was killed in 1931.

Civil Disobedience Movement - Dandi March : Historic Civil Disobedience Movement was launched by Gandhiji with Dandi March on the Gujarat sea coast from March 12 to April 05, 1930 against Salt Laws of the British. The movement was much popularized and spread throughout the country on similar lines as that of the earlier Non-cooperation of 1920's.

Side by side, more and more significant developments pervaded the political scenario like the advent of the Marxist ideas in India, growing movement in the labour front, spread of revolutionary groups and their activities, peasant up-risings etc. Communist influence was spreading in the country at a fast pace. Foundations of Workers and Peasants Party in 1925, All India Socialist Party in 1934 manifest a growing tendency to radical movements. Communist penetration within the Congress increased and **All India Kisan Sabha** emerged in 1936.

In the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1928 Subhas Chandra Bose founded a Volunteer force. Some more revolutionary groups under leadership of Hem Chandra Ghosh at Dacca founded 'Bengal Volunteers' or '**B.V. Party**'. Leela Nag (later Roy) was a leading revolutionary. After difference of opinion with H.C. Ghosh, she & Anil Roy founded another revolutionary organization called '**Sri Sangha**'.

Chittagong Armoury Raid : It is also known as Chittagong uprising which was an attempt on 18th April 1930 to raid the armoury of police and auxiliary forces from the Chittagong Armoury in Bengal province by armed revolutionaries for Indian independence led by Surya Sen, popularly known as Masterda. The persons associated were members of revolutionary group included Ganesh Ghosh, Lokenath Bal, Nirmal Sen, Ambika Chakraborty, Naresh Singh, Jibon Ghosal, Ananda Gupta, Pritilata Waddedar, Kalpana Dutta, Binod

Behari Chowdhury, Subodh Roy and many others. Surya Sen devised the strategy of capturing the two main armouries in Chittagong and then destroying telegraph and telephone offices, followed by assassination of members of the European Club, the majority of whom were government or military officials involved in maintaining the British Raj in India. The plan was put into action at 10 p.m. on 18th April 1930. Both the police armoury and auxiliary forces armoury were captured. Telephone & Telegraph lines were cut, train movements were disrupted. After the raids, the revolutionary groups gathered outside the police armoury where Surya Sen took the salute, hoisted the National Flag and proclaimed establishment of Provisional Revolutionary Government. A few days later the British acted in revenge and retaliation. The judgment of mass trial of those arrested during and after the raids was delivered on March 1, 1932. Twelve of the defendants were sentenced to deportation of life, two received 3 years imprisonment and the remaining thirty two were acquitted. Surya Sen along with Tarakeswar Dostidar were hanged on 12th January 1932.

Parallel Lines of Movement - The election of Subhas Chandra Bose, as the President of the Haripura Session in 1938 highlighted the more radical trend of the Congress. Subhas differed fundamentally with Gandhiji on vital issues viz., industrialization and India's attitude towards the British Government during the impending World War-11. Gandhiji did not approve of draft plan of industrialization and national development prepared by the National Planning Committee of the Congress set up by Subhas. Rift between the two widened. In 1939, Subhas again was elected as the President at the Tripuri Session of the Congress in spite of Gandhiji's open opposition to Subhas and support for Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Gandhiji did not take the defeat lying down. The opposition of the group following him made things impossible for Subhas to function effectively as President. So he resigned from the

post, left the Congress and founded the **Forward Block in May 1939**. Subhas did not believe in achieving freedom through Non-Violence. His fiery patriotism made him restless and he chose the path of armed struggle for attainment of freedom. Gandhiji was willing to offer his support to the British in the World War-II and wrote; "We do not seek independence out of Britain's ruin." But his opinion changed after failure of the mission of Sir Stafford Cripps representing the British Government to arrive at any consensus with Congress and Muslim League about handing over power to Indians in exchange of support for war efforts.

Quit India Movement - The aforesaid incident led the Congress Working Committee to adopt on July 14, 1942 a resolution demanding immediate end of the British Rule. This is known as 'Quit India Resolution' which declared that in the event of the demand being rejected the Congress would be '...reluctantly compelled to utilize all its Non-violent strength for a wide spread struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi'.

The British Government rejected the demand, the Viceroy refused to even discuss the issue. Gandhiji proclaimed - 'We shall **do or die**. We shall either free India or die in the attempt.' Gandhiji was arrested on 9th August 1942. Virtually almost the entire Working Committee was arrested. Masses became restive, but leaderless. Violent outbreaks occurred. In this crucial situation the **Congress Socialist Group** played a significant role. In some places like Midnapur in Bengal and Ballia in U.P, - even parallel governments were set up defying British administration.

The Communists, after Soviet joining the World War-II termed the war as '**People's War**' against Fascism.

Netaji and INA - During this period, struggle for independence was being carried on by Netaji Subhas Chandra

Bose from outside India. Indian National Army was formed in 1942 by Indian Nationalists in South East Asia. In 1943 in Singapore Subhas took over charge of both the Indian National Army and Presidentship of the Indian Independence League. **A Provisional Government of Azad Hind** was formed. One of the INA brigades advanced upto the frontier of India. The Indian National Flag was hoisted in Kohima in March 1944. Exploits of the Azad Hind Forces are a milestone in the history of Indian struggle for independence.

The Bengal famine of 1943 : One of the most disastrous calamity, which was more an artificial creation than real, struck the Bengal Province of pre-partition British India during World War II following the Japanese occupation of Burma. Estimates are that between 1.5 and 4 million people died of starvation, malnutrition and disease; out of Bengal's 60.3 million population, half of them dying from disease after food became available in December 1943. This was a tremendous blow to Bengal's economic and social orders, it ruined numerous families; nevertheless the people rose back soon and played their heroic role in the freedom movement.

Naval Revolt encompasses a total strike and subsequent revolt by Indian sailors on board the ship and shore establishments at Bombay harbour on 18 February 1946. From the initial flashpoint in Bombay, the revolt spread and found support throughout British India, from Karachi to Calcutta and ultimately came to involve 78 ships, 20 shore establishments and 20,000 sailors.

It was repressed with force by the British Royal Navy. Total casualties were - 7 dead and 33 wounded. Only the Communist Party supported the strikers; the Congress and the Muslim League condemned it.

The strike found immense support among the Indian population, already gripped by the stories of the Indian National

Army. The actions of the mutineers was supported by demonstrations which included a one-day general strike in Bombay. The strike spread to other cities, and was joined by the Royal Indian Air Force and local police forces.

In Madras and Pune. the British garrisons had to face revolts within the ranks of the Indian Army. Notably, the revolting ships hoisted three flags tied together - those of the Congress, Muslim League, and the Red Flag of the Communist Party of India (CPI), signifying the unity and downplaying of communal issues among the mutineers.

The revolt was called off following a meeting between the President of the Naval Central Strike Committee (NCSC), M. S. Khan and Vallab Bhai Patel of the Congress, who had been sent to Bombay to settle the crisis. Patel issued a statement calling on the strikers to end their action, which was later echoed by a statement issued in Calcutta by Mohammed Ali Jinnah on behalf of the Muslim League. Under these considerable pressures, the strikers gave way. However, despite assurances of good services of the Congress and the Muslim League widespread arrests were made. These were followed up by court martials and large scale dismissals from the service. *None of those dismissed were reinstated into either the Indian or Pakistani navies after independence as per agreement entered into between Jawaharlal Nehru and Mountbatten. Would it be wrong to suggest it to be a betrayal of freedom fighters whose bravery and heroic action with their life at stake was one of the foremost factors to hasten up Indian Independence within next one and a half years?*

Naval Revolt in popular culture – The rising was championed by Marxist cultural activists from Bengal. Salil Chaudhury wrote a revolutionary song in 1946 on behalf of the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA). A Bengali play based on the incident, Kallol (Sound of the Wave), by

radical playwright Utpal Dutt, became an important anti-establishment statement, when it was first performed in 1965 in Calcutta. It drew large crowds to the Minerva Theatre where it was being performed; soon it was banned by the Congress government of West Bengal and its writer imprisoned for several months.

The glorious movement of the INA and the Naval Revolt, Moulana Abul Kalam Azad observed – ‘Convinced the British that they could no longer rely on Armed Forces unless the political problem of India was satisfactorily solved.’ So it is an admission that this hastened transfer of power.

Communal Riots : Calcutta witnessed a shocking blood bath of communal frenzy on August 16, 1946, which was fomented by Muslim League's declaration of the date as Direct Action Day. Soon the riot spreaded at Noakhali (presently Bangladesh), Bihar and also different parts of the country.

India Attains Freedom – On September 2, 1946 the Interim Government headed by Jawaharlal Nehru was sworn in. The Muslim League also joined the government shortly after. But a deadlock in administration arose as both the Congress and the League could not function as a team.

On February 20, 1947 the British Prime Minister Attlee announced to quit India by June 1948. Lord Mountbatten succeeded Lord Wavell as the Viceroy in March 1947 and he was engaged in hasty preparations for transfer of power.

In July, the **Indian Independence Bill** was passed in the British Parliament and it received royal ascent on July 18, 1947. 15th August 1947 was finally fixed for transfer of power. The Act provided for establishment of the Dominions of India and Pakistan and the nation was finally divided into two parts.