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The Torchbearers of Progress:
Youth, Volunteer Organisations and National Discipline
in India, c. 1918-1947

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of the requirements for the degree of
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Declaration

I affirm that this thesis is entirely my own work, represents my own original research and no part thereof has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signed:

Franziska Roy

Thesis Abstract

The thesis deals with volunteer bodies in India from the end of the Great War to c.1947. It examines the genealogy of these bodies as a projection surface for ideal citizenship, a space to experimentally put those ideas into practice and as site of a mobilisational drive 'from below' rendering these bodies contested spheres of national self-definition. The energies of 'Youth', both feared and desired by many actors, were sought to be disciplined into volunteer corps and utilised for the building of a disciplined 'modern' nation. 'Youth' and 'volunteers' thereby become mutually related categories, the former needing to be transformed into the latter. Several groupings of 'volunteers' appeared at the time, such as the Seva Dal, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the Khaksars, and the Muslim National Guards, all of which were provided paramilitary training and were available for use not only for various 'social service' activities, but also political intervention and, when necessary, for displays of violence, the latter feature most evident during the Second World War and the communal violence leading up to Partition and Indian Independence.

Three levels of analysis are undertaken herein: the first, of event history, which aims not at a comprehensive narrative but to provide illustrations of the operation and dynamics of youth and volunteer movements. The second is an intellectual history (or genealogy) of the movements, outlining a series of engagements with ideas relating to modernity as well as to organicist ideas of the nation as a body with its citizens as component parts. The third is a structural analysis of volunteer groups with their tendency to resemble one another. Such 'family resemblance' also reopens the question regarding the greater ideological formations of the first half of the twentieth century.

Abbreviations

| | |
|-----------|---|
| AIHMS | All India Hindu Mahasabha |
| AIML | All India Muslim League |
| AIMLWC | Working Committee of the All India Muslim League |
| AICC | All India Congress Committee |
| AIWC | All India Women's Conference |
| AIVB | All India Volunteer Board (of the Seva Dal) |
| AISF | All India Students Federation |
| ARP | Air Raid Practice |
| IOR | India Office Records at the British Library, London |
| BomPCC | Bombay Provincial Congress Committee |
| BPCC | Bengal Provincial Congress Committee |
| CID | Criminal Investigation Department |
| CP | Central Provinces |
| CrLAA | Criminal Law Amendment Act |
| CWC | All India Congress Working Committee |
| DIB | Director of the Intelligence Bureau |
| DIG | Deputy Inspector General |
| Dept | Department |
| DoIR | Defence of India Rules |
| DM | District Magistrate |
| Dy | Deputy |
| genl secy | secretary general |
| GOC | General Officer Commanding |
| GoB | Government of Bengal |

| | |
|-------|---|
| GoBom | Government of Bombay |
| GoI | Government of India |
| HMS | Hindu Mahasabha |
| HS | Hindu Sabha (meaning here: local branches of the HMS) |
| IB | Intelligence Bureau |
| MIM | Majlis-e-Ittihadul Muslimin (Muslim political party in Hyderabad) |
| MNG | Muslim National Guards of the Muslim League |
| ML | [local] Muslim League |
| MSA | Maharashtra State Archives, Bombay |
| NAI | National Archives of India, Delhi |
| PCJ | PC Joshi Archives at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi |
| PCC | Provincial Congress Committee |
| PVB | Provincial Volunteer Board (of the Seva Dal) |
| PpVB | People's Volunteer Brigade (during the Second World War) |
| SAD | Shiromani Akali Dal |
| SD | Seva Dal (also: Congress Seva Dal or Hindustani Seva Dal) |
| SGPC | Shiromani Gurdwara Parbhandak Committee |
| Suptd | Superintendent of Police |
| secy | secretary |
| UP | United Provinces, India |
| NWFP | North Western Frontier Provinces |
| WBSA | West Bengal State Archives |

List of Illustrations

(in order of appearance)

Jawaharlal Nehru wearing the uniform of the Seva Dal in Kanpur (Aditya Arya Archive, Kulwant Roy Collection).

‘Gandhi volunteer workers doing push-ups during early morning exercise at 6 a.m. on the grounds of the Gandhi Colony compound’, May 1946 (M. Bourke-White for *Life*).

SC Bose with his Congress volunteers (c. 1928), in Sisir Kumar Bose, *Netaji: A Pictorial Biography*, Calcutta: Netaji Research Bureau, 2008.

SC Bose as GOC of the Congress volunteer at the 1928 session, in Sisir Kumar Bose, *Netaji: A Pictorial Biography*, Calcutta: Netaji Research Bureau, 2008.

Ambedkar with Samata Sainik Dal Volunteers, in Vasant Moon, *Growing Up Untouchable in India. A Dalit Autobiography*, Lanham et al: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers 2000 (2nd ed.).

Uniform of the Muslim National Guards (Maharashtra State Archives).

Introduction

'I am the secret of perpetual youth, the everlasting creator of life; where I am not, death rages. I am the comfort, the hope, the dream of the oppressed. I destroy what exists; but from the rock whereon I [a]light new life begins to flow. I come to you to break all chains which bear you down[...] I will dissipate every delusion which has mastery over the human race. [...] Let the will of each be master of mankind, one's own strength be one's property, for the free man is the sacredman [sic], and there is nothing sublimer than he. I will destroy the existing order of things which divides one humanity into hostile peoples, into strong and weak, into privileged and out-lawed, into rich and poor, for that makes unfortunate creatures of one and all. I will destroy the order of things that makes millions the slaves of the few, and those few slaves of their own power [...] Come and follow in my track with the joyful crowd, for I know not how to make distinction between those who follow me. There are but two peoples from henceforth on earth - the one which follows me, and the one which resists me. The one I will lead to happiness, but the other I will crush in my progress. For I am the Revolution, I am the new creating force. I am the divinity which discerns all life, which embraces, revives, and rewards.'

Richard Wagner, *The Revolution*, (1849) quoted in *The Volunteer*, December 1927.¹

In the early twentieth century, mass political movements took on distinctive shape in South Asia. The energy of youth, both feared and coveted, was sought to be mobilised and harnessed for the benefit of these movements. In this dissertation, I focus on the popular notions surrounding youth and volunteers, and how those relate to the vision of an Indian nation. To this end, the volunteer groups and 'service armies' that became so popular during the nationalist movement, their organisation and mobilisation are highlighted and the specific context of their emergence outlined. This study, then, sheds new light on national discipline within the process of 'nation-building'. It also serves as an opportunity to transcend neat political and often *post ex facto* categories such as 'communalism' and 'nationalism', 'communism' or 'socialism', 'terrorism' and 'non-violence' by considering the broader underpinnings of politics at the time.

There is as yet no comparative study on youth and volunteer movements in South Asia for the period under consideration², though their symbolic and practical importance for the nationalist

¹ Excerpt from an abbreviated version of Wagner's text in *The Volunteer*, Dec. 1927, pp. 288-290.

² I shall explain the conflation of these two terms below.

movement has been noted or is often alluded to.³ This is a surprising gap, given that practically every organisation of note - from religious bodies to political parties - had a youth wing by the 1930s. Along with peasants and workers, youth belonged to those sections of society that nationalists aimed to mobilise during the period. The legitimacy through 'the masses' was needed for the painstaking assembly of a parallel state that was at the heart of the nationalist agenda ever since the 'constructive' programme. Volunteers could assume the role of an executive of the nationalist 'shadow state'. They became an organisational requirement in the age of mass mobilisation, doing propaganda and 'social service', collecting funds, enrolling members or manning whatever campaign their parent body or leader had settled on. The profiles of different volunteer organisations were strikingly similar and in various ways interconnected, not just in their genealogy but through direct influences. Despite their ideological diversity, they generally partook of shared rigid notions of personal and organisational discipline which typically included absolute obedience, and an outfit, training and internal structure mirroring that of the armed forces.

This was not least due to the fact that the protection of their respective community and 'self-defence' was included in their responsibilities from early on. Volunteer bodies of other 'communities' would, in turn, be set up to keep up with and counter the existing ones. A mutual game of deterrence furthered a vicious circle of communal anxieties from the late 1920s and, more visibly, in the 1930s and 1940s. At the same time, youth movements close to the Congress or left-leaning groups (including the Communists) started various international co-operations often with a proclaimed pacifist outlook. What permeated all the movements was a sense of necessary self-purification or 'awakening' to counter a perceived decadence or lack of 'modernity', and this was to be achieved through selfless service⁴, the ultimate object of which was almost invariably the 'nation'.

³ There is writing - or references - to individual organisations (see below). On volunteer service see Carey Watt, *Serving the Nation: Cultures of Service, Association, and Citizenship in Colonial India*, Delhi et al: OUP, 2005. On youth see Satadru Sen, *Colonial Childhoods, The Juvenile Periphery, 1850 - 1945*, London: Anthem, 2005 (dealing with juvenile delinquency); Sudipa Topdar, 'Knowledge and Governance: Political Socialization of the Indian Child within Colonial Schooling and nationalist Contestations in India' (1870-1925), [PhD thesis, University of Michigan, 2010]; and Harald Fischer-Tiné, *Der Gurukul-Kangri oder die Erziehung zur Arya-Nation. Kolonialismus, Hindureform und 'national Bildung' in Britisch-Indien (1897-1922)*, (= Beiträge zur Südasiensforschung, Vol 194), Ergon, 2003. For a somewhat hagiographic overview see Sona Roy, *Youth vs Raj. Bengal 1920-1935*, Kolkata: Das Gupta and Company, 2007.

⁴ We shall develop the notion of selflessness and just how far this idea went below. See esp. chp. 3.

Even ‘apolitical’ groups were informed by the need to make the power of youth available for the organic national body.

Apart from ‘political’ movements, there were a number of organisations that described themselves as ‘social’ or religious organisations. At times, this emphasis was an attempt to avoid Government repression, but even where the reasons were not (partly) instrumental, ‘social’ movements often had medium- to long-term agendas revolving around the uplift of their respective community and an underlying vision of the nation. What is more, moral improvement itself became a political project set on a world stage of (nation-state) entities competing for survival.⁵ The already fuzzy distinctions were exacerbated by the highly popular concept of supra-political betterment and progress based on the betterment of the individual, and actors did perceive that their social agenda was one that would reap political fruits, or, in short: the social was the political. On a more practical note, organisations' claims to be ‘purely social’ should not lead one to think they did not engage with politics or parties.⁶

The argument put forward in this thesis is that volunteer movements - hopelessly underfunded, falling short of their expectations and aims of mobilisation, often sidelined by their own inefficiency, and tending to get lost in the quagmire of their own administration (or lack thereof) - were nevertheless spaces where visions of the nation *in vitro*, ideals for a future citizenry and the contested issue of India's self-definition were discursively dreamt up and experimentally enacted. An emergent bio-politics, processed in the melting pot of colonial politics, nationalist movement(s) and international trends, encountered the self-declared and willing *avant-garde* among the mobil-

⁵ See the more detailed discussion below.

⁶ The free mixing of political engagement and ‘purely social’ uplift had another dimension as well: given the widespread concern about inner reform before outward political reform could be achieved, politics and personal morals tended to be collapsed into each other, and it is futile to try and distinguish the ‘political’ from the ‘social’ or ‘religious’ too closely. This is clear from tactical alliances between so-called social movements and political groups, and the overlap of membership between the two categories or their engagement in the same campaigns. See below (esp. chp. 4). See also National Archives of India [NAI], Home Dept., Political [Home, Poll.], 74/6/1940-Poll(I), f. 57 and ‘Khaksar and other Volunteer Organisations in Indian States. Policy to be adopted towards them’, NAI, Political Dept., Political, 31(2)-P(S)/40, 1940. The colonial state was rather more hesitant to interfere with religious or ‘purely social’ bodies (at least in comparison to outright political movements).

ised masses in this arena. Competing claims over India's national essence and diverse engagements with the wider world, however varied or antagonistic they turned out to be, started out from shared assumptions that existed beyond the level of specific definitions of community and political affiliations within a 'political economy' of power and the body. The corporeal form acts as a powerful interface between intellectual/social aspirations and practice which gets imprinted on the body politics of a given context. It also provides a window into the practice and experience of the self within those formations.⁷

Foucault's work, especially regarding the microphysics of power and genealogy provide us with a useful framework with regard to this point. Foucault, beginning with his early work on genealogy, developed the notion of the body as an interface or surface on which historical events are inscribed that History otherwise dissolves.⁸ His genealogy links the body with history in a fundamental way.

Genealogy, as a method of inquiry, complemented Foucault's 'archaeology'⁹, and was meant to interrogate certain dispositives and discourses by reconstructing the specificity of events, plurality, discontinuities, accidental formation of ideologies, or beliefs that gave rise to them, to reveal their intrinsic base-lessness and absence of any essence.¹⁰ He would elaborate on the link between history and the body further by positing that all power is the enactment of the minutiae of rituals being exercised on and through the body.¹¹ The body of the volunteer, then, is here interpreted as

⁷ See, for instance, Paul Dimeo "'A Parcel of Dummies?'" Sport and the Body in Indian History' in James Mills, Satadru Sen (eds), *Confronting the Body: The Politics of Physicality in Colonial and Post-Colonial India*, London: Anthem Press, 2004, pp 38-55.

⁸ See Foucault 'Nietzsche, die Genealogie, die Historie', esp. pp. 174-176, and in connection with 'real history' pp. 178-183. This can be read as an early intimation of the importance of the body in Foucault's work which he would later develop into his theories on bio-politics. On a analytically sharp discussion of the development of the micro-physics of power in Foucault's work, see Dreyfus/Rabinow, *Michel Foucault*, see esp. pp. 139-146 and 156-163.

⁹ Foucault developed the 'archaeology' as a method to dissolve 'epistemes', that is to strip discursive practices or discourses down to their internal structure and make these evident, to render contingent what the discourse takes for granted. Genealogy is not a supplanting or revising of the archaeology as such, but rather presents another side of it – where the archaeology is a method, the genealogy is its intention. See Michel Foucault, *Die Ordnung der Dinge. Eine Archäologie der Humanwissenschaften*, Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp, 1993 (1st ed 1971), esp. 23-28. On the archaeology, see also Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault - Jenseits von Strukturalismus und Hermeneutik*, Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1987, chp. 2, on the problems see esp. pp. 105-127, and on archaeology and genealogy see pp. 133-147 in particular.

¹⁰ See Michel Foucault, here especially 'Nietzsche, die Genealogie, die Historie', in idem, *Von der Subversion zum Wissen*, München: Hanser, 1974, pp. 83-109. See also the concise, insightful summary by Michael Makropoulos, 'Foucaults Moderne', [published online at: <http://www.michael-makropoulos.de/Foucaults%20Moderne.pdf>; accessed 24th June 2012].

¹¹ On bio-power building on his notions of the political economy of the body see, Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol I: An Introduction*, Harmondsworth et al: Penguin Books, 1978, see pp. 133-

the foremost site of an ‘anti-colonial laboratory’ where the nationalist movement(s) in various ways attempts to take away (and take over) functions from the colonial state sought to inscribe their vision of national discipline (in the Foucauldian sense) through the micro-physics of power, a formation of knowledge and technology necessitated by the nation-building enterprise in order to homogenise and subjugate the corporeal(ised) nation.¹²

At the heart of this study are not so much definite political programs or aims, elite concepts of science and development or intellectual reflections on the human condition in the modern age, but rather a ‘popular political imagination’ that Kaviraj has referred to. This does not constitute a different epistemological order as such but partakes of the contemporary discourse(s) which appears here as common sense.¹³ Looking at this order of knowledge, things may appear more kaleidoscopic and affective than when dealing with more self-conscious attempts at knowledge formation (and dissemination) by ‘professional’ political thinkers of some description. Seen from a genealogical perspective, it is at this intermediary level that the constructed coherence and order of the discourse is more ragged, their contradictions and points of reference, in short their contingency, more evident.

160; and *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* [transl. by Alan Sheridan], New York: Vintage Books 1995; see especially ‘Docile bodies’, ‘The Correct Means of Training’ etc. On power formations and the birth of confining institutions serving social homogeneity and banishment of ‘unreason’, see also his *Madness and Civilisation - A History of Insanity in the Age of Reform* [transl. by Richard Howard], New York: Vintage Books (Random House), 1988 (1st ed. 1965), pp. 38-64, and esp. pp. 241-278. These thoughts were picked up by Agamben and combined with Walter Benjamin's notions of bare life to arrive at the notions proposed in Agamben's *Homer Sacer - Sovereign Power and Bare Life* [=Meridian - Crossing Aesthetics], Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998 (originally published in 1995, transl. by Daniel Heller-Roazen). See on Agamben, Benjamin, Carl Schmitt and a brief discussion of the volunteer as partisan below.

¹² One can argue that this ‘anti-colonial laboratory’ as a haphazard set of technologies being developed within the nationalist movement does not constitute a full-fledged bio-politics in the sense Foucault used that term (i.e. a technology of power backed by a full-fledged apparatus deploying disciplinary techniques among its populace or certain sections thereof in a hegemonic form). The discussion about Foucault's specifically European framework of reference is however not the point here. We could easily counter that, through the colonial apparatus, these technologies of power got deployed in the colony while being simultaneously developed in the metropole – the argument about the synchronicity of the development of disciplinary tactics in the metropole and colony are by now almost commonsensical. At any rate, Foucault's observations about the micro-physics of power and the political economy of the body can be employed here as an analytical framework.

¹³ On a popular imagination of the Indian state and how to study such a phenomenon, see Sudipta Kaviraj, ‘On the enchantment of the state: Indian thought on the role of the state in the narrative of modernity’, *European Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (2005): 263-296, see esp. pp. 263-264.

This dissertation further helps to fill a long-standing lacuna in South Asian history which tends to either look at politics at the leadership level or the subaltern margins. Volunteer movements were consciously created to bridge precisely this gap: they were a form of institutionalised ‘mass contact’ programme set up by various bodies to bring ‘the people’ up to speed and get them to actively engage with the (competing) nationalist agenda(s).

The Historiographical Context

This thesis addresses two main concerns in South Asian history: first, it looks at the question of ‘mass’ mobilisation, its success or failure, and the directions in which such mobilisation led -or was expected to lead- thereby revisiting, albeit from a different perspective, questions that have been posed by historians in (the wake of) the early Subaltern Studies group.¹⁴ Second, it takes into account the international contexts that were integral to what amounts to a popular political imagination in South Asia (and elsewhere) in the 1920s and 30s.¹⁵ The theme of the mobilisation of youth in different political or ‘social’ movements in South Asia connects to a range of topics which have been studied in their own right but have seldom been connected with youth more than in passing. I shall briefly lay out some possible connections and point to the existing literature on adjacent themes.¹⁶

¹⁴ See in particular Ranajit Guha [et al] (ed.), *Subaltern Studies* vols. 1-6 (Delhi: OUP, 1982-1989).

¹⁵ Certain ideological tendencies, groups and events, such as the Ghadr, and Hindu-German conspiracy or, to some extent, Bolshevism, have received a fair share of attention. Global history and the history of circulation of goods, people and ideas will no doubt keep pushing those intellectual frontiers. For earlier histories of Indian ‘connectedness’ with the world in the period under consideration, see for instance Nirode K. Barooah, *India and Official Germany 1886-1914* (European university papers. Series 3, History, paleography and numismatics, 77), Frankfurt/M : Peter Lang, 1977. The focus in these studies is usually on individuals like ‘Chatto’ (see Nirode K. Barooah, *Chatto, the life and times of an Indian anti-imperialist in Europe*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), Har Dayal (Emily C. Brown, *Har Dayal: Hindu revolutionary and rationalist*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1975.) etc. Other movements, especially outside the US, are not very well explored so far, though new research is under way. See Ramnath, Maia, *Haj to Utopia - How The Ghadr Movement charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire*, Berkeley et al: University of California Press, 2011. ‘Interrogating Provincial Politics: The Leftist Movement in British Punjab, c. 1914-1950’ [unpublished PhD thesis, Oxford, 2011]. For a similarly recent study see also Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment. Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*, New York et al: OUP, 2007 (see on the central tenet of this book, below). Earlier on, Tilak Raj Sareen published a number of annotated selections or summaries from pertinent documents, see for instance Sareen, *Indian Revolutionary Movement Abroad (1905-1921)*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1979. There are a number of books regarding India and Japan, the INA, SC Bose etc. See below, last chp.

¹⁶ The historiography on particular organisations will be addressed in more detail in the relevant chapters or sections of the dissertation.

There exists a still-growing corpus of literature on youth and childhood as particular life-cycles with specific characteristics especially with regard to its rise in the ‘modern age’.¹⁷ An extensive body of literature on youth movements and culture in Europe (especially in the context of European fascisms),¹⁸ and some publications for their counterparts in non-European countries, especially for Boy Scouts and similar organisations (for example in Africa, the Middle East etc.) exists.¹⁹ But available literature on youth for India is mostly of a sociological or socio-psychological nature, and academic publications on this topic are more numerous starting in the 1960s.²⁰ These publications are therefore of limited value for the current project but can allow a glimpse into post-colonial concepts of youth and its continued importance for the ‘nation’. The concern with ‘youth’ has striking continuities in the perceptions of policy makers, as it symbolises and actualises the process of the perennial becoming of the ‘nation’.

For the period considered here there is a surprisingly small corpus of historical research into youth as a category, as a set of values, or the role of specific youth movements in the social and political

¹⁷ On modernity, see below. The development of this field can at the moment best be traced by looking at *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 2008-present. It offers much on the problems of studying youth as a category, as historical actors etc. and, thankfully, includes the non-European world. See also the essay collection by Giovanni Levi and Jean-Claude Schmitt (eds), *A History of Young People*, esp. Vol II: Stormy Evolution to Modern Times, Cambridge (Mass) et al: Harvard University Press, 1997, which serves as a good entry point to some of the debates but confines itself to modern Europe. For more specific literature on youth-related themes, see below.

¹⁸ See for relevant references, below (chp. 5). This background is helpful to contextualise the phenomenon we are dealing with here as it is not South-Asia specific, but part of a global phenomenon and as we will see, actors readily participated in the debates concerning dictatorship, progress, eugenics, individualism and militarism. Scholars of Weimar and Nazi Germany have long been grappling with the continuities between the romantically inspired youth movements of the Weimar Republic and its darker reincarnation from the 1930s. See esp. Eve Rosenhaft, *Beating the Fascists? The German Communists and political violence, 1929-1933*, Cambridge et al: CUP, 1983 and Walter Laqueur, *Die deutsche Jugendbewegung: eine historische Studie*, Köln: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1978; and Jürgen Reulecke, ‘Hat die Jugendbewegung den Nationalsozialismus vorbereitet?’ *Zum Umgang mit einer falschen Frage*, in: Wolfgang Krabbe (ed.), *Politische Jugend in der Weimarer Republik* (Dortmunder Historische Studien, Bd. 7), Bochum: Universitätsverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer, 1993, pp. 222-243 on the stark similarities in style and demeanour between left and right-wing youth movements.

¹⁹ For India much remains to be done in this field- see however Carey Watt, ‘The promise of ‘character’ and the spectre of sedition: The boy scout movement and colonial consternation in India, 1908–1921’, *Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 1999, pp. 37-62. On scouts in a non-European context more generally, see Jennifer M. Dueck, ‘A Muslim Jamboree: Scouting and Youth Culture in Lebanon under the French Mandate’, *French Historical Studies* Vol. 30, No. 3, 2007, pp. 485-516; Anne Mage, ‘Youth Organisations and the Construction of Masculine Identities in the Ciskei and Transkei, 1945-1960’, *Journal of Southern African Studies* Vol. 24, No. 4, 1998 (Special Issue

sphere, although there are some studies on the connected field of students and education.²¹ This is despite the fact that there, first, is an abundance of contemporary material and writings on the subject of the importance of ‘youth’ for the nation²² and, second, that every important political group or organisation had its own youth wing in this period. These were not always seen or self-defined as youth movements in a biological sense but the rhetoric of ‘youthfulness’ (and its adjacent characteristic of rashness, exuberance and a life relatively unencumbered by social or family responsibilities) permeated volunteer mobilisation and many of them had a significant percentage or majority of ‘young’ people (including young adults). A newly politicised segment of the populace, seen both as autonomous and distinct in their characteristics and at the same time in need of control and disciplining, thus came into contact with organised politics and, in turn, introduced another set of youth-inspired concerns and approaches into the arena. Often, these groups constituted the zones of contact, and the pool of people to reach out to and integrate into political movements. As such they were seen as the living links between the leaders and the ‘masses’.²³ They became part and parcel of what Partha Chatterjee called ‘political society’ since, he argued, a majority of the populace remains outside of what is traditionally termed ‘civil society’.²⁴

on Masculinities in Southern Africa), pp. 653-667; Colin Bundy, ‘Street Sociology and Pavement Politics: Aspects of Youth and Student Resistance in Cape Town, 1985’, *Journal of Southern African Studies* Vol. 13, No. 3, 1987, pp. 303-330; Arthur Brown, ‘The Development of the Scout Movement in Nigeria’, *African Affairs* Vol. 46, No. 182, 1947, pp. 38-42; Timothy Parsons, ‘No More English than the Postal System: The Kenya Boy Scout Movement and the Transfer of Power’, *Africa Today*, Vol. 51, No. 3, 2005, pp. 61-80; Saul Scheidlinger, ‘A Comparative Study of the Boy Scout Movement in Different National and Social Groups’, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 13, No. 6, 1948, pp. 739-750; Kristine Alexander, ‘The Girl Guide Movement and Imperial Internationalism During the 1920s and 1930s’, *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* Vol. 2, No. 1, 2009, pp. 37-63. Apart from the Boy Scouts a number of other (nationalist) movements particularly geared towards the youth have come to notice in the connection of the ‘age of nationalism’ and fascism, see for instance Wolfgang Werner, ‘Playing Soldiers’: The Truppenspieler Movement among the Herero of Namibia, 1915 to ca. 1945, *Journal of Southern African Studies* Vol. 16, No. 3, 1990, pp. 476-502; Peter Wien, ‘Iraqi Arab Nationalism: Authoritarian, Totalitarian and Pro-Fascist Inclinations, 1932–1941’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40 (2008), pp. 337-339.

²⁰ The bulk of such studies actually originate in the 1970s and 1980s. This wave presumably is connected with contemporary events: the student and Naxalite movements taking off circa 1967, and later Sanjay Gandhi's Youth Congress (and the problem of the rejuvenation of the INC), the problem of slums and the informal sector, juvenile delinquency and goondas as well as communal violence and larger concerns for ‘heritage’ national culture and modernity along with concerns over rural development and illiteracy. The official concern led to many semi-official publications and enquiries in this period (from diverse research institutes). See below.

²¹ Again, student movements have attracted greater attention from the 1970s. See on childhood and youth (as cited earlier): Satadru Sen, *Colonial Childhoods, The Juvenile Periphery, 1850 - 1945*, London: Anthem, 2005; Sudipa Topdar, ‘Knowledge and Governance: Political Socialization of the Indian Child within Colonial Schooling and Nationalist Contestations in India’ (1870-1925), [PhD thesis, University of Michigan, 2010], which picks up on four moments and modes of youth in

The studies most pertinent in this context - though none of them dealing with youth as such - are monographs based on doctoral theses by Carey Watt, Harald Fischer-Tiné, Joseph Alter, Markus Daechsel and Nandini Gooptu. Watt looks at the notion of service, service organisations and ‘moderate’ politics in the perceived nationalist ‘lull’ in the 1910s. Fischer-Tiné studies the Gurukul Kangri and elucidates from the details of that educational project the wider emanations and discourses surrounding nationalism, manliness, Hindu culture and perceived racial degeneration.²⁵ Both these studies are focussed on the period prior to ‘mass’ mobilisation and volunteering on a wider scale. Alter was the first to comprehensively deal with the (male) body as an object of nationalist aspiration by looking at wrestlers.²⁶ Nandini Gooptu situates the ‘urban poor’, so often lumped together as ‘the masses’ or considered purely from a labour history perspective, in the sphere of nationalist activities and studies their strategies of self-assertion in the political and socio-economic arena in UP.²⁷ Bob van der Linden wrote on the ‘moral languages’ underpinning some voluntary movements, which he considers in terms of their shared utopian nationalism.²⁸ Markus Daechsel studied the ‘anti-societal’ (sometimes labelled ‘fascistic’) politics of ‘self-expression’ of bodies such as the RSS, Khaksars and Muslim National Guards, which he regards as an elaborate staging of symbolic meta-politics, a performance of abstract power, aimed at expressing nothing but an ‘inherent sense

South Asian history, the most relevant here are the engagement with early literature for children and the student movement in Indian nationalism. There is much writing that has to do (at least peripherally) with youth, from Alter's writing on akharas (see below) to scholarship on sport, physical culture (see the multitude of articles in the *International Journal of the History of Sport* which has a heavy South Asia/ Asia focus), on to literature (see the directly relevant article by Shobna Nijhawan, ‘Hindi Children's Journals and Nationalist Discourse (1910-1930)’, *EPW*, Vol. 39, No. 33, 2004, pp. 3723-3729), or law (directly concerned with the nexus of these two is for instance Ashwini Tambe, ‘The State as Surrogate Parent: Legislating Nonmarital Sex in Colonial India, 1911–1929’, *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 2009, pp. 393-427.) There is a large amount of contemporaneous writing from around the time of independence (see below) and a corpus of sociological and anthropological studies on Indian youth from the 70s and 80s. On this topic Ram Chandra Gupta (ed.), *Youth in Ferment*, Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1968; Rajendra Pandey, *India's Youth at the crossroads: a study of values and aspirations of college students*, Varanasi: Vani Vihar, 1975; or N.Y. Reddy, *Values and attitudes of Indian Youth: a psychological study of rural and urban students*, Delhi: Light & Life Publishers, 1980. The bulk of studies are on the post-independent era when these were national/state concerns and many were underpinned by a sense of panic at ‘student indiscipline’ or the moral decline of a seemingly alienated youth or with the problem of ‘modernising’ rural youth and primary education. See, on student politics at this time especially Phillip Altbach, ‘Student Politics in the Third World’, *Higher Education*, Vol. 13, No. 6, 1984, pp. 635-55. and idem, ‘The International Student Movement’, *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1964, pp. 131-137 (which deals also with the World Federation of Youth in which the Seva Dal would be engaged in the post-independent period, but for which there is unfortunately no space here).

²² Annie Besant, *Preparation for Citizenship*, Madras: Commonwealth Office, 1916 and the same author's *The future of young India*, Madras: Theosophical Pub. House, 1915. There are innumerable articles and (some recorded) speeches by Nehru, Gandhi and various other national leaders. See for instance Durlab Singh (ed.), *To the youth of my country: being the survey of the history of the youth movement in India as expounded in their addresses by Subhas Chandra Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru,*

of being' before a nebulous (and menacing) world audience²⁹ which he juxtaposes with the traditional, institutional 'politics of interest'.³⁰ His approach is somewhat reminiscent of some of Arendt's descriptions in 'The Origins of Totalitarianism'³¹, but Daechsel does not take sufficient account of the very real grounding and interaction of the politics of 'self-expression' in and with institutional politics, the equally concrete interests of the people engaged in such displays of power and their claims over territory³² or the inherently political project this type of mobilisation was aimed at, as we have outlined already.

When looking at the evolving notions of 'youth', a number of social shifts and changed conditions that had occurred (not only in India), such as urbanity, the concept of leisure time, prolonged time that was set aside for education (at least in the middle class), family and gender relations, all connected to socio-political changes occurring in the era of 'modernity'³³. Relevant, too, are the myriad contemporaneous international movements which were so often held up as competitive yardstick for the Youth of India.³⁴ We should avoid a simple re-telling of the 'modernization

Sarat Chandra Bose, K.F. Nariman, Kamla Devi Chattopadhyaya, T.L. Vaswani, Dr. Raman, Mr. Sanjayal and other youth leaders, Lahore: Hero Publications, 1946. See also Madhavendra P.N. Singh (ed.), *Challenge to Youth - A symposium of Messages by the Great personalities to Youth*, with an foreword by Sir S Radhakrishnan, introduction by Pandit Amaranatha Jha, Allahabad: Kitabmahal, s.a. [1940], which assembles addresses by a variety of 'great men' from Reverend CF Andrews to Malaviya, GD Birla to Zakir Hussain, MN Roy, Harold Laski and many more. Dedicated pamphlets and books on youth include GP Prabhaker. *Echo of Youth*, Baroda: Shah Maneklal Ambaram Doctor (at Shree Sayaji Vijaya Press) [1937?]. Gandhi also addresses issues of youth in his 'Young India', a contemporaneous compilation of his addresses to students has been published in Anand T Hingorani (ed. & comp.), *To the Students by Mahatma Gandhi* (Gandhi series, Vol 1), Allahabad: Allahabad Law Journal Press, 1945 (1st ed. 1935 for the Congress Jubilee).; see furthermore William Cowley, *A Plan for Youth. A Handbook of Youth Organization for India and Pakistan*, Calcutta: OUP, 1949; Anonymous, *From an Elder Brother to the Youth of India*, reprinted from New India for December 12, 1925; HP Blavatsky, *The Golden Stairs*, Theosophical Publishing House: Adyar, Madras, India 1932. Then there are a range of newspapers either explicitly for Youth or addressing the 'young radicals' more or less explicitly and informing their readers the international and national level, see papers like *Student Call*, *The Volunteer*, *Vanguard* [Meherally's paper, not MN Roy's], *Yuvak*, *Spark* (and *New Spark*), *Young Liberator*, to some extent the *Forward*, *The Congress Socialist*, and various earlier Bengali militant journals (see below). Then, the The RSS' *Organiser* as well as magazines in a variety of Indian languages (*Sainik*, *Karmayogi*, *Goshti*, for instance). There were a number of dedicated children's journals like *Khilauna*, *Kanya Manoranjan* etc. which basically mirrored the moral and physical concerns - especially over boys - exhibited in their muscular Christian counterparts. See Shobna Nijhawan, 'Hindi Children's Journals and Nationalist Discourse (1910-1930)', *EPW*, Vol. 39, No. 33, 2004, pp. 3723-3729.

²³ I would agree with Nandini Gooptu who sees the roots for 'muscular Hinduism' in the 20s and 30s, but while this is when a public and widespread appreciation set in that shapes the discourse in fundamental ways, the shaping of these arguments goes back to the late 19th Century and turn of the

drama', however.³⁵

To the extent that the theme of youth and volunteering has been dealt with, single movements have been studied, such as, popularly, the RSS,³⁶ terrorist organisations in Bengal³⁷, to a lesser extent the *Bayam Samities*, and certain forms of student politics (Aligarh,³⁸ or within the Swadeshi movement).³⁹ Another prospering field is that of youth in the context of education, yet educational institutions and schemes are, generally speaking, mostly seen through the lens of the values and ideologies that are to be imparted from above, or the institutional dynamics and histories.⁴⁰ The Boy Scouts in India have also attracted some attention.⁴¹ However, in most cases, bodies or movements have been perceived as national(ist) organisations incorporating young people rather than being studied or theorised as youth movements situated in a wider social and trans-territorial context, and in terms of their potential interconnections and crossovers.⁴² Thus, youth organisations have not been sufficiently studied in their specific connection with political mobilisation, urbanity, urban violence, national education and discipline, or with the peculiar ideological underpinnings according to which certain characteristics were thought to be especially tangible in young men (and sometimes women), which were considered essential for the 'virility', pugnacity, vitality and

Twentieth. See Nandini Gooptu, *The Politics of the Urban Poor in Early Twentieth-Century India*, Cambridge: CUP, 2001.

²⁴ Partha Chatterjee, 'Beyond the Nation or Within', *Social Text*, No. 36, 1989, pp. 57-69. He draws the distinction between civil society, that is institutions characteristic of modern associational life based on 'Western' societies; they are egalitarian, autonomous with freedom of entry and exit, and a process of deliberative decision-making. On the other hand there is the 'political society', that is mediating institutions and activities situated between civil society and the state.

²⁵ Carey Watt, *Serving the Nation: Cultures of Service, Association, and Citizenship in Colonial India*, Delhi: OUP, 2005; and Fischer-Tiné, Harald, *Der Gurukul-Kangri oder die Erziehung zur Arya-Nation. Kolonialismus, Hindureform und 'national Bildung' in Britisch-Indien (1897-1922)*, (= Beiträge zur Südasiensforschung, Vol. 194), Ergon, 2003.

²⁶ While he started out with an anthropological study in the 1980s, he subsequently also delved into the history of these trends. See articles referred to below.

²⁷ Nandini Gooptu, *The Politics of the Urban Poor*.

²⁸ Bob van der Linden, *Moral Languages from Colonial Punjab. The Singh Sabha, Arya Samaj and Ahmadiyahs*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2008.

²⁹ See Markus Daechsel, *The Politics of Self-Expression The Urdu Middle-Class Milieu in Mid-Twentieth Century India and Pakistan*, London/ New York: Routledge, 2006 [kindle ebook ed.]; and Markus Daechsel ' "Faith, Unity, Discipline": The Making of a Socio-Political Formation in urban India - Lahore 1935-1953' [PhD thesis, Royal Holloway, 2001].

³⁰ As such it was an attempted a break with the colonially channelled and controlled politics of interest which actors engaged in the politics of self-expression 'hated', see Markus Daechsel, *The Politics of Self-Expression* [kindle ebook ed. see esp. 9-10%; see also his PhD Markus Daechsel ' "Faith, Unity, Discipline", pp. 186-87].

³¹ See Hanna Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (new ed. with added prefaces), San Diego/New York/London: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1979, see esp. pp. 323-334 on the markers of totalitarian movements and their 'political expressionism'.

the overall ‘progress’ and freedom of ‘young India’.

Another limitation of the existing secondary literature becomes readily visible: for those bodies, cadre organisations etc. that have been studied, the focus has almost exclusively been on the organisation and disciplining of young males. Concerning political radicalism, urban violence, imparting organised drill and ‘defence’ training, (young) women are conspicuously absent from academic writing for this period – but not from the scene itself, even though heavily gendered notions concerning duties prevailed.⁴³ While it is true that in the colonial representation the body was by default assumed to be the male body both among colonisers and the ‘effeminate’ colonised, women were not entirely absent. The physically fit female body was always an issue in relation to its procreative aspects but also as a resistant body when it came to abductions and the upholding of communal honour. On the other hand, the role of women is too often seen as a field in itself and something apart. Even in the case of a readily apparent and all too visible ‘manliness’ of certain organisations, the image was a consciously intended and carefully projected one, which was difficult to uphold at a time when the ‘mass movement’ and politics of representation was the framework of such bodies and especially when the physical training of women for ‘self-defence’ became

³² This particular aspect is very well described by Nandini Gooptu in her *Politics of the Urban Poor* where she analyses such displays throughout as a means of political and cultural self-assertion (rather than self-expression) that went hand in hand with public claims over space and an appropriation of legitimising devices, including Sanskrit culture.

³³ See below.

³⁴ For a more contemporary psychoanalytical study: Sudhir Kakar, *The Inner World: A Psycho-Analytic Study of Childhood and Society in India*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1981. Kakar, a student of Erik Erikson and shares the latter's interest in Freudian theories allowing for a fusion of classic psychology with structural cultural psychological traces making for a framework in which culture and psyche/identity formation constantly impact upon each other and evolve together, thus making it feasible to trace them across generations as psychology becomes inscribed onto social institutions. See, for instance, Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, Frogmore: Triad Paladin, 1978 (repr.), see esp. part IV, pp. 251-362 on youth and the evolution of identity, including politics and the ego.

³⁵ See below. Such narratives tend to somewhat simplistically ascribe to people a rootlessness and disorientation owing to such changes (economy, administration, urbanity, modernity, colonial education) that forced them to find solace in mass movements, strong leadership or religious ‘fanaticism’ based on their ‘yearning for community’. Cf. Walter Andersen and Shridar D Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh an Hindu Revivalism*, New Delhi, 1999 (7th ed.), p.1 The following of Hindu nationalists, religious leaders etc. at these points has been explained by the rushing in of the world into localities through the media and global intertwinedness (cf. Daechsel, ‘Faith, Unity, Discipline”, pp.117-118, 135-144, and chp. 4, esp. 146-147), to the changed economic and administrative system etc. which supposedly opened a gap that then was filled by especially religious-influenced political revivalism, such as Hindu nationalism or similar movements (Cf. Andersen and Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron*, see esp. the introduction). This rendering of the ‘modernisation drama’ typically privileges the attitude of an urban middle class. It is worthwhile to complement and complicate these phenomena by looking at other classes and

seemingly imperative. ‘Masculinity’ is not something intrinsic to the male body (itself a construct) but rather denotes a set of practices and ideals.⁴⁴ The stark phallogocentric language of colonialism and anti-colonialism threatens, both, to render anything that is not ‘masculine’ opaque as masculinity served to uphold an essential difference between rulers and ruled, but at the same time constructs masculinity as a metaphysical whole when it is actually a discursive process, a contested and chimeric sphere.⁴⁵ The contemporaneous notions of masculinity in the metropole were themselves built around and inscribed with this colonial difference. An essentialised masculinity appears to us then as a discourse regarding corporeal ideals connected to notions of positive personal markers, active citizenship and specific forms of sociability, (political) activity and organisation, which shall be elaborated on later.

It has been argued that ‘modernity’, urbanity and the related rhythms and life cycles, patterns of work and leisure, (compulsory) education, unemployment (not least of young people and graduates) and other factors played an important role in the emergence of ‘youth’ as a concept, and,

milieus (see for instance Nandini Gooptu, *The politics of the urban poor in early twentieth-century India*, Cambridge/ New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001) and the evolving physical and gym culture, the shakhas and wrestlers, cf. Joseph Alter, ‘Somatic Nationalism: Indian Wrestling and Militant Hinduism’, *MAS*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 1994, pp. 557-588.

³⁶ See on the RSS and relevant literature, chp. 4: The RSS.

³⁷ Peter Heehs, *Nationalism, Terrorism, Communalism*, New Delhi et al: Oxford India Paperbacks, 2000. Idem, *The Bomb in Bengal: The Rise of Revolutionary Terrorism in India, 1900-1910*, New Delhi/ New York: Oxford University Press, 2004; see also the same author’s ‘Bengali religious nationalism and communalism’, *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1997, pp. 117-39; Michael Silvestri, ‘"The Sinn Fein of India": Irish Nationalism and the Policing of Revolutionary Terrorism in Bengal’, *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 4, 2000, pp. 454-486; Irfan S. Habib, *To Make the Deaf Hear. Ideology and Programme of Bhagat Singh and his Comrades*, Gurgaon: Three Essays Collective, 2007.

³⁸ See the seminal work by David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.

³⁹ See the account by PM Joshi, *Student revolts in India. Story of pre-independence youth movement*, Bombay, 1972. See also Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi movement in Bengal 1903-1908*, New Delhi : People's Pub. House, 1973. A big corpus on literature on the student movement in Bengal is available in Bengali – though, unfortunately, currently not to this scholar.

⁴⁰ Relevant studies in the context of my own research are, for instance, Harald Fischer-Tiné, *Der Gurukul-Kangri*; the edited volume on a range of educational institution in colonial India by Mushirul Hasan, *Knowledge, Power & Politics. Educational Institutions in India*, New Delhi: Lotus Collection - Roli Books, 1998, see especially Mushirul Hasan, ‘Negotiating with its Past and Present: The Changing Profile of the Aligarh Muslim University’ in: Mushirul Hasan, op.cit, pp. 189-220; Nonica Datta, The ‘Subalternity’ of Education: Gurukuls in Rural Southeast Punjab, in: *ibid.*, 1998, pp. 27-65.

⁴¹ For the South Asian context: Carey A. Watt, *Serving the Nation*; idem, ‘The promise of character

therefore, of youth movements along with its perceived potentialities and dangers.⁴⁶ Youth is seen here as a socially constructed category that is volatile and highly dependent on its context. For the purposes of this work it is better to refrain from imposing at the outset an external and retrospective understanding of the term, and instead to attempt to reconstruct how the category was perceived and negotiated at the time. This negotiation took place on different levels and is contested by various actors: in the cultural (education, cinema, home, etc.), biological, political spheres and so forth. Having said that, the theory of generational conflict as a symbol and *sign* for social change may provide a *starting point* to look into the consciousness of young people.

I am not primarily concerned here with the literature on (Indian) nationalism in general, which for the most part does not address the question of youth and volunteer organisations directly, or indeed of the intellectual and social histories of nationalism and nationalist mobilisation.⁴⁷ It is worthwhile to focus instead on the histories of youth and volunteer movements and their conceptualisation of the future state.

and the spectre of sedition: The Boy Scout Movement and Colonial Consternation in India, 1908-1921', *South Asia* Vol. 22, No. 2, 1999, pp. 37-62; see also Watt's 'Education for National Efficiency: constructive nationalism in north India, 1909-1916', *MAS*, Vol. 31, No. 2, 1997, pp. 339-74.

⁴² There been a careful examination of the interconnection between Indian youth organisations and the self-conscious international sphere (especially when connections stretched to realms beyond the British Empire) with which, as we shall see, these movements interacted and paid considerable attention to.

⁴³ Paul Dimeo claimed that in the realm of sports and fitness, women were entirely absent from the representation of the body, see Dimeo, 'A Parcel of Dummies?' Sport and the Body in Indian History' in James Mills, Satadru Sen (eds) *Confronting the Body*, pp 38-55, p. 43. There are a number of good studies on the 'women's movement' in Indian politics. See Manini Chatterjee, '1930: Turning Point in the Participation of Women in the Freedom Struggle', *Social Scientist* Vol. 29, Nos. 7/8, 2001, pp. 39-47. See also the (very congratulatory and Communist party line oriented) study by Renu Chakravartty, *Communists In Indian Women's Movement*, New Delhi: People's Publishing, 2011 (1st ed. 1980). Probably the first acknowledgement of women's role in the Hindu right is in Tapan Basu et al., *Khaki shorts and saffron flags: a critique of the Hindu right*, New Delhi 1993. This theme was followed up by Tanika Sarkar, see for instance her *Women and the Hindu right: a collection of essays*, New Delhi: Kali For Women, 1995 and her more recent *Hindu wife and Hindu nation: gender, religion and the prehistory of Indian nationalism*, London: Hurst, 2001. Atreyee Sen has of late shown to what an extent poor working-class slum-dwelling women and children are involved in the Shiv Sena under their by now partly autonomous organisational wing of the 'Mahila Aghadi'. See idem, *Shiv Sena Women. Violence and Communalism in a Bombay Slum*, London, 2007. Most of these studies are of a more contemporaneous nature, however. Various bodies that are dealt with in this study had indeed a women's wing, from the Congress' Seva Dal (including its 'juvenile corps') to the Muslim National Guards (the youth organisation of the Muslim League).

⁴⁴ The work that famously problematised any easy distinction between a naturalised about sex and a constructed gender by demonstrating the interconnected contingency and constructedness of both, is

Youth and Volunteers as Categories and a Cluster of Concepts

An imagined 'youth', national reinvigoration and nation-building were linked in many countries of the period. But 'youth' and 'young' in the stricter sense do not denote the same phenomenon or idea.⁴⁸ 'Youth' came to carry a variety of attributes which, as a signifier, could function irrespective of the actual age of individuals concerned, these included for our context: energy, (physical) vigour, bravery, zeal, a broad outlook or 'world-mindedness', desire for (national) renewal and change, purity of intent, but also passion, lack of self-control, a volatile temper, malleability, a tendency to violence, and impatience. A number of actors proclaimed loudly that no 'youth' could be considered truly 'young' if he did not exhibit these characteristics.⁴⁹ Youth had been associated with notions of virility and war in eighteenth-century France already, and this proved to be a lasting association.⁵⁰ Thus 'youth' was a constructed, relational and metaphysical super-category for the active and politicised layers of society which departed from accepted frameworks for engaging with society. Youth was to be feared and celebrated because it deviated from the norms of social behaviour and the *status quo*. Thus, dovetailing colonial stereotypes, the equation established by Intelligence Bureaus of youth – rebels – terrorists, or youth – deviance - amorality is never far

Judith Butler's *Gender trouble : feminism and the subversion of identity*, New York/London: Routledge, 2008 (Repr.), see esp. pp. 9- 19, 22-33 for her discussion and critique of Simone de Beauvoir and Luce Irigaray and, following Foucault, observations on the metaphysics of substance that are pertinent here.

⁴⁵ See Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity - The 'manly Englishman' and the 'effeminate Bengali' in the late nineteenth century*, Manchester/ New York: Manchester University Press, 1995.

⁴⁶ See below for details.

⁴⁷ For a recent study see Benjamin Zachariah, *Playing the Nation Game: The Ambiguities of Nationalism in India*, Delhi: Yoda Press, 2011, see esp. pp. 31-78. See Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968 (a representative example of the 'Cambridge School'). For a critique of the instrumentalist Cambridge approach, see David Hardiman, 'The Indian "Faction": A Political Theory Examined', in Ranajit Guha (ed), *Subaltern Studies I*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982, pp. 198-232. On the structures of nationalist thought, see Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?*, London: Zed Books, 1986; idem, *The Nation and its Fragments*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). On the simultaneous emergence of the nation from across the world, see CA Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: global connections and comparisons*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2004, see pp. 199-244. On the production of national 'state-space' (following Henri Lefebvre's argument), see Manu Goswami, *Producing India*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004. On Dalit nationalism, see G. Aloysius, *Nationalism without a Nation in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997); on 'communalism' within the nationalist movement, see William Gould, *Hindu Nationalism and the Language of Politics in Late Colonial India*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. On the question of mobilisation, or the interface of elite and popular politics, which is central to this thesis, see Ranajit Guha, 'Discipline and Mobilise', in Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey (eds), *Subaltern Studies*, Vol. VII, Delhi: OUP, 1992, pp. 69-120.

⁴⁸ See below on what defines a Youth in the contemporaneous discourse.

⁴⁹ See for instance Subhas Chandra Bose (below), and BS Moonje especially during his speech 2nd /3rd

away.⁵¹ Sánchez Eppler noted that '[a]s a site of cultural meaning childhood thus fluctuates between past and future, expressing desire.'⁵² Youth then is in a similar manner the corporeal link between present and future, and thus it connects notions about historic failure or a golden age, with utopias or dystopias, in a more concrete way.⁵³

Biological notions of who could be a youth were intertwined with the socio-political functions of the category and remained so despite more concrete definitions in the sciences.⁵⁴ Along with their actual importance as stratum of society to be mobilised, the imaginary of Youth as the future of all nations had gripped contemporaneous observers. On a pragmatic level, the young generation would take over positions of power all too soon, but more than that, a whole cult around the special propensities and characteristics of Youth developed at the time. Early in the twentieth century, the category was taken very seriously in different quarters, by colonial officials in their fear of anarchism, communism and terrorism, and by nationalists in their aspiration for change and renewal. Youth epitomised the hope of, as well as a potential menace to India. Youth was something like the joker in the deck of cards that was nationalism. Young people could be moulded (or indoctrinated, the police would say), they had a particular propensity for change and renewal

Jan. 1934 addressing the virtues and faults, merits and demerits of Youth as a phase in life but more than that as a defined phase as a quality and outlook. See Nehru Memorial Museum and Library [NMML]; BS Moonje Private Papers, Subject File 41, see esp. ff. 49-50.) This is emblematic of the definitions and characteristics we will come across time and gain in the further course of this study, from rashness and impatience (potentially dangerous) to enthusiasm (naivete) and the desire to change things and the bodily requirements to translate these desires into action. This was a delimiting of more defined categories that had evolved in psychology and sociology earlier while building on their descriptive aspects. (see below)

⁵⁰ See, for instance, Sabina Lorgia, 'The Military Experience', in Levi/Schmitt (eds), *A History of Young People*, Vol II, pp. 11-36, who traces the rise of notions of fitness and virility with regard to youth and its association with war in late eighteenth-century France and the Napoleonic Wars. See esp. *ibid.* pp. 32-36.

⁵¹ See the next chapter.

⁵² See Joseph M. Hawes and N. Ray Hiner, 'Hidden in Plain View: The History of Children (and Childhood) in the Twenty-First Century', *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2008, pp. 43-49; Karen Sánchez Eppler, *Dependent States: The Child's Part in Nineteenth-Century American Culture*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005, pp. xxvi.

⁵³ On youth and age as a category, see also Steven Mintz, 'Reflections on Age as a Category of Historical Analysis', *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2008, pp. 91-94; and his 'Why the History of Childhood Matters', *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2012, pp. 1-28. Mintz who considers childhood as the 'missing link' in social history and shares the here proposed constructivist view of childhood and youth.

⁵⁴ Regarding the biological notions of youth: The American philosopher-turned-psychologist, Stanley Hall, studied the effects of adolescence based on the entry into puberty around the turn of the century and along with the outer markers - caused by the physical changes - he noted the peculiarities of this stage as craving excitement or 'intense states' of mind and passion. This is in line with many of the ascribed emotive characteristics described above. See Stanley G. Hall, *Adolescence. Its psy-*

because they could adapt to a rapidly changing world - and no one doubted that it was just that, especially after the Great War - and an India that needed to change just as rapidly if it dared hope to win freedom.

Due to this, Youth could overcome seemingly paramount problems that could not be addressed by policies or social engineering in a short time if directed at adults, who, as Nehru pointed out, might be too 'tied down to the ancient ruts'.⁵⁵ On the other hand, Youth was a dark, undefined and therefore dangerous entity, with its 'impatience' and innate radicalism. Some celebrated, others feared this aspect. Nehru, one of the few who criticised Fascism early on, still could call on Youth to adapt what he called the 'Fascist motto' of 'live dangerously' while simultaneously evoking a 'commonwealth of Empire of youths'.⁵⁶ Subhas Bose, likewise proclaiming the existence of a 'Republic of Youth', proclaimed that associations of young men or women, service leagues etc. were not necessarily Youth associations, because proper youth associations were 'characterised by a feeling of dissatisfaction with the present order of things, the desire of a better order accompanied by a vision of that order.' Youth movements were therefore always revolutionary. For Bose, the youth movement was the mother of all movements, since this restlessness and impatience had to exist before any political movement could be started. This, for many actors concerned, represented a universal truth. From Bolshevism to Fascism, from the Young Turks to Young China 'the same vision [of a better world] and the same objective' could be found, and wherever the old generation had failed, the Youth of the world had awakened and taken up the responsibility to reconstruct society and guide it to a 'better and noble state of existence.'⁵⁷ Any number of speeches like this

chology and its relations to physiology, anthropology, sociology, sex, crime, religion and education, Vol. 2, New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1904, see for instance pp. 69-75. See also below.

⁵⁵ Cowley, *A Plan for Youth*, p.8. Cowley, the provincial youth organiser for the Punjab, who had great sympathy for Indian aspirations, echoed many of the tropes one could also find in nationalist circles combined with concerns typical for the administration. Youth organisations were dangerous (as Hitler had shown) but not organising youth was even more dangerous, for idleness bred crime whenever youth had no lawful outlet for their exuberant energies. Youth could be a panacea for virtually all social problems - from superstition to economic crisis, public health and hygiene - if properly trained from early on. See his introduction.

⁵⁶ Nehru, speech at Students' Conference at Shradhanand Park, Calcutta, 22nd Sept. 1928, in Durlab Singh, (ed.), *To the youth of my country: being the survey of the history of the youth movement in India as expounded in their addresses by Subhas Chandra Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarat Chandra Bose, K.F. Nariman, Kamla Devi Chattopadhyaya, T.L. Vaswani, Dr. Raman, Mr. Sanyal and other youth leaders*, Lahore: Hero Publications, 1946, p. 90.

⁵⁷ Subhas Chandra Bose, 'Speech as chairman of Reception Committee of the 3rd All Youth Congress held at Calcutta on 25th December 1928 [KF Nariman being the president]', cited in the collection of speeches and addresses of leaders, edited by Durlab Singh, *To the Youth of My Country*, pp. 45-

from leaders with diverging social and political views could be cited here to the same effect.

We have already hinted at the collapsing and interchangeability of ‘volunteer’ and ‘youth’. During nationalist campaigns, colonial officials seem more prone to use the catch-all-phrase ‘volunteers’, and this, obviously was not limited to youth. A reflective note around 1930 said

The Government of India understands that its [Youth movements] external manifestations are for the most part to be found in the activities of the volunteers. These devote special attention to physical culture, exhibition of feats of strength, lathi play, and so on.⁵⁸

For nationalists, too, the terms ran side by side. Volunteers were often young people, and students made up for a good percentage of the volunteers. Commonly, the main body of ‘youth’ and volunteer organisations was supposed to be between 16-18 and 30 years old.⁵⁹ Generally, people between 16 and 30 seem to have met the definition of ‘young’.⁶⁰ Apart from biological age, the phase after puberty and the continued economic dependency on parents or before marriage prescribes the markers for what is (still) considered young beyond idealistic notions.⁶¹ The high percentage of educated unemployed Indians, arguably, added to the prolonged phase of ‘youth’ at the time, as the transition to economically independent adulthood became increasingly fuzzy.

50, see for quotes pp. 46-48.

⁵⁸ NAI, Home, Poll, 212/30, 1930, f. 7.

⁵⁹ The idea of youth as the time-span of c. 25 to 40 (later 30) years is one that arose in Thermidorian France as the a ‘quarantined’ interval before a person would become a full citizen and be eligible to a public hold office (See, Sergio Luzzatto, ‘Young Rebels and Revolutionaries, 1789-1917’, in Levi/Schmitt [eds], *A History of Young People*, Vol. II, see esp. pp. 183-184). We find that the deferred upper age limit of 30 continues to be the boundary as to who is a ‘youth’ in the discourse of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Some organisations, like the Naujawan Bharat Sabha were less strict, others, such as the Bangiya Seva Dal prescribed that ‘members’ could only be people between 16 and 18; younger people were ‘minors’, and older ones ‘associates’. See for details the corresponding chapters. Youth remained a category that was interchangeable with ‘child’ until the 1960s (see the ‘Children Act’ for dealing with juvenile offenders. This can be also seen for the period that concerns us here by looking at the 1929 ‘Child Marriage Restraint Act’ where youth below 14 and 16 for girls and boys respectively were not to be married. Cf. Ved Kumari, *Juvenile Justice System in India. From Welfare to Rights*, New Delhi: OUP, 2004, pp. 14-19.)

⁶⁰ The competition for participating in the World Youth delegation in India was open to people up to 30 years of age, cf. NMML, AICC papers, FD-10, I, f. 59. The reasons for the predominance of ‘youth’ in these movements seems self-explanatory when we assume they mean people between 18 and 30. But the greatest percentage of rank and file in these movements, as far as I can make out, would usually be in their early twenties while the upper echelons often were notably older. This seems to hold true for male and female members. This age cluster is still mostly accepted as conforming to definitions of youth or young men. See for instance Jeffrey Craig and Jane Dyson, ‘Introduction’ to idem (eds), *Telling Young Lives: Portraits of Global Youth*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008, pp. 1-15, see pp. 4-6.

⁶¹ A definition of youth that is still pretty consensual in the social science is along the lines of that by Charlotte Bühler from 1933: Youth is an in-between period beginning with the achievement of physiological maturity and ending with the acquisition of social maturity, that is with the assump-

Undoubtedly there were many ‘mature’ volunteers – especially in the higher strata of organisations where they functioned as organisers, and instructors. But the largest percentage of members of such organisations would actually be ‘youths’ (i.e. people between 18 and 30 years in bodies like the



Seva Dal), and made up a large percentage in organisations such as the RSS without there

Jawaharlal Nehru wearing the uniform of the Seva Dal in Kanpur (Aditya Arya Archive, Kulwant Roy Collection)

being very specific rules about the age of members. The recruitment and gradual initiation into volunteer organisations would, however, often target children or young adolescents, whether we look at the terrorist movement in Bengal⁶² or parties like the Indian National Congress, the Hindu Mahasabha, or the Muslim League who would at times lay down age limits for their members,⁶³ and would usually have a ‘juvenile corps’ as soon as they attempted to conduct popular politics with a mass base.

In the few detailed lists of volunteers I have found, the percentage of people in their early twenties is striking. This is particularly true for women engaged in politics: most women we find in the IB files of the late 1930s about ‘communist’ and ‘terrorist’ women are unmarried people in their late teens and twenties. Females who underwent the Muslim National Guards training were predominantly College girls.⁶⁴ This, of course, is not surprising given the role married women were normatively expected to fulfil: one structural problem that especially, though not exclusively, applied to

tion of the social, sexual, economic and legal rights and duties of the adult. Cf. Charlotte Bühler, *Der menschliche Lebenslauf als psychologisches Problem*, (second compl. rev. ed.) 1959, Verlag f. Psych. Göttingen, quoted after Marie Jahoda and Neil Warren, ‘The Myths of Youth’, *Sociology of Education* 38, 2, 1965, pp. 138-149, see p. 138. The elongation of the period of youth is connected to socio-economic customs - longer education and a later entry into wage labour thus means a prolonged period of youth.

⁶² Famous in this connection are the school boys recruited for the Chittagong armoury raid. See below, and Manini Chatterjee, *Do and Die*, esp. pp.45-54.

⁶³ For Pledges of organisations, see the examples in the following chps. Generally, around this time, a youth was somebody between 18 and 30 (and somebody who was ‘youthful’ by temperament). Under 18 or 16 year old volunteers were labelled minors (*balaks/balikas*) and most organisations (such as the Seva Dal, the Muslim National Guards etc), had separate wings for them, sometimes also special wing for teenagers (Kumars/kumarikas, 12-18 years) as opposed to children (6 or 8-12 years)

⁶⁴ NNML, Delhi Police Records, V inst., F.No. - 65, f. 48

volunteering females was the strong authority family or guardians would normally exercise or be expected to exercise. But it needs to be put in the larger context of what this meant for the social basis and structures of volunteer bodies.

The Wider Intellectual Context

We have repeatedly referred to the centrality of the concept of ‘modernity’ and its close connection with ‘youth’. There is a plethora of definitions and attempts to come to terms with this phenomenon, which can relate to an era or be used as a normative term.⁶⁵ When we look at it as an epoch, it comprises the confluence of distinct socio-political, economic and cultural changes as well as aesthetic notions typically linked to industrialisation and technological development and the resulting acceleration of the world and the rise of ‘homogeneous, empty space-time’, or as a mood or mindset (for instance as ‘modernism’ distinguished from ‘modernity’⁶⁶) and a discursive formation. Moreover, modernity breeds its own counter-movements (such as romanticism and revivalism), all of which are intrinsically ‘modern’ too. It is this multitude of phenomena that makes modernity so hard to pinpoint or define. This has been made even more complex in the wake of the ‘cultural turn’ with its critique of Euro-centrism that introduced the idea of multiple modernities.⁶⁷ Without venturing too deeply into these discussions, we must note that at the heart of the idea of modernity (and its narrative encapsulated in modernisation theory) lies that of pro-

⁶⁵ For a standard overview preceding the ‘cultural turn’, see Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht, ‘Modern, Modernität, Moderne’, in Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, Reinhart Koselleck (eds), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Wörterbuch zur politisch-sozialen Sprache*. Vol. 4, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1978, pp. 93-131.

⁶⁶ See on this useful distinction, Henri Lefebvre, *Introduction to Modernity. Twelve Preludes, September 1959- May 1961*, London/New York: Verso, 1995, esp. pp. 1-2, where modernism is described as a mindset, awareness and fashion marked by a triumphant mindset, arrogance, certainty; whereas modernity is a social phenomenon characterised by questioning, fear, uncertainty and reflexivity accompanied by a mode of critique. See also Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982.

⁶⁷ See Shmuel Eisenstadt, *Multiple Modernities*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 2002. There are innumerable critiques of the concept as well as many defences. See for instance the edited volume by Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, *Alternative Modernities*, Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2001. See for a critique of Eisenstadt from an Indian perspective: Sudipta Kaviraj, ‘An Outline of a Revisionist Theory of Modernity’, *European Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 46, No. 3, 2005, pp. 497-526, for Kaviraj’s alternative model incorporating and departing from the ‘sequential’ model of modernity, see esp. pp. 514-526. For a very insightful critique regarding the intrinsic connection between the success of capitalism in Asian countries, the end of the cold war and the cultural claims on modernity, see Arif Dirlik, ‘Modernity as History: post-revolutionary China, globalization and the question of modernity’, *Social History*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2002, pp. 16- 39.

gress and development(ism). In the shadow of this developmental narrative, history-writing itself must be considered as an outcrop of modernity and its particular reflexivity.⁶⁸ In the period we are here concerned with, this narrative presented itself as an objective, scientific model of linear development and infinite progression clad in different theories and approaches, from the biological to the economical or spiritual. Post-Enlightenment rationality and objectivity, what Foucault has brandished as history seen from the apocalypse, i.e. a logical end-point towards which it was inexorably steering, were the unquestioned tools for an understanding of an increasingly complex but also malleable world and nature.⁶⁹

Appeals to history, science, and scientific history were integral to the ideologies of the volunteer movements with its strive for discipline and societal betterment. In the later nineteenth and early twentieth century, utilitarian thought along with the positivist scientism⁷⁰ were intermingled with symbols and beliefs of a millenarian mysticism as well as an evolutionary determinism that pervaded perceptions of the linearity of history in India (and elsewhere)⁷¹.

These trends are exemplified by the staunch right-winger Benoy Kumar Sarkar. He became one of the most important proponents of an Indian sociology based on positivist and Spencerian thought

⁶⁸ See Dirlik, 'Modernity as History', on modernization theory see esp. p. 20. See also Van der Veer, 'The Global History of Modernity'.

⁶⁹ Foucault, 'Nietzsche, die Genealogie, die Historie', see esp. p. 95-96. On the wider phenomenon and the narrative of linear progress, see also Michael Bentley, 'The Turn Towards "Science": Historians delivering Untheorized Truth' in Nancy Parker and Sarah Foot (eds), *The Sage Handbook of Historical Theory*, London et al: Sage, pp. 10-22. While the article departs from the German 'Methodenstreit', it traces the rise of this mindset in a much wider context.

⁷⁰ See Arendt's pertinent analysis of the rise and success of positivism in the context of bourgeoisie notions of the state and society and what this meant for the science of history, Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, see esp. pp. 170-184. On positivism in India, Geraldine Forbes', *Positivism in Bengal: A Case Study in the Transmission and Assimilation of an Ideology*, Calcutta: Papyrus, 1999 (1st ed., Calcutta: Minerva, 1975) is still an essential guide to the inroads of positivism (especially that of Comte) in the late 19th century via a numerically negligible body, The Positivist Society and its relation with the Brahma Samaj. On a related theme, Dhruv Raina and Irfan S Habib analysed the engagements with concepts of biology and evolution by the National Council of Education and in the paper Dawn in the late 19th and first decade of the Twentieth century, see idem, 'The Moral Legitimation of Modern Science: Bhadrakol Reflections on Theories of Evolution', *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 1996, pp. 9-42.

⁷¹ The understanding of history as a science and the revelation of certain structures and laws, has of course, a much longer history. See the classic RG Collingwood, *The idea of History*, London et al: OUP, 1956 (1st ed. 1946), pp. 126-133 on positivism and history, see 93-126 for the former 'romantic' notions of history (from Kant, Schlegel, Fichte to Hegel) and the fluid shift from divine will to history as the revelation of the 'world spirit'. See Hanna Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, esp. pp. 170-175. On Hegel and the notions of history, see also Peter van der Veer, 'The Global History of "Modernity"', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 41, No. 3, 1998.

and also authored works of Positivism.⁷² According to Sarkar, to divine the laws of the fall and rise of nations, the whole realm of life (the Science Of Life, as he called it) had to be taken into consideration, all human activity, passions, tendencies and institutions. Like the early Spencer, this work posits an environmentally deterministic approach rather than a biological deterministic one but sees the ‘struggle for existence’ as axiomatic and all world history and all mankind mutually connected and interdependent – the sum of which makes up the ‘total world-culture of the age’.⁷³

Thus, History became the science of determining the relative progress of individual peoples according to objective criteria and a set of natural(ised) laws that could be applied to cultures.⁷⁴ The period was marked by models of linear progress with Spencer and Marx being two political poles within this discursive formation. But the debates about whether social evolution was pre-determined and man a helpless object in its path or whether something like a voluntaristic evolution of the self and society was possible were ongoing.⁷⁵ The esoteric traditions, people influenced by ideas of functional spontaneous evolution as proposed by Lamarck, and utopian socialism alike would - in the wake of the *fin de siècle* - also dream of a new dawn or doom of mankind in the

⁷² See Sarkar's tome *The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology*, Book I, Allahabad: Panini Office, 1937, which makes a general argument much in line with what is outlined below but in starker terms; ‘The Futurism of Young Asia’ and a variety of subjects. He would later write glowing reviews of the Nazi regime shortly after it had attained power (see Sarkar, *The Hitler State: A Landmark in the Political, Economic and Social Remaking of the German People* (reprinted from ‘Insurance and Finance Review’, 1933.) which he celebrated as the model of a re-awakening nation and the power and influence it could wield. His ‘The Science of History’, based on a series of lectures delivered by him at the Bengal National College Calcutta, is an idealtypical example proposing to treat History as a science on par with physics and maths, from which proper study general laws can be distilled. See Benoy Kumar Sarkar, *The Science of History and the Hope of Mankind*, London, New York, Bombay, Calcutta: Longmans, Green and Co, 1912. Some of his later thoughts are pre-figured here when he posits that unruly populations or crisis demand a tyrannical regime and a strong ruler to control affairs as one of the necessary laws of history (see pp. 53-56 for instance). The interesting aspect here, however, is the emphasis on the mutual interdependence of national characteristics, a nation's rise and fall through constant interaction with the world (ibid., pp. 66-67) and yet it was the ‘transcendental’ heroes, the great man and ‘barbarians’ (one could read this here as those imbued aplenty with the will to power) who altered the world forces and could tip the balance to create new circumstances (ibid., pp. 75-76).

⁷³ Benoy Kumar Sarkar, *The Science of History and the Hope of Mankind*, p. 21.

⁷⁴ See above on Benoy Kumar Sarkar, *Science of History*, above. Herbert Spencer himself -often painted a mimicry of Darwin applied to societies- was rather a proponent of a positivist Lamarckianism proposing a cosmic evolution of all spheres from science to societies and the universe itself towards ever higher negentropy (or complexity) and differentiation, who eventually incorporated natural selection into his theory. See on the Pre-Darwinian phase his ‘Progress-Its Law and Cause’, *The Westminster Review*, Vol. 67 (April 1857), pp. 445-447, 451, 454-456, 464-65.

⁷⁵ Other than the esoteric theories on human evolution as such (most noteworthy: the Theosophists) there were harsh debates within the emerging sociology about the topic. See Lester F. Ward, prob-

twentieth century.

From the perspective of these meta-historical debates, among ideologues and activists, both the pre-deterministic and voluntaristic streams were articulated and mixed up, resulting in an amorphous Social Darwinism⁷⁶ and ideals about a New Man that eclectically combined elements of positivist notions of science, utilitarianism, Spencer (who himself already combined Lamarck, Comte's positivism and Darwin), the Nietzschean superman⁷⁷, Malthus, Theosophism (proposing an alternative self-willed model to Darwinian evolutionary theory), spiritualism (sometimes with a pacifist slant) more generally, and liberal humanism, to name some of the strands.

The dreams and aspirations that marked the period under consideration tapped into desires for utopian change⁷⁸, for a meaningful collective destined for a task, for transcendental metamorphosis; in short for a mythical apotheosis that would lift the mired self, the collective, and humanity itself out of present-day problems, into a higher state that aligned the self with universal progress and, ultimately, would fulfil its promise of perfection. Many of the proponents of evolutionary theory tried to create an ethics of cooperation, not least Darwin himself, and thus 'evolution was envisaged as a

ably Spencer's harshest contemporaneous critic but largely forgotten nowadays. See especially his *Applied Sociology. A Treatise on the Conscious Improvement of Society by Society* [ebook, 1st publ. 1906]

⁷⁶ What is usually simplistically referred to as 'Social Darwinism' represents not one set of socio-political assumptions but a heterogenous cluster of ideas centering around the shared notion that individuals and groups had to compete with others in a 'struggle for existence' and that those deemed 'fit' according to differing criteria would prosper and evolve, while the 'unfit' ones would stagnate and ultimately perish. The goal was, then, the successive progression to a more advanced social type. The point is well-made in Gregory Claeys, *The "Survival of the Fittest" and the Origins of Social Darwinism, Journal of the History of Ideas* 61, 2 (2000), pp. 223-240. The author points to a common sphere of ideas that was well developed in Victorian Britain by the time Darwin and Russell made their discoveries about the principles of evolution. There is an abundance of writing on Social Darwinism and the underlying principles and varied applications. Pertinent in this context is the article by Mark Singleton 'Yoga, Eugenics, and Spiritual Darwinism in the Early Twentieth Century', *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, Vol 11, No. 2, 2007, pp. 125-146. On the widespread appreciation of Spencer, see also Shruti Kapila, 'Self, Spencer and Swaraj: Nationalist Thought and Critiques of Liberalism, 1890-1920', *Modern Intellectual History* 4,1, 2007, pp. 109-27 (she is rather narrowly concerned with a handful of leaders and not, as we are here, with the wider popular appeal, and hence she seems to miss out on some of the continuities across the political board).

⁷⁷ The most emotive evocation of the Superman is in Nietzsche's *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. One can find a basic notion of the superman (Übermensch) in his *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*. The Superman in Nietzsche has a biological and a moral dimension, he is a trans-humanly self-evolved subject. To evolve such a type of New Man was one of the primordial duties of mankind, according to Nietzsche. On a more biologicistic notion of the evolution of a new caste of Herrenmensch through eugenics see his *Ecce Homo* and the 'Party of Life' advocating the extermination of whatever (and whoever) was 'entarted' and 'parasitic'. See Rüdiger Safranski, *Nietzsche - Biographie seines Denkens*, München/Wien: Hanser, 2000, see esp. pp. 266 ff. See also Werner Ross, *Der ängstliche*

moral process—the progressive development toward ever more perfect expressions of altruism, compassion, and love.’⁷⁹ All these readings - the cold ‘struggle for existence’ (going back to Malthus), might makes right, and the ascendancy towards a higher moral and social being were part and parcel of a popular reading of evolutionary theory. Contemporaries did not necessarily subscribe to one particular line of argument but manoeuvred within the complex matrix of the idea of progress in its myriad shades and forms. This, in part, might offer an explanation for the seamless shifts actors could perform across platforms and political labels.⁸⁰ ‘Progress’ offered a meta-narrative wide enough to accompany anything from a socially conservative feminist to a pacifist occultist or a utopian militarist position, and despite the fight that was going on in the sociology and political theory of the time, many activists operated with blends and shades that bypassed the hard and fast political boundaries that were drawn – often later on. This allowed them to communicate with each other and, until some time in the 1930s, even operate on common platforms.⁸¹ The mission of the interwar period for many activists, whether operating in international circuits or ‘at home’, was a self-conscious search for supra-political agreements which took account of cultural and political differences but sought to integrate them and make them commensurable rather than mutually exclusive to synthesise an underlying consensus, a higher universal truth.

The positivist influence made for a search for universal patterns among anti-colonial actors from a variety of fields and backgrounds while cultural *différance* was also articulated to legitimise national aspirations. Societal comparisons to elucidate the laws underpinning universal progress

Adler - Friedrich Nietzsches Leben, München: DTV, 1999 (4th ed.), pp. 657-729. On the question of Nietzsche as Social Darwinist or anti-Darwinist, see Gregory Moore, *Nietzsche, Biology, and Metaphor*, Cambridge et al: CUP, 2002, see esp. 21-55.

⁷⁸ Utopian change seemed not only possible but inevitable to many at this juncture, and was explicitly referred to as ‘utopian’: see Subhas Chandra Bose, Speech at the Uttar Pradesh Naujawan Bharat Sabha, Mathura, dt. 23rd May 1931, [<http://subhaschandrbose.org/speechContent.php?id=YWJl-cmFzaWJvKDQpZmlyZQ##>, retrieved 8.5.2012].

⁷⁹ Gregory Moore, ‘Nietzsche, Spencer, and the Ethics of Evolution’, *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 23 (2002), pp. 1-20, for the quote see p. 2.

⁸⁰ Subhas Bose stated that revolution is evolution compressed into a shorter period; evolution is revolution spread out over a longer period’. Cf. SC Bose, presidential speech at Amraoti Student Conference, Dec. 1929, in Durlab Singh (ed.), *To the Youth of My Country*, pp. 51-57, see p. 52.

⁸¹ See Benjamin Zachariah, Benjamin Zachariah, *Developing India. An Intellectual and Social History*, New Delhi et al: OUP, 2005. This is not to say that there were no fights over political orientation, of course. The lines were, earlier on, drawn between moderates and ‘radicals’, rather, with Gandhianism proposing something of a middle-path. Sharper political differences emerged slightly later. See on details below.

were made, even while different routes towards it were proposed, often dichotomised into Western materialism and Eastern spiritualism. A comparison of concepts of the *fin de siècle* and the Indian *Kaliyug* might shed light on how the general trend of thinking about decline and degeneration after which a new age must surely follow coincided to an astonishing degree, and made for a commensurability and cross-fertilisation of debates about the fate(s) of man.⁸² ‘Western linear time’ and ‘Eastern circular time’ were in reality not in opposition to each other with the former replacing the latter with the advent of print capitalism.⁸³ Rather, the changes between ages marked by certain characteristics and the progress along prescribed paths informed by laws of nature did not only co-exist but many of such models were inscribed with a circularity of their own. Progress was often a becoming as much as a *returning* - a look at the (‘West-East’ fusion in) Theosophist Neo-Platonic model of human evolution through a set of ‘root races’⁸⁴ or Ambedkar's notion of an egalitarian citizenship as a return to earlier times make this point abundantly clear.⁸⁵ But in the seemingly more sober area of social science and politics, notions about the hidden patterns of the grinding progress from age to age meant an overlap that gave room to manoeuvre to actors on both side of the *kala pani*. Authoritarian tendencies, avant-garde and strong leaders that represented avatars - messengers of this promise of ascendancy - were often seen as the vehicle to further such aspirations where ordinary men, and more so, the ordinary masses, must surely fail.

⁸² On ideas surrounding the Kaliyug see for instance Sumit Sarkar, ‘Renaissance and Kaliyuga: Time, Myth and History in Colonial Bengal’ in idem, *Writing Social History*, Delhi et al: OUP, 1997, pp. 186-215. See also on the notion of time and dharma/ karma in (here somewhat essentialised) Hindu culture, Sudhir Kakar, *The Inner World*, pp. 44-51. The nexus between time and destiny is a point that could be employed also for the notion of the wider belief of India's special place and destiny in the world.

⁸³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London: Verso, 1983.

⁸⁴ On the theosophical model of the seven root races culminating in returning man to a transcendental and incorporeal state of being, see HP Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine - the Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy*, Vol. 2, book 1, ‘Anthropogenesis’, Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House 1938, see esp. stanzas IV, VI, XII. on the first race, the fall to humanity and the possibility of gaining divinity once more. As all of this is near undecipherable to any but the initiated, a theosophical study guide is necessary. See for instance, Blavatsky's own *The Key to Theosophy, being a clear exposition, in the form of question and answer, of the ethics, science, and philosophy for the study of which the theosophical society has been founded*, [place illegible]: The Theosophical Publishing Company, 1889 [digitised copy, no pp. nos].

⁸⁵ On a sharp critique of Benedict Anderson's notion of homogeneous empty time, bound and unbound seriality (and the celebration of good nationalism against bad ethnic nationalism) through print capitalism, see Partha Chatterjee who proposes the existence of other models of time existing in a heterogeneous cascade of lived heterotopias (one might debate whether it is not empty-space time that is the heterotopia), by looking at notions of citizenship and ‘modern’ values to show the circularity of the underlying notions of times in many such concepts. I am extending his findings here to an utterly ‘modern’ phenomenon such as Progress and Social Darwinism which is at the same time a becoming and a returning. See Partha Chatterjee, ‘The nation in heterogeneous time’, *Indian Economic Social History Review*, Vol. 38, No. 4, 399, 2001, pp. 398-418.

What we find are a variety of movements tapping into (one is tempted to say) archetypal energies and attempting to channel them. Žižek's observation regarding ideological formations capable of posing as 'the Sublime' complete with an elevation into the realm of transcendence of both the thought-object and the subject, especially if it was, as in this case, centred on the idea of an apotheosis of Man might help explain the immense affective forces this particular ideological construct could command.⁸⁶ The disciplinarian channelling of energies in many cases is effected in the form of a highly aestheticised politics or politics itself as an aesthetic and moral undertaking.⁸⁷ While this politics as style presents a striking conformity in its form, the differing contents evolve and depart from each other more clearly over time. Around the turn of the century and its early years, many of these movements and aspirations were still amorphous and vague. They overlapped and criss-crossed in ways that tend to seem paradoxical or even repulsive to us - as we see them through the stereoscope of hindsight - because much of it does not 'fit the mould of historiographical categories that have hardened over the course of the century'. Developing a feeling for the earlier commensurability of these diverse tendencies can 'help us to understand a world whose contours we have largely forgotten.'⁸⁸ As the century progressed, movements crystallized into political camps more decisively, diverging most clearly with the advent of the Second World War

⁸⁶ Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, London/New York, Verso, 1989. Žižek offers an entry point to understanding the commensurability of seemingly opposed positions: in the trias of The imaginary, symbolic and Lacanian real, in the imaginary relation '...the two poles of opposition are complementary; together they build a harmonious totality; each gives the other what the other lacks - each fills out the lack in the other [...] See *ibid*, pp. 171 f. For Kant's concept of the Sublime (das Erhabene) which is juxtaposed with The Beautiful in the first part of *Die Kritik der Urteilskraft*, see *ibid*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974, 2nd book, §§ 23-29. Žižek's application of the Sublime to ideology is in line with Kant's allowing for human-induced events (like war) to trigger recognition of the sublime - a thought he developed in his ironically titled 'Zum Ewigen Frieden' (Perpetual Peace), as Kant, too, believed that long peace was harmful. As the recognition of the Sublime is something the subject itself produces, the possible realm of application is, in principle, unlimited. Žižek posits that in analogy to Kant's Sublime, the inability to fully grasp the ideology that the subject adheres to is seen as testimony to the transcendental nature of said ideology. The point here can help us resolve both the tension of a seemingly inappropriate re-interpretation of ideologies in different contexts as well as make more concrete the archetypal energies invested in the ideology. We can thus move away a little further from concrete ideologies towards configurations embracing the individual in such a way that it renders both the thought-object (say, the nation) and the enfolded subject transcendent.

⁸⁷ On transcendental notions in totalitarian movements (on which more later), see Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, esp. pp. 323-332.

⁸⁸ I borrow these phrases from Adeeb Khalid's work. See 'Visions of India in Central Asian Modernism: The Work of 'Abd ar-Ra'ūf Fiṭrat', in Beate Eschment and Hans Harder (eds), *Looking at the Coloniser - Cross-Cultural Perceptions in Central Asia and the Caucasus, Bengal, and Related Areas*, pp. 253-274.

even as they retained many features in common from the earlier period. Therefore, while the affective energies utilised as tools of mobilisation (not simply from the top, but on horizontal levels and, indeed, by individuals for the self) built on the same aesthetics and common sense, they were channelled into different directions and used for different purposes. The specific image of humans and their role, and the political aspirations that were built on these dreams, diversified and differed in the end to an extent that one could no longer be mistaken for the other. To see their common ancestry, enduring allure as well as their lasting impact while appreciating differences and the process of crystallization is then the main driving force for this study.

A basic conflict in the Indian national movement - along with a vast number of other nationalisms of the time - is the general acknowledgement of liberal, democratic forms of government to which India generally aspired, contrasted to a more positivist, scientific reaction against democratic government, which would at times take the form of a stage-ist model of political development in which dictatorship was a necessary stage.⁸⁹ It was widely believed that in the linear ascendancy of nations, an authoritarian regime was a necessity for rational and efficient development. Rather than the Indian national movement being concerned with democracy based on popular participation, we find widespread (at times xenophobic) ideas about national advancement based on an allegedly scientific rationale in which the populace became a mere building block in an organic nation, to be led and controlled by the avant-garde - a process that can be traced to the Nehruvian state where it appears in an apparently left-oriented apparatus of national planning.⁹⁰

Authoritarian, anti-individualist, and eugenic/social Darwinist tendencies, often coupled with what might be called militaristic chic, constitute something like the 'seedy underbelly' to a great number

⁸⁹ See below, chp. 3

⁹⁰ That period is beyond the time-span of the current study. This is not to say that there is any necessity of this development that is magically inscribed into the development of national thought from the turn of the century, of course. But we can, without 'reading history backwards', trace the development. For the intellectual underpinnings of national planning in the late colonial and early post-colonial state, see Benjamin Zachariah, *Developing India*. The eugenic overtones then became clad in more benign nationalised health standards and regimes, among others (see Zachariah, *Developing India*, pp. 247-248). See on the concept of the Indian state also Rajni Kothari, *State Against Democracy - In Search of Humane Government*, Delhi: Ajanta Publications 1988, see ESP: pp. 254-261. See also Ranajit Guha, 'Indian Democracy: Long Dead, Now Buried', in idem, *The Small Voice of History*, (comp. and with an introduction by Ranajit Guha), New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2009, pp. 577-597 [written 1976].

of nation-building projects (and arguably nation-building *as such*) of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, especially during the phase of disciplining the masses for the national project.⁹¹ At the *fin de siècle* and in the first half of the century we find such movements all over the globe - the more obvious and extreme being certain engagements of Arab nationalists with Fascist ideals in Iraq and Palestine,⁹² or the Argentinian positivism that became a full-blown Darwinist race theory, and political alliance between certain Argentinian nationalists and German Nazis.⁹³

This study, then, examines some of the pervasive socio-intellectual (rhetorical and legitimatising) tendencies within the Indian nationalist movement to explore the theme of contested national visions and the aspiring nation's need to homogenise and discipline the national body (especially its corporealised imagination) through the lens of volunteer movements. This category - however protean and often *ad-hoc*-based - is an ideal object for such an exploration because volunteers were the proposed carriers of discipline, an ordering, trained social element deployed by groups proposing competing national visions during the Freedom Struggle.

South Asia, here, is not selected to thematise a supposed 'darker' side of 'democracy' exhibited by

⁹¹ Cf Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, London: Zed Books, 1993 (2nd impr.), 1999, see esp. pp. 48- 52. On the ordering and disciplining of the masses, we can then refer back to Foucault to elucidate the nationalist shadow state's tendency to attempt the capture of state functions replete with the tools of the control over bodies (see above). The 'shadow state' is a function of any nationalist movement which embodies the strive for the capture of the functions of the state - that was what the swadeshi campaigns and various Gandhian movements aspired to, at their core. Hence, the clear distinction between state and nationalist movement blur and we need to take seriously the disciplining and punitive functions the 'movement' took over at times.

⁹² There is a growing literature on extra-European perceptions and engagements with the European Fascist or Nazi regimes that is relevant in this context. Recent literature on fascist movements (rather than full-fledged Fascist regimes) has come into being - but tends to be limited to the European continent plus Britain (see for more details chp. 5) The question of (engagements with) Fascism outside Europe is still relatively new especially in the English speaking literature. Among German academia, the question of, in particular, Arab versions of fascism and the sometimes assumed naturalized inclination of the 'Arab World' towards such tendencies has made for bitter arguments among scholars relating back to the heated debates surrounding contemporary Israeli and Palestinian or Middle Eastern politics. Cf. Gerhard Höpp, Peter Wien, René Wildangel, *Blind für die Geschichte? - Arabische Begegnungen mit dem Nationalsozialismus*, (ZMO-Studien 19) Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, s.a.; René Wildangel, *Zwischen Achse und Mandatsmacht - Palästina und der Nationalsozialismus* (=ZMO Studien 24), Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2007.

⁹³ Federico Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism. Ideology, Violence, and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919-1945*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2010. On India, so far, see the article on Bengali intellectuals and their reception of European Fascism: Mario Prayer, 'Self, Other and *alter idem*: Bengali internationalism and Fascist Italy in the 1920s and 1930s', *The Calcutta Historical Journal*, 26, 1, 2006, pp. 1-24.

the Indian nationalist movement(s) or in so-called developing countries.⁹⁴ Neither is the supposition that colonial countries simply imbibe such ideas from continental Europe at the time useful. While I would argue for an evolving modular form of nationalism, it is not that the West transferred nationalism onto the rest. Neither is it limited to distinguishable models but rather oscillates between them, exhibiting a marked fluidity and range of rhetoric legitimisation within a discourse that became global(ised) also but only through colonialism.⁹⁵

Documents of youth organisations exhibit (in ideals, rhetoric, language and analogies) the supreme interest in a higher, more ‘efficient’ and disciplined forms of organisation geared towards fulfilling functions of an existing or possible government - preferably the military. This language and its accompanying analogies were part of a paradigm of organisation that, as its most basic assumption, saw the human as component part in an imagined larger machinery or organism (the nation), and demanded of the component part that it should be meticulous, obedient, healthy and function faultlessly. These were the modern and ‘scientific’ lines of organisation that were accepted, or even axiomatic in the industrialised age - from the factory worker to the modern soldier down to the ordinary citizen.

The phenomena and tendencies outlined above are explored through a set of case studies of organisations typically exhibiting the described ‘somatic nationalism’ that incorporates a disciplinarian nationalist project⁹⁶. There were, at least up to the 1930s, also groups that were quiet library clubs, religious organisations pursuing the uplift of their community through education and common discussion, or small-scale social service networks, and while this does not contradict the discursive

⁹⁴ Michael Billig, in his *Banal Nationalism*, London/Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1995 pointed out that what is called patriotism in ‘first-world countries’ becomes ‘nationalism’ (worse, ethnic nationalism) in other areas of the world, often portrayed as the nastier young brother of the ‘good’ nationalism of developed countries

⁹⁵ See for the conceptualisation of nationalism as a modular blue-print originating in Europe, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities : reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, New York: Verso, 1991.

⁹⁶ On methodologies and sources for this project, see Appendix ‘Methodologies’. Cf. Joseph Alter, ‘Somatic Nationalism: Indian Wrestling and Militant Hinduism’, *MAS*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 1994, pp. 557-588. See chp 5, ‘Gama The Great - Another Heroic Indian’ in idem, *Gandhi's Body: Sex, Diet, and the Politics of Nationalism*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, see esp. pp. 113-116. On the development of this concept see the monograph based on his doctoral thesis, *The Wrestler's Body: Identity and Ideology in North India*, Berkeley : University of California Press, 1992.

trends we have outlined, we shall concentrate on the majority of groups that also aspired to some form of physical training (PT). The intellectual and activist strands form synergies and can actually not be separated.⁹⁷ Some of them kept out of politics more strictly than others, and therefore do not turn up frequently in the colonial records, newspapers or other sources. NS Hardikar, the organiser of the Seva Dal, also organised local rotating libraries - so did various 'terrorist' groups for that matter. Moulding the mind and body of the future citizens were two sides of the same coin.

The colonial discourse about and the mind-boggling breadth of such tendencies themselves reveal another difficulty. Such trends were (at least rhetorically, often practically) so axiomatically written into the very structure and thinking of actors around the world as to become an unspoken hegemony of concepts and it is this maybe that constitutes the *zeitgeist*, something we can grapple with using Foucault's genealogy as starting point.⁹⁸ We have to attempt to reveal the underlying contingencies, to factor in the contexts of emergence, conditions of fascination and also account for the fact that was simply the use of an accepted language and at times denotes nothing (much) but that language itself. Scientism, militarism, efficiency mingled with some form of Darwinist argument or other were the outer, visible markers of what it meant to be 'modern' and 'civilised' and fit to withstand the great game of nations across the globe.⁹⁹ 'Modernity' with its kaleidoscopic ambiguity and open-endedness functioned also as a contemporaneous projection surface for the aspirations of actors who often could scarcely agree on anything else. As such, modernity and utopia are interwoven.¹⁰⁰ Beyond the assessment that there are certain hegemonical undercurrents in the

⁹⁷ To use just one example, the Khalsa Young Men's Association, next to discussion on the Granth Sahib, organised picnics and outdoor games promoting healthy exercise and practical communal solidarity. See the Rules of the Khalsa Young Men's Association (established in 1909), which were revised in 1940, in NMLL, Delhi Police Records, IX inst, F. No 149.

⁹⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* [transl. by AM Sheridan Smith], London: Routledge, 1995 (1st ed. Tavistock Publications, 1972).

⁹⁹ We need to account, then, for those axiomatic assumptions the actors concerned are conscious of - and which can be consciously manipulated and employed to create legitimacy. We could relate this to a structural analysis of systems and the self-referentiality of social operations (i.e. the fixed rules established in such a system determining valid/ acceptable interaction) as suggested by Niklas Luhmann. See for instance his theoretically foundational text *Soziale Systeme. Grundriß einer allgemeinen Theorie*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991 (1st ed. 1984). One does not have to accept Luhmann's stringent system theory to use the core of theories with some benefit.

¹⁰⁰ The romanticism of the self-proclaimed anti-modernists that is born out of the same condition presents a mirror-image of the same. Anti-modern romanticism is deeply and consciously woven into a modernist agenda and is far from an anti-rational reflex against progress and the Weberian notion of a 'disenchantment' of the world. For an excellent study see Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, on British occult circles and the mutual dependency of modernity and occult romanticism. See esp. pp. 10-14. See also above.

nationalist agenda, we can then attempt to re-locate the use of epistemic formations in their specific context to tease out the practical applicability or deviation.

The Case Studies

This study looks at selected youth organisations from different backgrounds, taking into account the alleged polarities: ‘secular’ and ‘religious’, ‘left’ and ‘right’, ‘political’ and ‘apolitical’. It is the contention of this work that these categories become less clear-cut when viewed from the angle of youth movements and mobilisation.¹⁰¹

With the huge variety of youth and volunteer organisations over the extended period that is considered here, no exhaustive account can naturally be provided. Rather, particular themes will be highlighted through a study of organisation and aims and particular incidents. We are not chiefly concerned with the ups and downs of the nationalist movement but approach the bigger developments by looking at the events and discussions in ‘high politics’ through the lens of a number of volunteer movements. What is attempted here is to focus on some (self-proclaimed) All-India bodies that ought to provide a representative spectrum.¹⁰² Some of these organisations have been dealt with to some extent in the historiography, many more have been hardly touched upon. The Congress Seva Dal is used to provide some continuity in the story line and chronology. Our story branches out to include Youth Leagues, Khaksars, the RSS, the Muslim League's National Guards (MNG) and some smaller bodies to provide (sometimes local) context and a comparative perspective that allows us to point out the common denominators. The study is not one that deals with locality and local socio-economic dynamics at any lengths, mostly for lack of space. In following a few organisations and campaigns, the aim is to point out dynamics and structures, intellectual

¹⁰¹ Labels at any rate are treated somewhat differently in the Indian context. ‘Left’ could be equated with militant nationalism, and ‘right’ with ‘moderate’ approaches - and this is merely the beginning of the problems of labels, which with hindsight become vastly different from what actors would have perceived. Cf. Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle 1920-1942*, compiled by the Netaji Research Bureau), Bombay et al: Asia Publishing House, 1967 (Repr.), pp. 24-25.

¹⁰² The study mostly follows organisations which at least laid claim to be All-India organisations and, as a comparative study brings often with it a certain bird's eye perspective, locality along with its intricate dynamics of socio-economic structures, aspirations in social mobility of particular groups and so forth, remain woefully under-represented in the current study, which deals largely with events in a few urban centres of particular importance for individual groups.

underpinnings and social practice while being mindful of the importance of local conditions. The focus is from roughly the end of the Great War to 1946-47, though a summary is provided of some developments before and after the core period.

Socially, the groups dealt with here range from the familiar figure of the middle-class student to small-time businessmen, employees, lower-ranked Government servants, and at times workers and the lower classes. Amazingly, the story of the Seva Dal has not been written, perhaps because it was eclipsed by the bigger Gandhian campaigns, or because it was not always as important or efficient in practice as the organisers wanted it to be, and yet, as already stated, this and similar bodies can teach us much about concepts of citizenship, ideals, practices of mobilisation, engagement with 'tradition' and international developments.¹⁰³

The study does not really deal with student federations but will briefly look at students and their links with volunteer groups and politics more generally.¹⁰⁴ Many of the volunteers were students or recent graduates. Student meetings and hostels provided platforms for agitation and mobilisation that were exceedingly important for the nationalist campaigns. The boundaries between the two is often plastic.¹⁰⁵ While student bodies could be mobilized for specific events or campaigns, they can be seen as complementary to rather than identical with permanent volunteer organisations, albeit with spheres that overlapped.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ The only academic writing on the Dal I have found is an MPhil thesis, which outlines some of the activities of the Dal in a celebratory fashion, based on secondary literature, some newspapers and the Dal magazine. See Madhu Mendiratta 'Volunteer Corps, Hindustani Seva Dal and Youth leagues Organisation and activities 1923-1934' [MPhil, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1987].

¹⁰⁴ See chp. 1.

¹⁰⁵ A number of student organisations blurred these stereotypical boundaries, though, and a study of the Muslim Student Federation and their leaning on Iqbal's philosophy (see Punjab Student Federation, for a somewhat tendentious study Safaraz Hussain Mirza, *The Punjab Muslim Students Federation 1937-1947: a study of the formation, growth and participation in the Pakistan Movement*, Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1991), the AISF, the NWFP Jirga (blurred with the Red Shirts) and a number of others could be undertaken to provide a fuller account - this is however heavily abbreviated here for lack of space. Typically, however, the self-conscious and contained student federations operate in a realm of politics somewhat more removed from the activist stance of the ideal volunteer. Students more explicitly displayed an intellectual engagement with politics, often aiming at a wider intellectual audience, parties or the colonial states.

¹⁰⁶ For lack of space, the communists will not be dealt with at any length, except briefly during the Second World War, and then especially with reference to the All India Students' Federation (AISF). The aim here cannot be to provide a continuous history for any or all of these movements but rather, by picking up on world views, tools of mobilization and specific campaigns, to draw out similarities that enable us to appreciate some of the more general trends that have not been seen together in the literature so far.

The chapters of this study are organised as follows: The first chapter traces the beginnings of youth organisations in India prior to the core period. Chapter Two addresses the Congress' attempts to organise and discipline youth and national volunteers under a national volunteer corps, the Seva Dal. The third chapter deals with attempts to imagine the perfect volunteer, the importance of such movements for nationalist rituals and an 'imagined community', as well as the contradictions and failures of this vision. Chapter Four addresses the emergence and organisation of some of the 'communal' youth and volunteer movements, and traces the continuities with the 'generic' hegemonic model of volunteer organisation. The final chapter highlights some of the trends during the Second World War and leading up to independence and partition. Since volunteer movements had become the principal form to organise 'self-defence' against internal and external threats, the war and post-war mobilisation bled into each other seamlessly. At the same time, volunteers as organised 'private armies' also threatened the official state's monopoly of violence.

I. 'Tomorrow belongs to me': Physical culture, 'Youth' and the Perfectibility of Mankind

[Nationalist] movements are ostensibly directed against the foreigner, the outsider, but they are also the manifestation of a species of civil strife between the generations; nationalist movements are children's crusades; their very names are manifestos against old age: Young Italy, Young Egypt, the Young Turks, the Young Arab Party. When they are stripped of their metaphysics and their slogans [...] such movements are seen to satisfy a need [...] Put at its simplest, the need is to belong together in a coherent and stable community”¹

This chapter describes the contingent and interdependent rise of the idea of Youth. It elucidates the connection between the themes of degeneration and the aspiration to 'anthropogenesis'² and the role Youth as an utopian concept played in these models. It goes on to consider these trends in India more specifically, though no exhaustive account of trends like the social reform or terrorist movements can be provided here. The focus is instead on certain strands that had a lasting influence and helped shape a common grammar for the movements of the interwar period.

Youth movements had started to become a distinctive social phenomenon in the metropole in the second half of the nineteenth century as well as on the continent.³ Youth, one might argue, became a category in its own right in South Asia around the same time, but its more visible forms (organisations, mass base, distinct culture) can be made out more clearly around the turn of the century,

¹ Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 96. I do not hold with the unilinear modernist line of thinking of the author, his focus on elites or the tautological equation of a 'need to belong', i.e. for an identity, with a form of nationalism. However, the *mood* of many of these movements is well captured. See on the question of a need for an identity and nationalism also A.D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, London: Duckworth, 1971, esp. pp. 35-40.

² The term was popularised by the Theosophists, but is used in a different, analytic vein here. While the Theosophists meant the stage-wise spiritual evolution of man towards perfection and a return to an ethereal state of being, I use it to refer to the multi-layered blend utopian and dystopian visions of mankind which forcing it to either rise above its current state or else tumble towards its doom in the new millennium.

³ For instance, the YMCA was founded in 1844, the Boys' Brigade in 1883. For (slightly dated) overview, see Paul Wilkinson, 'Youth Movements, 1908-30', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 4, No. 2 1969, pp. 3-23. See the references in the introduction. See on the refined notions of a definite category of youth as opposed to a vague notions of children or young people around the time of the Great War, also: Arthur Marwick, 'Youth in Britain, 1920-1960: Detachment and Commitment', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 1970, pp. 37-51. On the connection between the rising fear of juvenile loafers and criminals and the necessity for youth organisation, see John R. Gillis, 'The Evolution of Juvenile Delinquency in England 1890-1914', *Past & Present*, No. 67, 1975, pp. 96-126.

which is exemplified in three moments:⁴ Firstly, the popularisation of Youth as a concept cannot be considered apart from the rise of a new kind of literature. This study of and providing for young (especially) male teens has been termed 'boyology', consisting of boy's magazines and (Christianised) adventure stories with moral tales etc. which had a wide currency in late Edwardian and Victorian Britain.⁵ It presented the typical mix of adventure stories exhorting bravery, loyalty and masculinity - often in colonial settings teeming with slaves and exotic creatures, practical knowledge (outdoor survival tips, fauna and flora) and instructions for home-based scientific experiments.⁶ In India we find, first, a prevalence of young *bhadralok* as heroes in early nationalist fiction,⁷ while boys' magazines were becoming prevalent after the turn of the century, notably around the 1920s.⁸

Secondly, in terms of actual organisation, *Bayam Samitis*⁹, and more explicitly the *Tarun Samitis* (youth groups) were started in the second half of the nineteenth century, most notably in Bengal and Maharashtra. Nabagopal Mitra's gymnasium (started in 1866) served as a model for the *akhara* movement that became prevalent later.¹⁰ *Melas* at which national culture and feats of physical strength and martial arts were presented helped disseminate the message. The trend, pioneered by people like Rajnarain Bose¹¹ and Mitra, came into its own towards the close of the

⁴ The positive connotations of 'Young' as denoting rejuvenation and change go back further, of course – as can be seen most obviously in the 'Young Bengal' movement.

⁵ The *Boy's Own Paper*, conceptualised as a moral counter to the popular 'Penny Dreadfuls' and running from 1879 to 1967, was one of the most successful enterprises of this kind in Britain and epitomized the fusion between Public School Boy spirit and Muscular Christianity. Muscular Christianity was evolving, but at this time manliness was still mostly a moral attribute. See however attempts to instil a liking for physical fitness in children in articles such as: 'How to Become Double-Handed: A Lesson in Clubswinging', by WM Vardon (M.B.C.P.E.) in *The Boy's Own Paper*, Vol. XX, No. 998, 1898, pp. 348-349 (bound as the *Boy's Own Manual*, Annual Volume for 1897-98).

⁶ *The Paper* carried serialised stories by authors like Jules Verne, Baden-Powell, R. M. Ballantyne and, later, Arthur Conan Doyle along with lesser known writers. Up to Second World War this was published by the evangelical Religious Tract Society; given the prevalence of Reverends on the regular contributors' list along with (retired) army officers, the unselfconscious praise of the Empire and Christian morals is unsurprising.

⁷ See Joya Chatterji, *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932-1947*, Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1994, pp. 163-4.

⁸ A brief study of children's and boy's literature in India has been done by Sudipa Topdar, 'Knowledge and Governance: Political Socialization of the Indian Child within Colonial Schooling and nationalist Contestations in India (1870-1925)', [PhD thesis, University of Michigan, 2010], pp. 163-224; see also her chp. on school text books.

⁹ Physical exercise societies.

¹⁰ Rosselli, 'The Self-Image of Effeteness', p. 127.

¹¹ Rajnarain Bose emphasised the need for physical strength and vigour along with a revival of 'Hindu

century together with the nationalist movement, as this moved from an elite occupation by politicians or small 'terrorist' cells to a mass movement.

One important moment in the popularisation of youth groups was, no doubt, the introduction of the Boy Scouts in India only shortly after they had been started in Britain in 1907. At first, colonial officials were wary of the potentially dangerous project: while 'civilising' the natives was at the heart of Crown Rule's legitimating claims, achieving too much success in this regard would undermine the foundations of the same.¹² The ambiguity is not surprising (apart from this basic contradiction in the civilising mission itself), given that the Scout movement was from its inception wedded to the imperial project.¹³ Baden-Powell sought with his movement to counter the threat of physical and moral decline posed by modern life and, at the same time, another threat posed partly by the imperial project itself, that is the loss of national selfhood.¹⁴ Other organisations were set up by British officials or unofficial bodies, and soon Indian nationalists followed. The aims and character of these nationalist organisations were in many respects very similar to their British models but were given the air of ancient culture and tradition.¹⁵

music' already in the 1860s. Cf. Bimanbehari Majumdar, *Indian Political Associations and Reform of Legislature (1818-1917)*, Calcutta: KLM, 1965, p. 93.

¹² In later years and with more liberal views prevailing, some British officials envisioned more such formations modelled on the various organisations that later formed the Youth Service in Britain, including the Boy's Brigade, Cadet Corps and others. Cf. Carey Watt, 'The promise of character and the spectre of sedition: The Boy Scout Movement and Colonial Consternation in India, 1908-1921', *South Asia*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 1999, pp. 37-62. See also Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, Cambridge: CUP, 1994 on the general change in attitude in the different phases of the colonial project. In this context the influence of evangelical and muscular Christianity on the notions of Empire are of relevance. On Muscular Christianity, see Gerald Studdert-Kennedy, *Dog-collar democracy. The Industrial Christian Fellowship, 1919-1929*, London: Macmillan, 1982; Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001.

¹³ The scout movement was itself conceived of when a boy cadet corps was put together in the defence of the town Mafeking during the Boer War. See Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys: A Handbook for Instruction in Good Citizenship Through Woodcraft*, The Bharat Scouts and Guides: National Headquarters New Delhi, 1989, see esp. 'The boys of Mafeking', p. 9-11.

¹⁴ In more practical terms, the Scouts were a reaction to the wariness regarding adolescent delinquency and unemployment in the context of the changes occurring in English society. To counter these dangers Baden-Powell devised a system of martial romantic values such as 'pluck', fearlessness, love for truth, discipline and respect for authority. There is a debate in how far Baden Powell intended to or did indeed found a (para-)military organisation with the Scouts. For details see below.

¹⁵ See, for instance, Harald Fischer-Tiné, 'National Education, Pulp Fiction and the Contradictions of Colonialism - Perceptions of an Educational Experiment in early 20th Century India', in idem and Michael Mann (eds), *Colonialism as Civilising Mission. Cultural Ideology in British India*, London: Anthem, 2004, pp. 229-247. See also Fischer-Tiné's PhD thesis on which the article is

Thirdly and connected to the Bayam Samitis, colonial officials worried about the terrorist movement which, officials were quick to notice, was not only made up, for the most part, of young bhadraloks but was also notorious for recruiting in schools and colleges.¹⁶ During this period, 'secret societies' made a name for themselves in Bengal and Maharashtra by acts of (attempted) murder, and raids, manufacture of explosives, mainly in the form of the Anushilan Samiti (Self-Culture/Exercise Club), the Jugantar, and the Maharashtrian Abhinav Bharat.¹⁷ They were inspired by a variety of events and movements.¹⁸ The term (and much of the directly influential ideals) can be traced to Bankimchandra's novel(s), holding out the idea of a voluntaristically achieved evolution of the self through the development of one's capabilities to the outer limits - marking the ontogenetic transformation of the 'effeminate' Bengali into a martial ascetic hero that provided a definite shape for the self-reform ideals of young Bengalis.¹⁹ This was in line with a bastardised Darwinism (fused with Lamarckian/Spencerian elements) in the social sphere that was immensely

based: idem, *Der Gurukul Kangri oder Die Erziehung zur Arya Nation*.

- ¹⁶ Cf. 'Statement showing the participation in poll. agitation of students of schools and colleges in the province', note sd. RS Hutchinson, CID, Calcutta, 29 March 1913, in West Bengal State Archives [henceforth WBSA], CID, IB Branch, file no 445 of 1913, no ff. nos. See also Manini Chatterjee, *Do and Die. The Chittagong Uprising 1930-34*, Penguin: New Delhi/ New York, 1999.
- ¹⁷ The Mitra Mela was founded at Nasik 1900 under VD Savarkar, and merged into Abhinav Bharat (Young India) in 1904. The name was a reference to Mazzini's, Young Italy. See on the links between the Abhinav Bharat Sabha and the Bengali 'terrorists' 'Abhinav Bharat Bombay', in WBSA, IB Branch, file no 15/39. See also the descriptive overview article by Mani Kamerkar and HM Ghodke, 'Militant nationalism in Maharashtra (1876-1913)', in Amitabha Mukherjee (ed.), *Militant Nationalism in India 1876-1947*, Calcutta: Institute of Historical Studies, 1995, pp. 1-56. The lineages of Anushilan can be traced back to certain 'debating circles' which were not necessarily defined as Youth but typically consisted of college students.
- ¹⁸ See Peter Heehs, *Nationalism, Terrorism, Communalism - Essays in Modern Indian History*, New Delhi/ Oxford/ New York: Oxford India Paperbacks, 2000. See also on the Irish connection, Michael Silvestri, "'The Sinn Fein of India': Irish Nationalism and the Policing of Revolutionary Terrorism in Bengal", *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 4, 2000, pp. 454-486.
- ¹⁹ For Bankim, his *Dharmatattva or Anushilan*, see Ranajit Guha, 'A Construction of Humanism in Colonial India', in idem, *The Small Voice of History*, New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007, pp. 479-492. He situates Bankim in relation to writers from Kant to John Stuart Mill all of whom professed their interest in a project of human betterment/perfectibility and looks at the event horizon of these notions in terms of an anti-colonial project and a critique of 'Western anthropology'. See for Bankim's use in the early physical culture movement: Rosselli, 'Self-Image of Effeteness', pp. 128, 130; Milind Wakankar, 'Body, Crowd, Identity: Genealogy of a Hindu Nationalist Ascetics', *Social Text*, 45, 1995, pp. 45-73, see esp. 48-50. On Bankim's cultural transcendentalism and colonial difference see Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought Zones and the Colonial World - A Derivative Discourse?*, Delhi et al: OUP, 1986, pp. 54-81.

popular in the 'metropole' as well and could be equally shown for many youth-directed endeavours in Britain.²⁰

A great variety of people and movements including but not limited to Gandhi have been influenced by similar set of metaphysics.²¹ Naturally, intellectual influences can very rarely be traced conclusively to any particular source, from where it neatly unfolds. It consisted of a blend of a Nietzschean-sounding avant-gardism, transgressive irrationalism and evolutionary transcendentalism is a strand of early (and later) nationalist debates that can hardly be overemphasised. This strand is highly protean and includes an emphasis on the lonely hard path that had to be walked by the adept (or the superman in the making), who had to be aloof of the masses, yet obedient; the theme of (Indian and/or global) brotherhood that was to be organised in a kind of social pyramid, the need for sacrifice, purification etc., the theme of the violated 'Mother India' whose sons had to protect her and make good the wrong that had been perpetrated against her, and India's rightful place as spiritual leader of the world, while such notions also exhibit continuities with eugenic thinking and Social Darwinism.²²

In these distinct but mutually re-enforcing moments of the recognition of Youth as a sociological (or metaphysical) category, one can discover some of the tensions that have intrigued historians: on the one hand, the relationship between 'indigenous' and 'foreign' influences on the early nation-

²⁰ See below on public schools and muscular Christianity and the scout movement, which exemplify this. Such tendencies are invariably most visible for this period in the realm of physical culture as concerns about degeneration in the nineteenth century were principally articulated with reference to the body. See on details below.

²¹ In Gandhi's case by way of Theosophical contacts and Esoteric Christianity (the two were not that distinct). A close reading of this can be found in the very critical biography by Kathryn Tidrick, *Gandhi: a political and spiritual life*, London: IB Taurus, 2006.

²² See below for details of Aurobindo's thinking and Nietzschean 'spiritual Darwinism' (cf. Mark Singleton, 'Yoga, Eugenics, and Spiritual Darwinism in the Early Twentieth Century', *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, Vol 11, No. 2, 2007, pp. 125-146.) Like the revolutionaries, the Theosophists commanded a well-organised publication and social network and are therefore rather conspicuous in these debates. Cf. Anonymous, *From an Elder Brother to the Youth of India* (reprinted from New India for December 12, 1925); and Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Golden Stairs*, Theosophical Publishing House: Adyar, Madras, India 1932. Compare with the Darwinian transcendentalism exhibited by Sangh Parivar philosopher Deendayal Upadhyaya, *Integral Humanism*, New Delhi, Bharatiya Jana Sangh Office, [s.a.], see esp. pp. 5, 24-36, 39-42. See also the analysis in Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism - Origins, Ideologies and Modern Myths*, Oxford/NY: Berg, 2001, see esp. pp. 154-158 on this 'humanism', see *ibid* for the continuities with German Romanticism, theosophy, Bluntschli, and Herbert Spencer.

alists, and the relationship between metropole and colony. We shall have a brief look at influences and moments that fed into the evolving notions about Youth and its distinct spirit by looking at the evolving notion of the importance of physical culture around the globe and in India. It was on this basis and within this initial framework that later youth movements were built. Generally, many themes and tropes of continued importance were being defined in the later nineteenth and early twentieth century where movements and political direction were not yet clearly distinguishable.

In Britain, one might trace the growing concern with youth and the necessity of setting up movements or organisations to the quickening of (bourgeois) social activism that led to the formation of non-governmental organisation and, among others, also to a new concern for youth. Physical culture linked with recreation and hygiene loomed large in the minds of officials and non-governmental organisations. Recreation in connection with physical training and 'healthy outdoor activities' was seen as a counter to economic problems, joblessness, criminality, loafing, and, generally, fissures of the social fabric (connected to industrialisation, family neglect, World War I etc.). It was also meant to serve as a preparation for a disciplined work-life as well as a balancing and disciplining mechanism for young workers (especially under-age).²³ Moreover, with the successive extension of Empire and social concerns at home, the public (school) discourse took on a more militarist tone, a response to the double concern of creating a steadfast and productive citizen as well as a potential soldier.²⁴ But the appreciation of the particular place of youth for (developing) nationalisms was a shared sentiment around the world in the period. Youth were encouraged to value and serve the community as part of becoming citizens endowed with pride and concern for their national culture.

²³ See on service by youth for instance John Field, 'Service learning in Britain between the wars: university students and unemployed camps', *History of Education*, Vol. 41, No. 2, 2012, pp. 195–212. For a Foucauldian analysis of youth service as stabilising mechanism anchored in spatially bound negotiation/cooperation between adults and youth, Richard G. Kyle, 'Negotiating youth work : moral geographies of the Boys' Brigade in Scotland' [PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2006]. On the young workers and the regimes to which they were subject see also Michael J. Childs, 'Boy Labour in Late Victorian and Edwardian England and the Remaking of the Working Class', *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 23, No. 4, 1990, pp. 783-802. See also John R. Gillis, 'The Evolution of Juvenile Delinquency in England 1890-1914'.

²⁴ See Robert H. MacDonald, 'Reproducing the Middle-Class Boy: From Purity to Patriotism in the Boys' Magazines, 1892-1914', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1989, pp. 519-539.

It is important to recognise the basic interconnectedness of these discussions. In existing historiography, much weight has been placed on the bilateral public sphere(s) of metropole and colony. There is no denying the importance of the discourse about masculinity and effeminacy that shaped the gendered descriptions of imperial might as well as national(ist) lament, and the perceived need for re-invigorating 'the nation' (as a corporeal entity made up of all its individual components) and awakening the age-old (often 'Aryan') 'race spirit'. However, the underlying perception of historians that the Empire was the implicit navel that Indian reformers of the nineteenth century and nationalists of the twentieth were intently gazing at after having internalised an imported Orientalism is cutting a long story (too) short. Pre-drawing the relevant 'zones of engagement' always carries the inherent danger of failing to appreciate wider trends and more complex, multi-layered engagements. While naturally being concerned first and foremost with the question of colonialism, Indian nationalists had a much wider frame of reference to draw from and engage with. Italian nationalism, the lessons of the Russo-Japanese war (most noteworthy that an 'Asiatic' nation could defeat a 'European' one), the emerging Pan-Asianism or Pan-Islam and later Russia, China and others are only a few examples that might serve to decentre the Empire and remind us of the importance of global tendencies and events for the nationalist imagination.

The Physical Culture Movement at the Fin de Siècle

By using youth movements as a window we will be able to trace in greater detail certain eugenic tendencies that were central and inherent to the independence struggle in India insofar as it used physical culture as a means for regeneration of a corporeally imagined nation (or a somatic nationalism).²⁵ The consensus across the political board with regard to the nexus citizen-volunteer-soldier also needs to be explored.

In the second half of the nineteenth century a number of movements sprang up that aimed at inculcating physical vigour, discipline and health among its members and, by extension, its national

²⁵ Cf. Joseph Alter, 'Somatic Nationalism', pp. 557-588.

or racial sub-group. This trend came into sharper focus around the turn of the century, when a popular discourse blended a variety of earlier elements into a powerful fear of degeneration resulting from industrialised, urban habitation and the ever growing abyss between humans and nature, meaning also their 'natural' living conditions. The perfectibility of the body (and the mind through the body) can be seen as a post-Enlightenment model reaching its climax concomitantly with the prevalent fears of the late industrial age. To many observers it seemed as if there was either doom or a new dawn of humankind lurking across the near-magical century's boundary. By the latter half of the nineteenth century, Germany was one of the foremost champions of the blending of a nationalist discourse with physical culture embodied in its *Turnvereine*, which, in turn, influenced the later *Wandervogel* movement²⁶ as well as, for instance, the Jewish counterparts of the nationalist body-building venture.²⁷ Friedrich Ludwig 'Turnvater' Jahn and his regime of harmonised, synchronised mass exercise had become the epitome of the new physical revival that blossomed in Europe. Similar movements (sometimes directly influenced) can be found elsewhere, such as France, Britain and the Scandinavian states, where it often included more gentlemanly pursuits such as swimming, riding and rowing.²⁸ The emerging term 'physical culture' summed up this new obsession with athletic health and strength and, in the anglophone world, became associated with 'muscular Christianity'.²⁹ This drive was seen as a counter to an unhealthy

²⁶ On the Wandervogel, see for instance John Alexander Williams, *Turning to Nature in Germany. Hiking, Nudism, and Conservation, 1900-1927*, Stanford University Press, 2007, and Detlev Peukert, 'Die „Wilden Cliques“ in den zwanziger Jahren', in Wilfried Breyvogel, et al (eds), *Autonomie und Widerstand. Zur Theorie und Geschichte des Jugendprotestes*, Essen: Rigodon, 1983, pp. 66-77; Arno Klönne, *Jugend im Dritten Reich: Die Hitler-Jugend und ihre Gegner*, Köln: PapyRossa, 1999. See also the autobiographical account bringing out this point maybe more vividly than much of the secondary literature: Kurt Piehl, *Latscher, Pimpfe und Gestapo. Die Geschichte eines Edelweißpiraten*, Frankfurt: Brandes & Apsel Verlag, 1994. See for an overview Walter Lacquer, *Young Germany: A History of the German Youth Movement*, New York: Basic Books, 1962. But while the romantically motivated 'Wandervogel' movement was about the blossoming of character and individuality (*Persönlichkeitsentfaltung*), the volunteer movement was inscribed with the ideal of self-negation and selflessness in the literal meaning of the term. See esp. chp. 3 of this study.

²⁷ See for instance Todd Samuel Presner, 'Clear Heads, Solid Stomachs, and Hard Muscles: Max Nordau and the Aesthetics of Jewish Regeneration', *Modernism/modernity*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2003, pp. 269-296.

²⁸ See for instance Robert A Nye, 'Degeneration, Neurasthenia and the Culture of Sport in Belle Epoque France', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 17, No. 5, 1982, pp. 51-68. Nye traces the origins of the ideology surrounding physical culture to resistance against the Napoleonic occupation in Germany especially (where it resurfaces again later). On the Nietzscheanism and physical culture in Britain with regard to Youth (for the 1930s), see for instance Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Building a British Superman: Physical Culture in Interwar Britain', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 41, No. 4, pp. 595-610.

²⁹ On muscular Christianity, see the collection by Donald Hall (ed.) *Muscular Christianity*:

emphasis on the cerebral at the expense of the somatic which, it was asserted, led to a disjunction not only in the development of the individual but also, increasingly, was the root cause of moral deprivation and decadence that seemed to mark the times. Revitalising the body promised a holistic restoration of the individual and, through it, of the larger community, redressing the imbalance imposed by modern living and working conditions. The body was the temple of the soul as well as the person's interface to engage with and brave the world. While the German model was without doubt important for the European continent, the so-called Ling System, developed in Scandinavia, had a more direct bearing on the anglophone world.³⁰ The importance of physical culture, replete with its notions of a manly character for England in particular, have been pointed out elsewhere, and the familiar figure of the 'rowdy boy', the 'public-school spirit' in Victorian and Edwardian England, gentlemanly sports and a British masculinity that metamorphosed under the conditions and exigencies of the colonial project need not be elaborated on in great detail. The influences on the ascendancy of a counter-masculinity among the colonial subjects of the British 'civilizing mission' have also been explored by a number of scholars.³¹

Embodying the Victorian Age. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. We should resist the temptation of considering Muscular Christianity as the root or beginning rather than one branch in the developing concerns as it would mean to over-determine these ventures with a specific religiosity that was not necessarily part of it. For the Turner movement in America and its impact and adaptation to the divergent setting, see for instance, Gertrud Pfister, 'The Role of German Turners in American Physical Education', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 26, No. 13, 2009, pp. 1893 - 1925, where it assumed an ethno-centric outlook but aimed at a wider dissemination of the principles. See also the rest of that special issue of *The International Journal of the History of Sport* on the movement in the US.

³⁰ The Ling system was a harmonised system of movements that functioned without heavy weight-lifting machines. It replaced the older, machine-intensive Maclaren system in schools and the military. Singleton, *Yoga Body*, pp. 82-90, esp. pp. 86-88.

³¹ JA Mangan is the doyen of this field, see, for instance, his "'Muscular, militaristic and manly": the British middle-class hero as moral messenger', *International Journal of the History of Sport* Vol. 13, No. 1, 1996, pp. 28-47. For an exploration of the interdependent formation of British as well as colonial masculinity, see Sinha, Mrinalini, *Colonial Masculinity - The 'manly Englishman' and the 'effeminate Bengali' in the late nineteenth century*, Manchester/ New York: Manchester University Press, 1995.

Physical Culture in India - Akharas and the Swadeshi Movement

Whether in Italy or France, whether in Germany or in America where have aged men instead of youths appeared as priests of the great Yajna of a country's salvation? Who but young men have ever purified religion with their blood by baring their breasts before the oppressor's death-rod and obeyed the cult of the country? In every country, oppressed, trodden under foot by aliens... it is the community of young men which has, by destroying unrighteousness.... created a new nationality or empire.

Jugantar; 15th April 1906³²

Much has been written (or compiled) on the early militant or 'terrorist' tradition in Bengal especially.³³ I do not endeavour to repeat the story of the coming of the *akhara* or militant nationalism here. It will suffice to point to some of the pertinent features that became deeply ingrained in all the organisations that were to follow. Many of the features and rhetoric of later mass-based volunteer organisations can be traced back to the early 'terrorist cells', which shall be shown here by using the example of the Anushilan Samiti in particular.

The fascination with physical training was proclaimed to be the necessary prerequisite of rejuvenation and revivalism (and all youth movements), and was actualised in the (re)discovery of the *akhara*, that 'ancient' gymnasium for indigenous training. Attempts were made to assimilate the

³² The Sanskrit 'yajna' denotes a sacrifice. Article in the *Jugantar* of 15th April 1906, cited in Kabita Ray, *Revolutionary Propaganda in Bengal. Extremist and Militant Press 1905-1918*, Kolkata: Papyrus, 2008, p. 30-31.

³³ There is less research on Maharashtra, which had close personal and structural ties with Bengal. In Maharashtra, the organisation that has been studied is the Abhinav Bharat. The Mitra Mela was founded at Nasik 1899 under VD Savarkar, and merged into the Abhinav Bharat (Young India) in 1904/1905, at which point it consisted chiefly of students of the Fergusson College. See on the enduring links between Maharashtra and Bengal radicals: 'Abhinav Bharat Bombay', in WBSA, IB Branch, file no 15/39. See also the descriptive overview article by Mani Kamerkar and HM Ghodke, 'Militant nationalism in Maharashtra (1876-1913)', in Amitabha Mukherjee (ed.), *Militant Nationalism in India 1876-1947*, Calcutta: Institute of Historical Studies, 1995, pp. 1-56. But we will here focus on Bengal as example to highlight certain trends. The most comprehensive compilation on the Bengali terrorist is the 6-volume series by Amiya K Samanta (ed. and compiler), *Terrorism in Bengal - A Collection of Documents*, Calcutta: Government of West Bengal, 1995. For detailed accounts see Amitabha Mukherjee (ed.), *Militant Nationalism in India, 1876-1947* which contains articles covering the main episodes of militant struggle in India, see especially Amitabha Mukherjee, 'Revolutionary Nationalist Activities in Bengal (1902-1913)', *ibid*, pp. 57-98; Pranjal Kumar Bhattacharaya, 'Revolutionary Activities in the UP and the Punjab (1876-1915)', *ibid*, pp. 99-121. The best known and most critical scholar is Peter Heehs and his seminal *The Bomb in Bengal. The Rise of Revolutionary Terrorism in India, 1900-1910*, Delhi et al: Oxford University Press, 1993.

spaces of sports and physical training into a larger concern for the body of the nation. It is perhaps not surprising that it was in the homestead of the 'effeminate Bengali' that physical culture became especially popular.

It was around the 1860s that writers, early nationalists, social reformers, that is to say the Bengali *bhadralok*, came to lament the acute physical degeneracy of the Bengali, and of young people, in particular.³⁴ Most important was the behavioural and structural explanation, however: the extreme emphasis the Bengali *babu* put on (western) learning under the exigencies of a colonial educational system, compared with the allegedly discontinued physical practices of their healthier and manlier forefathers.³⁵ From early on, the cruel laws of nature and men led to a felt need for arming and preparing oneself for the great struggle of life. The *Jugantar* in 1906, for instance, noted:

All nations are to-day growing proficient in arms; at such a time all feeble and unarmed nationalities without exception will most certainly be annihilated. We Indians have been disarmed by order of the king [...] Hence we have no means of earning military tactics. But [...] [i]f the Bengalis will undertake the task of [imparting] this education into their own hands, then, if not exactly military drill, they may derive much instruction useful in war.³⁶

This is one of the earliest explicit linking of physical (ideally armed) training, the military and the inevitability of war due to the 'spirit of the time' or some more fundamental law of human societies. The early revolutionary period was, however, marked by a latent and bloodthirsty optimism that the Gandhian discourse obliterated or at least drove underground for the most part in later times. Two of the best-known early examples of attempts to organise physical culture on a large scale and combine this with militant anti-colonial activity and notions of virility (not solely aimed at males but females too) are surely the attempt to set up an akhara/secret society by Aurobindo

³⁴ Rosselli has summarised the diverse strands of the discussion and explanations offered for this: from environmental (the hot, wet climate or what Macaulay characterised as a constant 'vapour bath') to genetic (non-Aryan descent), from dietary (meat-less diet) to the habits of procreation (child-marriage and early childbirth, something that became a constant topic in the 20th Century, not least with Gandhi) and a fashionable Social Darwinism. John Rosselli, 'The Self-Image of Effeteness: Physical Education and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Bengal', *Past & Present*, Vol. 86, No. 1, 1980, pp. 121-148, esp. pp 123-5.

³⁵ Rosselli puts great emphasis on the internalisation of and puritanical *reaction* against English stereotypes as decisive factor for these debates among the Bengali elite. See Rosselli, 'Self-image of Effeteness', p 127.

³⁶ Anonymous, 'Mandali gathan' [Organisation of Bands] in *Jugantar*, 26 August 1906, cited after Heehs, *The Bomb in Bengal*, p. 96. A study of contemporary newspapers would elicit a train of very similar pronouncements from the militant press but is beyond the scope of the present study .

Ghose's brother, Barindra Kumar Ghose³⁷ and the akhara organised by Sarala Debi.³⁸ Underlying the exhibited drive for physical strength was a perceived need for 'self-defence' against 'rowdy' Muslims as relations in eastern Bengal especially had become tense during the anti-Partition agitation.³⁹ It was around the time of the Partition of Bengal in 1905 that such ventures would take off on a larger scale. The model of the 'samiti' (here: band of nationalist volunteers) was by then well established and became the quintessential mode of organisation during the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal. Carey Watt has pointed in this connection to the drive for a new 'associational culture' in India.⁴⁰ These samitis typically combined some social or political reform programme and social service activities with physical culture and moral training of its members.⁴¹ During the Swadeshi campaign those youths that formed picketing parties and did propaganda were the 'volunteers'. It was during the Swadeshi campaign that the strong link between physical culture, national service and volunteers was popularised on an unprecedented scale as a 'craze' for physical training hit Bengal. In 1906, the movement was amalgamated into the 'National Volunteers' which soon had branches in many parts of Bengal.⁴² We shall not dwell on the samitis here, however.⁴³ Sumit Sarkar pointed out that the national volunteers, often drawn from national schools and Congress

³⁷ One of those closely involved with Barindra Kumar Ghose's akhara, P. Mitra, became one of the principal founders of the Anushilan Samiti. See RH Syned Hutchinson, DIG of Police, IB, Calcutta 1st May 1914, 'Note on the Growth of the Revolutionary Movement in Bengal, Eastern Bengal and Assam, and United Bengal', in Samanta, *Terrorism in Bengal*, Vol. I, pp. 222-223.

³⁸ Sarala Debi was the daughter of novelist Mrs J Ghoshal, her father was the secretary of the National Congress, said to be present in the first secret meetings to form a revolutionary party in Bengal around 1900. She was one of the first generation of female BAs from Calcutta University and in relatively close touch with Swami Vivekananda. She started the *Lakhi Bhandar* and opened an akhara where Jiu-Jitsu lessons were given by Murtaza, a travelling acrobat, strong man and fencing master. See report by JC Nixon, 'An Account of the Revolutionary Organisations in Bengal other than the Dacca Anusilan Samiti', dt. 1917, in Samanta, *Terrorism in Bengal*, Vol. II, p. 509. And report by IB officer Hutchinson 'Note on the Growth of the Revolutionary Movement in Bengal, Eastern Bengal and Assam, and United Bengal', in Amiya K Samanta, *Terrorism in Bengal*, Vol. I, pp. 221-222, 224.

³⁹ James Campbell Ker, *Political Trouble in India 1907-1917*, Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing Press, 1917, p. 9. On anti-Muslim sentiments among revolutionary groups, see below. On Muslim activities, the socio-economic basis of communalism and religious revivalism during these years, see Sumit Sarkar, *Swadeshi Movement in Bengal 1903-1908*, New Delhi: People's Pub. House 1973, esp. pp. 408-409, 411-462.

⁴⁰ See Watt, *Serving the Nation*, esp. pp. 109-116.

⁴¹ Sarkar, *Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, pp.71-72.

⁴² This was under the leadership of under the leadership of one Pramatha Nath Chararji. Cf. JC Nixon, 'An Account of the Revolutionary Organisations in Bengal other than the Dacca Anusilan Samiti', dt. 1917, in Samanta, *Terrorism in Bengal*, Vol. II, pp. 459, p. 525.

⁴³ See Sumit Sarkar, *Swadeshi Movement in Bengal 1903-1908*, New Delhi: People's Pub. House 1973, see pp. 352-404. The IB files have been made available relatively recently and allow, maybe, for a more in-depth view of the workings of these groups than the official reports do. There is

session volunteers, were in many cases actually young adults.⁴⁴ But for officials and nationalists, by their actions and outlook they would be lumped together under the emotive term of 'Youth'. During this time, some plans for permanent All India Volunteer Corps also emerged.⁴⁵ Such schemes were fleeting and many volunteer corps were a localised affair, yet certain super-structures were emerging. Some of the bigger samitis had, on paper, more than 100 or 200 branch organisations but this did not always speak to close-knit coordination but rather a myriad parallel, loosely-organised federation of local bodies.⁴⁶

At a time when the partition of Bengal caused indignation in large sections of society, the model was a particularly important one. This sparked off what Intelligence called the 'first wave' of 'terrorism' in Bengal.⁴⁷ 'Terrorists'/militants and samitis/volunteer movement came to form a continuum of modes of organisation from the 'loose' and democratic groups represented by the samitis to the revolutionary secret cells.⁴⁸

These groups are important here because they served as a kind of (rhetoric and organisational) blueprint for many organisations that followed later. It has been noted that the swadeshi move-

however no space here to dwell on this aspect overly long.

⁴⁴ See Sarkar, *Swadeshi Movement*, esp. p. 358. On the participation of school students, see below.

⁴⁵ One of these plans apparently proposed Sarala Debi and Tilak as presidents. Cf. Sarkar, *Swadeshi Movement*, p. 360.

⁴⁶ See for instance 'Proclamation of certain samitis in the Dacca Division', in WBSA, IB Branch, 583/1909 (sl no 2) which provides an overview and characterisation of samitis in Dacca. See Sumit Sarkar for a district-by-district overview. Sarkar, *Swadeshi Movement*, 361-404.

⁴⁷ On Maharashtra and early terrorism as a response partly to the anti-plague measures, cf Mani Kamekar and HM Ghodke, 'Militant nationalism in Maharashtra (1876-1913)', in Amitabha Mukherjee, *Militant Nationalism in India 1876-1947*, Calcutta: Institute of Historical Studies, 1995, pp. 1-56. The Anushilan was first launched in 1901. The 'second wave' took place around the beginning of the First World War and will be briefly dealt with later. In the perception of the IB 1916-1921 was a 'calm phase', not least due to the harsh legislation to tackle 'extremist' nationalism and what colonial officials liked to refer to as terrorist outrages. On the importance of outside influences such as Sister Nivedita and the Japanese art critic Okazura, see Heehs, 'Foreign Influences on Bengali Revolutionary Terrorism', in idem, *Nationalism, Terrorism, Communalism*, New Delhi et al: OUP, 2000 (1st ed. 1998), pp. 72-74.

⁴⁸ Sumit Sarkar while providing an unsurpassed narrative of the movement, has tried to draw a sharper distinction between these modes of organisation, stating that the view of the *samiti* as revolutionary society in embryo was a serious 'anachronism'. This is partly true - the involved teleology obliterates the dynamic inter-relationship between the different modes of organisation and cross-fertilisation. See Sarkar, *Swadeshi Movement*, see esp. p. 355. The IB files have been made available more recently and allow, maybe, for a more in-depth view of the workings of these groups than the official reports do.

ment 'anticipated' later Gandhian campaigns in the form of (strategic) passive resistance and boycott, often paired however, with violent resistance. Passive resistance was chiefly meant to made to immobilise the colonial administration. This practice was stated by the more militant nationalists to be one step short of actually taking up arms, the two being not mutually exclusive but rather successive stages of a war, since boycott itself was a war and the Kshatriya ideal permitted the use of violence in war-time.⁴⁹ At the same time, to prepare for such violent resistance, lathi and dagger 'play' were perennially advocated. This cult of the body took on quasi-religious connotations in the sphere of radical nationalist circles heavily tinged with religious rhetoric and legitimisation, including the use of the Bhagavad Gita, various gods and goddesses, and references to ancient Hindu culture.⁵⁰ The early militants, then, introduced another feature which would haunt later organisations - the mixing of politics and religion, the mobilisation through appeal to affective bonds to religious symbols. The Anushilan Samiti is a good example in this context .

The Anushilan, founded as an organisation proper in 1905, operated through a network of places and groups in line with its secretive character. A number of physical culture clubs (akharas) and student associations (chhatra samitis) or hostels with ashram-like rules functioned as front organisations.⁵¹ These provide, in vitro, most of the elements of youth movements that we shall dwell

⁴⁹ Aurobindo, article series in the *Bande Mataram* titled 'Doctrines of Passive Resistance' (published from 11-23 April 1907) explained the theory and practice of passive resistance which, it was pointed out, were principal tools in resistance campaigns in contemporary Europe as they had been in eighteenth century America. The refusal to pay taxes, the *Bande Mataram* stated, was the 'most emphatic protest possible short of taking up arms'. See Aurobindo, 'The Doctrine of Passive Resistance - IV - Its Methods, in idem, *Collected Works of Sri Aurobindo*, Vol 6-7: *Bande Mataram. Political Writings and Speeches, 1890–1908*, Pondicherry: Aurobindo Trust, 2002, pp. 281-286, see for quote pp. 283-284. The last point pertaining to the Kshatriya ideal is taken from an exhibit in the Alipur Conspiracy Case of May 1908.

⁵⁰ S. Irfan Habib has rightly observed that '[t]he activities, writings and speeches of the revolutionaries of this period reveal a strong religious bias, romanticism and emotionalism.' S. Irfan Habib, *To Make the Deaf Hear*, p. 14. He immediately qualifies this remark by pointing at the secular strands within what the Government dubbed 'anarchist' circles, and that this tendency - at least for the progressive radical circles - changed markedly after the Bolshevik Revolution (ibid, p. 18 f.).

⁵¹ Little work exists on these, see however, John Berwick, 'Chātra Samāj: The Significance of the Student Community in Bengal, c. 1870-1922', in Rajat Kanta Ray (ed.), *Mind, Body and Society - Life and Mentality in Colonial Bengal*, Calcutta et al: OUP, 1995, pp. 232-293. Berwick points to the long-standing mobilisational traditions (around the Shivaji festivals, political issues like the Ilbert Bill, clashes with the university authorities) of such organisations stating that their importance in the swadeshi campaign was merely a '[m]aintaining of old traditions' (ibid., p. 242.)

on in greater detail for later movements.⁵² Pertinent here are some structural elements of these samitis: first, they were very keen on social service and village work to gain a firm foothold and influence in their surroundings.⁵³ Secondly, the rules prescribed a regularly updated register with details of the physical status of the member, the maintenance of an akhara at every branch, regular exercise in the form of lathi drill replete with military commands, and for every ten members there was to be a *dalpati* supervising his charges.⁵⁴ The other noteworthy feature is the overt anti-Muslim stance and often Hindu revivalist stance: rhetorically politics was subsumed under religious duty.⁵⁵ The group implemented the older ideal of the ascetic soldier-hero which literati like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee had dreamt up.⁵⁶ It prescribed the observance of brahmacharya for all its members, Brahmanical diets, extraordinary characteristics of the self not least of which was the capacity for self-sacrifice, perseverance and obedience to the person in charge⁵⁷. The members were called upon to consider themselves part of a military organisation and hence disobedience was liable to be punished. There were, in fact, reports of death sentences carried out for certain misdemeanours within the society.⁵⁸ The prescribed reading list is equally revealing: everyone had to read, among other things, some of the works of Bankim (naturally, Anandamath was at the top

⁵² It should be stressed that nothing in this implies a linear development or teleology. We are merely tracing some of the elements that played a role later on under specific circumstances

⁵³ See, for instance, Amulya Sarkar's Revolutionary Pamphlet which spells out the instrumental nature of such philanthropic work most clearly. Sarkar was a member of the Pabna Jugantar Party, his pamphlet sets up an entire organisational and constitutional chart for revolutionary organisations replete with Intelligence, Training and and Military Departments. Social Service is to be done to the extent practical and while evaluating the merits and demerits and had to constitute 'public sympathy' to be worthwhile. The connection between service and the gathering of intelligence was also elaborated on. See the pamphlet in Amiya K Samanta (ed.), *Terrorism in Bengal*, Vol. II, pp. 403-440, see esp. 420, 425-428.

⁵⁴ 'Anushilan Samiti regulations and Drill-Book', in Amiya K Samanta (ed.), *Terrorism in Bengal*, Volume II, see esp. pp. 693-697, 733-735.

⁵⁵ It was stated in the rules of the Dacca Anushilan that no one who was not a Hindu and had 'any spite against the Hindu' may be admitted, and reference to a long history of Muslim betrayal was made. Cf. Sedition Committee, 1918 - APPENDICES [Rowlatt Report, Vol II: Evidence], ff. 32, 34, (pp. lxi, lxxv), Appendix B 6(v), Exhibit IX-B. B. - Dacca Conspiracy Case, in IOR, L/PS/20/38. There were Muslims in other Anushilan samitis (the Dacca branch was particularly parochial in this respect) and the Jugantar, however. In other instances, the conflation of politics and religions is very explicit. See the Anushilan 'Scheme Book' in WBSA, IB Branch, file 1280/15 (sl no 68), for quote see f. 1. There is no space here to go into the details of the intricate and close connection between early Bengali or Maharashtrian militancy and Hindu revivalism. See on this for instance Peter Heehs, 'Bengali religious nationalism and communalism, *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 1, 1, 1997, pp. 117-39.

⁵⁶ Bankim popularised the term Anushilan in the way it came to be used in his novel *Anandamath*.. See comments above, Ranajit Guha, 'A Construction of Humanism in Colonial India'. See also Ker, *Political Trouble in India*, pp. 32-33

⁵⁷ Cf. Sedition Committee, 1918 - APPENDICES [Rowlatt Report, Vol II: Evidence], ff. 32-35,

of the list) and Vivekananda, 'Aryanari' (Aryan women) by Kaliprasanna, *Karmayoga*, titles on India's past and present as well as the Bengali version of 'Lives of Mazzini and Garibaldi, and a book on Napoleon and George Washington.'⁵⁹

The body itself was the *sine qua non* in the aspirations of the ascetic soldier. Physical development was to precede spiritual, the body would later be routinely referred to as 'the temple of the soul' by Indian nationalists, revolutionary underground organisations such as the Anushilan Samiti imbued their activities with overt religious symbolism and meaning, some of the akharas that were built later are reminiscent of temples while nationalist icons stood in lieu of the gods. Mark Singleton described this aptly as '[t]he resacrilization of the body through ritualized techniques of physical culture...'.⁶⁰ The language of degeneracy, sickness and rejuvenation was bound up with the over-arching importance ascribed to the body with its intimate connection to the self or soul as well as the corporealisation of the nation which became one of the most common tropes of the national movement. In *Bartman Rananiti* (The modern art of warfare), Abinash Chandra Bhattacharya, an associate of Aurobindo⁶¹, reprinted a *Jugantar* article of 1906 declaring that 'war is the order of creation' and that both were but two sides of the same coin:

Destruction is natural and war is, therefore, also natural. When any part of the body is rotten it should be cut off with the help of surgical instruments, otherwise the gangrenous wound would expand and cause destruction to the body. Vice, persecution, the dependence are but gangrenous sores in the body of the nation.⁶²

The typical training of the Anushilan included lathi training, wrestling – both lower class and lower-caste traditionally - and sword and dagger training. The Anushilan had its own training

Appendix B 6(v), Exhibit IX-B. B. - Dacca Conspiracy Case, in IOR, L/PS/20/38.

⁵⁸ See, for instance, report of Superintendent of Police, JE Armstrong, 25 April 1917, 'An Account of the Revolutionary Organization in Eastern Bengal with special reference to the Dacca Anushilan Samiti', in Samanta, *Terrorism in Bengal*, Volume II, pp. 462-463. Members who joined the Anushilan were sometimes made to sign pledges in which they consecrated their mind and body to the cause and work of the samiti in the name of the Gita and the motherland, and which included the phrase: 'If I am found guilty of sacrilege I will submit to any punishment inflicted on me. If I am guilty of treason I will submit to the supreme penalty.' Cf. IOR, L/PS/20/38; Sedition Committee, 1918 - APPENDICES [Rowlatt Report, Vol II: Evidence], Exhibit XX (3), in Barisal Suppl. Conspiracy Case, f. LVI: 'Vow taken by a student (in Bengali)', 1916.

⁵⁹ Hutchinson's Report, Appendix C, 'Rules for the Membership of the Anushilan Samiti', in Amiya K Samanta (ed.), *Terrorism in Bengal*, Volume I, pp. 272-274.

⁶⁰ Singleton, *Yoga Body*, pp. 89-90

⁶¹ Peter Heehs, 'The Maniktala Secret Society: An Early Bengali Terrorist Group', *Indian Economic Social History Review* 29, 3, 1992, pp. 349-370, see p. 368.

⁶² Ker, *Political Trouble in India 1907-1917*, p. 52.

schools and drill took a place of primary importance.⁶³ At some places, the revolutionary cells would form student messes for their more dedicated workers as inconspicuous meeting and training places and bases of operations.⁶⁴ The structure was pyramidal and regular inspections by emissaries from headquarters were undertaken in the branches in the early phase. Intelligence officers described it early on as a 'semi-military' body.⁶⁵

Physical culture was, in the minds of many observers, linked to the recruiting of 'terrorists' through akharas, while the idea of service was in its pre-mass movement manifestations associated with social reform. Yet, as we have seen, social service was also a part of the larger ideal framework of national service perceived by the Anushilan, who used it both as propaganda instrument and to inculcate the requisite spirit of dedication to the nation in its members.⁶⁶ More commonly and much more systematically, it was implemented by the various Indian service leagues that had sprung up. In Bengal these were especially the Sree Sanghas. In northern India, the Servants of India is the best-known body. The idea of service and the various connotations and associations floating around that term, especially in its connection with citizenship ideals and the nation-building project, have been dealt with.⁶⁷

⁶³ See IOR, L/PS/20/38: Sedition Committee, 1918 - APPENDICES [Rowlatt Report, Vol II: Evidence], Appendix B 6(v), Exhibit IX-B (f.31+32). B, Exhibit IX FF (f. 30). regarding the rules of the Dacca Anushilan Samiti retrieved in the Dacca Conspiracy Case.

⁶⁴ JC Nixon, 'An Account of the Revolutionary Organisations in Bengal other than the Dacca Anushilan Samiti', dt. 1917, in Amiya K Samanta (ed.), *Terrorism in Bengal*, Volume II, p. 510-511 on the Chhattra Bhandar mess, which was the offshoot of the Chhattra Bhandra founded after Jatindranath Banerjee gave up revolutionary work. Another faction of the original Bhandar formed a limited liability company. The Chhattra Bhandar was closely associated with the Jugantar through its leader Kartik Datta who worked in the printing press of the *Jugantar* journal.

⁶⁵ IB Officer Hutchinson's 'Note on the Growth of the Revolutionary Movement in Bengal, Eastern Bengal and Assam, and United Bengal', in Amiya K Samanta (ed.), *Terrorism in Bengal*, Volume I, p. 223.

⁶⁶ Some of the Anushilan members were more dedicated to social service than others, but a general pattern is that when the organisation was in trouble due to persecution or in a lull they would re-focus more energy on social service. See also the example of Makhani Lal Sen of the Sonarang National School, supposedly leading the Dacca Anushilan during Pulin Das's absence and later on reverting back to pure philanthropic service when the Anushilan - under the umbrella of the New Violence party - re-radicalised itself. Samanta, *Terrorism in Bengal*, Vol. I, p. 458; see on the school as a rendezvous point and base of operations for dacoities also pp. 468, 466-467.

⁶⁷ Carey Watt sees social service as a nation-building programme which furthered cross-caste, -class and trans-regional solidarities in a move towards an 'associational culture'. See Watt, *Serving the Nation*, esp. pp. 109-116.

The Servants of India Society of Gokhale, started in 1905, made use of volunteers for keeping order at political meetings and during pilgrimages, to help with the organization of local Congress bodies, and political propaganda. They rendered social service during calamities from famine, floods to the 1918 influenza epidemic.⁶⁸ Watt has pointed out that in some respects the age of cross-caste and -class mass mobilisation pre-dates the appearance of Gandhi. In the organisation and even more so in the process of application to render social service for big events like the Kumbh Melas we can already see the shift towards a mass-based culture.⁶⁹ Physical culture and service, radical anti-colonialism and social reform from within, and from the individual upwards, merged into the idea of the volunteer during the age of mass mobilisation, which forms the main focus of this study.

A Little Learning is a Dangerous Thing - Of 'Tainted Boys' and Terrorists

School-boys and students formed the principal recruiting pool for the Bengali terrorists and were of great importance for later nationalists. We are not concerned with students as such but since volunteers were often drawn from among the student or graduate population, we shall briefly elaborate on some of the early mobilisation campaigns and colonial reactions to students' engagement with politics, which set the pattern and rhetoric for later encounters.

In nineteenth and early twentieth-century India, existing colonial schools, universities etc.

emulated British models. Indian nationalists were quick to focus on education as one of the main

⁶⁸ Carey Watt merely refers to the social service done by volunteers during the epidemic, see *Serving the Nation*, pp. 114-115, see also David Hardiman, 'The Influenza Epidemic of 1918 and the *Adivasis* of Western India', *Social History of Medicine*, March 2012, [doi: 10.1093/shm/hks015]. Hardiman refers to the social service done by Christian missionaries in the interior of Gujarat during the epidemic. For a general overview of the influenza epidemic in India see ID Mills, 'The 1918–1919 Influenza Pandemic - The Indian Experience', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1986, pp. 1-40.

⁶⁹ The *seva samitis* were used for propagating Home Rule from 1916 on, to help with order at melas and pilgrimage festivals, and also got involved in famine and drought relief (in the United Provinces especially). The scales on which the Kumbh Melas were organised by the Seva Samiti, Servants of India and associated organisations was relatively limited in a comparative perspective. See Watt, *Serving the Nation*, pp. 110-114.

pillars of necessary social reform. Unemployment among graduates contributed to the disillusionment many felt with the colonial education system. The main argument against the colonial education system was, however, that it 'denationalised' young Indians. On top of that, many claimed, it virtually crippled one generation after another, who were so busy cramming Wordsworth and Shakespeare that they ruined their health and physique.⁷⁰ The 'emasculating' effect of British education in particular became a recurring topic, while, in official reports, evaluations of students' health was a concern. Similar debates about the deteriorating effects of a singular stress on learning were of immense importance in Britain as elsewhere, of course. In Britain, and by and by in India, 'physical culture', hygiene etc. became part of the curriculum.⁷¹ With the setting up of indigenous 'national schools' (here I am focussing on the non-confessional schools) and colleges in a revivalist fashion, there was an attempt at wedding 'tradition' with 'modern, western' knowledge and subjects; at the same time there was also an emphasis on the training of mind, body and, more or less explicitly, soul.⁷² 'National schools' were especially suspicious to colonial officials, allegedly providing space for sedition and propaganda or even paramilitary training.⁷³ Playing' with lathis, daggers and the like were common parts of physical training, the display of physical feats common at public and school festivals and melas. The

⁷⁰ An expert to the Calcutta University Report Committee stated 'He (the Bengali boy) is notoriously careless of his health, but the fault is seldom wholly his own. The opportunities for recreation have generally come to him when he has already become a victim to a course of indolent inactivity.' Hence an improvement in the realm of military training and a furtherance of the boy scout movement was advocated to preserve the health of the student, cf. IOR, V/26/864/6: Calcutta University Commission, 1917-1919: Report Volume I, Part I: Analysis of Present Conditions, Chapters I-XIII, p. 109-110, 117. For a similar sentiment from a nationalist perspective see Lala Lajpat Rai's foreword for Har Dayal, MA, *Our educational Problem - with an Introduction by Lala Lajpat Rai*, Tagore and Co., Madras, 1922 (originally published a series of articles in the *Punjabee* in 1908/09), p. ix. The 'overstrain' in education mirrored English debates closely if a little belatedly. On the coming of the 'public school' and the emphasis on games and physical prowess, see for instance, JA Mangan, 'Grammar Schools and the Games Ethic in the Victorian and Edwardian Eras', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 4, 1983, pp. 313-335.

⁷¹ On muscular Christianity see for instance Donald E. Hall, *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age*, Cambridge/ New York: CUP, 1994 and John MacAloon, *Muscular Christianity in colonial and post-colonial world*, London/ New York: Routledge, 2008.

⁷² More detailed work on the social history of such institutions is still largely absent. See, however, Fischer-Tiné, *Der Gurukul-Kangri*; David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978. On some of the famous national universities and colleges, see the volume edited by Mushirul Hasan and GW Leitner, (eds), *History of Indigenous Education in the Punjab since Annexation and in 1882*, Patiala: Languages Dept. Punjab, 1971 (Repr.).

⁷³ This was thought of the Gurukulas among many others. On the dynamic relationship between Hindu nationalist reformers with its English pendants and the colonising mission, see for instance Fischer-Tiné. *Der Gurukul Kangri*.

importance and visibility of students in political struggle in Bengal, especially after its partition, and elsewhere, seemed to justify these concerns. As early as 1905, the Carlyle Circular warned magistrates and district officers about sedition in schools and Government soon found it necessary to introduce new decrees to deal with these threats. During and after the Swadeshi Movement pupils in schools as well as teachers were under general suspicion. Pupils were thought of as particularly vulnerable and particularly dangerous: their alleged age-bound receptiveness for any kind of propaganda made them easy prey for seditious doctrines. The Government had long-standing concerns about terrorist groups drawing from and recruiting in these circles.⁷⁴ Student meetings from local to all India levels were common in the 1910s and 20s. Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose and others began to be frequent speakers at such meetings, along with ‘seditionists’ and ‘terrorists’ like Bhupendranath Datta, ex-detenu Pratul Chandra Ganguly and others.⁷⁵ To many of these leaders, students represented the avant-garde; the responsibility to go forth and ‘uplift’ or enlighten ‘the masses’ was commonly bestowed on students at these sessions.⁷⁶

School and college boys did provide the most important recruiting pool for groups such as the Anushilan. There is ample evidence and details on schemes by terrorists to recruit in schools available. One that was prominently cited by the IB was the Anushilan's secret ‘District Organization Scheme’, which was meant as a definite guide for setting up new branches and maintaining close contact and control over the boys recruited into the organisation. The focus for propaganda and enrolment was on Entrance schools especially and the reason given was that ‘it is unmarried

⁷⁴ Cf. ‘Note by the Intelligence Bureau on the Terrorist tendencies of youth organisations in Bengal and other provinces’ (official publication), in WBSA, IB Branch, file no. 341/1938.

⁷⁵ See for the importance of Nehru in the student scene for instance, WBSA, GoB, CID, IB Branch, file no. 459/38, f. 27. Nehru was commonly called upon as speaker and mediator and, if his time allowed, complied with these requests. BN Datta was a known agitator, first with the Ghadr movement in the US, then with the India Independence Committee in the First World War Germany. Pratul Chandra Ganguly of Dacca, an ex-detenu, was influential in student circles (on eugenics, see below).

⁷⁶ Cf. for instance the 9. The All India Youth Convention held in Calcutta on 17th and 19th Dec. 1928 “Subhas Bose, the President, reminded the ‘teachers’ of the country that the French revolution was brought about by those who had gone and preached among the masses. K.D. Sastri referred to the achievements of Lenin, Zaghul Pasha, Kemal Pasha and Mussolini in their respective countries, and asserted that if the youths of India were organised they could do likewise.” Extract from Weekly Report of the Director, Intelligence Bureau of the Home Department, Gov. of India, dated New Delhi, 12 January 1928, IOR, L/P&J/12/59, file 4968 (G) 1921; 1925-1928, (Separate Papers. Public and Judicial (S) Department), f. 19.

youths who are the depositories of enthusiastic zeal, capability of doing work and self sacrifice.' (Rule 15) . Rule 4 of the scheme details how to recruit individual school boys from English middle schools who then in turn can bring others into the revolutionary fold.⁷⁷ The scheme gives a good impression of the height of organisation the Samiti aspired to – and for a time, could actually live up to, as the network was vast before police and IB cracked down heavily on the organisation.

With the heightened political activities, teachers and other staff were held more and more responsible for inculcating the 'right views' in the minds of their pupils and various suggestions as to the control of their performance in as well as outside the classroom were suggested by high ranking officials and to quite some extent implemented.⁷⁸

Mere abstention from seditious teaching cannot be accepted as an adequate performance of duty on the part of those engaged in education. To them is entrusted the moulding of youth and impressionable minds [and] directing [...] their pupils to form right views. It is in the domain of history and economics that erroneous opinions are most frequently held [...] and students, left without proper guidance, are let to believe that what is approved in the case of Switzerland or Italy must necessarily be good for India.⁷⁹

The irony of a British education system that was to *not* transpose lessons from the West to India is of course one of colonialism itself. More pertinent here is that the loyalty of teachers required more than teaching; they had to pro-actively mould their pupils to be loyal subjects or otherwise themselves invite suspicion. Various other measures to curb sedition by students and teachers were discussed as well.⁸⁰ Teachers might face disciplinary charges if they, by 'public utterances',

⁷⁷ 'Statement showing the participation in poll. agitation of students of schools and colleges in the province', note sd. RS Hutchinson, CID, Calcutta, 29th March 1913, in WBSA, CID, IB Branch, file no 445 of 1913, no ff. nos.

⁷⁸ An increasingly close nexus between police, the political section of the Government's Home Department, the Director of Public Instruction, and headmasters of schools were introduced to tighten surveillance. Regular reports of any incident, breach in discipline or any involvement, suspected or otherwise by students had to be sent to the Director of Public Instruction by headmasters. Circulars and regulations were put in place to ensure that boys who were members of a revolutionary group such as the Anushilan would not be admitted to Government schools, and if they had been subject to criminal charges during the Swadeshi campaign or in other contexts, would not be sent up for the matriculation examinations without having been referred to the District Magistrate (Cf. Order of 1909 of the East Bengal Government). See also WBSA, IB Branch, file no. 445/1913 (Printed Statement showing the participation in political agitation of students of Schools and Colleges), see esp. ff. 18-12, and Appendix A.

⁷⁹ Letter regarding 'the political situation of the country and some of the causes and remedies for sedition' from GoI, Home Dept., 4 March 1910, in WBSA, IB Branch, file no. 445/1913, f. 23.

⁸⁰ In Bengal, East Bengal and Assam, educational institutions as a whole could be blacklisted and its students debarred from government employment if and when that institution had acquired a certain 'notoriety' or a 'generally undesirable political atmosphere surrounding them' either through the behaviour of pupils, students or staff. For other areas this was discussed but ultimately dropped

introduced into the 'immature minds' of students 'doctrines subversive of their respect for authority and calculated to impair their usefulness as citizens and to hinder their advancement in after-life'⁸¹ This basic reasoning was also applied to college and even university professors, though to a somewhat lesser extent.⁸²

What is immediately striking about these discussions is how commonly and unselfconsciously the language of 'contamination' and 'taint' was applied. The Bengal Government had 'taken steps that boys once tainted should have as little chance as possible of contaminating their fellows in other institutions etc.'⁸³ Pupils and students who were exposed to carriers of sedition must come under 'evil influence' themselves. Nationalism, anarchism, or terrorism then was perceived by officials as a highly contagious disease that spread like wildfire, and the fear of some kind of 'pandemic' was evident:

[...] one of the main objects of the revolutionary party is to capture the organisation of education in its primary branches, more particularly the middle and high English schools [...]. A still more sinister movement is to introduce their pestilential doctrines in the girls' schools and thereby contaminate the whole future social life of the people.⁸⁴

The reproductive aspect of women that is played out in the biological as well as the social sphere posed a particular threat to Government when 'misused', since it would be ingrained in the generations to come and literally breed dissent, sedition or, at the worst, open violence.

since the Government feared that the public anger of such collective punishments might do more harm than good. Regulation about debarring schools etc., cf. *ibid*, f. 15; the original circular was signed Dacca, 18 Jan. 1912.

⁸¹ Letter of the late Sir H. Risley [Herbert Hope Risley, the anthropologist] of May 1917, in WBSA, IB Branch, file no. 445/1913, f. 25. If teachers were allowed to include political remarks in class and thereby further 'wrong' notions on history and economics or induce students to participate in any political meetings or activities, the school could face the taking away of grants-in-aid and the withdrawal of recognition of the school so pupils could not be sent up for the Matriculation Examination.

⁸² For other areas of India such measures was discussed and the suggestion later was reviewed by the central Government for India wide implementation but dropped after a prolonged exchange of letters and circulars since the public anger of such collective punishment in this form was thought to possibly do more harm than good.

⁸³ Statement showing the participation in poll. agitation of students ,extracts from 'very important orders on the subjects', in WBSA, IB, 445/1913, see f. 18-15.

⁸⁴ 'Statement showing the participation in poll. agitation of students of schools and colleges in the province ', *sd*. RS Hutchinson, 1913.

Female terrorists, then, might claim to be independent but that in truth they were usually influenced by male consorts or relatives.⁸⁵ In the case of women especially, family background seems to usually have provided the explanation for police as to their quasi-hereditary waywardness.⁸⁶ The blatant talk of officials exchanging snippets about the 'pedigree' of politically engaged girls and boys, men and women offers insights into the colonial mind. The 'taint' of anti-colonial activities could not only be passed on by proximity like an infection, but also by blood⁸⁷: the political agitator and his kith and kin became akin to a criminal tribe replete with the established colonial view of intrinsic hereditary characteristics.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Cf. WBSA, IB Branch, file no. 223/19, 'Recruitment of Females for the formation of a Women Branch of the Revolutionary movement' (on the Dipali Sangha/ Sree Sangha and Lila Nag). Despite the claims of some female 'terrorists' that their organisations were quite independent, the IB for Midnapur found it safe to assume that, since 'the dividing line between Congress and Terrorist in this District hardly exists [...] it may be taken that any female who joins any organisation can do so with only two objects in view, I.e., (a) Supporting and sheltering their male connections when necessary (b) trying to prove themselves the equal of their men folk by carrying out any type of terrorist work as opportunity offers.' Cf. Distt. IBO to IB, CID, HE Sabine, Midnapur, 7 Dec. 1936, Secret, WBSA, IB Branch, file no. 223/19, 213 (19)., f. 221 (27). See on women's organisation and the necessity for 'self-defence' below.

⁸⁶ Many cases could be explained in these terms since the girls come from seemingly 'loyal' middle class families, but, where applicable, the respective 'pedigree' of terrorist 'girls' would be stressed – as would the assumed proximity between Congress and terrorist activity. For example, Miss Gita Rani Bhaumik, d/o Sashi of Mohati P.S. - Khedgree, Dist. Midnapur: Copy of MIC's letter to District Magistrate, sd. 20.1.1935, no. 826/17-28 regarding the 'Kanya Sikhshalay' at 84 New Park Street, Appendix B: Students of Midnapur District in Kaya Sikhshalay, in WBSA, IB Branch, file no. 223/19, 213 (19).

⁸⁷ The pre-eminence of a medicalised discourse that framed attempts by colonial officials to make sense of phenomena such as terrorism, can be put in the context of colonial knowledge gathering in the late nineteenth century more generally. David Arnold has highlighted the importance of the colonial discourse on tropical disease for the consolidation and legitimisation of the administrative machinery as well as interpreting the accumulation of knowledge on diseases as a generalised framework for knowledge about India as such. The prevalence of the language of disease and taint in the twentieth Century certainly suggests the lasting impact of this project. See David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India*, Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993.

⁸⁸ See S. Nigam, 'Disciplining and policing the 'criminals by birth', Part 1: The making of a colonial

The Next Stage

The First World War saw the introduction of a number of repressive rules and laws in order to ‘protect’ India from propaganda. After the Defence of India Rules [DoIR] were introduced in 1915, a more coherent set of measures were in place. The Great War also demarcated a break in the popular political imagination, which we shall here briefly outline and elaborate on more fully in the next two chapters. Generally, a disillusionment following the war has been proclaimed, a slow retreat from the unproblematic militarism (often with nihilistic overtones, as in the case of the Futurists) in many European countries. But the shattering of Empires that followed brought forth new nationalist movements with paramilitary outfits.⁸⁹ The intellectual celebrations of the glory of destruction and re-birth, which had been interrupted by the war, blossomed into the social realities of militaristic movements and ethnic nationalism in the 1920s, spurred on by the destabilising effects of the war and the proclaimed right to national self-determination.⁹⁰ But reducing this period to the post-traumatic reaction to the war, bleeding into the retreat into parochial nationalism would be wrong. It was in the interwar period that wide-spread, open-ended socio-political platforms attended by people from different backgrounds and parts of the world started their ascendancy - in part due to the deep-seated impact of the Great War, the horror about an industrialised war on a world-wide scale being possible. To the young generation in India, the war had meant no less than that ‘mankind was menaced, the whole race threatened with extinction.’ And in 1918 a ‘war-weary world’ downed their arms and everyone was ‘mad for peace’ and ashamed at their own ruthlessness. ‘There was a universal cry of ‘No more war’ and a new international brotherhood came into being, and Youth realised that – as some contemporaneous authors

stereotype— The criminal tribes and castes of North India’, *Indian Economic and Social History Review* Vol. 27, No. 2, 1990, pp. 131-164. The terrorism scare witnessed the introduction of a number of repressive laws that were often introduced with clear *ad hoc* purposes and objects in mind. The GoI was very pragmatic about legislation, and if newer laws did not have provisions for a particular case, bureaucrats referred back to very open-ended regulations from the nineteenth century (such as Regulation III of 1818). See Radhika Singha, *A Despotism of Law: Crime and Justice in Early Colonial India*, Delhi: OUP, 1998.

⁸⁹ See Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, see esp. pp. 262-265 and *passim*.

⁹⁰ The older studies focussed on the impact of the war on the high politics of India and Imperial policies. Newer studies deal with the social realities in war-time India. For a bibliographical summary of the historiographical debates, see Franziska Roy and Heike Liebau, ‘Introduction’, in Franziska Roy et al (eds), *When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings*, New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2011.

put it - they had tried to cut each other's throats in the service of their Elders who were responsible for promoting international quarrels. Disillusioned, they started to organise themselves bringing into being the international Youth movement – thus wrote the League of Youth in Madras ten years after the armistice.⁹¹

For all the utopian euphoria that marked this period, what emerged in the interplay of complex international politics and thought currents, was an often curious mixture of militarism and celebration of international fellowship. Many observers thought that should another world war break out - and most people thought it would - the next war might wipe out civilisation as it was known.⁹² Planning and preparations were needed for such an eventuality. International grass-roots platforms - while combining diverse political and social views - had a general tendency to eulogise the role of youth in building a peaceful future for the world, since the old generation and politicians had betrayed the hopes for a new era so blatantly. The basic interconnectedness of the world was felt by most contemporaries and hence 'world-mindedness' was a feature youth especially should imbibe early on. A synchronous perception that embraced the popular political imagination of the delicate filigree that spanned the world, rendering it one gigantic organism or web, made events in faraway places seem of immediate importance to one's own locality - say, for example, events in Japan, Russia, Czechoslovakia or Germany that were avidly followed by Indians even beyond the middle classes. These examples could be studied as models for their applicability to India or could be signs of things to come in line with the overarching positivist imagination we have referred to above.

Along with various international bodies, national youth conferences and organisations were mushrooming. While the interwar period was one that saw many nation-states welcome radical change

⁹¹ All the quotes above are from the Pamphlet of the League of Youth, Madras, 1928, in NMML, AICC, G-39, 1928, ff. 257-266, for quotes see ff. 257-258. For more on the Youth Leagues in India, see below.

⁹² See for instance, the address by Jawaharlal Nehru to the Students Conference, Shradhanand Park, Calcutta, 22.10.1928. Cited in Singh (ed.), *To the youth of my country*, pp. 76-92, see pp.88-90. This speech is from a slightly later period but epitomizes the fears of the period. We shall briefly return to this 'war that never was' below in the context of the envisioned military rejuvenation of Indian youth.

with renewed hope, this process was in many cases accompanied by a rapid decline not only of the grand empires the war had toppled but also of democratic institutions; and there was a turning towards authoritarian and seemingly more personal (and personalised) leadership. And in those states that held on to their democracies, there seemed to be little enthusiasm or trust in the capacity of the existing machinery to solve economic or socio-cultural problems.⁹³ A distrust in the slow grind of bureaucracy and the cynicism of leadership models in which ultimately nobody was quite responsible seemed to have set in during the late stages of and after the Great War. And as the 1920s progressed and the 1930s dawned, it seemed more and more doubtful whether the world was, indeed, 'safe for democracy'.

The period, then, is important for the utilisation of an assemblage of thoughts for mobilisation and the shaping of youth movements on a mass basis. It defies easy attempts at categorising and labelling its political character or that of its actors. It includes diverse strands, which, seen through the monochromatic lens of the post-Second World War world, seem oxymoronic. To understand this period, therefore, one needs to take seriously the actors who operated across ideologies that crystallized and became mutually exclusive only later on. Individuals and platforms during this time managed to weave together elements of what, if seen singularly, might be labelled pacifism, social Darwinism, eugenics, feminism, authoritarianism and liberal individualism, spirituality (often making India the spiritual lynchpin of the world)⁹⁴ and economic materialism, socialism and romanticism, class war and global brotherhood to name but a few. All these strands were integrated to form a heterodox vision of a different future that the wasteland of the Great War had made a simple necessity.

The era immediately following the Great War witnessed the first serious attempts at mass mobilisation in the South Asian context. Hence, questions about social set-ups and organisation, citizen-

⁹³ See EH Carr, *The Soviet Impact on the Western World*, London: Macmillan and Co., 1946, p.1.

⁹⁴ An early example of this trend which became even more marked in the interwar period is the *Bande Mataram*, 2 March 1908, stating that 'India is the guru of the nations, the physician of the human soul in its profound maladies; she is destined once more to new-mould [sic] the life of the world and restore the peace of the human spirit.' (cited in Kabita Ray, *Revolutionary Propaganda in Bengal. Extremist and Militant Press 1905-1918*, Kolkata: Papyrus, 2008, pp. 132-33).

ship and the shape of the projected independent nation were of more immediate concern in the national arena. At the same time, the actual international engagements intensified, and the outer markers for this qualitatively new engagement can be seen in the Russian Revolution and the end of the First World War, lasting, roughly, until the outbreak of the Second World War.

Some of the most striking descriptions of (not only) the interwar the mental landscape are those by Hanna Arendt in her 'Origins of Totalitarianism'. Arendt's approach, for all the problems with the politically loaded term of totalitarianism itself, is, not unlike Foucault's genealogy, an attempt to look at the diverse origins, longer-standing traditions and conditions that enabled the rise of totalitarianism while taking account of the ruptures, abortive branches and diversity of unique factors. Without attempting to simply superimpose Arendt's analysis on the Indian context (much of which is bound up with party systems and class society in Europe), many elements of her narration are strikingly familiar – this is not surprising given the global reach of ideas, a nexus imperialism helped establish as a framework of reference within the colonies as well and we can draw on some of her observations here.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Part Two. See also chp. 3 for some more specific references, and the brief discussion on Fascism and totalitarianism in chp. 5.

II. The Age of the Volunteer Corps: The Indian National Congress and Its Service Army

To-day youth is the prime factor in heralding the dawn of a new era, unfurling the standard of revolt against the old, breaking the barriers of customs, restrictions thereby raising the moral force of the world on a plane of ethereal effulgence. The history of the modern world is the history of and awakening of the Youth Movement.

- A minute book of the Jute Mill Workers' Association¹

It was the age of mass mobilisation that set the stage for the youthful volunteer. The Rowlatt satyagraha itself had a notable effect on volunteer organisation as they existed until that point. The attempt of a country-wide mass campaign was a novel one, even after rehearsed localised experiments, deviating sharply from the earlier moderate petition writing or the extremist lone-gunmen tactics which, many thought by then, could not disrupt a well-entrenched bureaucratic machinery. The samitis and volunteer corps had, up until then, typically fit the framework of 'pure service' organisations without a political agenda (excepting the 'front organisations' of militant cells). During the Rowlatt satyagraha, volunteers including the seva samitis² were used to organise hartals, pickets and boycotts as well as do propaganda. The 'apolitical' organisations thus came into direct opposition to the Government, while the violent avant-garde largely joined Gandhi's later call for non-cooperation and non-violent civil disobedience at a point when their own fortunes were at a low to see how mass protest would turn out.³

The other noteworthy feature of the Rowlatt agitation and the non-cooperation movement that followed was the ill-preparedness of the Congress apparatus - for all practical purposes they were starting a mass campaign without possessing a mass organisation, with the possible exception of Bengal and Maharashtra, where networks existed, but tended to have their very own interpretation

¹ Meerut Conspiracy Case [MCC] Exhibit P. 283, pp. 5-6.

² The seva samitis were by then officially recognised by the UP Government for their social service activities.

³ See below. On the crackdown on terrorist activity esp. in Bengal effectively ending the 'first wave' of terrorism, see for instance: Ker, *Political Trouble in India 1907-1917*, pp. 164-169 and *Sedition Committee Report*, pp. 181-184 on the problems the government encountered in dealing with the 'conspiracies' and dacoities, and *ibid*, pp. 195-225 on the envisioned legislation to tackle the problem (large parts of which were eventually enacted). See also Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement. Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India*, New York: Columbia University, 1982, p. 120.

of things.⁴ This meant leaving the implementation of the campaign to local dynamics and a hostage to fortune.⁵

Before volunteer corps were established on a more permanent basis, they had been utilised mostly to maintain order, for instance, at the annual Congress sessions.⁶ The objects of the Congress Volunteer Corps, laid down in 1920, when the Congress machinery geared up for the confrontation with the British administration, stated simply: 'Provincial, District and Town organisations should form volunteer corps for the purpose of disciplining the people and maintaining order.'⁷ Maintaining order here obviously meant maintaining order among the non-volunteering crowd, and is symptomatic of the perception of The People as an unruly mass unless ordered by those who had achieved a higher level of self-discipline.

The Khilafat Movement

Another significant development in this context concerns the other evolving volunteer organisation prior to the aspiring monopoly of the Seva Dal. The Khilafat movement, founded to agitate for the preserving of the Ottoman Khalifat and the safety of the holy places of Islam, together with the Congress corps, were the two main political volunteer organisations prior to the Seva Dal.⁸ The

⁴ Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947*, p. 189. By and large, the extremist faction could be persuaded to suspend violent activities for a year but there was dissension among that in the ranks of the Anushilan, see below.

⁵ India had been caught in the upheaval of post-war reconstruction, price hikes, and labour unrest on top of the of the deeply felt sentiments and fears surrounding the Peace Settlement regarding the to-be-dismantled Ottoman Empire. The Khilafat Committee had been formed to exert pressure on the British, initially to preserve the Khalifat and, at the barest minimum, to respect the holy places at Mecca. For accounts of the events surrounding the Rowlatt bills, hartals and the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, see Ravinder Kumar, *Essays on Gandhian Politics. The Rowlatt Satyagraha of 1919*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 197; Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India*, esp. pp. 187- 204, and on the background, pp. 165- 186. See also Judith Brown, *Gandhi's rise to power. Indian politics 1915-1922*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972.

⁶ The idea stemmed from the early Seva Samitis who were helped keep order at melas or at busy pilgrimage sites during festivals. For a detailed study see Watt, *Serving the Nation*. See also previous chapter.

⁷ AICC resolution Calcutta, Sept. 1920, NMML, F.No – 70, Pt I, 1946-47, f. 5.

⁸ The Khilafat movement was started on the ruins of the older Anjuman-Khuddam-i-Ka'aba founded in 1913 to preserve the most sacred places of Islam from violation. Fears of the Ottoman Empire breaking apart had already been raised by the Turco-Italian and Balkan wars. The Khilafat movement proper was started at the end of the Great War to exert pressure on the British to maintain the old boundaries of the Ottoman Empire and retain the caliphate of the Ottoman sultan. See Dietrich Reetz, *Hijrat: The Flight of the Faithful. A British File on the Exodus of Muslim Peasants from*

Khilafat movement was a complex variety of interests at play, from pan-Islamic sentiments, the unity of Indian Muslims to internal power struggles⁹ or mobilising colonial support for religious hierarchies and systems. These opposing strands came together in that great marriage of convenience that was the Khilafat movement, where anti-British ‘ulama and nationalist, secular modernisers vied for leadership, while the Congress under Gandhi sought to embrace ‘the Muslims’ as such. Lower level Muslim agitators spread a multitude of hear-say with religious content to stir up anti-British and pro-Muslim sentiment.¹⁰ Even for those who had little idea about the Khalifat, the Ottoman Empire or the Versailles Treaty, such ‘news’ could not but communicate a sense of imminent danger to and blasphemous disregard for Islam in combination with the (partly mytho-poetic) outrages such as smuggling pig parts into consumed or handled goods.¹¹

The Khilafat Volunteer Corps was officially established as an India-wide body by the Khilafat Conference in June 1920¹² with the vague brief of collecting funds (30,000 rupees was the sum envisaged) and preparing the people for the four-stage non-cooperation that the Conference had just voted for. The Khilafat volunteers, which were, like their Congress counterparts, to a large extent

North India to Afghanistan in 1920, (Forschungsschwerpunkt Moderner Orient, Arbeitshefte No. 5), Verlag Das Arabische Buch, 1995, p. 15.

⁹ It was principally a Muslim elite together with the ‘ulama who championed anti-western pan-Islamic symbolism which fanned solidarity for the endangered caliphate. The Muslim League had been changing under the influence of the younger generation – not least the Ali brothers, Ansari and Jinnah who upstaged the old loyalist elite of the League in 1913, and again in 1918 when the 'Young Party' saw to it that the ML did not accept the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms and instead hailed Gandhi and proposed joining satyagraha. See the seminal account by Gail Minault 30 years ago, *The Khilafat Movement*. A greater rapprochement between Muslim League and Congress for a short while (between 1913 and 1918-1919) came to the fore due to Khilafat agitation, even to the extent that the League called on Muslims to abstain from cow slaughter for Bakr Id in 1919. Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India*, p. 196. On religious symbolism at this time and the Congress-ML alliance, see Minault, *Khilafat movement*, pp. 7-11, on the Aligarh and Deoband Movements pp. 14-38. See also David Lelyfeld, *Aligarh's First Generation*. for the wider intellectual background of the move to establish the university and its implications.

¹⁰ In Bengal, local agitators were exhorting coolies not to unload ships with salts as pig feet were cured in the salt on the voyage (the coolies were happy to oblige as they claimed they had been under-paid by the master of a particular vessel), or referred to Lord Elphinstone's book on India where Mohammed was said to be described as a false prophet. There were incessant news about sacrilegious acts by British soldiers at Mecca and other places - some of them true (cf. 19 Sept 1922, Hart, Burdwan District Officer, to PC Bamford, Supt, IB, CID, Calcutta, for week ending 24th August, WBSA, IB Branch, File No. 2/1921, serial no. 273/21 Part II, f. 94, also f. 95), violence committed by the British in the Punjab, which typically dealt either with horrendous mass killings after Dyer's shooting spree or sexual assaults on Indian women (in the absence of detailed information made worse by British press censorship which gave rise to wild rumours). ‘List of names involved in Non-Cooperation Movement – Revolutionaries’, WBSA, IB branch, Serial no. 162/1920, File No. 2677/20, esp. ff. 76, 92, 45-42 see also the rest of the file.

recruited from among the student population, acted also as guardians over public meetings by keeping order among crowds (and keeping the police out), collecting funds and working as agitators. They typically wore khaki uniforms or the green robes established by the Red Crescent and Anjuman-e-Khuddam rounded off by a Turkish fez and armbands, which, armbands aside, was the attire of the Ali Brothers wherever they went.¹³

Meanwhile, another factor which converged with the question of the Khalifat and rumours about British misdeeds into a veritable millenarian excitement, was the brief war King Amanullah of Afghanistan led against the British in May-June 1919. The Hijrat movement, a quasi-millenarian exodus of Indian Muslim peasants from Northern India, peaked in April 1920, and many Khilafatists took part.¹⁴ Here as elsewhere, the volunteers mainly kept order and helped the pilgrims logistically, especially around the Salt Market area of Peshawar where the *hijrat* Committee had their office.¹⁵ Some of the *mujahireen* who had set out on a political *haj*, sometimes ending up in Russia, would be important actors in Indian Kirti Kisan Party, Naujawan Bharat Sabha, and commun-

¹¹ Persecution was sometimes the best advertisements for such bodies: The Delhi Police noted that there was a boost in sympathy, prestige and support for organisations that were suppressed by Governmental orders, cf NMML, Delhi Police Records, V inst, F.no. 64.

¹² The All India Khilafat Conference took place at Allahabad and the resolution was reiterated at the September Calcutta session concurrent with the INC.

¹³ Minault, *Khilafat Movement*, pp. 101-102, 105, 120. The display of practised Hindu-Muslim unity on the street is striking, seen in the context of the often overtly religious propaganda and the fast dissolving accord between the leaders of Khilafat Conference and Congress. In Shazadapur (Bengal) on 13.4.21, the anniversary of the Jallianwalah Bagh massacre, the local Police noted with amazement that a Sankirtan party of Hindus and Muslims paraded through the streets with Muslims shouting "Hariram" and the Hindus "Allah Ho Akbar." Weekly Confidential Diary for the week ending 16th April 1921 Pabna, 'List of names involved in Non-Cooperation Movement – Revolutionaries', WBSA, IB branch, Serial no. 162/1920, File No. 2677/20, ff. 551-552.

¹⁴ Motives for hijrat were varied, but the mullahs preached that it was a necessary reaction to the shattering of the Ottoman Empire - to make these rather abstract dangers more real, rumours (some strategically planted) about the destruction of Mecca and Constantinople were used to mobilise people as well as claims that India had become dar-ul-harb, and these were juxtaposed with the re-envisioning of Afghanistan as a promised land where the settlers could live as a self-sufficient community under Muslim rule, which was particularly attractive for the poorer sections suffering from the economic conditions and rent increases. Reetz, *Hijrat: Flight of the Faithful*, pp. 49-52. On Khilafat volunteers see esp. *ibid*, p. 60.

¹⁵ In the end, many of the settlers were not as welcome as they had imagined, some went on to other places including Soviet Russia, and King Amanullah soon forbade any further influx of them into Afghanistan and Turkey became a secular republic. A number of them stayed in Russia, where some developed a deeper interest in the Soviet system and the Communist party. See Shaukat Usmani, *Historic Trips of a Revolutionary. Sojourns in the Soviet Union*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1977, see pp. 1-42 for the initial Hijrat movement and the trek to Russia. Some forty of the Muhajirs

ist circles later on.¹⁶ Tashkent and Moscow were the hubs for Indian revolutionaries. At Tashkent, an Indian Corps and Indian Military Academy had been started and some of the newly-made Indian Communists were trained there.¹⁷

Khilafat and Congress Volunteers at this point were not seen as an organisational sine qua non or the founding stone of a new nation in the way that they were later conceptualised, but rather were a necessary wing of any campaign, the muscle and helping hand of a movement. But the longer-standing 'pure' service organisations like the Seva Samiti provided an existing framework to see volunteers as ascetic carriers of social uplift.

It was a restive period as India was hit by the implications of the aftermath of the war. Before Tilak, Hardikar's hero, died in August 1920, he had advocated a stringent campaign by Indians to press for their 'birthright' of swaraj in the light of the brewing trouble in Ireland and Egypt as the chance of a century - the 'world-cauldron' was boiling, he had said in March that year.¹⁸

of Usmani's batch never made it beyond the Soviet Union and became Communist mujahireen.

¹⁶ Apart from the poor peasants who set out on the Hijrat, there were also some anti-British young men who set out for Turkey to pledge their loyalty to the Khalifat. After the Bolshevik revolution and during the Khilafat/Hijrat movement, the lasting fascination with Soviet ideals and the Afghan-Soviet alliance made for the sojourns not only of 'professional revolutionaries', like MN Roy, MPT Acharya (formerly active in Germany with the Berlin Indian Committee) or Barkatullah. But there were also Khilafat delegations, or merchants in Russia. See on this the thesis of Ali Raza who deals briefly with some of the Russian returnees, the extended Kirti circles and the Punjabi left: 'Interrogating Provincial Politics: The Leftist Movement in British Punjab, c. 1914-1950' [unpublished PhD thesis, Oxford, 2011], see esp. 48-50 (on Moscow and mujahirs) 81-89 (on the Kirti connections with Ghadrates and Akalis and Russian support) See also Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia - How The Ghadr Movement charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire*, Berkeley et al: University of California Press, 2011, pp. 201-218 (for Rafiq Ahmad's journey to Moscow), see esp. 217

¹⁷ See Shaukat Usmani, *Historic trips of a Revolutionary* on the Khilafatists/ mujahireen in Russia see pp. 12-27, 43, on the Military Academy see esp. pp. 51-53. This study will not deal centrally with the organised left until the Communists come into prominence during the Second World War, but it can be stated with some confidence that the discourse of efficiency, militarism and utopian change applied to them as well.

¹⁸ Sir Verney Lovett, *History of the Indian Nationalist Movement* (3rd ed.), London: Murray, 1921 (1st ed. 1920), p. 277. Economic depression, high prices, the Income Tax Act, epidemics, famine, agrarian discontent, labour strikes, the discontent of demobilised soldiers collided with events such as O'Dwyer's examination before the Hunter committee the publication of the Congress Report (March 1920) which made, on top of Khilafat movement, for an explosive mix. The Hunter Committee in the end consisted of three loyalist Indian members and four British members to look into the 'disturbances' that took place during the agitation in Delhi, Punjab and Bombay. For its findings regarding martial law in Punjab, the firing at Jallianwallah Bagh and the use of the military and

Non-Cooperation

The Nagpur Congress session closed the ranks between Khilafatists and Congress. At Nagpur, the Congress and its prominent non-cooperation opponents finally succumbed to popular pressure and Gandhi's tenacity. Jinnah once and for all resigned from the INC, being opposed to both the mass movement that he predicted would run out of control and the overtly religious symbolism of the Khilafat,¹⁹ while others, such as Malaviya and CR Das gave in despite their scepticism. The session, apart from the the vote in favour of the movement, the changes to the Congress creed and organisations (such as the set-up of the Working Committee and AICC), is interesting here due to one detail: the then not-so-notorious Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, formerly of the Anushilan, organised the Congress volunteers at this session. He would go on to set up the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) less than two years later.²⁰

The Congress attempted to gear its machinery towards the relatively uncharted waters of a mass movement under a central leadership. For this purpose the collection of funds (to be paid into the Tilak fund) and enrolment of one lakh members, setting up of village and district branches and the providing of charkhas for the masses to further the 'constructive' first stage of the campaign was prescribed. Meanwhile, having achieved the Congress' submission, Gandhi was faced with another problem: the 'extremist' wing. He tried to come to terms with the 'terrorists' especially in Bengal. CR Das organised a conference with both sides to this end - with Sachindranath Sanyal being the spokesperson for the 'terrorists' - to win the support of the extremists for the non-violence experiment. The latter decided to suspend their activities until Gandhi's self-set deadline. Police reports indicate that they intended to bide their time and work quietly within the ranks of the Congress to build - or rather rebuild - their tattered base after being hemmed in by the colonial police apparatus

armed police at places like Ahmedabad, see, Government of India, *Disorders Enquiry Committee*, Calcutta: Government of India Printing Press, 1920, esp. chp. III. See also *Correspondence of the Government of India and the Secretary of State on Lord Hunter's Committee Report*, (submitted to parliament), His Majesty's Stationery Office 1920, containing the judgement of the Government regarding the analysis of Hunter's committee.

¹⁹ Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman. Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge: CUP, 1985, pp. 7-9, Minault, *Khilafat Movement*, pp. 113-116.

²⁰ See below, chp. 4.

during its vigorous 10-year long campaign.²¹ It was also a chance to expand their already formidable network of physical culture facilities. The police kept a wary eye on the links between non-cooperators and revolutionaries, as well as revolutionary links with physical culture. 'Santi Senas' or Swaraj Sevak Sanghas and Young Men's Associations had been started in Bengal and were in many cases led by revolutionaries, such as Purna Chandra Das at Faridpur or members of the Anushilan. Drill, parades, lathi drill, sword fight and other exercise were regularly practised in these 'senas', which in the (quite correct) reading of the IB was meant to 'replace the police'.²² Comparisons to 1905 were immediately drawn in light of the widespread appeal and mobilisation for physical culture, occasionally reminiscent of military training.²³ In 1922, the rules and regulations framed by the notorious Bipin Bihari Ganguli of the Jugantar specifically laid down the establishment of physical culture clubs teaching lathi, wrestling, boxing and other martial arts all over the province as an important means to build up the organisation. The extremists seem to have been pleased with the outcome of the achieved mobilisation.²⁴ The marked radical tendencies among youths were not limited to Bengal, but we shall not go into a detailed analysis of youth mobilisation during this time.

²¹ See SC Bose, *The Indian Struggle. 1920-1942* (compiled by the Netaji Research Bureau), Calcutta et al: Asia Publishing House, 1967 (Reprint of the 1964 ed.), p. 69. S. Irfan Habib points out that this meeting must have taken place in 1920 and not 1921 as Bose claimed (cf. Habib, *To Make the Deaf Hear*, p. 20). While the Jugantar faction supported Gandhi's programme, marked dissension among the Dhaka Anushilan meant the continuation of a modicum of violent activities during this period, but by and large the 'terrorists' opted for propaganda and village work which widened their own base.

²² The Shanti Sena was only a partial exception to such tendencies - some of these 'peace armies' were trained strictly for picketing and hartals, but others received drilling and training of a nature described as military by the IB. See for instance Runpore (Rangpur), Rai Saheb KM Das Gupta, addl. suptd. to Corbett, DIG, IB, Calcutta, dt. 1 Dec. 1921, WBSA, IB branch, F.no.284/1921 (Serial 77/21), f. 238 (140), see also f. 249 (cf. below).

²³ Report sd. G. H. Corbett, DIG IB [s.a., Dec. 1921] stated that 'military training' of volunteers was in evidence in a some places (Pabna, Bakaraganj, Howrah, Noakhali, Chittagong and generally in Faridpur district, and many more though stringent measures to ban all organisations conducting such training showed effects by this time and training was mostly intermittent), and included a few santi senas (Pabna, Noakhali) who were given drill exercises and lathi drill. Some of this training was conducted by ex-army men (Kharagpur, Barisal - see *ibid*, f. 246), and revolutionaries were in evidence too. In some places, volunteers aged between 8-12 years were much in evidence (district of Bakarganj). See WBSA, IB branch, 284/1921 (Serial 77/21), ff. 249-248. See also Wh. Cornish, IP, Suptd. Pol., Chittagong, to DIG Corbett, dt. 30.11.1921, *ibid*, f. 236 (138). But such regular and martial training was not the rule. The numbers of some of these corps were quite impressive with hundreds of volunteers in Khilafat and Congress volunteer corps even in relatively remote places (see the various entries and reports in the file cited here).

²⁴ Note on the Physical Culture Movement and Formation of 'akhras' for lathi play, having connection with the revolutionary movement in Bengal, WBSA, IB Branch, file no. 445/1913, ff. 18-7 (Printed Statement showing the participation in political agitation of students of Schools and Colleges).

There is a certain historical irony here as Gandhi's 'rise to power', many people would agree, was also connected to his image as the 'lesser evil', a shield against terrorism (and later communism), among Indian conservatives, capitalists and the British authorities.²⁵ But some of Gandhi's power derived from the very people he was supposed to out-manoeuvre, which meant that this fine balance was based on an implicit and pragmatic give and take. Judith Brown's point that Gandhi relied on sub-contracting his mobilisation to pre-existing movements and networks can be applied here to include these ideologically diverse strands.²⁶

An interesting example of how the temporarily-reformed 'terrorists' made sense of the Gandhian campaign was a speech by two ex-detenués at a meeting at Dighirpar, Bengal, on 5th April 1921 in which the speakers, Monoranjan Bhattacharji and Jitendra Kushiary, said that in the last attempt to make India a republic, violence had been used but it had failed. Kushiary advocated a strategic shift by pointing out that every *charkha* was a gun and every loom a cannon and that with the help of these weapons *swaraj* would easily be obtained. In an interview with a police officer, Kushiary 'admitted the fallacy of many non-co-operation arguments and agreed that once the mob got out of hand the no-co-operators would be powerless to control them.'²⁷ The Rowlatt satyagraha and civil disobedience entailed not only the officially sanctioned boycott, but creative ways of disobedience included the cutting of telegraph wires, damaging of train lines, damaging government property and occasional physical assaults (mostly limited to throwing stones etc.).²⁸ The military was called upon to fire on the 'mob' at various places, and in Gujranwala, aerial bombing was used to contain the 'mob' activities. The reports speak of either 'mobs' vandalising property or taking over towns,

²⁵ Sumit Sarkar, 'The Logic of Gandhian Nationalism: Civil Disobedience and the Gandhi-Irwin Pact (1930-31)', *Indian Historical Review* III, 1 (1976), pp. 136-141; Claude Markovits, *Indian business and Nationalist politics 1931-39: the indigenous capitalist class and the rise of the Congress Party*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

²⁶ Judith Brown, *Gandhi's rise to power*, see for instance pp. 77 ff. in the context of Champaran, see also the Kaira campaign.

²⁷ See 'List of names involved in Non-Cooperation Movement – Revolutionaries', in WBSA, IB branch, serial no. 162/1920, File No. 2677/20, ff. 74-73.

²⁸ In Viagram an Indian magisterial officer was burnt alive along with his record, at other places, officials were beaten or stripped, but overall there few incidents of an overtly violent nature (nevertheless, European women and children were evacuated from many localities), but vandalism was in evidence in a number of places. For attacks on trains and wires see esp. chp. 8 of *Disorders Enquiry Committee and Correspondence of the Government of India and the Secretary of State on Lord Hunter's Committee Report*. This was a feature running through nearly all reported incidents.

or of 'armed bands' roving around.²⁹

The structure behind the coordination remains opaque. The official reports highlighted, referring to disturbances in Lahore district, posters issued in the name of Gandhi calling on people to enlist in the Danda Fauj (translated by the secretary for State as 'Bludgeon Army') to kill the English *kafirs*, as well as similar posters in Gandhi's name exhorting the public to fight against the British unto the death and to dishonour their women.³⁰ Overall, the non-cooperation campaign by necessity dove-tailed local grievances and thus took on varied forms.³¹ These mass campaigns in which significant numbers of the populace were being mobilised - while being non-violent by designation and leaders' intention - gave occasion to pour longer-standing grievances into legitimised channels. As such, they tapped into suppressed drives as well. In Bengal, next to the picketing of cloth shops and alcohol, prostitutes became a target for the campaigners. Groups from localities started acting as moral police for their environment as this could be seen as sanctioned under Gandhi's decrees.³²

The question of what constitutes actual violence (or blackmail) is ambiguous in the realm of satyagraha-like activities (a question that becomes interesting in later campaigns underpinned by communal tensions). The Congress high-command found it necessary to issue orders to supporters to refrain from physically obstructing or intimidating opponents. In later days, the Congress offi-

²⁹ See the language employed in the *Hunter Committee Report*.

³⁰ Despatch of the Secretary of State to Governor-General in Council No 108, dt 26.5.1920, in *Correspondence of the GoI and the Secretary of State for India regarding Lord Hunter's Report*, p. 24 f.. That the action under the Martial law led to excesses even the GoI agreed. Next to famous crawling order: the roll call for students at Lahore was also listed; along with the confinement of students and professors at Sanatan Dharam College on account of martial law orders pasted on the grounds having been destroyed, see *Correspondence of the Government of India and the Secretary of State for India regarding Lord Hunter's Report*, pp. 18, 19.

³¹ There are numerous studies looking into the local grievances that fed into the dynamic of the 1919-1922 movement. See for instance W. F. Crawley, 'Kisan Sabhas and Agrarian Revolt in the United Provinces 1920 to 1921', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1971, pp. 95-109. An excellent study is that of Majid Siddiqi, 'History and Society in a Popular Rebellion: Mewat, 1920-1933', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 1986, pp. 442-467; which takes a wider approach to the question (and periodisation) and multiple angles of enquiry.

³² 'List of names involved in Non-Cooperation Movement – Revolutionaries', WBSA, IB branch, File No. 2677/20 (Serial No. 162/1920), see esp. ff. 2, 555.

cially laid down regulations for volunteers and tried to bring all the existing bodies into one umbrella organisation.³³

Students and 'boys' were much in evidence at pickets, doing propaganda, travelling to villages to exhort the people not to drink alcohol, boycott British goods or (in Bengal) arguing against jute cultivation and destroying jute seeds. In fact, when looking at local reports of the non-cooperation campaign, a majority of reports (which tend to deal with what the Government saw as the more problematic or dangerous type of activity) relates to students, 'boys' or 'youngmen' - the terms are often used interchangeably.³⁴ The leaders, Khilafat and Congress alike, had taken great pains to move the students to boycotts of non-national educational institutions as one of the cornerstones of the first phase of the campaign. Meetings and speeches were held by important figures at universities and students asked to sign pledges of non-cooperation.³⁵ The student agitation, while widespread in 1920-21, ebbed away soon as students considered their career options. The national educational institutions - without having their degrees approved - could not send students up for university entry; not many were willing to permanently leave their studies with all that rode on the attainment of degrees. The administration was worried about non-cooperators aiming at capturing youth,³⁶ not only since this was a quantitatively significant segment of the population, but also because experience especially in Bengal had taught colonial administrators that students once unleashed and 'indoctrinated' made for trouble-makers who would stop at nothing in their assumed youthful fanaticism, and would, moreover, rob the administration of the next generation of Indian professionals.

³³ 'Instructions re. picketing' were drafted by the CWC at Delhi, in February 1931, cf. NMML, AICC papers, F-No. 70, 1946/47, ff. 29, 31. See below.

³⁴ The inconspicuously labelled 'List of names involved in Non-Cooperation Movement – Revolutionaries' (in WBSA, IB files, Serial no. 162/1920, File No. 2677/20), deals with many of such incidents, and 'revolutionary is a misnomer - even though the Anushilan is mentioned here and there, most deals with student activity,

³⁵ For the extent of student participation in Bengal, see 'List of names involved in Non-Cooperation Movement', WBSA, IB File No 2677/20 (Serial No 162/1920), as in a majority of reports students and agitation in colleges and schools play a prominent role in various districts and towns. For other provinces, closer studies are in order. The replacement of institutions supervised by the colonial state with independent, national ones was the promise held out in return for students' non-cooperation, and many national institutions were founded from 1920. On the importance of students from Jamia Millia Islamia in organising Khilafat committees etc. in rural areas, see Minault, *Khilafat Movement*, esp. pp. 116-119.

³⁶ Sir Verney Lovett, *History of the Indian Nationalist Movement*, p. 275.

Senapati Hardikar

When the Congress considered the unification of all existing volunteer bodies in the face of Government's announcement to ban such groups, one of the young men attending the session was the future perennial general secretary of the Congress' volunteer body.

Narayan Subbarao Hardikar was born in 1890 in Dharwar.³⁷ His father, an employee in the court of the District judge, died of plague when Hardikar was six. The family, Shivaite Brahmins, moved around while two of the older boys tried to provide an income, but they too along with his sister succumbed to plague. Hardikar then came to his uncle Ramrao Shevade, a landlord in Hubli. Then his mother passed when he was 16. The young Hardikar was zealously religious and politically influenced by the Swadeshi movement and, more immediately, BG Tilak. He organised the 'Aryabal Sabha' while still in high school in Hubli. The group advocated boycotting foreign goods, ran a library, organised physical training, and observed the Ganapati and Shivaji festivals inspired by Tilak.³⁸ Hardikar later joined the National College and then Medical College in Calcutta. Helped by public subscription for his travel costs, he went to Michigan University for his M.Sc. in public health together with two Kannada friends. The three of them planned to open a free hospital after finishing their studies abroad. While in the US, Hardikar worked for his living in factories and through night shifts. But he found time to join and rise through the ranks of the Hindustan Student Association.³⁹ Hardikar became its president in 1915/1916. He finished his M.Sc. in 1916, then became an extension lecturer for Indian history in Michigan.⁴⁰ Hardikar, as president of the Hindus-

³⁷ Hardikar, a close associate of Nehru, later served in the Rajya Sabha between 1952-62, and then became the administrator of the Karnataka Health Institute in Ghatrabrapha which he shaped into something between a free clinic, a service ashram and a volunteer camp. On Ghatraprabha, see the overview by V.S. Narayana Rao, *Dr N.S. Hardiker*, (= Builders of Modern India Series), Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi 1985, pp.238-256, esp. pp. 252, 255, 270.

³⁸ 'Dear Old Hardikar' by RR Diwarkar, in *Smriti Sourabbha*, Ghatraprabha: Karnatak Health institute, 1976, pp. 9-11.

³⁹ The Student Association was founded in 1912. On The Hindustan Student Association in America, see WBSA, 102, 1915 (serial no. 12, 1915). The Association acted as a hub for expatriate Indians even beyond Northern America, and as such the Government kept close watch on them during the Great war due to their connections with the Ghadr. For some of Hardikar's activities see the Association's monthly paper: *The Hindustanee Student*, Vol II, No 5, p. 19. in *ibid.* [no ff. nos] Tara Singh was one of the more noteworthy donors of the Association, see *ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴⁰ Cf. Hardikar, 'The social and economic condition of India', NMML, Private Papers, Dr. NS Hardikar, I-IV inst., articles by Hardikar, 1.

tan Association, at the instance of Lajpat Rai, organised a meeting of Indian students in Chicago and Rai drafted (the slightly unwilling) Hardikar as his assistant. For the next three years he shared quarters with the 'lion of the Punjab' and helped with the Home Rule League, then the India Information Bureau and the Indian Labour Union as well as Rai's journal 'Young India'.⁴¹ Rai seems to have been an exacting and over-bearing master, as caring as he was temperamental.⁴²

It was during his time with Lajpat Rai that Hardikar established many personal and institutional contacts that he could fall back on during his later career.⁴³ His associates were drawn from across the social and political board. He was in touch with various Labour Federations, some industrialists, a Negro Advance League, Taraknath Das, Tara Singh, Kamaladevi and Virendranath Chattopadhyay, later Agnes Smedley, all manners of Indian students, and had extensive contacts with the Unitarian church (Rev, John Haynes Holmes⁴⁴). Tilak contributed money to Rai and Hardikar while they were working in the US.⁴⁵

Life in the US had a profound effect on Hardikar. After (almost) 'stumbling', he renewed his pledge to brahmacharya.⁴⁶ He himself said of that time that he transformed his rather conservative

⁴¹ 'News letter of the Young India Association', Vol 1, No. 1, April 15 1922 (sic), NMML, Private Papers, Dr. NS Hardikar, I-IV inst., Subject File 1, f. 108. Lajpat Rai left America in 1920. The Bureau collapsed when Rai ordered all activities to be stopped while in England, and was taken up by the Young India Association and embittered former associates of the grand old man. The journal, too, was eventually stopped, when with Tilak's death, financing the undertaking became difficult and the Congress under Gandhi did not care for foreign propaganda too much at the time. See letter by THK Rezmie to NS Hardikar, 21.04.1922, in NMML, Private Papers, Dr. NS Hardikar, I-IV inst., Subject File 1, f. 105-107. See also Narayana Rao, *Dr NS Hardiker*, pp. 68-69

⁴² Narayana Rao, *Dr N.S. Hardiker*, pp. 58-61.

⁴³ Among others, he knew the Irish nationalist Eamon De Valera and other Irishmen, who were in touch with Lajpat Rai, during this time. He also got to know many in the Sikh community, among them Master Tara Singh, on a fund-raising tour in Canada. He generally got acquainted with many of the Indian exiles in America. See Rao, *Dr NS Hardiker*, p. 66.

⁴⁴ Holmes was an admirer of Gandhi who compared him to Lenin and Romain Rolland. Hardikar's attraction seemed to stem at least partially from his early experiences with missionary hospitals in Calcutta. Hardikar had been admiring of the efforts of Christian missionaries in Calcutta regarding their social service to the poor and ill - if not their proselytizing. His letters to Holmes were very Christianised in their vocabulary and allegories - whether to please Holmes or because he genuinely experimented with hybrid religion is open to debate. He did go to church in America occasionally. Hardikar generally saw Gandhi as a "divine personage". Cf Rao, *Dr NS Hardiker*, pp. 90-93.

⁴⁵ The connection between Tilak and Rai was described by Nehru as two men being forced together by circumstance, Nehru, *An Autobiography*, 1941, pp. 63-64, as Lajpat Rai tended towards a constitutional position as opposed to Tilak (on Lajpat Rai's breaking with the Congress, and as a member of the Swaraj Party - later reconstituted as Nationalist Party- see also Nehru, *ibid*, pp. 158-160). As for Hardikar, he remained an earnest admirer of Tilak throughout.

⁴⁶ "Due to American conditions of temptations and fascinations, my mind was perturbed twice and I

religious notions into the religion of nationalism. We find this transformation with many nationalists who treated nationalism as a surrogate religion.⁴⁷ Hardikar, like many Congressmen, never completely let go of his Hindu nationalist sentiments, and he was very critical of the Indian communists, though he would later engage with socialistic ideas when it had a wide-spread appeal.

Hardikar returned to India in late 1921, some time after Lajpat Rai had returned, to join Non-cooperation. Initially he was not welcomed as openly as he might have imagined and was sent off on a political apprentice's wandering year. But through his involvement with Lajpat Rai he had access to a number of networks. Rai introduced him to various eminent Congressmen from Gandhi to Dr. Ansari, CR Das and Mohammad Ali. Hardikar became General Secretary of the Karnataka Congress Committee, and a member of AICC a little later.

The beginnings of a central volunteer organisation can be traced back to 1921. In November of that year, with the impending visit of the prince of Wales, the use of civil disobedience was authorised by the Congress. As a reaction, the Congress and Khilafat volunteers in Bengal and then UP were proclaimed illegal. The ban was defied, and activities were not only carried on but in the UP, names of volunteers were published in newspapers - with Motilal Nehru's name heading the column. Mass arrests of volunteers followed in both provinces. Nehru says that at first volunteers were mostly 'city men' and their numbers seemed inexhaustible. At this time, a volunteer was simply somebody who did (ad-hoc) service for the Congress.⁴⁸ The government used the Seditious Meetings Act and Criminal Law Amendment Act to tackle the 'volunteer problem', and a number of provincial governments banned various Congress-affiliated bodies. The Congress Working

would have possibly violated my vow of celibacy, but for the timely warning of my friend Ankliker and my preceptor, Lala Lajpat Rai." Cited in: Narayana Rao, *Dr N.S. Hardiker*, p. 100.

⁴⁷ See above on the Bengali nationalists. We can relate this to Derrida's point about the transcendental signified (while ignoring his ideas about 'Western' culture) - here, nationalism becomes an alternate transcendental object, an external point of reference that transcends all signified concepts but, by being implied, centres them, and could safeguard universalism when values (based on religion alone) had become uncertain. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* [transl. by Gayatri Spivak], Baltimore et al: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974 (orig. French ed. 1967), esp. pp 48-50. See also Zizek's analysis regarding the 'sublime object of ideology' in the introduction.

⁴⁸ Nehru, *An Autobiography*, 1941, pp. 79, 88. Motilal Nehru, who had signed the Congress volunteer form *pro forma*, was actually charged with being the member of an illegal organisation and sentenced to six months imprisonment on that count.

Committee passed a resolution in late November 1921 which sought to bring the existing volunteer bodies under central control and institute a Central Volunteer Board in defiance of the bans. This set the stage for all the later attempts of permanent organisation in a unified umbrella organisation.⁴⁹ At the Ahmedabad session of the Congress, a pledge for the National Volunteer Corps instituted the principle of non-violence for all those who would be satyagrahi volunteers, along with the promotion of communal harmony, swadeshi and khadi use, and, for Hindus, the removal of untouchability. Volunteer would be divided into two lists - an active list (those ready to serve the Congress) and a standby list for those who were 'otherwise employed' but were prepared to suffer 'imprisonment, assault, or death' when called upon to do so. It was further laid down that only people of proven and good character were to be enlisted. At the same time, the Congress called, however, on all students over 18 to pledge themselves and become members of the National Volunteer Corps.⁵⁰ The CWC at Bardoli in February 1922 noted that 'great laxity' was prevailing with respect to the selection of volunteers - people who did not believe in non-violence, or khaddar, or the removal of untouchability were entering the formation.⁵¹

Hardikar returned to Karnataka after the Ahmedabad Congress and busied himself with organising a Ganpati (Ganesh festival) Mandal (1922), a Varta Prasarak Sangh (publicising national news) and a Bhagini Mandal (for the uplift of women), a Tilak library (filled with books he had brought from the US as well as Indian periodicals)⁵² and began efforts at national education in Hubli.⁵³ Through these activities, he recruited a number of youngsters and workers who would be of great

⁴⁹ See Hakim Ajmal Khan (president of the committee) et al, *Report of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee*, Madras: Tagore & Co. 1922, p. 12. The Committee was to review the readiness of India for mass civil disobedience. MN Roy's *Vanguard* describes it as a closed-door shadowy group deciding over vital questions of the nation, cf. Confidential note, by DIG, Intelligence Branch, CID, 30 Oct. 1922, in 'List of names involved in Non-Cooperation Movement – Revolutionaries', f. 96.

⁵⁰ For the Ahmedabad pledge, see the Appendix. See Resolutions no. II, VIII of the Congress Working Committee [CWC] at Ahmedabad, in NMML, AICC Papers, F.No. 70 (pt. I), 1946-47, ff. 9-11.

⁵¹ See NMML, AICC Papers, F.No. 70 (pt. I), 1946-47, f 13(b). In this context it is pertinent to note that BS Moonje [see below] had in fact forwarded a resolution of the Nagpur CC, which called on the CWC to make the pledging to the removal of untouchability and swadeshi optional. See *ibid*, ff. 15-17.

⁵² The contents of the library, which was seized by the Government in 1931, are fascinating as it provides a rare glimpse into what literature people actually had access to by providing an index of a more than a hundred pages. Cf. Maharashtra State Archive [MSA], Home Department (Special) [henceforth: Home (Spcl)], 800 (34) E-III, 1932.

⁵³ Narayana Rao, *Dr N.S. Hardiker*, pp. 95-7.

importance in his later Seva Dal work.⁵⁴ In 1922, Gandhi hand-picked Hardikar to help issue the *Congress Bulletin*, but with Gandhi's incarceration and the changed circumstances regarding the planned Bardoli no-tax campaign it never came to that.⁵⁵

The events at Chauri-Chaura marked the end of the Non-Co-operation campaign as Gandhi called off the movement after the burning alive of 22 policemen in their thana by 'the mob'. Let us pick a fragment of that episode which pertains to our topic: Shahid Amin mentioned the case of Bhagwan Ahir, a demobilised soldier from the Mesopotamia campaign, as one of the organisers of the protest in Chauri Chaura and a volunteer leader, who drilled the local Congress Volunteers. The police had beaten him up and opened fire on the crowd congregated in protest before the thana, which led to the incident. He was later on hanged for his involvement.⁵⁶ This points to an under-explored theme in the Indian nationalist movement, that is the lasting impact of the Great War and the role of demobilised soldiers, especially in Punjab and UP.⁵⁷ Despite official claims to the world that demobilised soldiers had no tendency whatsoever to participate in 'mischief mongering' in the Punjab,⁵⁸ internally the administration was alive to the dangers.⁵⁹ Sepoys were prominently involved in the Punjab disturbances in 1919.⁶⁰ It stands to reason that a large body of trained

⁵⁴ Among his close associates and helpers were BG Lokhare, Mangoli, Karigudri, Smt. Umabai Kundapur who was later extremely important for the women's wing of the Dal, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Burli, Vashistha, later SV Inamdar and others. The president of the Karnataka PC, Hanumantha Rao Kowjalgi was one of supporters and political allies.

⁵⁵ Letter by THK Rezmie to NS Hardikar, 21 April 1922, NMML, Private Papers, Dr. NS Hardikar, I-IV inst., Subject File 1, f. 105-107. Narayana Rao, *Dr N.S. Hardiker*, pp. 88-89.

⁵⁶ Shahid Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory, Chauri Chaura 1922-1992*, Delhi: OUP, 1995, see esp. p 38-40.

⁵⁷ After the First World War, the de-mobilisation of some one million Indian soldiers proved a problem for the government. The promised land and pensions could not be handed out in the ways the sepoys had imagined. Cf. Tan Tai Yong, *The Garrison State. The Military, Government and Society in Colonial Punjab 1849-1947*, New Delhi et al: Sage, 2005, see pp. 141-156 or further for the various counter-measures from 1920). There is however nothing on the involvement of demobilised soldiers in the Punjab disturbances, except the statement that concessions by the Government averted a general crisis despite the wide-spread dissatisfaction.

⁵⁸ See Lovett, *History of the Indian Nationalist Movement*, p. 264. The ICS officer Lovett, completing some 25 years of service in India around the time of writing, was a staunch, uncritical supporter of the British administration and at pains to explain that the Punjabi soldiers were loyal subjects and O'Dwyer was not only beloved by the Punjabi people but also had acted honourably and courageously in most difficult times when 'Home Rule Leaguers' were attempting to make inroads into British India's foremost recruiting pool.

⁵⁹ See Tan Tai Yong, *Garrison State*, pp. 141-147.

⁶⁰ See for instance the ex-sepoy Brijpal Singh and the Karhaiya Riot of 1921, Telegram from Chief Secy to Govt. of UP to Secy to GoI (Home Department), 22 March 1921, in NAI, Home, Poll. A, F.Nos. 335-339, March 1921. Brijpal, a soldier with a good record, was one of the leaders in the riots and the Government was forced to lessen the sentences for all the accused in this case. Cf. also

and somewhat disgruntled men with extensive social networks, who had expertise with weapons and combat fighting, skills of organising and commanding, and who could not simply be absorbed back into either the social surroundings or the job market, partly due to the half-hearted measures by the Government in providing for them, could and would find niches in the evolving nationalist movement or other struggles that could use their particular skills.

The sudden end that Gandhi called to the movement after the events at Chauri-Chaura was disillusioning and embittering for many of the activists, not least the Khilafatists and his staunch supporters, the Ali brothers, who turned away after the débâcle. Gandhi's explanation for this, as before and after, was that the people were not 'ready' yet for non-violence. He maintained that satyagrahas and violence were unconnected, since satyagraha meant and elementarily was non-violence.⁶¹ Others believed that the movement was called off because the INC was losing control and not so much because of Chauri Chaura itself.⁶² At the risk of oversimplifying, one could trace the influence of this top-down ending of Non-Cooperation to the birth of a number of movements and splits within the momentarily unified ranks spearheaded by the Congress, which had called forth and released so much energy and kindled quasi-millenarian hopes. India saw the Mappila Rebellion (1921), Lajpat Rai's setting up of the Congress Independent Party,⁶³ the beginnings of the All-

Kapil Kumar on peasants in Awadh and the importance of demobilised soldiers, Brijpal Singh comes up here as well, cf. Kapil Kumar, *Peasants in Revolt. Tenants, Landlords, Congress and the Raj in Oudh, 1886-1922*, Delhi: Manohar, 1984, p.165 ff. Most authors have highlighted the loyalty of sepoys during 1919 without going too much in the reasons behind it. See Rajit K Mazumdar 'From Loyalty to Dissent: Punjabis from the Great War to World War II', in Kaushik Roy (ed.), *The Indian Army in Two World Wars*, Boston: Brill, 2012, pp.461-492, see esp. pp. 468-475. In the realm of fiction, this theme has been explored by Mulk Raj Anand, himself of a military family, who had already written the story of an Indian soldier in the Great War. The sequel, 'The Sword and the Sickle' deals with the (anti-)hero's return to the Punjab after having been captured and, his superiors suspect, indoctrinated by the Germans. Willy-nilly, he becomes an organiser of local protests and winds up with a motley gang of 'communist' rebels and terrorists. The level of accuracy displayed by Anand is impressive – down to the names of Indian agitators active in Germany. See Mulk Raj Anand, *The Sword and the Sickle*, London: Cape, 1942. See also his earlier *Across the Black Water*, New Delhi: Vision Books, 1978.

⁶¹ See below for Gandhi's notion about violence in non-violence. Cf. David Hardiman, *Gandhi In His Time and Ours*, see esp. 57-61 for the influences converging into Gandhi's notion of ahimsa and its power even in the face of military troops. See for a view which highlights Gandhi's idiosyncrasies and ambiguity on the subject of ahimsa (and the incorporation of himsa in ahimsa): Kathryn Tidrick, *Gandhi. A Political and Spiritual Life*, New York: IB Taurus, 2006. (see for details below)

⁶² Nehru, *An Autobiography*, pp. 85-6.

⁶³ Lajpat Rai, the political mentor of the later de-facto leader of the Congress volunteer wing, was one of the many Congressmen with connections to the HMS and dissatisfied with Gandhi's (or his programme's) pre-eminence within the INC

Bengal Young Man's Association (1922), then the Seva Dal (1924), the Hindustan Republic Association (1924)/ Naujawan Bharat Sabha (1926), the RSS (1925), the Samata Sainik Dal founded by Ambedkar (1927), to name just a few.⁶⁴

The Nagpur Flag satyagraha was started as a reaction to an incident that occurred when a batch of volunteers paraded through the streets of Nagpur to commemorate the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, carrying the tricolour.⁶⁵ According to the people involved, the Government feared they would hoist the flag on the Government secretariat. Police attacked the volunteers and the flag was 'most abominably treated' which was seen as 'direct insult to the National Honour and to the Nation's Manhood.'⁶⁶ This is to some extent a *post-hoc* reading of events as it was the Nagpur satyagraha which helped establish the popular notion of the 'honour of the flag' as a quasi-sacred political symbol of the Indian nation. On the 1st of May the local Congress organised a march in protest (the INC itself was split on the issue).⁶⁷ As expected, many were arrested and a civil disobedience movement was launched, in which prominent workers such as Jammalal Bajaj and Vallabhbbhai Patel took part. Hardikar went with a handful of volunteers in June and was arrested and sentenced to 1 year rigorous imprisonment.⁶⁸ Hardikar himself ascribes the inception of the Seva Dal to this experience (though we know that it had already been well under-way): in jail, a number of them tendered apologies in order to be released. Hardikar lamented the volunteers' caprice, vanity and partisanship.

⁶⁴ We shall deal in greater detail with the Seva Dal and the RSS, and only briefly with the Samata Sainik Dal below.

⁶⁵ Gandhi had finally settled on the tricolour as national flag in 1921 (it was evolved by others, though, most noteworthy Tilak and Madame Cama who first hoisted it at the Second International). On the Nagpur satyagraha, see Arundhati Virmani, 'National Symbols under Colonial Domination: the Nationalization of the Indian Flag, March-August 1923,' *Past and Present* 164 (August 1999), pp. 169-197. Virmani studies the emergence of the tricolour through the Nagpur satyagraha in the context of the post-war environment and the use of the Union Jack by the British. For the flag satyagraha, see esp. pp. 181- 189. The INC did not officially back the satyagraha. But some Congressmen took the opportunity to stage the campaign as a sign of the viability of the method of satyagraha after Non-Cooperation.

⁶⁶ Nilkanthrao Deshmukh, 'A child of the prison', *The Volunteer*, January 1925, pp. 11-13.

⁶⁷ The CWC congratulated the volunteers for their 'defence' of the flag and called upon all volunteers throughout India to be 'ready to join the struggle' (Resolution X) and commended all those who had courted imprisonment particularly on their non-violent demeanour (resolution IV) by the CWC (later adopted by the AICC) at its Bombay meeting 23-29th May 1923, in NMML, AICC Papers, File 70, 1946/47, ff. 21 On the disagreement on the issue between - broadly - the Swarajists and the Gandhians, see Arundhati Virmani, 'National Symbols', pp. 182-183.

⁶⁸ [Rigorous Imprisonment] All in all some 1,700 volunteers were arrested in connection with the movement. They were released in stages, when Vallabhbbhai's brother Vithalbbhai Patel managed to come to an agreement with the Government.

'It was hard for them to efface their personality and personal elements in and for the sacred cause for which they had volunteered themselves as servants. This could be done only by discipline.'⁶⁹ Deshmukh later wrote that, where apologies were tendered this was generally due to volunteers' lack of hardiness and preparation for the hardships of jail life.⁷⁰ The answer to all these problems was discipline, and regular training courses to induce this foremost quality of the volunteer. At the same time, the lingering connection of what was to be the Seva Dal and the national flag as established here. It was the Dal who went a long way to popularise the symbolically important practice of monthly flag 'salutations'.⁷¹

The answer to the problems raised by the conduct of volunteers during the satyagraha was then discipline, self-abnegation and physical hardiness - themes that run through the nationalist movement, of course.⁷² At the Delhi Special Session of Congress in September 1923, it was resolved that: '[Congress'] local committees be also instructed to induce and encourage the people to take up physical culture and to provide the necessary facilities for this purpose, to enable the Indians to undertake their self-defence.'⁷³ What this self-defence exactly referred to, or more specifically against who it was directed against often remained nebulous.

The double-edged sword of internal disturbances and external aggression was the *Leitmotiv* of perceived threats. Especially after the 'Moplah rebellion' and the communal riots of 1923, communalist stereotypes became increasingly expressed through gender-related tropes, abduction being first and foremost among them.⁷⁴ At the 1923, the Hindu Mahasabha [HMS] session, Malaviya pro-

⁶⁹ Anonymous [NS Hardikar], 'Sahayaks' Training Camp and Classes conducted by Karnatak Branch of the Hindustani Seva Dal, and their aims and objects', *The Volunteer*, January 1925, pp. 15-18, see p. 15.

⁷⁰ Nilkanthrao Deshmukh, 'A child of the prison'. Deshmukh was one of Hardikar's acquaintances from the Nagpur flag satyagraha and the subsequent time in jail. He was reported to be somebody Hardikar consulted on the issue of a Volunteer's conference. Deshmukh became a member of the All-India Board of the Seva Dal later. The other prominent men in the flag satyagraha were Dr. Chandulal Desai (Broach), Dr. Ghia (Sura), Mohan Lal Pandya (Anand). See Rao, *Dr N.S. Hardikar*, p. 105.

⁷¹ On the wider significance of the flag salutation popularised by the Dal in the context of the construction of national unity, see below (on the AICC in 1928).

⁷² See above, for Rosselli, 'Self-Image of Effeminate'; Mrinalini Sinha et al on stereotypes of the effeminate Indian and reactions against it.

⁷³ Special Session of Congress Feb. 1923, quoted from NMML, AICC papers, F.No. - 70 (pt I), 1946-47, f. 23A.

⁷⁴ Cf. Pradip Kumar Datta, *Carving Blocs. Communal Ideology in Early Twentieth-century Bengal*,

claimed that protecting their womenfolk was one of the duties of Hindus.⁷⁵ The highly gendered notions found their entrance into the trinity of fear about safeguarding 'life, property and honour' as the constitution of the Seva Dal and Muslim National Guards prescribed in the 1930s and 40s. Honour was, by default, the honour of women in the context of the fear of violation, and by extension her honour was the honour of the whole community. Apparently, it eventually seemed more straightforward to train women themselves in self-defence to avoid abductions than rely on the men (their pre-inscribed supreme duty as protectors of women was stringently maintained, though).⁷⁶

When Sarala Devi started the first classes in self-defence to train young men to defend themselves and their womenfolk against British soldiers, as well as young women to guard against abduction, it was a pioneering enterprise. By the time Lila Nag started female physical training in the 1920s in collaboration with The Hindu Sabhaite BS Moonje, the field was better developed.⁷⁷ In this revealing moment of complicity, the drive for physical culture by large sections of the populace coincided with an attempt by the revolutionaries to reorganise and to use the youth movement and akharas as recruiting grounds⁷⁸, and then more specifically Hindu concerns over Muslim aggression. In Bengal this meant that revolutionaries and Hindu Sabhaites had interests in common and a

New Delhi et al: OUP, 1999 features a long chapter on the significance, practice and response to abductions in Bengal, pp. 149-237, see esp. 148-182 (on its impact on the male political elite in Bengal and the popularisation of the theme). See below.

⁷⁵ The dynamic played out differently in different provinces. In Bengal these moves were made independent of HMS whereas in many other localities HMS was closely tied to this. (Cf. Pradip Kumar Datta, *Carving Blocs*, chp. 4). Two could play at this game, though, and in later years Fazl-ul-Haq would claim on the basis of numerous (quite believable) reports that it was in fact the Arya Samaj who abducted married Muslim women they claim were 'originally' Hindus. Report Fazl-ul-Haq, Complaints against Congress Ministry, in IOR, L/I/1/628. See also below.

⁷⁶ This aspect became more marked (and the hesitation to train women according to military fashion receded) when the fear of the communal Other reached a climax in the 1940s. See below. These notions fed into the shift towards the need for female organisation as one factor, together with the obvious impracticability of excluding half the population in a mass-based struggle. A clear indication is the early Bengal attempts at training women which was already linked to the necessity of women to be able to defend themselves against outrages especially during communal clashes.

⁷⁷ See 'Physical Culture Movement and formation of Akharas', WBSA, IB, file no. 354/26, see esp. ff. 18-7, see esp. 7 on the Dipali Sangha, Lila Nag's group of which Moonje was president in 1927. Lila Nag had a longer history of involvement with revolutionary groups (through the Sree Sangha which she headed and her close relationship with Anil Ray). See on the Sree Sangha (which also doubles as service organisation): WBSA, IB, 274/29 (serial 113/29), see esp. ff. 15, 9 on Lila Nag.

⁷⁸ Cf. Secret. Extract from Weekly Report of the Director, IB, Home Dept, GoI, dt. New Delhi, the 12th January 1928, No. 2, IOR, L/PJ/12/59, file 4968(G) 1921, ff. 7-8.

number of alliances to organise against the Muslim threat sprang from this drive.⁷⁹ Communal 'self-defence' would from now on trump Hindu-Muslim unity. Popular demands wanted self-defence branches down to village level and have physical training and self-defence with sticks made compulsory.⁸⁰ Mahabir Dals were formed in many locations around this time, practising the familiar wrestling, sword-fighting and lathi drill, while the Arya Samaj put even more emphasis on the prescribed training in akharas and 'western' physical training than it had before.⁸¹ The Mahabir Dal in Bengal was 'discovered' by Intelligence in 1927 and here had its stronghold in the Midnapore district where it tried to dispossess the *Mohants* of certain temples in the area; this activity characterised their later campaigns elsewhere and they were more generally associated with the Hindu Mahasabha and temple movement. In Bengal, intelligence officers described it however as an independent off-shoot of the Jugantar (due to the involvement of the Jugantar member Jatindra Nath Mukharji it seems), aiming to overthrow the Government. The Dal committed dacoities as well.⁸² While this sphere of activity may be a 'Bengali speciality', it emphasises the collusion of interests and a new axis of alliances that were formed around this time, enabled by communal fears.⁸³ On top of the perceived external threats in the insecure landscape of the post-War, self-defence was thought of, with increasingly menacing overtones, in connection with communal disturbances and the communal Other. The ambiguity in formulations such as the 'Rules and Regulations' of diverse volunteer bodies covered both these scenarios.

⁷⁹ Generally, 'terrorists' were attempting to re-organise around that time. Jatin Das (Anushilan), and better known for being one of Bhagat Singh's bomb manufacturers, was pressing for a go-slow approach and was more interested in capturing the Congress machinery to attain funds and infrastructure to organise (cf. IOR, L/PJ/12/253, esp. ff. 1-4, see also below on the AICC in 1928), others worked through physical culture clubs and organisations in that orbit, such as the All Bengal Young Men's Association [ABYM], started in the early 1920s under the famous chemist PC Ray. The point here is the convergence of a variety of streams in the akhara movements seen from the backdrop of a series of communal disturbances.

⁸⁰ Charu Gupta, 'Articulating Hindu Masculinity and Femininity: 'Shuddhi' and 'Sangathan' Movements in United Provinces in the 1920s', *EPW*, Vol. 33, No. 13, 1998, pp. 727-735, see p. 729. She refers to 'Kartavya', week ending September 23, 1922, Native Newspaper Reports Published in the United Provinces. Also see the editorial in *The Leader*, Allahabad, 2nd April, 1923, p. 3. Gupta argues that it is in the shuddhi/sangathan movement of the early 1920s that the image of the masculine Hindu warrior evolves and is used to consolidate unity among Hindus in opposition to both British rule and the Muslim aggressors, resulting in a drive for akharas and physical culture against the perceived degeneration.

⁸¹ See also Fischer-Tiné, *Der Gurukul Kangri*, see pp. and 255-268, see esp. p. 223.

⁸² Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal From 1st Jan. to 30th June 1927, in Samanta, *Terrorism in Bengal*, Volume I, p. 561.

⁸³ On the HMS, RSS etc. see below, chp. 4.

After the end of Non-Cooperation, as noted earlier, disillusionment was widespread. Certain Congress leaders made a supreme effort to portray Chauri Chaura as a suspension, not an end of the movement and keep the momentum going.⁸⁴ At the 1922 Gaya Session of the Congress, a resolution called for preparing for the eventual resumption of non-cooperation which was meant to be achieved through the constructive programme.⁸⁵ During 1922 and 1923, Hardikar embarked on a campaign to establish a new volunteer body designated the National Volunteer Corps in line with the earlier ideas formulated by the Congress.⁸⁶ He issued circulars at the Gaya Congress session, held an impromptu meeting at the 1923 Congress session at Delhi and, having obtained permission to hold a meeting at the next AICC in Cocanada, began to contact the diverse volunteer and service groups in the provinces to hold a preparatory national conference to prepare a draft scheme and constitution.⁸⁷ A provisional board with Hardikar as general secretary was appointed to do propaganda, and prepare the constitution. Hardikar had definite ideas about this: physical training from wrestling to Hindi Drill⁸⁸, first aid, British laws and Congress history were to be included. His volunteer was to be a strong, semi-professional non-governmental worker of the nationalist movement. A uniform, to be worn by all delegates, was prescribed in great detail: pure white khaddar with Gandhi cap and exact measurements for each item down to the last folds of cloth exhibits the early obsession with uniformity.⁸⁹ The scheme was considered by a joint volunteer conference

⁸⁴ In October 1923, Dr Saifuddin Kitchlew called on all prospective volunteers to submit their names for an eventual Civil Disobedience movement, and in the Punjab he called on all workers to take an interest in the Akali movement. The INC lent support to the Akali agitation, as they had for the Nagpur campaign (cf. *Times of India*, 15 Oct 1923, in MSA, Home Department (Special), 355(58), 1923, f.21; 'Making Trouble', *Times of India*, 26.10.1923, *ibid*, f. 33.)

⁸⁵ Hardikar was not the only one busy organising. Other volunteer corps were (naturally) springing up around the time. See, for instance, Bombay City SB, 12th Nov 1923, in MSA, Home (Spcl.), 355(58), 1923, ff. 45, 47, on a 'National Volunteer Corps' and a Swaraj Sabha Volunteer Corps in Bombay.

⁸⁶ The INC had a national volunteer corps and Civic Guards in mind in 1921/22. Civic Guards were to be used in tense provinces to keep the peace, for instance Sind/Hyderabad where volunteer board on Hindu-Muslim unity was formed. Official Note, MSA, Home (Spcl.), 355(58), 1923, ff. 121-122. For INC Sept. resolution No 15 by the Congress on Hindu-Muslim unity: see Home (Spcl), 355 (58), 1923, f. 23. But the Civic Guard scheme never materialised and in view of the preparations for Cocanada, the INC was content to wait how things would shape up, cf. see NMML, AICC Papers, F. No 70, f. 25: Resolution of the CWC at Bombay, Jan/Feb 1924.

⁸⁷ See WBSA, file no 343/23, serial no 45/23.

⁸⁸ Hardikar advertised the use of pamphlets published by Prof Manikrao. Manikrao was a well-known physical culturalist, Hindu revivalist, member of the Hindu Mahasabha, the author of a number of pamphlets on drill and physical instruction, and founder of the Shree Jummada Vyayam Mandir. Manikrao also founded an *vyayam mandir* (temple of physical culture) for women, the Kanya Arogya Mandir.

⁸⁹ Cf 'Scheme of organisation', *Bombay Chronicle*, 29th Oct. 1923, MSA, Home (Spcl), 355(58), 1923. f. 37.

in Bihar in 1923. Calls were issued that all existing volunteer organisation should organise provincial meetings and choose delegates to attend the planned national volunteer conference at Cocanada.

Some time before the Congress Session, Hardikar travelled with RR Diwakar⁹⁰ to see Lajpat Rai, Hardikar's political mentor, and one of the Congressmen dissatisfied with Gandhi's handling of things with closer links to the Hindu Sabha. They discussed the future of the Dal and whether or not it should merge with the Congress. Rai advised for the organisation to remain independent but firmly aligned to Congress.⁹¹ For a long time, the Seva Dal stuck to this advice, and the organisation was officially integrated into the Congress as late as 1931 (on Gandhi's insistence).⁹² Hardikar also sought out the young dynamic 'youth leader' Nehru at Allahabad before the Cocanada session and discussed the constitution of the (Man-)Dal with him, the latter in turn discussed it with Gandhi who disapproved of the draft - on what grounds is not entirely clear from Nehru's statements except that he thought Gandhi would not give his approval at that time.⁹³ But Gandhi watched the rise of clubs undertaking physical culture for 'self-defence' with some alarm. He is most outspoken in a few articles in *Young India* from the same year. In the 'Bully and the Coward' he not only essentialised the traits of each community, but warned that the wide-spread stringent preparations for 'self-defence' would lead only to more distrust and violence in the end.⁹⁴ Possibly, he saw the Dal as just such a body despite his own yearning for disciplined satyagrahis under his control especially after the ignominious end to Non-Cooperation.

⁹⁰ Diwakar was one of the best-known Congress leaders of Karnataka, as well as a regular contributor to *The Volunteer*, these articles were often concerned with either physical degeneration or Hindu mythology. Although 5 years younger, he was a school-friend of Hardikar's, whom he knew since 1908. He was a College teacher till 1920 or so, then Congress full-timer and became the provincial organiser of the Seva Dal in Karnataka. In the 1960s he became general editor of Bhavan's Book University of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Bombay together with KM Munshi. The BVB, as is well-known, was funded liberally by KK Birla and is associated with a revivalist (Hindu-nationalist) agenda.

⁹¹ 'Dear Old Hardikar' by RR Diwarkar in *Smriti Sourabbha*, pp. 9-11.

⁹² See below.

⁹³ Narayana Rao, *Dr NS Hardikar*, pp. 107, 155.

⁹⁴ See especially Gandhi, 'The Bully and the Coward', *Young India* dt. 29th May 1924, in MK Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (Electronic Book)* [henceforth CWMG], New Delhi, Publications Division Government of India, 1999, Vol 28, see esp. pp. 49-51 of this issue which is entirely concerned with Hindu-Muslim relations. In that year Gandhi wrote a few more articles along the same lines. The Muslims were throughout described as inherent bullies - a characteristic Gandhi traced back to their position as a minority. See David Hardiman, *Gandhi in His Time and Ours*, pp. 158-174.

The Coming of the Dal

The first official Volunteer Conference was held at Cocanada concomitant with the Congress Session to enable important Congress workers to take part. Nehru had agreed to preside over the Conference when Hardikar met him. The speeches at this first gathering are worth noting to highlight some of the characteristics in language and ideals that came to be part and parcel of the organisation. Nehru in his presidential address said he came to this conference ‘as a mere soldier not an officer’ and related his own experience in the Officers’ Training Corps during his school days in England, where he ended his career as a private after two years. The purpose of the conference was, he stated, to consider how to make ourselves ‘more fit to serve our country and hasten the day of her liberation. [...] We meet as soldiers of freedom and as soldiers we must be men of action rather than words.’ The rest of his (by comparison) short speech was spent re-narrating the then familiar story and platitudes: Before them was the task of building a disciplined body of volunteers ready to sacrifice their lives on the altar of freedom.⁹⁵

The next speaker was Congressman and Dal member Kasinadhuni Nageswararao, the Pantulu Garu.⁹⁶ In a rather convoluted address he described how the modern world had come under the sway of Asura powers. ‘Bolshevism, Communism, Socialism, Commercialism, Fascism [sic] and Militarism are only a few of the wasting disease which is ruining human nature.’ He then went on to describe India’s situation and the need for non-violent satyagraha as well as Mahatma Gandhi’s instinctive grasp of the need for rigid discipline for the great non-violent struggle - even in the face of criticism from other Congressmen. ‘The Volunteer Movement is an offshoot of Western militarism. In free countries where conscription is disliked, volunteer system of service is adopted. In dependent countries, like India even this Volunteer training is not possible, as the foreign power has no trust in the people.’ Satyagraha, truth and sacrifice demanded courage and patience,

⁹⁵ A brief history of Congress-affiliated volunteer organisations rounds off the speech, from those helpers at the annual session to the more permanent Non-Cooperation and Khilafat corps that had sprung up and then were crushed by the Government Nehru’ address at the 1st Volunteer Conference, *The Volunteer*, Jan. 1925, pp. 7-8.

⁹⁶ Nageswara Rao was a journalist, founder of the Andhra Patrika and Congressman from Andhra. At the time he had just been elected as president of the local PCC. He was president of the Andhra Provincial Volunteer Board in 1929/30 See NMML; NS Hardikar Private Papers File 63 [Microfilm], f. 24.

he proclaimed. And in the conflict between the Divine and the Asuras, '[i]n this conflict for supremacy between brute force and soul-force, between enjoyment and suffering, between Western and Eastern samskaras, Bharataputras [the sons of India] are destined to play a leading part.' Which meant: The Asura-ridden western militarism would in India be transformed into a movement of the Bharatputras and become a vehicle of the soul-force for which Mahatma Gandhi, the 'foremost man in the world', stood - it would transform the materialist principle of self-assertion and self-protection into self-effacement and self-surrender while using the same principles and style.⁹⁷

This metamorphosis of Western militarism into saintly self-surrender by a process of indigenisation is in line with the well-studied principle of creative appropriations and the enunciation of colonial difference by anti-colonial nationalists to solve the complex puzzle of imbibing what was scientific, rational and evolved in the 'west' and turn it into something rooted in Indian culture and aligned to the Indian 'genius'.⁹⁸ These spiritual metaphors are not limited to self-identified Hindus or obscurantists but they bleed and suffuse all the nationalist discourse including that of self-declared socialists and communists. It was a trend most leaders adopted as they saw religion as a way to reach out to people, inspire and mobilise them where cold rationalism would not suffice for the Indian temperament. From the Anushilan to the Seva Dal and the CPI, many people - some more strategically than others - made use of these religious idioms as an appeal to win 'hearts and minds', but there is a more significant point of analysis to uncover here. MN Roy was not only the one who criticised the oscillating of Indian Nationalism (especially among the lower middle classes and lower classes) between Gandhism and a reactionary jingoism of the type of Mussolini as early as the 1920s, he also criticised 'spiritual Communism' (and the wider tendency to mix spiritualism with politics) sharply. His reading of Aurobindo's treatise on the subject is pertinent here as it connects us to a wider debate: Aurobindo aimed at the total evolution of society based on spirituality that would abolish the 'separative egoism' and establish it on the foundation of harmony and unity. Aurobindo maintained that 'spiritual communism starts with a new conception and ex-

⁹⁷ Address of Shri K. Nageswara Rao Pantulu Garu, in *The Volunteer*, Jan. 1925, pp. 8-11.

⁹⁸ Numerous studies address this process and problem. See Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World - A Derivative Discourse?*, Delhi et al: OUP, 1986, here esp. pp. 37-43.

perience of man - the realisation of the supramental and spiritual being.' Roy lucidly criticised the teleology as well as the idiosyncratic blend of Hegelian idealism and Hindu mysticism.⁹⁹ But Aurobindo's Nietzschean reading of communism as a mystical inner journey of the New Man to his personal anthropogenesis helps us attain a grasp on the practical translation of the model of an 'esoteric (i.e. Lamarckian) evolution' that functioned within a positivist Darwinian model turned on its head. Aurobindo was an advocate of eugenics carried out 'with the remorseless wisdom of Nature' in his younger days, and later envisioned a positive eugenics through the self-perfecting practice of yoga while he dreamt about a utopian world state (though here, too, isolation or sterilisation of the hopelessly degenerate was a viable option.).¹⁰⁰ This blend, while certainly extravagant in Aurobindo's case, is not actually unusual but rather the norm. It represents the hallmark of the translation of the laws of nature and the models of politics among large sections of Indian nationalist (but could as easily be seen in the context of, say, an earlier Jacobinist tradition, or the Fabians and occultists in England around the turn of the century)¹⁰¹

Nevertheless, if we, for the sake of clarity, propose that these modes operate within different registers, then these two poles – Nehru and the Pantulu Garu – exemplify two of the three main planks of the ideological range along which the Seva Dal tried to situate itself. Nehru here would stand for the modern, secular and nationalist cosmopolitan (an oxymoron only at the surface of things, at the time) with a firm international outlook (which grew into an unassertive, yet iconoclastic socialism). Nehru would later be self-critical about the common notion of India's perceived destiny - its very own civilising mission - of educating and taming the western world, where the Seva Dal and Hardikar never were.¹⁰² Nehru's left-leaning politics was rather alien to the Dal, as it strived to remain an 'apolitical' body, with socially often conservative ideals and an unevenly suppressed xenophobia regarding Muslims.¹⁰³ Hardikar himself, while avowedly a secularist Con-

⁹⁹ MN Roy, 'Spiritual Communism - A Criticism', in G. Adhikari (ed.), *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Volume Two, 1923-1925, New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1974, pp. 216 -220 (originally published in *The Vanguard*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 15th Dec. 1923).

¹⁰⁰ Quote after the remarkably poignant article by Mark Singleton, 'Yoga, Eugenics, and Spiritual Darwinism in the Early Twentieth Century', *International Journal of Hindu Studies* Vol. 11, No. 2, 2007, pp. 125-46, see esp. pp. 232-234.

¹⁰¹ See for example Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment* which does a masterful job of pulling the diverse social and ideological strands together.

¹⁰² Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, London: Signet, 1946.

¹⁰³ These were not alien to a majority of Congressmen, of course. William Gould, *Hindu Nationalism*

gressman, at times seemed to lean towards the more conservative sentiments of his mentor Lajpat Rai. Nevertheless, the Dal (or such sections of it as were given to airing their views) shared Nehru's secular cosmopolitanism in many ways and its international engagements were as far-flung as they were eclectic. Nageswar Rao on the other hand stands for the anti-Western, seemingly anti-modernist Gandhian spirituality, self-effacement, along with the rather exclusivist Hindu symbols and vocabulary that marked this discourse that referred to the Vedas and the golden era of Aryavarta with its resplendent warrior-philosophers – and all these remained constant tropes in the Seva Dal's magazine and in the thinking of its leaders (see below).

The third plank would be the unapologetically 'western'-inspired jingoistic/militarist youth organisation proper, which is always condemned and yet so closely imbibed by many of the leading lights of the Seva Dal. These Dal leaders might be said to broadly represent the intermediate leadership of the Congress, overlapping also with the upper crust of the Hindu Sabha. We shall elaborate on this point below. For now we can refer to all this, with Javed Majeed, as a 'disavowed cosmopolitanism', that is the somewhat parochial antagonism to all things foreign (or sometimes 'modern') while the close engagement with those disavowed matters leads to unavoidable entanglements.¹⁰⁴

To come back to the AICC session of 1924: It had elected Mohamad Ali as president for the year, and Jawaharlal Nehru acted as secretary. It had also institutionalised the Seva Dal as an auxiliary body of the Congress, meaning the body retained internal autonomy to a great extent. It was thus a body affiliated to but not part of the Congress - as Hardikar had wanted. The Congress further resolved 'that in order to train the people of India and make them effective instruments for the carrying out of the national work.... it is necessary to have a trained and disciplined body of workers.'¹⁰⁵

Many of the regulations laid down earlier for volunteering would apply to the Dal.¹⁰⁶ The attempt

and the Politics of Language in Late Colonial Nationalism, Cambridge et al: Cambridge University Press, 2004, see for instance pp. 14-16, 40-42 and ICN in the nexus of HMS, Arya Samaj et al.

¹⁰⁴ Javed Majid, 'Travel, auto/biography, and modern India: issues, themes, methodologies', paper presented 18th February 2011 at the Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin.

¹⁰⁵ NMML, AICC, G-13, 1946, f. 79. This was a re-iteration of the CWC resolution at its special session of 1923.

¹⁰⁶ The framework laid down that volunteers must sign the Ahmedabad pledge and to regard the pledge as binding 'as long as the policy of non-violence is continued by the nation.' Volunteers should not

to create out of existing volunteer bodies a singular movement spearheaded by this new corps mirrors the attempt of the Congress to create a platform like itself and under its control for the burgeoning sector of social service and youth activities.

But there was also, at the early stage, marked suspicion among some Congress quarters whether the Dal would always remain non-violent, whether it was necessary at all or 'premature'. Shaukat Ali said that 'some people' imagined that under the guise of non-violence 'a large number of youths were being trained for violence.' Ali supposed these suspicions were partly due to the Dal's origin in Karnataka with its 'brilliant role in the past' and Hardikar's American/ Western training which many thought of as 'the home of Anarchists, bomb-throwers and other revolutionaries.'¹⁰⁷ The conduct of the Dal during its first years seems to have put most of those fears to rest – at least few references in this vein can be found later on. The need for 'disciplined workers', rebuilding support on the ground and disciplining the masses overall was felt strongly after Chauri-Chaura. Nehru concurred with the need for more discipline and cohesion than any of the Congress' volunteer organisations had afforded till then. He describes his surprise at finding many Congressmen being thoroughly opposed to the new corps:

Some said that this was a dangerous departure, as it meant introducing a military element in the Congress, and the military arm might overpower the civil authority! Others seemed to think that the only discipline necessary for the volunteer was to obey orders issued from above, and for the rest it was hardly desirable for volunteers even to walk in step. At the back of the mind of some was the notion that the idea of having trained and drilled volunteers was somehow inconsistent with the Congress principle of non-violence.¹⁰⁸

Some within the Seva Dal did not see the body as a militaristic vehicle at all and did prescribe in a heartfelt way to the Gandhian credo if we go by their utterances. With others, we have to wonder. One of the Dal workers who wrote a letter to Hardikar stating that surely he did not mean to build

carry any sword but may carry a 'walking stick no longer than four feet' (the word lathi was scrupulously avoided). Volunteers should be 18 or older. The duties of the volunteers were to preserve order at meetings, hartals etc. and render social service in emergencies as well as promote physical culture. Cf. AICC Papers, F. No 70, 1946/47, see esp. the CWC Bombay meeting of 1921, ff. 5-7.

¹⁰⁷ See speeches summarising and contradicting such notions by SV Kowjalgi, 'The future is in your hands' and Maulana Shaukat Ali, 'You will not be treated as stepchildren' in *Hindustani Seva Dal Belgaum Congress Report* (Special Issue of *The Volunteer*), pp. 7, 9.

¹⁰⁸ Nehru, *An Autobiography*, p. 121.

a military body, later helped draft what was without doubt the most militarised of all the Dal's training schemes and included a training item called 'trench warfare'.¹⁰⁹

It is no accident that a volunteer body such as this could be set up at this point. The debate about the 'Indianisation' of the army had been raging for some time (and more since the end of the Great War) and would eventually lead to the appointment of the Skeen Committee in 1925.¹¹⁰ It was, beyond rather practical arguments regarding states and nations and their basic characteristics, a matter of enormous symbolic capital, and we shall return to the debate and the notions attached to the carrying of weapons and defending one's own country, below. Within the Congress, the tide was changing as the 'young' generation of Congressmen rose.

Gandhi had needed to let his obligatory spinning programme for the INC go, according to which each Congressmen was obliged to spin a certain amount of khaddar yarn. Gandhi had compared the spinning programme to the discipline exercised for military conscription in other countries. But spinning, for him, was aimed at turning one's face towards God and become closer to the poor of India. Therefore he attributed immense spiritual value to it and claimed that it stilled the mind and made passions subside, hence he advocated it especially to the young.¹¹¹ But Gandhi, too, had felt the need for a army-like body of satyagrahis for a long time (ever since his own imprisonment and the rigorous, camp-like set-up of Phoenix farm, one could argue) and never more than now - after Chauri-Chaura. In a statement written for the Seva Dal Journal under the heading 'Who is a Volunteer', he laid out the moral and physical prerequisites. Referring to 1921, he said that while those volunteers engaged in the campaign had rendered immense services, they had also actually hindered the progress of the nation because 'all of them were not the required type. Every one of them must, no doubt, go through physical drill and must be able to compete with the trained soldier in performing the different movements in dealing with crowds, and must know first-aid to the injured.'¹¹² In other words, soldier-like volunteers were also to act as an insurance that Chauri-

¹⁰⁹ See the Bangiya Seva Dal below. Cf. Sachin Mitra, letter to Hardikar, WBSA, IB Branch, F. no. 583/1927 (Sl. no. 45).

¹¹⁰ For details see below.

¹¹¹ Tidrick, *Gandhi*, pp. 202-205.

¹¹² Gandhi (Delhi, 29th Jan. 1925), 'Who Is a Volunteer?' in *The Volunteer*, March 1925, cover. The other qualifications Gandhi laid down were what one would expect: truthful, chaste, obedient, amenable

Chaura would not repeat itself. They were to be the answer to a question that had plagued the old aristocratic Congress since it first reluctantly mulled over mass campaigns: how to control the masses once they were mobilised? By infusing a stable, obedient element into the the unpredictable swell of the oft-cited 350 million, some continued control might be established.

Many of the activists within the Seva Dal or its more immediate orbit, while being rather fuzzy on the question of militarism, leaned decidedly towards a view of the Dal as executive arm of the Congress, or a proto-army of the nation while at the same time emphasising its non-violent character - the obvious clash in methods is dealt with by Hardikar in an interesting manner. Hardikar wrote in 1925: '[The Seva Dal] might be termed the Police or the military department of the Congress Organisation.'¹¹³

When a nation is under the rule of conquerors, the main requisite for a systematic fight for liberation are training, discipline and organisation of its youth. First we have to take stock of our forces - a sufficient number to make a bold stand for the liberty of the nation - then we must turn our attention to the constituent parts of that force. ... We can not in any way afford to be negligent in this respect. One screw loose, one wheel out of gear, one spoke missing may put the whole machinery out of order and out of control of even those who first set it in motion.¹¹⁴

To reconcile the warring trends the Dal encompassed within its fold, Hardikar developed the slogan of the Dal as a revolutionary body fighting for a bloodless revolution. Obviously responding to criticism and questions, NSH wrote a long article positing a (rather tenuous) dichotomy between bloody and bloodless revolution, saying that if one had meant to engage in the former, one would have needed to 'know everything that a soldier on an actual battlefield knows' - by which he meant 'war-science': the ability to handle battle cruisers, dreadnoughts, tanks, aeroplanes, Zeppelins (!), artillery etc. (as if most revolutionaries had access to any of that). But the high-tech requirements can not define away the fact that the Dal provided an imitation of basic military training to its volunteers. For a bloodless revolution, Hardikar said, one needed to bring about a quick and thorough change in people's mentality - therefore an educative programme was needed, peaceful and legitimate means were used, and weapons had no place in such a movement. The volunteer's weapons

to perfect discipline, friendly even to the meanest, free from concepts of untouchability, believers in Hindu-Muslim unity, ardent spinners.

¹¹³ Anonymous [Hardikar], 'Sahayaks' Training...', p. 15.

¹¹⁴ Hardikar, 'The Great Need', *The Volunteer*, Oct. 1925, p. 243.

were self-help, self-reliance, self-sacrifice, self-purification, courage and endurance. Hardikar said diplomatically that the Dal had to accept the 'present Congress creed' and that the Dal aimed at nothing except the training and disciplining of youth. It was easy, he wrote, to throw a bomb here and there but even a child knew that this would not suffice against an enemy armed to its teeth. Physically and temperamentally the Indian people were 'quite unfit as yet to even think of bloody revolution...'. While the Dal was 'not exactly run on military lines', Hardikar said he would 'like to run an organisation ... on strictly military lines insofar as discipline is concerned' since it was the lack of discipline that caused other Indian movements to fail. That was why he was in favour of military training 'minus, of course, the inhuman and brutal part in it.'¹¹⁵

Where masses, for the Congress leadership, were generally unruly and to be distrusted, youth was all the more volatile and unpredictable due to its exuberance and seemingly infinite energy, and its proclivity towards uncompromising radicalism. Discipline and obedience were the first and foremost requirements in the 'troops' that Hardikar envisioned for the INC. Next to a 'trained army of voluntary workers', the primary requirements to win a national struggle were proper consolidation of 'the forces' purpose and programme. As examples Hardikar cited George Washington, Garibaldi and Lenin and their respective organisations. In similar ways, the army of volunteers should be centrally organised and under the leadership of 'one supreme head in the country' working with and for the Congress and being financially and otherwise nourished by it. Physical fitness and activity were of primordial importance, since otherwise the workers would be no more than 'talking machines of the Congress' and the machinery would 'rust'.¹¹⁶ People working in synchronised and carefully conducted harmony as parts of a machinery point, of course, to the organicist imagery of the time but it furthermore opens up questions concerning the idea of the individual's place in society.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Hardikar, Q & A, 'Is the Dal a Revolutionary Body?', *The Volunteer*, June 1925, pp. 97-99. We will return to the them of the Dal as army or police below in greater detail. See chp. 3, below.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 243-245.

¹¹⁷ See below.

For a future India, the development of a body of citizens firmly imbued with all the necessary characteristics, moral as well as physical (and resembling the virtues propagated by muscular Christianity), was of utmost importance to overcome social injustice, 'emasculatation', 'backwardness', and 'superstition' and other social evils that were keeping 'the nation' imprisoned and helped the colonial overlords to retain their grip on it. These notions were well summed up in the Rules of the Congress Seva Dal.¹¹⁸ The objects of the Seva Dal (undergoing some change over time) were described in four points. First: 'To instil qualities of self-discipline, self-sacrifice, self-reliance, simplicity, service, tolerance and aptitude for corporate and co-operative work and life in youths', so that they a) become disciplined workers of national service and b) 'become *ideal citizens* of a Free India' (my emphasis). The second point relates to the promotion of national unity irrespective of caste and creed. The third, read: 'To improve the health and physique of the Indian people through physical culture and training'. The fourth object is for the volunteers to act as a 'peace and relief brigade' in times of emergency and 'to protect the life, honour and property of the people'. A later draft version of these rules approved by the CWC included as one main objective in paragraph 15 the 'defence against anti-social elements'.¹¹⁹

The SD constitution underwent multiple changes over time: the pledge was changed, the age limit reduced so that boys and girls from age 11 (later 7 years) could join, and limited to 40 as Dal workers were expected to be fit enough to drill. The structure also was changed, especially when the Dal became a body under direct control of the INC. Basically, an All-India Volunteer Board (AIVB) with a changing number of members was at the apex.¹²⁰ The Board had the power to

¹¹⁸ This is the constitution of 1931 (when the Dal came under direct Congress control, see below). It is cited here to elucidate some more general points. Cf. NMML, AICC papers, F.No. - 8, 10/1931, f.1 and the later constitution under: NMML, F.No. 70 (I), 1946-47, f. 65 (2 pp.). See also for the earlier version: WBSA, IB Branch, file no. 343/23, f. 13 (12).

¹¹⁹ This later version is the Draft Rules of 1946. These later draft rules were also including detailed passages dealing with internal organisation that specified that INA men should generally be officers of the Dal (see below). NMML, F No. 70 (I), 1946-47, for the quote cf. f. 61. For the spectre of the 'goonda' and its proximity to the volunteer itself, see below.

¹²⁰ In 1929, there were 21 members all in all. Later there were 9 or 12 members, five of which were provincial members. For the membership, see AICC, F. No 38, 1929. Among the more prominent persons connected with the Dal through the board were SC Bose, KF Nariman, Dr Satyapal (the founder of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha), Dr. SG Patwardhan, DV Gokhale, TC Goswami (MLA, a radical Congress leader from Bengal), MA Ansari, DV Gokhale, Bulusu Sambamurthy (one of the active Dal workers), Pratul Chandra Ganguli (ex-detenu), Jawaharlal Nehru, VR Naik, KF Nariman, AS Wali; Dr Chandulal Desai; Sardar Mangal Singh (Akali Dal/SGPC) and a number of revolutionaries (especially from Bengal; see on the Dal connection with Bengali revolutionaries: WBSA, IB

change the constitution, chalk out policy and training and give directives to the Dal branches. Hardikar lamented the lack of interest of the upper ranks of the Congress and the business of the AIVB members often in the early days, claiming that the AIVB members, except for Nehru, did nothing to further the Dal's recognition and programme among their PCCs.¹²¹ The AIVB members were typically the most formidable political celebrities the Dal could find, and, therefore, usually had other things to do than look after the the organisation.¹²² Provincial Volunteer Boards (PVB) were answerable directly to the AIVB.¹²³ The relationship between the PCC and the PVB was described by Hardikar as analogous to the relationship between the civil and police department of a government. Therefore, volunteers were to take orders only from their superior officers, not from the 'civilian' Congressmen.¹²⁴

The AIVB *de facto* provided a bridge to the INC and looked after the implementation of central Congress directives. Hardikar ran the day to day affairs of the Dal on his own responsibility but would consult Nehru on more structural or far-reaching decisions. The relationship was not without complications, and occasional encroachment on each other's (theoretical) areas of authority occurred. With the various constitutions of the party-affiliated volunteer bodies we find on paper a broadly democratic framework¹²⁵ providing for elections to a central board (often through the parent organisation where it existed) which was to ensure accountability. In practice the trend was toward a pyramidal structure at the apex of which was not the board but one leader (here Hardikar). The language, in alignment with the universal army analogies, of 'supreme commander', 'dictator' or similar terms are to be found at many points.

Branch, file no. 354/26, esp. ff. 4-2; see also below). Hardikar was an ex officio member as general secretary. See on the composition of the board also: NMML, Hardikar Papers, File 63, ff. 22-23

¹²¹ Hardikar, 'A Retrospect' [review of the SD Dal in 1925], *The Volunteer, Special issue for the Cawnpore Session of the Congress 1925*, pp. 5-9, see p. 6.

¹²² For the 1926, for instance, the AIVB included Sarojini Naidu, Shaukat Ali (president of the Dal for 1925), Shrinivas Iyengar, Rajendra Prasad, MA Ansari, TC Goswami, Nehru and a few others. The AIVB for 1929 consisted of the office-bearers SC Bose as president, VR Naik (treasurer), Hardikar (genl secy) and BG Lokare as under-secy.

¹²³ The PVB could set down their own rules but always had to get approval of the central board.

¹²⁴ Hardikar, 'What is the relationship between the Provincial Congress Committee and the Provincial volunteer Board...', *The Volunteer*, June 1925, p. 99.

¹²⁵ See especially the MNG (below) which was organised on the same lines as the Seva Dal; even the RSS, when forced to give itself a constitution, subscribed to this accepted format (which it never really adhered to, though; see below). A notable exception are the Khaksars - they had neither parent organisation nor constitution and, in line with Mashriqi's uncompromising vision, were organised as an army with a supreme commander without any masquerading (see below).

The pledge of the Congress volunteers, that was to be signed by everybody, stated that: "In the event of my imprisonment I shall not claim from the Congress any support for my family or dependants."¹²⁶ Admittedly, the Congress could hardly have provided financial support even if willing – but who could whole-heartedly sign up to such pledges if he was earning for a family? By 1931 volunteers were asked further to sign up for a number of years they were to specify on a form they had to fill. It was also stated that members had to be willing to travel, and take residence in any part of India that the HSD might desire them to.¹²⁷ Youth as a particular phase in life is considered as yet unsettled, partly because it is at times defined as the phase prior to earning a livelihood and is (usually) not burdened down by family responsibilities etc. In this respect, young people (as brahmacharyas) were the 'ideal volunteer' as far as organisations were concerned.

While, it seems, Hardikar and his friends had decided that, for the purpose of attracting a wide range of members, it might be prudent to formally keep aloof from the Congress, the explicit policy of acting as the trained rank and file of the Congress permeated the movement from very early on. Though not a Congress body, Hardikar kept repeating like a mantra that it was still a Congress organisation 'through and through'.¹²⁸ The Dal was in perennial financial difficulties especially as it expanded and started to retain a small group of paid full-timers and office secretaries. The Seva Dal always had to rely on financial aid from the Congress for its functioning. While the Dal had to raise most of their money themselves by public subscription, the CWC regularly gave amounts around Rs. 2000 for office expenses as well as to help out with the journal.¹²⁹ PCCs were called upon to contribute money to the Dal but did so, if at all, haphazardly. Hardikar usually had grant schemes for raising money. In 1926, he wanted to collect Rs. 25,000 as funds for the central office and full-time workers in the provinces.¹³⁰ Most of the time, the Dal led a hand-to-mouth ex-

¹²⁶ Resolution I of 36th INC, Ahmedabad, 31st Dec. 1921, cited from: AICC papers, F. No. 70 Pt I, 1946-47, f. 13).

¹²⁷ AICC papers, F.No. 8, 10/1931, f. 5.

¹²⁸ Hardikar, 'A Retrospect', Special issue of *The Volunteer* [1926], p. 5. Possibly, he felt the need to emphasise this point so much due to lingering criticism or distrust of the organisation - but there are few direct references to this, except in the case of Gandhi (see above).

¹²⁹ AICC Expenditure, 1928-29, NMML AICC Papers, F. No 15-20, 1929, f. 9-11.

¹³⁰ Details for budget in 1930, see NMML, AICC papers, F.No. 9, 1930. A regular fund was set up when the Dal came under Congress control. See below. Before that, the Dal was supposed to collect

istence, relying heavily on the financial aid from the CWC. The symbolic membership fee in the Dal was four *annas* (Hardikar felt people would thus take their membership more seriously and be active). For associates, who were patrons not taking part in the drill, it was Rs. 1.

Nehru, before becoming member-in-charge, acted as treasurer, which was convenient since he also saw his way to provide the Dal with funds or subsidies when needed. When the Congress took direct control of the Dal in 1931, a fixed fund was allotted after long discussions and haggling.¹³¹ It was, however, able to keep a core staff, a magazine (for some time) and set up regular training camps. A lot of this was made possible since the volunteers - again this being a general feature - basically paid their own way. They had to pay for their own uniforms, kit (whistles, badges), travel etc. meaning that the Dal had to maintain the superstructure in the form of its headquarters and staff only. It meant also that much depended on local initiative: where enough volunteers were able to raise funds or had the active support of their PCC, they might be able to pay an instructor or full-timers, give money to their more dedicated members for training courses offered at intervals by the Dal and to participate in camps and Congress sessions. In regions where the Congress was less strong or the local Congressmen less forthcoming (something that if Hardikar's lamentations are anything to go by happened a lot), the Dal was little more than a rudimentary fitness club or group of unpaid Congress pamphleteers. This made for a basic conflict that marked the Dal along with many of its counterparts: while the organisation was envisaged as a centralised body with a uniform appearance, prescribed activities and schedules, where orders were passed down from the command level to its branches, in practice it was rather a loose federal structure (if at all) that sometimes had little more in common than the name (and even that varied in many localities).

The Dal's beginnings were quite modest in its early years. A series of training camps, especially in Hardikar's home region, were held to discipline the enrolled members and build up a core group.

These camps often had no more than a dozen to twenty volunteers.¹³² In some cases, the camps fol-

its own funds, but in many years the INC paid something for the upkeep of the Dal or its mouth-piece *The Volunteer* (in 1925 this, for instance, was Rs. 1,000, in other years, say 1927 it was Rs. 2,000 out of Rs. 5,000 Hardikar applied for, cf. NMML, AICC papers, F.No. 70, 1946/47, f. 39).

¹³¹ See below on details.

¹³² On the early camps in Sitimani and Bijapur and their difficulties see, for instance, MSA, Home (Spcl), 355 (58), 1923, f.193, f. 205, 209, 211. Sitimani remained a semi-permanent training camp

ded mid-way through because funding was lacking or volunteers left. The number of volunteers was quite small. The Dal won over some scoutmasters to help with instruction, one of them being Shambunath De, from Bengal. Hardikar also sent some of his inner circle to Prof. Manikrao to learn lathi drill.¹³³ The military set-up of the camps made it hard in the beginning to find people voluntarily undergoing the routine which had lack of rest, discomfort, bad provisions and instructors barking military commands built into it.¹³⁴

But the Dal remained a body that was growing well in the area around its headquarters and had a direct impact on mobilisation there (i.e. the region that would become Karnataka and Maharashtra). Here in Hardikar's home province, he commanded over a wide network of contacts and a close association with the local PCC as well as a core group of workers around him.¹³⁵ Other Dals worked in semi-autonomous fashion and the amount of contact depends largely on personal ties and was otherwise limited to orders and recommendations passed down from the All India committee to the branches.¹³⁶ The Dal also commanded some influence and following in UP, Bihar and the Central Provinces, Andhra and Sindh, while it hardly made inroads into other areas for a long time (this often depended on the extent of the cooperation the local PCC afforded the body).

at the instance of Hardikar who strived to create more permanent structures.

¹³³ On Manikrao see above. Hardikar sent some of his volunteers for training at his Hanuman Vyayam Shala at Amraoti. Shambunath De, MC Mathanda, Nandkumar Vasishtha were sent to Prof. 'Rajratna Rajpriya' Manikrao for drill lessons for 2 months starting August 26, See *The Volunteer*, Aug. 1926, p. 193. Manikrao started offering short-term courses from the early 1920s and it was these short-term intensive courses Hardikar's chosen ones were admitted into. On the Vyayamshala, see also Joseph Alter, 'Physical education, sport and the intersection and articulation of 'modernities': The *Hanuman Vyayam Prasarak Mandal*', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 24, No. 9, 2007, pp. 1156-1171. The article focusses on some its general features and its participation in international sports festivals with its kabbadi troop, including the 1936 Olympics.

¹³⁴ Proper tables with military commands translated into Hindustani were produced relatively soon to complete the resemblance to an army. See NMML, AICC Papers, F. no. 60, 1946, ff. 3-5.

¹³⁵ Next to the above mentioned Shambunath De, MC Mathanda, Nandkumar Vasishtha together with individuals such as GG Jog, BV Burli, landowner Krishnarao Hoskoppa, NB Malgi, Vamanrao Naik, Hanamantrao Naik, BG Lokare (secretary of the Karnataka PVB) and RR Diwakar form the inner circle of Hardikar's instructors and propagandists in Karnataka. See NMML, Hardikar, Private Papers, Files 63 and 62.

¹³⁶ See on the Karnataka Dal, its members and proceedings of the Provincial Volunteer Board (PVB), and its working relationship with the Karnataka PCC esp. NMML, Private Papers, NS Hardikar, File 63. In this file especially can also be found the members of the other provincial bodies at the time. The provinces with orderly constituted PVBs were Bengal (despite the BPCC split trouble), CP Hindi, Andhra, 'Maharashtra' (Bombay Province), Bombay (city), Sindh, Punjab (with Dr Satyapal and Lala Duni Chand as well as Sardar Mangal Singh (Akali/SGPC member on the board), UP (with JK Birla) and Behar. (cf. *Ibid*, ff. 23-24 for PVBs in 1929).

Later, as Hardikar's network expanded and the halo around him grew, he commanded somewhat greater influence regarding affairs elsewhere too.

Lajpat Rai wanted Hardikar to come to Punjab for six months and build up the organisation,¹³⁷ while Malaviya urged a move of the HQ to Varanasi.¹³⁸ Overall, the Dal had some ardent supporters, chief of whom was Nehru; there was a handful of other active well-wishers,¹³⁹ and many Congressmen would sing praises of the Dal without getting involved and many more seemed to view the group with a certain apathy or at any rate did not actively involved in building up the organisation in their home provinces - a state of affairs Hardikar kept complaining about.

Seva Dal Camps, Discipline and Women

It was the annual Congress sessions that gave the Seva Dal a reliable jolt of activism. In 1924, the AICC session was to be at Belgaum, the heartland of the Seva Dal, and the event had Hardikar scrambling to prove the worth of his infant group. Enrolment campaigns were carried out and special pre-Conference training camps organised.¹⁴⁰ Women and men were enrolled by separate organisations, namely the Dal and the Bhagini Mandal. Boy Scouts and volunteers both were enrolled.¹⁴¹ The term 'scout' here is ambiguous - it simply denoted children under 14 in some cases, but Hardikar also did send a group of volunteers to Mysore to undergo a course in scout training by one of the scoutmasters there. He evolved an antagonistic relationship with the Scout movement a few years later (see below) but never quite managed to pull his group out of its proximity to the various scouting bodies.¹⁴² Men and women (141) along with scouts (numbering 198) made up part

¹³⁷ NS Hardikar to Hoskoppa (fwd. to TC Goswami), dt 5th Oct. 1928, in NMML, Private Papers of NS Hardikar, File 11, 1923-1931, f. 20.

¹³⁸ Narayana Rao, *Dr NS Hardikar*, p. 126.

¹³⁹ The President of the Karnataka PCC, Kowjalgi was one of them; Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay; Umabai Kundapur; TC Goswami, MLA from Bengal; Rajendra Prasad; Srinivas Iyengar and Sarojini Naidu; NC Kelkar of the HMS; H Krishan Rao of Hoskoppa, a wealthy landowner from Mysore and member of the Mysore Representative Assembly who became an active Dal leader).

¹⁴⁰ See 'Karnatak and the Belgaum Congress', *The Volunteer*, February 1925, pp. 22- 27, where the organisation, camp routine etc. are laid out. See also *Hindustani Seva Dal Belgaum Conference Report 1924* (special issue of *The Volunteer*).

¹⁴¹ On the Seva Dal and the relationship with Boy Scouts, see below

¹⁴² 11 young men were sent to Mysore and Hardikar reports that they subsequently started scout camps of their own in various places, see Hardikar, 'Strength and Composition of Volunteers at Belgaum Congress', *The Volunteer*, Feb. 1925, p. 29

of the 1156 volunteers for the Conference.¹⁴³ Hardikar took pains to emphasise that these sevaks came from all castes and creeds, and while he stated that there were farmers, weavers, merchants, landlords and a few lawyers and physicians, it seems quite obvious from his reports that a significant number of the volunteers consisted of students and graduates, along with a few 'double-graduates'.¹⁴⁴ Thankfully, Hardikar provides us with one of the very few tables of caste and creed allegiance of the volunteers, revealing that in Karnataka some 3/4 of the participants were Brahmin and only 40 out of the 817 male volunteers were Muslims.¹⁴⁵ That the Dal, and so many other overtly secular organisations, drew their membership mainly from one community (and often one class) has not only to do with politics (although one could debate at length the image of the Congress as a Hindu body). Among other things it tells us something about the social background of leadership and the way enrolment and mobilisation was typically organised: that is, through pre-existing networks based on neighbourhoods. Caste and class feed starkly into this, as neighbourhoods were often segregated.

The Provincial Bhagini Mandal helped enrol and organise the female volunteers, the *sahayikas*. Umabai Kundapur¹⁴⁶ was in charge of these 'lady volunteers' who made their debut as uniformed

¹⁴³ From the Dal side 1095 had been enrolled from all over Karnataka by volunteers touring the province for the purpose - out of which 817 actually turned up. Hardikar, 'Strength and Composition of Volunteers at Belgaum Congress', Table III, *The Volunteer*, Feb. 1925, p. 30. The aim had been to recruit 1500, see DSP, Belgaum dt. 29th Nov. 1925, in MSA, Home (Spcl), 355 (58), 1923, f 199.

¹⁴⁴ Hardikar, 'Strength and Composition of Volunteers at Belgaum Congress', *The Volunteer*, Feb. 1925, p. 27

¹⁴⁵ Tables and actual numbers or enrolment lists are hard to come by as stated above. Hardikar cautions that the table might not be completely accurate. Most of the volunteers had been enrolled in Belgaum and Dharwar (245 and 107 respectively), then Bijapur and Mysore (70 and 62). A steep 650 out of 817 were Brahmins, 16 Kshatriyas, 31 Vaishyas (in the local caste order, these castes would have not been that strong numerically, but the figure for Brahmins remains noteworthy), 13 'sudras', 25 Jains (almost exclusively from Belgaum), 4 Arya Samajis which are interestingly enough listed along with the other castes, and 4 dalits along with a few other localised castes (3 Raddis, 1 Naidu, 16 Lingayats). There were 40 Muslims, 1 Christian and 1 Jew, giving us a grand total of 765 Hindus (Hardikar did include the 4 untouchables in this category). Table in op.cit, p. 28. The caste figures might be tending toward the upper classes (if we relate these to castes) as travel expenses, kit and like costs had to be borne by the volunteers themselves. Some routine of sending contingents of volunteers for whom travel expenses would be paid by their local PCC evolved, was functional only to the extent that the PCC was interested. The label 'Brahmin' does of course not tell us that much about their socio-economic background, especially in this area and at this point, the class/milieu alliance of the volunteers besides the students can only be guessed at.

¹⁴⁶ Umabai Kundapur, born 1892 in Mangalore, was married to Sanjiv Rao Kundapur at 13. He died when she was 25. Her father-in-law Anandarao Kundapur was a reformist and she could study up to the matriculation exam. She became involved with a variety of women uplift societies early on. Until the Belgaum session of 1924 she lived in Bombay. Hardikar, impressed with her social work

Congress volunteers at the Belgaum session. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, who had already joined the All India Women's Conference (AIWC), enlisted in the Dal in 1924 (before the Belgaum session) at the request of both Hardikar and Kundapur. Her husband, Harindranath Chattopadhyay, brother of Sarojini Naidu, was a volunteer as well.¹⁴⁷ Kamaladevi came from the region (Mangalore) and an upper-middle class background but coped with the camp's setting of 'austerity with a vengeance'.¹⁴⁸ 141 women could make it to the Congress, plus 15 Girl Guides (below the age of 14 and mostly put in the 'Singing Department'). Out of the sahayikas, 92 were below 30 years, and only 6 above 40. The 'lady volunteers' were used for 'light work' only, making their scope of activity 'very limited', Hardikar said. In these early days, it seems, he had not much use for them but wanted them there to represent the inclusiveness of the Congress and Dal. The women were not used for crowd control, helping attendees with their luggage or regulating human traffic, camp guard, sentry duty and similar activities which made for much of the work of their male counterparts. Later on, nursing was introduced in the SD as a social service activity, and women were mostly engaged in this. The camp routine here as later on, was rough. The cold at that session made it even harder. Gandhi described that the volunteers often more than 16 hours on their legs.¹⁴⁹ When some of the (male) volunteers went on a hunger strike at a perceived slight from the kitchen staff, Hardikar rushed back to the camp around 2 o'clock at night, shouted for Umabai outside the secluded camp of the women, and made the lady volunteers quick-march to the kitchen, cook food and serve the young men.¹⁵⁰ Gendered roles were taken for granted and the volunteer life of a woman reproduced the tasks of the home in the public sphere as far as the women were concerned.

experience, allegedly talked her into coming back to Hubli, where she took over the coordination of the Bhagini Mandal (founded 1922) and Hardikar's other pet project, the Tilak Library (or Tilak Kanyashala). She was also in charge of a school for girls adjacent to the Karnataka Press belonging to her father in law. See Narayana Rao, *Dr NS Hardikar*, pp. 99-100. [see also www.kamat.com/kalranga/women/kundapur.htm, retrieved 3.4.2012].

¹⁴⁷ Umabai Kundapur, 'Pioneer of Women's Movement', in Golikeri et al. (eds), *Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of Dr. N. S. Hardikar*, pp. 33-36, see p. 33.

¹⁴⁸ Sakuntala Narasimhan, *Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay - The Romantic Rebel*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1999, p. 35. The book is mostly a hagiographic account of Kamaladevi's life (and lacking proper references) but one of the few that mentions her engagement with the Dal quite regularly.

¹⁴⁹ 'Mahatmaji on Volunteers' in *The Volunteer*, March 1925, p. 2.

¹⁵⁰ VS Narayana Rao, *Dr NS Hardikar*, pp. 115-116.

Hardikar could be a rather autocratic stickler for detail and he had arrogating demands for discipline. His exacting tables, statistics and the incessant listing of faults, and organisational critique and self-critique practised by him in *The Volunteer* is reminiscent of Gandhi's habit of elaborating on every detail, every fault to elucidate for all the way to perfection. At Belgaum Hardikar complained that a share of volunteers were always indisposed either for lack of rest, food or on some 'pretext'. His own observations were that the volunteers tended to rebel against the imposed strict order, might even defy authority but would eventually be broken in. He put this down to the general lack of appreciation for discipline of people. At later sessions, it did come to almost full-blown strikes of volunteers.¹⁵¹

Parallel to the Belgaum session, the Second Volunteer Conference was held with Shaukat Ali presiding. The resolutions at the Belgaum conference called for the establishment of permanent training centres in each province through the local PCCs and one All-India training camp at Sitimani (Bijapur district). Only the latter was actually implemented by Hardikar himself and Sitimani became at least a semi-permanent camp. The pattern of the Volunteer Conference taking place around the AICC sessions would be set. Even though large batches of Hardikar's own Dal volunteers did not serve at most of the AICC sessions in the 1920s (the provinces tended to use the occasion to set up corps of their own) the Dal usually sent instructors to help prepare the local volunteers, and the advance intensive training camps and organisation were from now modelled on the Dal paradigm.¹⁵²

Let us briefly consider the question of women in and around the Dal. It was in the mid-1920s that a women's wing of the Dal really came into being, which functioned separately. It had its own leadership and, of course, its own instructors. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay and a few women such

¹⁵¹ Many volunteers remembered him also as a strict, but loving father figure in his role as *senapati*. See esp. the account by Sri NR Malgi, 'Dr Hardikar Towards A Volunteer' in Golikeri, Ramakant with GB Mahasabde and Shushil Mukherji (eds), *Souvenir In Commemoration of the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of Dr. N. S. Hardikar, Founder of the Hindustani Seva Dal*, Bombay: Dr. Hardikar Diamond Jubilee Celebrations Committee, 1950, pp. 66-67.

¹⁵² The HSD did serve at Kanpur in 1925, and send instructors, for instance, to the Lahore session in 1929 and held a variety of training camps. In Madras 1927, a sevika contingent served at the session. Subhas Bose dis-invited the Dal for the 1928 session as he wanted to train his own corps (see below), as did a number of other local Congress bodies later.

as Umabai Kundapur and Dr. (Mrs) Mahajan, who were also active in the All-India Women's Conference (AIWC) were principally responsible for it.¹⁵³ Sevikas became a more and more prominent feature at later Congress sessions after Belgaum.¹⁵⁴ Kamaladevi was elected president of the Youth Congress session at Ahmedabad 1929 and became the principal organiser of the women's wing in 1931 when the Congress took control of the Dal (see below). Initially, it was only after much discussion and some pressure (and in the context of the expected CD campaign) that Hardikar eventually consented to a regular women's wing which became known as *Desh Sevikas*.¹⁵⁵ A separate Women's Committee within the AIVB was formed at that time, putting the sevikas institutionally on firmer footing as, until that point, responsibilities were somewhat hazy.¹⁵⁶ Kamaladevi and others won, by and by, greater control over the sevikas but it seems that the body always functioned more as an appendage to the AIVB than a board in its own right. Women were trained extensively in preparation for the Civil Disobedience Campaign in separate camps which offered training in first aid and picketing especially. Some 500 of them were trained by the Dal. A central women's camp was held at Matunga up to January 1932 under the command of Kumari Lajjavati, an associate of

¹⁵³ Other prominent members of the women's wing of the Seva Dal included Mrs Perin captain (Bombay), Mrs Avantikabai Gokhale, Kalyabani Sayyad, Miss Sofia Somji (later the wife of Dr. Khan, brother of Abdul Gaffar Khan and the 'commander' of the sevikas in Bombay), Miss Kisan Dhumatkar and others. In Bombay, ASE Iyer, in cooperation with Kalyabani Sayyad, played an important role in the setting up of the women's wing in Bombay, where he trained the male volunteers out the time.

¹⁵⁴ In 1927 at the Madras session, Kamaladevi organised an independent women's volunteer corps, known as the 'Orange Brigade', cf. 'Women's Part in National Movement: Interview with Kamaladevi', *Bombay Chronicle* 11th Dec. 1931; Sakuntala Narasimhan, *Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay: The Romantic Rebel*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1999, pp. 36-38. A sevika section was also conspicuous at the 1929 Lahore session where large numbers of college girls enlisted and were trained by Hardikar's lieutenant ASE Iyer along with an associate of Lajpat Rai, Kumari Lajjavati.

¹⁵⁵ See Umabai Kundapur, 'Pioneer of Women's Movement', in Golikeri et al. (eds), *Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of Dr. N. S. Hardikar*, pp. 33-35.

¹⁵⁶ The AIVB was responsible for it but not much on the sevikas as well. The first president of the Women's Central Committee of the AIVB was the aforementioned Sambamurty and the first session was held in June 1931. The members of the AIVB had the right to attend and Vamanrao (or VR) Naik, Nehru, YJ Meherally were present from that body. The others were Kamala Nehru, Mrs. Avanthikabai Gokhale, Durgabhai Joshi, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Umabai Kundapur (convener), and Hardiker (ex officio). Kamaladevi was nominated Organising Secy. and Kundapur office secy. The uniform for the three sections of volunteers was discussed and a training programme for women chalked out by a sub-committee which consisted of Kamala Nehru and Kamaladevi with Hardiker, Sambamurty and Mrs. A. Gokhale. Cf AICC papers, F.No. G - 08, 10, 1931, see ff. 161-167.

Lajpat Rai.¹⁵⁷ These sevikas efficiently organised pickets of liquor and cloth shops in the Bombay area, many courting arrest in the process.¹⁵⁸

The question of women in the volunteer movement was, nominally an easy one: yes, women could be volunteers just like men, Hardikar unhesitatingly proclaimed. But problems dogged this aspect of the movement throughout its long history. That a very gendered idea of division of labour prevailed in the Seva Dal is not that surprising: 'lady volunteers' as Hardikar dubbed them, made natural nurses, *khadi* spinners, and educators of other women and children - starting with their own. The assessment (exemplified by Gandhi) of women as natural satyagrahis due to their inbred patience, gentleness, chastity, self-sacrifice and other essentialising assumptions informed the Seva Dal's organisation as well.¹⁵⁹ 'Woman's mind is stronger and nobler than that of man, because she is thought by nature to curb and control it to keep it chaste and pure. She may appear howsoever fickle-minded, but it is only to achieve her end, to reach her goal', an author in *The Volunteer*, wrote.¹⁶⁰ On a slightly different trajectory, Shaukat Ali also rephrased the Gandhian paradigm that women are actually the stronger because the more self-controlled and selfless sex.¹⁶¹ In the age of mass mobilisation, women - notwithstanding whether all leaders were happy with this or not - began to be a part of those masses that were mobilised, and occupied public roles in meetings, women's conferences etc. And as service for the nation required a strong body and mind, women in their role as protectors of culture and (potential) future mothers did too - maybe even more so. Their reproductive function made it biologically imperative that their bodies should be made fit

¹⁵⁷ Safia Somji was the camp secretary for Matunga. A complete list of 'campers' does not seem to be available. On a list of those women who deposited some money with the office we find 59 names (+8 names from later correspondence and notes). From the names, at least, it appears that there is only one Muslim woman, but there is a good spread of the provinces with Bombay participants dominating: 5 from Maharashtra, 3 from Karnataka, 15 from Bombay province, 13 from Tamil Nadu, 5 from Andhra, 5 from UP, 7 from Behar, 2 from Delhi, 2 from as far off as Bengal and 4 from CP Hindi. See NMML, NS Hardikar, Private Papers, F.11, ff. 29-31.

¹⁵⁸ Some of them went beyond mere picketing and the backlash in opinion against the Dal was substantial, claims Kundapur. Further research is necessary. See Umabai Kundapur, 'Pioneer of Women's Movement', p. 35

¹⁵⁹ See for instance Madhu Kishwar, 'Gandhi on Women', *EPW*, Vol. 20, No. 40, 1985, pp. 1691-1702.

¹⁶⁰ VA Modak (BA, Life-worker, Hindu Widows Home, Hingane-Budruk), 'Lady Volunteers', *The Volunteer*, November 1925, p. 273.

¹⁶¹ Talking to the Seva Dal volunteers about the defence of India in a coming war or should the British fail to do the necessary, he claimed that even if the men of India should fail in the coming struggle, the women would not. Women were 'used to a daily life of suffering and sacrifice, the two great qualities needed to make a good soldier, he said. Cf. Shaukat Ali, 'You will not be treated as stepchildren', *Special Issue of the Volunteer for the Belgaum Congress 1924*, p. 11.

and healthy so that they might bear the future generation of 'heroes' and soldiers.¹⁶² This was tied in then with the wide-spread eugenic discourse, which, as we have seen above, was based on a 'bastardised' popular scientism that welded together Social Darwinism/Lamarckianism/Nietzscheanism.¹⁶³

Since excellent studies on birth control and eugenics exist, there is little need here to elaborate on this aspect. The sanguine point to be restated is that projects that tended to be seen as potentially empowering of women such as birth control often lent themselves to a discourse that restrained women more than anything else.¹⁶⁴ Partha Chatterjee, building on his arguments about the separation of an 'inner' and 'outer' sphere in the nationalist discourse, pointed out that it was anti-colonialism itself that made it infeasible for women to highlight feminist issues if doing so would have brought them in conflict with the nationalist agenda or laid the latter open to criticism.¹⁶⁵

One structural problem that applied to volunteering females was the strong authority family or guardians would normally exercise. A good example for this, and the notions 'volunteering' might be linked up to, is the story of Prema Kantak, a *sevika* who helped organise the National Volunteer Corps for the Maharashtra PCC.¹⁶⁶ Kantak was planning a camp for women, where Seth Jammalal Bajaj and Gadgil were expected as speakers on 'revolution in women's life' and 'world politics'. This caused somewhat of a public scandal, notably driven by the moral outrage of the Democratic

¹⁶² Phrase by VA Modak, the above-cited author who also penned instruction books about the use of guns and the Indian Defence Problem, wrote in the *Volunteer*: 'In her girl-hood if women will be given proper opportunities for exercising her limbs and develop herself fully, she will certainly build a stronger and more powerful body too. She will indeed be healthy in the right term.' VA Modak, 'Lady Volunteers', p. 274. We have referred to the inclusion of women in the discourse about physical fitness coupled with the necessity of 'self-defence' above.

¹⁶³ See the debate above and in the introduction. See also Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, pp. 158-184 which focusses on 'race thinking' in Britain and in the imperial context.

¹⁶⁴ Sanjam Ahluwalia, *Reproductive Restraints. Birth Control in India, 1877-1947*, Urbana/ Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008, see introduction. It could actually be questioned to what extent the birth control was a contemporary tool of empowerment since it seems to be overshadowed by a strand of positive eugenics in many parts of the world.

¹⁶⁵ Women's role was, as seen by contemporaries, that of preserving element of what Partha Chatterjee has described as the 'inner sphere' in the Indian nationalist discourse. Her role was always over-determined by her procreative abilities and her consequent responsibility for the upbringing of succeeding generations and their being imbued with the right values. Partha Chatterjee, 'The nation and its women', in *The Nation and its Fragments, Colonial and Postcolonial History*, New Delhi: OUP, 1997 (1st ed. Princeton, 1993), see pp. 116-134.

¹⁶⁶ AICC papers, F.No. G - 47, 48, 49/ 1936, f 11.

Party¹⁶⁷, who claimed that the Congress was dominated by socialists and, while they didn't mind the economics, they were opposed to the socialist stance on sex. In Russia there was no respect for the holy bond of marriage. '[T]hey want licence not liberty.' Socialist young men, so beloved by the Congress, held the same views, they claimed.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, guardians were not willing to send their daughters and sisters to the volunteer corps, and they warned other parents about these danger, too. As a result, many women had to stay home, Kantak stated when she wrote to Nehru that, while she did not know a lot about Russia and appreciated what they had done 'for humanity', she tentatively enquired whether Nehru truly wanted the 'same state of affairs [of lacking family morals, we surmise] brought about in India'. She concluded: 'I suppose you would better choose India to rise in a new form on the old basis of Aryan civilisation of ideal ancient times.'¹⁶⁹

The exuberance of youth - naturally? - always also came back to the question of sex. Brahmacharya was, of course, advocated to any serious national worker. But the question was all the more pressing with regard to women's 'honour'. Kamaladevi reported Vallabhbhai Patel to have said that a '... shocking atmosphere [was] prevailing in the country. Reading of Socialist and Sex-literature is the order of the days [sic]. These youths get divorced from the realities of life and content themselves by talking and criticising others and not doing anything. Hence I run away from the students and youths.'¹⁷⁰ By and large, it is amazing to what an extent the language of reproductive morals prevailed. Women themselves were active authors in the conceptualisation of women's primary role as mothers, and as such Indian 'feminism' remained subservient to nationalist concerns while also using the overwhelming patriarchal discourse strategically to press for certain issues.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ A socially conservative responsivist group.

¹⁶⁸ In this context reference was made to a book by socialist Minoo Masani, 'Russia through Indian Eyes', to which Nehru wrote the introduction and recommended it to the young generation, as an example of the hapless admiration for all things Russian that the Democrats (mostly Hindu Sabha) found so disdainful. On the 'socialist fashion' in the 1920s see below.

¹⁶⁹ AICC papers, F.No. G - 47, 48, 49/ 1936, pp. 4-6 of the letter.

¹⁷⁰ Kamaladevi wryly countered with another stereotype: sex was the creative aspect of man and had never been a taboo in Oriental culture. See Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay in *Congress Socialist*, 14th March 1936, p. 7.

¹⁷¹ For a summary of the prevailing debates, see for instance Sanjam Ahluwalia, *Reproductive Restraints: Birth Control in India, 1877-1947*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008, see esp pp. 85-88, on Kamaladevi and her approach to sex and birth control, see pp. 95-98.

The close link between an imagined organic nation-body, physical fitness, a 'healthy' (national) character and common contemporaneous notions of eugenic (and Malthusian xenophobic) ideas may be re-stated here. Ideas and terms referred to already above shaped notions of what the state-citizen relation was ideally to be, which formed a basis and a common vocabulary for very different parties and organisations to express their ideas. As Sarah Hodges noted for the 1920s and 30s: 'Most social and political debates in India were informed and energised by eugenic thinking.'¹⁷² This was not only true for India but for England, the 'Continent', and other places where similar debates also prevailed.¹⁷³ What is striking is the degree to which women themselves subscribed or had to subscribe to this (legitimising) discourse. There existed a truly ambiguous relationship between the Indian women's movement and nationalist movement (with all its patriarchal assumptions), the dynamic of which was marked by women aligning themselves to the nationalist discourse whenever a feminist discourse would have brought them in conflict with the former.¹⁷⁴ It seems that it was mainly in earlier Communist and Socialist circles and briefly in the early 1930s that a different set of arguments concerning women's role and empowerment - also sexually - gets articulated more forcefully, and that, too, with its own set of ambiguities.¹⁷⁵

Models and Influences

We have referred to the use of the term 'scout' above. The relationship between the scouts and the Dal needs a short elaboration. As we have stated, Hardikar soon realised the need to draw lines of

¹⁷² Sarah Hodges, 'Indian Eugenics in an Age of Reform', in idem, (ed). *Reproductive Health in India*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2006, pp. 115-138, see p. 115. Hodges situates the study in this wider context but is mainly concerned with the realm of marriage and eugenics, the area most self-professed eugenicists were active in. For a detailed study see Sarah Hodges, *Contraception, colonialism and commerce : birth control in South India, 1920-1940*, Aldershot et al: Ashgate, 2008. There is a large periphery of people fascinated by eugenics yet not active in any scientific field. See the brief comments in Zachariah, *Developing India*, pp. 247-251. See also above, in this chapter on ideas of evolution, Social Darwinism and Aurobindo.

¹⁷³ See, for instance, Katherine Holden, 'Nature takes no morality', *Women's History Review*, Vol. 11, No. 3 2002, pp. 483-87 on British eugenics.

¹⁷⁴ Ahluwalia points towards the upper-class and caste subjectivity of middle-class feminists that prevented them from articulating women's rights. Ahluwalia, *Reproductive Restraints*.

¹⁷⁵ Yusuf Meherally's journal *Vanguard* is a good example here as it exhibits an unusual emphasis on women's equality and positive references to sexuality. See below on the magazine. The *Congress Socialist* also advocated a different set of moral values in this connection at times.

demarcation between his own group and other movements, and he singled out the Scouts as the biggest competitor, it seems. The influence of the scouts as an organisational and moral model, combining the best of muscular Christianity and permanent mobilisation, and the parallel developments to them are visible everywhere - from the steady rhetoric about character building and the need for valour, strength, bravery to the camps with their white tents set up in orderly rows like a military encampment.

Hardikar expended considerable time denouncing the official scout organisation, next to the University Training Corps for which he also had little love, and pointing out the differences between those bodies and volunteers. The fundamental difference was, naturally, that the volunteers were a national movement while scouts and UTC were (partly) governmental, hence their training was for the benefit of the state, they were non-political and 'spiritless' or 'adventureless', lacking in that most important characteristic of the volunteer, the 'soul stirring' realisation of national duty through self-sacrificial service.¹⁷⁶ The closeness between scouts and volunteers was not lost on Hardikar, and he did what he could to disavow the connection. Hardikar reacted directly to repeated questions by readers and acquaintances about the differences. Hardikar portrayed the Scouts as an 'ideal-less' organisation aimed to enable the boy to have a good and successful life, and thereby reducing it in a dismissive tone to an organisation concerned with the individual and at the same time a lap-dog of the Government. The Dal on the other hand was a patriotic body aimed at winning liberty for India and training people towards that goal and thus was an organically growing 'people's movement'.¹⁷⁷ Some scoutmasters - especially in the southern regions - acted as instructors for the Dal earlier on and Hardikar earlier sent his best and brightest to obtain training from scoutmasters in Mysore or Travancore. They were then used to set up volunteer training camps in different parts of Karnataka.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Hardikar, 'U.T.C. Men, Scouts and Volunteers - The difference in their training', *The Volunteer*, December 1925, pp. 294-296.

¹⁷⁷ See Hardikar, 'Comparison and Contrast of the Scout and the Volunteer Movement', *The Volunteer*, August 1926, pp. 175- 176.

¹⁷⁸ On the camps see 'Volunteer Training in Karnatak', *Bombay Chronicle*, dt. 11th Nov. 1924, MSA, Home (Spcl), 355 (58), 1923 [no. ff.] There were camps in Bijapur, Belgaum, Hardwar, Dharwar, haveri and Hardikar was on his way to organise more at different places (Mangalore, Kumta). Mr GG Jog was in charge of the Dharwar camp. See also above.

Hardikar perceived of the Pioneers in Russia as an ideal volunteer body akin to the Dal: a nationalist version of the scouts with political aims (he referred to them as a Russian version of the scouts based on the Russian conditions and genius). He held the Pioneers up for emulation. Especially the explicit state sponsorship, unified structure and total enrolment of youth were attractive features to Hardikar. His special admiration was due to the naturalisation of the states of the volunteer - his (and her) individual evolution: all youth became pioneers, then grew naturally into kom-somols and then communists according to a prescribed path based on their age.¹⁷⁹ That one could simply grow into a particular belief system that included service, hard work and discipline was an inspiring thought for the *senapati*.

National versions of the Scout movement had come up early on. Some scout troops existed as early as 1910 started by the Theosophists and taken up by others soon after. It was Lord Chelmsford who vetoed the integration of Indians into the official Scout Movement in 1916, even though Baden-Powell favoured the move by that time.¹⁸⁰ Annie Besant started the Indian Boy Scouts Association the same year in Madras and Benares and was closely involved with the movement.¹⁸¹ In 1918, the Seva Samiti Boy Scouts (SSBS) were formed, in the same year that Malaviya started the Akhil Bharatiya Seva Samiti in a move to widen the movement. Hirdaynath Kunzru¹⁸², who

¹⁷⁹ 'Scouting in Russia', *The Volunteer*, April 1927, pp. 93-97.

¹⁸⁰ Baden-Powell, the typical Public School boy educated at Charterhouse in the day when athleticism and manliness and homosocial bonding (despite the homosexuality scare due to the Oscar Wilde trial) were the cardinal traits that counted - had conservative ideas of race but also romanticised the 'wild man' and the innate good of 'the natural man'. He saw his scouts as toned-down equivalent of tribal initiation rites' (Jeal, p. 421). He had served in India some 20 years after the 'mutiny' and had returned to India on later occasions, living in the country for some 5 years all in all (1876-79, 1897-1899). But Baden-Powell eschewed conflicts with authority and relented on most issues where met with serious antagonism. See his biographer, Tim Jeal, *Baden-Powell - Founder of the Boy Scouts*, New Haven/ London: Yale University Press, 1995 (1st ed. 1989).

¹⁸¹ Carey Watt, 'The promise of 'character' and the spectre of sedition: The boy scout movement and colonial consternation in India, 1908-1921', *South Asia*, 22, 2, 1999, pp. 37-62. In 1920, Besant worked also quite closely with the official scouts before turning rather militant again. See for instance Maharaj Singh, to GA Thomas, secy to GoBom, Edu. Dept, Lucknow, dt 25th Feb. 1920, MSA, Educational Dept, 240, 1920, F. 14G.

¹⁸² Hirdaynath Kunzru, born 1887, was one of the founders of the Servants of India Society in 1908 along with Gokhale and belonged also to the Seva Samiti. He was sent by Gokhale to study economics at LSE in 1911-12. Together with Malaviya he edited 'The Leader' for a spell. The Seva Samiti Scout Association (Humanity Uplift Service Society) was based in Allahabad. Later he became the Servants of India president in 1935 and in 1936 was elected its president for life. He became deeply involved with the Cadet Corps organisation due to his abiding interest in the Indian defence Problem already in the 1930s and became President of the Indian Council for World Affairs after independence. He was also first National Commissioner of the Bharat Scouts and Guides from 1952 to November 1957, and again from November 1960 to November 1964.

was a member of the Servants of India Society and the secretary for the Akhil Bharatiya Seva Samiti, also joined the SS Boy Scouts. Both SSBS and IBS had wings for girl guides as well, but, as in the BP scouts, these had a very definite gender bias and aimed at instilling domestic qualities in girls.¹⁸³ Nursing, as with the various *mahila mandals*, was an important part of the training. In the 1920s, as we have seen above, the attitude towards physical cultures of girls shifted slowly, though it retained all its gendered ambiguities, self-defence became more important, and a good physique was of course important to make for healthy mothers of the future citizenry. Nevertheless, the unofficial scout movement soon outnumbered the official one.¹⁸⁴ By 1918, Besant's group counted some 20,000 youths, and the YMCA got into the fray and started training their own scout-masters. Two rival scout organisations to the Baden-Powell Scouts eventually came into being. In 1921 Baden-Powell came to India to seek a unification of the movements, coinciding with Besant's pro-Government phase and for some time, the movements were amalgamated. The Seva Samitis (under Malaviya and thus connected to conservative Hindu opinion) and other nationalist scout-like organisations of course remained outside these considerations.¹⁸⁵ Baden-Powell, relenting somewhat on the question of race in his last years, came to India in 1937 for a Scout jamboree attended by some 5000 scouts with the intention of strengthening the movement there. He ended up doing the opposite, as he committed the extraordinary faux-pas to claim that there was no word in Hindustani for 'honour'. The backlash on the eve of the 1937 elections was harsh and several Scout branches saw no other way to salvage their existence than to disassociate from the 'Imperial headquarters' for good, even though Linlithgow, doubling as Chief Scout for India' expended much energy trying to save the situation - he had invited Baden-Powell, hoping no doubt that it would be an opportune moment to strengthen the loyalist Scouts.¹⁸⁶ Hardikar, too, wrote some articles on this episode, and even intended to start a new group to be called the 'Bharat Kumars', but Nehru

¹⁸³ See also Watt, *Serving the Nation*, pp. 116-117.

¹⁸⁴ The scout movement grew quickly and seemed a threat, so much so that Lord Pentland declared himself president of the Indian scouts and attempted to promote the official organisation lest they would be outnumbered by Besant's 'up-starts'.

¹⁸⁵ See Jeal, *Baden-Powell*, pp. 496-497.

¹⁸⁶ See Bombay Chronicle of 10th May 1937, 'A Gross Libel', which is a scathing attack calling the utterance and 'unpardonable calumny' and 'Jingoism in excelsis' or just Baden-Powell's senility. For Linlithgow's face-saving mission see 'Printed Leaflet, Information Series No.3 - Simla, 30th September 1937: His Excellency the Viceroy (Linlithgow) and the Boy Scouts Movement, address to the Governors of Provinces in their capacity as Chief Scouts of their respective Provinces'; see also the letter by Linlithgow, dt. 16th Sept. 1937 in IOR, L/I/1/62, File 16/24, ff. 13-14 and printed leaflet.

was less than enthusiastic saying that he had not given it much thought, but that the Seva Samiti Scouts were fairly widespread and unless there were definite reasons to the contrary they could cooperate with it to some extent.¹⁸⁷

The colonial state again viewed these with mixed feelings - depending on the political view of the colonial administrator concerned - but generally left them alone, the basic equation of the state that if it was non-political it was legitimate held in this respect, and was made tactical use of by a number of movements, as we shall see. The Hindustan Scouts operated in the extended orbit of the Congress but were not used for 'party work' or rallies. The Muslim League would as late as the mid-1940s start a similar organisation but wanted it firmly within the orbit of the party – much to the dismay of the architect of the plan. In a series of letters to the organiser of the MNG he explained the necessity of having a children's organisation (at least semi-) independent of the party to wean away boys and girls from the 'de-Islamicising' influence of the official scout movement. He wrote 'purely for political reasons themselves, we should not ascribe the proposed Muslim Scout organisation to belong to any political organisation.' and refers as a good example of a successful framework to the Hindustan Scout Organisation which 'is carrying out the educational and cultural plan of the National Congress, but to all intents and purposes it has nothing to do with the Congress or with the Congress volunteer organisation.' He objected to the plan favoured by the MNG of a 'Juvenile Corps' as part of the parent volunteer body on the grounds that it meant "“Volunteer” in the too often usual sense of the term, every political and even sub-communal organisation having its own “Volunteers” '. Scouting on the other hand was a 'sustained educational affair with nothing adhoc [sic] about it.' He concluded: "Muslim Girls and Boys needed 'the help of its educational programme [more] than many other *advanced* groups in India'.¹⁸⁸

Naturally, there was an understanding in political circles that a successful scout or similar organisation generates also a recruiting pool for follow-up organisations. But explicitly scouting had a

¹⁸⁷ See NMML, AICC, G-64, 1937, and *ibid*, G-39, 1928.

¹⁸⁸ GM Mehkri, Bombay, to Nawabzada Siddique Ali Khan, Salar-e-Ala, All-India Muslim National Guard [MNG], c/o Central Office, AIML, Daryaganj, Delhi, dt. 25.6.44, NMML, Delhi Police Records, F.No.-66, ff. 33-34 [my emphasis].

more long-term task as an alternative educational institution, which for the sake of nation-building would prepare children for 'efficiency', since it famously 'builds character' and hardiness, respect for authority, and makes them apt in a number of skills. In short, scouting, as in England and elsewhere in the world, would produce good citizens - and in India national Scouts organisations would make good citizens even of those who could not be included into the national fold on explicitly political terms and thus had a much wider reach.¹⁸⁹

But it would be much too simple to see the scouts as the model youth groups followed. The scouts themselves were merely an aspect of a wider trend concerned with the moulding of citizens, regeneration and national efficiency, as we have already observed. From the *Wandervogel* to the international youth movement, the *Turnerverein* to the Bolshevik youth groups, the Anushilan to the upheavals in Turkey, Egypt and Ireland, models of success and failure were available and invited systematic comparison to tease out successful patterns that the sum of history and man's advance had to offer. The scouts themselves mirrored rather than invented a certain *Zeitgeist* which culminated in what has become labelled as 'Muscular Christianity'. The term, while apt for its context, is unfortunate as it obstructs the view on the wider groundswell from which it rose.¹⁹⁰

Another important model for youth mobilisation in India was the *Sokols* founded in Bohemia in 1862 and modelled on the 'Turnerverein' but adopted by its founder Miroslav Tyrš to suit the needs of a Czech nationalist project that incorporated political liberalism, organisational authoritarianism and a blend of Nietzschean aesthetics and ideological Social Darwinism.¹⁹¹ Similar to other contemporary and later nationalist organisations, they aimed in the first instance to perfect individuals through their body, to instil in them national discipline and a spirit of service. The ultimate aim was to bring about a renaissance of Czech culture, an aesthetically pleasing and healthy populace

¹⁸⁹ For an elaboration on this for an earlier period, cf. Carey Watt, *Serving the Nation*, esp. chp. 5 and 6.

¹⁹⁰ See chp. 1.

¹⁹¹ Tyrš, born into a German family as Friedrich Emanuel Tirsch, was a philosopher and convert of Nietzsche and Darwin, forsaking his earlier proclivities for Schopenhauer. For a history of the Sokol movement see Claire Nolte, *The Sokol in the Czech Lands to 1914: Training for the Nation*, Basingstoke/ New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2002. The Sokols' uniform leaned consciously on that of Garibaldi's Red Shirts (in an obvious visual reference to the Habsburg's defeat at the hands of Italy in 1859) but blended with elements of the traditional Slavic dress. See idem, 'Our Brothers Across the Ocean: The Czech Sokol in America to 1914', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 26, 2009, pp. 1963 – 1982.

for the (re-)birth of an independent Czech nation from the ashes of history, and a return to a mythological golden age. After the Czech Republic was established, the Sokols became something of an official national youth movement and Tyrš' successor Masaryk the first president.

The similarity in style and aims was not lost on contemporaneous Indian observers, and its success in winning independence doubtlessly added to its attractiveness. While the Sokols underwent a number of transformations, going through militaristic, chauvinistic and homosocial phases with the crumbling of the Habsburg Empire, it was these latter aspects that Indian observers were taken with, while the more catholic, democratic and individualist phases were interesting for its structure mainly. A number of articles and news items on the Sokols appeared in *The Volunteer*. Two were written by the notorious anti-Semite and Slavophile former editor of the London *Times*, Henry Wickham Steed, who wrote eloquently about a Sokol festival, admiring the gymnastic and uniformed grace of the 'Falcons', and compared it to an army guided by a single 'unspoken collective thought' based on disciplined individualism and democracy, a moral force that was bound to change the future and fate of Central Europe and maybe Europe as a whole, warding off degeneracy by its selfless activity and self-development.¹⁹² Other articles on the Sokols were by the Czech nationalist Dr. Jan Mask who highlighted the physical training and the Greek influence (Kalos Kai Agathos)¹⁹³, and by one 'Sardar' who aligned it with the aftermath of the Great War and the global struggle for national independence through physical and moral development while negating the individual striving for aesthetic perfection and happiness by stating that individual well-being was good inasmuch as it contributed to collective action only and otherwise hampered national efforts. He admired the training of all groups of citizens including the women, which forged the Czechs into 'one homogeneous National Unit' and made their young men ready to lay

¹⁹² [Henry] Wickham Steed, 'Sokols in Czechoslovakia - A New Gymnastic Movement' (originally written for the Forward, Calcutta) *The Volunteer*, October 1926, pp. 237-239 and idem, 'Sokols in Czechoslovakia - The inspiring Force', *The Volunteer*, November 1926, pp. 259-261. He saw the Sokols as a movement inspired to large extent by German models (especially the *Turnvereine*) as well as classical Greece gymnophiles but fused with Czech spontaneity, religion and aesthetics. He also ascribed to it the moral force of the Sokols the capability to withstand any reactionary or revolutionary (read Bolshevik) onslaught and claimed that the Sokol movement was a patriotic but non-political one, which commanded even more religious force than the rebellion of Martin Luther against Rome.

¹⁹³ Dr Jan Mask, 'The Sokol Influence in The Life of Czecho-Slovakia', *The Volunteer*, June 1927, pp. 151-153.

down their lives.¹⁹⁴ It is noteworthy that ‘Sardar’ felt the need to play down so rigorously the aesthetic striving of the individual and foregrounded the martyr theme instead, while Wickham Steed admired the aesthetics (especially that of the Sokol girls in wet clinging clothes) and collectivity first and foremost. The most striking article is one by the Czech Jiri Klima where the ideology and philosophy of Tyrš is traced in great detail to explain the (from a nationalist perspective) necessary Social Darwinism to which Tyrš adhered. The article is interesting not only for its unapologetic and blunt stance on the darker aspects of the survival of the fittest but also because it lent a philosophical rigour to it that was mostly absent from the debate in India.¹⁹⁵ Czechoslovakia remained an abiding interest in certain Indian circles.¹⁹⁶

I am taking the Sokol movement here to point towards the intense international engagements outside the Empire and the parallel yet interconnected development of trends urged on by such global events as the Great War. It demonstrates potently that Empire-centric scholarship can only grapple insufficiently with the Indian nationalist movement and that any simple models of influence (say, the Scouts or Muscular Christianity) crumble once the horizon is widened. As scholars we often suffer from our own limited language skills and the pre-determined reach of the archive, but even more from the pre-drawn zones of engagements which we often project on the historic actors in gauging such interconnections. Moreover, by putting side by side the articles by these authors with wildly different backgrounds we get a sense of the aspects emphasised by each. For Sardar, it was the familiar martyrdom and bee-hive like martial National Front. For the Czech national Klima, the philosophical aspects of Social Darwinism, and for Steed the aesthetically pleasing army which would change all of Europe for the better. Social Darwinism is an implicit theme in the articles of

¹⁹⁴ ‘Sardar’ ‘The Sokol Movement in Czechoslovakia’, *The Volunteer*, January 1927, pp. 7-9.

¹⁹⁵ Jv Klima, ‘The Great National Leaders of Czechoslovakia’, *The Volunteer*, July 1927, pp. 175-177, which traces an alternative, independent evolving of Social Darwinism to the founder of the Sokol Movement, Miroslav Tyrš.

¹⁹⁶ SC Bose was in touch with the well-known Indologist Prof. Lesny. A Indo-Czechoslovak Friendship Society (resembling the Indo-German Friendship Society) with Lesny as president existed in the 1930s. ACN Nambiar, who was based there between 1935-38, was among the leading Indians there. See letter by SC Bose to Prof Lesny, dt 9th January 1936, in Ravindra Kumar, *The Selected Works of Subhas Chandra Bose, 1936-1946*, Vol. 1, New Delhi : Atlantic Publ., 1992, document 1 (p.1.); and a letter dt 25 March 1936 to Lesny, *ibid*, document 17 (p. 27). SC Bose was trying to further Czech imports in India, and met with President Brenesh, courtesy of Prof Lesny. Nambiar returned to Berlin after 1938 where he helped Bose with his early attempts to set up an Indian National Army. Nambiar later became the first Indian ambassador to West Germany.

Sardar and Hardikar, written into the structure rather than philosophically explicit. This pragmatism in engagements is important for us to take seriously as it allows actors to consciously blend politically differing modes into one holistic, positivist frame of successful dynamics. This pragmatic eclecticism can be seen as one of the markers of any nation-building venture as it puts the rise and fall of the collective above anything else.

The Uses of the Volunteers

In 1926, riots broke out in Rawalpindi. Hardikar took this up to point out that the Government was incapable or unwilling to protect the people, who had now to protect themselves,¹⁹⁷ thereby calling again on the defence argument to re-state the paramount necessity of the youth movement. The Volunteer Movement had always thrived on tension and calamities since it was organised on a need-basis. Despite the best efforts of the Dal, it, along with its parent body, retained some of that *ad-hoc* feature. As with the Congress, the Dal depended on campaigns, and could not muster an all-year round mobilisation. Maulana Shaukat Ali presided over the All India Volunteer Conference at Gauhati that year, referring to the conference as the 'Soldiers' Conference. He put to vote a resolution that branches of the HSD be established in every *taluk* and village.¹⁹⁸ The Seva Dal despite its claims and attempts to attain a monopoly over all volunteer organisations affiliated with the Congress, was never more than one among many organisations in the complicated inter-regional plutocracy. Its attempts to bring under one uniform umbrella all the regional corps met with some amount of success but could never keep up with the (however sporadic) initiative in various localities.

The last days of the year 1926 saw the assassination of Swami Shraddhanand, the champion of shuddhi and founder of the Gurukul Kangri. In life, many Congressmen had found issue with the Swami's strife to 'reconvert' Muslims, but in death he became a universally loved martyr of the nation, as others before and after him. Gandhi mourned the death (he had heard while en-route to

¹⁹⁷ Hardikar, 'Editorial notes, 1) Rawalpindi Riots', *The Volunteer*, August 1926, p. 170.

¹⁹⁸ ZMO, Krüger Papers, Uncatalogued Files, Drawer III, 116: Hindustani Seva Dal (1928-1929).

the INC session) and inspired a Shraddhanand fund similar to his earlier attempts at capturing the sympathy for fallen heroes such as Tilak (Tilak Swaraj Fund) and CR Das. The *Volunteer* fell over itself in eulogising the great man who had been assassinated by a Muslim coward, while - the story said - turning his back toward the young man to give him a glass of water. Hardikar wrote that the life of Shraddhanand must be an inspiration to Hindu and Muslim workers, even though 'as a worker for the Hindu ideal. the activities of Swamiji were not quite agreeable to the zealous Mohomedan [sic] who looks upon the mass of Hindu humanity as the raw material from which to evolve his dream of pan-islamism [sic]' and that his death at the hands of a Muslim 'fanatic' brought to the fore questions about Hindu-Muslim unity.¹⁹⁹ Another incident took place at the 1929 opening of the Dal's Bagalkot akhara, where out-of-town volunteers (according to Hardikar) had played music in front of a mosque and were 'immediately' assaulted by some 'Muslim rowdies' and 'hooligans' (Hardikar kept using such epithets to describe the Muslims) with stones and sticks. Hardikar celebrated the disciplined non-violence of even the young kumars and balaks and their humbleness as they begged forgiveness for their error, while he warned the 'goondas' that the Dal could have easily thrashed them, had they only wanted to. He claimed the Dal was victimised by both communities: despite the 'repeated attempts to enrol Mahomedans' there were those who claimed the Dal was a Hindu body, and then there were those Hindus who accused the Dal of 'fraternising' with the Muslim and therefore 'non-co-operated' with them.²⁰⁰ Whatever the Dal was meant to be, the central body never seems to have attracted any sizeable Muslim following and would not in the future.

Meanwhile, the Mahasabha faction within the Congress was on the rise, and the Congress slowly became, for the most part, a Hindu body which is reflected in its rhetoric of those years. GD Birla, Gandhi's eternal sponsor and benefactor, had just been elected the Mahasabha candidate for Benares and Gorakhpur - much to Gandhi's shock, and the Birla family funded in the years to come a number of Hindu communal projects and later their weapons.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Hardikar, Editorial notes, *The Volunteer*, December 1927, p. 276.

²⁰⁰ Hardikar, 'Assault on Volunteers of the Hindustani Seva Dal', *The Volunteer*, September 1929, pp. 46-48.

²⁰¹ See below. The only serious biography of Birla is by Medha M. Kudaisya, *The life and times of G.D. Birla*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003, who, however, does not really deal with these matters.

III: The Perfect Volunteer and His (Un-)Making

This chapter will elaborate on notions, aims and activities of volunteers by taking a closer look at the intellectual underpinnings and aspirations of actors as well as some practical problems they encountered. To this end, the focus will be on Hardikar's journal *The Volunteer* as a medium that brought together diverse opinions and successfully merged them into an overarching *raison d'etre* (despite many internal contradictions).

Reference has repeatedly been made to articles published by Hardikar and others in the *Volunteer*, which was launched in 1925. *The Volunteer* was Hardikar's 'private concern' for a long time, though money came quite regularly from the Congress for its upkeep. It served as a mouthpiece for diverse discussions beyond Congress networks by bringing together Indian as well as international authors, contacts that Hardikar assiduously cultivated in a catholic spirit.¹ The *Volunteer* had as its self-proclaimed objective the recording of the history and experiences of the Indian national volunteer/youth movement, so that it could lead the path for those who would follow. The agenda was an explicitly nationalist one.² But a great many articles referred to or focused on non-Indian developments.³ It is an apt example of how the international was deeply ingrained in the national.

¹ Among its authors were people as varied as Agnes Smedley and Taraknath Das, Czech nationalists, American sympathisers, proponents of the Greater India ideology, holy men and socialists, Congress presidents, and members of the Hindu Mahasabha such as NC Kelkar, MS Aney or the editor of the *Mahratta* for example. The international circulation is eclectic but interesting: we find Christian organisations, various student organisations, the American Federation of Labour, various US volunteer and social service organisations, the Committee in Militarism in Education as well as an organisation for 'Negro advancement', and we know from correspondence that the journal was actually subscribed to and read by a number of people from these organisations, some of whom also contributed to it.

² NS Hardikar, 'Ourselves', *The Volunteer*, January 1925, p. 1

³ Despite the avowed nationalist aims, many of the *The Volunteer*'s authors and certainly Hardikar himself saw themselves part of wider global movement for national liberation. Nothing illustrates this better than the attempted medical mission to China which Hardikar tried to launch through the *Seva Dal* in 1927, after the Shanghai massacre of April that year. For a retelling of that fascinating mission (which ultimately came about under the aegis of the Congress many years later) we unfortunately lack the space here. See however the articles in *The Volunteer*: 'Sun Yat Sen and New China', Oct. 1927, pp. 267-272; 'A Nationalist', 'The Indian Fist at [sic] Nationalist China', *The Volunteer*, Jan. 1927; KA Venkataramaiya, BA, Hubli, 'The Youth Movement in China', *The Volunteer*, Jan. 1927, pp. 20-23; TC Goswami 'The Voice of Humanity, China and the Powers', *The Volunteer*, Oct/Nov 1927, pp. 259-261. See also Hardikar's message to General Seng, Southern Army, Peking (China): 'Indian Nationalist Youth rejoice Your Victory', AICC papers, F.No. G - 08, 1928, f. 259. For the deliberations of the Govt which ultimately rejected to give passports to the proposed participants of the mission as well as the overwhelming public response to the call see also: MSA, Home (Spcl), 355 (58) A, 1927. On the engagement of the international left with the Chinese struggle, see Fredrik Petersson, "'We are no Visionaries or Utopian Dreamers'" - The Network of the League Against Imperialism, Comintern, and the Anti-Imperialist Movement, 1925-1933' [PhD

The Volunteer never achieved a subscription list that crossed 1000. But on this list were a number of reading rooms and libraries, including the New York Public Library and various Indian and non-Indian student organisations, so that its reach cannot be measured by its run.⁴

Since Hardikar and other contributors were the principal Dal organisers who imparted political and physical training, the journal gives us a good idea about the corpus of ideas they sought to transmit.⁵ In accordance with the Congress creed, the journal was to be non-communal and the Seva Dal emphasised that it strove to incorporate people of all denominations and castes.⁶ But the definite slant to a glorified Hindu past and its rulers as model figures fighting off Muslim invaders that can be found in many articles points to the ambiguous nature of this supposedly inclusive nationalism. The rhetorical recourse to the warrior-sanyasin of old as the preceptor of modern-day volunteers and their service to the nation as religious duty is symptomatic in this respect.⁷

BG Lokare, of the Karnataka Congress and long-standing member of the Seva Dal (also on the AIVB), wrote an excited article when the Seva Dal managed to obtain as one of its volunteers

thesis, History Dept., Abo Akademi, 2011], see pp. 63-86 on the 'Hands Off China' campaign from 1925 and 98-100 for the wider importance for the LAI; for Nehru at the Brussels Conference see *ibid*, pp. 135-7.

⁴ It stopped publication while the Congress organisations were banned in 1930-31, and the Dal members were scattered. In 1931 a few more issues were brought out before the journal folded up. The low subscription figure notwithstanding, it was on the exchange list with almost all the big national daily and weekly papers and a number of monthly magazines in and outside of India, including *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *The Bombay Chronicle*, *Madras Mail*, *The Forward*, *The Mahratta*, *The Indian National Herald*, *Swarajya*, *Hindustan Times*, *Guardian*, *Lokamanya*, Palme Dutt's *Labour Monthly* and others. Cf. the various letters in NMML, Private Papers, Dr. NS Hardikar, Subject File 3.

⁵ Given that a number of the important youth leaders and volunteer organisers contributed to and obviously read the journal, a certain impact and representativeness in the field might safely be ascribed to the magazine. I do not propose, however, to speculate about reception here.

⁶ The main items featuring in the monthly can be categorised under 1) history, often of the mythical Hindu type. 2) military training and physical culture - both of which were in most cases written from comparative international perspectives 3) Congress programmes especially regarding the volunteer's role in constructive social work in the villages 4) physical culture 5) Contemporary news and background information. The absence of news on internal politics is striking. Hardikar saw *The Volunteer*, as the mouth piece of an army-like organisation that followed orders and built up national strength, and – more or less successfully - tried to stay out of internal politics.

⁷ In the very first issue of *The Volunteer*, Vidyaranya is portrayed as the first volunteer India ever produced. After undergoing years of austerities, he established the Vijayanagar empire. While the article does not go into details, it would not have been lost on the readership that Vidyaranya is reputed to have undergone tapas and begged the help of the gods in reaction to the Muslim 'invasion', then re-converted two army chiefs of the Hoysala Dynasty from Islam and helped them to find a place to build a Hindu Empire. See DK Bharavraj, 'The Karnatak Volunteer', *The Volunteer*,

Swami Visheswar Saraswati, a 60-year old *sanyasin* of Karaveer Math, who made a name for himself by popularising *Surya Namaskar*. He was to visit akharas in Karnataka and Maharashtra on behalf of the Dal to implement more such yoga exercises. Lokare exclaimed that 'the Almighty in His inscrutable wisdom has ordained that [India] should attain her salvation by and through religion'. In India from times immemorial the side of religion meant the side that is morally right and consequently bound ultimately to achieve its goal. Might might make right for some time, but it was the morally superior who would inherit the earth. Lokare went on to reminisce about the sanyasin who built the Karnataka Empire, Ramdas, Shivaji, and Swami Vivekananda - a good overview of the pantheon the *Volunteer* subscribed to.⁸ There were a great number of articles dealing with mythological Indian heroes and demi-gods as inspiration for volunteer ideals. The constant inter-weaving of Hindu mythology and religion with nationalism that can be found in the *Volunteer* marks the implicit exclusions at work here. While its proponents might have pointed to a common Indian culture that allowed various gods and Vedic heroes to not be seen as exclusively Hindu, the explicit references to cruel Muslim rulers or invaders and the brave Hindu heroes who fought them off, could not but hit a nerve, especially in the late 1920s.⁹ The marked absence of Muslim contributors, despite the Seva Dal's repeated claims to be non-communal, is striking. Shaukat Ali and Dr Ansari were among the very few Muslims who ever contributed to the journal. Hardikar in his editorials in the later 1920s would often adopt an admonishing and paternalistic tone when addressing 'Muslims'.¹⁰

How this non-communal policy which sought to lecture Muslims on their behaviour played out in actual terms at times, may be gleaned from an incident in Kanpur 1927 described in Nandini Go-

Jan. 1925, pp. 13-14.

⁸ BG Lokare, Hubli, 'Sanyasin and the Seva Dal', *The Volunteer*, July 1927, pp. 169-170.

⁹ William Gould has pointed to some of the communal tendencies within the Congress itself and a close study of the rhetoric of the Seva Dal could bear out the point out with greater force. William Gould, *Hindu Nationalism and the Politics of Language in Late Colonial Nationalism*, Cambridge/New York: CUP, 2004.

¹⁰ Under headings such as 'Muslim separatism' he would try to establish that every 'true Mohomedan son of India' should concentrate on the uplift of his community by education and the removal of illiteracy. Thinking about such matters might also 'prevent them from p[l]aying the fool in the hands of the British bureaucracy who are interested in keeping them as an insoluble salt in the waters of India polity.' Hardikar, Editorial Notes, 'Separatist Tendency in Moslems', *The Volunteer*, Dec. 1927, p. 277.

optu's book. Here, the tensions had led to an incident where some Muslims beat up a band accompanying a marriage procession. As a counter, two Dal organisers, GG Jog and Ganesh Shanker Vidyarthi got together with other Dal and Congress members and played music in front of a local mosque for some forty minutes. Jog, it may be noted, was one of the foremost organisers of the Dal and a right-hand man to Hardikar in the late 1920s. Vidyarthi was described as a 'secular' Dal organiser from UP, he wanted the Dal to replace the police and the army and later died in the Kanpur riots while trying to save some Muslims. In the days after the defiant gesture, large processions comprising Congress volunteers, Arya Samajis and Seva Samiti members (the latter armed with lathis and axes) repeated the exercise. This was by no means an isolated incident but rather typical of the Congress (volunteer) politics enacted at the street level.¹¹

Raghupati Sahai, Under-Secretary of the AICC, Allahabad, better known under his pen name Firaq Gorakhpuri¹², developed in 1927 a mytho-utopic vision reminiscent in equal parts of Sufi poetry, Spencerian theories of progress, Theosophy's spiritual Darwinism and the Nietzschean yearning for ethereal rebirth as well as contemporary utopias of a global brotherhood. In ecstatic and millenarian terms he laid down (spread over two lengthy articles) his vision of the forces of natural progress rendering all divisions of society on the basis of race, caste, gender, religion anachronistic. They would give way to 'another world wide system of a single human organism brought about by similar conditions' of knowledge, universal civic law and governance and the shift from religion and tradition as the centre of social organisation to economic well-being and personal dignity.

It is consciousness defining and manifesting itself through a prosperous and happy

¹¹ This incident is cited in Nandini Gooptu, *The Politics of the Urban Poor*, pp. 293-294. She refers to Jog and Vidyarthi as Congress leaders only who led the volunteers in this instance. But both Jog and GS Vidyarthi are Seva Dal organisers. On the latter's activities see WBSA, IB branch, 583/1927 (Sl. no 45), f. 23. The Seva Dal UP branch had been organised in 1925. Gooptu records some striking examples of Congress volunteers involved in communalist activities in her book. Cf. *ibid*, see esp pp. 293-297. On a poignant analysis of the Seva Dal as a challenge to the state's monopoly of power and violence, see *ibid*, pp. 341-344.

¹² Sahai was a former ICS who quit the service during the Non-Cooperation Movement and worked in the ICN for a number of years. He later became an English lecturer at Allahabad University, he is better known as an Urdu poet, especially of Ghazals, and won some of the most prestigious literature awards in post-Independent India. For a very brief sketch of his life and some of his poetry, see KC Kanda, *Masterpieces of Urdu Ghazal from 17th to 20th Century*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1990, for instance pp. 277-287

worldly life, in an ever perfecting rhythm 'the musical thought' of creation realising itself in more and more life-like forms till it reaches its crown and climax in man who is the embodiment [sic] of the perfect fusion of matter and spirit, thought and form, of the visible and the invisible. This is the great harmony, the cosmic yoga, the 'one far off divine event', to which through the winding process of the suns the whole creation moves and avails. The great Brotherhood of the future will have only one creed – life – and not Hindu or Muslim, Budhist [sic] or Christian, Aryan, Semetic [sic] or Jewish. It will be predominantly human.¹³

This future would bring forth an evolution of consciousness untrammelled by codes of belief or morals. It would neither stand for indulgence nor asceticism, activity or idleness but transmute and transcend all of these and bring forth the golden mean, a perfect man and woman with the intellect of sages, the hearts of children and the passion of youth, prophesied Sahai. In short, it was the dawn of the Superman, Theosophy's *mahatma* or, in a darker vein, Nietzsche's *Übermensch*. This 'cosmic illumination' would bring forth a unified world culture and system within which the 'free play' of 'creative strength' would rule, and India would lead and teach the world.¹⁴

This excerpt provides an intriguing starting point from which to consider the host of elements used in one way or the other by a great number of actors especially in the adjacent fields of volunteering, service, social reform and physical culture (though not all of them were as optimistic as Sahai). The envisioned world-brotherhood and anthropogenesis in Sahai's 'science fiction' thus represents the utopic *Aufhebung* rather than the negation of a popular Social Darwinism in all its splendid eclecticism. It also allows us to consider the idea of linear progress referred to in the beginning with reference to Spencer and Benoy Kumar Sarkar¹⁵. Sahai uses the concept of linear progress - here embodied in the trajectories of stellar bodies - and the forces of nature, which were seen as threatening, unsympathetic or even malevolent by others, to show that the present travails, including communalism and caste, are but the birthing pains of a new age and will soon be mere murmurs of an ancient past. This is in line with the popularly prevalent view of history at the time - somewhere between Marxian historic materialism, evolutionary theories and the neo-platonic

¹³ Raghupati Sahai, BA, Allahabad, 'Orbiter Scripta I', *The Volunteer*, April 1927, pp. 89-91.

¹⁴ See 'Orbiter Scripta, part II', *The Volunteer*, May 1927, pp. 119-121. Compare this to the quote of the same author given below regarding physical degeneration. Whether Sahai had read Aurobindo's writing on this subject (see the discussion above, chp. 2) or arrived at his visions by way of other influences, is mere speculation at this point. But tracing the exact chain of influences is a futile undertaking at any rate and the general notion and ideas put forward here were mirrored by so many other individuals that we can assume a wide subterranean dissemination of such debates.

¹⁵ See the introduction on Benoy Kumar Sarkar's positivism and science of history.

staggered spiritual evolution proposed by the Theosophists.

This 'future-past perspective' in which the present is beaded onto the thread of world history and looked at from the view of an imagined endpoint at which the insecurity about where we are going 'in this ocean of chaos' have all been removed by development and evolution fulfilling their tantalising promise of becoming. This view is something we find alongside mythological visions of (in the case of the *Volunteer*) especially the Vedic age. Past and future are welded together in an ever-ascending spiral, briefly and unhappily interrupted by the dark, colonised present. It also allows the speaker to rhetorically 'reach back' to the present from a position of near-omniscient authority and foreknowledge.

Universal Degeneration, Universal Uplift

The volunteer as the ephobic gate-opener to that future was accordingly a role over-laden with expectations and ambiguities representing all the internal division of the parent organisation and the wider nationalist movement as to the exact social ambitions and objects. The basic two strands sometimes vying for paramouncy, sometimes collapsed into each other, were the idea of service usually in the form of Gandhian constructive work, especially village work and 'uplift' of the dalits, and, on the other hand, the role of the volunteer as a hybrid civilian police or militia member. While the discussion kept coming up, the volunteer was usually called upon to fill both portfolios, and one or the other function would be emphasised depending on the context. But the 'job description' apart, more important than what the volunteer actually did, was who he was - his inner self. And the descriptions of the mental and physical requirements were far more definite and elaborate. The quote from BG Lokare above regarding the inevitability of the morally just to win exemplifies this.

Next to the law of nature (that says might makes right) what is posited is a 'law of nature' in tune with spirituality. In the realm of the necessity of progress, ensuring that the requisite human

material for the next stage was at hand, would almost inevitably lead to development. The Congress politician RR Diwakar phrased this notion in terms reminiscent of the Bhagavad Gita: 'One strong will can set a thousand to dance in joy of self-less action, Awaken this central force in you, direct it towards the service of the Mother and you have done your duty. Because, all else will take care of itself and all other necessary actions will flow from you.'¹⁶ One must not be led to think however that the utopian exclamations meant the absence of eugenic dystopias. Next to the celebrations of humanity *in excelsis*, the very practical aspects of physical degeneration were the living hell to which Indians were condemned unless they took timely precautions. The above-quoted Raghupati Sahai, predicted a 'universal and progressive physical degeneration' in stark, graphic terms:

There is all round degradation and misery in every [middle-class] family. Each family is breeding and bringing up only invalids, boys and girls who, if they survive, are a disgrace to manhood and womanhood. ... It is the pariah and not a well-bred human being that is visible in [the] shrunken, stunted deformed, and weakened bodies... of their children... If these thousands of homes will be allowed to remain like so many plague spots how can a better social environment be possible. If in their homes vermin are bred how can men and women be found to carry on or be benefitted by the schemes and measures so much advertised in every quarter?¹⁷

In the imagined corporeal nation, physical and moral fitness, and common eugenic notions were closely aligned. Most common, in the context of youth, were reports about the deplorable physical degeneration of students, the mindless habit of cramming without bodily activity to counterbalance its physically harmful effects, and the lack of appreciation in society, and especially among the middle classes, for anything but exam results within an anti-national education system aimed at keeping the population in subjugation.¹⁸ Shocking descriptions about the stereotypical college or university student made the rounds. Physical culture, we have noted, had an intimate connection with the capability for volunteering. Another regular author of the *Volunteer*, after a stark description of the sickly, educated Indians from whom salvation could surely not be expected, summed up: 'So we must beware betimes and care first for our bodies and then for everything

¹⁶ RR Diwakar, 'The Will To Serve', *The Volunteer*, November 1925, pp. 267-269.

¹⁷ Mr Raghupati Sahai, under-secy, AICC, Allahabad, 'Some Matters of Importance', *The Volunteer*, August 1926, pp. 184-186; for quote see p. 185-186.

¹⁸ The state of physical fitness of students was reviewed in various University Reports, and compulsory physical or military training was a perennial topic, which was discussed by most (nationalist) educational institutions, and various localities implemented schemes to this effect in the interwar period.

else.’¹⁹

But if education had to a great extent caused this dilemma among the middle classes, it might also be the way out if properly nationalised and overhauled.²⁰ If physical fitness was the sine qua non of volunteering and national regeneration, and education and training its framework, the activities (seva) of the volunteer were the output of the combination of his exceeding moral virtues and robust physical stature. Let us briefly consider the general activities of volunteers before going on to the self of the volunteer.

Volunteers and especially students were regularly called upon by the Volunteer (and politicians from across the board) to go to the villages and help with constructive work in villages, to educate the masses, teach the peasants to read and write, organise *kisan sabhas*, or lecture on the political events and programmes in the country. The uplift towards 'responsible, mutual service' of the people from the village up alone would mean eventual independence. 'Self-help' alone could save India.²¹ The village, it was variously stated, had been the saviour of India for so long since it preserved its own culture and way of life through successive waves of invasion. As such, it partook more in the 'inner sphere' than the 'outer' as far as many nationalists were concerned. The village was everything the city was not - and this led to a curious double discourse. It was the non-modern preserve of ancient culture and living memory, its inhabitants sturdy, healthy and

¹⁹ RR Diwakar, MA, LLB, Dharwar, 'Neglect of our Bodies, *The Volunteer*, September 1926, pp. 204 – 206 dismissing “the pale and hectic, sickly and sentimental, long-necked, necktied and collared, spectacled and be-booted staggering young educated Indians” he put his hopes in the “firm the healthy, rosy, glowing, stiff-necked, youn [sic], plaing [sic] energetic men and women in India” who resided in the villages.

²⁰ The editorial piece of *Science and Culture* of October 1938 on education, edited (and probably penned) by the avowed socialist Meghnad Saha, refers in its opening to the Chinese philosopher Liang Ch'i-Ch'ao who defined education as ‘the means by which the state nurtures its own kind of people, welding them together as a whole that they may be independent and struggle to strive in the world where victory goes to the fit, and defeat to the unfit.’, *Science and Culture*, October 1938.

²¹ This is reminiscent of the Scottish (Presbyterian) reformer Samuel Smiles who wrote what can only be called best-sellers on moral conduct and societal values in the late nineteenth century. His first book, simply entitled 'Self-Help' makes the same point. It portrays any regulation and help from 'above' as undermining the self-development of people. See Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help; with Illustrations of Character, Conduct and Perseverance*, London: (self-published with) Murray, 1859. See also his *Character*; Project Gutenberg, 2001 (1st ed. London 1871), which lays even greater stress on the individual characteristics necessary for the healthy development of society overall.

vigorous if uneducated in contrast to the diseased nature of urban dwellers. On the other hand, the village was the abode of superstitions and savage rituals, and descriptions were often reminiscent of the arguments of 'Oriental despotism': unhealthy traditions from which Indian society had to be purged, coupled with unhygienic living and the daily struggle for life with its phases of hunger and want. The rural inhabitants were victims in need of saving, unhealthy, ill-clad, starving and illiterate. Considering the urgency with which such calls were made, it is striking that in all the lengthy articles written on the necessity of sending students/ volunteers to the villages, nobody seemed to bother with laying out quite clearly what the youngsters, when encountering true Indian rural life, were supposed to do.²²

Village uplift was taken over by a number of other organisations active in the field. The older Seva Samiti, the Boy Scouts (Indian and Baden-Powell) to some extent and especially the YMCA were engaged in the reconstruction of utopian village life.²³ Volunteers found themselves in environments more or less conducive to their endeavour at social uplift in the national hinterland. In UP and Madras this would have been normalised by the long-standing efforts in those regions which included the training of rural workers, whereas elsewhere, a new structure had to be built

²² Some Gandhians pointed out the lack of clear guidelines for volunteers. From all indications there is no long-term implemented scheme of Seva Dal volunteers participating in rural uplift despite all the rhetoric. The volunteers did often manage to help in short-term relief efforts after floods, fires etc. when a local leader took charge of the efforts. They were also mobilised at specific junctures for political campaigns. The Congress machinery overall, up to the ministry period and to some extent beyond, functioned on an ad-hoc basis in most localities and was hardly an apparatus proper, except at the top-most level, and even there its origin in an annual conference seemed to have had a lasting impact.

²³ See CF Strickland (CIE), *Review of Rural Welfare Activities in India 1932, with a preface by Sir Francis Younghusband [Chairman of the Indian Village Welfare Association] and a Foreword by The Lady Irwin*, London: OUP, 1932. The Village Welfare Association was founded by the Government in 1931. The founding had a very concrete political appeal: rural welfare was seen as a primary anti-dote to 'sedition'. Cf. Strickland, *Rural Welfare*, p. 15. Rural welfare and the strides made towards 'progress' in villages varied widely. In Punjab under the Rural Community Board of Punjab, and more especially Gurgaon (where the effort was spearheaded by the civil servant Frank Lugard Brayne from 1920-28) concerted efforts were made by a conglomerate of governmental institution, village councils and non-governmental bodies like the Red Cross, Boy Scouts and missionary bodies. See Strickland, *Rural Welfare*, pp. 16-18. On Brayne see also Clive Dewey, *Anglo-Indian Attitudes: The Mind of the Indian Civil Service*, London: Hambledon Press, 1993, pp. 19-100. This ties in with the paternalist approach and the enormous concern for the agrarian hinterland which marked the British administration in Punjab up to the Second World War. On co-operations in the province as moral institutions in line with the 'civilising mission' that local voluntary associations adapted to their own uses, see Bob van der Linden, *Moral Languages from Colonial Punjab - The Singh Sabha, Arya Samaj and Ahmadiyahs*, New Delhi: Manohar 2008.

almost from scratch or the space was taken up by other structures such as the more self-contained panchayat in Punjab. Overall, some bodies such as the Scouts,²⁴ the YMCA and to a certain extent the Seva Samitis, Mahini Mandals, Ramkrishna Mission²⁵ and Arya Samaj were active in village uplift, while the more politically minded volunteer bodies acting as police/military or executive of the emerging shadow states in the late colonial period paid lip-service to rural work, leaving most of the long-term effort to specialised bodies. Hardikar founded other bodies such as the Mahini Mandal in his native area and these were actively concerned with their rural surroundings.

A concrete example will help make elucidate the purposes of *seva*: 1927 saw another Kumbh Mela in which some 100 Dal volunteers under Hardikar's lieutenant Nandakumar Deo Vashishta rendered service alongside the many other organisations that traditionally flocked to these occasions. The year also saw widespread floods in Gujarat, Orissa, Sindh and others places. The Dal's social service usually revolved more around help with the infrastructure at fairs and pilgrimages and work in the neighbourhoods of whatever Dal group felt called upon to become active. At the time of the floods, they wanted to send successive batches of volunteers to Gujarat as soon as it was clear where they were needed. But Hardikar was firmly told that so many would rather get in the way. Therefore, the batches were downsized and only the first batch was actually sent, with their travel expenses raised by public subscription. Hardikar took up correspondence with the Servants of India (GK Deodhar) who told him to wait for details and instructions. Hardikar then asked the Bombay PCC, they in turn referred him to Vallabhbhai Patel who firmly stated that outside volunteers were not required. The Servants of India and like service organisations much older than the Dal as well as politicians like Patel did not seem keen on dabblers in the field.²⁶ Giving aid during natural calamities, while the idea of national service no doubt was important and earn-

²⁴ Similar to the YMCA, no comprehensive study of scouts in India exists to date. See however, Carey Watt, 'The promise of 'character' and the spectre of sedition: The boy scout movement and colonial consternation in India, 1908–1921', *Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 1999, pp. 37-62.

²⁵ On the notions of *seva* in the Ramkrishna Mission, see Gwylim Beckerlegge, 'Iconographic representations of renunciation and activism in the Ramkrishna math and mission and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh', *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 19, 1, 2004, pp. 47-66. Beckerlegge is one of the most incisive scholars of the Ramkrishna Mission, but the focus on religion and Hinduism misses out on the wider context of the re-emergence of *seva*.

²⁶ 'Floods and the Dal', *The Volunteer*, September 1927, pp. 228-9.

est, had also become a competitive field for prestige and legitimacy. Aid campaigns during such time were sure to be headlines in any nationalist newspaper. Meanwhile, Dal volunteers from elsewhere came to HQ clamouring to be sent to Gujarat. The Dal, not wanting to be seen as help-less and inactive, badgered some leaders. Finally a total of four volunteers under BG Lokare with 'senior officers' of the Dal²⁷ were dispatched and Patel sent them to Nadiad and Palady, where they had a cluster of villages under their care. The volunteers left behind collected funds and clothing. Hardikar mourned the lost opportunity of giving help and for the volunteers to gain experience quite publicly, and blamed Patel - but not too loudly.²⁸

By the time the Dal joined the field of service, it was a contested space with a number of older and better organised groups (such as the Seva Samiti and Servants of India) monopolising the 'right' to serve. Seva established legitimacy for the body offering it. In the nationalist culture which praised selflessness and self-negating devotion to the nation above all else, seva was the ultimate form of being a good nationalist. Being at the front line of events and struggles - the role Gandhi's Congress played so masterfully and made into a norm- meant that sitting idly by or not being seen in the thick of things could delegitimise actors.²⁹ Next to political legitimacy, seva could also serve to establish abstract claims over territory - beyond the practical help, its symbolic capital lay in enacting of the capacity, strength, efficiency and organisation required to render service - it was somatic propaganda. Seva could be used to compete with other groups, actors or communities in the competition for 'scientific' and modern organisation - the *sine qua non* for nation building. Hence seva, ideally, visibly and popularly embodied and established the ability of

²⁷ These were office secretary MC Mathand, one of Hardikar's close associates and Dal instructors who would conduct a number of training camps and had been by Gandhi's side when the latter was recuperating from his 1924 operation (cf. Narayana Rao, *Dr NS Hardikar*, p. 122), AS Ekambara Iyer, also one of Hardikar's lieutenants and one Lakkimarao.

²⁸ Editorial Notes, *The Volunteer*, September 1927.

²⁹ The HMS during the 1938/39 Hyderabad 'satyagraha' (see below) struggled to come to terms with this, for instance. Criticism had been levelled against one of their leaders as he was not seen in Hyderabad itself and people accused him of shirking the hardships that the volunteers endured while reaping the gains from their work and suffering. Afterwards, the HSM made sure to second some people to Hyderabad for the purpose of being seen to be there (even if that achieved little as their main role was that of bankrolling the campaign). See Vaddi Venugohal Krishna Sastri (Bezwada Hindu Sabha) to GV Ketkar, editor *The Mahratta*, (copy fwd. to Gainpat Rai, secy HMS and BS Moonje, president) s.a. [c. June 1939] and esp. Dharam Vir (office secy HMS) to Savarkar, dt. 6th June 1939 in NMML, HMS Papers, C-21/22, ff. 193-197,221-223. See on the satyagraha itself the references in chp. 4.

competing factions to bring the nation into being and as such was one of the most coveted activities. Practically, seva by volunteer bodies (and all of them claimed to do service) attached to parties was often not very efficient or well organised or regular, it was ad-hoc, geared to impress and establish neighbourhood networks.³⁰ Nowhere, maybe, is this better (or more ironically) portrayed as in *Tamas*.³¹

The Characteristics and Characterisation of the Volunteer

In his article 'Who Is A Volunteer', Gandhi had given an exhaustive list of characteristics: he was to be chaste, truthful, non-violent, obedient, amenable to perfect discipline, respectful and friendly, Hindustani-speaking, spinning 2000 yards of yarn per month (this was in 1925 after all), able to cook (i.e. look after himself), 'free from the curse of untouchability' which we assume meant that he has to have no regard for the custom, and believe in Hindu-Muslim unity. Most articles on this list are hardly surprising. The theme of chastity is a recurrent one.³²

We have referred before to the glee with which Lokare celebrated the signing up to the Dal of a true sanyasin. The warrior-saint has been established as an important figure for the Hindu Right, of course and for the early Bengal intelligentsia (Bankim especially).³³ It has been widely noted that Gandhi's appeal stemmed to some extent from his saint-like image.³⁴ The ideal volunteer was

³⁰ The Khaksars are a good example of this type of service. See below.

³¹ Bhisham Sahni, *Tamas*, London et al: Penguin Books, 2001 (1st ed. 1974), pp. 57-62. Sahni, writing his novel on the basis of his experiences of the months preceding and during partition, lets the president of the local Congress Committee advise his volunteering co-workers offering seva in a Muslim neighbourhood: 'Constructive work does not mean that you should actually clean the drains. It is a symbolic gesture to make the residents aware of the need for civic sanitation and gradually earn their trust and participation in the struggle for independence.' This brings together the aspect of fortifying the support of neighbourhoods, doing party propaganda as well as the very Gandhian approach of shaming people into improving themselves.

³² See also Gandhi's articles on volunteers in *Young India*, 29.1.1925 and 5.2.1925. Gandhi generally prescribed brahmacharya for serious nationalist workers and women (if they did not want to marry) as well as widows. See Madhu Kishwar, 'Gandhi on Women', *EPW*, Vol. 20, No. 40, 1985, pp. 1691-1702. On the notions of brahmacharya in its intimate nexus with truth, fitness and national strength and integrity, see Joseph Alter, 'Celibacy, Sexuality, and the Transformation of Gender into Nationalism in North India', *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 1, 1994, pp. 45-66.

³³ See chp. 1.

³⁴ Cf. Shahid Amin, 'Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern UP, 1921-2', in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies III*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 1-55.

to exude that same saintlike aura, and on a more practical level the dependency of a family left behind was not for the true volunteer. This credo was preached throughout the country and the *brahmacharya* ideal had particular reverberations with youth as the phase in life characterised by the absence of stringent social obligations. From that absence of worldly attachments and duties in combination with the implicitly assumed emotionality, impressionability and Homunculus-like formlessness that could be moulded as required, rises the peculiar appeal of youth for nationalist projects. The youth is the bachelor, and the bachelor is the volunteer. The Anushilan's District Organization Scheme cited earlier made this point explicit when they stated that the unmarried graduate was the real prize of a recruiter.³⁵

A verbose example of this is the speech by Sureshchandra Bandyopadhyaya, anointed president of a youth conference at Berhampore (Bengal) in January 1930. Bandyopadhyaya stated that in other countries volunteers would be celebrated and get a state pension whereas in India they faced persecution and oppression. In such circumstances, the less family a volunteer has to look after, the better. 'Youth' who aspired to be full-time workers must remain unmarried all through their lives, he proclaimed, but if they were married they must renounce all their household duties.

A worker of the country should have no mother, father, brother, sister, wife and son and even no religion. His only religion was the service to the motherland. She was to him father, mother and family. For the good of this greater family he must fully and completely sacrifice himself. Then and then only the country would survive and the nation would be instilled with life.

Beyond the rediscovery of brahmacharya, which was always connected to the idea of absorbing the energy which would otherwise be spent through ejaculation and render (young) males sickly and weak (if not blind),³⁶ brahmacharya in youth was something for the select and dedicated. Brahmacharya together with physical fitness and other characteristics enabled certain individuals in special ways to serve India.³⁷ The brahmacharya was also the martyr in the making, it was he

³⁵ Compare to the Anushilan District Organisation Scheme, above (chp. 1 and ref in chp. 2), which makes this even more explicit.

³⁶ The discourse on the ills arising out of the destruction of semen and the beneficial effects of brahmacharya, interestingly, is enduring. See Joseph Alter, 'Celibacy and Sexuality - Transformations of Gender into Nationalism', in idem, *Moral Materialism - Sex and Masculinity in Modern India*, New Delhi et al: Penguin, 2011, pp. 21-52, see esp. pp.27-31. See also Alter, 'Seminal Truth - A Modern Science of Male Celibacy', in ibid, pp. 55-84; on the post-colonial Bharatiya Yog Sansthan as an example of this discourse, see on the negative effects of loss of semen pp. 72-74

³⁷ Carey Watt has noted this rediscovery of brahmacharya and its significance for a number of organ-

who dedicated his life, body and soul -the term regularly used is 'consecration' - to a greater cause and thus became the modern sanyasin whose religion was Swaraj³⁸. The emerging equation is then: youth = bachelor = volunteer = brahmacharya = sanyasin = martyr. The teleological stringency in this equation is important. It is by necessity martyrdom that the volunteer moves towards - this can be the martyrdom of self-annihilation through work or resistance. We can show this in the very same speech of Bandyopadhyay who urged such brahmacharya-volunteers to choose a village, make it their abode while forsaking all friends and family and 'preach the message of freedom' in the surroundings and prepare the villagers for the fight for freedom.

[The volunteer] sacrificed the world, all persecution he took on his breast, the roaring of Death as a song he heard. Him the fire burnt, spear pierced [...] A red lotus his torn breast appeared with the same offering the last worship of his life he did with full devotion perform. Making his life a success even unto death, the success of failure of work is not in the hand of the workers, The responsibility of the workers is self-abnegation, his joy lies in great sacrifice.³⁹

The ideal of the ascetic soldier has been described as Brahmanical and often applied in the context of the RSS,⁴⁰ a body that looks very similar to the Dal. KB Hedgewar founded the RSS about a year after he had supervised the Seva Dal volunteers at the INC session at Nagpur (both Hedgewar and Hardikar were building on influences of the earlier militant nationalism that both would have experienced in Calcutta). That these ideals borrowed much from aesthetics associated with Brahmanism is an obvious but hollow point.⁴¹ The synchronous and interdependent constitu-

isations, including the Servants of India and the Gurukul, see Watt, *Serving the Nation*, p. 106, see in greater detail and for the connection between brahmacharya and discipline also Fischer-Tiné, *Der Gurkul-Kangri*, esp. 168, pp. 214-216, 221-225.

³⁸ See also speech of Dr. Vardarjulu Naidu, President at the First Kerala Youth Conference at Payyanur on 27th May, 1928 in 'The Mission of Youth', Durlab Singh (ed.) *To the Youth of My Country*, pp. 25-36. He called upon the youth to lay down their lives if necessary since their country was their idol and it would serve their religion which was Swarajya, he used the Ramayana to illustrate such religious sacrifice and asserted that nationalism would make the young men brave soldiers and was the 'panacea for the weary spirit'. We have already noted how the Anushilan and others made use of this sacrilised politics.

³⁹ Review of speech delivered by Suresh Chandra Bandyopadhyaya, Berhampore in BS 1336 (Jan 1930), see WBSA, CID, IB, 271-C/ 28, ff. 33-28. Quotes (from the police summary) from ff. 30, 29-28.

⁴⁰ On the general point of Brahmanic ideals or Sanskritic culture in the RSS, see Andersen/Damle, *Brotherhood*. Other authors, such as Romila Tapar have emphasised the syncretic nature of Hindu nationalism pointing to the emulation of Christian ideals. See Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist movement*, see esp. pp. 78-79.

⁴¹ That such ideals were not limited to overt supporters of Hindu majoritarianism also does not require much comment, but it is worth pointing out in this context that it is ill-advised to simplistically read back ideals regarding asceticism, self-discipline and service to any particular -ism. Many influences converged in what became associated with an overhauled, and re-interpreted Hinduism. See William R Pinch, *Peasants and Monks in British India*, New Delhi et al: OUP, 1996, introduction and pp. 81-

tion of Indian and European or American (or Japanese or African) reform movements may be pointed to in this context. More interesting is the particular environment of the stark resurgence at a very specific moment in time. It ties in all too neatly with the 'age of extremes', the age of idealism and nationalism to overlook the tailored synergies, its assimilation for nationalist purposes, and the fact that ideas phrased in almost similar terms emerged in countries who are not merited with having produced the Vedas, the Mahabharata or a caste system.

The self in the service of the nation is inscribed with the aesthetics of asceticism in a way that would have produced similarity and familiarity especially to an upper-caste Hindu male - and thus creates a more or less explicit hierarchy between the subject 'pre-adapted' to the ideal by virtue of his religious and cultural belonging as opposed to those who did not - here, low-castes, Muslims and women.⁴² The more or less overt Hindu/Brahmanic ideals and mythology were important for the Seva Dal (see above); and the implicit (or explicit) exclusions inherent in such a discourse need to be dealt with in their specific context if we are to gauge who or what they boost or are directed against.⁴³ As we have shown above, the Indian middle-class transmuted a set of specific values into a basis for nationalism, and this was most strikingly the conversion of the nationalist subject into an ascetic body. But if we look at 'Muslim' attitudes towards these questions, we find a very similar rhetoric of self-sacrifice, martyrdom, and discipline at work, but citing in turn heroes of an Islamic cultural pantheon.⁴⁴

This also opens up an interesting question regarding the extraordinary virtue and aesthetics ascribed to physical and hard labour - traditionally associated with *sudras* - repeatedly emphasised by volunteer movements. Hardikar considered hard labour such as digging trenches as a necessity

114 on claims of shudras for kshatriya identity and the religious underpinnings of such moves, as well as the uneasy relationship between kshatriya reformers and the Arya Samaj. On the 'Sanskritization' debate, see *ibid*, pp. 82-83. See also Nonica Datta on how a newly constituted Jat Aryan identity dovetailed and impacted on Arya Samaj ideals, *Testimony of a Daughter*, for a concise summary see esp pp.10-15, otherwise see the narrative esp. with reference to the figure of Bhagatji.

⁴² Having said that, we shall consider how the ideal of service played out in Muslim organisations, which was not substantially different in its appeal or rhetoric (or its sketchy implementation), but varied mostly in the vocabulary employed.

⁴³ See below on the (in my opinion unhelpful) distinction between communitarian and communalism.

⁴⁴ See below, chps 4 and 5.

and test of strength and obedience for volunteers, but more than that such activity was a virtue in itself.⁴⁵ Both Gandhi and Tagore epitomized this new appreciation for the dignity of labour and craft⁴⁶ that was also advanced under Marxist influences by Indian unions. Traditionally demeaning tasks became re-inscribed with the image of hardiness and masculinity. For the volunteer, service and labour in connection with particular appreciations of 'silence' went hand in hand and converged into the ideal of the civilian soldier.

Over and above everything else, self-effacement along with discipline were the cardinal virtues of a volunteer.⁴⁷ SV Kowjalgi, Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Dal in 1925 and head of the Karnataka PCC, described the qualities in a volunteer as first and foremost, 'complete selflessness. You must be ready to merge your personality in the cause of the service of the Motherland and through that of Humanity.' Honour or gratefulness a volunteer must not expect, he should be indifferent about the results of his actions (he cites Krishna's speech to Arjuna here), should do any work assigned, even that of the sweeper, be humble, obedient, truthful, fearless and practice non-violence in word and deed.⁴⁸ Hardikar, writing about how ill volunteers generally took to the

⁴⁵ Labour and practical handicraft skills were cited by low-caste reformers as evidence of dignity and power by pointing out the technical advancements in the western world or the importance of weaving for Gandhi's campaigns. The dignity, value and valour of labour came to be appreciated within the framework of its economic necessity for 'progress' and the self-assertion of lower class movements could be streamlined with Vaishnavist reforms. Pinch, *Peasants and Monks*, p. 107-114.

⁴⁶ See Deepali Diwan, 'The Body at Work. Colonial Art Education and the Figure of the 'Native Craftsman'', in James Mills, Satadru Sen, *Confronting the Body*, pp.118-134. On the connected theme of the arts and craft movement, see Tapati Guha Thakurta, *The Making of a New 'Indian' Art: artists, aesthetics and nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge: CUP, 1992.

⁴⁷ Ranajit Guha has written on obedience and duty as virtues. But Guha relates this obedience to the obedience of the subjects to their colonial masters epitomised by the early Gandhi and the liberals, and as the main spring of collaboration. Guha points to the lineage of Utilitarian thought from Bentham to Hume and its resurgence with such authors as Samuel Smiles [see above]. Guha goes on to disentangle Bankimchandra's notions of bhakti to argue that the basic power structures and dominance in India remained untouched by any superimposition of 'Western positivism, egalitarianism and humanism' and ends where it began: Indian liberalism 'reverts ... to a concept of collaboration, framed primarily in terms of a subordination characteristic of precapitalist culture.' (pp. 54-55) We can convert Guha's point by exchanging the subordinating subject (and doing away with any ideas about an untouched zone). 'Samaj' no longer meant liberalism but often radicalism. Obedience and proving one's worth to the coloniser was a waning strand in and after the late 1920s, but it became a principle of the nationalist 'shadow state' in waiting to train up its citizenry with the virtues of obedience, discipline and self-control. By tracing the 'collaborationist moments' to Bhakti and the Gita as its source, Guha misses out on the early use of the text for entirely different goals (as with Tilak and the Anushilan). But in this elaboration Guha gives us the next cue - atmanivedana or the complete surrender of body, mind and soul (or the disinterested, selfless service asked for by other nation-states). Guha, *ibid*, p. 48.

⁴⁸ SV Kowjalgi, 'The future is in your hands', *The Volunteer*, Special issue, Hindustani Seva Dal

discipline demanded of them during the first training camp, lamented, 'They think that their service is a [...] bargaining sort of gift. They do not consider it a sacred duty. They fail to completely efface their personal elements. They think of individuals more than institutions.' Indiscipline was the consequence and in its wake the 'devilish brood of petty jealousy, disobedience and idleness etc.'⁴⁹

The collective versus the individual was one of the central questions in these negotiations, and the two poles were demarcated by an outright anti-individualism and a more lenient, liberal approach in which individual development was to go hand in hand with the required 'social nature' and responsibility of the individual for the collective (though not necessarily the other way round). As an example of the first train of thought one might cite the prominent Seva Dal organiser and instructor GG Jog from Kanpur who wrote 'Individualism is an anachronism' and whoever talks in support of it was 'pathetically behind the times ... he is a madieval [sic] reborn'. These, he proclaimed, were the days of large aggregations not small communities. 'This is not to say that individualism is a lost cause. It has its place and value in philosophic thought. But it is a spent up force.' He explained that there was room for an individual in every society: 'Every Nation has its individual, its Hero' and these heroes, by their actions 'justify themselves... But the common herd is a different commodity. we [sic] cannot afford to let them go their way. We must devise certain broad rules by which they shall be guided. Thither we must allow them but let it not be too long. Let us leave them sufficient scope for the exercise of their limbs. But let them not tread their several paths, lest they work not in co-operation.' He explained that in society there could only be competition or co-operation, and while competition might spur activity, it 'kills in the long run.' It was movements and not men who really shaped the world. Only an organisation was efficient and 'all powerful. ... A man is but a unit. And a unit by itself is nothing.'⁵⁰ We also find numerous

Belgaum Conference Report 1924, pp. 7-8. SR Kowjalgi (or Kaujalgi) was at this time president of the Karnatak PCC and a close associate of Hardikar's who went a long way to enable the hand-in-glove cooperation between these two bodies in the province. Kowjalgi spent quite some time explaining the necessity of being non-violent in mind as well, harbouring poisonous thoughts was for him himsa as well. As such he is one of the ideologically committed Gandhians (rather than the many strategical Gandhians such as - probably - Hardikar).

⁴⁹ Anonymous [NS Hardikar], 'Sahayaks' Training...', *ibid*, p. 17.

⁵⁰ See GG Jog, 'Individualism vs. Organisation', *The Volunteer*, September 1926, pp. 206-207.

instances of statements along the lines of 'Society has been rightly compared to an organism'.⁵¹ Human society, in such examples, was rendered analogous to plant-life, where every part of the plant exists only by virtue of being a member of the whole, or to the social organisation of bee-hives.⁵²

Translating such rather abstract notions into the currency of contemporary world affairs, an article entitled 'Volunteering as I conceive it' summed up some common arguments: The author first outlined the volunteer as such: what an individual does out of choice for society is what counts, and this 'flowing forth of mind' from the individual to the social outlook demarcates the volunteer. The birth of such movements has always been a sign that 'society has become conscious of its organic existence, and the power of society increases in proportion to the strength of this movement'. Today 'the whole west' is organised into groups on a territorial basis 'with the result that the mind of every such group has become almost synonymous [sic] with that of its state, generating a force that has enabled these small groups, to hold under their control the rest of the vast humanity. [...] therefore the volunteer movement has come to be known as one, which has for its object, the training of citizens in a military style.' Because in a society where power has to radiate from an autocrat to the people, the need for such an organisation was paramount.⁵³

This view on individualism was not limited to the socio-moral mental landscape of volunteer or youth organisations, of course, but was in fact linked to a scientific rationale linked with the circumstances that modernity (and industrialisation) placed societies in. Together with the self-Orientalising view of the essentially spiritual East, this is one of the most common tropes of the period.⁵⁴ Indian leftists tended to state similar anti-individual trends based on notions of a

⁵¹ Jagunathrao, Kanpur, 'Individualism [sic] and Organisation', *The Volunteer*, June 1926, p. 128.

⁵² See for instance on the value of organisation and references to analogies of bee hives and animal life, the Gandhian MB Dixit, a regular contributor to the *Volunteer* on village uplift, 'Value of Discipline', *The Volunteer*, April 1926, p.81. See also the curious piece 'Drops of Nector' [sic], which is an assemblage of popular social Darwinist words of wisdom in the form of aphorisms (*The Volunteer*, August 1927, pp. 212-213).

⁵³ Mr. Dattopant Majli, (Belgaum), 'Volunteering As I Conceive It', *The Volunteer*, January 1926, p. 10.

⁵⁴ Peter van der Veer, 'The Foreign Hand: Orientalist Discourse in Sociology and Communalism', in Carol Breckenridge and van der Veer (eds), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993, pp. 23-44.

scientific socialism/ communism.⁵⁵ Individualism, seen as a particular Western or a backward ideology was contrasted with the 'scientific' collectivism that was a prerequisite for national advancement within the framework of linear progress and, at the same time, an age-old trait of Indian or 'Eastern' culture which the world finally could appreciate.⁵⁶ The right-wing hardly needs citing in this context, since their views correspond closely to the discourse on spiritual and community-oriented society. The views of the RSS would largely be phrased in ways very similar to the above with perennial emphasis on the necessity to 'wipe out' individual characteristics and on an army-like structure geared towards that goal. More 'leftist' views were, in fact, not in stark opposition to the former view, and attempts were made to synthesize the Kantian (or Mazzinian or spiritualist) credo that man was also an end in himself to the needs of the national (or international) collective, in which the individual was called upon to develop as long as this was not at the expense of his 'social nature'.⁵⁷ Selfless service as path for self-realisation, and individual, voluntaristic self perfection that was only to be found when becoming an integral part of the organic, holistic group-body (citing Jesus, Seneca or the Bhagavadgita), were philosophies employed for the same end. This rhetoric was most strikingly employed by the more religiously-minded who could relate service, discipline, sacrifice and the volunteer movement to Dharma.⁵⁸ One of the sharpest discussions of the demands placed on 'the masses' to be selfless and loyal is, no doubt, Hanna Arendt's when describing the rise of 'mass men' and their self-lessness that is the actual lack of self-interest or self-preservation even.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ As an example, the Communist Shaukat Usmani might be cited in this context, who manages to combine all of these trends under the header of scientific socialism. See Shaukat Usmani, *Peshawar to Moscow: Leaves from an Indian Muhajireen's Diary* (Swaraj Publishing House, Benares, 1927), pp 76, cited in Muhammad Ali Raza, 'Interrogating Provincial Politics: The Leftist Movement in British Punjab, c. 1914-1950' [unpublished PhD thesis, 2011], p. 299.

⁵⁶ Interestingly enough the 'East' or sometimes even Asia was seen in the 1920s to include Russia, which in 1905 was still viewed as a Western power.

⁵⁷ See Jagunathrao, 'Individualism [sic] and Organisation', *The Volunteer*, June 1926, p. 128-129. See also NH Pandia, secretary of HSD in Bombay, 'Team Work', *The Volunteer*, October 1926, .. 232-233.

⁵⁸ Cf. 'Address of Shir K Nageswara Rao Pantulu Guru', *The Volunteer*, January 1925, p. 8-11, for quote see p. 8. There were some sanyasins writing and joining the Seva Dal (which made a bid deal of this) who had no such qualms about 'brute force' but celebrated the ideals of manliness epitomized by the muscular heroes with the wonderful physical powers of the Mahabharata. For the references to Seneca etc. see KB Dixit, MA, Allahabd (Research Scholar, Philosophy, Allahabd University), 'Religion of the Volunteer', *The Volunteer*, October 1926, and idem, 'Service Before Self', *The Volunteer*, July 1926, pp. 154-155. pp. 228-230; also RR Diwaker, The Will to Serve, *The Volunteer*, November 1925, pp. 267-269.

⁵⁹ See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, pp. 315-326.

The volunteers, as ideal citizens of tomorrow, occupied a prominent place in national utopias. They were depicted as individual quasi-ascetic renouncers and as strictly obedient, yet thinking and creative soldiers. Lajpat Rai, in a letter to his former secretary Hardikar, which was later published under the title 'I Wish I Was A Boy Again' summed this position up well when he said, 'The most important element is to forget your personal elements in obeying orders in a superior cause.'⁶⁰ Volunteer movements stressed action and a particular aesthetic of silence that is connected to the role of the individual as part of the organic whole. Hardikar, Hedgewar, and the Khaksar leader Mashriqi would advocate activism and silence to their followers. There was a certain contempt for intellectual exercise, for 'arm-chair politicians' and 'platform orators' as Hardikar called them, and, by and large, the educated middle-class who think too much of themselves to take orders without question, who 'do not like the idea of 'superiors.'⁶¹ Add the imparting of morals and regular habits by physical exercise and we are back to the epitome of the public school boy, the Boy Scout, or the soldier, depending on how one is inclined to trace it. It was the importance and alleged immense energy of youth that was also the reason it needed to be reigned in and controlled tightly especially in its phase of awakening.

The strong fascination with dictatorship in its close relation to discipline and efficiency was one potent solution to this (as well as numerous other problems). The aforementioned Raghupati Sahai wrote that the quickening of political awakening was full of hope and danger. He was referring specifically to the recurrent communal riots, one of the very visible dangers of a country tearing itself apart. Sahai thought the 'active and vocal part of society' needed to be protected from itself. Otherwise the movement towards the land of promise will become only 'a wild dance of destruction.'⁶² For society to be protected from itself, to be purged of old and harmful traditions and weak

⁶⁰ Lala Lajpat Rai, 'I Wish I Was A Boy Again', *The Volunteer*, March 1926, p. 52. This is echoed by most people as the most essential quality of the volunteer – "to merge your personality in the cause of service", see the address of SV Kowjalgi [the president of the Karnatak Congress Committee], Chairman of the Reception committee of HSD, Conference at Belgaum, in Hindustani Seva Dal Belgaum Conference Report, 1924, p. 7.

⁶¹ NS Hardikar, editorial notes: 'Inculcate the Spirit of the Movement', *The Volunteer*, March 1926, p. 45-46.

⁶² Raghupati Sahai, (Under-Secy AICC Allahabad), 'Some Matters of Importance', *The Volunteer*, Aug. 1926, pp. 185.

national life, unity reached through efficiency and discipline was needed, but for such movements to be able to effect the requisite changes what was also required was precisely the type of strong leader who had already arisen in other countries. The canon of examples in this context almost invariably refers to Kemal Pasha Atatürk and Mussolini, sometimes Lenin and Hitler, in the mid-20s certainly Sun Yat- Sen, Chang Tso-Lin, the Manchurian warlord, and Chiang Kai Shek, and in other instances Primo de Rivera in Spain, Pilsudski in Poland, Raza Khan in Persia and Amir Amanullah in Afghanistan - often in the same breath.⁶³

The influential Prof. Puntambekar, an MA from Oxford, Bar-at-law and Head of the Economy Department, later the History Department of the Hindu University, Benares, elucidated the advantages of dictatorship in Hardikar's *Volunteer*: he argued that though it was commonly stated that this was the age of democracy, a number of dictators had risen, who were 'strengthening the state and revolutionising the old conditions'. They were 'actuated with strong desire of promoting the greatness of their nations.' India alone seemed to suffer from the lack of such an avatar or dictator. 'The value of dictatorship lies first in its national outlook, then in its rigorous work in arriving at decisions and carrying them out strenuously, and lastly in the discipline it spreads for revivifying [sic] and re-ordering society.' Echoing a common trope, he said that in a certain phase of national life, dictatorship was needed so that beneficial change might be forced on society – otherwise vested interests and minorities hampered the onward march.⁶⁴

Prof. GP Prabhakar, MA, wrote a long book on the tasks of the youth movement around 1937. He was close to the Congress, and advocated Hindu-Muslim unity on the basis of acknowledging reli-

⁶³ A good example in this context is, for instance, the Congressman Dr. Shastri, who presided over the All India Youth Conference at Madras in 1927. He talked about the world spirit and the destiny of the revolt of Indian youth and the current of the 'world forces' in 'the age of freedom of thought and soul-emancipati[on]' that were steering the 'race of heroes and saints' towards the 'holy battle for freedom, nationality, liberty', and claimed that India needed a 'strong hand' like that of Atatürk or Mussolini. Dr Shastri, speech at the Second Youth Conference held at Madras, over which he presided, speech reproduced in 'The Indian Youth Conference', *The Volunteer*, December 1927, pp. 278-282, for quotes see pp. 279, 280, 281.

⁶⁴ Referring to Gandhi, Puntambekar said that the Mahatma might revolutionise minds but was lacking in compulsion and discipline since there was no punishment for the breach of his code. Hence, Puntambekar stated, the mind loses its original vigour and the newly born creative force is eroded. SV Puntambekar, 'Democracy Dictatorship', *The Volunteer*, March 1927, pp. 69-70.

gious differences. He dealt with the commensurability of religion (as national duty) and politics, proclaiming the principal of 'Universal Love' is the ideal of 'Universal religion',⁶⁵ but also took account of debates regarding socialism and dictatorship. A friend had told him that 'India does not want religion now, but Hitlerism', to which he replied: 'I admit the philosophy of India wants a second Hitler, but a true religion shows the path, how to visualise Hitlerism and lead the nation forward to the ultimate goal and its healthy development.'⁶⁶ In 1937, Hitlerism could still be seen as another 'healthy' path to progress or even in line with 'Universal Love'.

Any number of examples to this effect could be cited, from notable speakers, newspaper articles and youth conferences to obscure publications and people moving on the fringes, but these few might suffice to give representative impressions of discussions within a wider mainstream, which is not limited to the usual Bengali or Maharashtrian suspects.⁶⁷ It is one of the most widely commented themes next to the overarching necessity for strength and discipline that we find when commentators reflect on the advancement of the nation. It has an intrinsic connection with the concerns of leadership concerning mobilised masses. A widely shared opinion was that in the linear, organic progress of nation-states, the 'adolescent phase' of becoming required a dictator to lead the nation to modernity and efficiency. Puntambekar, who also penned admiring articles on Mussolini (a great man, even though he repressed and silenced his opponents) and George Washington (a great military leader, who built a victorious army out of mere rabble)⁶⁸ was certainly among the more outspoken advocates of such trends, but references in this vein are recurrent on a number of platforms.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ See GP Prabhakar. *Echo of Youth*, [1937?], Baroda: Shah Maneklal Ambaram Doctor (at Shree Sayaji Vijaya Press), see esp. his chapter on 'Religion and Socialism', (quote from p. 12).

⁶⁶ GP Prabhakar. *Echo of Youth*, [1937?], Baroda: Shah Maneklal Ambaram Doctor (at Shree Sayaji Vijaya Press), p. 8.

⁶⁷ See for instance the admiration professed for Mussolini and the Fascist street fight (in its cleaned up, memorialised form) described by a delegation of young Indian women led by Mrs. Datta, the wife of SK Datta, one of the important players in the Indian YMCA and the Forman Christian College. She left Bombay with 20 female students in May 1934 for a four-month tour of Europe and had an audience with Mussolini, which is described in euphoric terms, and were deeply moved by the shrine to the dead fasces, the 'martyrs' of the Fascist take-over in Italy and the national rejuvenation of Italy generally..See 'Il Duce' Greets Indian Women - Party's Tour -- in Munich on Day of Nazi 'clean-Up', by 'a correspondent' [one of the participants], in *The Statesman*, 2.11.1934.

⁶⁸ See Puntambekar, 'Mussolini', *The Volunteer*, June 1927, pp. 147-8; and the article on George Washington in *The Volunteer*, Aug. 1927, pp. 203 ff.

⁶⁹ A number of scholars and activists in the Indian context have been prone to use the epithet 'fascist'

We find individuals who unite within themselves divergent tendencies irreducible to ideological definitions, without a sense of apparent internal contradiction. Let us look at a connected theme and its international convergences: The Bengali Congressmen Dr. Nalinaksha Sanyal⁷⁰ was one of the delegates to the 'World Youth Peace Congress' held at Eerde, Netherlands in 1928.⁷¹ The Congress aimed to establish 'world brotherhood' and peace fuelled by a utopianism born out of the cataclysm of the Great War.⁷² India would remain a member of the connected World Youth Congress Movement until the outbreak of the Second World War brought such endeavours up short of a time.⁷³ A number of Indian delegates partook of the Eerde proceedings, Rajendra Prasad came and went in a hurry but delivered public messages from the Mahatma and CF Andrews.⁷⁴ Sanyal was voted to be the spokesman of the Oppressed Peoples at this conference.⁷⁵ In a speech, he outlined the plunder of India by the British and the terrible conditions country and people were in, stating the the necessary condition for 'equality, freedom, and lasting peace among the free and self determining citizens of the world' was the abolition of imperialism. From among Anarchists, Anti-Militarists, Social Democrats, 'Physiocrats', to him only the communists seemed to have

when describing the RSS and Hindu Right. For instance, Casolari made much of the connections between Italian Fascism and the Mahasabaite Moonje (consisting of a visit and some glowing writing, incidentally) to proof the enduring and committed nature of the fascist tendencies of the Sangh Parivar overall. Marzia Casolari, 'Hindutva's Foreign Tie-Up in the 1930s: Archival Evidence', *EPW*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 2000, pp. 218-228. On the question of 'fascism', see below (chp. 5).

⁷⁰ Sanyal was born 1898. He studied at Krishnath College, Berhampur and Presidency College, Calcutta. Did his MA from LSE and PhD in Economics on the development of Indian railways from London University. While in London, he was a member of the expatriate INC committee, held positions with insurance companies. He was a member of the Bengal Assembly and served as Chief Whip of the Indian National Congress before the partition of Bengal. On Sanyal and his attitude to the the Scheduled Caste Conference, see also Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *Caste, Protest and Identity in Colonial India: The Namasudras of Bengal*, Richmond: Curzon, 1997, p. 196.

⁷¹ Due to the travel cost, they tended to be in Europe already before participating in the conference even though various individuals in India had applied to go but could either not get the necessary institutional backing or could not mount the travel cost. The grounds of the meeting belonged to none other than Krishnamurti, the boy proclaimed to be the next messiah by the Theosophists, and the Eerde meeting followed Krishnamurti's Star Camp held under the auspices of the Order of the Star of the East, which Krishnamurti wanted to be 'a true League of Nations'. Cf. Roland Vernon, *Star in the East. Krishnamurti, the invention of a Messiah*, New York: Palgrave, 2001, p. 100-101. In August 1928, the WYPC took place with some 150 youth from 27 different groups, claiming to representing some 32 nations and more than 100,000 youths. The Congress was organised by a conglomerate of youth organisations, not least the British Federation of Youth under Harold F. Bing (also editor of the British magazine 'Youth'). See Harold F Bing, 'British Youth and India', in *The Young Liberator*, Vol. I, No 8. April 1929, pp. 276- 2280, see esp. 278. See also Bing's report highlighting the need for youth to work for peace after they had stumbled blindly into the disaster of the Great War, cf. 'Report on the World Youth Peace Conference', NMML, AICC papers, F.No. O - 3, 1928 f. 179. See on the camp the fascinating contemporary report by Joseph Brown Matthews,

practical and time-tested answers but it was unclear how the domination of one class was supposed to bring about peace everlasting. By sheer dint of bravery, he was still holding on to the non-violence proposed by Gandhi, but whether it would be that or communism for India depended on the youth of the world.⁷⁶ Less than two years later, Sanyal gave a speech at a Murshidabad Youth Conference in which he called on the youth movement not to join the Congress as all the people of the land had not joined the latter. The youth movement should form

into such a great and powerful association, where it would be possible for all to work unitedly. there would be no party faction or difference of opinion in it. Its object would be to create a new society and a new country. It is not only that before its force the British power would only bow down but before it all the political and economic inequalities would be removed. As destruction and construction would be the object of the youth movement, so its object would be to go against the 'tradition'...

He stated further 'Those who have youth in them, want to create [...] They are thought of as mad people and in a sense those who did some work for the world were all mad men.' As examples he presented Buddha, Sankaracharya, Shivaji, Lenin, Mussolini and Sun Yat-Sen.⁷⁷

To contemporaries, the problems of India and the world were fundamentally entangled during the period. Beyond the rhetoric of leaders, the reference to international affairs and the attempt to get

Youth looks at world peace: a story of the first World Youth Peace Congress (Holland, 1928), New York: American Committee, World Youth Peace Congress, 1929, which gives a vivid overview of participants and organisation at the camp and, more than that, the prevailing spirit.

⁷² 'General report', World Youth Peace Congress, Eerde, 16-26 August 1928 by Nalinaksha Sanyal, NMML, AICC, F O-3, 1928, ff. 181-203. See also the invitation and programme, aims and objects of the conference as well as the 'Youth charter' by the British Federation of Youth (one of the principal organisers) and the World Youth League (Weltjugendliga) which inspired the movement. See NMML, AICC, F O-3, 1928. 'Youth's Charter' aimed at establishing 'a sound body in a sound mind', the opportunity to serve, the elimination of war and construction of peace (see *ibid*, f. 232.)

⁷³ This episode and the fascinating international connections that emerge from this are outside of the purview of the current study merely for lack of space. See on the Youth Congress Movement however: NMML, AICC Papers, FD 10, pt. I, 1936.

⁷⁴ See Report by Sanyal, in NMML, AICC, F O-3, 1928, f. 189.

⁷⁵ His detailed report of the proceedings is fascinating given his close engagements with the problems of peace, world brotherhood and the task of youth in building a more stable future with equality and justice for all. He highlighted the importance of the Wandervogel which, at the Congress, apparently was portrayed as the mother of all youth movements. See 'General report' by Nalinaksha Sanyal, NMML, AICC, F O-3, 1928, ff. 181-203.

⁷⁶ He stated 'Western' imperialism and capitalism undermined the entire structure of society by denying the 'social value of man' and called for the removal of all exploitation to be brought about by the Youth since the League of Nations was nothing but a conference of 'pirates'. 'India and the World Youth'. Speech of Dr. Sanyal at the Eerde Conference, 19th Aug. 1928), NMML, AICC, G-39, 1928, ff. 284-303.

⁷⁷ Cf. Dr. Sanyal, review of speech given at Murshidabad Youth Conference, 19th Jan. 1930, WBSA, GoB, Office of DIG of Police, CID, IB, 271-C/ 28.

to know youth from other countries was common-place and can be found in every other pamphlet.⁷⁸ Secondly, social change generally, and the youth movements in particular, were envisioned by most of its apostles as something supra-political. They were the materialised form of an eternal ideal of Youth, symbolising the forces of the march of progress and agents of destruction of everything that is. Various Congress leaders emphasised that the youth movement was to be something above parties, above political allegiances; something even above the Congress, which was equated with the nation.⁷⁹ This can be related to what Laqueur dubbed the 'metapolitics' of the romantically inspired, escapist German youth movement (especially the *Wandervogel*), which Sanyal along with many others regarded as the mother of all youth movements.⁸⁰ Arendt, in turn, would have referred to this as suprapolitics.⁸¹

The Congress itself was a project that spawned all differences of opinion, but it did so by incorporating (supposedly) a multitude of approaches, while the Volunteer Movement was supposed to negate these altogether and achieve a higher national synthesis than the Congress ever could. Hardikar's reiterated stance was 'We belong to Congress but parties have we none.'⁸² This was partly due to the desire to create a united, truly national front in which there would be no place for 'petty squabbles' and power-brokering, in which national harmony and dutifulness were the true founding stone.

⁷⁸ See for instance 'Report of the secretary of the Student's Organising Committee' of the All Bengal Students' Association [established in 1928], dt 22nd Sept. 1928, NMML, AICC, G-39, 1928, ff. 271-276, see esp. f. 272, and the programme at f. 276.

⁷⁹ That the Congress was synonymous with the nation was an approach often put forth by Congressmen, see for instance JR Kripalani, (genl secy INC), 'Readers' View - Congress Policy - Mr Kripalani Explains', *The Times of India*, 14th Nov. 1935, MSA, Home (Spcl.), 800 (775-B-VII), 1935. See for instance DK Bharadvaj, 'The Karnatak Volunteer', in *The Volunteer*, January 1925, p. 13-15, esp. p. 14. See also Mohamad Ali, *ibid*, p. 18.

⁸⁰ Cf. Walter Laqueur, *Young Germany. A History of the German Youth Movement*, London: Routledge, 1962. Ascribing mere instrumentalisation to such proclamations would however be making it too simple - the felt euphoria surrounding youth and the almost crazed hope for renewal, was real and the supra-politics was an important part of the perceived special mission for youth which was something larger than politics, something larger than life.

⁸¹ See Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, esp. pp. 225, 323-325, 331-332. Arendt's comments about the anti-political stance of totalitarian movements are especially relevant here. For her, they were precisely marked by a characteristic eschewing of concrete goals, replaced by an activist 'motion-mania'.

⁸² NS Hardikar, 'Cawnpore Volunteers! Listen', *The Volunteer*, December 1925, p. 296.

There was also a degree of general distrust in high politics generally as it was a sphere that with its jockeying for position and power was necessarily corrupting and limited - it had to take into account exigencies, it operated within a framework that made it necessarily reformist in character, and it could merely have an impact on the more superficial aspects of life, whereas the youth movement would transform life itself.⁸³ Subhas Bose stated that the Youth movement was 'not merely political' but neither was it 'non-political. In its scope it is as large as life' since it seeks to satisfy the basic craving of the human soul for self-



SC Bose with his Congress volunteers (c. 1928), in *SK Bose, Netaji: A Pictorial Biography*, Calcutta: Netaji Research Bureau, 2008.

expression and freedom. Nehru re-iterated this concept in nearly the same terms but added the dimension of social and gender equality to end exploitation and bring about 'world co-operation and world harmony', to cite but two examples from among the upcoming Congress leaders, both of whom advocated a socialist state at that point. But then, socialism was to many a scientific method and not a mere political opinion: 'the only hope for a distressed world today'.⁸⁴ In contrast, high politics was the ill-advised attempt of trying to change everything at once, top-down instead of from below, and Spencerian notions of rebuilding society starting with the individual posed a counter-model to that.⁸⁵ The twist was the emphasis on inherent moral qualities and spirit that made it possible to transcend the present *status quo*.

⁸³ Compare with Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, esp. pp. 256-263 (regarding what she terms tribal nationalism, which exhibits interesting similarities with anti-colonial movements).

⁸⁴ Subhas Bose, Speech at the First C.P Youth conference held in Nagpur, 29th Nov. 1929, and Speech by Jawaharlal Nehru at the Students Conference held in Shradhdhanand Park, Calcutta, 22nd September 1928 in Durlab Singh (ed.), *To the Youth of My Country*, pp. 35-44, pp. 76- 90 (see 81). Both of them also spoke about the unrest in the labour movement and the open and explicit recourse to socialism at this point can be seen in this context. See also comments in chp. 1 'The Next Stage' on the distrust in high politics and institutions. See also the Pamphlet of the Madras League of Youth, cited there and Speech by Jawaharlal Nehru at the Students Conference held in Shradhdhanand Park, Calcutta, 22nd September 1928, in Durlab Singh (ed.), *To the Youth of My Country*, pp. 76- 90, see p. 77.

⁸⁵ See the Speech by Sir CV Raman [n.d] who asserted that it was the heroism to do it all at once that had led to the Great War, and what was needed was the heroism of the steady carrying out of tasks and by and by change once environment., See Speech of Sir CV Raman, in Durlab Singh (ed.), *To the Youth of My Country*, pp. 25-32, see esp. p. 30.

Whether among socialists or militarists, we tend to find this philosophy of mind over matter, inner qualities over outer exigencies, and will over structure. This notion equated ‘character building’ with external progress. The creation of the new order could therefore not be bound by politics, but was obeying the world forces, the universal law of nature and linear progress. How this new society was to come about practically and what exactly it would look like were not the most immediate questions at hand – one could apply Gandhism or Communism or nothing at all depending on what was practical at the time (and most would have added Fascism to this list). The central concern for the advocates of the youth movements, was, as we have seen, about the qualities that youth had to embody as a basis for building the nation and winning freedom. The task of the youth movement was then to free themselves first, from tradition and custom and the old order, and to carry idealism and a utopian spirit into society, rendering society more adaptable and malleable as the youths themselves were, and that way let the country be reborn.

The 1928 AICC Session and Subhas Bose's Volunteers

The Calcutta session of the AICC, taking place in the heated atmosphere after the visit of the Simon Commission and the wide-spread protests against it,⁸⁶ did not lack in pomp or drama. Subhas Chandra Bose, released from jail the previous year and elected president of the BPCC, acted as chairman of the Reception Committee of the Youth Congress and as GOC of his Indian National Volunteer Corps, a body that had come into existence under the BPCC.⁸⁷ By this time,

⁸⁶ In this atmosphere of open hostility sparked by the racial composition of the Simon Commission toward a government that once again seemed to go back on its promises, the Bardoli satyagraha was taken up under the (public) aegis of Vallabhbhai Patel. In one of the anti-Simon demonstrations, Lala Lajpat Rai, Hardikar's erstwhile mentor, was lathi-charged along with the crowd he led and seriously injured by a blow in the chest. When he died almost three weeks later of a heart attack, the police assault was singled out unanimously as the trigger for the passing of the ‘lion of the Punjab’. On student boycott calls and protests see, for instance, Bombay Presidency Youth League Pamphlet no. 18. [s.a.], NMML, AICC, G-39, 1928, f, 319. See also pamphlets nos. 17, 19, 20 at *ibid.*, ff. 317, 321, 323. The pamphlets called for a complete boycott, and made use, for instance, of the example of Egypt in her non-co-operation with the Milner Committee and reminded Britain how she lost America. It prophesied that when the Commission came, youth would interpret the nation's reply, namely total boycott.

⁸⁷ Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin [ZMO], Horst Krüger Papers, Uncatalogued Files, Drawer III, 116: Hindustani Seva Dal (1928-1929), p.4.

Bose had moved more to the left but not without some reservations and ambiguities.⁸⁸ His attraction to a certain philosophical irrationalism remained marked. He would talk about the divinity in man roused by the desire for freedom, or sermonise that when the Nietzschean superman had become the ideal in Europe, youth in India must speedily shape their ideal of the new man and the new society.⁸⁹ In preparation for the session, some 2,000 volunteers had been raised under Bose's supervision. The Corps for the session were khaki-clad and carried lathis; the officers wore steel-chain epaulettes. The revolutionary Jatin Das held the rank of major in the organisation and had helped with the training.⁹⁰ Bose prided himself on giving explicitly military training to the volunteers, and that many First World War veterans had joined the corps as leaders. Most of the volunteers were college students and youth. Bose had also started a committee to form a women's wing. A women's division marched up under the leadership of 'Colonel' Latika Ghosh, secretary of the Mahila Rashtriya Sangha, which she had set up encouraged by Bose a little earlier.⁹¹

Bose's volunteer corps was somewhat fantastically divided into 'divisions' such as Motorcycle, Cavalry or Coded Messages. Bose demanded that all volunteers needed to be declared medically fit by a doctor and had to bear the training expenses. Once admitted, all expenses would be borne by the organisation, though.⁹² This body became known as the Bengal Volunteers, which had quite a few members otherwise associated with the Bengal revolutionaries.⁹³ Bose envisioned that these

⁸⁸ He struggled with issues of national harmony versus class relations. He was also distrustful of an internationalism that sidelined nationalism which for him was the prerequisite to internationalist engagements and India's attaining her place in the world. See Gordon, *Brothers Against the Raj*, pp. 162-189 for an account of Bose's activities in 1927-28.

⁸⁹ Gordon, *Brothers Against the Raj*, pp. 168, 198-199. This refers to two speeches one in 1927, the latter at the District Students' Conference in Rajshahi (Bengal) in August 1929.

⁹⁰ ZMO, Krüger Papers, Uncatalogued Files, Drawer III, 116: Hindustani Seva Dal (1928-1929). An early Anushilan member who also participated in the early Gandhian campaigns, he later manufactured bombs for Bhagat Singh's group and was arrested in the Lahore Conspiracy Case. In the hunger strike of revolutionaries in protest against conditions in jails for political and under-trial prisoners, he fasted unto death in 1929.

⁹¹ Gordon, *Brothers Against the Raj*, p. 194.

⁹² Press announcement by Bose, see Gordon, *Brothers Against the Raj*, pp. 190-191.

⁹³ Some of the volunteers joined from a pre-existing Mukti Sangha under Jyotish Joardar, an M.Sc of Physics (Dacca University) who later became one of the organisers of the Bengal Volunteers led by Hem Chandra Ghosh, a well-know revolutionary, and counting the editor of the Forward, Satya Ranjan Bakshi as an important member. The other group that can be traced back to this moment is the Surya Sen's Chittagong group. Gordon, *Brothers Against the Raj*, pp. 190-198. On Bose's his long-standing and complex connection with the revolutionaries, see also IOR, L/PJ/12/214. On Bose and the All-Bengal Young Men's Association and their connection with the revolutionaries, see for instance, Secret. Extract from Weekly Report of DIB, Home Dept, GoI, dt Delhi, 21st Jan. 1925, IOR, L/PJ/12/59, file 4968(G) 1921, f.2-4. On the ABYM and the Hindustani Student Association ,

volunteers would swarm out into the villages and combine their cross-country marches and drill exercises with learning about the rural areas.⁹⁴

Subhas had, like many others, used an abundance of military metaphors in the preceding period, from satyagraha campaigns as 'sorties' to the nation as an army. He himself had attended military training as a cadet in Calcutta and Cambridge universities and had an inkling about structure and command. On the occasion of the session, Bose donned a fantasy uniform hauntingly reminiscent of Mussolini, and commanded the volunteers from horse-back.⁹⁵ In other pictures he poses garlanded

and in pure white khaddar surrounded by uniformed volunteers. Nothing could better summarise the discursive strands that were interwoven by the volunteer organisations and their leaders. Here, the dictatorial leader,



SC Bose as GOC of the Congress volunteer at the 1928 session, from SK Bose, *Netaji: A Pictorial Biography*.

a man above the crowd, a born avatar larger than life, there the mild-mannered saintly (in Bengal:) intellectual, *primus inter pares* based on his evolved morality.

At the session itself, the younger Nehru was elected president for the year, and the elder Nehru along with the old guard of the Congress came under heavy fire from the younger generation for their mild-mannered Report, a compromise was finally found by giving the Government one year to accept the Nehru Report or face another satyagraha. The session also marked the irrevocable break-down in ML-INC relations.⁹⁶

see No.6/P.A./1925, letter to Major Wallinger, dt.Simla, 2nd June, 1925, *ibid*, see f.8-9.

⁹⁴ Gordon, *Brothers Against the Raj*, pp. 194-195. Gordon states that Gandhi's resistance curbed the growth of the movement outside Bengal. Bose had intentions of creating from this body a more All-India format.

⁹⁵ Subhas would travel to Fascist Italy in 1933 and 1935, meeting Mussolini both times (presenting his banned book *The Indian Struggle* during the 1935 trip). In 1933 he befriended Vithalbhai Patel, Sardar Patel's elder brother, and 'inherited' his position as friendly ambassador to the Irish nationalists from him. His engagement with Communism and Fascism both were layered and complex. As with so many other leaders, the discipline and efficiency and 'scientific' programme appealed to him. He oscillated between Marxism, religious sentiments reminiscent of Vivekananda and a fascination for Fascism. Mr and Mrs Kurti, two of his Jewish friends from Vienna, described him as disgusted with many aspects of Nazism while his own writing makes it quite clear that he thought he could use Fascism and Nazism for the benefit of India. See also Gordon, *Brothers Against the Raj*, pp. 282-283.

⁹⁶ As a counter to the due Simon Report, Motilal and others wrote the 'Nehru report' regarding India's constitutional future. Shortly before, the Bengal Government had released the detainees including the soon-to-be Chittagong Armoury raiders Surjya Sen and Ananta Singh, who along with most of

It was at this session too, that the last Sunday of the month became reserved for monthly flag salutations.⁹⁷ The Seva Dal had been enacting this ceremony for some time, and Hardikar was keen to make it a national custom. He kept exact accounts on when and which of the Dal branches enacted the flag hoisting, for which a precise programme had been evolved, and he time and again called on all volunteer bodies to make the custom 'a success', printed leaflets etc.⁹⁸ If the effectiveness of the Dal in other areas may be doubted, it seems they did manage to popularise the custom, and a grand 'March Past' in military style and hoisting of the flag became the big attraction at the end of every Congress session.⁹⁹ Preserving the 'honour' of the (rather new) flag was by then firmly proclaimed as every nationalist's duty. A variety of bodies practised such flag salutations as a form of 'daily plebiscite' and the perpetual re-enactment of pledging oneself to higher, national goals.¹⁰⁰ Later on, during a dispute between Gandhi and Hardikar over the militarised nature of the Dal, Hardikar would defend his position by pointing out that military training was necessary to be able to defend the 'honour' of the flag.¹⁰¹ This points towards another function of volunteer bodies more generally: by virtue of being the intermediaries between party leadership and masses, they

the upper echelons of the group also took part in the proceedings as Bengal delegates. See Manini Chatterjee, *Do and Die - The Chittagong Uprising: 1930-1934*, New Delhi: Penguin India, 1999, see esp. pp. 38-40. The Chittagong Group backed Bose in the emerging clash of titans within the Bengal BPCC leading to a split of the same (ostensibly about election technicalities). The Seva Dal implicitly went with Bose. The volunteer movement in Bengal would be bedevilled for years with the subsequent schism of the Dal. For the INC, busy with the Lahore resolution and the political fall-out, it was an inopportune moment for internal party squabbles. Motilal Nehru was sent as an arbitrator in the hopes of finding a quick solution. For his report on the dispute, see NMML, AICC, G-120, (Pt. IV), 1929, ff 5-35. For the initial case as filed by the BPCC, see AICC, G-120 Part II, 1929. See also Gordon, *Brothers Against the Raj*, pp. 1113-119, especially for the related split in the Municipal Corporation as well as BPCC.

⁹⁷ NMML, AICC Papers, F. 70, 1946/47, ff.41+41A.

⁹⁸ See NMML, NS Hardikar, Private Papers, see esp. File 62, ff. 9, 11 on the duty of volunteers to guard the flag against 'insult' even at the cost of their life; f. 43 on the National Flag day the Dal celebrated all over the country in April 1931, also ff. 57, 64, 79-82, 119, 123. See the diverse articles on the subject in *The Volunteer*. The programme for the monthly flag salutation was regulated strictly - it had to start at 8 a.m. and not a minute later (Hardikar was very specific on this as it was so integral to the symbolic significance of the ritual), after a roll call, the flag would be saluted and Vande Mataram sung. Hardikar was pleased to note there was all-round approval and enthusiasm for the practice. By August 1928, Hardikar received regular reports from some 200 PCCs and Dal branches who carried out (sometimes quite large) monthly flag salutations – and this was said to represent only a small minority of the actual number. See NMML; NS Hardikar, Private Papers, File 63, ff.102-103.

⁹⁹ See for instance 'Our Flag at Cawnpore', *The Volunteer*, Jan. 1926, p. 7; see also Special Report on Belgaum Congress, *The Volunteer*, Feb. 1925, pp. 24-25 on flag hoisting at the Congress.

¹⁰⁰ Most famously the RSS with their saffron flag (Bhagwa Dwaj) who is the actual and metaphysical true guru of the Sangh, and every shakha opens their sessions with a flag salutation (see on this

were instrumental in evolving or implementing an entire register of newly emerging political rituals and ceremony that connected the parent body with the masses and gave it legitimacy.¹⁰² Taking the cue from Homi Babha, we can refer to the 'chiasmatic' disparity and non-sequentiality in national narratives which emerge as a double discourse and a 'splitting' of 'the people': they were on the one hand the object of a continuous pedagogic project which stresses their origin in the past, and, we might add, aimed at disciplining them into becoming a homologous entity. At the same time they were the subjects of a contemporaneity of the nation which had to be constantly reified and performed so that the state could maintain its existence as a totality of the people engaged in constant competition with other such entities.¹⁰³ The flag salutations were located at the double intersection of the split imagination of the people and between nations: from colonial subjects of the past-to-be the ritual reified them as the homogeneous people of a national present in opposition to the colonial state. That the Dal's flag salutations were to be celebrated at precisely the same minute on the same day all over the country - by every Dal branch and every Congress body - is performing this staging of the people-as-(free)nation on a scale that the ICN without its voluntary executive could not have hoped to achieve.

The Volunteer conference was as always held concomitantly. KF Nariman was the president elect for the conference.¹⁰⁴ The AIVB met as well. Among the members were Dr. Satyapal, Congress member and founder of the Punjabi Naujawan Bharat Sabha [NBS], the socialist KF Nariman, DV Gokhale, MA Ansari, Bulusu Sambamurti, Pratul Chandra Ganguli and Hari Kumar Chakrabarty (both ex-detenus). Unsurprisingly, in the Bengal volunteers many ex-detenus were involved and

Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalism*, esp. p. 39). The Bombay National Guards (see below) and others too followed the Seva Dal programme in this respect. On honouring the flag as daily plebiscite, see Sadan Jha, 'The Indian National Flag as a site of daily plebiscite', *EPW*, Vol. 43, No. 43, 2008, pp. 102-111.

¹⁰¹ See below, in this chp.

¹⁰² Bose's newly formed body too observed the regular flag salutation on the last Sunday of the month according to his new programme. See reference below.

¹⁰³ Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation', in *The Location of Culture*, London/New York: Routledge, 1994, pp. 139-170, see esp. pp. 140-152.

¹⁰⁴ The All India Youth Congress that met under the chairmanship of Bose passed a resolution calling for the attainment of freedom by 'all possible means' in direct contradiction to the INC policy. Bose after the session sent out a memorandum detailing the work to be done by the BPC and their volunteers. Enlisting 5 lacs Congress members, raising money and enlisting 1000 volunteers per district were among those items in order to give effect to the programme of the Congress - something impossible to do without a disciplined volunteer organisation.

the group was said to have strong links with 'terrorists' ever since its training by Jatin Das and since the revolutionaries were trying to organise through youth clubs once more, the Dal being one of them.¹⁰⁵ Shambunath De, one of his Hardikar's close co-workers, had been approached by some revolutionaries in Bengal to build up an organisation in Bengal.¹⁰⁶ Meanwhile, TC Goswami, MLA for Bengal and member of the AIVB, was asked by the notorious Rashbehari Bose whether the latter could organise an affiliated Seva Dal in Japan.¹⁰⁷

The fluidity between akhara-terrorist-volunteer was, of course a long-standing one. For a localised study, tracing all the connections might be an interesting undertaking, but for our purposes suffice it to point to the similarity and overlap in training and style that rendered the boundaries between these (abstract) categories permeable, to say the least. The structure and discourse established by groups like the Anushilan moulded their successors and rendered organisations akin on so many levels who had nominally nothing much to do with each other. When we talk of the modular forms of organisations, then this is where we find it.

At the same time, the prominence of people like Nariman and the 'firebrands' on the Volunteer Board also marked a wider shift in the Congress and Indian politics generally at the time.

After the session, preparations for the expected confrontation with the government were made in varying shapes and forms. Nehru believed the end result would be a general strike. The INC itself

¹⁰⁵ 'Note on the Hindustan [sic] Seva Dal', sd. TP Bhattacharjee, Insp. IB, 15.11.28, WBSA, GoB, office of DIG of Police, CID, IB, file no. 354/26, ff. 4-2., see also 16-10 for the revolutionaries organising through youth clubs.

¹⁰⁶ De's name had been found in Sachindranath Sanyal's notebook by the CID, and he was being watched by the IB. Apparently, he was shadowed for some time - a fact made public by Hardikar in *The Volunteer* and portrayed as an example of the malignant interest the police took in the Dal. See NMML, Hardikar, Private Papers, Files 63 and 62.

¹⁰⁷ Rash Behari Bose was the forth accused in the Delhi Conspiracy Case but escaped while his co-conspirators were rounded up and hanged. Afterwards, he resided in Japan. His story is fascinating and complicated. For a biography see Uma Mukherjee, *Two great Indian revolutionaries; Rash Behari Bose & Jyotindra Nath Mukherjee*. Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1966. Sachindranath Sanyal, founder of the Anushilan, was the revolutionary who had announced a suspension of terrorist attacks during Gandhi's Non-Cooperation movement. When Gandhi called a stop to the campaign and Sanyal was released (1920) he started organising again and the result of this was the Hindustan Republican Party, which would become the HSRA. See on Sanyal for instance, Irfan Habib, *To make the Deaf Hear*, esp. pp. 12, 21-22, 88-91.

had been undergoing a difficult phase in the late 1920s. In 1929 membership had declined to 56,000. Funds, too, were down.¹⁰⁸ Nehru spearheaded the drive for new enrolment and the Dal had been heavily involved in this, especially in Karnataka where Hardikar and his lieutenants worked over-time to meet the provincial enrolment quotas (which, of course, most provinces did not meet). The overall Congress membership went back up to half a million by 1930. Along with this, the reconstructive programme to prepare the population was highlighted.

The Youth Leagues and the Socialist Fashion

I believe in Youth Movements so much that I am prepared to sacrifice all other work to the organisation of youths in India.

– Jawaharlal Nehru ¹⁰⁹

In the preparatory year 1929, the AICC called upon 'the people of the country' to organise the youth, workers and peasants for an impending campaign.¹¹⁰ After the lapsing of the Congress-dictated deadline for the Nehru Report, *Purna Swaraj* was declared the goal of the INC. The Dal adopted this resolution for themselves. The the 'insult' delivered by the composition of the Simon Commission, the heated atmosphere and the death of Lajpat Rai had made for a daring attitude among some, namely the HSRA and 'The Youth'.¹¹¹ Before we move on to the events following this, an excursus is necessary to consider the wider developments around this time, especially the mushrooming Youth Leagues and what they stood for.

These years marked the first wave of the wide-spread fascination with and use of socialist and communist rhetoric and symbols. When one looks at progressive media and leaders of the late 1920s and early 1930s, one might think everybody was a socialist. A number of influences and strands conspired to bring about this shift towards the designated left in these years. There was the economic crisis leading to the strike wave already referred to. The arrests of the accused in the Meerut Conspiracy case was the final attempt of the Government to crush the burgeoning com-

¹⁰⁸ See Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India*, esp. p. 282.

¹⁰⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru to Venkatachari, 28th March, 1928, NMML, AICC papers, F.No. O - 3, O - 4, O - 12, O - 14, O - 17/ 1928, f. 65.

¹¹⁰ Resolutions of the AICC, Dec 1929, NMML, AICC, F. No 32, 1929, f. 106.

¹¹¹ See Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India*, esp. pp. 261-262, 266-269.

munist and socialist (and labour) movement by a series of show cases.¹¹² Also a new 'wave of terrorism' was gathering momentum. The old revolutionary factions were unravelling since the newly-formed violent 'Revolt groups' were not satisfied with partaking in the internal Congress fights.¹¹³ Surjya Sen and other such splinter groups along with the HSRA under Bhagat Singh demonstrated the disaffection with the older 'terrorist' leadership through a new series of attacks. 1928-1930 were thus busy years for the younger generation within and outside the Congress.¹¹⁴

In the 1920s, the question was not yet really between left and right (there was no self-defined right as yet). To the existing labels of radicals and moderates that contemporaries like Subhas Bose equated with left and right, were added the distinction of being a communist, a socialist - or not (the negative embracing all the leftovers). Both Nehru and Bose at their various speeches at youth conferences articulated their vision of a socialist future and youth's place in it, even though Bose's appeal was politically more fuzzy.¹¹⁵ As these wings began to develop, and the younger generation took over the Congress, a (mostly) tactfully staged battle for the INC began, while the SD tried its best to stay aloof.

¹¹² The earlier attempts being the Peshawar and Kanpur Conspiracy cases. For details on the Peshawar Conspiracy Cases, see G. Adhikari (ed.), *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India, Vol. Two, 1923-1925*, pp. 26-41.

¹¹³ On the workings of the 'revolted group' - as the IB was wont to call them - through youth associations in Bengal, see WBSA, Office of DIG of Police, CID, IB, File 1324, 1932 (Dinajpur branch of the Jugantar and the local Young Men's Association as its front) and WBSA, Office of DIG of Police, CID, IB, 271-Y, 1928 on the Youth Association in Jessore and its varied connections to revolutionaries). For a brief summary, see Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India*, pp. 266-269. The Revolt Groups or 'New Violence Party' were a reaction to the march through the institutions by Anushilan and Jugantar leaders who were so busy playing power games within the Congress that they had lost touch with the base of the younger generation who grew up with the romantic image of daring dacoits and, much more pragmatically, suffered from the economic conditions and continued high academic unemployment.

¹¹⁴ The Chitagong Armoury raid is the most famous instance here - the actual 'raiders' were mostly boys (the youngest being 13 years), who had been recruited as Congress volunteers through the DCC after Sen and his group had taken over the body in 1929. From among the volunteers for the local Congress session that year, drill master Bidhu Bushan Bhattacharjee siphoned off likely adolescents for the secret group while Ananta Singh had become instructor to the local akharas on the lines of the well-established success formula for such recruitment. See Manini Chatterjee, *Do and Die - The Chittagong Uprising: 1930-1934*, New Delhi: Penguin India, 1999. See esp. pp. 41-44 and chp. 3 'The Teenage Recruits'.

¹¹⁵ Bolshevism, despite its universal appeal, was not applicable to India, many said, since Russian conditions were different. Socialism was the broad category encompassing the basic principles that Communism was built on. Most people with intuitively progressive leanings and a more positive attitude towards the behemoth of modernity would have no quarrels with the socialists. It appeared to many as the rational, scientific answer to India's problems.

In 1931, just after the execution of Bhagat Singh in May, Bose at a speech at a Naujawan Bharat Sabha conference referred to this battle within the Congress. He spoke about the disputes between the youth movement and the Congress, the counterproductive mistrust of the elders against the young radicals (for the youth movements was defined by its impatience, the will to destroy, its radicalism) despite those radicals being their future. At the same time, he called on youth not to undermine the Congress, since it stood for and was coterminous with the nation. The INC had to move slowly to take all the nation with it. The Naujawan - which Bose saw not as a local or national group but a broad movement under different names representing a 'universal phenomena' [sic] - should understand itself as a 'feeder movement' for the INC, and youth 'should act in a spirit of helpfulness, and if they so desire, they may act as a lever inside the Congress, in order to influence the Right wing or the conservative section in the Congress'.¹¹⁶

Overall, the later 1920s were probably the idealistic and activist high-point of the progressive Indian (youth) movement when the organisational structure was actually geared towards implementing the rhetorical demands for a 'Republic of Youth', and before the later 1930s dashed those hopes with the looming war, rising communal tension and the crystallization of political factions.¹¹⁷ The rising student unemployment formed a socio-economic basis for the discontent of the young educated middle-class.¹¹⁸ But the Youth Leagues provided a (tentative) corrective to seemingly ubiquitous suprapolitical self-reform propagated by many volunteer movements and tried to grapple with the idea of the political in these movements.

¹¹⁶ Speech by Bose at Karachi Naujawan Bharat Sabha Conference, 27.3.1931. Bose exclaimed that socialism, too, was a universal principle. As mankind in East and West had always dreamt about an ideal society, there were common principles in their different socio-political ideals, namely justice, equality, freedom, discipline and love. The sum of these universal principles was the essence of socialism. The youth movement existed to destroy the old order and create a new one by carrying their utopian ideals into society. Thus, training centres for mental and physical development of men and women were needed and a widespread network. [<http://subhaschandrabose.org/speechContent.php?id=YWJlcmFzaWJvKDlpZmlyZQ##>, accessed 15th June 2012].

¹¹⁷ See below. The Meerut case, not least, helped split the amorphous Indian left into camps as those Meerut accused formed more coherent ideological groups during their imprisonment in the detention camps of Deoli and Ajmer jail. PC Joshi would be replaced by Adhikari and Ranadive who would later on propagate the People's War against the former United Front policy.

¹¹⁸ Student numbers had risen significantly over the preceding years while the job market remained stagnant. After the 1919 reforms, education had been transferred to the provinces and the percentage of students out of the total population had risen from just over 5 per cent in 1922 to 6.91 per cent in 1927. See Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India*, p. 266.

The Youth Leagues [YL], as a phenomenon growing out of the the various Young Men's Associations of the early 1920s, became prominent in the late 1920s. The name itself deserves a brief line. While various shapes and forms of youth movements had sprung up in the 1920s, the 'Youth League' was a reference to Lenin's construct of the same.¹¹⁹ The Indian YLs subscribed to a very similar model when we consider the programme that Nehru laid out for them - of course, the reality was different and the YL became in effect yet another loose platform, a catch-all-phrase for groups and conferences held at the time with varying agendas - but suffused in many cases with at least the aesthetic reference to socialist symbolism.

The Indian Youth Congress [IYC], which later became the official Congress youth wing, came into being around this time as a common platform. In a draft resolution of 1928, along with calls for boycott of British goods, complete independence and for youth to rebel against 'antiquated' social customs including the inequality of the sexes, it was stated that: 'This Congress tenders its fraternal greetings to the youth and Organisations of the world, and expresses its determination to co-operate with them and bring into existence a new world order.'¹²⁰ It also advocated international anti-imperialist organisations. As in so many other pamphlets of this type, there is also a call for a 'physical renaissance', here for both sexes, through outdoor games, woodcraft, physical exercise, volunteer corps etc. The appeal makes the imperative behind such exhortations explicit: all this is to be undertaken 'with a view to the future usefulness [of the individual] to the country and humanity at large.'¹²¹ The scope of activity comprised the creation of brotherhood and service; to

¹¹⁹ The initial framework was proposed by Lenin at the Third All-Russia Congress of the Young Communist League in 1920. Lenin outlined a programme that aimed at creating the 'New (Soviet) Man' through the self-education of young people within these leagues where they would familiarise themselves with Communism and train themselves to act accordingly. The idea was from the beginning an amalgamating of theory and practice that would allow youth to remould society in a totalising way. V.I.Lenin, *The Tasks of the Youth Leagues, Speech delivered at the Third All-Russia Congress of the Russian Young Communist League October 2, 1920*, Moscow. Progress Publishers, 1976 (7th ed.; 1st ed. 1950), see esp. 7-20.

¹²⁰ Draft Resolution of the Indian Youth Congress, 1928, in Meerut Conspiracy Case [MCC] (Exhibits, 1-500), exhibit P.164, p.31.

¹²¹ Ibid, p. 32.

guard the safety and honour of country, religion and women, and to fight adharma in whatever form it may appear by peaceful or passive resisting means.¹²²

Bombay served as headquarters for the All India Youth Congress with Nariman as its first president and Meherally as general secretary. Both of them were committed socialists leading the Bombay Provincial Youth League, thus shaping the formations of these leagues throughout the province and beyond. The YL served as platform for the socialists and progressive factions from early on - at least in Bombay, which was particularly important for the Indian youth movement.¹²³ But the calls for compulsory physical training and the rhetoric of militaristic jingoism can be found here as elsewhere, too, making it clear that such tendencies permeated these bodies across the political board.¹²⁴

But the Leagues took different shapes in different regions in accordance with their platform character. The Youth Leagues do not fill the brief of normal volunteer bodies as they lacked the corporeal agenda of the former, even though they too advocated physical and military training, and the akhara movement.¹²⁵ It is difficult to generalise, as Youth League is really merely a vague demarcation signalling that these were neither designated student bodies nor organised volunteers (though they could be or merge into either and members sometimes switched back and forth or

¹²² 'The Indian Youth Congress' [constitution, rule sand regulations], in NMML, AICC, G-39, 1928, ff. 307- 311. The president of the INC was to act as chief advisor of the IYC and the AIWC would also form the board of the IYC, meaning the congress was from the beginning firmly embedded in the Congress as one of its wings. The membership was open to people between 20 and 30, associates could be between 12 and 20 and 'advisors' people above 35 who were willing to help thee Congress and participate in its deliberations.

¹²³ Nehru to HD Rajah, May 1st, 1929, NMML, AICC, G-39, 1928, f. 179. The Government shared that opinion: see 'Government's view of the Youth movement', Extract from secret report dt. 30.12.1928, in ZMO, Krüger Papers, Box 7-38-1.

¹²⁴ A handbill of the Bombay Presidency Youth League, sd. YJ Meherally, AR Bhat [s.a.] proclaiming that all sections of society were 'organising' - 'Why not Youth?' And goes on to plead for the boycott of British goods, Hindu-Muslim unity and called on all young people to get Compulsory Physical and Military Training. Cf. AICC papers, F.No. O-3, O-4, O-12, O-14, O-17/ 1928, ff. 239. The interesting part here is not even the compulsory military training but the credo of organisation itself. Organisation to what end and how were the details, but the framework for all groups was that of efficient organisation, and efficient organisation was an abstract scientific principle that entailed discipline, training, fitness, dedication and obedience. The other fear is that of being left behind, of losing out in the race for 'organisation'.

¹²⁵ Bombay Presidency Youth Conference, appeal, sd. YJ Meherally, dt. 15.12.1927, in NMML, AICC, G-39, 1928, f. 325. Next to these physical articles we find, once again, calls for along with the fight against communalism and antiquated customs, and to promote swadeshi, primary education, independent thought amongst youth and the spirit of universal brotherhood and an international outlook

held memberships simultaneously).¹²⁶ The confusion about what they actually were was one shared by contemporaries.¹²⁷

The outspoken socialist Yusuf Meherally, who became a Bombay Dal PVB member (and eventually mayor of Bombay), for instance also started to organise the Hindustan National Militia or National Guards in Bombay later on. This body was intended as an alternative to the Dal under Congress control in the run-up to Civil Disobedience offering more relaxed requirements for membership: its volunteers were not expected to sign the Ahmedabad Pledge unless they wanted to offer satyagraha. After being banned during the CD campaign, it was (re)constituted in 1935 as National Guards. With its strong local roots, Meherally's organising ability and the close ties to the BPCC it became one of the principal volunteer groups in Bombay city.¹²⁸

In 1929, even before the arrests of left-leaning labour leaders in March which marked the beginning of what became the Meerut Conspiracy Case, some members of YLs were also arrested.¹²⁹ At this stage made them more attractive if anything. There are instances of youths from far-out places

¹²⁶ Naturally, as it is so hard to track individuals among the rank and file, these reports are few and far between, but see a letter by a member of a YL to Nehru during the crackdowns on Youth leagues, in NMML, G-39, 28, f. 182 .

¹²⁷ Nehru, as one of stringent advocates of the Youth Leagues, received a rather worried letter by a tutor at one of the Allahabad colleges stating that he heard from his students all manner of things, some stated that the Youth Leagues stood for communism, others said they advocated terrorism, and some said that both were the same, really. He sought clarification from Nehru on whether any of this was true. Cf. Bhagwat Dayal, House Tutor, Kayastha Pathshala University College Allahabad, to Jawaharlal Nehru, Anand Bhavan, Allahabad, dt. 28.3.1929, in NMML, AICC, G-39, 1928, ff. 149-150. Nehru replied in a 6-page letter. The Youth League, in his mind, was an open platform, independent of creed or dogma, for all young men, including communists, who were dissatisfied with the present conditions and wanted to 'better them'. The League was meant as a study circle where young people could educate themselves and prepare for active work. They might do social work but this was for training purposes and to gain knowledge mostly. But then, none of this was for him to say since Youth Leagues were to be organised by young people themselves. The idea of the Youth League, in Nehru's mind, was thus a combination of the concept of the supra-political youth movement united and demarcated by their impatience and the necessity of channelling those energies and stalling them somewhat by prescribing a sort of self-educating apprenticeship among peers. Cf. Nehru to Bhagwat Dayal, dt. 3rd April 1929, in NMML, AICC, G-39, 1928, ff. 153- 159.

¹²⁸ Their aims were however much more immediately geared to the requirements of local Congress work (propaganda, fund collection 'local surveys' for the Congress and they were sometimes sued by BPCC members for election campaigns). MSA, Home (Spcl), 800 (93), 1935. On Meherally as PVB member see NMML, NS Hardikar, Private Papers, file, 63, f. 24. See also Proceedings of the Bombay Volunteer Conference, in NMML, NS Hardikar, Private Papers, File 61, f. 136-139. The idea was to have two Congress-affiliated bodies one under the Ahmedabad Pledge and the other with less rigid lines (this one being the Bombay National Guards). The Guards were to have a structure much like the Dal, with provincial boards and a coordinating All India committee appointed by

who had no organisation, but felt moved to establish Youth Leagues in an answer to the 'challenge' the British had thrown at 'Young India' with Meerut. In the beginning the case was not only perceived as a conspiracy trial of communist and trade unionists but also of 'Youth'.¹³⁰ A host of Youth Leagues in various places come into being from May 1929 on. These Leagues were often more decidedly anti-communalist, politically radical and socially progressive than other amorphous youth groups, but we find among them groups close to the Servants of India or moderate political views as well.¹³¹ The *Young Liberator* was the self-appointed journal of the Youth League movement, started in late 1928. It was published from Bombay and managed by HD Rajah.¹³² It similarly set the task before Youth as no less than the reconstruction of the entire social, political and economic life and was thus somewhat more action-oriented than what politicians like Nehru or Annie Besant or Kripalani (all involved in their local YLs) had in mind.¹³³ Its articles, when compared to the *Volunteer*, show its political divergence from the latter. While it also dealt with the utopian visions of Youth, the euphoria regarding revolutionary change, and the dawn of a new civilisation to come, its slant was towards themes such as capitalism, labour and the poor, agrarian and economic politics, equality of the sexes and active international co-operation, instead of the

the AICC. The drill, too, was similar, from elementary drill to first aid, ambulance, swimming, cycling, riding, lathi-play. The Guards were to hold regular parades and their main object was other than the direct Congress work, general relief work.

¹²⁹ These were members of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha and the Student Union in Punjab among others. Copy of resolution from Calcutta AICC, letter dt. 18th Jan. 1929, AICC Papers, G-35, 1928, f. 7.

¹³⁰ See letter by one Lakshman Singh, Jubbulpore, to Nehru who wants to join 'his' League after he heard of arrests. Letter dt. 23.3.1929, in NMML, AICC, G-39, 1928, f. 173. See also the letter to Nehru by two youths from Nawargrahi, Dhulia (west Khandesh) who wanted to attempt to start a Youth league even though their town was 'out of the way' and therefore not susceptible to the social and political currents that swept through India. But having heard of the 'challenge' of the Government, they intended to start a League immediately and asked Nehru for guidance. Letter by SW Paliskar and BS Shandarkar(?) to Nehru, dt. 13th May 1929, in *ibid*, f. 191. See also the letter by a student who had been a member of the Seva Dal and now organised a YL in Bangalore: he had been visited by a CID officer purporting to interview him for a job just before the Meerut case. He felt more defiant after the event, and described the arrests as aimed against labour leaders and Youth to 'comrade' Nehru, see letter by A.L.N. DiEugar[??], *ibid*, f. 181-183. A host of requests to Nehru to send the rules and regulations of the Youth League after the beginning of the Meerut case arrived, but since many were just stating the request or sending postcards, we cannot draw a definite connection.

¹³¹ See for instance the rules of the Lucknow Youth League. For a conference to be held in August of all youth and student groups in the area, communal organisations were specifically excluded. NMML, AICC, G-39, 1928, f. 207.

¹³² Rajah together with Meherally and Nariman had active international contacts. Rajah, for instance, also wrote articles for 'Youth' the magazine of the British federation of Youth, while its general secretary, Harold Bing (of the British Youth Federation, and one of the organisers of the Eerde conference), wrote articles for the *Young Liberator*. Rajah also kept in touch with other international youth organisations, such as the World Federation of Youth. They also had friendly relations with

more overtly spiritualist and corporeal self-elevation and (politically empty) sacrificial obedience that we find so often in the *Volunteer*. What is interesting, rather than this difference, though, is the actual overlap in the millenarian and militaristic rhetoric.¹³⁴ After Meerut, the *Young Liberator* took on an even more radical note after March 1929, publishing articles on labour unrest, the trials, the Communist scare along with 'youth-related' topics. Rajah called upon youth to carry on the work of the arrested labour leaders.¹³⁵ The *Young Liberator* can be seen in the same bracket as Meherally's overtly socialist *Vanguard*.¹³⁶ In practice, many of the YLs did not look dissimilar to the various volunteer bodies. They did lathi play and PT, hawked khaddar, organised swadeshi fairs, had lectures and study circles, organised libraries, did propaganda by meetings and lectures on specific topic, and held camps.¹³⁷ The YLs of the time were, apart from the issue of socialism and the poor, concerned with the question of communal representation and many had explicit clauses against communalism or the participation of their members in any body promoting communal representation in their rules.¹³⁸

the British communists and socialists in Bombay (such as Hutchinson).

¹³³ Opening Page of the *Young Liberator*, [s.a, Sept/Oct? 1928] by the 'manager'. NMML, AICC, G-39, 1928, f. 281.

¹³⁴ The Appeal for the Third Madras Youth Conference (under the auspices of the League of Youth, Madras) exemplifies these trends, containing as it did appeals to the young 'comrades' (the League was by no means 'socialist') regarding the 'new spirit' and the new social order, the turmoil of the world, the need for 'universal brotherhood' while hailing the lofty idealism of the Indian youth movement that was 'as broad as the blue vault overhead'. To enthrone 'social Justice' and elevate the Motherland Youth had to serve and prepare to 'do and die'. Cf. 'Appeal for the Third Madras Youth Conference', [s.a, ca. 8.12.1928], NMML, AICC, G-39, 1928, ff. 247-250. On more details of the League and its workings, see their pamphlets etc. in NMML, AICC, G-39, 1928, esp. ff. 253, 258, 260-266. While the delegates to the conference and the members of the League had to be below 30 years, many of the organisers of the Madras League were above that age. Again, we find an educated elite at the helm of the body.

¹³⁵ HD Rajah, 'War on labour', *The Young Liberator*, April 1929, pp. 267-269, see esp. p. 269.

¹³⁶ Yusuf Meherally asked Nehru for an article on 'Why I am a socialist' and then proposed Nehru join the board of the Vanguard (in an honorary position since Nehru was much too busy to be an active member). The Vanguard aimed at the intelligentsia while trying to expound (and convert them to) the principles of socialism (New Leader And The Nation (US) were models for this). Nehru was enthusiastic (by his standards) and grudgingly agreed to be one of the directors - with Nariman and Dr Sumant Mehta, Urmilla Mehta, NV Gadgil. Proposed authors included Lasky, Scott Nearing, B Russell, Col Wedgewood, Furtwängler and Upton Sinclair. See correspondence between Meherally and Nehru in NMML, AICC, G-39, 1928. See also 'The Youth Movement - 'Vanguard'', MSA, Home Dept, (Spcl), 724 (VI), 1929, S-3-, S-5. The first issue of the Vanguard opened with a piece by deValera in the Irish struggle and carried a review of The Well of Loneliness - which gives a good indication of its tendencies as also of just how unusual it was in certain respects (especially on gender and sex). See The Vanguard, Vol 1, No 1, Sept. 1929. In the second issue, the Vanguard,

The Government, naturally was wary of the radical strands of the Youth Movement, stating that while many of these groups engaged in legitimate activities like their European counter-parts, most of them inculcated revolutionary tendencies in the impressionable young minds, advocated Ireland, Egypt and Russia as models and turned young men towards violent means of obtaining Swaraj.¹³⁹

Probably, one of the best known Youth League spin-offs is not known under that label at all, but under their nom de guerre of 'Red Shirts'. It is this group that we shall briefly turn to as a case in point concerning both the possible range of activism and the left symbolism. Through the Peshawar 'riots' in which the Red Shirts acquired such a prominent role and experienced their rise, we shall also look at the events of the Civil Disobedience movement, and de-centralise this well-known chapter of Indian history for our purposes. Before doing so, we need to glance back at events concerning the Seva Dal as the organisation was overhauled to be made fit for the rising demands of professionalism within the INC.

Civil Disobedience and the Red Shirts

After the window for accepting the Nehru Report had closed with the break-down of Government-Congress negotiations, satyagraha was all but a foregone conclusion, even though Gandhi

carried an article de constructing why the young generation was disillusioned with Gandhi and turned away from his doctrines and proclaimed India to be the heart of the global Youth Movement. See *Vanguard*, Vol. 1, No 2, 28th Sept. 1929, pp. 5-6.

¹³⁷ See for more information, for instance, the Young Liberator's column 'Youth on the march' which reported on Youth league activities. See also the constitution of the Lucknow Youth League, found in NMML, AICC, G-39, 1928, ff. 369-386.

¹³⁸ See for instance Outline of the Mordabad League of Indian Youth in AICC, G-41, 1928, ff. 60-61, as well as the rules of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, which for the purposes here, can be seen in the same frame, in NMML, AICC, F.No. 10, 1930. ff, 1-13, see esp. f. 3.

¹³⁹ Nehru and Bose were held to be among the chief seditionists. The account of the Bombay Youth Conference in 1928 in Poona emphasised the display of red flags, revolutionary slogans and the throngs of students and regarded the Leagues as a foreboding of a revolutionary terrorist resurgence. The Poona Conference in December 1928 was presided over by Nehru and his speech on the occasion attracted much attention. He was quoted as saying that those who believed to wrench away power from those who hold it today by sweet reason had not read history with much profit. The facts of the day were the bayonet and baton. To overcome those one had to deploy sanctions even greater than steel or wood. Cf. 'Government's view of the Youth movement', Extract from secret report dt. 30.12.1928, in ZMO, Krüger Papers, Box 7-38-1. The speech had an aftermath, as The Pioneer accused Nehru of advocating violence and Nehru publicly reputed the claim with some articles going back and forth between the parties.

tried to find some compromise until 1930.¹⁴⁰ Extensive preparation marked the early stages of the campaign. For Delhi, 'street propaganda' in which Gandhi's followers were 'preaching' to small batches of young men, especially in colleges and schools were reported.¹⁴¹ 'In addressing young students, the preachers said that Gandhi has already received the applications of 80,000 young men who have volunteered themselves to die for the liberation of India. Delhi alone has 3,000 men ready, and they may launch civil disobedience at any moment.' They were also exhorted to give every pie to Gandhi, wear khaddar and be at the ready.¹⁴² Training centres for satyagrahis were opened in different provinces according to the Dal scheme. Women were trained in picketing and Congress-related subjects as detailed above with renewed efforts. All the Dal camps were disbanded after Gandhi's arrest and volunteers sent home (camps would again be conducted in-between campaigns in 1931, though).¹⁴³ Gandhi had been arrested after his symbolic breaking of the salt law at Dandi with a hand-picked batch of volunteers. An alternative salt satyagraha was staged at Ankola, Karnataka, on 13th April, after Hardikar had consulted Gandhi on the issue. Umabai Kundapur and Hardikar participated in the resulting no-tax campaigns in the Ankola area, helped by Dal volunteers, before Hardikar was arrested as well. Overall, the volunteers in his sphere of influence concentrated their efforts on Bombay, while another batch was instructed to work under the AICC office which shifted places during the movement. They also organised messenger services for the collection of funds, distribution of news and letters and gathering of in-

¹⁴⁰ On the events and dynamics surrounding the Lahore Congress, see, for instance, Tidrick, *Gandhi*, p. 214. It had been nearly ten years since the last big satyagraha movement and, by this time, Gandhi was embattled within his own party and slowly sidelined. The Congress Socialists and progressives had become an inner-party faction threatening (not only) Gandhi's position. See Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India*, p. 281-283. For an overview of the actual movement see Judith Brown's *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience- The Mahatma in Indian Politics 1928-1934*, Cambridge: CUP, 2008. There are numerous localised studies, of course taking into account the local dynamics and the greater political configurations, but we have to gloss over the issue of locality largely here for lack of space.

¹⁴¹ See NMML, AICC, F.No. G-46,1935, f. 29. The Report was then submitted to DIB asking for suggestions to deal with the propaganda among and tampering of loyalties of students. GoI worried and asking what steps have been taken. A meeting with the principals of colleges held by Superintendent of Education on 11.4.1930, offering advise to principals and pointing out that associations such as the Youth League, Seva Dal and Naujawan Bharat Sabha are "really political associations which students should not join." [ibid, f. 19]. As far as the Govt. was concerned, these were really cases where professors systematically abused their position to teach "dangerous political doctrines." (letter from Chief Commissioner, Delhi, to Superintendent of Education, Delhi, in ibid, f.18).

¹⁴² AD's [Tasaddun] report on CD activities, 21st Mar 1930, in NAI, Home, Poll., 256, 1930.

¹⁴³ Among those undergoing training at the Central Women's Training Camp were Sofia Somji, later wife of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan's brother, Dr. Khan Sahib. Kumari Kisan Dhumatkar became the secretary of the Desh Sevikas. See above (chp. 2).

formation while the INC was banned¹⁴⁴ Generally what the Dal volunteers did during the CD depends largely on the locality and local leadership.

It was in 1930, too, that the Government for the first time became acutely aware of the presence of large numbers of persons engaging, as the communiqué said, in anti-governmental activities while wearing military-style uniforms and decorations and so giving the impression that they were soldiers of His Majesty's Forces. The combination of official-looking people spreading sedition jarred the Government's sensibilities and they advised all local governments to open proceedings against anyone purporting themselves to be soldiers.¹⁴⁵ It was some ten years later that the question would be taken up on an All-India level.

Rather than attempt to give an exhaustive account of the ups and downs of the CD movement, a brief look at one of the hotspots of activities shall suffice here and also serves to widen the horizon of groups and organisations a little. The period also saw the popular advent of Abdul Gaffar Khan's Khudai Khitmatgaran (Servants of God). The Khidmatgars were the activist pendant to the Zalmo Jirga (Youth League) that had been founded a little earlier with much the same aims as other YLs, but a localised, Pashtoon identity was stressed, as many in the NWFP felt sidelined by the main Indian parties in their demands for reforms in the region. Hence, the Seva Dal could never make any inroads here and accepted the Red Shirts as an affiliated organisation.¹⁴⁶ The League stood for the attainment of independence by peaceful means and the eradication of communalism by furthering the awakening of the NWFP Youth. The propagated non-violence assumed a role of special importance in the area as one of the social evils that reform movements here tried to erad-

¹⁴⁴ This is based on SV Inamdar's recollection (the inner decision making of the Dal is hard to ascertain otherwise). Inamdar was a worker of the Dal then, and later succeeded Hardikar as Dal organiser. See SV Inamdar, *Short History of the Seva Dal*, Vadodara: Gujerata Prakashan, 1978, see pp. 16-18.

¹⁴⁵ No B./11835/1(KG8) - Circular to all local governments and administrations, sd. Dy Secy to GoI, JA Nair and Asst Secy to GoI, Major Lumly, dt. 13th December 1939, in NAI, Home, Poll., 467/1930, [no ff. nos.]. The whole thing did not come to very much, as far as I can tell, though. The question would be taken up with the beginning of the Second World War. See below.

¹⁴⁶ Hardikar had to admit in 1931 that in the NWFP, the Khudai Khidmatgars (or Red Shirts) had taken the place destined for the Seva Dal, that they had their own rules, uniforms, and a large number of volunteers. He implied that they would be accepted as a Dal substitute in the spirit of tolerance and function autonomously. Cf. 'A brief Report of The Hindustani Seva Dal From the 10th August to the end of October, 1931. Submitted to the Central Board' by NS Hardikar, NMML, AICC papers, F.No.- 9/1930.

icate along with the usual catalogue of such traditions, were the notorious blood feuds. It was able to appeal to a wide range of society especially in the rural areas as it combined the stance for political reform with local identity and anti-British agitation with a fight against economic oppression of the poor as well as religious symbolism. Membership was open to all youth who were literate (no age limit was fixed).¹⁴⁷

Close associates of Abdul Gaffar Khan (from the Anjuman-i-Islah-ul-Afaghana circles) headed the League and almost the same leaders and Pashtoon intelligentsia would guide the Red Shirts. The Khidmatgar were started with an eye on the coming Civil Disobedience campaign.¹⁴⁸ The Khidmatgaran started operating in earnest in 1930, and by May had an alleged membership of 50,000, with volunteers coming from across the social board and including landlords, tenant holders, and lower agricultural classes and farm labourers.¹⁴⁹ There was some cross-over with the local Naujawan Branch. Red Shirts and Naujawan volunteers were working as one group at certain points.¹⁵⁰ The Red Shirts, also conceptualised as a non-violent army, were set up on similar lines as the Dal to which they were affiliated. As such, we shall here not go into the details of the organisation since much of the rhetoric and organisational structure but also the local dynamics in the NWFP give the movement a different appeal. Intelligence claimed that the local Congress was

¹⁴⁷ The Frontier Provincial Youth League (Suba Sarhad Zalmu Jirga) also known as The Afghan Jirga or The Anjuman of the Servants of God and its Organisation of volunteers The Khudai Khidmatgaran, 1929-1930', Confidential Report (by Mr. F.C. Isemonger, CBE, Inspector-Gen. of Police, NWFP). Printed by Manager, Gov. Printing and Stationary, Book Depot and forms store, NWFP, Peshawar, 1930, in NAI GoI, Foreign & Political Dept., Frontier, 360-F., 1930.

¹⁴⁸ For an overview over the Red Shirts, see also Sayed Wiqar Ali SHah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism. Muslim politics in the North-Western frontier Province 1937-1947*, Karachi et al: OUP, 2000 (2nd ed.), pp. 22-38.

¹⁴⁹ Gaffar Khan initially had to struggle with his allegiance to Congress in the beginning as the Pathans thought of it as a Hindu body. He like others held up the noble work Youth had to do, and in practical terms declared that the NWFP Youth league could have prevented the regime change in Afghanistan and the rendering of Amanullah Khan as kafir, which led to the ruin of the country with the ascension of the 'bandit king' Habibullah.

¹⁵⁰ Report, by F. Isemonger, IG Police, dt. 2nd May, 1930 Peshawar, in PC Joshi Archive [PCJA], CPI List 102/1930, [arbitrary ff. nos]. There were many double- and triple-memberships as Naujawan Bharat Sabha-men had been recruited to the Congress in an attempt to give the organisation a boost in a province where it otherwise was marginal. Among the men later arrested in the connection with the campaign were many Congressmen and Khilafatists but a focus was on those who were also doubling as members of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha (M Abdul Rahin of Deobandi: member of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, the Naujawan, the Congress and the 'War Council'; Maulvi Rahia Baksh Ghaznavi: secy of the Khilafat Committee, Congress and Naujawan member; Abdul Rahman Riya: secy of the Naujawan, editor of the 'Naujawan Sarhad'). Out of the 11 men arrested, 8 were members of the Naujawan or connected to it.

quite prepared to name Khan the dictator of the province.¹⁵¹ When Gaffar Khan along with other prominent Congressmen were arrested in April 1930 (as a 'precaution' against the popular excitement which badly backfired), the arrests focussed on those Muslim 'comrades' with Naujawan or otherwise revolutionary connections who were considered the most dangerous elements.¹⁵² Clashes between crowds and the police assisted by the military in armoured cars ensued in which many were killed (estimates vary widely from 25 to 250¹⁵³). Among the arrested was also the 'Captain' of the local Seva Dal, Comrade Ghulam Rabbani, who doubled as a member of the Naujawan and secretary of the Khilafat Committee, along with another Congress volunteer and Naujawan member. Police considered that the enrolment of Congress volunteer for the 1929 Lahore session gave an impetus to the dormant Naujawan and, together with the subsequent import of revolutionary literature (like the *Kirti*¹⁵⁴) from Punjab and new local Naujawan papers, led to furthering 'fanaticism' in the locality.

At the same time, the Congress re-established a nexus with the Khilafatists over the arrests under violations against the Sarda Act,¹⁵⁵ and with the Naujawan. Members of both attained prominent positions within the Congress in an attempt to give the INC a firmer footing in the region.¹⁵⁶ What

¹⁵¹ 'The Frontier Provincial Youth League', NAI GoI, Foreign & Political Dept., Frontier, 360-F., 1930, p. 8.

¹⁵² A report on the arrest of Gaffar Khan and the activities of some 200 Khidmatgars along with a 'mob' of 800 trying to force entry to the jail where other leaders were held at Charsadda can be found at 'Copy of report dt. 26th April 1930, from the Asst. Commissioner, Charsadda to DY Commissioner, Peshawar, in PCJA, CPI List 102/1930

¹⁵³ The Police said it was 25 people, the Congress claimed 179 and some locals as many as 250. See Telegram P. No. 465-P, dt 23rd May 1930, from Norwef, Peshawar to Home Dept, Simla, in NAI, Home, Poll, 255/V/1930, part III, f. 15.

¹⁵⁴ On the *Kirti* in the Punjab, see Ali Raza 'Interrogating Provincial Politics: The Leftist Movement in British Punjab, c. 1914-1950' [unpublished PhD thesis, Oxford, 2011], see esp. pp. 76-123.

¹⁵⁵ The Government felt somewhat cheated on this occasion as Naujawan and Congress used the local discontent against the Sarda (Child Marriage Restraint) Act in their propaganda and declared it to be an oppressive law (even though the INC as a whole had welcomed the law). This highlights the tendency of the Government to see the INC as a homogeneous, stream-lined party apparatus, which, obviously, it was not. 'Communique' by the Secy to GoI, dt. the 5th(?) May 1930, in PCJA, CPI List 102/1930, ff. 122-127.

¹⁵⁶ Report, by F. Isemonger, IG Police, dt 2nd May, 1930 Peshawar, in PCJA, CPI List 102/1930, [arbitrary ff. nos]. Previously, a Congress enquiry deputation had been sent out to Peshawar on the 22nd but was stopped by the Police before they could reach there. A procession was taken out in the city to protest the move and public meetings in the evening called on people to prepare for action on the following day (23rd). The clash occurred not long after the last two Congressmen on the police list had been rather publicly arrested, when the military in armoured cars was met by a crowd after accidentally running over and killing a rider on a motorbike (the Congress bulletin said the car ran over several people as the soldiers gave no warning and drove into the crowd). One of the armoured cars was burned and the DY Commissioner seriously wounded at which point the authorities opened

the events did was give a further impetus to the Red Shirts, with new branches being opened and enrolment shooting up sharply in Peshawar as well as the surrounding areas, where the Khidmatgars were reported to raise sickle and hammer flags over villages.¹⁵⁷ 'Order' was restored only ten days later, but an influx of sympathisers ranging from Afridis to Khilfatists and faqirs arrived from outside, and were supported by the Khidmatgars. Lashkars (jathas) from the close to the border (by early June said to be 6000 men strong¹⁵⁸) were moving around the adjoining districts throughout May, while certain tribal chiefs and mullahs used the opportunity for a show of strength vis-a-vis the British to further their own demands. Incidents including heavy clashes between police and crowds and more casualties continued over a longer period of time.¹⁵⁹ The Red Shirts were said to parade in large groups armed with lathis and axes.¹⁶⁰ In the interlude, there was a brief 'Congress Raj' in the city with some 3000 INC and Naujawan volunteers (on the 26th April only 650 volunteers had existed in the city¹⁶¹) patrolling the city day and night, and for a spell guiding traffic and taking over the role of police (including the arrest of thieves), while also cutting lines of communications as best they could.¹⁶²

fire on the crowd, according to the official report. The INC's version however recounts a peaceful and entirely unarmed crowd coming forward and asking to be shot and the soldiers complying even in the cases of young boys, children and elderly people. See also *The Bombay Congress Bulletin: Peshawar Supplement - The Travail of Peshawar*, in *ibid* [no consecutive ff. nos].

¹⁵⁷ Fortnightly report on the internal situation of the NWFP for the first half of May 1930, in PCJA, CPI List 102/1930, f. 73 a-b. Telegram P. No. C.R. 31, dt 29th April, 1930, from Norwef, Peshawar to Home Dept, Simla, in *ibid* [marked p. no 10].

¹⁵⁸ Telegram P. No. C.R. 546-P, 5th June 1930, from NWF Peshawar to Home Dept, Simla, in NAI, Home Poll, GoI, 255/V/1930, part iii, f. 97.

¹⁵⁹ The local authorities in the end considered that any opposition to the rule of the Congress and its volunteers in the city would merely result in riots and heavy death tolls and chose instead to wait and gather troops to occupy all the important positions in the city early at morning on the 3rd May. See Telegram from P.No. C.R./47 dt. 30th April, 1930, from Norwef, Peshawar to Home Dept, Simla in PCJA, CPI List 102/1930. Extract from the Weekly Diary of Military Intelligence, NWFP, for week ending 28.4.1930, in PCJA, CPI List 102/1930, f. 41. and Copy of telegrams dt. 4th May 1930, from HQ Peshawar Dt. to Chief of General Staff, Simla, reporting that the troops had arrived in the city and seized the Congress HQ, *ibid*, f. 49. Copy of a letter from Haji of Turangzi, dt.1.5.30 in which he states that he is collecting an armed and brave lashkar and wants to be kept abreast of developments through the Khidmatgars, see PCJA, CPI List 102/1930, f. 56. Information regarding Frontier Affairs subsequent to the riot in Peshawar on the 23rd of April (advance abstract of Diary No 17, dt. 2nd May 1930), sd. H. Lillie, IB, Peshawar, PCJA, CPI List 102/1930, [arbitrary ff. nos]. The killed Asst Suptdt was killed by being hit in the head with a stone on 25th May. See telegram P.No. 475-P, dt. 25th May, 1930, from Norwef, Peshawar to Home Dept., Simla, in NAI, Home, Poll., 255/V/1930, part III, f. 21. When the police went to the village close to where the policeman had been killed to arrest some of the locals, they were apparently fired at from neighbouring villages (see telegram P.No. 501-P, dt. 29th May, 1930, from NWP, Peshawar to Home Dept, Simla, in NAI, Home, Poll., File 255/V/1930, part III, f. 67). Charsadda along with Bannu and and Dera

During this virtual Congress control, something like a rudimentary Governmental structure was apparently put in place replete with chains of commands, while picketing of liquor shops and brothels along with propaganda were carried out. Isemonger, the IG of Police, felt on the 2nd of May that to regain control, Muslim discontent would have to be allayed (by making the Sarda Act inapplicable in the province) and only then could the police deal with the Congress and break up the volunteers. The Naujawan and Congress were declared unlawful in certain areas, in others extensive use was made of the Seditious Meetings Act, and heavy aerial bombardment in the outlying districts was used.¹⁶³ The Government was extremely worried about the situation and the possible fall-out: not only the possible unrest in tribal areas (where rumours that government had enacted laws against the Shariat were making the rounds) and the reaction of the new Amir Nadi Shah together with the unpredictable Afghan temperament (as a Governmental report put it, 'Afghans are Afghans and their probable actions in any given circumstances cannot be gauged with any confidence by Western standards'¹⁶⁴), but in light of events throughout India it might look (especially to the prying eyes of the Russians across the border) as if India was ripe for insurrection.¹⁶⁵

The setting up of parallel institutions by the Shirts and the tacit no-tax campaign that was started in 1931 particularly irked the Government. In December, the PCC under Gaffar Khan also called

Ismail Khan remained hotspots of activity in this period. For the events in mid-May see also NAI, Home, Poll, 255/V, 1930 part IV, especially the use of machine guns against unruly crowds in Peshawar city on 8th May 1930 (f. 124).

¹⁶⁰ Telegram P.No. 497-P, dt. 28th May, 1930, from Norwef, Peshawar to Home Dept, Simla, in NAI, Home, Poll., File 255/V/1930, part III, f. 44.

¹⁶¹ Telegram from P. No. C.R./28 dt. 26th April 1930, from NWF, Peshawar to Home Dept, Simla, in PCJA, CPI List 102/1930 [no ff. nos].

¹⁶² Report of Isemonger, p. 9; Fortnightly report on the internal situation of the NWFP for the first half of May 1930, in PCJA, CPI List 102/1930, f. 73 a. Telegram from P.No. C.R./41 dt. 30th April 1930, Norwef, Peshawar to Home Dept. Simla,

¹⁶³ See telegram P.No. 475-P, dt 24th May 1930, from Norwef, Peshawar to Home Dept, Simla, in NAI, GoI, Home Poll., File 255/V/1930, part III; and telegram P.No. 492-P, dt. 14th May 1930, from Norwef, Peshawar to Home Dept, Simla, in NAI, GoI, Home Poll., File 255/V/1930, part IV, [no ff nos, =f. 165]. See the various reports in this file on the aerial bombardment especially in early June of different villages and surroundings, mostly aimed at the hostile 'lashkars'.

¹⁶⁴ The Present Situation in Connection with Tribal territory and Afghanistan, General Staff, 25th April 1930, in PCJA, CPI List 102/1930 [no ff.nos].

¹⁶⁵ Government thought especially of the unrest in other places (Calcutta, Karachi, Poona), the Chittagong uprising, and the 'mutiny' by the Hindu/Sikh Garwhal Rifles who had refused to fire on the (Muslim) crowd in Peshawar. Rather unfairly, the Government claimed later that Gaffar Khan had been inciting his followers to violence and they subsequently issued new ordinances for the NWFP (1931).

on the Congress to abandon the Delhi Settlement that had officially discontinued the movement in March 1931.¹⁶⁶ The Government later on remarked bitterly that while Gandhi might have been sincere about observing the settlement, 'general efforts do not appear to be made by the rank and file to carry out' his orders, referring especially to Punjab where after the execution of Bhagat Singh, much 'seditious' activity continued in the form of meetings, demonstrations, calls for a no-tax campaign and pickets. Articles appeared describing the executions of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru as a breach of the Delhi Settlement.¹⁶⁷

Between Campaigns, or How Gandhi Saved the Seva Dal from Itself

According to Nehru some 100,000 (Congress-affiliated) volunteers participated in the movement. He was not, however, very happy with their conduct and the reasons were none too different from the general observations of the Government. In mid-1931 he wrote that they lacked discipline and uniformity and thus energy was wasted and 'efficiency sacrificed' - this was specifically aimed at all those volunteers organised in the orbit of the Congress but not under the SD. A total overhaul

¹⁶⁶ See GoI, *The Civil Disobedience Movement 1930-34. Note on the general measures taken to deal with the movement*, New Delhi: Government of India Press, 1936, p. 13-16. These were the NWFP Province Emergency Powers Ordinance which allowed for arrests of suspect, seizure of buildings and movable property of 'public utility', sealing off certain places from public access and roping in additional police or even non-police, among others. It also allowed imprisonment for 'tampering with public servants', spreading rumours and the like and specifically allowed to recover fines slapped on 'young persons' from their parents and guardians. The Unlawful Instigation (NWFP) Ordinance to tackle especially non-payment of taxes and the Unlawful Association (NWFP Province) ordinance. These ordinances are important especially since the same measures were introduced on an All-India scale with the onset of the renewed CD movement.

¹⁶⁷ See for instance 'The heroic Sacrifice' in the Congress bulletin, Sitanagram, 31st Mar. 1931, in NAI, Home, Poll. (Simla Records 3), file 13/ IV/32 & KW, p.2. Bhagat Singh thought along similar lines when he wrote to the Punjab Government saying that if a peace had indeed been made they might release the 'soldiers of freedom', but otherwise they might kill them. (See Babu Jatindra Nath, *Sardar Bhagat Singh*, extracts of which can be found at *ibid*, pp. 16-22, see esp. p. 22). Those newspaper articles that the Government found offensive reveal a marked emphasis on youth and its propensity towards revolution fired by the death of the Bhagat Singh and his comrades as well as the numerous political assassination attempts of that year. In most of these papers (except the *Kirti* and *Mazdoor*) youths are the active organisers and revoluzzers while peasants and workers are the ones that need to *be* organised. See the press compilation and papers like the *Sainik*, *Pratap*, *Aj*, *Salar* and the various *Mazdoor* papers etc. Some quarters, the GoI insisted, were using the period as a truce during which they could re-group. GoI, *The Civil Disobedience Movement 1930-34. Note on the general measures taken to deal with the movement*, New Delhi: Government of India Press, 1936, pp. 10-11.

of the volunteer movement seemed to him necessary if the country was to 'take full advantage' of them.¹⁶⁸ As a consequence, the Dal was brought under direct Congress control in 1931. Gandhi was the architect of that move, and Hardikar claimed later that if he and Nehru had not agreed, 'by the stroke of one pen, Gandhiji would have made us go into oblivion' and that the decision was thus taken under duress. Hardikar suspected Vallabhbhai Patel had influenced Gandhi and that there was a fear that the Seva Dal might 'overrun' the INC.¹⁶⁹ After this, Hardikar seems to have become more and more disgruntled with the way decisions were taken out of his hands.

However that may be, by decree of the CWC in July 1931, the SD (now Congress Seva Dal) would thus function as the central Congress volunteer body and lose the supra-political status that Hardikar and others were so keen on; it would enrol and train recruits, as well as train instructors and officers which were to be provided to provinces in need of them at the latter's expense. The Dal would have the power to establish volunteer corps in provinces where the local bodies failed to do so. Not much in these provisions was actually new, but it changed the Dal's *raison d'être* in fundamental ways. It also gave the Dal - at least on paper - the monopoly Hardikar had been striving for: all Dal volunteers had to be Congress members, only Officers which held training certificates from the Dal would be recognised as such, and no local body was to use the name of Congress volunteers unless approved by the Dal authorities. The volunteers on the 'Active list' were furthermore not to take any part in party politics¹⁷⁰ nor to belong to any other political party or communal body - ruling out participation in the HMS, most of all, which the INC for its own members only effected in 1938.¹⁷¹ Mostly, this move signified the attempt by the Congress high command to reign in the volunteers who, despite being idealised as the disciplining element with-

¹⁶⁸ Nehru, Congress Circular to PCCs no 17, dt. 16th July 1931 in MSA, Home (Spcl), 355 (58)C, 1932, S3-S5.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Dr Hardikar by Dr HD Sharma, 26th March 1973, cited in Narayana Rao, *Dr NS Hardikar*, p. 151-154. One of Hardikar's later confidantes reports a conversation between Hardikar and Gandhi where the Mahatma said that the Dal had become a menace and needed to be absorbed or destroyed. Hardikar was somewhat bitter about that, though he stated unrepentant, as he thought the fate of the country might have gone differently if the Dal had been allowed to carry on its own work.

¹⁷⁰ This applied to standing for election as well as doing campaigning work for certain candidates.

¹⁷¹ On the decision to make the Dal part of the INC, the constitution and the formal establishment of a separate women's wing, see NMML, AICC Papers, F.No 70, 1946/47, ff. 43-51.

in the masses, had themselves become 'rowdy' in the last struggle. It seems the Congress high command feared it was losing control over its youth wing.

With the new structure, the Dal authorities themselves changed: Nehru was appointed the (semi-permanent) Member-in-Charge by the CWC and Hardikar Organising Secretary. Around this time, Narayan acquired the epithet of 'senapati' (army chief). A separate 'Volunteer Department' of the INC was established to accommodate the HSD in its overall structure and a separate examination board was set up to regulate the certificates.¹⁷² In August, a special Dal conference was held under Gandhi's chairmanship to consider the new constitution, which was (despite grumbling among the ranks) accepted. Gandhi, in his opening remarks said he had followed the events of the last campaign from Yeravda and noticed that due to the lack of discipline in the volunteer ranks, many evils had crept in that were 'natural' when mass awakening occurred but set back the Congress. The volunteers were 'the soul' of the Congress and the INC's existence depended on them since they were its (non-violent) army, Gandhi proclaimed. But if the volunteers themselves became violent (as had happened in the campaign), the weapon of satyagraha would come to naught.¹⁷³

The training course was also made official, though not much changed: marching, drill, lathi play all remained. On top of that, physical standards were prescribed (such as being able to run a mile in eight minutes), and the training became more medicalised: specific functions of the body such as the circulatory, respiratory, nervous and muscular systems were to be enhanced. Congress history (including national flag), sentry duty, crowd control, first aid and the other intellectual and practical skills also remained mostly unchanged but Hindi became obligatory.¹⁷⁴ Volunteers were trained by then at special facilities at Bagalkot, which the Dal was able to open in 1928, having received a grant of land and money raised by public subscription. Bagalkot was a mixture between akhara and ashram.¹⁷⁵ The other significant change was the formal establishment of a

¹⁷² Both the AIVB and the examination board were to be appointed directly by the CWC.

¹⁷³ 'Note on the Seva Dal', MSA, Home (Spcl), 355 (58)C, 1932, see S-7.

¹⁷⁴ For the complete course of training of the Dal see for instance, NMML, NS Hardikar, Private Papers, File 63, ff. 13 ff, see esp. ff. 16-19. See the Appendix for an overview.

¹⁷⁵ The wish for an 'ashram' of the Dal had already been expressed as early as 1923 at the Hindustani Provincial Volunteer Conference at Balaghat, Dec. 1923 with a view to give sufficient training to a limited number of volunteers. See NS Hardikar Private Papers 60, ff. 125, 135. See also Principal

Women's wing, which we have referred to above. Kamaladevi with Umabai Kundapur as her office secretary principally organised the sevikas, with their stronghold centred around Hubli and Bombay¹⁷⁶

1932 and After - The Seva Dal in Shambles

With the break-down of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and the renewed Civil Disobedience, the Government came down hard on Congress-affiliated volunteer organisations. Special regulations regarding volunteers and bans under the Criminal Law Amendment Act were used against the Dal and like outfits.¹⁷⁷ A number of groups tried to play cat and mouse with the administration by changing their names overnight to evade the immediate order.¹⁷⁸ The Dal let itself be disbanded. Hardikar, and some of his close co-workers like Venkatesh Karigudri and BG Lokhare were arrested along with the rest of the more prominent Congressmen. Under the ban and the new Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1932 (made a permanent law in 1935), the Dal headquarters at Hubli and its academy in neighbouring Bagalkot were seized in early 1932, after it had been operational for just

AT Gidwani, Brindaban, 'Ashram or Akhara', *The Volunteer*, April 1927, p. 102; 'Camper', 'Hanuman Vyayam Mandal', *The Volunteer*, July 1927, pp. 178-179. It was in line with the attempted professionalisation of the Dal and to counter the shortage of dedicated workers. In 1929, Hardikar established a small order of 'life-time' workers as well. Bagalkot became also a centre for training camps, civil disobedience training and spinning (see Resolutions at 4th Karnatak Provincial Volunteer Conference, Bagalkot, 1st and 2nd Aug. 1929, in *ibid*, File 63, ff. 133-135, and NMML, AICC papers, F.No. G - 08, 1928, ff. 163 ff.). The Training Academy was a large open-sided structure with training grounds and a temple-like entry hall. (compare this to the description by Joseph Alter of akharas he visited in the 1980s. Joseph Alter, *The Wrestler's Body*) On Bagalkot, the lay-out and planning, see NMML, AICC, G-8, 1928, esp. ff. 163-179 where the published scheme and details of the plans are reproduced) Bagalkot could not be built up to its capacity, though, as the property was seized during the Civil Disobedience Movement and was given back, in a run-down state, many years later. (see correspondence in MSA, Home (Spcl), 800 (34) E-III, 1932. See also below, on Moonje.

¹⁷⁶ For lack of space, the details of this will have to remain outside the purview of this study.

¹⁷⁷ The GoI had passed new ordinances in 1930 to deal with the movement, especially the Unlawful Association Ordinance (which by 1932 was incorporated into the Criminal Law Amendment Act). The re-introduced Press Act with amendments to tackle news-sheets as well, a Prevention of Intimidation Ordinance against picketing). These Ordinances were withdrawn after the Delhi Settlement of March 1931 and GoI passed a new wave of ordinances in 1932 (basically introducing the NWFP regulations passed after the Red Shirt unrest for all of British-India. See above).

¹⁷⁸ For instance the Indian National Volunteer Corps in Punjab, which became the Bukhari Corps and the MNG which became the Ansari Corps (see National Documentation Centre [NDC], Secret Punjabi Police Abstract of Intelligence [SPPAI], Vol. LIII, 3rd Jan. 1931, No. 1, p.3). The Naujawan Bharat Sabha renamed itself the 'Baghat Singh Appeal Committee' (*ibid*, p. 7) and certain local branches of the INC also carry on their activities under new names, such as in Rawalpindi (see NDC, SSPAI, Vol. LIII, dt. 17th Jan. 1931, No. 3, p. 57). Any number of other local groups sprung

about three years. It would be fascinating to trace the activities of the emerging volunteer 'underground' around this time, but for lack of space we cannot do justice to the complexity of the activities in and around the CD campaign here. This points to one of the problems of dealing with volunteers: they are recognisable as long as they are uniformed, otherwise they, seemingly, simply become part of 'the masses'. In situations like this, this was a blessing in disguise as even intelligence had trouble figuring out who was who among the 'mob'.¹⁷⁹

Overall, broader implementation of collective fines instead of imprisonment of individuals was deemed a good deterrent by the Government and marked the return of methods once devised for criminal tribes. They also alleged that a large number of those volunteers arrested were 'hooligans and bazaar riff-raff' - the general way of referring to disorderly elements. Regulations regarding physical punishment (especially whipping) were loosened to deal with issues of jail 'discipline'.¹⁸⁰ The treatment of political prisoners caused repeated outcries in Congress circles along with police excesses (firing on crowds).¹⁸¹ The suffering of the prisoners led to the ritualised apotheosis of political martyrdom that had become part and parcel of the non-violent (or violent) struggle.¹⁸²

After the campaign (officially disbanded by Gandhi in April 1934), the volunteer organisation within and outside the INC was in shambles. While the ban on the Congress itself was lifted in

up, too many to even attempt an enumeration.

¹⁷⁹ The Governmental ban also reveals the complexity and thick interconnected network of Congress affiliates on the ground. We have noted before that Hardikar, the institution builder, had also set up a number of other groups. Education and rotating libraries were the natural corollary to the activist-oriented stance of the volunteer corps in its strict sense. Hardikar had founded the Tilak Library at Dharwar, which had been sealed in 1930 only to be raided by police in 1932. The list of more than a 100 pages of seized articles is probably one of the most fascinating documents with regard to the youth movement at this time. It gives us a rare insight into the circulated literature. MSA, Home (Spcl), 800 (34) E-III, 1932. The ban also was only lifted when the Congress ministries came into power and some of the books the Govt had sold off were purchased by sympathisers and returned to Hardikar then. Rao, *Dr NS Hardikar*, pp. 148-149.

¹⁸⁰ GoI, *The Civil Disobedience Movement*, p. 23.

¹⁸¹ The maximum of legal punishments (flogging) and illegal methods to extract apologies, from long-term solitary confinement to handcuffing volunteers in such a way that they were hanging by their wrists or could stand only tip-toed, and occasional instances of beatings were described in reports. 'Report of the treatment meted out to the political prisoners in Meerut District Jail', in NMML, AICC, F.No. G-44, 1931, f. 55-57.

¹⁸² See letter by SC Kumar, Sonapat, to Jawaharlal Nehru eulogising the services and sacrifices of 'the volunteer', dt. 26th Feb. 1931, NMML, AICC, G-44, 1931, f. 27. Kumar suggested an All-India Volunteer Day to show that his work is not considered inferior and to 'soothe the sufferings of the volunteer Nehru replied this was not practical at present.

1934, many volunteer organisations remained unlawful, among them the Seva Dal and Red Shirts (considered revolutionary satellites of the INC).¹⁸³ These bans were removed piecemeal by the states. Only under the Congress ministries was the Dal as such legalised again. Where and when the ban was lifted, regional networks had to be re-built, the old membership contacted. A host of new organisations had sprung up in the meantime under a variety of names.¹⁸⁴ The ideal of the Dal to act as an umbrella for all other volunteer groups was further away than ever. Hardikar himself had tried to set up a few groups under other names but with little success.¹⁸⁵ Still, local and sometimes more far-flung efforts continued even during the ban - albeit not under the name of the Dal. In 1934, after the Bihar earthquake which Gandhi famously attributed to God's wrath caused by the continued untouchability, Hardikar and Umabai Kundapur organised batches of volunteers for the affected areas where Rajendra Prasad made use of them.¹⁸⁶ Hardikar seems to have taken this moment as the last concerted effort of *his* HSD. The Dal would be re-incarnated in another form and under new leadership after 1936, but Hardikar slowly drifted into the background and returned to political matters in his home province.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ GoI, *The Civil Disobedience Movement*, p. 26-27.

¹⁸⁴ Before the crackdown on volunteers, there existed in Bombay some 20-25 different independent volunteer corps in and around the city next to the Seva Dal, the Desh Sevikas and the women's wing of the HSD under Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay. In 1936, there were roughly a dozen independent volunteer organisations with some 500 members overall, but the Bombay National Guards liked to claim that they were the only national volunteer organisation in the city. They were formed in late 1934, since the HSD had still not been legalised again and volunteers were needed for the Congress session. From among them, the core of the National Guards was formed immediately after the session to replace the Congress-affiliated corps. A. Ekambaram S. Iyer became the Chief Officer. The Guards closely followed routines set up by the HSD - there were regular flag salutations on Sundays together with drill and exercise classes - described by the organisers as 'infantry training'. See MSA, Home (Spcl), 800(93), 1935, for instance *The Bombay Chronicle*, 12.Dec. 1935 in *ibid*, f. 31 and *The Bombay Chronicle*, 9th Jan. 1936 in *ibid*, f. 33.

¹⁸⁵ He was said to try to establish a branch of National Guards in Karnataka, official note in MSA, Home (Spcl), 800(93), 35. f. 41. He also had a notion to set up an elite cadre of 'old hands' to guide other bodies and work as a movement of instructors. But nothing much came of this.

¹⁸⁶ Narayana Rao, *Dr NS Hardikar*, pp. 259-260. Hardikar, self-negating as always, dragged himself from his Bombay hospital bed after an operation to go to Bihar ignoring medical advice.

¹⁸⁷ At Hardikar's 'Diamond jubilee' in 1950, Hardikar's speech referred to roughly 1934 as the last time, the Hindustani Seva Dal had a chance to come together and organise. See speech of Hardikar quoted in Narayana Rao, *Dr NS Hardikar*, p. 218. By 1937, he himself had thrown himself into provincial politics, from the municipal cooperation to trade unions of motor drivers and the Karnataka unification and Princely States movements. Nevertheless, he would be asked to advise on matters or attend camps and he maintained life-long contact with the body. See below, see also on Hardikar's Karnataka activities: Rao, *Dr NS Hardikar*, pp. 173-179; 180-200 on his activities in Mysore and other states.

Through 1935, one or a handful of Government officials discussed a blanket ban on all volunteer organisations. These individuals were keen to show the historical parallels between bodies such as the National Guards or RSS and the Nazi Brown Shirts, the IRA and Black Shirts in Italy as they all came under the category of 'private armies' out to threaten the existing government.¹⁸⁸ The pre-condition for declaring organisations illegal u/s 16 of the CrLAA¹⁸⁹ was the interference with the administration or maintenance of law, or where groups were said to constitute a danger to public. The recent attack by the French Croix de Feu on President Leon Blum and reactions in France suggested to some officials that special legislation might be needed for India.¹⁹⁰ The success of the fascists in Italy and the rise to power of the Nazis sparked off lateral comparisons with those movements - that democracies seemed to be falling like dominoes could not but worry the British given their own trouble with IRA and with Oswald Mosley.¹⁹¹ Such were the signs and portents of the times: embryonic movements could be swept to power within few years.

Congress and Seva Dal from 1936

With time to spare, Hardikar went to help with the training of the volunteers for the Lucknow session despite suffering from severe asthma attacks. At Lucknow two interesting developments took place: First and rather embarrassingly, only days after Gandhi visited the training camps of the volunteers in Lucknow and urged them to keep discipline and stand ready 'to assist' Nehru in the fight for freedom, 700 of the volunteers present went on a hunger strike against the conditions, es-

¹⁸⁸ See note by HF Knight, secy Home Dept., 15th Jan 1936, copy of which can be found in MSA 800 (93), 1935, f. 37.

¹⁸⁹ Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908.

¹⁹⁰ Note by Knight, 19.2.1936. MSA 800 (93), 1935, f. 42.

¹⁹¹ Oswald Mosley had returned from a 'study tour' of Benito Mussolini's Italy in 1931 - not unlike some of the Indians we have encountered. But Thurlow in his study of the British Fascists highlights the continuities between Edwardian values, the post-war landscape and the internal political and economic situation in tracing the origins of the group. He states that the first major group, the British Fascisti under Rotha Linton Orman in 1923 were basically formed as a mixture between a 'glorified' version of the boy scouts and a paramilitary group (see p. 34). He emphasises the importance of style over hard and fast politics at the outset of the Fascist Movement in Britain. A more detailed comparison with trends in India and influences might be an interesting project for later. On details of the BUF see Richard Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain. From Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts to the National Front*, New York: IB Tauris, 1998. On British Fascist groups, the absolute centrality of virility and continuities with the scouts, see Tony Collins, 'Return to manhood: the cult of masculinity and the British union of fascists', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 16, No. 4, pp. 145-162, see esp. 145-146, 150-152. On Fascism generally, see below, chp. 5.

pecially accommodation and rations, at the training camp. Sourly, the *Times of India* remarked that 'Yours not to reason why/ Yours but to do and die' should be the motto of the soldier (and hence, the volunteer).¹⁹²

Meanwhile, the Congress dragged its feet on the question of reorganising a volunteer corps. Hardikar mostly concentrated on social and economic issues in Karnataka during the Congress ministry period - from political organisations in the Princely States to local trade unions (to not workers fall into the hands of the communists) and village organisation.¹⁹³

Secondly, the Congress socialist and Hindi advocate, Sampurnanand, GOC of the volunteers, President of the Congress Swayam Sevak Sangh (as he preferred to call them) of the 49th AICC, and 'Dictator' of the City Congress Committee Benares, placed before the CWC a resolution for immediate steps to be taken to reorganise volunteers. Sampurnanand was yet another individual who combined within himself strands of Hindu religious revivalism, Fabianism or a diffuse socialism and a variety of other ideas, chief of which was the necessity of the subordination of the individual to an organic nation. As such, he was well placed as the volunteers' GOC and the continuities with many of the Dal affiliates should be evident by now.¹⁹⁴

The INC discussed the re-organisation of their volunteer corps (not least in the light of the upcoming elections), but the various Congress committees were hard pressed (and sometimes unwilling) to invest a lot of time or money into the reorganisation of the Dal or to find adequate instructors, and that was not considering the continued ban on the group in some areas.¹⁹⁵ Most of the PCCs

¹⁹² See *Bombay Chronicle*, 4th April 1936 and *Times of India*, 8th April 1936 in MSA 800 (93), 1935, ff. 51, 53. The quote, going back to Lord Tennyson's 'Charge of the Light Brigade' - that memorable and utterly senseless attack of British cavalry on superior Russian instalments during the Crimean War - was a beloved and oft-cited one in the Volunteer Movement.

¹⁹³ See Narayana Rao, *Dr NS Hardikar*, esp. pp. 175-179. Later on in his life, he became a member of the Rajya Sabha and finally spent his days organising the Karnataka Health Institute.

¹⁹⁴ NMML, AICC, G-15, 1946, f. 79-80. William Gould has a lot to say about Sampurnanand and his communalism. See Gould, *Hindu Nationalism*, see 168-179, 238-240. See also his more specific article on Sampurnanand and PD Tandon: 'Congress Radicals and Hindu Militancy: Sampurnanand and Purushottam Das Tandon in the Politics of the United Provinces, 1930-1947', *MAS* Vol. 36, No. 3, 2002, pp. 619-655, see esp. pp. 629-637 on his philosophy and the concept of 'paramatma'. His detailed analysis will not be repeated here but he has convincingly argued for the commensurability of socialism and professed Congress secularism with explicitly Hindu mobilisation and 'Hindu nationalism'.

¹⁹⁵ INC Circular No. 6 of 1936, NMML, AICC, F.No. G-15, 1936, f. 29 (Gujarat PCC), 31, 33

agreed that there should be no central organisation or authority. The tug-of-war of locality versus centre shadowed the INC throughout its existence. There was also no general consensus regarding how close the corps should be to the Congress, whether it should be an autonomous organisation or an appendix to the local PCC.¹⁹⁶ Others answered simply that “under the present circumstances” no re-organisation was possible or wanted, probably with a view to the continued ban on the HSD in those provinces.¹⁹⁷

The envisioned reorganisation was to emphasise quality not quantity. Nehru's circular pointed especially to the unsatisfactory training of volunteers and he earmarked them for constructive and village work more emphatically.¹⁹⁸ Hardikar still kept consulting on matters of the Dal in this period,¹⁹⁹ and he had ideas of his own regarding the Dal's future. As soon as the ban was lifted, he wrote to Nehru asking:

Is it not possible to take up the work of training the man-power of India for self-defence? The ideas with which the work of the Seva Dal was carried on now seem to be too crude and worn-out. In order to keep pace with the times, if training for self-defence is taken up in each of the six provinces where the Congress is in power, I think, we shall be doing a greater service to the nation. The Governments too might help us.

Nehru replied to the effect that this was no matter to be decided lightly, and greater power under the constitution would be needed before such an undertaking could be realised.²⁰⁰ The SD was

(Combatore DCC).

¹⁹⁶ Andhra PCC was in favour of the former, while the Bombay PCC advocated a close control by the PCC.

¹⁹⁷ Among those disinclined to seriously consider a volunteer organisation at the time were Gujarat (Morarji Desai) and Bengal. NMML, AICC, G-15, 1946, ff. 29, 35. Both Hardikar and Nehru address (in a telling lapse of coordination) independently official enquires to the PCCs regarding the reorganisation of volunteer branches (see on the AIWC session deciding about the procedure *ibid.*, f. 65). As the SD was still illegal, Hardikar asked whether local committees had started or felt the need of starting another volunteer organisation. Another problem facing the volunteers were to organise the meetings prescribed for electing members, since a number of PCC members were not allowed to enter their own presidencies by orders of the central government, while others had not the requisite travel funds. A sense of general disarray comes through clearly.

¹⁹⁸ The re-formed Dal was to control crowds at gatherings (especially with a view to potential disturbances), carry out constructive and educational work. NMML, AICC, G-15, 1946, f. 39.

¹⁹⁹ Some time in 1934, Hardikar apparently decided to focus on other things in the future. He seems to have gotten impatient with the INC's reorganisation of volunteers and frustrated by the continued bans. In mid-1934, he wrote to his instructors and core group, and told them that after careful consideration he had decided they should now spend time in developing their faculties (i.e. to study) as he wanted them to be the 'leaders of tomorrow'. Cf. Hardikar to an undisclosed number of recipients, dt. 1st June 1934, in NMML, NS Hardikar, Private Papers, Subject File 2 ff, 135-137.

²⁰⁰ Letter by Hardikar to Nehru, 1st Aug. 1937; letter by Nehru to Hardikar, 4th Aug. 1937, in NMML, AICC, G-64, 1937, ff. 57, 63.

now being put to rural uplift and constructive work, and Hardikar in the end demurely acceded to this 'new' focus and the changes necessary to implement it.²⁰¹

The question of the overt militarism of the Seva Dal was problematised periodically within the INC but nothing much ever came of the discussion usually brought on by a small faction of devout Gandhians (as opposed to the majority of 'strategic Gandhians'). But around 1937 Gandhi himself raised the problem again by objecting to an old article of Hardikar's. Hardikar replied: 'The Congress is having certain type of volunteers with training modelled on that followed in the army. The uniform and designations... are imitations of the army in India, though it can't be said that it is the monopoly of the army. Instead of rifles long lathis are carried on the slope, and bands play martial tunes.'²⁰² This was necessary to protect the 'honour' of the Congress flag even at the cost of one's life.²⁰³ For Hardikar, this was not a sign of aggression but national unity. 'Without this [special] training to defend the flag, it is idle to talk of the flag.' What this training is to entail – with regard to the pledge of 'by all non-violent means' was up to experts to decide. The Congress volunteer movement 'has absolutely no uniformity of ideal, aim or object and training.' But the response it gets 'and the enthusiasm which which hundreds don the Khaki or white volunteer uniforms....give an idea that if there was a movement to create a national militia, it would be responded with enthusiasm, sincerity and sense of responsibility.'

Martial Non-Violence

The paramilitary training that was generally imparted to volunteers of all shades as means of 'building character' and discipline seem to be at odds with the principle of ahimsa, that had been made a Congress creed as Gandhi rose in its ranks. Leaders and organisations from Tilak to the RSS accused Gandhi of further 'emasculating' the Hindus, and thereby inviting others to dominate them.²⁰⁴ Beyond the circle of close followers of Gandhi, there was not always much love in the

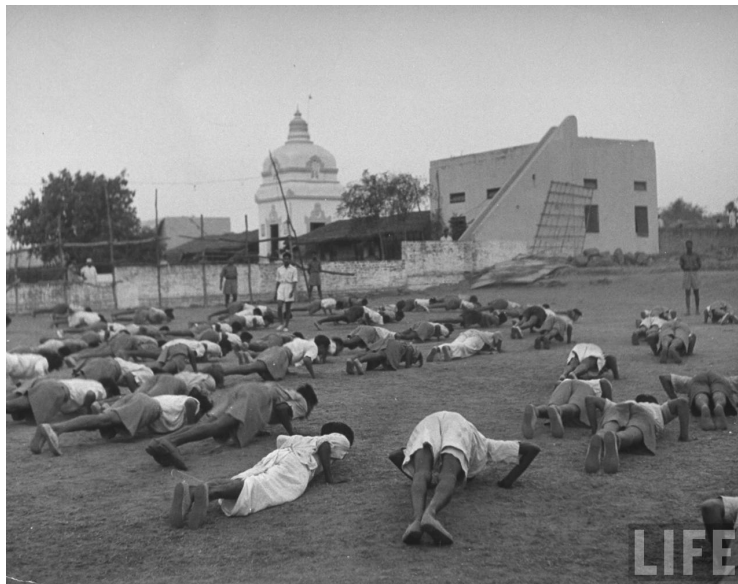
²⁰¹ Statement of Hardikar on the occasion of taking charge of the buildings at Bagalkot, NMML, AICC, G-64, 1937, f. 83, 85.

²⁰² Hardikar to Gandhi (copy to J. Nehru), 14th Sept. 1937, NMML, AICC, G-64, 1937, ff. 75, 76.

²⁰³ See above, on the discussion of the Dal and the flag salutations.

²⁰⁴ See below.

Congress for non-violence and the idiosyncratic notions Gandhi harboured about it. The creed was adopted only after prolonged discussion and even then many held that it was a strategic position for the time being rather than an invincible spiritual principle.²⁰⁵ Tilak had stated, 'The most practical lesson of the Gita, and one which is of abiding interest and value to men of the world, with whom life is a series of struggles, is not to give way to morbid sentimentality when duty demands sternness and boldness'.²⁰⁶ Gandhi's own stance regarding military training and discipline was more than ambiguous. He was often deeply disappointed with the state of 'his' people and their apparent inability to follow in the wake of his insights and principles. He resorted to the idea that the Indian people might need to learn to fight before they could be non-violent. India had been emasculated for too long to just leap into non-violence. There had to be intermediate stages of learning to fight back and becoming truly non-violent.²⁰⁷



'Gandhi volunteer workers doing push-ups during early morning exercise at 6 a.m. on the grounds of the Gandhi Colony compound', May 1946, M. Bourke-White for 'Life'.

Gandhi took to elaborate reasoning to explain that the ability to remain non-violent had to be built on the basis of and after going through violence.

Violence is a function of the body. *Brahmacharya* consist in refraining from sexual indulgence, but we do not bring up our children to be impotent. They will have observed

²⁰⁵ The Mahratta faction in the Congress was especially harsh on the trope of non-violence, of course. See for instance MSA, Home (Spcl), 812-A, 1935.

²⁰⁶ JC Ker, *Political Trouble in India*, p. 49.

²⁰⁷ See Tidrick, *Gandhi*, p. 126. See especially Gandhi's quote regarding the inability of a mouse to offer non-violence when faced with a cat quoted there.

brahmacharya only if, though possessed of the highest virility, they can master the physical urge. In the same way, our offspring must be strong in physique. If they cannot completely renounce the urge to violence, we may permit them to commit violence, to use their strength to fight and thus make them non-violent.²⁰⁸

Thus, there was something like an ontogenetic evolution from violence, equated to the growing up of a child. Of course, not only Gandhi, the avowed teacher of non-violence, harboured such thoughts – he is just usually the one least suspected of it. Gandhi dreamt of a non-violent army - but an army nevertheless.²⁰⁹ The attainment of Independence was conceived of by many as a kind of epic war comparable to the Mahabharata. Some saw this war carried out as a struggle directed inwards (Gandhi), others as something that started from action directed outwards (Tilak). It is widely maintained that these constituted very different methods and philosophies, and, therefore, different types of struggles. But despite these philosophical differences there was a convergence on the mythopoetical plane, that was: conceiving of the national movement in terms of an epic war. In practice, the methods and objects, whether the attainment of inner discipline and aptitude, or physical prowess, were not only not that far apart from each other but indeed necessitated each other – or, in Gandhi's view, followed each other in an ontogenetic progression.²¹⁰ At the most basic, these different strands shared their belief in the subjugation of the individual, the necessity for an 'emptying out' of the self in the interest of the (organic) nation which was embodied in the demands made on the *volunteer-as-brahmacharya-as martyr* and his status of 'ideal citizen'. Both sides, those favouring ahimsa and those advocating force and the myriads caught somewhere in-between, strove for the creation of the super-man, to be born out of their midst or, better, within

²⁰⁸ Letter of Gandhi to Maganlal, quoted in Tidrick, *Gandhi*, p. 128.

²⁰⁹ In Gandhi's ashrams, Sabarmati, inmates lived by the clock, each act being regulated, and with Gandhi as supreme ruler of the ashramites. Sabarmati closed down in 1933 after an embezzlement scandal involving Chhaganlal Gandhi, but still the ashram was relatively lax compared to Phoenix. See Tidrick, *Gandhi*, p. 204. Gandhi, as so many of his contemporaries, employed military metaphors on a regular basis. For instance, he would compare satyagrahas to military campaigns, and himself to the General. He coined the term 'satyagraha sena' (army), which he used repeatedly and out of which grew the post-independence Shanti Sena. Gandhi, *Collected Works*, Vol. 78, p. 89-92: letter no. 86: 'Every Congress Committee a Satyagraha Committee'. For quote see p. 89. 25th March 1940 (*Harijan*, 30-3-1940). See also *Collected Works*, Vol. 78, Question Box, p. 227

²¹⁰ The point here is, that the 'inner' and the 'outer' war were not always so distinct and removed from each other, not only were they fought out with a common foe and object in mind but the perceived shortcomings of the populace and the redemption through discipline were also common themes – and whereas some merely emphasised physical discipline and that 'when the youth of any nation have acquired bodily strength by culture, mental culture will necessarily follow', speech of Ganguli, cf WBSA, IB Branch, file no. 354/26, f.9. Gandhi emphasised mental culture, but thought this had to be attained in steps through also employing physical culture.

themselves.²¹¹ We can then point to the common denominators and their anchorage in a *zeitgeist* that exhibits a fundamental belief in the perfectibility of mankind based on the notion of (individual) human progress and perfectibility of man by his (or her) own volition. In Gandhi's case, and for those with esoteric leanings, ideas about a communion in this life, or the arrival of the 'kingdom of god' prevailed. In whatever form, the ideals of purity and perfection of the individual and, through it, of society by way of an ethical living which transcends religion and politics became the political and social 'common sense' of the Indian nation-building project by the early twentieth century. It is here that socialist circles, the spiritually inclined, and adherents of 'scientific' arguments about evolution blended with Spencerian and Malthusian notions (the popular blend of which became branded as 'Social Darwinism') met.

Waging Peace: Non-Violence and the 'Military Rejuvenation' of the Indian Youth

"The characteristic of a sovereign people is said to be its birth-right to carry arms and wage war."

Message of His Holiness Shri Shankaracharya (Dr. Kurtakoti) to *The Volunteer*²¹²

To understand the context for the following analysis, we need to briefly consider some wider trends. The interwar period was to contemporaries exactly that, a world after a major conflict on a global scale and on the brink of tumbling into another one, of which people were seeing the signs and shadows in a number of (geo-)political constellations. Indian commentators of the time referred matter-of-factly to the 'coming war in East Asia' for which India needed to prepare. Who the players or what the stakes in this war would be was shifting throughout the period. In the 1920s a major confrontation was expected between what was to become the Western bloc and the

²¹¹ Gandhi spent much time in his Gita interpretation to showing that Krishna was not a god descended to earth but a human who had become god-like, an avatar. This concept was developed in Gandhi's 'Discourses on the Gita' written in his year of silence (1926). In his Gita comment 'proper' he was careful to push the notion of the avatar back into the realm of allegories and metaphysics. See Tidrick, *Gandhi*, p. 208-210. We have already seen other instances of the employment of human avatars for political purposes whilst looking at the notion of volunteers.

²¹² Front page, *The Volunteer*, Sept. 1926.

Soviet Union or the middle-East.²¹³ Some observers speculated about a war between England and America in the late 1920s.²¹⁴ Finally, Japan was at times a worrying factor due to its expansionist drive. The Russian spectre that was not only haunting Europe morphed almost seamlessly into the image of the 'yellow peril' with the onset of the Second World War when an invasion by Japan seemed logical and imminent. In short, many contemporaries were casting around for the next likely confrontation. Commentators speculated what would happen if Britain would not fare so well in this war - after the dramatic stand-off in the Great War on the Western Front and the unprecedented loss of life, not a very far-fetched idea²¹⁵. This was an important strand of the arguments made concerning the Indianisation of the army and the working towards a true national army, and, in the meantime, an Indian defence force or even a semi-official Indian body that could defend the country when faced with attack or invasion. Quite a few books picked up the theme of the 'Indian defence problem' and it seems to have influenced nationalists from the Mahasabha to the Congress. On the other hand, a move towards greater incorporation of the 'natives' in Indian defence lent plausibility to the demands, from the establishment of the University Corps to the Territorial Army, which helped disseminate and popularise participation in India's defence.²¹⁶

One example that might be cited here is an article by Hardikar giving facts and figures about the money spent by USA on military education in schools and Reserve Officers Training Corps [ROTC] which, he said, 'show the direction in which the wind is now blowing in the world': While, Hardikar claimed, the US was part of the League of Nations - which claimed to work for

²¹³ An Afghan invasion during the brief war between the British and Amir Amanullah was also feared, deepening the mutual distrust of Congress Hindus and Khilafatists. There are innumerable references to this, and one can regularly find statements about this ominous war and the necessity to build better Indian defence in many major papers. For the sake of brevity, I shall once again focus on *The Volunteer*, however (below). For a full-length study epitomising many common arguments see also Captain GV Modak (member of the Servants of India), *The Indian Defence Problem. Being a Plea for saving 28 Crores a year by immediate Indianization*, Poona, 1933. See on Modak also below.

²¹⁴ See for example Sailendranath Ghose 'War Is Coming - Is India Ready?' *The Young Liberator*, Vol. 1, No. 8, (April 1929), pp. 272-273.

²¹⁵ See also 'India's Defence', article in 'The Leader', by IMS Major Ranjit Singh who had recently returned from Europe, reproduced in *The Volunteer*, November 1925, p. 276.

²¹⁶ The UTC and like bodies are outside the purview of this study. And a comprehensive analysis of these trends and their impact on 'civil society' is missing, to the best of my knowledge. See however, Dr. SC Maikap, *The Cadet Corps in India - Its Evolution and Impact*, Calcutta: Naya Prokash, 1979 for a fact-based overview of the development of the Corps from the UTC on. See esp. pp. 7-33 for the interwar period.

peace and disarmament – the US and other nations actually worked toward re-armament.²¹⁷ Hardikar points to the expenditure for military education and said the reason behind this was that the US is ‘smelling war’ in the East. Is it a crime, he asked, for India to think of self-protection? The same countries that are preparing for wars and are training their manhood to protect their own borders, are against teaching military science to the Indian people. ‘A big joke!’ Closing, he claimed that the Seva Dal today was the only body that aimed at national self-defence.²¹⁸

In 1931, the then President of the Hindustani Seva Dal, Sambamurty, compared his post to Commander-in-Chief and wanted it to be continuous rather than annually elected so that a 'solid national militia' can be built up ‘in a few years’.²¹⁹ In the minds of (eager) outsiders and potential volunteers, the Seva Dal was generally considered and called a ‘National Militia’ so that these trends cannot be considered to be an elite occupation only.

Beyond the level of intentions of the shapers and makers, it is instructive how spectators made sense of the Seva Dal. Whatever Hardikar might say about his non-violent organisation, the military jargon and the press reportage left their mark and on applications Hardikar receives the impression one gets is that people apply for a post in a *bona fide* militia. For instance, one KR Venkatachala Iyer, Govindarajapuram (a village in south Malabar) wrote to Nehru (as member-in-charge) in 1931 and stated that he had given up Governmental service to join Gandhi’s movement, and now wanted to be trained as officer in the ‘National Militia’. As qualification other than being a satyagrahi, he said he had undergone training in the University Training Corps.²²⁰

²¹⁷ For the League of Nations and its deliberations on the subject of disarmament and its spectacular failure to reach a meaningful agreement, see the classic account by E.H. Carr, *International Relations since the Peace Treaties*, Macmillan and Co., London, 1943 (rev. ed.), see esp. pp. 81-97.

²¹⁸ NS Hardikar, 'Let US Protect Ourselves – Facts about Military Education in U.S. America', *The Volunteer*, March 26, 1925, p. 49.

²¹⁹ Sambamurty, to J. Nehru, dt. 24th July, 1931, NMML, AICC papers, F.No. G-8, 10/1931, ff. 9-10.

²²⁰ KR Venkatachala Iyer, Kalpathi-Palghat PO, to JN, dt. 26th July, 1931, NMML, AICC papers, F.No. G-8, 10/1931, f.7. There are numerous letters on file which seek admission to the 'Militia', often by people specifying their previous military experience (UTC). Many such applicants seemed to have had the idea of the Dal as a surrogate national army from press reports to which they often refer. Some more examples will be cited later on. Other people within the Dal had their doubts about this drive - apart from the few dogmatic Gandhians, mainly on the grounds that an amateur body like the Dal could hardly be expected to take over the defence of India. Curiously, these voices are far and few between.

In the early 30s, generally, a feeling seemed to prevail among many of the Dal leaders that the organisation 'should be run on military lines'²²¹ or 'The Seva Dal should be trained more like military and not like Police and its functions should be similar to those of the Military.'²²² Hardikar, was himself sympathetic to such ideas as we have seen above when Hardikar talked about the Dal as a revolutionary body and the necessity of military discipline and training.²²³ It was also underlined in the meeting of the Board of the HSD that children should be trained early in the Dal, so that they might develop a 'taste for discipline'.²²⁴

The widespread fascination with all things military went hand in hand with the fear of what happened to nations who failed to continuously evolve and change or those who (had) stagnated, according to the contemporaneous discourse. We can pick up again our analysis of Social Darwinist tendencies here: the trope of degeneration and the 'struggle for existence' was a recurrent trope in publications concerned with physical culture and youth movements. In 1927, BG Lokare, the under-secretary of the HSD and close relative of Hardikar who had worked earlier for the Defence Department in Poona, wrote in the *Volunteer*:

²²¹ SV Inamdar (a Dal organiser of Malad and Hardikar's eventual successor), 'Suggestions on the Resolution of the Congress Working Committee on the Hindustan Seva Dal', NMML, AICC papers, F.No. G-8, 10/1931, f. 85.

²²² Dr. A. Laxmipathi (Madras), NMML, AICC papers, F.No. G-8, 10/1931, f. 87. Other voices already prepared for a 'War Council' which should have at least two Dal members (see *ibid*, f. 89). SS Shastri, Pleader, Honavar, opined that the Dal should not come under direct Congress control because the 'present policy of the Congress namely non-violent non-cooperation' would clash with Dal objectives. The basis of the Dal was to have a 'an efficient body of workers, to be ready to take up work of a sort which may in many ways be inconsistent with the current policy of the Congress.' There were, however, those within the organisation who seemed opposed to this interpretation. See the Bengal organiser Sachindranath Mitra, for instance, cf. Sachin Mitra to Hardikar, 18th Dec. 1931, WBSA, IB, 583/1927 (sl.no 45), f. 263. It is noteworthy that the same Sachin Mitra was involved in the *Bangiya Seva Dal* which stewed up the most militarised scheme in this period from among all the branches of the Dal (see below).

²²³ WBSA, IB Branch, file no. 354/26, f. 4.

²²⁴ VG Apte, (Ratnagiri), 'Suggestions on the Resolution of the Congress Working Committee on the Hindustan Seva Dal', NMML, AICC papers, F.No. G-8, 10/1931, f. 85. See also official statement of Karnatak Province which wants 'provisions to be made for the training of Bal-balikas [sic!] and Kumar-Kumarikas', *ibid*, f.81. And statement of Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, *ibid*, f. 95. The Seva Dal, as other volunteer bodies, had sections for minors. The HSD consisted of three sections: the Proudhas (adults), the Kumar/ Kumarikas (boys and girls) and the Bal/ Balikas (children, what age group exactly belonged to these groups could differ slightly from province to province) - each complete with their respective differing uniforms. NMML, AICC papers, F.No. G - 08, 10/ 1931, esp. f.4.

The whole human life is a continuous strain and struggle against the forces of opposition in the achievement of its goal. This struggle, therefore, has been described as 'the battle of life'. This holds good of the life of a nation as well. Countries there are many in the world. The struggle of one country for individual existence is a struggle pure and simple as against the opposition of all the other countries in the world.²²⁵

Lokare went on to say, that in politics, whether one preferred the role of the non-co-operators, the constitutionalists or the revolutionaries – it is 'all the same. The struggle does exist there as everywhere else.' It just may be more or less bloody. He went into some detail regarding the necessity of rearing healthy and physically fit offspring on the lines with which we are by now familiar.

Though less numerous, we also find explicit explorations of social Darwinism especially in their beneficial effects in other countries and movements.²²⁶ For instance, one DB Kirtikar used the science of eugenics (as he said) to argue for the abolishment of caste since, besides being un-Aryan in its recent form, it was proven that animals reared in small circle became 'stunted and emasculated within few generations'.²²⁷ He also felt that a mere volunteer organisation could never replace a proper army and was, for that reason alone, against the presentation of the Dal as an army in vitro.²²⁸ The ability to defend one's own country was also linked to natural rights and national honour and, at the same time, to *realpolitik* considerations of the re-armament of the world.²²⁹ But the distinction between internal and external self-defence was highly porous, as we have pointed out already in the context of the 1920s and its communal riots. Volunteers invariably

²²⁵ BG Lokare, 'The First Step in Building a Nation', *The Volunteer*, June 1927, p. 149. Lokare worked for the HSD until it was merged with the Congress officially, then went to the Free Press Journal, later the Bombay Chronicle. Like Hardikar, he never married.

²²⁶ See for instance, the article by JV Klima, 'The Great National Leaders of Czechoslovakia', *The Volunteer*, July 1927, pp. 175-177, which traces an alternative, independent evolving of Social Darwinism to the founder of the Sokol Movement, Miroslav Tyrš.

²²⁷ DB Kirtikar (PhD, Bombay), 'Dissolution of Castes as a National Need – A rational Plea', *The Volunteer*, Nov. 1925, pp. 270-1.

²²⁸ This is, of course, not to suggest that everybody was under the spell of models of society that favoured the organic collective at the expense of individual freedom. Rather, a number of competing claims for ideal society were voiced at the time. But all of these shared the language in which these questions were negotiated and the common concern about a changing global environment, which seemed to favour strong nation-states with the well-known (nationalist) minimum of unity (language, culture, history and 'fate'/ aspiration). And the recurrence of arguments of this type of a banalised Darwinism makes the extent of the engagement with such theories clear.

²²⁹ That carrying arms and waging wars was the birthright of a sovereign people was a commonly reiterated credo, see for instance, 'Inspiration of the Past - A Message of His Holiness Shri Shankaracharya [or Karveer Pith] (Dr. Kurtakoti), *The Volunteer*, September 1926, p. 193. See for considerations on global re-armament Hardikar who kept writing about questions of military preparedness of India in comparisons to other states, see for instance, NS Hardikar, 'Let Us Protect Ourselves – Facts about Military Education in U.S. America', *The Volunteer*, March 1926, p. 49 f.

were tasked with the defence against external aggression and internal disorder.²³⁰

All of this has to be seen in the context of debates around the Indianisation of the army with all its symbolic implications and the report of the Skeen Committee in 1926, which recommended an Indianisation of the army and the setting up of an Indian military academy on the lines of Sandhurst.²³¹ The preparation and enabling of young men to rise through the ranks, or, better, to earn a King's Commission by military training and the requisite education was an immediate concern ever since the publication of the report, even though or rather because the subsequent decisions of the Government seemed to water down the recommendations - while vacancies at Sandhurst were extended, the setting up of an Indian Sandhurst in 1933 was deemed 'premature'.²³²

Sarojini Naidu, as Congress President, proclaimed that she was in favour of general conscription for volunteers, to train the young for national discipline but, as this was not possible in a colonised India, the volunteer organisation was the next-best thing.²³³ Naidu argued for compulsory military training as an essential part of any national school's curriculum. In a speech she elaborated on the right to self-defence:

Is it not the saddest of all shameful ironies that our children whose favourite lullabies are

²³⁰ There are numerous examples for this haziness concerning the object of the ubiquitous 'self-defence'. See for instance, the editorial piece 'Mofussil Defence' regarding the appeal by Mr. Sham Sunder Chakravarty, editor of the *Servant*, Calcutta, in *The Volunteer*, September 1926, p. 216. Others saw volunteers as a 'second line of defence' in case of an attack on India. But since volunteers most commonly were used to keep order at public meetings, melas etc, the role of keeping internal order would have usually been the first association in this context.

²³¹ The Skeen Committee appointed in 1925 and reporting in 1926 consisted of Lieut.-General Sir Andrew Skeen and twelve Indians, among whom were a significant number of career military as well as Jinnah and Motilal Nehru. The committee was to consider the avenues for widening the appointment of Indians under the King's Commission. The Skeen Committee in the end unanimously recommended a thorough Indianisation of the army, extending the possibilities of Indians being appointed to the King's Commission and the setting up of an 'Indian Sandhurst' in 1932. This would become Dehra Dun. See 'Report of the Indian Sandhurst committee', *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 1927, pp. 349-358.

²³² Indianisation was to be taken up experimentally in eight units at first to not adversely effect 'efficiency' in the army as a whole - much to the ire of many nationalists who saw it as the Government going only against military expertise on racial grounds and impose segregation from above. See (John Allsebrook Simon, 1st Viscount Simon), *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission* [Simon Commission], Volume One, Survey, His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1930, pp. 102-106.

²³³ See Naidu, address by TC Goswami at the 1925 Dal Conference, *The Volunteer*, special issue on Cawnpore Congress, p. 13.

the battle-songs of Kuru-Kshetra [...] should be condemned to depend for the safety of their homes ... on the fidelity and strength of foreign arms? The savage Massai... may claim the inalienable right to defend the honour of their race but we alone have been defrauded of that privilege and have become cowards by compulsion, unfit to answer the world's challenge to our manhood, unable to maintain the sanctity of our homes and shrines.²³⁴

She urged the Congress to form a proper National Militia, the core of which might well be the present Volunteer organisation. Motilal Nehru, who had been on the Skeen Committee,²³⁵ appealed in 1927 to the volunteers that “[i]mmediate cultivation of 'esprit de corps'” was required for effective service and effective sacrifice without which no country had ever achieved freedom. He heralded: 'Remember, you volunteers, you are the soldiers of unity. You must gird up your loins to restore unity. You are the future national army of India.'²³⁶ For many Congressmen, and we can count Hardikar among them, non-violence was a credo that was chosen for pragmatic rather than absolute ideological reasons.²³⁷ Many of the Seva Dal leaders thought that the organisation “should be run on military lines”²³⁸ Hardikar, Sarojini Naidu and Jawaharlal Nehru, to name a few, made at various points statements to the effect that non-violence was a strategically fitting method. Naidu stated for instance that the volunteer movement should “serve as the first steps to the [armed] National Militia. If we have not yet the arms to use, let us first train ourselves in other ways.. Let us learn to obey and die in the service of the land.”²³⁹ Many other people were simply pragmatic about the question - a free and self-sufficient state would need an army, and would need to hold the monopoly of power. It was what made a state into a state, a necessity for

²³⁴ Sarojini Naidu, 'Editorial Notes', *The Volunteer*, 'Editorial Notes', February 1926, pp. 22-23.

²³⁵ He was criticised for joining this committee by the Swarajists but had defended his position by stating that it the addition one more Indian being able to defend his country was worth more than the appointment of ten Indian governors and that all Indians had as their duty to increase the number of those potential defendants of the country. Hardikar, 'Pandit Motilal Nehru Joins' (editorial notes), *The Volunteer*, August 1925, p. 164.

²³⁶ Motilal Nehru, 'Soldiers of Unity', *The Volunteer*, January 1927, title page.

²³⁷ Nehru is a good example for the general turn of mind concerning this issue. He saw satyagraha as a dignified weapon that suited India's needs best at the time and under the circumstances, it was a political tool chosen by a political organisation as the best means available. See Nehru, *An Autobiography*, John Lane The Bodley Head, London, 1941, pp. 73, 84-85.

²³⁸ See above, fn. 219. BV Inamdar [Dal organiser, Malad, the latter successor of Hardikar's], 'Suggestions on the Resolution of the Congress Working Committee on the Hindustan seva Dal, NMML, AICC papers, F.No. G-8, 10/1931, f. 85. Hardikar himself was sympathetic to such ideas. He professed 'that he, personally, was in favour of military education, but of military education minus the inhuman and brute part of it.' WBSA, GoB, Office of DIG of Police, CID, IB Branch, file no. 354/26, f. 4.

²³⁹ See editorial, 'Congress President and defence', *The Volunteer*, February 1926, p. 23. See also Hardikar, editorial, 'Is the Dal a Revolutionary Body?...!', *The Volunteer*, June 1925, pp. 97-99, especially pp. 97-98.

survival.²⁴⁰

The above example provide an insight into the actual preparation for taking over (or taking away by and by) state functions; and this was also a part of the Gandhian campaigns from the start. The Congress was a slowly evolving shadow state and a strong faction within it was very aware that the army needed be one of them. The drive for 'volunteer armies' is understandable from that background - it is a logical part of the nation-building agenda. Moreover, it was, in connection with debates about Oriental effeminacy, a powerful symbolic site. Self defence, too, was obviously necessary for true independence from a pragmatic perspective but on the idealistic plane it was legitimised by the argument that only a strong India can take its rightful place among the nations, have proper foreign relations and thereby help and heal future of the world as was its destiny.

Moreover, national self-defence was not only linked up with honour but also with the natural rights of a free people, the exercise of violence within and outside being the legitimate preserve and monopoly of a national state. But external and internal objects against whom self-defence might be necessary, i.e. invasion and riots,²⁴¹ were regularly collapsed into each other and the question of communal tension came implicitly up in many of these discussions, even though in Congress circles this was usually not addressed head-on, and if it was then it tended to trip people up: One author of *The Volunteer* had earlier suggested that to solve the communal tension by building a Hindu militia, since, he argued, it was based on mutual fear and if the Hindu majority had no reason to be afraid, the problem should be solved. He omitted to mention that the Muslim

²⁴⁰ Nripendra Chandra Banerjee, Professor of English Literature in Presidency College, Calcutta, and member of the PVB in Bengal, was more blunt on the question. In a review of the Gandhians' Wardha Scheme of national education he stated: 'Now the *sociological idea of a state based on absolute non-violence* [...] is an entrancing idea; it is Gandhism at its apex. Intellectual India admires the Ideal but with very great mental reservations. ... We hold to non-violence as a beautifully romantic and essentially practical technique of political struggle by an unarmed nation of slaves against a fully armed police state; we do not consider it as a feasible and practical basis for a full-grown, independent state.' Nripendra Chandra Banerjee, 'A Review of the Wardha Scheme of Primary Education', in *Science and Culture*, Vol. IV, No. 4, October 1938, p. 201-204; for the quote see p. 203.

²⁴¹ See Dattopant Majli, 'Volunteering as I conceive it', in *The Volunteer*, January 1926, pp. 10-13.

minority might harbour similar fears.²⁴² As we shall see (especially during and after the Second World War), due to this close nexus and the interchangeable nature of the potential aggressor, the mobilisation and training for defence also could and would cut both ways.

²⁴² Dr. SV Ketkar, MA, PhD, Poona, 'Disciplining the Next Generation', *The Volunteer*, Sept. 1925, pp. 209-210.

IV. Mainstreaming the 'Fringes': The Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Khaksars

In this chapter, we look at engagements with notions of progress and militarism outside of the Congress. We can then demonstrate that the near-hegemonic position these debates acquired making engagements and dialogues across political boundaries possible as actors recognised the commonality in outlook and organisation of different. Both the RSS and, to a lesser degree, the Khaksars have merited some attention by scholars and as such, no complete account or overview of these two groups will be attempted here. Rather, we will try and look at some of the issues of mobilisation they faced, how people made sense of them (as far as this can be accounted for), and compare the structures and debates with those of other bodies within the so-called 'mainstream' of politics.

Hinduisse All Militarism - Moonje's Military Academy

Better an army of asses led by a lion, than an army of lions led by an ass.

Persian Proverb & motto of the Skeen Committee

In 1935, when the Seva Dal was still banned, NS Hardikar toured Karnataka with Dr. BS Moonje to popularise the latter's newly established Hindu Military Academy and military training generally. The Hubli Ganesh Mandal (a creation of Hardikar's) made the official invitation for the Ganeshpati festival, and stops at *vyayam shalas* at Hubli and Bagalkot (including the Seva Dal building) figured prominently on the tour programme.¹

¹ See *The Bombay Chronicle*, 31st Aug. 1935, MSA, Home (Spcl), 812-A, 1935, f. 65. Hardikar himself stated afterwards that he only thus toured with Moonje due to the controversy that had arisen, and that otherwise an 'officer' of the Mandal would have accompanied Dr. Moonje. See NS Hardikar, 'Dr. Moonje in Karnatak', in *Bombay Chronicle*, 23rd Sept. 1935, MSA, Home (Spcl.), 812, 1935, f. 111.

The Karnataka Congress-leader and CWC member Gangadharrao Deshpande publicly called on Congress members not to facilitate or participate in Moonje's tour in any way, describing him an 'arch-hater' of Muslims, a 'lover of war' and enemy of non-violence, an advocate of beef-eating and a Congress detractor - among other things. Hardikar shot back with an advocacy of the freedom of expression. Narayan claimed there was no danger to the Congress from Moonje's tour, and while one might not 'relish' all his opinions, one should admire his devotion to Hindu Sangathan and military education.² The real issue was one of Moonje's political affiliation and communal attitude - especially in the light of the upcoming elections - rather than anything to do with the academy or militarism. The attacks on Moonje - and Hardikar's invitation - provoked much confusion and, in the end, a public backlash in favour of Moonje, since the Congress mired itself in continued bad public relations by displaying a striking inconsistency in their remarks.³

The whole episode came to a head when Moonje - with Hardikar and Savarkar in tow- went to Belgaum and presided over a speech by Shivaram Laxman Karandiker, editor of the Poona magazine 'Trikal' who was accompanying Moonje. In the speech, Karandiker advocated the social and economic boycott of the Muslims to strengthen the Hindu community, and Moonje, referring back to the speech, said Hindus should not be afraid of Muslims since they were only converted Hindus and cited 'the example of the treatment of the Jews at the hands of the Nazis', according to the DM's report. This positive reference to the state-enforced boycott of Jewish shops⁴ has to be seen in the context of the political opinions of the persons concerned: Moonje was an outspoken admirer of Mussolini and Karandiker's *Trikal* carried pro-Nazi news and propaganda well into

² *Bombay Chronicle*, 'Charge-sheet against Moonje', 3rd Sept. 1935, in MSA, Home (Spcl), 812-A, 1935, f. 67. Deshpande was not the only Congressman with whom the Moonje tour sat very uneasily and Hardikar had a very hard time defending the move (see for instance; 'Dr. Hardikar's Blunder', *Bombay Chronicle*, 24th Sept 1935, MSA, Home (Spcl) 812-A, 1935, f. 113). Heated debate and public meetings especially ensued in Belgaum where the local CC had tried to keep Moonje out of the province (which he had initially no plan of visiting). See letter by MC Kelkar, secy of the Central Hindu Military Education Society, to BS Moonje, dt. 16.09.1935, in NMML, BS Moonje Papers, Subject File 25, Pt. II, f. 209 and *Times of India*, 7th Sept 1935, 'Moonje's tour - Congress Circles perturbed?' and 'Dr. Moonje at Hubli', clipping in MSA, Home (Spcl.), 812-A, 1935, f. 71.

³ Extract from the Weekly Confidential Report of the District magistrate, dt. 12th Sept. 1935, MSA, Home (Spcl.), 812-A, 1935, f. 85. See also the full-page article in the *Bombay Chronicle* of 17th Sept. 1935 by BN Datar, 'Storm in a tea-cup', clipping in *ibid*, f. 87.

⁴ Extract from the Weekly Confidential report by the DM, Belgaum, dt. 19th Sept 1935, MSA, Home (Spcl.), 812-A, 1935, ff. 95, 97.

1939.⁵ An associate of Karandiker's, M.R. Tulsibagwale, speaking at a meeting in Poona in May 1939, would compare the former to Goebbels, Savarkar to Hitler and the Hindu youth to the Nazis' army.⁶ It is not hard to see how the references to economic boycott might resonate with Indian nationalists and their ideas of swadeshi. The point here is to draw out the amazingly plastic spectrum that might find Hardikar, Moonje and Karandiker on the same platform.

There were many, however, who even before the outbreak of the Second World War, were anathema to such references. An outraged NG Joshi, president of the DCC Belgaum, issued a statement condemning the remarks, but faced severe hostility from the city's establishment, populace and even other Congress members who claimed the reports regarding the speech were exaggerated or that it was a breach of etiquette vis-à-vis a guest.⁷ The brief political affair might be another good example of how nationalist politics made for strange bedfellows at times. Here was Dr. Hardikar, the non-cooperating Congressman and secular nationalist who, self-professedly, attempted to include all religions and castes in his All India organisation which officially subscribed to the principles of non-violence. There was Dr. BS Moonje, an important member of the liberal (i.e. Responsivist) National party, ex-Congressman, a leader of the Hindu Mahasabha, a rather rabid communalist and a stringent militarist who admired Mussolini. We shall trace in some more detail what brought these two together and why the combination is only a strange one at first glance.⁸

⁵ See the *Trikal* article from 1st July 1939, 'Nazi propaganda in Calcutta - Nazism applauded to the skies in India - Special love for the Indian Princes', dt. 1st July 1939, which carried news about Nazi agents sent by Goebbels to sway the Indian princes and pointed out the alleged similarities between the German system of Government and that of the Princely States. See 'Nazi Propaganda in India', MSA, Home (Spcl) 830 (I), 1939, f- 53. See also f. 55. See also Eugene J. D'souza, 'Nazi Propaganda in India', *Social Scientist*, Vol. 28, No. 5/6, 2000, pp. 77-90, see pp. 86-87, where the same article is referred to. D'Souza wrote his article utilising two files from the MSA and adding little in terms of context or analysis.

⁶ D'Souza, *ibid.* p. 89.

⁷ BN Datar, 'Storm in a tea-cup', *Bombay Chronicle* of 17th Sept 1935. Moonje was quick to cash on on the internal strife of the INC and thanked GR Deshpande publicly for making his tour a greater success by way of his antagonism and the curiosity and sympathy it caused among the people, who, he said, flocked to his speeches and listened in rapt attention. See 'Moonje thanks Karnatak', in *Bombay Chronicle*, 20th Sept 1935, MSA, Home (Spcl.), 812-A, 1935, f. 101.

⁸ It should by now be clear that such comparisons were not outlandish or a marker of the Hindu Right. Nehru, in 1937, felt moved to write an article 'The Rashtrapati' under the pseudonym of 'Chanakya', answering all those who wished Nehru to be a Mussolini for India - a wish he found distasteful because Fascism to him was a brutish movement. He made it clear that such tendencies to see Jawaharlal as a leader, or maybe a Führer, were irreconcilable with democratic principles that

Moonje's often vitriolic rhetoric and communal outlook had many opponents – but it is interesting to note that while Congressmen, Gandhians and Muslims alike found the details of the Military Academy (and sometimes the person of Moonje) distasteful, the general idea of the academy and its aims were greeted warmly.⁹ Hardikar seems to have expressed the wish to hand over his Bagalkot facility to Moonje (who had just waxed eloquently on the lost glory of the Hindus and the aggressive military campaign of Germany and other Western countries) as well as start a military training school himself.¹⁰ What is certainly true is that Hardikar, in line with his striving for supra-political cooperation among all nationalists, was an admirer of Moonje's efforts for 'military rejuvenation'. The colonial government generally seemed unconcerned about Moonje's RSS connections, while stating that his association with Hardikar warranted close watching, and was potentially dangerous.¹¹ Moonje's school exerted quite an influence on and sparked off debates within the SD¹². It also helps us further appreciate the outlook of those who stringently argued for a militarised national movement.

Moonje (1872-1948) had participated in the Boer War and, on his return to India, settled down in Nagpur and was first associated with the Congress (the Tilak faction). He became the President of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1927, a post he retained until 1937. Moonje had pressed for compulsory physical and military training in schools and colleges and as MLA introduced various bills to this effect in the later 1920s, which were backed by many of his colleagues but always rejected by the authorities.¹³ These bills laid out the necessity of better provisions for the 'defence of India' - a

the nationalist movement stood for. See Benjamin Zachariah, *Nehru*, London et al: Routledge, 2004, pp. 87-88. That he had to write it in the first place shows that the tendencies had grown to such proportions that they required a public refutation.

⁹ See for instance reports in the *Bombay Chronicle* and a number of other papers on the academy, in MSA, Home (Spcl), 812-A, 1935.

¹⁰ Confidential Report for the week ending 11 Sept. 1935 by the DM of Bijapur, in MSA Home (Spcl.), 812-A, 1935, f. 83. Other reports seem to indicate that Hardikar was trying hard to reclaim the building - but to what end was unclear.

¹¹ See 'Connection between Dr B.S. Moonje's Military Academy and the Hindustani Seva Dal', NAI, Home, Poll, 118/35 ff. 2, 27.

¹² See below, on the Bengal Seva Dal.

¹³ See for instance 'The Indian Boys' Compulsory Physical and Military Training Bill', NAI, Home Poll, 238/IV, 1930 (the bill actually was originally put before the Assembly in 1928 but was re-introduced in the body later) The official correspondence is attached to the proposal and illuminates the colonial worries. See also NAI, Legislative, Publication, 9-IV-P, 1929 (referring to Moonje's

concern that would occupy Government a few years later to a considerable degree, but found a handful of admirers from within the colonial administration in the 1920s.

Moonje started setting up the school in 1934, soon after having returned from a tour in Europe. It was opened as the Bhonsala Military School in 1937 near Nasik. He claimed inspiration from other schools he had visited during a tour in Europe, including England, France, Italy and Germany. He had had an audience with the *Duce* in March 1931, in which he stated how very impressed he was with the Ballila and the Fascist organisation which he had inspected earlier that day.¹⁴ Moonje attributed his own belief to various 'world leaders' that continued peace 'would lead to stagnation' whereas war is a 'great stimulant for youth'. The Great War had changed the trend of thought on a world-wide scale. Youth, he said, should have 'the ambition for conquest', while also possessing eloquence and diplomacy.¹⁵

Moonje's school was residential and emulated the English public school for an Indian middle classes who had been more or less implicitly barred from the military professions when the theory and definition of the 'martial races' became the alpha and omega of colonial recruiting. It would provide the first non-official institution of its kind for the middle classes, Moonje wrote proudly.¹⁶ The training was meant to improve the chances of the pupils at succeeding with enlistment in Imperial and Provincial public service from the Army, Navy and Air Forces to the Police a even the Forest Service 'etc etc'.¹⁷

attempts to introduce similar bills in 1925 as a member of the Central Provinces Legislative Council and said bill from 1928). See also other bills by Moonje: NAI, Industries and Labour, Industries, 1-273/91, 1929 on a resolution to send Indian students to England and other countries for training in manufacture of fire-arms, guns and ammunition.

¹⁴ Marzia Casolari, 'Hindutva's Foreign Tie-Up in the 1930s: Archival Evidence', *EPW*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 2000, pp. 218-228.

¹⁵ See 'Military Training for Hindus', in *ToI*, 19.08.1935, in MSA, Home (Spcl), 812, 1935, f. 37, see also the *ToI*, 27.08.1935 at *ibid*, f. 49. The *Bombay Chronicle* critiqued the idea of peace leading to stagnation vehemently while supporting the general idea of a military academy, though it should be 'national' (i.e. open to all castes and creeds), see *ibid* dt. 20.08.1935, MSA, Home (Spcl), 812, 1935, f. 39.

¹⁶ Letter by Moonje to the Maharaja of Indore, 11.06.1936, NMML, BS Moonje Papers, Subject file 23 [no ff. nos, p. 2].

¹⁷ 'Scheme and Curriculum of Education and Training' in the proceedings of the Military Education Society of 16.08.1936 (p.6), NMML, B.S. Moonje Papers, Subject file 23, [no ff. nos].

The 'Central Hindu Military Education Society' was started to form a governing body for the school. The stated objects of the Society were, among others, to base the training of mind and body on the 'old Vedic culture of Sanatan Dharma' and to 'develop leadership, self-confidence, manliness and courage, sportsmanship and dignity, love of enterprise and the ambition of shouldering the entire responsibility of the defence of the motherland from foreign aggression as well as from internal commotion, that is, in short, to revive and quicken the latent martial spirit.' It also aimed at abolishing caste to 'bring about organic unity amongst ...the Hindu Community'¹⁸, but this was not out of a deep-seated conviction but can be rather seen as means to an end, that is the even distribution of martial virtues among and the availability of all sections of society for the defence of the country. That is the official statement, versions of which are repeatedly broadcasted in later years as well. The Preface to the scheme of the society, numbering 25 pages, written in 1935, was not used as widely and makes for an interesting insight into Moonje's aspirations for his pet project. The text opened with the question of why it was necessary to train 'our boys' for the military.

It must be clearly understood that this kind of training is not for Love and Non-Violence, though its ultimate aim is to establish Love and Non-Violence but through methods which are the direct contrary This training is meant for qualifying and fitting our boys for the game of killing masses of men with the ambition of winning victory with the best possible Casualties [sic] of dead and wounded while causing the utmost possible harm to the adversary.¹⁹

It then goes into basic human nature (the instinct to fight) and the dire consequences if this instinct is altogether subdued – as was the case in India, according to Moonje, when the Buddhist doctrine swayed the populace and came to a tragic climax when the Kshatriyas were sitting in the Himalayas 'dreaming of Nirvana' while the Muslim hordes invaded India. He comes from Manu to Mussolini on the evolutionary necessity of war²⁰, to Bernard Shaw in which he claimed that a 'strong Germany' under Hitler was as important as a strong Britain and that when all powers are

¹⁸ Preface to 'Scheme and Curriculum of Education and Training', NMML, B.S. Moonje Papers, Subject file 23, [no ff. nos].

¹⁹ 'Preface - to the scheme of the central Hindu Military Education Society and its military school', in NMML, BS Moonje Papers, Subject File 25, ff. 4321- 442. For the quote see f 431 (p1). The 'Preface' has no date, but from circumstances mentioned in the text we can place it as having been written in the second half of 1935.

²⁰ Moonje quotes: 'I absolutely disbelieve in perpetual peace which is detrimental and negative to the fundamental virtues of man, which only by struggle reveal themselves in the light of the sun'. 'War alone brings up to its highest tension all human energy and puts the stamp of nobility upon the peoples who have the courage to meet it'. See 'Preface', p. 6.

armed to the teeth then ‘they will be strong enough to impose peace on the world’ (a sentiment made use of in the very beginning), and, quite extensively, a German geographer and NSDAP member from 1933, Ewald Banse, on his theories about ‘Wehrwissenschaft’ (military science).²¹ After quoting him regarding the necessity to ‘impregnate’ the mind of the people from childhood with the idea of war, he refers to military psychology and states:

A skillful [sic] Government and military command must give to warlike individuals particularly favourable conditions to live and procreate and must try to graft their warrior ideal on the less warlike classes [‘], that is they must deliberately practice what he [Banse] calls ‘Military engenicis’ [eugenics].²²

Moonje, before moving on to Manu once again, also quotes a French Marshal, veteran of the Great War, in saying that it was obvious that Germany today believes in force alone and that its whole activity was directed at revenge. Moonje asks whether there was not a lesson to be learnt here for the Hindus? And answers: ‘Revenge is one of the fundamental qualities of a person worth the name of man and it may turn out as a virtue or vice as the exigencies of the situation may justify.’ He goes on to philosophise on the amenability of the people generally to force and punishment and the lessons to be gauged from the ‘great Law-giver’ Manu. The efficient realization of Manu’s vision were exemplified by looking at Russia, where, supposedly the Young Communist League, the Soviet Red Cross and others have ordered the immediate military training of 5 million young people and, once again, Italy, where every boy at the age of eight gets a uniform, becomes a ‘son of the wolf’²³ and a part of the army or navy and thus the entire civilian

²¹ Banse was a geographer, Pan-Germanist and joined the NSDAP in 1933. He advocated treating *Wehrwissenschaft* - on which he wrote extensively - as a science proper and had a deep interest in Africa and the Orient. From being interested in exotic cultures, he graduated to advocating an aggressive German expansionism (based on the theory of a *Volk ohne Raum*) which he and his mentor Wilhelm Uhle (an outspoken Social Darwinist) helped develop. He would later also attest that the ‘uplift’ of the Orient had been deficient, and a complete westernisation and colonisation by force including the extinction (*Ausrottung*) of adversary elements in those societies if necessary. But when Moonje engaged with Banse, the latter’s theories on Orientals were still in the future. In the same paragraph, Moonje referenced the efforts of bettering the physique of the Italian youths to make them into better soldiers and talked about Shivaji. See ‘Preface’ p. 7 (f. 437). See for the original: Ewald Banse, *Wehrwissenschaft*, Leipzig: Armanen Verlag, 1933.

²² ‘Preface’ p.7 (f. 437). The interesting question here is where Moonje obtained these passages since the work was not translated. One might assume Moonje got it from one of the Indian exiles in Germany, though after 1933 there were fewer and fewer of them. See on Indian exiles in Germany and their relations with the Nazis see Benjamin Zachariah, ‘Transfers, Formations, Transformations- Some Programmatic Notes on fascism in India, c. 1922-1938’, in Jörg Feuchter, Friedhelm Hoffmann, Bee Yun (eds), *Cultural Transfers in Dispute - Representations in Asia, Europe and the Arab World since the Middle Ages*, Frankfurt/New York: Campus, 2011, pp 167-192, see esp. pp. 189-192.

²³ As is evident from the subsequent passages dealing with the *Avanguardisti* for boys from age 14 on

life from banker to peasant is organised on military lines, the distinction between civilian and soldier is abolished and henceforth nobody who is not proficient in military science can do well in school or advance in society, claims Moonje with obvious admiration.²⁴ He rounds off this excursus with examples of Chiang Kai Shek, a peasant-defence league (*against* Nazi aggression) in Bavaria and military training in Persia, Afghanistan and Japan – showing once more that the concern was not that of any particular politics, but the thoroughly authoritarian style, militaristic methods and, more fundamentally, the basic assumptions regarding the nature of the world. However in his case, Germany and Italy shine forth as the supreme models and objects worthy of imitation, while Japan is treated like a mirror image of India before the former westernised and abolished her ‘caste system’, and thus of particular interest. Most of the remainder of the piece is spent detailing the historic downfall from the pre-Buddhist period, in which the Manusmriti was the law and which bears ‘practically no difference’ to the ideologies and preparations for war of modern Western nations, leading to the sorry condition of India today.

But let us return to the school. The aim of the school that was generally aired concerned the military regeneration of the Hindus by inculcating this martial spirit and thus to make Hindus and thereby the nation (the two are treated as synonymous) fit for self-rule since ‘national defence from foreign aggression is the first test to prove India is fit for Swaraj’, but it was claimed that ‘Hindus cannot defend themselves even in places where they preponderate in number’ and as long as this was the case it would be the main stumbling block for the aspirations of the Hindus. What Moonje basically states is that the fact of communal riots in Hindu majority areas proved they were not as yet up to the task of defending their homeland internally or externally.

He cites the farewell address of the Foreign Secretary of the Indian government, Bray, in saying that independence was a mirage as long as the Hindus remain lambs rather than become tigers.

and the ‘Young Fascist’ organisation (*Giovani Fasciste*, but he probably means the *Fasci italiani di combattimento*) for boys aged 18 to 21, he means by the ‘son of the wolf organisation’ the *Balilla* youth group which was devised using the Baden-Powell scouts as a guide line – a fact pointed out by Moonje as well. He seems to mix this up with the *Figli della Lupa* (‘children of the wolf’) for children between 6-8 which was devised around the time.

²⁴ ‘Preface’, pp. 9-11 (ff. 439-441).

Hindu society had been robbed of its martial spirit, according to the Doctor, due to the caste system that laid down that only Kshatriyas were warriors; the Hindus therefore are in a disadvantageous position compared to the Muslims. His comparative 'sociology' of Hinduism and Islam, taken from the Preface, is instructive here. Talking of the tribes in the NWFP in particular, Moonje's analysis runs along these lines: Hindus are vegetarians and therefore not used to bloodshed and their incentive to learn the use of fire-arms is suppressed. 'Butchers Pathans, on the other hand are innumed [sic] to shedding blood, from their very childhood., They chop [sic] off human heads with the same easy [sic] as we pluck flowers; it is mere plaything [sic] to them.' The greatest hindrance, however, remained the caste system.²⁵ The obvious remedy for Moonje was the abolition of caste, as was done in Japan where militarism is now inculcated in schools in a 'most scientific way' by means of indigenous arts such as 'Jijutsu' [sic], wrestling and fencing with Bamboo-lathis' along with military drill and rifle practice which is now compulsory for every boy and may serve as a model (next to Germany) 'to remove the deficiencies' of caste.²⁶

Moonje managed to establish his school after much difficulty, not least that of finding funds and grounds that were suitable and enlisting of governmental support. Moonje took pains to humour the sensitivities of colonial officials: He excluded prospective teachers and affiliates on direct requests from state officials, asked them for advice on people to fill certain positions (such as headmaster), asked for official curricula from other schools and, generally, kept in close touch with officials at various levels in the provincial and central administration.²⁷ He also kept in very close touch with a number of Maharajas, some of whom became supporters such as Raja Dhanrajgirji and the Raja of Aundh who supported the scheme with Rs 10,000 each and the Raja of Bansilal with Rs 1000²⁸. The fruit of all his labours was an impressive list of supporters for his enter-

²⁵ 'Preface', p. 25 (f. 458).

²⁶ For the quotes see 'Prospectus of Bhonsla Military School', pp. 1-3; for the general aims also see the 'Report of the Progress of the work of the Society from 1st Jan. 1935 to 15th August, 1936', pp. 1-2, both in NMML, BS Moonje papers, Subject File No 23, [no ff. nos].

²⁷ See for instance the letter from the Director of Public Instruction to Moonje, dt. 27th Apr. 1934, NMML, BS Moonje Papers, Subject file 23, ff. 237-239; see also the letters from and to Chetwode (footnote below), and his correspondence in the early phases of the establishment more generally.

²⁸ See 'Bhonsle Military School Scheme', *ToI*, 10th Dec. 1935, clipping in MSA 812-A, 1935, f. 135. For a list of donors with individual sums, see 'First List of Donors', *Bombay Chronicle* dt 23rd Jan. 1936, newspaper clipping in MSA, Home (Spcl), 812-A, 1935 f.136. The other big donors included Seth Jugal Kishor Birla and the Tilak Raj Jubilee Trust Fund each with Rs. 10,000, Vamanrao

prise: He managed to find a sympathetic official in the person of the Commander-in-Chief Sir Philip Chetwode, a retiring Field Marshal whom Moonje had met during his time on the Defence Committee of India chaired by Chetwode.²⁹ Moonje had been an avid participant in the discussion about the Indianisation of the army and could draw on the political networks and associations he had made in this connection for his new enterprise. Other individuals who supported the scheme with letters, public utterances or donations were Sir James Roberts of the Indian Medical Service, surgeon to Lord Hardinge during his time as Viceroy, and some of the colonial Agents for various Princely States as well as a number of Maharajahs³⁰. The scheme was blessed by Viceroy Willingdon, his successor Linlithgow, the new C-in-C Robert Cassels, and Indian notables, not least MM Malaviya. Moonje claims that Robert Cassels even assured him of that the 'loan of services' from Indian Military Officers (active list) could be arranged and help with the training could be provided occasionally.³¹ In the end, Moonje preferred to dispatch a man of his choosing to the 10/5th Mahratta Light Infantry for training before joining the school staff as instructor.³²

The governing body of the school and society behind it, was a mix of Mahasabha members, some of whom doubled as politicians in the National party, rich Hindus and Indian aristocracy and also included the RSS founder Hedgewar. It was a good cross-cut of the supporters of the Hindu

Narayan (Naik) with Rs 5000 and a long list of donors of Rs. 1000 or less which included some of the Nagpur, Poona and Bombay establishment, HMS supporters and some wealthy merchants and factory owners as well as individuals like Hedgewar. The total promised sum by January 1936 was Rs. 1,67,355.

- ²⁹ See for instance Chetwode's letter to Moonje, dt. 15th Mar. 1935 in which Chetwode expresses his 'delight' at hearing about the military school, and another one dt. 29th Apr. 1932 in which he gives explicit advice regarding the training and living conditions of pupils and offers to lend the services of two Commissioned officers to train the boys. See NMML, BS Moonje Papers, Subject File 24, 129 and f. 209-211. See also a letter of support for the school, dt. 17.11.1935, in NMML, BS Moonje Papers, Subject File 25, f. 61. He made a rather half-hearted subscription of Rs. 100 for the school in its early days, but official circles estimated a high impact of his public blessing. (See 'C-in-C's message', *ToI* 26 Nov 1935, in MSA, 812-A, 1935, f. 127 and Bombay Presidency Weekly Letter no. 49, dt. 7th Dec 1935, in *ibid*, f. 133.
- ³⁰ The Maharajah of Kolhapur was, in particular interested in the matter of military training and had earlier donated some 200,000 Rs for military training at Malaviya's Benares Hindu university. See letter by NG Apte (on behalf of Capt. Modak) to BS Moonje, 31st July 1934, NMML, BS Moonje Papers, Subject file 24, f. 229.
- ³¹ Letter by Moonje to the Maharaja of Indore, 11th June 1936, NMML, BS Moonje Papers, Subject file 23 [no ff. nos, p.2].
- ³² See various letters in 1935 by members of the General Staff to BS Moonje regarding the progress of the *instructor in spe* Karmakar, in NMML, BS Moonje Papers, Subject File 25, Pt II, ff. 253-4, 257-8. See also Karmakar's letter, *ibid*, f. 207.

Sabha.³³ But the school remained Moonje's brainchild till his death in 1948. Moonje's initial plan to establish the school in Nagpur failed due to lack of cooperation from the local government, which was especially concerned about the proximity of the proposed establishment to the numerous schools, and particularly the Police School, in the area and sought and found a number of pretences to force the doctor to find other sites.³⁴ In Moonje's correspondence with Captain GV Modak, the author of books about 'the Indian Defence Problem' and other enlightening material intended for young readers such as 'How to use a gun'. Modak lamented the fact that the school could not be started in Nagpur as it would have been 'in the best interest of propaganda' and the school 'would have been extremely useful to such a fine body of volunteers such as the Swayam-sevak Sangh [Devanagari] and a school elsewhere was a disadvantage to the progress and training of the members of the Sangh.'³⁵ From the familiar tone of the statements one might deduce that the topic had been raised before and the two men exchanged letters from time to time and had met personally in 1935.³⁶ Modak, initially, was expected to become the first principal of the school.³⁷ Moonje, generally, kept quite close contact to the RSS and, in later years, attempted to set up

³³ On the first governing body formed by the society were: the chairman Raja Narayanlal Bansilal (or Bhonsal (a Bombay-based mill-owner); Colonal Kukade (or Kukday), IMS (retired); Motilal Manikchand alias Shreeman Pratapsheth (a wealthy mill-owner of Dhulia, New Pratap Mills, who gave a Rs. 1 lakh for the institute), the treasurer and president of the society. He was also a supporter of the UTC, the RSS and, more generally, the gymnasium movement. (See letter by NC Kelkar to BS Moonje, dt. 28th Jan. 1935, in NMML BS Moonje Papers, Subject File 24, f. 184.185.) Vice-chairmen: NC Kelkar, Sir Govindrao Pradhan, MR Jayaker (at first meant to be chairman, see MSA, Home [Spcl] 812, f.151). On the board: Madhav Shridhari Aney; the advocate LB Bhopatkar; see NMML, BS Moonje Papers, subject File 25, f. 193. For the office-bearers of the Hindu Military Education Society see also MSA, Home (Spcl), 812, 1935, ff. 59-61. Further Dr. Keshevrao Hedgewar, the founder of the RSS, and Moonje's protégé. See Proceedings of meeting on 16.08.1936, in NMML, BS Moonje Papers, Subject file 23 [no ff. nos] and 'Constitution of the Central Hindu Military Education Society', in *ibid*, Subject File 24, f. 281. Other members of the society: MR Jaykar, Govindrao Pradhan, Raja Narayanlal Pitti, Seth Mathuradas Vasamji Khimji (MLA), Chandrojirao Angre, General Nanasahib Shinde, BS Niyogi. The secretary of the society was MC Kelkar. Lieutenant Paranjpe (military officer, 11th Battalion, Mahratta Light Infantry) was closely involved with the society. See MSA, Home (Spcl), 812-A, 1935.

³⁴ See the official correspondence in MSA, Home (Spcl), 812-A, 1935, especially ff. 9-13, 21-22. Though some officials tried to assure the secretary to the government that the school would be 'anti-Mahommedan' rather than anti-Government, the numerous vyayamshalas in the area with a total of some 350 students were seen as potential embryonic core of some future radical outfit that might be directed against the Govt. See letter of DM Nasik to secy Home Dept, 20.07.1935, *op cit*. ff. 21-22.

³⁵ Letter by NG Apte (for GV Modak) of the Indian National Defence League, Poona, to BS Moonje, Nagpur, dt. 31st July 1934, in NMML, BS Moonje Papers, Subject File 25, Pt II, ff. 268-270. See also Modak letter, dt. 10.08.1935, in *ibid*, ff. 261-262.

various other bodies modelled on the RSS.³⁸ We shall return to that later.

The planned lay-out and micro-geography of the grounds and buildings at the new site in Nasik would in themselves make for an interesting study, although the schemes were never implemented quite in this way and the school, in 1937, with its 84 boys had still to contend with using some old bungalows rented for the purpose.³⁹ The grounds purchased were christened 'Ramabhoomi', there was to be an octagonal plot of land, presided over by an octagonal building on top of which was to be an octagonal temple - all in accordance with the 'Ashta-Disha and Ashta-Dikapal'⁴⁰. The design of the place was to represent 'the original extent of Hindusthan, the land of the Hindus, the directions in which it was growing and expanding and also the directions from which foreigners came and invaded it.'⁴¹ The heteronomic reach of Hindudom as described by these geographical markers was meant to equal the boundaries of 'Akhand Bharat', the undivided Hindusthan of the golden age that was to be again. At each gate was a building named after a national hero, from the Rani of Jhansi to Guru Govindsingh and Baji-Chimaji Peshwa⁴². Moonje thus created a heterotopia that compressed the idea of a Hindu Greater India with firm roots in history and mythology (both being forced into a compact and complimentary co-existence) into a microcosm of real space that aimed to enable the re-creation of it on a broader scale by making a utopia based on

³⁶ See letter by Modak to Moonje, dt. 10.08.1935, NMML, BS Moonje Papers, Subject File 25, Pt II, f. 261-2.

³⁷ See copy of cutting from the *Bombay Chronicle*, 09.02.34 (Military Training School at Nagpur'), MSA, Home (Spcl), 812, 1933, f. 81.

³⁸ For instance, Moonje sent an RSS volunteer to a vyamshala as instructor. He also had a close connection with the Seva Samiti, cf. NMML, BS Moonje Papers, Subject File 40, Moonje at the Special Session of the Hindu Sabha Gaya [no ff. nos]. He was generally involved in the RSS networks and decision-making behind the scenes. See below.

³⁹ See the debate between Moonje and a parent of one of the boys attending the school regarding the state of the building and hygienic conditions which was partly fought out in private, partly in the local press, in NMML, BS Moonje Papers, Subject File 29 [no ff. nos].

⁴⁰ The eight deities ruling the eight directions.

⁴¹ BS Moonje, 'The Bhonsala Military School, Nasik. Bulletin No 5', NMML, BS Moonje Papers, Subject File 29 [no. ff. nos, p.1.] The eight gates were named in accordance with this idea: the northern gate as Hindukush-gate (the original northern boundary of India), the southern gate as Kanya-Kumari gate, the North-West as Afghanistan gate (since the original Aryan invasion of India was launched there), the eastern gate as Burma-Japan gate (indicating the eastward expansion of Hindu culture) and so forth.

⁴² This refers to Baji Rao, the son of the first *peshwar* Balaji Vishwanath. He became the supreme political and military commander of the Marathas, who defeated Nizam-ul-Mulk while Nadir Shah invaded India from Persia, which left the Mughal Empire in a desolate state. See for instance, Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund, *A History of India*, London and New York, Routledge, 2004 (4th ed.), p.213-214. Moonje, 'The Bhonsala Military School, Nasik. Bulletin No 5', pp 2-5.

heterogeneous elements corporeal and thus suggesting an alternate order(ing) of things.⁴³

Foucault described the heterotopias as 'a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, ...a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live'. He used the metaphor of a mirror to elucidate the relation between utopia and heterotopia. Where the utopia is the imagined placeless place, the heterotopia is the physical place of intersection and translation, in the metaphor them mirror itself that enables the view of oneself in a a virtual space. One of the examples he uses, are, in fact, Persian gardens with their simulation of the macrocosm (the four corners of the world) in the artificial and ideal-typical microcosm. Indian mythology abounds with such representation that collapse the distance between macro- and microlevel and provided Moonje with a ready tradition for his heteronomic utopia.

The pedagogic concept in store for the cadets or *Ramadandees* (holders of the sceptre of Ram) is easily explained: 'Signor Mussolini, they say, never forgets. We also want our boys never to forget the obligations of their history' - which seemed to chiefly consist in remembering the imperial ambitions of a Greater India. Referring to Mussolini's dictum the Alps must never be violated again, Moonje proclaimed the same for the Himalayas. 'It is necessary to be strong. The strong nations have friends near and far in time of peace; in case of war they are feared. Weak nations, in times of peace also stand alone and neglected and, in case of war, run the risk of being crushed.' As we have already seen, the Social Darwinism of world politics, the inevitability of war and the fate of 'weak' nations in a merciless universe was a credo any number of people explicitly or implicitly subscribed in India as in so many other societies, and not least, groups aspiring or

⁴³ On the concept of the heterotopia, see Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias', *Diacritics*, Vol. 16, No. 1 1986, pp. 22-27 (based on a 1967 lecture), and his two essays in idem, *Die Heterotopien. Der utopische Körper*, Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp, 2005, pp. 7-53. Foucault developed his notions on heterotopias in a number of places with somewhat differing arguments (see also his *The Order of Things*). On a very good exegesis of Foucault's notions of heterotopia that is concerned with actual spaces and places more than literature and rhetoric, see Kevin Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering*, London/New York: Routledge, 1997, see esp. pp. 39-54, for a definition see esp. p.51 passim and, for the relation with modernity and utopias, esp. pp. 56, 140-141. Hetherington emphasises the quality of heterotopias as alternate social ordering to displace any romantic notions of marginality, counter-discourses and 'other' spaces.

aiming to 'reclaim' their nationhood.

The welding together of a celebration of 'Western' character (efficiency, bravery), politics, (military) science and the adopting of all these traits and achievements for a conservative Hindu-nationalism has a number of predetermined breaking points. To be able to celebrate the ancient Hindu past, the younger past – not just, as is typical, since the Mughal empire, but ever since the coming of the Buddha needs to be disinherited as a mere meandering – a beautiful dream of peace and *moksha* in a world where saints are rare and therefore, almost by nature, false prophets. It is also a clever device to de-legitimise Gandhi and his politics without getting swamped in contemporary politics in this specific context. The truism of a universe ruled by the (bastardised version of the) law of the survival of the fittest which is translated as the survival of the strongest, the most ruthless, can date the blunder of non-violence back to the Buddha and display Gandhi as a mere successor of that fundamental error, the catastrophic results of which have already been amply demonstrated by the centuries of foreign rule.

With all this incorporation of seemingly 'western' models starting from the public school and not ending with the celebration of Mussolini, the stringent drive for the eradication of English terms, the very architectonic set-up of the place with all its references to a golden Vedic past in which the Hindus were the rulers and colonisers seems a particularly striking example of an amorphous and defensively aggressive nationalism, which is nowhere more succinctly or openly summarised than in Moonje's own words: 'In short, the School will attempt to infuse virtues of European Militarism in our boys but without Europeanising them. In fact it will strengthen their Hinduism in its pristine purity'.⁴⁴

The question, for now, is not so much how close Moonje was to the RSS or whether he was a fan of the Nazi-regime (and what that actually entails or means). We shall return to that discussion

⁴⁴ See Moonje, 'The Bhonsala Military School, Nasik. Bulletin No 5', p. 6, see also 'Preface' (here an almost identical formulation can be found but instead of European virtues and Europeanising it speaks of British virtues and Anglicising and adds that the abolition of caste will bring together the organic Hindu community). See also 'Military Training for Hindus', *ToI*, 19th Aug 1935, MSA, Home (Spcl), 812, 1935, f. 37.

later. More interesting is his relationship with Hardikar. We do not need to assume that Hardikar was familiar with all aspects of Moonje's scheme. Where Moonje talked of the need of military training, and strength, the threat of internal disturbances, the general belligerent nature of man, the resulting perennially simmering external threats and, overall, the need to die for the nation if necessary, all of that would have been perfectly in line with so many other speeches at so many youth conferences and the fears and ideals proclaimed in *The Volunteer*. It is this very interchangeability, the fluid stratum of fascination with some brand of Social Darwinism and the undefined miasma of militarist-nationalist vocabulary, that allowed such an unproblematic exchange between people apparently politically as far apart as Moonje and Hardikar.

This practice of volunteer movements is naturally informed by more abstract guidelines and ideas which can at least be attempted to be traced and understood. But what we find time and again in many of the volunteer movements is a focus not so much on intellectual content which is rather shifting and malleable, but on style and method. The key phrases that keep returning are indicative in this regard: young, impatient, passionate and efficient, selfless, obedient, disciplined, which describe characteristics and moods. As these movements tend to perceive themselves as tools and vehicles for certain intellectual and political agendas, as is so often said, the nation's army of volunteers, this tendency goes with the self-perception. 'The oft-quoted 'Yours not to question why, yours but to do and die' is the embodiment of the call on volunteers. Therefore it is problematic to ascribe definite political categories to such movements, even though many of them had overt political leanings.

Let us consider the actual training scheme. Moonje envisioned the school as "a kind of military camp" with all military discipline. The training was to equal that received by those attending Dehra Dun (the envisioned 'Indian Sandhurst' that was initially to be established around 1933) or Sandhurst by the end of their first year while the academic standard was to be equal to that of the Senior Cambridge of the Indian matriculation. The explicit interchangeability of the degrees is very conscious. If there was to be a true Indian Sandhurst, an Indian Army and schools that could

act as feeders to the military profession, the easiest way to win acceptance was to replicate existing, especially English, systems. The physical and military training would comprise Horse-riding, swimming, rifle-training, squad and company drilling for infantry and cavalry, battle practice and 'the science and art of modern warfare'. On top of that there would be indigenous exercises (wrestling, lathi and sword play).⁴⁵

It is telling to compare Moonje's envisioned military training in a specialised military school to that national volunteers were to go through. Virtually all contemporaneous youth movements and volunteer bodies were trained and 'drilled' according to at least semi-military fashion. Squad drill was almost universal, platoon drill common along with lathi and dagger 'play'. The Seva Dal is a good because a rather unexpected example. A look at their drill inventory comes up with a curious list: the official compulsory Seva Dal training in 1931/32 included, along with 'Current Politics', 'Congress History', 'National Songs' and 'Bugling', items such as Infantry Drill, Platoon Drill, Lathi Drill, Lathi Vaiyactic, Lezim Drill, Jui-Jitsu, Boxing, Yogasanas and Athletics. In all this, we can once more see a 'cosmopolitan' nationalism at work: from the Jiu Jitsu so fashionable since the Russo-Japanese War to the YMCA's fetish for 'athletics' combined with such hoary (if re-invented) Indian physical traditions such as Lezim.⁴⁶

The Bangiya (i.e. Bengal) Seva Dal went a good deal further in their programme (which Nehru approved) in including trench fighting and shooting among other things and explicitly rendering the Seva Dal an envisioned feeder for military institutions in a free India. At the same time, their pledge set down the promotion of peace among all classes and communities as a goal.⁴⁷ A look at their scheme should make the connection between the two debates, Indianisation of the army and

⁴⁵ 'Scheme and Curriculum of Education and Training' in the proceedings of the Military Education Society of 16th Aug. 1936 (p.6); see also Letter by Moonje to the Maharaja of Indore, 11th June 1936, NMML, BS Moonje Papers, Subject file 23.

⁴⁶ 'Hindustani Seva Dal, Budget for 8 months (August 1931 to March 1932), NMML, AICC papers, F.No. G-8, 10/1931, f. 99. Jui-Jitsu had become a fashion after the Russo-Japanese War and was quickly picked up especially in Bengal. On the connection between yogasanas and a militarized physical culture, see Mark Singleton, *Yoga Body*, esp. pp. 95-111. On the revival of physical culture, see above (chp. 1).

⁴⁷ 'Constitution, Rules and Course of training of the Bangiya Seva Dal', NMML, AICC, G-44, ff. 13-23, see esp. ff. 17, 21. Sachindra Nath Mitra, secy of the Reception Committee of the All Bengal Volunteers' Conference, sent the scheme for a military school to Nehru in preparation for the All Bengal Volunteers Conference with Sarojini Naidu presiding and Hardikar attending.

Volunteer movement, as well as the alternative arguments clearer. While Moonje's scheme was addressing the colonial state as recipient of the human material he attempted to develop, this was done for nationalist purposes. Yet, the functioning within a colonial apparatus pre-determined to some extent the shape of his institution. The BSD said about Moonje that he had basically taken the Sandhurst report and replaced Indian youths by 'Hindu youths' (which they objected to).⁴⁸ For Bengal at least, with its renown for revolutionary activities and political problems, acting as a feeder for the colonial state was not a conceivable option, stated the author of the Scheme. The aim was still to provide 'a steady flow of really first class materials for recruitment as army officers and also for the public services of the country when she obtains freedom.' The other aims read like any other proclamation of a volunteer body of the time: inculcate patriotism, subordinating self-interest to national interests, fit youths for the struggle of swaraj even if they had to lay down their lives, and – more interestingly - 'undertake the defence of the country'. The BSD were content meanwhile to function in a non-state paramilitary fashion by training people for the (future Indian) army or to simply be good nationalists. The constitution of the BSD defined who was a junior (children below 15), a member (16-18 years) and an associate (people over 18) and laid down an extensive compulsory training for all members.⁴⁹ The graduates of this school would also act as officers of the Seva Dal.⁵⁰ The school was intended as a boarding school with a syllabus accommodating all the necessary military training during the day and general classes in the evening.

This is one of more links between the theme of volunteer organisations and military service. The importance the latter had in their eyes of many for the national advance can hardly be overestimated. Apart from the perceived need to have a pool of indigenous army personnel for 'defence' of the country, the fascination with all things military and glorious no doubt played into such

⁴⁸ 'A General Scheme of the Military Training School for the Military Rejuvenation of Youth', NMML, AICC, G-44, 1931, f. 7.

⁴⁹ This scheme laid down the compulsory training including 'route marches', physical training in 'Oriental and Occidental style', 'shooting and trench fighting', with first aid and sanitation, history, village organisation to follow soon. See NMML, AICC papers, F.No. G – 44, 1931, f. 5-11.

⁵⁰ Cf. 'A Central Scheme of the Military Training School for the Military Rejuvenation of Youth', Scheme of the Bengal Volunteer Conference, NMML, AICC papers, G-44/1931, ff. 5-11. The Bangiya Seva Dal at this point applied for affiliation with the central body.

endeavours. That military training was so prominent on the nationalist wish-list is not surprising given the de-armed state of India and the aiming at re-capturing power. It is a feature of all nation-alisms in the making. A closer look at how such ubiquitous obsession with militarism shaped the project of nation- and citizen-building is nevertheless revealing in its reach and influence on fundamental notions with regard to the concept of Man.

The Hindu Mahasabha

Various of the Hindu Mahasabha [HMS] leaders - often also (ex-) Congress members who were not happy with the policy of 'obstruction' and boycott - leaned towards a Responsivist line. Moonje and other pragmatists of a Tilakite persuasion formed the Responsive Co-operation Party in 1926 as a reaction.⁵¹ The various Responsivist groups under leaders such as BS Moonje, Lajpat Rai and Malaviya were at first organised within the Congress but grew more and more apart in the late 1920s and early 1930s over questions of boycott and especially the Communal Award.

The HMS, at this point, was more a loose group or elitist 'movement' than a parliamentary-oriented party but also catered to landed and middle-class interest and urban support base. One of its principal financiers was the same man who kept Gandhi financially afloat: JK Birla.⁵² The HMS had been revitalised after the 'Moplah riots' and now also gained support in the southern regions. The annual meeting of the Mahasabha in 1923 at Benares, presided over by Malaviya, besides pledging support for shuddhi and sangathan, also called for the forming of Samaj Seva Dals to inculcate physical strengths in Hindus⁵³. Malaviya proclaimed the need to educate all Hindu boys

⁵¹ A new division within the HMS emerged as a result: those Congressmen in the HMS who formed the Responsivists as political party and wanted the HMS to continue its focus on social reform, and those non-Congressmen or ex-Congressmen (like Parmanand and Moonje) who aspired to an explicitly political role for the HMS, i.e. to contest elections from this platform. See Walter Andersen's observations, see Walter Andersen, 'The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh: II: Who Represents the Hindus? Who Represents the Hindus?', *EPW*, Vol. 7, No. 12, 1972, pp. 634 ff.

⁵² So much so that when Birla withdrew his monthly donation of Rs. 1000 in 1939, the HMS tried hurriedly to find out what could be changed in (their policy or line of action) to win him back since their expenses (they were then embroiled in the money-consuming Hyderabad agitation, see below) could hardly be borne without the money. Cf. letter by [Dharam Vir?] to 'Tatyrao' [VD Savarkar], dt. 24th Jan. 1939, in NMML, HMS papers, C-21 [1939], f. 423.

⁵³ See Charu Gupta, 'Articulating Hindu Masculinity and Femininity: 'Shuddhi' and 'Sangathan' Movements in United Provinces in the 1920s', *EPW*, Vol. 33, No. 13, 1998, pp. 727-735, for an overview of these trends. See also chp. 2.

and girls, establish akharas, a volunteer corps to help implement the decisions of the HMS.⁵⁴ In his presidential address he stated: 'If Hindus made themselves strong and the rowdy section among the Mahomedans were convinced they could not safely rob and dishonour Hindus, unity would be established on a stable basis.'⁵⁵ The necessity for strength and self-defence as a deterrent as well as the enlargement and unity of the Hindu fold (by including untouchables and reconversion) was not a new discourse but one that was now fed by a fillip of nervous energy. According to its constitution, the All India Hindu Mahasabha (AIHMS) aimed, among other things, to 'improve the physique of the Hindus and promote martial spirit amongst them by establishing military schools and organising volunteer corps'.⁵⁶ Volunteering with reference to Hindu nationalists invariably spiralled back to drives for shuddhi, for which volunteers were needed.

Self-consciously 'Hindu' elements had been articulating fears over the alleged dying out of the Hindu race ever since an all-India census was undertaken, the fears to be outnumbered was further heightened after the Morley-Minto Reforms strengthened the numerical representation of the communities. The so-called 'Moplah rebellion' in 1921 then seemed to prove the Hindu soothsayers correct. Stories of forced conversion and rape of Hindu women emerged.⁵⁷ Various groups like the Arya Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha were quick to seize on and fuel the popular mood. Malaviya, Swami Shraddhanand, and Dayanand Saraswati were among the ardent supporters. The Moplah riots following the abrupt end to the Non-Cooperation campaign, marked a shift by the Congress right-wing away from the Swarajist and secularised wing of it. Shraddhanand stands in pars pro toto for the trend: he had long agitated for embracing the untouchables in the Hindu fold and had been prominent in Congress campaigns up to 1923 when he turned his back on the INC in favour of the HMS due to the INC's reluctance to take up the issue seriously. His pamphlet 'Hindu Sangathan: Saviour of the Dying Race' traces the decline of the Aryan race to the moral fall from grace. Brahmacharya, of course, played an important role in the reconstruction of Hindu society

⁵⁴ Walter Andersen, 'The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh: I: Early Concerns', *EPW* Vol. 7, No. 11, 1972, p. 592.

⁵⁵ Malaviya's presidential address at Benares, cf. Andersen/ Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron*, p. 29.

⁵⁶ Also see NAI, Home, Poll, File No 206/1926, p 14.

⁵⁷ See for instance BS Moonje's report on 'Forcible Conversion in Malabar', dt. 4th Aug. 1923, NMML, Moonje Papers, File No. 12, f.16.

as the control of the senses allows for the discipline and coherence which society is based on.⁵⁸

We have referred above to the the drive for self-defence in the early 1920s following a spat of riots, especially during the second half of 1924 (Calcutta, Delhi, Kohat and elsewhere) - partly -as reaction to the endorsement of the (till then Arya Samajist-led) shuddhi movement by the Hindu Mahasabha at their meeting in Benares 1923. Riots continued through 1924 and 1925. In the 1925 programme of the HMS, which drew its inspiration to large extent from the president Lala Lajpat Rai, it was decided to organise Hindu Sabhas throughout India, to organise relief to Hindus at times of disturbances, gymnasia for use of 'Hindu young men and women' and seva samitis among others.⁵⁹ Apparently, Lajpat Rai then knew nothing yet about Hedgewar's RSS.

The HMS, for a long time, did not have a youth wing of its own but had 'recognised' the RSS. Both Savarkar (HMS president from 1937) and Shyamaprasad Mookerjee recognised the need to establish a mass basis, something the decidedly landed and upper caste following of the organisation had been known to curb before.

The RSS

The early history of the RSS is not as well studied as one might expect (beyond the ideology and leadership level), the closest and most detailed account being that by Jaffrelot.⁶⁰ This relative

⁵⁸ See John Zavos, *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India*, New Delhi et al: OUP, 2002 (1st ed. 2000), see pp. 169-72.

⁵⁹ Baxter, *The Jana Sangh, A Biography of an Indian Political Party*, Bombay at al: OUP, 1971 (1st ed. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 1969), p. 15.

⁶⁰ For obvious reasons, academics have often chosen to focus on the post-colonial story of the Sangh in an attempt to make up for the relative absence of academic and critical studies before 1992 and while all the major studies provide some background, they tend to hurtle towards contemporary events. The most notable accounts of the early Sangh history are Walter Anderson's four-article series in EPW that deals with the early history of the RSS albeit focussed almost entirely on the leadership level, see Walter K. Andersen, 'The RSS I'; idem, 'The RSS II'; idem, 'The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh: III: Participation in Politics', *EPW*, Vol. 7, No. 13, 1972, pp. 673-682; idem, 'The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh: IV: Jan Sangh and Other Organisations', *EPW* Vol. 7, No. 14, 1972, pp. 724-727. Andersen's book with Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron*, which also provides a more in-depth history of the RSS. The most exhaustive account of the early days of the RSS can be found in Jaffrelot's, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996. A contemporary study by Curran with much important information and an appreciation for the movement on the ground needs to be seen in a particular Cold War context and

quietness surrounding the organisation until that point may be taken as an indicator of the success of a long-standing RSS policy. It has taken pains throughout most of its history to emphasize its non-political character. It is a self-proclaimed social reform and social service organisation. There is certainly truth in this, and this focus on social betterment is consistent with a Spencerian organicist approach of re-building society from bottom up that is characteristic of many non-governmental and social service organisations around the globe from the turn of the century.⁶¹ At the same time, it is obvious that this stance is built on a political world-view with very specific values and aims. In colonial times, as we have seen, this a-political posturing could moreover protect the organisation in question from close surveillance and bans. The colonial government was all too familiar with the need to 'build character', infuse certain values and enhance efficiency. This section aims not to recount the history, ideology⁶² or mobilisation by the RSS, as all that has been done better elsewhere and at greater length. The greatest problem with studies on the organisation might be the insularity with which the phenomenon is treated. If we here briefly recap the outline of a well-known story, it is not to re-write the history of the Sangh but merely to restore to it the context of our narrative and expand on some interpretations of the body.

The RSS was started officially in 1925 by Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar as what members of the Sangh made out to be a panacea the doctor had found for the ailing nation of India.⁶³ He came into

American interest based on *Realpolitik* and the search for relevant forces (and possible allies) within the post-independent political field of force. See Jean A Curran, Jr., *Militant Hinduism in Indian Politics. A Study of the RSS*, International Secretariat, Institute of Pacific Relations, New York, 1951. See also Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave – Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*, Princeton: PUP, 1999. There are a large number of more popular and political books and articles on the RSS, which are not listed here and often written between the 1980s and the present, see for instance Abdul Gafoor Abdul Majeed Noorani, *The RSS and the BJP: a division of labour*, New Delhi: Leftword Books, 2001 (Leftword being the intellectual, partly autonomous publishing wing of the CPI[M].) Other than the RSS self-publicity, there is also a corpus of reminiscent literature such as S.H. Deshpande, 'My Days In the RSS', *Quest*, No. 96, 1975, pp. 19-30 or KR Malkani, *The RSS Story*, New Delhi: Impex India, 1980.

⁶¹ Watt, *Serving the Nation*, esp. pp. 44-46.

⁶² One of the most careful and philosophically in-depth accounts is that by Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism - Origins, Ideologies and Modern Myths*, Oxford/NY: Berg, 2001.

⁶³ The RSS was inaugurated not long after Hedgewar, being deeply impressed with Savarkar's Hindutva, had visited the latter in March that year and discussed the idea. Hedgewar, a Brahmin of Telugu descent from Nagpur, came from a family that had persisted in its traditional role as priests. He himself, however, studied in the 'western' educational system. But we are here not concerned with details of his biography, but merely the traceable influences of configurations we have already discussed and are relevant in light of his later politics. See as an example of a hagiographic account such as is still prevalent: GS Hingle, *Hindutva Reawakened*, New Delhi: Vikas Publ. House, 1999, pp. 1-34 for the early life of Hedgewar.

contact with BS Moonje during his school-days and came under the latter's patronage, which proved especially important when Hedgewar's parents died and he started to live in Moonje's house. On the advice of Moonje, Hedgewar studied medicine at the National Medical College, Calcutta and here came into contact with the Anushilan Samiti.⁶⁴ He was also influenced by the Ramkrishna Mission.⁶⁵ When Hedgewar returned to Nagpur in 1916, he would have encountered familiar structures: gymnasiums that served as recruiting pools, secret groups of young 'terrorists' operating through the former. Extensive links between the Bengal and Maharashtrian extremists existed. Hedgewar participated in the first Gandhian campaign despite being critical of Gandhi's methods (and support for the Khilafat movement), but became increasingly disillusioned with the Congress following the failure of the movement and the 'Moplah riots'. After the Flag Satyagraha in Nagpur in 1923, another incident was sparked off in Nagpur in October that year, initially over music in front of a mosque. Moonje and others organised a Hindu Sabha, with Hedgewar as its secretary. The incident ended in communal riots.⁶⁶ Hedgewar drifted away slowly rather than breaking with the Congress, though. Despite misgivings he participated in the 1930 satyagraha while supporting Moonje's faction of the Responsivists.⁶⁷ This typifies the career of many dual members of Congress and Mahasabha: the continued straddling of both camps, the situationist approach to political activism, the critical fracturing of the pre-existing communal fault line.⁶⁸

The range of RSS activities in the beginning resembled closely that of any other volunteer organisation, with the difference that, being small and centralised at the time, a thorough admission procedure was implemented including interviews with Hedgewar and references by other

⁶⁴ Calcutta was, of course, a hotbed for revolutionary groups. Especially around this time, these revolutionaries were influenced by Hindu religious concepts and myths. The Anushilan is a prime example of this particular branch of activism. As we have stated above, they did not allow Muslims to join their organisation, their rituals were fuelled by Hindu iconography mixed with the dramatic allure of earlier secret societies. See above.

⁶⁵ Andersen, 'The RSS, I', p. 591; Andersen/Damle, *Brotherhood in Saffron*, p.31.

⁶⁶ Anderson/Damle, *Brotherhood in Saffron*, p. 32-33; see also Hingle, *Hindutva Reawakened*, pp. 35-37.

⁶⁷ The Responsivists had come into sharp conflict with the Swarajists after the elections in 1925, when a Responsivist member accepted office against the explicit policy of the Congress.

⁶⁸ Until the late 1930s, INC and HMS, though with different programmes, overlapped to a large extent terms of personnel. Disgruntled Hindus left the Congress ranks and various points, but not least during and after the Khilafat movement, others kept straddling both camps until the Congress decreed that membership in both organisations was incommensurable.

swayamsevaks, resembling the closed circle of cells like the Anushilan with their initiation procedures and tests. In practice and ideology, The RSS imbibed much from the by then well-ex-pounded mythopoetic references to the consecrated life of the sanyasin.⁶⁹ Also, a routine for all members was established at the outset. Regular physical training as well as political classes and, soon, military training were held on specific days.⁷⁰ In the 1930s, recruitment through national schools and especially those with known Hindu leanings such as the DAV College and Malaviya's Benares Hindu university (BHU)⁷¹ were undertaken more forcefully - this, too, was a time-honoured practice since the Anushilan⁷². On Sundays the group would meet to offer worship to the flag, resembling the flag hoisting ceremonies of the Seva Dal, which both groups took from the Congress camp routine. Service at *melas* were the first public activities of the RSS. Apart from the performed social service, outdoor excursions of branches were encouraged. Swayamsevaks might hold various games in the jungle or rural areas on weekends akin to the scouts. Camps for the rank and file (combining social occasions and drilling) and for officers were also arranged once or twice a year. Bodhaks (lectures) to educate the sevaks were rounded off by the daily drilling and meetings. The close resemblance and similarity between the Congress volunteers and the elements around the Hindu Mahasabha (of whom Moonje is an example) is no coincidence. The early RSS had close contacts with the Hindu Mahasabha chiefly by personal union and double (or triple, i.e. HMS, INC, RSS) membership at this point. In 1920, five years before the inception of the RSS, it was Hedgewar who organised the Congress volunteers for the Nagpur session of the INC, and the name and uniform of the RSS were basically taken from that session.⁷³ Hedgewar conceived of the RSS at almost the same time that Hardikar was conceptualising the Seva Dal- after the Non-Cooperation Movement had ended in ignominy. Both were from a similar background (poverty, death in the family), both had been students in Calcutta, and Hedgewar, noticeably, had been in close touch with the Bengal 'terrorists', and were influenced by the visit of

⁶⁹ See above. On the continuities with the Anushilan and the sadhu ideal see also Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalism*, esp. pp. 33-40, 43-50. A number of authors have over-emphasised the Brahmanic ideology of the RSS. See also below.

⁷⁰ Walter Andersen, 'The RSS I', pp. 592-3.

⁷¹ For a critical account of the RSS at BHU in the 1940s and post-independent period, see Girish Mishra, *RSS Shadow over Benares Hindu University*, Sampradayiktra Virodhi Committee, New Delhi, [s.a.]

⁷² See Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalist Movement*, pp. 66-68.

⁷³ Walter Andersen, 'RSS I', p. 589.

the Prince of Wales, the Nagpur flag satyagraha, communal tension and the lack of proper permanent organisation of youth within or outside of the Congress which after the first 'mass campaign' seemed now so urgently required as the idea of organising politics shifted but retained the established monastic ideals of service established by the earlier samitis. The RSS, too, aspired to ideals that they believed were beyond day-to-day politics which could only corrupt their members with egoistic careerism and juggling for position. This trend became much more marked under Golwalkar. While the RSS under Hedgewar and Hari Krishna 'Appaji' Joshi, one of the local sanghchalaks from an early date and a Congressman until 1931, kept relatively close personal relationships with the HMS and with the INC, this cannot be simplistically applied throughout.

The RSS cadres would render help to the HMS and in turn would use the HMS platform for advertisement of their activities by acting as guards and organising marches at annual meetings etc. Relations between Savarkar, the HSM president succeeding Moonje from 1937, and the RSS under Golwalkar were not as amicable as they had been under Hedgewar/ Moonje or other presidents. Savarkar later famously proclaimed: 'The epithet for the RSS volunteer will be that he was born, he joined the RSS and died without accomplishing anything.'⁷⁴ Savarkar apparently thought of Golwalkar as too saintly altogether, while the former tried to navigate the tightening colonial controls of volunteer movements. The RSS stayed aloof to avoid disgruntling Congress and the government, to which many among its ranks belonged.⁷⁵ Moreover, the HMS was embroiled in infighting, and its post-1937 participation in ministries - sometimes in alliances with the ML - was seen as opportunist and dangerous by many among the RSS. But some authors have overstated the alienation between the two bodies.⁷⁶ The extensive personal cooperation between HMS and RSS was kept alive to a great extent. For instance, the long-standing secretary of the HMS, Dharam Vir (the son-in-law of Bhai Parmanand) was an ardent RSS worker, who organised help and support

⁷⁴ D.V. Kelkar, 'The R.S.S.' *Economic Weekly*, 4th Feb, 1950, p. 132 (quoted in Andersen and Damle, *Brotherhood in Saffron*, p. 36).

⁷⁵ Andersen, 'RSS II', pp. 635-38.

⁷⁶ See for instance Anderson, 'The RSS, IV'. This is probably an outcome of the focus on the 'high politics' of the RSS while the extensive networks lower to the ground have not been as extensively studied.

for swayamsevaks through the HMS network and stated that ‘most of the Leaders and Members of the Hindu Mahasabha are members of the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh.’⁷⁷ Moonje was another leader who kept in close touch with the Sangh.⁷⁸

Numerically, the RSS was (and is) the biggest organised volunteer group around this time by a wide margin, but accurate figures for the past or present are impossible to come by since the Sangh keeps its membership roll a close secret and tends to vastly exaggerate its own numbers. The colonial government, based on intermittent volunteer census (which present rough estimates of the permanent membership at best and are notoriously self-contradictory) estimated some 19,400 swayamsevaks in 1940 (with 10,000 coming from Bombay province excluding the city), in 1943 the estimated number was 76,000, which rose to over 100,000 by 1946 spread over the Central Provinces, Bombay and the Punjab.⁷⁹ In the Belgaum area (Karnataka) that was home to the Seva Dal, some 600-700 swayamsevaks were attending an Officer's Training Camp (geared to train instructors) in 1943.⁸⁰ The RSS itself claimed to have 600,000-700,000 before the Gandhi murder.⁸¹ Overall, the Sangh was strong in North India (especially Delhi, CP, UP, Punjab, Berar, Rajasthan), weaker in the south⁸², and enjoyed strong links with a number of Hindu Princely States. It made inroads into Orissa and Karnataka successfully. In Maharashtra, where its roots

⁷⁷ Dharam Vir, secy AIHMS, to Shriyut ND Varadachariar, advocate, Nylapur, Madras, dt. 5th .March 1939, in NMML, HMS Papers, C-21/22, f. 377.

⁷⁸ See below.

⁷⁹ See NAI, Home, Poll., 31 (2) - P(S), 1940, Appendix B; IOR, L/PJ/12/666 (see the Appendix of this study)

⁸⁰ Extract of Deputy Central Intelligence Officer, Deccan states, Belgaum, re political movement in the Deccan States for the week ending 20th April 1943, in NAI, Political Dept., Poll, 190-P(S), 1943, f.49. According to one of the early American observers, JA Curran, in 1950, who based the estimate on his own observations and close interactions with some of the leaders. The accuracy is open to speculation - but that is the case with almost all figures for the RSS. Curran, 'The RSS: Militant Hinduism', *Far Eastern Survey*, Vol. 19, No. 10, 1950, pp. 93-98, see p. 96.

⁸¹ The figure of 6-7000,000 seems rather fantastic but is cited as factual by Andersen and Damle based on the information given to them by 'Balasaheb' Deoras, general secretary of the RSS, see Andersen/Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron*, p. 50. Curran estimated that after Gandhi's murder the membership dropped to something like 100,000 but rose steeply afterwards. JA Curran, *Militant Hinduism*, p. 43. For all the hue and cry regarding the Sangh and its fall from grace, its membership a few years down the line had increased further. Around 1950, the number of swayamsevaks was thought to be between 500,000 and 1 million, while some 1,5 million were said to attend shakhas.

⁸² In the early 40s, only one branch existed in Trivandrum (Madras Presidency) and that, too, was not exceedingly active at the time. British Resident of Madras State, Express Letter to GOI, Home Political, dt. 27th Jan., 1944, GoI, Political Dept., Poll, 190-P(S), 1943, ff. 91-92. Even as late as 1946, the Sangh had all of 63 swayamsevaks there - according to the official estimate.

and traditional strength lay, tension between the RSS and the Non-Brahmin movement are said to have limited its effectiveness.⁸³

One has to be careful not to fall prey to the image of an entirely homogenised body however close-knit and centralised. Much of how the RSS presented itself depended on their surroundings, obviously. In Gwalior the RSS by all accounts took the form of an Indianised version of the Boy Scouts, which was meant to say that they were not overtly militaristic here.⁸⁴ Raipur, Baroda and Jammu had active branches too. In Hyderabad, in 1938/1939, the RSS in collaboration with, most noteworthy, the Arya Samaj and HMS conducted a campaign against the Nizam who, it was claimed, oppressed the Hindus and denied them their human and religious rights.⁸⁵ The movement displays some interesting features which we will again encounter below. For one, it led to counter-demonstrations by bands of armed Muslims, which culminated in riots. Structurally interesting are the adoption of satyagraha as a tool, the extensive networks, active influences exerted on media outlets, the large sums spent by groups such as the Arya Samaj on travel cost for their satyagrahis and, in this context, the often youthful satyagrahis.

From the 1930s on, communal(-ised) campaigns and tensions were not necessarily the outcome of socio-economic local concerns (though these were often used as an initial spark) but were calculated power politics over the pre-eminence in certain areas and satyagrahas could serve to stage

⁸³ See Curran, 'The RSS', p. 96.

⁸⁴ Resident, Gwalior to express letter, secret, to GOI, Home Political, New Delhi, NAI, GoI, Political Dept., Political, 190-P(S), 1943, ff. 76-77.

⁸⁵ See Savarkar's speeches in 1938/ 1939 in MSA, Home (Spcl), 60-D (h), 1939-1941. On the campaign, see Ian Copland, "'Communalism'" in Princely India: The Case of Hyderabad, 1930-1940', *MAS*, Vol. 22, No. 4, 1988, pp. 783-814, p. 788-790. On some of the alleged offences against Hindus, including the flogging of satyagrahis, see Savarkar's comments in MSA, Home (Spcl), 60-D (h), 1939-1941, f.15. On the campaign itself, see especially Copland, *ibid*, who sees the satyagraha as the culmination of developing communal strife. Copland also pointed to the largely youthful participants who were out for an 'adventure' as well as the outside support and the subsidised travel arrangements by the Arya Samaj and other organisations who spent *lacs* in travel money for their satyagrahis. (Copland, 'Communalism', pp. 795-797). For a more in-depth chronological account of organisation and events see Lucien D. Benichou, *From Autocracy to Integration: Political Developments in Hyderabad State, 1938-1948*, Chennai et al: Orient Longman, 2000, pp. 55-83. See also Dick Kooiman, 'The Nizam's Last Victory: Hyderabad on Eve of Second World War', *EPW*, Vol. 33, No. 12, 1998, pp. 645-660.

claims over territory.⁸⁶ Such campaigns were often organised, as in the case of Hyderabad, on a cross-provincial basis with volunteers of an organisations streaming into the locality from other provinces. This meant that agitations could be kept alive long after the local population had a decided interest to pursue the issue, and it also meant great difficulty for the authorities to subdue such movements.

The RSS did not have an official constitution before one was forced upon them after the Gandhi murder as one of the conditions to lift the ban placed on them. The group despised any kind of paper trail, as a matter of fact, and approached such matters with exceeding weariness. But there were strict rules, pledges, rituals and hierarchies in place as elsewhere. Much of the outline of the bare bones of the organisational structure is known and need not be recounted here in detail - from the physical training and games in shakhas to salute of the saffron flag (mirroring, of course, the Flag salute so ardently popularised by the Seva Dal) and the financing structure. But, typically, much more attention has been paid to the ideology of the Sangh than the actual mobilisation and structure.⁸⁷

It might be more interesting to consider these through the eyes of one of their local organisers (without claiming that this is altogether representative). The most fascinating account in this respect might be that of one Ram Rakha Mal, stated to be 'an important member of the R.S.S.S. Punjab' in 1943. Whether he was all that important or not matters little here, but he was one of the local organisers. Mal was apt to boast about the virility and radicalism of his organisation, but he was no regular informer.⁸⁸ He stated that the Sangh was founded by Hedgewar once he realised

⁸⁶ The Ahrar campaign in Kashmir state of 1931 is a case in point for an early example of this type of mobilisation. See below. Copland pointed out that the HMS seemed to have been motivated partly by the Ahrar campaign in Kashmir - as such it was a counter-display of outside jathas 'invading' a princely state. For the Arya Samajis, the tension grew out of the ongoing and successively sharp competition between their shuddhi and the Ittihadul-ul-Muslimeen's tablighi work. The Ittihadul was helped in this by Khaksars in the state (on the Khaksars and the Ittihadul, see below). Fantastic rumours about the intentions of the Khaksars, Dindars and Ittihadul circulated which highlight the fear of organised hostile 'private armies' or jathas (see Copland, *ibid*, pp. 807-808).

⁸⁷ For details on the structure see Andersen/Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron*, esp. pp.36-46, 83-98; and Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalist Movement*, esp. pp. 35-43, 64-65.

⁸⁸ The testimony seems to have been given by him to a local officer quite freely and candidly (he was not charged with any misconduct as far as I can tell) with the possible exception regarding the

that only solidarity could benefit India after he had been disappointed with high politics. ‘It is said that he was a staunch Hindu who even went to the length of burning a mosque in a spirit of vengeance. He started a branch in Nagpur in the first instance with his family members as Sewaks.’ The aims were bringing ‘the Hindus of India under the control of a dictator (Guruji) and solidify their organisation for the ultimate purpose of capturing political power.’ Martial spirit and discipline and healthy bodies were to be developed by the Hindus ‘so that the Hindu nation may turn matchless in strength due to its overwhelming majority in India’ and sectarian tendencies within Hinduism were to be abolished and replaced a true brotherhood. He described the general principles of the Sangh thus:

1. There should be no advertisement, or demonstration of strength
2. ‘No interest in politics is to be taken unless the All India organisation claims 3% strength of the entire population of India’.
3. Until then, the Sangh should not come into conflict with the Government
4. No part should be taken in communal riots
5. Secrecy is to be maintained about the organisation and activities
6. No records were to be maintained so that no documentary proof is available should trouble arise. Guruji was considered the ‘virtual dictator of India’ and all the officers below him as provincial or local dictators.⁸⁹

details of drilling (due to a ban on military drills imposed by the Government. But the exact context of the conversation is unfortunately not recorded in the files and, hence, has to be treated with some scepticism.

⁸⁹ A close account of the complex structure of the RSS was then outlined, from the apex of Golwalkar won to the district officers Extract for the statement of Ram Rakha Mal, an important member of the R.S.S.S. Punjab, in NAI, GoI, Political Dept., Political, 190-P(S), 1943, see here esp. ff. 7-8. Only the sevaks who were considered reliable were made to take a pledge before the flag saying that they would owe allegiance to the National flag, abide by the RSS discipline, they would have complete faith in the Sangh Chalak and would not disclose anything about the RSS to outsiders, summarised Mal the internal requirements for full-fledged membership. Interesting is the age bracket and structure for different ages Mal described: ‘Hindus from the age of 10 years are eligible for recruitment in the Sang. (sic) The morning parades of the branches are called Parbhat Shakha (sic) and those of evening ones as Savam Kal. The former are attended by young Sevaks while the latter are attended by children.’ On the close-knit and highly personalised networks woven by the Sangh especially through the local *shikshak*, see Ram Lall Dhoria (lecturer PGDAV College Delhi), *I was a Swayamsevak*, New Delhi: Sampradayikta Virdodhi Committee, [s.a], pp. 18-20.

Looking at the RSS through this secretive but strictly enforced regulations, the body resembles nothing more than the Anushilan, of which it seems a successor under the conditions of mass mobilisation. From early on, the RSS was, for the most part, composed of college and university students and people from the lower middle classes. The RSS leader PB Dani claimed that some 60 per cent of the recent members (c. 1950) were between 18 and 25 years. The same or possibly a higher quota would apply to the 1930s, when the RSS focussed their recruiting efforts on schools and colleges - as did so many other volunteer organisations. Detailed statistics are, again, hard to come by. Students were especially important as active shakha members. Aside from students, blue and white collar workers from the middle and lower classes also made up a significant percentage of the Sangh membership (clerks, shopkeepers - and until 1948/9, civil servants). The leadership of the Sangh, the sanghchalaks (who acted as guides and organisers, while the practical local work was usually undertaken by the pracharaks), were usually recruited from the upper social strata, successful men in their middle age, lawyers, businessmen etc. who were the sponsors behind the noteworthy monetary strength of the RSS.⁹⁰ The more tense the communal situation in an area, the more influx the Sangh would often experience and hence Hindu minority areas played a key role for the RSS. The Sangh became even more important in the 1940s when communal tensions ran high and under the impression that the Muslims - not least the Khaksars - were organising and arming themselves. Tragically, the RSS and similar bodies were precisely the reason why bodies such as the Khaksars felt such an impetus to band together - and vice versa - thus creating a vicious circle of ever more radical communal organisations competing with each other over political and social power and territory.

Looking at the rank and file, boys and young adolescents were often recruited either through their schools by sympathetic teachers or RSS emissaries or, more often, because the 'novel' games of the neighbourhood shakha headed by an older boy or young men would pull them in and combine physical exercise with political indoctrination. The account of Ram Lall Dhooria (later lecturer

⁹⁰ The RSS along with bodies such as the Arya Vir Seva Dal were basically (and very comfortably) financed by rich Hindus RG Mellor, IP, Office of the Supdt. of Police, CID, Delhi, to G. Ahmed, Asst. Director (S), IB, Simla, dt. 28th June 1940, 'Statement show the volunteer organisations at present in existence in the Delhi Province', NMML, Delhi Police Records, V inst., F. No. - 66, f. 2. See also Curran, *Militant Hinduism*, p. 51.

PG DAV College Delhi), who severed his ties with the RSS after 1947 due to their violent and murderous activities during the Partition (a point we shall return to below), is a good example: He joined the RSS aged 10 or 11 in 1942 or 1943 in his hometown Haveli Lakha, in Montgomery district, Western Punjab. In this case it was the attraction of the shakha, the charming 'older boy' treating the swayamsevaks like pupils and brothers, the lectures on Bharat Mata being humiliated and held in abject subservience, as well as two teachers of his school with RSS sympathies who urged him on.⁹¹ Even in his otherwise bitter memoir, his Mukhiya Shikshak, the shakha leader, occupied a place of unreserved reverence. And back in the day he was 'a guide to [the swayamsevaks'] souls' and his word was gospel and doubting any word in the teaching session following the games was considered sacrilege.⁹² He also states that the RSS made no inroads among the older generation but rather alarmed them as their wardens started spending much time in surroundings removed from their supervision and that the shakhas broke down family ties. The students who were already swayamsevaks were to proselytize among others, and any shakha 'absconders' would attract the attentions and possibly house visits by the entire shakha to make them fall back in line. Together with martial Hindu mythology, explicitly anti-Muslim attitudes to whom labels from beasts, snakes, foreigners (despite being converts) were applied in the bodhaks, were implemented on by the youngsters in practical street and neighbourhood terms: the boycott of Muslim shops and the automatic, unconditional 'defence' of any Hindu boy in confrontations and not shirking physical fights with the Muslims as per order of their instructor. The exhortations to sacrifice all for the motherland and the insistence on the Aryan golden age and race bestowed upon young adolescents a sense of identity (as part of an organism, a metaphor explicitly used according to Dhooria's recollection), pride and a heroic and individual destiny of saving the nation.⁹³

⁹¹ The figure of an older boy leading a group of younger boys as a male role-model not too old to relate to his charges without any generational gap is one of the time-tested success models of youth movements and holds true for the Boy Scouts, the Wandervogel and Nazi youth organisations alike. See Walter Laqueur, *Young Germany. A History of the German Youth Movement*, London: Routledge, 1962. On the Nazi variation of the *Jugendführer*, see also Matthias von Hellfeld, *Bündische Jugend und Hitlerjugend: Zur Geschichte von Anpassung und Widerstand 1930-1939*, Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1987, esp. pp. 88-90, on Eberhard Koebel see pp. 39-41

⁹² See the account by Ram Lall Dhooria (lecturer PGDAV College Delhi), *I Was a Swayamsevak*, New Delhi: Sampradayikta Virdodhi Committee, [s.a], see pp. 15-16.

⁹³ That such teaching is particularly powerful at a time when identity formations are undergoing major shifts during puberty does not much elaboration Sudhir Kakar referred to the specific longing of the Indian child for a guru and while I see the broad-sweeping meta-psychology with reservations, it might be worthwhile to refer to him here. See Sudhir Kakar, *The inner world : a psycho-*

Dhooria also recounts that neither the economic boycott nor the anti-Muslim sentiments always entered into their day-to-day inter-communal relations which were, he says, very amicable at the time.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the wrestling, lathi fighting and other training was explicitly given on the understanding that it was part and parcel of the ability to defend oneself against Muslims. The shakha leader started sham fights and took the more dedicated boys, masked and armed, to teach a lesson to some Muslim ruffians (who later turned out to be merely shakha). The preparations and pretence of facing 'the enemy' was calculated to lower the inhibition threshold of applying violence in earnest.⁹⁵ The RSS camps - split into normal camps, Instructors' Camps and Officers' camps in the 1940s (the Seva Dal interestingly enough having the same three types) were typically held on the familiar lines: almost hermetically sealed camps with military (or scout) discipline, sentry duty, passwords. There were route marches, at times big sham fights of hundreds of people divided into two armies, and general physical training and physical feats (from dodging thrown spears to sword fights), skills (medical aid etc.) as well as lectures. But the RSS here, too, organised mass mock-wars in their camps with the participants being split into two opposing 'armies'⁹⁶ Along with the close-knit neighbourhood organisation, the camps were one of the most important factors to create emotional loyalty and dependence on the social networks of the organisation.

The RSS was also one of the few groups who actually managed to build relatively extensive

analytic study of childhood and society in India, Delhi: OUP, 1978, esp. pp. 119-139 where he traces the customs of upbringing, sudden severance from the mother and emotionally suppressed relationship between son and father and then tensions between family and network (caste) expectations with 'modern' life-style, as the root for strong male leadership figures to substitute the role model in the process of identification.

⁹⁴ Dhooria, *I Was a Swayamsevak*, pp. 9-23, 26-27. Dhooria was aware of the danger of exaggerating the anti-Muslim complexion of the RSS but endeavours to give the RSS a fair reading and, moreover, he states, remembers too well how deeply such sentiments moved him through his early adulthood.

⁹⁵ Dhooria, *I Was a Swayamsevak*, pp. 35-37.

⁹⁶ Dhooria, pp. 39-41. Dhooria recounts the absolute ignorance of swayamsevaks regarding Indian politics - he said that they were not informed of Congress campaigns, national leaders or anything else but consciously shielded from any nationalist news, and hardly knew who was Congress president at a given point in time. This feature is, mayhap, something that sets the RSS apart from other groups in terms of their 'totalitarian' style if taken together with the more successful hermeneutic micro-management of the daily lives of their members (to which other groups aspired but seldom lived up to). The difference is one in degree rather than absolute principles, though.

networks in the rural hinterland, especially in the CP and UP, and not just in the bigger cities like most volunteer groups with their urban student base.⁹⁷ The other organisations (apart from the kisan volunteer corps and some other communist-influenced groups) were maybe the Red Shirts.

The RSS attempted to avoid conflict with the government, and it seems that this was by and large successful as it skirted around bans throughout the colonial period.⁹⁸ It was in February 1948, after the assassination of Gandhi by an ex-RSS member, that the newly constituted Indian government felt itself moved to ban the RSS on an India-wide scale for the first, but not the last time in its history. One must question how close the RSS-alleged colonial government's scrutiny into this foremost paramilitary organisation actually was. The RSS' version of its own history is a re-written institutional hagiography with the RSS in the role of nationalist martyr surrounded by those who would distort its aims and methods.⁹⁹ During the Second World War, officials started looking askance at the organisation whose sympathies and politics now seemed suspect.

Before we come back to the RSS and other Hindu bodies during the Second World War, we shall look at a less-well known body which has been, however, most commonly compared with the RSS by colonial officials in terms of its communal outlook and anti-democratic setup. After the outbreak of the Second World War both bodies' ideologies and sympathies became highly suspect - the Khaksars' even more so than the RSS'. The Khaksars look very different from other volunteer bodies - firstly they are not overtly directed at youth (in fact, Mashriqi was as disparaging about 'children' as he was about women), they are more explicitly set up as a military and war-like body and they do not have any parent body or pre-determined affiliations, meaning that a number of groups looking for a likely volunteer movement coveted them at various points.

⁹⁷ Curran, 'RSS', p. 97

⁹⁸ This is not to say, that the Government did not consider the RSS a group to watch out for at all - but this concern was usually local and carried on by a few officials on an ad hoc basis. The same is true for practically all other volunteer organisations except the Congress up to 1940, though. The RSS had to contend with having governmental servants banned from joining the organisation in Bombay earlier on, but this seems to have been not very strictly enforced. As such there are very few files with state governments on the RSS before 1940.

⁹⁹ See for versions of this among the countless possible examples GS Hingle, *Hindutva Reawakened*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1999; KR Malkani, *The Midnight Knock*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1978; See, for an academic analysis, Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism*, esp. 115-116.

The Khaksars - Playing the Game of Blood¹⁰⁰

In the summer of 1939, I wrote an article [...] on "The Growth of Private Armies in India." My eyes were opened by a unique experience in Lahore in the Punjab, when motoring back from Kashmir to Simla [...]. My car was stopped one afternoon in a main street of Lahore by a band of uniformed men, armed with sharp spades. No policeman was present to stop them and regulate the traffic. They were Khaksars (servants of God) under the leadership of a Moslem who, according to a public statement made later by the late Premier of the Punjab, owed his inspiration to Nazi sources. There were thirty to forty thousand Khaksars in the Punjab and some of the adjacent provinces and States. Enquiries from official sources elicited the information that the Khaksars were not the only semi-military organization in the country; others, almost as strong numerically as the Khaksars, were Hindu in composition and outlook. Little notice was taken of these movements until after a sharp clash between the Khaksars and the Punjab police in Lahore in March 1940, resulting in many casualties. Even then and for a considerable time thereafter, Moslem officials of the Government enjoyed an inexplicable latitude, even to the extent of becoming members of the Khaksar movement.

B. Shiva Rao, 'After the War', 1945¹⁰¹

The discontinued civil disobedience movement of 1931, as in the early 1920s, apparently caused other movements to spring up outside the Congress. They could be regarded as an outlet for the for dispersed energies mobilised in the campaign seeking new anchorage. At the same time, after the unrest and communal incidents that also marked the movements, sections of Muslim society seemed to have felt a more acute need for organising. An article by an anonymous reader to the 'Mashriq' of Gorakhpur embodies the growing felt insecurity which turned the long proclaimed need for efficient organisation into something more sinister. Referring to the 'rage and vengeance' displayed by the Hindus at Benares, Mirzapur, Agra and Kanpur, the author claimed that Muslims would one day have to 'die a dog's death' in India and would need to organise before a day for the wholesale massacre based on the hate that was preached to Hindus students especially could be fixed. He drew up a scheme whereby every house upon finding a green flag at its door would have to offer a 'young man' for sacrifice. One out of the eight crore Muslims would thus be ready for a

¹⁰⁰ The phrase is based on a verbatim quote by Mashriqi. During a confrontation with the Congress government in the UP in 1939. See below.

¹⁰¹ B. Shiva Rao, 'After the War in India', *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 1945, pp. 169-179. Quote on p. 173.

war, in which innocents would be spared but enemies whose name were to be assembled on a list would be wiped out.¹⁰²

The the Mashriq printed that letter, the Khaksars were founded. There are a number of studies on the Khaksars,¹⁰³ and we are here mostly concerned with the similarities or dissimilarities with other movements. But since the Khaksars also had a marked impact on the shaping of British policy vis-a-vis volunteer organisations generally, a look at some of their campaigns is in order. M. Inayatullah Khan, better known as Allama Mashriqi (the Sage from the East), started out with what even colonial officials regarded as a 'brilliant scholastic career'.¹⁰⁴ In 1912, he took the ICS exam which he failed owing to poor health and returned to India afterwards. He then held different posts in the Civil Service, almost exclusively in the NWFP. In 1930, Khan was the headmaster of the Government High School, Peshawar. After not being promoted - according to him due to racism - he initially took a year's leave before retiring on his governmental pension. He started the Khaksars in his home-town of Ichhra, a suburb of Lahore, in 1931. The Khaksar Tehrik or Khaksaran-i-Anjuman (loosely translated, a movement humble like the dust) were intended, depending on which of Mashriqi's statements one uses, as a religious, or social service organisation, or a millenarian mujahideen army. He declared: 'The Khaksar movement is not a political body but a religious one. The Khaksars, who are willing to lay down their lives to

¹⁰² 'It is better for Muslims to give up their lives on a particular day than to bear disgrace and ignominy every day', *The Mashriq*, Gorakhpur, 17th April 1931, in GoI, *The Civil Disobedience Movement 1930-34. Note on the general measures taken to deal with the movement*, p. 28.

¹⁰³ There are a by now a number of studies on the Khaksar movement, most of them eulogistic accounts typical of the earlier nationalist history writing. As a good example of the earlier studies see for instance Shan Muhammad, *Khaksar Movement in India*, Delhi/Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1973 [1972]. The most exhaustive and painstaking work by far is Amalendu De's near encyclopedic empirical two-volume study, *History of the Khaksar Movement in India, 1931-1947*, Kolkata: Parul, 2009 (based on the earlier smaller work 'Khākasāra āndolanera itihāsa' from 1968). A problem of the study is De's tendency to take whatever Mashriqi or the Khaksars proclaim at face value. A critical and insightful assessment of Mashriqi can be found in Markus Daechsel, 'Scientism and its Discontents: The Indo-Muslim "Fascism" of Inayatullah Khan al-Mashriqi', *Modern Intellectual History*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 2006, pp. 443–472. Daechsel's book, *The Politics of Self-Expression* contains a close reading of Mashriqi's ideology (contrasted with that of Savarkar). Finally, there is a concise study of the movement and its leader by Muhammad Ali Raza, 'Contested Narratives: The Khaksar Tehreek in the Punjab, 1932-45' [unpublished MA dissertation, SOAS, 2010]. I am indebted to Ali for letting me have this piece and for the long and inspiring discussions about our respective Khaksar research, its problems and interpretations.

¹⁰⁴ After earning an MA from Punjab University, he pursued his studies at Christ College, Oxford qualifying for several BAs.

organise the Muslims of India, to cure all their evils and [sic] to make them useful citizens – the only goal of the Khaksar movement --, [...]’¹⁰⁵ We have seen that social uplift was - with its near-hegemonic status in all political quarters – *prima facie*, an inoffensive activity. Also, his followers were not necessarily concerned with his idiosyncratic interpretation of the Quran, some of them pointed out specifically that Mashriqi's private thought and the organisation were two different things.¹⁰⁶ Beyond that, Allama Mashriqi was, maybe to a greater extent than many of his compatriots, a skilful if mercurial political player who did not hesitate to contradict himself at various points as long as it served his agenda - this is particularly visible when looking at his (bi-)lingual political manoeuvring and his multiple media personalities by comparing his public statements or official letters in English with his Urdu writing or the religious excerpts on the necessity of jihad¹⁰⁷, and then again contrast them with internal orders to his followers¹⁰⁸. In another instance, Mashriqi exclaimed that the Khaksars were ‘a movement of men, lions, soldiers and belligerents, and never a movement for women, wives, eunuchs and boys’¹⁰⁹ - but they had not only a large youth and student section, Mashriqi would later call on women to undertake physical training and become soldiers as well.

As far as government officials were concerned, Mashriqi was untrustworthy, ‘truculent’, eccentric, megalomaniac, one of ‘the most unreasonable men’ and ‘maybe not wholly sane’.¹¹⁰ In

¹⁰⁵ Inayatullah Khan to the Viceroy, 5th June 1940, NAI, GoI, Home, Poll, 74/6/1940-Poll(I), f. 57. On the objects of the Khaksar movement, see Allama Mashriqi, *Ishārāt.*, Rawalpindi [s.a, c. 1970s] which lays down the tenets of the Khaksaran, membership rules and the basic notions of the Khaksar hierarchy with Mashriqi himself as the supreme leader. See below.

¹⁰⁶ See Official note (regarding Mashriqi's Tazkirah), dt. 7th Nov. 1940, NAI, Home, Poll., 231, 1941, f. 7

¹⁰⁷ This Mashriqi understood as actual war as well as the ultimate discipline of the self. For a - rather hostile - summary of the Arabic parts of the ‘Tazkirah’ where this is most clearly laid out: NAI, Home, Poll., 231, 1941, see esp ff. 19, 24-25.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. for instance the various statements and policies adopted by the Allama towards the authorities, his followers and the public: ‘Prosecuted Pamphlets 'Aksriyat ya-khoon' and 'Bait-ul-Mal' publ. by Inayat Ullah Khan Alama Mashriagi [sic] - leader of the Khaksar organisation’, in: NAI, GoI, Home Dept., Political, 74/2/40-Poll, 1940; ‘Protest from Mr. Inayatullahkhan Elmashriqi ... and certain religious bodies against the arrest of khaksars’, NAI, Home, Poll, 74/6/1940-Poll(I); ‘Khaksar and other Volunteer Organisations in Indian States. Policy to be adopted towards them’, NAI, Political Dept, Poll, 31(2)-P(S)/40, 1940; ‘Activities of Allama Inayatullah Khan Mashriqi and the Khaksars’, NAI, Home, Poll, 28/4/45-Poll(i), 1945.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted after Phillips Talbot, ‘The Khaksar Movement’, *The Indian Journal of Social Work*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Sept. 1941, pp. 185-202, NAI, Home, Poll, 74/6/41-Poll(I), 1941, serial nos. 1-3.

¹¹⁰ See, for instance, the characterisation of Mashriqi as possibly insane by Laithewaite, the personal secy to the Viceroy, in his letter to the same, dt. 8th March 1940, in IOR, L/PJ/8/680, see ff. 343-344. Laithewaite had a healthy esteem for Mashriqi's capabilities as a public leader and as a ‘strong personality’ who could ‘whip up a mob’ in no time at all, but repeatedly described him in unusually

1933, the report on an interview between Mashriqi and the local Government stated that he took great pains to show

that his movement was in no way antagonistic to Government, but was merely an endeavour to organise Muhammadans for the purpose of social service and in order to prove their unity and self-efficiency to attain Swaraj in a shorter time than the methods employed by Congress. These protestations, which he still continues, must be accepted with reserve [...] and he has been unable at times to conceal his hostility to the British Raj.

He initially had some links to the Congress, specially Abdul Gaffar Khan which, of course, were viewed with extreme distrust at this point. Mashriqi practised a kind of political pragmatism in the choice of allies combined with a tendency to grandiloquence which could also be construed as populist opportunism. His own programme remained by and large the same, clad in a different rhetoric as exigency commanded. Concerning their early activities, colonial officials noted dryly that nothing much was done by the Khaksars regarding social service, although they did render help during calamities and assist with menial tasks such as built wells and erect buildings in the neighbourhoods in the late 1930s, but with a tendency towards those tasks that were one-off and highly visible.¹¹¹ What the Khaksars excelled at were military displays that exceeded in their martial pomp that of other volunteer movements. In localities where they had the requisite membership, they tended to have at least weekly (and often nightly) marches, clad in uniform and armed with belchas (spades, often sharpened and turned thereby into formidable weapons) through the main streets as well as cross country or inner-city 'route marches'. A special kind of spade fighting drill evolved as well, described as a combination of *gatka bazi*¹¹² and bayonet fighting, before the practice was (officially) stopped by Mashriqi. The Khaksars became especially noted for their 'mock wars' or sham fights. For instance, on 27th October 1935, the Khaksars organised a mock-war at the municipal gardens in Lahore. The report stated that in the fight fire-crackers were used to represent bombs and the 'wounded' were removed to a field hospital that had been set up. On 9th/10th Nov. some 150 Khaksars paraded with a band in Anjuman Park, then

derisive terms ('swollen head', 'gone off at the deep end' etc.) vis-à-vis the Viceroy and governors of the provinces (especially Craik and Haig). See also 'Note on the Khaksar Movement', dt. 10th Nov. 1933, prepared in the Punjab CID, NAI, Home, Poll, 118/35, 1935, f. 8.

¹¹¹ See for the above, 'Note on the Khaksar movement', sd. Ahmad, 4th Mar. 1939, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 382-393.

¹¹² Gatka is the (mainly ritualistic) sword word fight technique typically associated with the Sikh Khalsa. It evolved in the late nineteenth century and absorbed fencing and various 'indigenous' martial systems. Gatka refers to the wooden sticks used for training (similar to lathis).

erected what resembled a military camp, where they spent the night. On the morrow, the volunteers were inspected by the *salar-i-akbar* Abdur Rahman, while the twenty unit commanders were armed with daggers and swords. Finally, a mock war was staged, in which one party was besieging a 'fort' defended by the other party. A 'minute of silence' was held at the end for the 'wounded and killed' and the prisoners were produced before Rahman. According to official reports, some 10,000 people attended.¹¹³ The sheer number of people flocking to such mock fights highlights what a fantastic advertisement and entertainment they were, Chandavarkar, albeit a slightly different context, spoke of the 'working man's theatre'.¹¹⁴ Such spectacles could draw out a much wider range of people than most politicians could hope to achieve. The 'simulacrum of war' thus enacted, stood for the natural state of the Hobbsian insecurity of human existence. We have traced this back to the intense search of this period for totalising models concerning human evolution, the natural state of societies and the order of their progress. What concerns us here, more specifically, are the embodied practices of this simulacrum. This is most easily demonstrated by actually going back to Lewis Carroll. In *Sylvie and Bruno*, the two meet the enigmatic 'Mein Herr' who tells them about the eugenics in his country and their map that was so precise that it was one mile to the mile. Since it was too big to spread out anywhere, they were now using the country itself as a map which worked 'nearly as well'.¹¹⁵ The mock-wars the Khaksars and RSS were so keen on, fulfil the same function as this map: they superimpose a different mental cartography imbued with a holistic vision of the world and the 'world forces'. We can refer back to the

¹¹³ 'Note on the Khaksar Movement, 10.11.33', NAI, Home, Poll, 118/35, 1935, ff. 13-14, 19-20.

¹¹⁴ Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, 'Workers' Politics and the Mill Districts in Bombay between the Wars', *MAS*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 1981, pp. 603-647, see esp. 606-7. Chandavarkar noted the fusion of politics, leisure and everyday life that came together in street life, the organised *tamashas* as well as the extent of public space from liquor shops as meeting places, akharas etc.

¹¹⁵ See Lewis Carroll, *Bruno and Sylvie Concluded*, London/New York: Macmillan, 1889, pp. 164-169. See also Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass* [Project Gutenberg, s.a.]. When looking at the space (rather than the effect) created by the mock wars, we might also argue that they constitute a heterotopia (see the brief discussion above and see Hetherington, *Badlands of Modernity*). Both Foucault and Baudrillard use the metaphor of the mirror extensively for their concepts of the heterotopia and simulacrum respectively. See Foucault, 'Of Other Places', and Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, esp. pp. 95-96. Baudrillard opens his monograph on simulacra with a rendering of Borges fable about the (colonial) cartographers who created a map duplicating the territory point for point effectively merging the two, a story closely related to the one cited. See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994, p. 1. We shall forego a closer reading of Baudrillard's concept of the (different types of simulation and) simulacrum here, though, as it is not readily applied to this case rooted strongly as it is in certain stages of capitalist development, consumer and media culture.

points raised above in connection with the flag salutation which established the imagined totality of the nation through the ubiquitous simultaneity of its performance. The volunteers, while no doubt of practical importance (whether by doing social or political service or as a way of self-assertion for the participants) could be used to stage cultural-political visions that transgressed spatial and temporal boundaries: they projected the nation's (or community's) characteristics forward in time to create a distinct national body. One is tempted to say that the volunteers did not only present but, at their best, *were* themselves a somatic heterotopia. Whether by war analogies or *seva*, they could symbolically claim the territory they wished to occupy. Their uniformed appearance and identifiability rendered them symbols for the nation's unity and discipline.

Mashriqi's own vision of the nation was a fusion of (blended) Social Darwinism, militarism and a liberal dose of Hobbes (not to mention Spencer, the English utilitarians and something that looks very much like religious Calvinism). As so many of his compatriots, he believed that the country was in need of a 'benevolent dictator' since this was the only forms of rule that could

.... evolve order out of the present chaotic conditions of the world. ... India needs dictators. ... How can you save people who barter away their rights, fight in communal camps, be saves in their own land? The Benevolent dictator can use force on them for their own good. Educate, unite, organize: who but a Dictator can deliver the goods, in a thousand-jointed, lumbering country of divisions, indecisions, fanatical follies!¹¹⁶

He admired such dictators as had arisen in Europe, especially in Italy and Germany. Most famously, Mashriqi claimed that he had gone to Germany in 1926 and inspired Hitler's NSDAP.¹¹⁷ Other Khaksar leaders would claim as late as 1940 that Germany had copied their movement and thus made the world tremble, even if, in the case quoted here, the local Khaksar leader hurried to say that he did not approve of all the bloodshed - but his followers were called upon to realise the might Germany had gained from their principles.¹¹⁸ Besides the great dictators, Mashriqi was,

¹¹⁶ Dr Amiya Chakravarty, *Asia*, August 1939, cited after Amalendu De, *The Khaksar Movement*, Vol 1, p. 95.

¹¹⁷ Mashriqi did go to Germany that year but whether he met Hitler as he claimed is unclear. When the Khaksars came under more systematic attack by those claiming their axis connection, Mashriqi said he had met Hitler only for all of three minutes and that the Khaksars did not need financial support, as each Khaksar provided for himself. See 'The Khaksar Movement - Its Origin, Growth and Future' (from the TOI correspondent at Lahore), in *The Times of India*, 8.8.1939, newspaper clipping in IOR, L/1/1/629, f. 61.

¹¹⁸ 'Note on the Khaksar Movement in Hyderabad State', NAI, Poll. Dept, Poll, 31(2)-P(s), 1940, ff. 28. The Khaksar in question was a vakil from Hyderabad state district of Medak Subha, and there the Naim-Hakim-i-Ala of the district at a meeting of the local Khaksars on 21st April 1940. Hence

much like Hardikar and some of the Seva Dal commanders, deeply fascinated by the Sokols as a successful volunteer movement and potential model. Mashriqi was particularly pleased that the Sokols had sprung from the idea of just one man who realised and applied the law of nature, which for Mashriqi, revolved around voluntaristic achievement more than biologicistic determinism. The vision of the designated individual or hero is a theme we have already encountered in the context of the avatar discussions among contemporaries¹¹⁹. According to Mashriqi, the movement also showed the beneficial impact of military life on the moral character of a nation. His expositions mirror the articles in 'The Volunteer': The Sokols made the Czechs into a nation, gave them back courage and strength along with physical fitness. Mashriqi glossed over the aesthetics of Tyrs to emphasise that the individual had to be part of a Jamaat to realise his potential and help the national survival. The conversion of Tyrs from Schopenhauer to Darwin was also emphasised.¹²⁰

Unlike many other volunteer organisations, Mashriqi never left any doubt that he sought authority, power, supremacy. In his 14-Point programme for the Khaksars (1937), Mashriqi, while stressing the non-communal character of the group, and their regard for all religions and civic rights (coupled with an openly professed vigilante 'justice'), also proclaimed that the ultimate goal for the Khaksar soldier was no less than world dominion and 'to conquer the universe' by following a literal interpretation of the Quran. From other sources it is clear that what was meant here was 'galba-e-Islam' - the domination of Islam.¹²¹ The format of Fourteen Points in itself is, of course,

(whether accidental or not), the meeting where the Hyderabad Khaksar said this took place a day after Hitler's birthday.

¹¹⁹ This is in line with Hanna Arendt's observations regarding the figure of the hero before and in the interwar period, here for Britain and in the context of evolutionist doctrines. These observations are very pertinent here seeing as how neatly they apply to the Oxford graduate Mashriqi. See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, see esp. pp. 179-181.

¹²⁰ I have been unable to get said article and do have to rely on a rather detailed summary by Amalendu De, see *Khaksar movement*, Vol I, p. 104-105, citing Inayatullah Khan, 'Sokol tahrir: Czechoslovakia men hurriyat ki ek kamyabi tahrir ki tarikh [The Sokol Movement - The history of successful liberation movement in Czechoslovakia], *Al-Islah*, 25.01.1936. Mashriqi further expounded his rendering of the history of the Sokols in his *Maqalat*. see De, *ibid*, pp. 106-110.

¹²¹ The programme, issued by Mashriqi in March 1937, was quite widely disseminated. See for instance, Mashriqi quoted in 'The Khaksar Movement - Its Origin, Growth and Future' (from the TOI correspondent at Lahore), *The Times of India*, 8th Aug. 1939. See also Phillips Talbot's reproduction of the programme in his contemporaneous article on the movement, *idem*, 'The Khaksar Movement', *The Indian Journal of Social Work*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1941, pp. 185-202, see pp. 192-193.

telling with its obvious reference to Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points.

Mashriqi was a devout Pan-Islamist, albeit one whose views often sat uneasily with his potential comrades.¹²² Mashriqi proclaimed a 'true' Islam of the *Qurn-i-Awwal*¹²³ He eschewed notions of the 'ulema and maulvis and anything that, according to him, were later inventions. His revisionist commentary of the Quran, 'Tazkirah', earned him much acclaim as well as many enemies.¹²⁴ According to Mashriqi, the purpose of religion and the prophets sent by God was to show their respective *qaum*¹²⁵ the way to domination, and thus history unfolded as a series of varying dominations by different qaums - this being Mashriqi's rendering of an Islamised 'battle of life' between competing nations. The Quran then was not a mystic revelation, but a positivist scientific guideline to the internal workings and laws of the universe. Hence, it should be treated as a science like any other.¹²⁶

While Mashriqi always emphasised the external trappings of martial materialism, the struggle he described was more against in-built degeneracy: the external effect of the rise and fall of nations was merely the outcome of their inner qualities. The dominion of any qaum depended on how closely they followed the original commandments laid down for them in their respective religion - in accordance with their race spirit - by God. Those nations who did failed to do so were *kafirs* and would be eventually wiped out, while those that showed obedience made themselves 'fit to

¹²² In 1926, while attending the Islamic Conference in Cairo, to which he had been invited by the Sheikh-ul-Islam of Egypt, he argued vehemently against the proposed Egypt Sultan being nominated the Khalifat-ul-Mussalman on the understanding that the political ruler could not be spiritual leader as well. 'Note on the Khaksar Movement', L/PJ/12/680, f. 473. He had tried at the conference and later tried in India to introduce Bait-ul-Mal - with the limited success of acquiring a few well-off sponsors who contributed to his funds in later years.

¹²³ That is, the earliest period of Islam.

¹²⁴ Official Note, dt. 11th July 1941, NAI, Home, Poll, 231/41, ff. 7-8. Mashriqi would be treated as a heretic from then on by the more orthodox section. Other than his dismissal of the Hadith and the institution of the maulvi, he declared that actual belief was dispensable as long as the (material) commandments of the Quran were kept, he also - in the interpretation of the Muslim informer to the Government - introduced new commandments on his own and altered the existing five basic tenets of Islam. Cf. NAI, Home, Poll, 231/41, ff. 13-33 for a (hostile) exegesis and excerpts of the Tazkirah. In fact, Mashriqi interpreted the five tenets in light of the duties it thrust on man and created a new set of principles which he deduced from that. See for a closer (very sympathetic) reading of the Tazkirah, Amalendu De, *Khaksar Movement*, Vol. I, pp. 7-25

¹²⁵ The Arabic term *Qaum* usually refers to the people or race defined by a common character or ancestry, the closest modern interpretation being a nation.

¹²⁶ *Al-Tazkirah*, part II, p. 2, cf. NAI, Home, Poll., 231/41, f. 27.

live on this earth,' and rule over it.¹²⁷ Hence, religion was a science to materialistic power and all religions could potentially attain it. To realise the Muslims' destiny of world domination, they had to reclaim their lost characteristics and virtues, chief among them militarism, and obedience to one leader alone to develop unity. Mashriqi claimed that 'The life of nations really means the preparation of individuals to die. The greater the number of those in it who are ready to kill and die the higher will it be able to hold its head in the world.'¹²⁸ Islam and militarism for him were synonymous. This is the background of his stringent advertisement for dictatorship which he elevated to a foundational religious principle. The parliamentary system, according to Mashriqi, held nobody responsible bringing out the worst of human instincts (betraying his rather misanthropic view of mankind). Furthermore, since God ruled in supremacy and would allow no others beside him, so dictatorship on earth was the natural law.¹²⁹

While Mashriqi was casting around for allies in the beginning and, if the sources can be believed, had help from Congress leaders (allegedly Gaffar Khan), the relations between Khaksars and Congress were never amicable and soon turned positively hostile. Mashriqi despised the 'effeminate' Gandhi and his political programme. His mocking of the gendered relationship of Indians and the British was lucid to the point of being painful. He described Indians as playing the wife to the British husband: they created noise, spun the charkha, and tried to make the husband feel guilty with their clamour. They would shut themselves into jail as if into their quarters when falling out with the husband. That was what the 'ridiculous methods of satyagraha, ahimsa...' boiled down to - a hope that the husband would get fed up and quit. The Hindus were a nation

¹²⁷ Mashriqi, *Al-Tazkirah*, p 51 . Cf. NAI, Home, Poll, 231/41, ff. 13-33.

¹²⁸ Allama Inayatullah Khan Mashriqi, *Maulvi ka Galat Mazhab No. 5*. (Lahore, 1937) pp. 11, cited after Ali Raza, 'Contested Narratives: The Khaksar Tehreek in the Punjab, 1932-45', p. 9. See *ibid*, pp. 9-12 for a concise summary of Mashriqi's believes.

¹²⁹ The parliamentary system was, Mashriqi interestingly stated, only viable, if at all, for ethnically and religiously homogeneous and awakened nations. Phillips Talbot wrote an appraising study of the Khaksars during his time in India, cf. 'The Khaksar Movement in India', *Indian Journal of Social Work*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1941, p.192. Talbot himself is a fascinating figure: a fellow of the Institute for Current World Affairs (ICWA), an aide of Woodrow Wilson, and former US Minister to China (in 1909 and 1920-21), who had a deep interest in Slavic Nationalism (which led him to establish contacts with, among others, Masaryk, the Sokol leader and president of Czechoslovakia). Findings of ICWA fellows were publicised in lecture tours organised by the organisation in the US but the ICWA also reported back directly to the State Department. Talbot had an impressive political career later on. See for a brief autobiographical sketch and a collection of his reports, *idem, An American Witness to India's Partition*, New Delhi: Sage, 2007.

who had 'never wielded the sword', never conquered anything and were forever destined to be beaten, and that was all the 'naked Mahatma' taught them.¹³⁰ The loathing was mutual, and relations soured particularly after the Khaksar struggle in the UP during the aegis of the Congress-led ministry¹³¹.

While contemporaries were at times shocked at the military aesthetics and discipline of the Khaksars, what really set the Khaksars apart were their radical campaigns against various forms of authority and not so much their outlook or set-up, though Mashriqi did take some of these to new extremes. Khaksar relations with the Muslim League were rather more complex but no less tension-ridden, and shall be described in more detail below.

Some of the internal contradictions of Mashriqi's claims are significant in the context of our study more generally. While he called for jihad and Muslim dominance openly, he also insisted that the Khaksars were a non-communal organisation and that the duty of the Khaksars was to further communal harmony and defend the civic rights of all communities. But as we have seen, even within Congress circles the ideas that peace required dominance was not unheard of. The advocacy of communal harmony always - and especially at this point - begs the question: on whose terms? As with non-violence there were many models of inter-communal peace, and most advocated one or other model of cultural assimilation into the projected dominant culture. For Hindu bodies, this would be the numerically stronger group, for Mashriqi it was the group that had been meant by God to lead but had to prove to God - which meant the God-given laws of survival of the fittest - that it was worthy of doing so. And the Congress was a multitude of opinions on the question. The only section of political opinion that was capable of escaping the question of a dominant culture were those who sidelined culture as social force in and of itself, i.e. the far left in this period (but that, too, was to change). It is enlightening to acknowledge the inherent narrowness of nationalist utopias as they had become inscribed with competing imaginations of

¹³⁰ Allama Mashriqi, *Qual-e-Faisal*, Rawalpindi [s.a], pp. 16-17.

¹³¹ See below.

the (culturally/religiously specific) golden age. Seen from this perspective, there might be nothing subjectively contradictory or extraordinary in Mashriqi's claim.

The Khaksars were understood as an army of sipahis. Their uniform consisted of a simple khaki uniform, with a coin-sized red arm badge and, at some point, other identification of rank. In line with Mashriqi's vision, they were an authoritarian organisation which had one supreme leader (or *amir*), in the person of Mashriqi himself and then a pyramidally organised hierarchy of posts, each with its own designation corresponding, usually to Persian terms for army officers.¹³² There were certain positions existing parallel to this hierarchy of the 'regular army'. The most significant are the *janbaz* - those who signed a special life-long pledge in his own blood.¹³³ A *pakbaz* designated a 'senior *janbaz*', somebody who had made available his entire private property to the organisation. Mashriqi later also invented specific posts for the 'executioner' (...) who meted out punishment such as flogging, as well as internal spies reporting back to the *amir* from the localities.¹³⁴ Considering the harsh disciplinary measures including public face-blackening and flogging meted out to members, one wonders what made people voluntarily sign up to such an organisation.¹³⁵ Rafiq Zaidi, a former Khaksar, explained that 'the uniforms and military drills instilled a sense of self-respect, pride and discipline and imbued in us a sense of conformity and unity with the wider

¹³² For instance the *salar-e-akbar (salar-e-zila)*, a District Commander; the *salar-e-ala*, or Commander of twelve *Jamaat*. and so forth.

¹³³ The pledge contained the phrases '[...] I hereby declare that from today I place my life, wealth, and everything else bestowed on me by the Almighty at the disposal of [Allama Mashriqi's] great Institution in the service of God and Islam. If I disobey the orders of God and Islam, may I be consigned to hell on the day of resurrection. [...]' The signing of pledges in blood is familiar from the early days of the Anushilan Samiti. Rhetoric as well as practises such as this revelled in the metaphysical bond and intimacy that blood bestowed on those who shed their own blood it voluntarily as well as those who shed the blood of their enemies.

¹³⁴ IOR, MSS Eur F161/164, pp 34. The varying designations changed and evolved over time, and there were also different terms for the same posts at times, making the seemingly clear-cut hierarchy somewhat muddied. See for a list of designations the Appendix.

¹³⁵ In one case, the face of two Khaksars was blackened for not attending a rally at Delhi (IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 491). In another, a Khaksar leader who was also bar-at-law was flogged for obeying an order given to his group by the District Magistrate during the Lucknow agitation 1939. Later on, floggings became even more regular for very slight offences, such as not praying in perfect rhythm (see below).

Muslim community.¹³⁶ The Khaksars served mainly as an organisation for the self-assertion of a section of Muslim society otherwise not adequately represented.¹³⁷

The Government, at first mostly bewildered and morbidly fascinated by the curious movement and its eccentric leader, made some enquires about what Khaksars who were 'capable of thinking for themselves' actually believed. They found that it was the Khaksars' promotion of unity and love among all Muslims across different sects that attracted many, that it instilled service and a feeling of equality, it cultivated the habit of silence on controversial issues and promoted general toleration. From the further summary, however warped it may be by the police interlocutor, what emerges is that the Khaksars were regarded as a movement that would help overcome petty squabbles within Muslim society and with other communities. The unity would give the Muslims strength and discipline and they would thus be 'unassailable'.¹³⁸ The Khaksars appeared in this reading to be a defensive movement meant to organise the Muslims into a more homogeneous bloc out of an appreciation of the insecurity of their position within larger society, a theme Mashriqi himself reflected in some of his comments. The starkly varying popularity of the Khaksars in different regions underlines this.

The Khaksars evolved the ultimate nationalist way of (forever deferring to) reimburse full-time workers: The payment for office-bearers was made in promissory notes which stated they would be paid on the eve of independence.¹³⁹ Beyond the familiar theme of the attempted building of counter-colonial institutions, this meant, that full-time members had to be able to support themselves, meaning the full-time Khaksar either had savings or had the typical household responsibilities meaning he could not work for the body full-time. Finance within the body is enigmatic - a lot of the expenses were borne by Mashriqi himself who possessed considerable private savings.

¹³⁶ Interview of Rafiq Zaidi with Ali Raza. 14th Aug. 2006, cited in Raza, 'Khaksar Teehrik', p.16.

¹³⁷ This is in line with much of the analysis by Nandini Gooptu regarding the methods of self-assertion by appropriating a martial style, (religious/upper class) symbols etc. in the context of localised urban conflicts. See Gooptu, *The Politics of the Urban Poor*.

¹³⁸ Report by M. Mazhar, circulated to CIDs, DIGs et al of the provinces by the IB, Home Dept, dt. Simla 9th Sept. 1936, No 55/P-F./31-IV-A, in NAI, Foreign and Political Dept., Poll., 406-p(S)/36, 1936, ff. 1-2.

¹³⁹ See Note on the Khaksar Movement 1933, NAI, Home, Poll, 118/35, 1935, see. f 14. The practice continued until well into the 1940s with Mashriqi issuing self-published currency notes.

Membership of the Khaksars again is difficult to gauge as no official records are kept and we have only governmental accounts to go by. It seems, members were recruited from among clusters of frustrated or apprehensive Muslim urban lower middle classes inadequately represented by the continued elitism of the Muslim League. In Punjab, the Government noted, the members stemmed overwhelmingly from lower middle class shopkeepers and 'semi-educated city-loafers'.¹⁴⁰ The observation concerning the shopkeepers is borne out by other evidence. In two Bangalore districts around 1939, the body was small enough that the district officials listed all the individuals. We find that a majority of the Khaksars were between 20-25 years old¹⁴¹ and the professions ranged typically from factory workers to petty merchants or shopkeepers of some description, to 'coolies', with a number of unemployed young men, tailors, weavers and (very) few students and peasants thrown in.¹⁴²

Mashriqi himself claimed to have had some 5-6,000 Khaksars in 1933 and branches in Madras, Bangalore, Sitapur and Peshawar, but he was notorious for gross exaggeration of his organisations and influence. The Khaksars started out as a Lahore-based operation and their early strongholds were in NWFP and Punjab. Apart from Peshawar, Lahore, Amritsar and Saloh (Jullundur district) no branches seemed active in that area, and it was estimated that there were probably not more than 6 or 700 Khaksars in the Punjab then.¹⁴³ By 1938, a Bombay branch was established, then further branches in Ahmedabad, Gaya and Patna.¹⁴⁴ The movement grew almost two-fold after a clash between Mashriqi and the UP Government, about which more below. By 1939, the movement was estimated to have more than 17,000 members. Mashriqi claimed that he actually had hundreds of thousands of followers.¹⁴⁵ Although the Government initially worried about the Con-

¹⁴⁰ Note by JM Ewart, sd. 2nd Sept. 1936, NAI, Foreign and Political Dept, Poll., 406-P(S)/36, 1936, f. 4.

¹⁴¹ There were a few older men mostly between 30 and 35 and some 18-year old members. How representative or locally specific this demography is, is, of course, open to speculation but seems to conform to general trends. It is one of the very few lists where we do have age and job description for the members.

¹⁴² See the lists of membership for Doddaballapur town and Yelahanka in Bangalore District, see NAI, Poll. Dept, Poll, 31(2)-P(s), 1940, ff. 50-52. The absence of students, given the small town surroundings is hardly surprising and might look somewhat different in an urban setting.

¹⁴³ 'Note on the Khaksar Movement, 10.11.33', in NAI, Home, Poll, 118/35, 1935, ff.12-13.

¹⁴⁴ See for instance IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 460, 465, 453.

¹⁴⁵ At a time when the official estimate was around 4000 Khaksars (in early 1939), Mashriqi claimed to have no less than 400,000 soldiers under his command. See IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 454. By 1940,

gress (or Naujawan) links of the Khaksars, they rapidly became regarded as an anti-Congress, anti-Red Shirt and pro-ML organisation in the NWFP¹⁴⁶, where they had initially some success in rousing the Khans to support the ML and thus provide inroads for the party into areas where the people had hardly heard of Jinnah before.¹⁴⁷ Some officials believed that the Khaksars would eventually become a branch of the ML in the region, and the highest levels of government were disquieted by the prospect of the League acquiring a quasi-army for their use.¹⁴⁸ The accord with the League was not, however, an uncomplicated or lasting one, and the NWFP branch seemed in decline between 1937 and 1939.¹⁴⁹ While there were numerous instances in which the two groups cooperated - with the Khaksars doubling as the volunteers at ML meetings and guards of honour - the Muslim League soon became wary of getting too involved with the aggressive confrontation the Khaksars staged.¹⁵⁰

Despite the stringent claims of the Khaksars to be a non-communal organisation striving for harmony and universal civic rights, neither the Government nor the Congress ever regarded them as anything other than a militantly communal body.¹⁵¹ Later developments make their joining even more unlikely, as we shall see. But we have already observed that the signing up of individuals to bodies such as these was not always primarily an expression of a particular political or religious affiliation but often an attraction simply to the social work or military style of a group that happened to be at hand, or the personality of its local leader.

the official estimate was up to just over 23,000 [see Survey of Volunteer Movements, in NAI, Home, Poll, 31(2)-P(S), 1940; see the Appendix for an overview].

¹⁴⁶ The NWFP brass could soon report with thinly veiled glee that a Khaksar in Abbottabad had referred to Abdul Ghaffar Khan as a 'kafir' and the khaksars had turned into an anti-Congress tool, cf. Extract from NWFP Governor's Report, No 10, dt. 6th Sept. 1937, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 489. This did not stop the Khaksars from saluting the brother of Abdul Ghaffer Khan, also a Congressman who was a minister in the local Govt. only a little later (ibid, f. 483).

¹⁴⁷ See Extract from report of Governor NWFP, No. 11, dt. 24th Sept 1937, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 488; and Extract from report of Governor NWFP, No. 13, dt. 23rd Oct 1937, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 486. See ibid, f. 489.

¹⁴⁸ Extract of Report from Governor of NWFP, No. 12, dt. 9th Oct. 1937, IOR, L/PJ/12 /8/680, f. 487.

¹⁴⁹ One of the problems were, seemingly, Khaksar demands for influence/representation on ML committees. It seems, the Khaksars were wanted as a strong arm not as discursive partners or political arbitrators. Report from Governor of NWFP, No. 14, dt. 9th Nov. 1937, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 485. See also ibid, f. 484.

¹⁵⁰ See below, esp. chp. 5.

¹⁵¹ Mashriqi was fond of claiming that they had members of all communities in their organisation and there seems to have been a handful Hindus at some point, but according to reports most of them resigned very soon and the non-Muslim members numbered no more than 50.

The organisation acquired an enormous boost in their popularity when they intervened in the Shahidganj affair (Punjab) in 1935, where Sikhs had destroyed an old mosque intending to build a gurdwara. A case was filed and the Sikh building project halted while proceedings were underway.¹⁵² The successful termination of the Shahidganj dispute gave the Khaksars credibility and prestige, not to mention advertisement from the press coverage. From this skilfully created plateau, Mashriqi, in late 1937, issued demands to the Punjab Government and Sikander Hayat Khan¹⁵³, these were that *zakat*¹⁵⁴ be introduced; that the Khaksars should be allowed to have a radio station of their own; and that Government servants be allowed to join the Khaksars - something the Punjab Government had disallowed due to the 'political' nature of the body. Polite negotiations by a wary Government led to nothing¹⁵⁵ and fizzled out when the Khaksar's attention was diverted into their next substantial agitation in UP, buying the Punjab a brief respite before Mashriqi turned their gaze back to the Unionist Government.¹⁵⁶ The Khaksars gained an image of notoriety mixed with admiration for their action against the unloved Congress 'regime' in Lucknow in 1939, though the campaign revolved ostensibly around the controversy between Sunnis and Shias concerning Madha-Tabarra.¹⁵⁷ Mashriqi sought to bring peace to the Lucknow

¹⁵² On the Shahidganj Affair see also David Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam. Punjab and the Making of Pakistan*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989, pp. 98-108. The Ahrars and a number of other Muslim organisations took part only when the movement was already peaking. The court injunction on any building activity was lifted in May 1940 while the later Khaksar agitation in the Punjab was ongoing, leading to further complications (see the next chapter).

¹⁵³ Mashriqi, address to Jalalpur Jatan Camp (Gujarat) 27th Feb. 1938, quoted in *Al-Islah*, 14th June 1938.

¹⁵⁴ *Zakat* is the practice, prescribed by the most basic tenets of Islam (the Five Pillars) to donate a fixed amount of one's income for charitable purposes.

¹⁵⁵ Local Government in consultation with GoI argued that *zakat* needed to be based on the will of the community and made known to be so through the proper representatives..) and references to existing laws (no independent radio stations could be allowed, but mayhap the Khaksars could have a slot on All India radio...). The Punjab Government merely restated their position that Government servants were not allowed to participate in any political organisations, as opposed to mere social service, religious or educational bodies. Cf. IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 469-472.

¹⁵⁶ The UP agitation in itself makes for a fascinating study in mobilisation and tactics but for lack of space and time cannot be considered here in detail.

¹⁵⁷ Mashriqi had threatened the lives of leaders of both groups and set an ultimatum for the resolving of the dispute in the name of Muslim unity. But the Khaksar agitation soon became more of a campaign about the reigning Congress ministry and was only ended when the Congress resigned. A compromise between the British representative and the Khaksars was then found. An almost day-by-day account can be found in the governmental correspondence of the time collected in IOR, L/PJ/8/680. The Shia-Sunni conflict over the reciting of Madha-Tabarra was of a long-standing nature and had led to conflicts and riots before. See Nandini Gooptu, *The Politics of the Urban Poor*, pp. 297-313 for the economic horizons of the participation of the lower classes and their assertion through *tanzeem* in this context. See also William Gould, *Hindu Nationalism*, pp. 213-218

Muslims by proclaiming an ultimatum for a compromise and threatening to otherwise kill the Sunni and Shia leaders especially responsible for the rift in the Muslim qaum.¹⁵⁸ The local campaign came to an end without the Khaksars, who went on to make various demands on the Congress ministry, who, they claimed, had attempted to 'crush' their movement.¹⁵⁹ The Khaksar agitation only ended when the Congress ministry resigned, and a speedy agreement was found with the British administrators.¹⁶⁰ This campaign was another exercise in practical self-assertion that has to be seen against the backdrop of the Congress ministry reign, popular resentment and allegations of the preferential treatment of Hindus and oppression of Muslims raised time and again by the ML (who made this an important plank of their political programme for these years).¹⁶¹ A more in-depth study of a campaign will be provided below with the second Khaksar agitation in the Punjab in 1940.

For now, we need only take account of Mashriqi's manoeuvres while in jail as a result of the agitation. From there, he sent a telegram to the Viceroy and various papers, offering 50,000 khaksars for the war effort and without any quid pro quos, since the 'baniya mentality' [of the Congress]

for a birds eye view of the long-standing issues and communal tensions. For a detailed account of the dispute, the Allsop Report and the decision by the UP Government, see Venkat Dhulipala, *Rallying around the Qaum: The Muslims of the United Provinces and the movement for Pakistan, 1935-1947*, UmiMicroform 2008, no. 3313438, pp. 106-123. For a contemporaneous account by one of the people involved detailing the Congress reasoning and attempted solution, see Rajendra Prasad, *Correspondence and Select Documents: Vol. 4: August to December 1939*, (ed. by Valmiki Choudhary), New Delhi et al: Allied Publishers, 1984, pp. 282-286.

¹⁵⁸ *Al-Islah*, 21 August 1939 for the initial call by Mashriqi on 30,000 Khaksar sipahis to descend on UP. The Khaksars, despite giving in on a number of their 'demands', once again managed to portray themselves as the victors after the confrontation and the martial display helped their recruitment and popularity enormously - the antagonism of the Muslim population to the Congress ministries played, no doubt, no small part in this. See also telegram by Mashriqi to Govt. UP, dt. 7th Aug. 1939, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 441, see also *ibid* ff. 452-449; note by the Chief Secy, UP Govt. on the Development of the Khaksar Agitation in the United Provinces [no date], in IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 440-445; see esp. ff. 440-441.

¹⁵⁹ A number of people - Khaksars who were being fired on and some senior policemen attacked with the Khaksars' sharpened belchas - died during the agitation and the Khaksars operated from bases outside the province making it hard to apprehend them.

¹⁶⁰ The restive Congress-led ministry, faced with a possible 'invasion' by a hostile party of what Mashriqi alleged would be 10,000 Khaksars, and imposed restrictions on the Khaksar bands under section 144 Criminal Law Amendment Act banning the carrying of spades or use of firecrackers. This was what gave rise to Mashriqi's proclamation that the Congress was trying to crush them. See Note by the Chief Secy, UP Govt. on the Development of the Khaksar Agitation in the United Provinces [no date], in IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 441-442, and Press note, Director of Publicity UP Government [without date], in IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 446. See also letter by Haig to Linlithgow, dt. 25th Sept. 1939, in IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 438-439). On the eventual settlement, see esp. IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 407.

was unworthy of 'great people like Musulmans'.¹⁶² The Congress ministries had shown that Muslims must now forestall a rule of the Hindu majority or face 'annihilation'. Muslims as the 'actual defenders of India' had a 'natural also inheritary [sic] right to control [India] [...] Blood and rule have always gone together in all history.' He claimed only the Khaksars 'could claim playing [the] game of blood'.¹⁶³ The governor, HG Haig, mostly considered this an opportunity to barter for peace, but Mashriqi would always claim that the government had wanted to enlist Khaksars for the Territorial Army.¹⁶⁴ Here again, we find the interwoven themes of martyrdom and strength, and political claims established on this basis. The envisioned seamless transition between volunteer - sipahi - Territorial Army is not one very peculiar to the Khaksars.¹⁶⁵

The Khaksars offered a radical and aggressive way of Muslim self-assertion on puritanical lines. In a survey of the movement in 1940, the year of a Khaksar campaign against the Punjab Government, it emerged that in 12 months (1939-1940) the membership had gone up from approx. 7,400 to 17,660 or 23,000.¹⁶⁶ In the Punjab, there had been only 200 Khaksars before the Lucknow

¹⁶¹ See for instance the *Report of the Inquiry Committee appointed by the Council of the All-India Muslim League to inquire into Muslim Grievances in Congress Provinces*, [s.l.:] All-India Muslim League [1939]; and Fazl-ul-Haq's, *Muslims Suffering Under Congress Rule - Reprint of a statement to the press by Fuzlul Huq, Premier of Bengal*, Dec. 1939 [s.l.], in IOR, L/1/1/628, ff. 77 - 87 (18 pp.). See Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman. Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge: CUP, 1985, esp. 42-45; and William Gould, *Hindu Nationalism*, pp. 220-223. Election campaigning in 1936 had accentuated communal tensions and clashes occurred in different places throughout the year. After their land-slide victory, the INC abandoned all promises of power-sharing in the provinces. The conduct of the ministries led to wide-spread resentment among Muslims. On the various grievances and complaints assembled and published by the ML, see *Report of ... Muslim Grievances in Congress Provinces*, see, for instance, pp. 16-17. More than that, a wave of agitation from below and staging of claims over public space or issues surrounding cow slaughter - newly popularised by the Congress - made these years a volatile period and thus ideal for the Khaksar agitation. The accounts provided in the ML reports - notwithstanding their blinkered view - speak to the pressure Hindus brought to bear on Muslims in certain areas. See for instance on the Dadri (Ballia district, UP) riot: *Report of ... Muslim Grievances*, pp. 68-69.

¹⁶² The offer specified that 30,000 men should be used for civil defence, 10,000 for police duties and another 10,000 as manpower on the European front or in Turkey. They would be 'nominally' drilled but their discipline would be supreme, and the very best material was meant for the fighting in Europe.

¹⁶³ Copy of telegram from Allama Mashriqi, leader of the Khaksar movement, to the Viceroy, dt. 30th Sept. 1939, in IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 436 - 437. *Al-Islah* 20th and 27th October 1939. The argument was based on his latest pamphlet *Aksariyat ya Khun* (The Majority or Blood), in which the conviction was spelled out that the community that spills its blood freely will rule the country, while it also hinted at the soon-to-be departure of the British and the need of Muslims to step in and seize control of their affairs.

¹⁶⁴ The Government did consider the question - fleetingly - and unanimously decided that while indi-

confrontation that raised their profile as a militant organisation.¹⁶⁷ New branches were established along with international offshoots.¹⁶⁸ The social composition of the movement depended heavily on the local dynamics. Class appeal varied widely depending on the personality at the helm. In Calcutta and Delhi, the Khaksars represented a working class movement. In Bengal, the movement started out as consisting of a hide merchant working for an American firm with a following of his own workers. In Delhi, a butcher led the movement around the time. In CP and UP, the local middle class, lawyers, a headmaster and some merchants spearheaded the movement. The role played by the Khaksars in Punjab shall be considered in greater detail in the next chapter as we come to the Punjab riots of 1940. In Hyderabad State, the movement became important around this time but presented a very different picture as the Khaksars took it upon themselves to defend the Nizam against critique and attack from the majority Hindu population.¹⁶⁹

Local leadership was of course a prime factor in the success of grass-roots volunteer groups. But the strict discipline of the Khaksars was not for everyone. According to local sources, the strict

vidual Khaksars might join the Territorial Forces, as a body they would certainly not be accepted. No one wanted an army within an army. But a number of papers, such as *The Pioneer*, dt. 8th Oct 1940., under the title 'Khaksars to be enlisted in the Territorial Army' published reports that the '... the Government of India are studying with interest the recent extensions of the Khaksars in India. Government feel that the best way to deal with such movements is to give opportunity to their members to enlist in the Territorial Forces shortly to be raised in India.' See NAI, Home, Poll, 74/1/40-Poll(I) &KW, f. 140.

¹⁶⁵ We shall consider below the impact of the War and the notions of volunteers and the theme of 'self-defence'.

¹⁶⁶ 'Survey of the Khaksar Movement', IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 386-5. Another survey of 1940 gives the figure of 23,000 and must be seen as more reliable. See the Appendix.

¹⁶⁷ Extract of report from Sir Roger Lumley to the Marquess of Linlithgow, dt. 11th Sept. 1939, in IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 433. It would appear that quite some of the 6000 new Khaksars in the province were former Muslim League Volunteer Corps members, as the latter lost the same amount of members at the same time despite stringent attempts to build up the movement then. In turn, when the Khaksars declined in the later 1940s, quite a number of its members switched (back?) to the Muslim National Guards, apparently. We have, in passing referred to the flexibility in membership of organisations and shall consider this below. 'Volunteer Movement in India', sd G Ahmad, IB, 7th Aug. 1940, in L/PJ/8/678, see ff. 9-10. See Markus Daechsel, *The Politics of Self-Expression*, chp. 'Politics against society' [no pp. nos, Kindle edition, 22% ; fn. 164]

¹⁶⁸ In Hedjaz some Khaksar emissaries tried to set up a branch as well as get special facilities from the King for Khaksar pilgrims - both, however without success. See 'Note on the Khaksar movement in Hyderabad State', f. 31. Reports of substantial increase in sympathy for the Khaksars also came from Quetta. Cf. IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 408.

¹⁶⁹ See the account in 'Note on the Khaksar Movement in Hyderabad State', NAI, Poll. Dept, Poll., 31(2)-P(s), 1940, which details the ups and downs of the movement, its local leadership, its ties to political parties in Hyderabad and the conflicts not least with the Arya Samaj due to the Tablighi

discipline, especially the flogging, were reasons for its decline.¹⁷⁰ Like the RSS, the Khaksars blossomed best in areas where the communal demography made for volatile situations at time of socio-economic or political strife or wherever communal tension was ripe. In Hyderabad, the Khaksars played a different tune than in other regions, as they saw it as an Islamic state that could legitimately claim their service, and this was to come before everything else. After the agitation of HMS/ Arya Samaj and RSS against the Nizam in 1938-39, the state was probably seen as especially deserving of protection. During the massive Khaksar agitation in the Punjab which drew in Khaksars from various states as jathas (we shall turn to the agitation below), the Hyderabad leaders ordered their own Khaksars to not participate in that campaign, and any Khaksar found being AWOL would be struck off the list of members. The Khaksars here were closely involved with Muhammad Bahadur Khan, better known under his title Bahadur Yar Jung, a great networker¹⁷¹: he was one of the leaders of the Ittihadul, a member of the Unionist Party, held close contact with the Muslim League and the Nizam. He also founded a volunteer wing of the Ittihadul which became a body in its own right, the Hizbollah Volunteer Corps, modelled on the Khaksars but with an explicitly political agenda. After initial competition, the Khaksars and the Hizbollah evolved close ties after the Shahidganj agitation.¹⁷² All this meant that the activities of the Khaksars here were closely aligned to the interests of the state.

In late 1939/1940 Mashriqi overhauled the structure of the Khaksar movement to make for better control and expand the body. India was divided into fourteen provinces were established for the purposes of administration, each with a 'governor'.¹⁷³ The provinces would be sub-divided into circles encompassing certain districts, each with a local *salar* to assume the responsibility for propaganda and enrolment. The scheme - in this case because of its stark centralisation and the

movement the local Khaksars got involved in at times.

¹⁷⁰ 'Note on the Khaksar Movement in Hyderabad State', ff. 23-24.

¹⁷¹ Yar Jung, born 1905, held a *jirga* in his home state Hyderabad and was also a *jamiat* of the Irregular Forces of the Nizam (also a hereditary title). He argued for a separation of India to establish Muslim majority state - he was thinking of Hyderabad - from very early on, long before the slogan of Pakistan was raised. He was elected president of the Majlis-e-Ittihadul-Muslimeen in 1938.

¹⁷² 'Note on the Hizbollah Volunteer Corps', in NAI, Poll. Dept, Poll, 31(2)-P(s), 1940, ff. 37-39.

¹⁷³ The leaders were mostly from Punjab and NWFP. A quota was set for enlistment by each province and Mashriqi aimed to enlist 25 lakhs of Khaksars within six months.

hand-picked workers - showed success in the early stages. The local groups depended heavily on charismatic leadership and initiative, and the new structure infused a sense of purpose in the leaders and closer ties with the rank and file thanks to the touring and meetings organised by the governors or their local commanders.¹⁷⁴ Around this time, with the overhaul of the organisational structure, the Khaksars also started enlisting women in separate corps, and students, in a concerted way.

The Volunteer Vicious Circle

We have considered the RSS and Khaksars and contextualised them within a larger mainstream of contemporaneous politics and conflicts. By looking at the supposed fringes, the continuities (and differences) between a variety of volunteer bodies becomes apparent. The concluding point to be noted here, which leads us to the next chapter, is the spiral of communal organisation and counter-organisation. Given, as they were, to military displays amounting to public spectacles, the Khaksars and similar bodies were highly visible, but the Khaksars' bearing including nightly torch marches and public mock wars, was more overtly aggressive than most bodies. Mashriqi and his circle were in a position to act out such stark claims of martial predominance, we might suspect, because they were not hemmed in by the necessities of political diplomacy and considerations the way party-affiliated bodies were. The same holds true for the RSS. Yet, both bodies were 'political players' with a complex set of engagements with high-level politics and multifarious local connections, which we unfortunately cannot consider here in greater detail as this study aims to give a comparative overview of some of the more important bodies. Both bodies blossomed where communal tensions were rife.

The response the Khaksars elicited in certain quarters was a counter-organisation on the same

¹⁷⁴ Bahadur Yar Jung was supposed to commandeer the NWFP and Kashmir but did not take up the appointment claiming he had too much to do while it seems that the actual reason was his unacceptability with the Frontier Khaksars who thought of him as an Ahmadiyya and infidel. Yung belonged, in fact, to another sect that had nothing to do with the Ahmadis. Cf. NAI, Poll. Dept, Poll, 31(2)-P(s), 1940, ff. 32, 35-36.

lines trying to top the Khaksars' display, especially in areas where Hindus and Muslims identified themselves primarily in communal terms, and when the Khaksars seemed to garner local influence and amass power in the way they did for instance in Hyderabad due to the close links with Tablighi and the Majlis-e-Ittihadul Muslimin.¹⁷⁵ We shall trace the tragic dynamic of such mobilisation in the 1940s when the full scale of it becomes apparent. At this point, in Hyderabad, the Arya Samaj especially regarded the Khaksars with wary distrust embodied in their military poses of defence whenever the Khaksars turned out in large numbers, and took to gathering around their Samaj Mandir, armed and ready, during the weekly route marches of the Khaksars.¹⁷⁶

Both, the Akali Sena and the Ghazi Corps were started as reaction (meaning, this was the most immediate cause not necessarily the reason) to the threat posed by the Khaksars, while the RSS and Arya Samaj stepped up their efforts in regions where the Khaksars were a force to be reckoned with.

A source reported that the Akali Jatha in 1939 was of the opinion that there would be civil war in India in the near future, and since the Khaksars were a well-equipped and developed body who would attack the Hindus and Sikhs. Hence, Tara Singh proposed an *Akali Sena* to protect the khalsa.¹⁷⁷ Members of the Shiromani Akali Dal, the political wing of the Akalis¹⁷⁸, also came from Amritsar to Delhi to advise the local Sikhs to organise Akali Senas and collection of funds among the community were undertaken - JK Birla is, once again, mentioned as an important financier.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ See NAI, Poll. Dept, Poll., 31(2)-P(s), 1940, ff. 28-29, also ff. 26 for the close ties.

¹⁷⁶ NAI, Poll. Dept, Poll, 31(2)-P(S), 1940, f. 30.

¹⁷⁷ Source 69's report dt 3rd Oct. 1939, in NMML, Delhi Police, 3rd inst, F. No. 33, I, f. 5. See Note on the Akalis, in IOR, L/PJ/8/678, f. 55-55b. The Akali Sena was not a very new phenomenon. Akali jathas and the Shiromani Akali Dal, the political arm of the Akalis, had had large contingents of military personnel throughout their history. A Punjab Police overview traces the emergence of the Akalis out of the 'storm troopers' in the late Mughal wars to the 'religious fanatics' who were principally responsible for winning control over the gurdwaras in the 1920s and remained the most influential Sikh organisation throughout. See National Information Centre, Islamabad [NDC], Supplement to SPPAI, Vol. LXIII for the Year Ending 31st Dec. 1941, No. 13, dt. 29th March 1941, pp. 1-2.

¹⁷⁸ The SAD held a factual majority within the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbhandak Committee (SGPC), the latter being a non-political body in charge of administration and preservation of the Sikh holy places and gurdwaras after the successful agitation of the Akalis over the issue. On the Akali campaign in the 1920s, see Tan-Tai Yong, 'Assuaging the Sikhs: Government Responses to the Akali Movement, 1920-1925', *MAS*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 1995, pp. 655-703.

¹⁷⁹ NMML, Delhi Police, 3rd inst, F. no 33 I, f. 1. The reference is to Giani Inder Singh (one of the

A ban on military drill in 1940 meant, however, that the body was not very active in the early 1940s. The Akalis had always had a considerable number of military or ex-military personnel in their ranks and while other bodies aspired to a military outfit, in real terms no organisation came as close to this ideal as the Akalis did. Even without the Sena the Akalis could rely on the long-standing Akali jathas to fall back on in case of any agitation.¹⁸⁰ Recruits between 16 and 45 years were wanted since physical fitness was a prerequisite¹⁸¹. The Akali Sena is, by that definition, hardly a youth movement, but, again, much of the mobilisation rhetoric called specifically on 'young men' to enrol. We shall return to them below, as they played an important role in the 1940s and gained prominence (or notoriety) as one of the best organised movements of this kind.¹⁸²

The Ahrar volunteers (Majlis-i-Ahrar) were formed in 1931 by a number of Muslim nationalist who turned away from the INC. They participated prominently in the Kashmir satyagraha of 1931/32 against the Kashmir Government (and its Ahmadiya head) and during the Shahidganj affair in which the Khaksars (and the Ahmadis) so prominently intervened.¹⁸³ In the UP, the Ghazi Corps, a special unit described as 'shock-troops' of the Majlis were set up in response to the Khaksars and here tended to carry hatchets and swords as their trade tools. The Majlis gained a membership of some 3,400 in the Punjab, 2,800 in UP and a small body of men in Delhi by 1939 but declined rather than grew over the next years, partly due to stringent persecution over their anti-war propaganda and pro-Congress activities.¹⁸⁴ The volunteers were said to not do anything

main players in the Akali Dal) and Nand Singh of Amritsar in this case.

¹⁸⁰ Note by Deane sd. 1.2.42., in NDC, SSPAI Vol LXIV for the Year Ending 31st December, 1942, p. 1-3.

¹⁸¹ Letter of secy. Shiroman Akali Dal, Amritsar to M.[Tshagid] Singh, genl secy, Akala Jatha, Delhi, NMML, Delhi Police, 3rd inst, F. no 33 I, f. 8-9.

¹⁸² For an overview of the inception and the first five years of the Shiromani Akali Dal, see Tan Tai Yong, 'Assuaging the Sikhs: Government Responses to the Akali Movement, 1920-1925', MAS, 29, 3, 1995, pp. 655-703. While quite some work has been done on the SGPC and Akalis, there is, amazingly, nothing on the Akali Sena which became immensely important during the closing days of the Empire and Partition.

¹⁸³ The Ahrars and Ahmadis (or Ahmadiyahs) were both competing for pre-eminence to represent Muslims (along with other groups) and were violently opposed to each other. The Ahmadiya themselves were set up as a reaction to the shuddhi and sangathan movement from the 1920s. They were therefore a proselytizing group heavily involved in tablighi. Along with the Ahrars, they were also prominent in the campaign against the Maharaja of Kashmir in the early 1930s.

¹⁸⁴ In 1939, they had some 380 volunteers in Delhi. By 1940 it was stated that they had some 2400 by 1940 in the UP whereas the body did not exist or was in a moribund state in the other provinces. In Punjab, the Ghazi Corps was apparently somnambulist (such bodies were often called together on an ad-hoc basis) by mid-1940. In the UP, it had some 2,400 workers which were not much in evid-

much, and we may conclude that the organisation set up as counter to the Khaksars did not have any intrinsic *raison d'etre* apart from opposing the Khaksars at the time.¹⁸⁵

ence though; in the NWFP some 600 volunteers. Their overall number was estimated at 5,000 in 1940. See 'The Ahrars' in IOR, L/PJ/8/678, f. 54-54b; and 'The Volunteer Movement' in *ibid*, ff. 9-10. The decline was mostly due to a large section of their leadership being jailed after their participation in the Congress' anti-war propaganda. For a very brief summary of the movement, see IOR, L/PJ/12/666, f. 31.

¹⁸⁵ The proud claim of the Ahrars was that not one of them had joined the Khaksars. The religious head of the movement had also forbidden his followers to join the ML. But they had a MLA in the Unionist Govt. who got permission to join for a period of six months only. Talk between Pir Akbar Ali, the Ahrar Unionist MLA, and Craik, reported in Craik's letter to Linlithgow, dt 25th March 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 293.

V. A Phantasmagoria of Volunteers - The Second World War, Quit India and the storm-clouds of civil war

“This is the age of youth. For the last twenty years there has been, throughout the world, a new interest in education and the training of youth. Hitler did not invent youth movements – he merely misused them.... The Axis countries have shown what a ruthlessly dangerous weapon an organized youth movement can be. No government can now afford to limit its interest in the training of youth to school hours and to the ordinary curriculum. To do so would be to ignore a tremendous potential force which, with the wrong ideas and training, might be a very grave danger, and with the right ones an overwhelming asset. Many people believe that, because youth can be dangerous [...], youth organization is dangerous. They are wrong. The lack of organization is far more dangerous, for then young people will tend to flock round any fanatical banner that is raised.”

Cowley, *A Plan for Youth*¹

The Second World War led to an unprecedented expansion of the colonial state and a mobilisation of material and men.² Internally, this expansion is mirrored by the rapidly growing volunteer movement(s) geared towards ‘civil defence’ against an invasion (esp. from 1942) and against internal disturbances which, contemporaries feared, would follow any weakening of the British administration. This final chapter will highlight the continuities between the mobilisation during the war for defence purposes, then for Quit India and the systematic preparations for Partition which bled into each other. Our understanding of later events can be enhanced by taking into account the earlier 1940s and see the period as a continuum of successive waves of mobilisation rather than single, distinct events. With the quick succession of events in those years, this chapter cannot provide more than a very cursory glance at developments. But even so, it may be possible to chart some general trends and lay the groundwork for further research in this direction.

¹ W Cowley, *A Plan for Youth. A Handbook of Youth Organization for India and Pakistan*, Calcutta: OUP, 1949, pp 2-3 [emphasis mine]. Cowley had written his programme while being the ‘Provincial Youth Organizer’ in the Punjab (until 1947). He explained the necessity for setting up youth organisations, with which, everything from educational problems, criminality, malnutrition to high mortality rates, superstition, backwardness and a host of other problems prevailing in India could be overcome. For details on Cowley see his fascinating autobiography, *The Cry of the Peacocks* (Manuscript, Cambridge South Asian Studies Centre).

² See Indivar Kamtekar, ‘A Different War Dance: State and Class in India 1939–1945’, *Past and Present* 176, 2002, pp. 187-221.

Before we come to the response of the Government to the phenomenon and the war, more generally, we shall look at the state of volunteer groups and the numbers we are here dealing with. With the outbreak of the war, a strong influx into certain volunteer bodies was tangible with the mounting anxiety regarding communal riots as well as external aggression.³ A look at the Punjab, for instance, reveals that a new Civil Disobedience campaign was expected to commence at any moment from 1940, and Congress along with other bodies was gearing up for the confrontation.⁴ Congress committees were converted into satyagraha committees or ‘war councils’, and ‘National Guards’, national militias or volunteers enrolled wherever possible - often pledge forms were simply signed collectively at meetings.⁵ Volunteer bodies were growing in number - from Socialist revolutionary guerillas to communal social service groups⁶. We shall focus on some bodies that we can track to a certain degree (thanks to the IB) and which are relevant for the argument of this chapter: that there were important continuities of the mobilisation of 1940/42 to 1946/47 that have not been researched sufficiently.

Generally, volunteer organisations by now spread much further and they increasingly organised on communal lines; even where this was not explicitly intended, the logic of communalism made for

³ See the estimates of increase and decrease of volunteers in the UP between Nov. 1939 and Feb. 1940 in IOR, L/PJ/8/678, f. 57. For the Congress this would mean the following increase per month after the ministries resigned: Nov 1939: + 762; Dec 39: + 2,579; Jan 40: +1935; Feb 40: +1200. This amounts to an average monthly increase of +1606 for the period. For the period of Jan.-Oct. 1939 the average increase was only 762 per month. This indicates that the war coupled with the withdrawal from the ministries actually made for a significant influx into the action-oriented Congress body. The Khaksars could boast a similar increase over the same period (an average monthly increase of 1,128), while the Muslim volunteers and the Youth Leagues lost members (the ML lost an average of 634 members per month between Nov. 1939 and Feb. 1940), and other bodies (such as the Mahabir Dal and the Ahrars) more or less stagnated. Again, caution needs to be exercised - the Govt. itself was rather unsure about these numbers. I have been comparing different reports regarding volunteer numbers, and massive discrepancies emerge for the same body and period of time (see fn 9, fn 15, fn 16 and fn 20 for instance).

⁴ Rumours were making the rounds in Punjab (and elsewhere) that the CD signal would be given any day now. Specific dates, like May 1940 then Sept. 1940 were afloat. See, for instance, NDC, SPPAI, Vol. LXII, 4th May, No. 18, 1940, pp. 251-252, *ibid*, Vol. LXII, 418th May, No. 19, p. 259 and details in the report; and *ibid*, Lahore, 19th October, No. 40, pp. 586-587 regarding rumours and actual preparations for CD. Socialists, Communists, left-oriented Kisan Sabhas (and early on the Akalis) clamoured for an early onset of the struggle and incited their audiences to take autonomous mass action (no-tax, no-rent campaigns and sometimes hints of more) as soon as the signal for CD would be given. See for instance, NDC, SPPAI, Vol. LXII, 24th August No. 33, pp. 494-495; NDC, SPPAI Vol. LXII, 19th October No. 40, p. 588.

⁵ On satyagraha committees and the enrolment of volunteers see, for instance: SPPAI, Vol. LXII, No 19, Simla, 18th May, No. 19, pp. 259-260, 261; *ibid*, 8th June, No. 22, p. 310; *ibid*, 22nd June 1940, No. 24, p. 348; and *ibid*, 31st August No. 34, p. 507. The reports are full of such instances but also mention that at least in the Punjab enrolment of volunteers was going relatively slowly in 1940 and the agitation met with little response except in areas with pre-existing grievances and ongoing

implicit distinctions along those lines. Many movements that were meant to be secular, such as the Seva Dal, had a membership drawn mainly from one community (and often one milieu with specific economic conditions). This had to do, among other things, with the leadership and the type of enrolment which was often based on (neighbourhood) networks - maybe more so than with the actual politics of the group. It was proximity and availability together with an attractive social network and an active local leadership that often determined the success of a local branch.

Communists, Socialists and other organisations with a stake in labour politics set up union bodies bearing the same hallmarks of other volunteer organisations: they were uniformed and held meetings for physical training, especially with lathis. They were engaged propaganda, picketing and, if need be, physical confrontation. Again, this points to the convergence of belief systems which demanded certain practical necessities such as the fit male body, weapons training, endurance and discipline for any sort of agitation, whether against the Government or the capitalists. On the other hand, the personal ties and direct cross-fertilisation should not be underestimated. The CSP and communists (who were often hiding in plain sight within the CSP after the Meerut Conspiracy Case and before the great divergence of 1942) were actively involved in setting up such bodies.⁷ The 'Red Army' was a CSP off-shoot and became notorious during the Quit India movement and after for allegedly training Congress volunteers in guerrilla warfare.⁸ The CSP had little patience with the Gandhian programme and pressed for a confrontation with the colonial Government.

Many other bodies could be enumerated. Ambedkar had his Dalit Independent Labour

campaigns, for instance in areas affected by hartals over the price hikes. See on the preparations also below.

⁶ Two examples would be the Mahabir Dal which organised social service at melas and was associated with the Hindu sanghatanists. The bulk of its members was in Punjab where it was financed by Punjab Sanatan Dharam Pritinidhi. Its membership grew from 1,000 in 1941 to 21,000 in mid-1943 but falling back to 15,000 in the latter half of 1943 and stagnating at that. It had branches in NWFP, Bihar, Sind and Delhi apart from the Punjab. See L/PJ/12/666, file 90/47, ff. 29.

⁷ See on this, Nandini Gooptu, *Politics of the Urban Poor*; chp. 9, esp. from p. 377 on.

⁸ The 'Hindustan Red Army' was formed around 1939 and claimed to have 146 branches in Maharashtra by 1946. Allegedly, it worked closely with the Congress and helped train their volunteers in CP during the Quit India campaign, specialising in guerilla warfare. Members of the Army were said to be responsible for an armed raid on a police station near Nagpur in August 1942. Afterwards, it had a heavy hand in the organised sabotage of communication, transportation infrastructure and destruction of Government property. It was said to cooperate with the CSP in Bombay province. It seemed to be defunct after its leaders were arrested or went underground in 1943, but was revived in 1946 as 'Jai Hind Dal' and evolved a cooperation with other volunteer bodies in the Congress orbit, esp. the Bombay-based Rahstra Dal. In collaboration with other groups, a 'Toofan Dal' (Death Squad) was set up with an elite guerrilla cadre of 40 men. See L/PJ/12/666, file 90/47, ff. 31-32.

Party/Samata Sainik Dal (see below) numbering some 1500 in Bombay in 1941, and 1227 in CP in 1943 (grown to 4500 in 1946).⁹ The various Kisan Sabhas had their own volunteer wings, but since they mostly operated at a very localised level, we will not deal with them here.¹⁰ With the outbreak of the war, recruitment for these bodies picked up.

An India-wide Intelligence surveillance of volunteer organisations in British India for 1940 gives a conservative estimate of the total (regular) membership of all known bodies as 194,247.¹¹ This number would rise steeply by the mid-40s, and by 1946 the official estimate gave a rounded 413,000 for the twelve All-India bodies they found most objectionable.¹² Most of them had a high density in certain regions or cities so that the All-India figures do not give an accurate impression of their relevance in certain areas.

Within the Congress, things had become complicated since the CD Movement. Taking all the bodies swearing allegiance to the Congress in 1940, this gives us 46,700 volunteers, out of which some 30,400 were the SD volunteers in UP alone.¹³ This amounted to an increase of 8,000 in just under one year.¹⁴ Since 1934 the proliferation of Dals, Seva Dals or bodies that looked very much like it had taken on such dimensions that the INC started to consider the question of how to bring

⁹ 'Volunteer Movement in India' in IOR, L/PJ/8/678, 2nd part, see f. 8. And L/PJ/12/666, File 90/47, f. 30. The numbers in these two files are actually contradictory for Bombay and these constant inaccuracies in the official counts make any estimate - even rough ones - difficult.

¹⁰ I will not venture into the organisations of Kisan Sabhas here. Like volunteers, many political organisations had 'their' Kisan Sabhas. Some were firmly allied to the Congress, many more came under the influence of socialists and Communists in the 1930s especially and generalisations should be avoided. That most of them at this point attempted to build stronger volunteer corps holds true throughout though. Especially those under Socialist/Communist influence strove for arming the masses, military training and the implementation of a national Government ever since the People's War Line was declared. Those closer to the CP party line also cooperated with the Government. See the recurring reports in NDC, SPPAI, Vol. LXIV, 1942 to gauge some of the dynamics. See also Sulagna Roy, 'Communal Conflict in Bengal, 1930-1947: Political Parties, the Muslim Intelligentsia and the Pakistan Movement' [unpublished PhD thesis, Trinity College, Cambridge, 1999].

¹¹ Provinces with a particular high turnout were Bombay with 20,173 (of which 12,574 were 'Hindu communal' organisations - the RSS alone made for more than 10,000 members); The United Provinces with 73,284 (of which 30,710 were 'Muslim' and 38,613 'Miscellaneous'); Punjab with 29,265 (with 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' organisations showing both around 11,900); and the NWFP with 32,211 (of which 14,571 'Muslim' and c. 17,000 'Misc.', the bulk of the latter presumably Red Shirts). In contrast, Madras Presidency had a mere total membership of 1,791 (of which 1,084 Muslim). Cf. 'Volunteer Organisations in British India, Statement C. Provincial Figures at a Glance', no ff. nos., NAI, Political Dept, Poll, 31(2)-P(S)/40, 1940. See also *ibid*, Statement A and B for detailed lists of organisations and their relative strength.

¹² See Appendix for an overview. The Regional distribution can unfortunately not be reproduced here.

¹³ See Appendix.

¹⁴ The combined numbers of Madras, Bombay, Bengal still only amounted to some 8000 according to official sources.

them back under some semblance of control as most of them operated on their own set of rules in more or less close contact with local Congress bodies, and the SD had practically stopped being an AI body.¹⁵ For instance, in Bombay, the Congress volunteers functioned under a variety of names (Gandhi Sevak Sena, Seva Dal, most prominently the 'National Guards').¹⁶

In the NWFP, Abdul Gaffar Khan's differences with the INC (or the Red Shirts' differences with Khan) was said to be responsible for a stagnation of the Red Shirts numbering just under 16,000 in late 1939.¹⁷ The Forward Bloc under Subhas Bose had its own volunteer corps who first envisioned a Defence Corps in response to the outbreak of the war.¹⁸ The body enjoyed their greatest success not in Bengal but in the NWFP (some 1000 members) where, apparently, it provided an alternative to the Red Shirts; the other alternative was the Naujawan Bharat Sabha which also made some headway.¹⁹ The Jugantar section of the BPCC, reacting to the development, then formed Internal Peace Brigades.

The above-mentioned Ahrars had some 5,000 members but suffered from stringent prosecution for their anti-war propaganda and most of their leaders were in jail.

¹⁵ Nehru, in March 1939, advised Hardikar and his lieutenant Vashishta to organise their own district and province before even considering 'the question' of an All-India body. Exact numbers as far as official estimates went were: Bombay: c. 2,600 under various names such as Gandhi Seva Sena or, more commonly, National Guards; CP: approx. 1,020 - but not properly organised; Bengal: 1,500 (here, work was rendered difficult due to BPCC split and the existence of two parallel organisations), Madras: 2,500 - mostly in Kerala, Malabar region, where the PCC was rather left-wing and an ex-subordinate Officer of Police had taken over the command. In Punjab there no body existed at all - owing to dissension among INC and the ban on military drill combined with the notorious weakness of the INC in the region. In other regions (Ajmer) the body was small, or negligible, affiliated groups were working under different nomenclatures, making it hard to track them. In March 1939, the number of Seva Dal and Congress volunteers was estimated at 18,000 all in all. By 1940, they had some 40,000 members. The dramatic increase is not congruent with the stated increase over the period of time and the colonial estimates at various points. As stated above, the numbers do not really add up. See 'Extract from Weekly Note of the IB (Home Dept.), GoI, dt. 22nd March 1939, IOR, L/PJ/8/678, f. 122.

¹⁶ An independent Red Shirt body affiliated to the Congress and a Youth League (some 4000 members) and some smaller localised groups also existed in the province, or rather the urban areas and especially Greater Bombay City.

¹⁷ See official note, sd. 10.10.40, IOR, L/PJ/8/678, register no 4618/40, f. 2. Earlier reports had claimed there was a membership of 30-40,000 which, by 1940, was held to be vastly exaggerated. Still other reports indicate that the Red Shirt affiliation to the Seva Dal had not exactly helped the cause and volunteers were getting impatient with Khan's leadership.

¹⁸ After Gandhi had sabotaged Bose's election as Congress president at Tripuri by ensuring that the CWC would not work with Bose, he struck out on a path of his own.

¹⁹ At the Congress convention at Dacca in May 1939, there was almost clash between anti-Bose demonstrators, consisting mostly of Communist volunteers armed with daggers, and Bose's volunteers armed with lathis and 'hunters'. Reports suggest the clash was avoided since the Communist

About the various Hindu volunteer groups the government had inaccurate figures at best and started collating material more stringently from this time on only. The threat assessment until that point dictated a strong focus on the Congress, the Khaksars and the numerically negligible Communists but not the 'social service' of groups like the RSS which had avoided any open confrontations with the government.²⁰ The RSS had an estimated membership of 19,300.²¹ The Akali Sena had some 19,000 members in the Punjab, but the 'active list' was estimated at only 2000. Various smaller Akali bodies under different names existed in other provinces.²²

The ML's Muslim National Guards could boast a number of an estimated 40,000 members, ML and INC thus being almost on par in terms of numerical strengths of their respective armies.²³ The provincial Leagues attempted to increase volunteer membership and set up new structures such as specialised catchment areas under specific leaders. The League was also drawing in professional instructors as far as possible. Among those can be found retired military personnel, an ex-Head Constable of Police, members from the University Training Corps, and in one district a Khaksar leader.²⁴

backed down since the other side outnumbered them. See 'Volunteer Movement in India' in IOR, L/PJ/8/678, 2nd part, f. 7.

²⁰ The Mahabir Dal was split over the Shiv Mandir agitation in Delhi. In the Punjab they had some 6,000 members with small rival organisations popping up, and small contingents in other provinces. According to other reports, they had 11,000 in Punjab, and 1,800 in UP. See IOR, L/PJ/8/678, 12-13; NAI, Home Poll 31(2)-P(S), 1940, Appendix. The Shiv Mandir agitation was an intense legal dispute over money and control of the building among the HMS.

²¹ The figures given in different reports vary sharply. The regional figures for the RSS were some 17,000 members in CP (Marathi speaking areas), some 1,450 in UP and only 1,300 in Bombay. In another report the Bombay figure was over 10,000; in Bombay city 1,300; in CP 6,000. See IOR, L/PJ/8/678, 12; NAI, Home, Poll 31(2)-P(S), 1940, Appendix. Smaller bodies like the Arya Vir Dal, Arya Yuvak Sangh, Hanuman Dal, Agni Dal and Hindu Raksha Dal were – strangely - not listed under Hindu but 'miscellaneous' bodies. All in all some 9,400 volunteers belonged to self-consciously Hindu volunteer bodies in the UP, and a variety of localised bodies existed in most bigger north-Indian towns often with a few hundred members. Minute on Volunteer Movements for First Half of 1940, dt. 10th Oct. 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/678, 12-13; and 'Volunteer Movement in India' in *ibid*, 2nd part, ff. 4- 6.

²² See 'Volunteer Movement', and official note, sd. 10th Oct. 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/678, f. 2. Punjab was basically in the hand of the Akali Dal as neither INC or ML were very strong there. The Congress in the province was also suffering from much internal strife.

²³ MNG numbers in 1940, for NWFP: approximately 11,000; Bihar: 10,000; Bengal 4,154; Bombay 2,704; CP 1,390; Madras 596. In UP 12,000 (a stark loss compared to the previous 18,000 in late 1939). Decrease in UP was probably due to the Khaksar movement in the province which shows a simultaneous increase of some 7000 members, and sported an overall membership of some 25,000 in 1940.

²⁴ 'Volunteer Movement in India' in IOR, L/PJ/8/678, 2nd part, see f. 9.

As a result also of this increase in volunteer organisations, both Muslim and Hindu bodies claimed that the other community was arming itself. The fear of communal disturbances was more pronounced after the outbreak of war in 1939 and the increasing communal nature of volunteer groups is closely linked to this vicious circle.²⁵ Political developments related to the war (the ML had been further elevated as official representative of Indian Muslims when Jinnah was offered a seat in the Viceroy's council) turned the simmering tension into something else when prevalent ideas about some form of a post-independent Indian Federation were put on ice, and Pakistan took shape as political demand in 1939 and was made the official ML policy in 1940.²⁶

To exemplify the vicious circle of communal organisation and counter-organisation at least as far as the political discourse was concerned the following example might be given: On the day of a 'Hindu nation celebration' in Poona in 1939, the 'pro-Muslim' policy of the INC and Gandhi was heavily criticised and 'it was pointed out that the Muslims were organising themselves on a large scale under the name of Khaksars, Red Shirts, Blue Shirts, etc. while the Hindus foolishly did nothing.'²⁷ The calls for militias were raised even more loudly now from a variety of platforms - Congress, Hindu Mahasabha, Muslim League, Akalis, student conferences etc.²⁸ In bodies outside the Congress, joining the Indian Defence Force or the Territorial armies in large numbers were discussed and military training should be introduced in schools, many demanded.²⁹

²⁵ From the half-yearly report on volunteer organisations for Delhi province it is visible that all volunteer organisations were increasing in membership or retained at least a steady following (mostly in the case of small, politically negligible bodies), the only one that decreased was the Hindu Sabha Swayam Sevak Dal.

²⁶ The outbreak of the Second World War restored the Muslim League to the position of a serious political force and gave them a second lease of life. For Bengal especially, it has been argued that the HMS and ML were the winners of the war and Quit India as they could attract new sections of supporters. See Sriramanjari, 'Denial, Dissent and Hunger: War-time Bengal, 1942-44', in Biswamoy Pati (ed.), *Turbulent Times, India 1940-1944*, pp. 39-66, see esp. p. 61. See also Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*.

²⁷ Bombay Weekly (BPW) letter, No. 43, dt. 25.10.39, MSA, Home (Spcl), 1009, 1939-1940, f. 67. The speakers included LB Bhopatkar, Dr. Pramanath Bannerji and SL Karandiker.

²⁸ Pointing the finger at the other community's organisation had been common before, but the tone changed around this time in line with the overall political developments.

²⁹ See for instance, BPW 11th Nov. 1939 on the 2nd session of Maharashtra Hindu Youth Conference. at Pandharpur, dt. Sholapur, 5/6th Nov. 1939, in MSA, Home Spcl., 1009, 1939-1940, ff. 83, 85. VD Savarkar called on the approx. 1500 youth present to keep a neutral position in the war but join the British if India was invaded and to raise a Hindu Militia, a 1000 strong in each district as well as join the Indian defence Force and Rifle and Flying Clubs.

Governmental Response to Volunteer Bodies During the War

The attitude of the Government to these bodies, armed and trained as they were, had varied according to the outlook of individual bureaucrats, local governments and major shifts in policy, particularly with the prevalence of liberal reformers after the First World War. When the Second World War commenced, things changed rapidly due to general considerations of the safety and stability of the administration and public tranquillity during the war and, secondly, due to the more aggressive among these outfits, most noteworthy the Khaksars, who can be credited with single-handedly bringing the potential danger of volunteer bodies to the fore of governmental concerns. They became the yardstick by which all other volunteer groups were measured after the Punjab riots (see below).³⁰ Above, we have referred to Mashriqi's (unrealistic) offer of half a million Khaksars for the war effort. While some local officials toyed with the idea, both Sikander and the central government ruled the possibility out. But it hit a raw nerve. Not only did the war demand trained men that had to come from somewhere, but the fear of an actual invasion of India seemed finally to lead to an official endorsement of physical culture and military training, and at the same time an enhanced uneasiness about 'private' armed bodies whose loyalty in a crisis was doubtful.³¹ After France surrendered and with the rising panic in India, the burgeoning volunteer bodies threatened to take on a life of their own, and the states and Governments were seeking means and ways to address their growing concern over 'private armies'.³²

The Khaksar Agitation in the Punjab 1940 and the Government of India's Ban on Military Drill

The Punjab Government, on February 28, 1940, introduced revised orders under rules 58 and 59 of the DoIR, which banned processions of more than 10 people to bear any arms or tools that could be used as arms with the exception of sheathed swords. The second order concerned drilling or

³⁰ SG Ahmad, 'Volunteer Movement in India', IOR, L/PJ/8/678, 2nd part, f. 5.

³¹ Even in East Bengal, compulsory physical culture and drill were introduced in schools with the outbreak of the war. WBSA, IB Branch, file no. 360/38.

³² See official note on 'Volunteer Movement in India', SG Ahmad, dt. 7th Aug. 1940, IOR/L/PJ/8/678, PJ 4618, ff. 4-14.

movements resembling 'military evolutions' with or without arms as well as the wearing of uniforms with a 'colourable resemblance' to official uniforms (with exceptions for officially sanctioned groups and activities).³³ What followed was an impressive campaign against, first these orders, and then the Punjab Government itself led by the Khaksars who saw the orders as an attempt to 'crush' their movement. Mashriqi was arrested after a major clash between police and Khaksars in Lahore, about which more in a moment.³⁴

This debate can be taken in lieu of regulations concerning the volunteers. Communalism was a problem in and of itself, but as far as the Government was concerned it was a problem it was not prepared to waste time on during the war. Well-organised and armed volunteer bodies could pose a serious challenge to the authority of the Government, especially at a juncture when many of its resources and manpower were bound up elsewhere. The Khaksars were, as far as officials were concerned, the closest thing India had to a 'private army'.³⁵ When the Khaksar trouble reached new peaks in Punjab, the call for an all-India solution for the Khaksars in particular and 'private armies' generally was raised.

It is worth having a close look at the campaign in the Punjab as it illustrates the perception of the Government, the close interplay between its various levels and the considerable impact a body like the Khaksars could have on policy-making, especially with the threat of a new civil disobedience movement on the horizon. Beyond that, it also exemplifies the continued strategies of parties, in this case, Jinnah and the ML who initially attempted to find a way to steer the movement into what they considered useful channels. This treatment of volunteers as half mercenary half public worker was a persistent concept.

³³ Exceptions were made for the army and related bodies but also for boy scouts and girl guides and drilling done in governmental schools or with the blessing of the District Magistrate (under Subrule 1 of rule 58, DoIR). See for the order by the Punjab Govt.: IOR L/PJ/12/680, ff. 380-381. On the DoIR and other legal war-time measures affecting labour or enterprise (such as the Essential Services Maintenance Ordinance of 1941), see also Sanjoy Bhattacharya's *Propaganda and Information in Eastern India 1939-45 - A Necessary Weapon of War*, Richmond: Curzon, 2001, pp 40-41, 91-96.

³⁴ In a later Assembly debate, the legitimacy of Mashriqi's arrest under the Defence of India Rules was questioned. It boiled down to the question of how exactly Mashriqi being at large would compromise the efficient pursuit of the war (that being the prerequisite for the DoIR to apply). Reginald Maxwell replied that the embittering of communal feeling could lead to riots and any large-scale riot would indeed compromise the war effort. IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 60-61.

³⁵ Note by Reginald Maxwell, 2nd Feb. 1942 in NAI, Home, Poll. 21/10/41, Annex.

When the Punjab Government promulgated its orders, they were said to be welcomed by most quarters.³⁶ That these rules were first introduced in Punjab can be attributed to variety of reasons, but it may be opportune here to point out the peculiar situation the Unionist-led Government found itself in around the time. The Unionist Party which had overseen the fate of the Punjab was an amalgamated group of Hindu and Muslim landowners and tribal leaders enjoying a close alliance with the British Raj. After the 1935 GoI Act and the enlarged franchise, the elitist Unionist Party had to cast around for new means of popular support and thus came closer to the Muslim League for a time.³⁷ The ML had never managed to establish a firm foothold here until Pakistan became an important issue, since its appeal to Muslim solidarity could not trump the cross-sectional agrarian interests and the tribal identity in rural Punjab. Among urban Muslims, the League was not the natural champion of the lower classes. In Punjabi towns, the communal divide was stark, and the urban Hindus would support the Mahasabha before the Congress, making the latter a negligible player in the province.³⁸ The Khaksars in the Punjab filled a specific representational gap. Among the Khaksars, we find a marked urban dominance, multi-class membership, with the leadership being mostly middle-class Muslims with a lower middle-class following, which can be seen as a consequence of the failure of the Unionist Government (with its agrarian outlook) to adequately represent the interests of those economically precarious urban sections.

When the Khaksar trouble erupted, Jinnah was caught between opposing poles that had to be kept together: losing the popular appeal of the Khaksars would mean a set-back in the aspirations of es-

³⁶ The exception to this was the Congress who argued that the measure was directed against nationalist movements. The Punjab Government expected serious defiance of the ban only from the Khaksars and the Akali Sena. The ban on uniforms was later effectively dropped by the Punjab Government owing to difficulties of enforcing it and the legal problems of defining a 'uniform' - any set of trousers and shirt in uniform colours could constitute a uniform, and with one particular outfit banned, another could be relatively easily imposed. Letter by Sikander Hyat-Khan to Sir Henry Craik, dt 7th Apr. 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 270.

³⁷ The opposing views regarding the Empire caused a falling out later. On the Unionist Party and a structural analysis of Muslim interests in the Punjab, see David Page, *Prelude to Partition. The Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control 1920-1932*, (reprint with a new introduction in *Partition Omnibus*), New Delhi: OUP, 2002 (1st ed. 1982). The Unionist and the Raj founded their alliance on common denominators such as the shared dislike for a potential strong centre emerging after the reforms of the 1920s and a preference for provincialised power.

³⁸ See Ian Talbot, 'British Rule in the Punjab, 1849-1947 - Characteristics and consequences', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 19, 2, 1991, pp. 203-221, esp. pp. 211-214.

tablishing the ML on a firmer popular footing, losing the Unionist support would mean a severe loss of parliamentary influence, the traditional sphere of activity of the League. The Khaksar riots led to a severe de-stabilisation of the game of high politics at this point.

In the Punjab and UP especially, quasi-military corps were set up to counter the Khaksars thus helping to turn those provinces into communal battlegrounds.³⁹ Officials were worried that the Khaksars caused the other communities to take up drill and that therefore, the personal secretary to the Viceroy, Laithwaite, thought it would be advantageous if the Khaksars 'would go' and that Mashriqi might have to be 'put down' since, after his success in the UP, he had gotten a 'swollen head'.⁴⁰ When the ban on drilling was introduced, Mashriqi interpreted this as an attempt to crush his movement. In a press statement on 5th March, he argued that the Khaksars were a social service and religious organisation and that their military-style marches through the city were, in fact, part of that service; that, furthermore, the organisation had never caused any trouble and the Government. He called on his followers to continue their social service and 'night prayers' (ominous torch marches the Khaksar performed) and argued that the sharpened spades were merely tools of social service and not 'weapons'.⁴¹ An article in *Al-Islah* condemned the orders and threatened that the movement would not be stopped until every Khaksar had 'bathed in blood'. The swashbuckling 'orders' blustered that if the Punjab Government declared war, then 30,000 Khaksars would descend on Lahore and 'lay a bed of corpses round Sir Sikander's charpoy'.⁴² Mashriqi

³⁹ Cf. 'Volunteer Organizations in British India. Statement A. Regional Distribution Jaipur,' IOL, R/2/164/231. The Ghazi corps were described as 'shock-troops' set up specifically to counter the Khaksars. See above.

⁴⁰ Letter by Laithwaite to Linlithgow, dt. 29th Feb. 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 358-360, see also f. 354 on Mashriqi's attitude. The personal Secy to the Viceroy, Laithwaite, reported that the ban on military drill implemented first by the Punjab Government had been ready for some time, but the Government had decided to wait with the implementation until after Muharram.

⁴¹ On 12th March, Mashriqi made known his intentions to file a test case against the orders, arguing that they could not apply to the Khaksars, who did not do any kind of military drill - their knives and spades being merely instruments of social service, and their processions formed part of that service. He referred to a case in the Delhi court against 6 Khaksars where the ruling, such as Mashriqi deigned to understand it, was that the knives those men carried were not weapons since they were sued for social service. Cf. IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 348.

⁴² Official note to Mr. Simms, Home Dept, from IB, Home Dept, GoI, dt. 18th June 1940, NAI, Home, Poll, 33/8/40, 1940, f. 3. For quote see IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 368-363 (*al-Islah*). A security from the new press at Delhi was then again demanded for *Al-Islah*. The security was not deposited, rather the *Ali-Islah* moved again, this time to Calcutta, see NAI, GoI, Home Poll, 33/8/40, 1940, ff. 3-7. *Al-Islah* had then just re-opened at Delhi following a demand for security payments in Lahore.

also wrote to the Viceroy himself, pleading with him to intervene in the uncalled for attempt of the Punjab Government to crush his movement.⁴³

The amir issued his orders from Delhi throughout the agitation.⁴⁴ In accordance with his plans, the Khaksars held a procession through Lahore contravening the imposed ban by wearing their belchas and marching in formation to the Shahi Mosque, apparently to say their prayers on March 19th, a few days before the AIML session was to start there. In the post-hoc descriptions, the Khaksars upon encountering a police line simply attacked with their sharpened spades. The local magistrate, described as a stout-hearted man of Afghan descent, stated that the jatha 'came on like wolves'⁴⁵ and the police opened fire. The confrontation left 26 Khaksars dead, 50 injured while three policemen died and 12 were injured, some seriously.⁴⁶ The Governor, Craik, who visited all the injured later on, described the Khaksars as 'mostly the scum of the Peshawar bazars'. A large percentage of them did hail from the NWFP and most were probably of lower classes in accordance with the Khaksar recruiting pool.⁴⁷

An Infantry regiment was called in to hold the Fort and a local curfew and restrictions on gatherings larger than five were imposed. Immediately after this incident, the Khaksars were declared an unlawful organisation in the Punjab under the CrLAA, and Mashriqi was arrested the same night in Delhi.⁴⁸

⁴³ Predictably, the Viceroy's office argued that this was a provincial matter in which His Excellency could not intervene. Laithewaite had attested Mashriqi to be 'almost mad' and, on the advice of Sir Sikander, declined the interview with Linlithgow that Mashriqi had asked for. For Mashriqi's letter to the Viceroy, see IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 350. For the reply and letter by Laithewaite, see *ibid.* ff. 358.

⁴⁴ A tactic which elicited from Sikander and Punjab's Governor (1938-1941), Sir Henry Duffield Craik unanimously the assertion that Mashriqi was a coward and Craik called him a 'most dangerous fanatic' in his correspondence. See Secret and personal letter from HD Craik to Lord Linlithgow, dt 8 March 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, see ff. 344. Letter from Craik to Linlithgow, dt. 20th March 1940, in *ibid.*, f. 325.

⁴⁵ Craik to Linlithgow, dt. 20th March 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, see f. 322.

⁴⁶ Both the Superintendent and his Deputy were reported to be in a critical condition. One of them died from his injuries in the hospital, the Superintendent lost an eye and was later sent home to England.

⁴⁷ Craik to Linlithgow, dt 22nd March 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 313. These were allegedly mostly Khaksars from outside the province (see below). However, local sources report that initial attempts to persuade NWFP Khaksars to go to Lahore met with little response, that the UP Khaksars were almost inactive and in Hyderabad local leaders ordered Khaksars to go to Lahore individually (see above). See NDC, SPPAI, Vol. LXII, 4th May, No. 18, 1940, p. 249.

⁴⁸ IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 375, 374. The Punjab Government wrote to the neighbouring states, asking them to implement similar bans. Delhi did so without delay, while NWFP, Sind and UP argued that

Raids of all surrounding Khaksar offices and their HQ at Ichhra followed.⁴⁹ During the raid on the Khaksar office, a volume with hundreds of photographs, mostly reproductions from *Al-Islah*, published around 1938 as 'Al-Sirat ul-Mustaqim' was recovered showing the Khaksar's military operations from marches and camps to sham fights, as well as photos of armies or armed bodies from other countries including Turkey and Persia and Germany. The latter included a double-page picture of a march through Berlin of Hitler's Labour Corps armed with the spades that Mashriqi claimed were due to his inspiration. This was taken as further indication of the unholy nexus that had been raised earlier.⁵⁰ Craik advised Linlithgow afterwards that it was now time to restrain Mashriqi for a good long time and suppress the movement - after Lucknow and Lahore he had little doubt that 'its methods are those of the Nazi storm-troopers on the model of which it is founded.'⁵¹

Lahore city was relatively quiet immediately after the clash.⁵² But another incident with the police opening fire took place a few days later, and still another a few days after that in Multan district.⁵³

Bodies of Khaksars remained in Lahore, holed up in mosques from where the government saw no

there was currently no need to ban the Teehrik. Apparently, they had little desire to provoke the Khaksars and possibly reap the whirlwind when the former had caused no particular trouble to their governments. Linlithgow, too, said that compared to the Congress, the Khaksars had caused Government so far little trouble, even though they made him uneasy due to the potential this 'thoroughly well organized movement' exhibited. He thought that in the event of civil disobedience and the communal trouble that likely follow, Government might have to deal with the Khaksars to stop them from dealing with their opponents in turn. Letter by Linlithgow to Zetland, dt. 29th Mar 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 285.

⁴⁹ HQ consisted of two houses, one, according to the report, occupied mainly by school boys and college students who could be persuaded to surrender. The main building had to be tear-gassed since the inhabitants were prepared to resist the police - they argued that the son of Mashriqi was inside and that he was 'their Prince of Wales'. About a dozen broke rank before the gassings started, however. Cf. Bourne's report in IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 328-332.

⁵⁰ Cf. Bourne's report at IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 328-332 and for the photos see letter of Craik to Linlithgow, dt. 22nd March 1940, *ibid*, ff. 313-314, and more details in a report by JTM Bennett to Craik, dt. 4th Apr. 1940, *ibid*, f. 279.

⁵¹ Craik to Linlithgow, dt. 20th March 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, see f. 325. On the allegations of an Axis connection, see below.

⁵² A pre-censorship order imposed on newspapers regarding the firing, curfews and patrols apparently showed some effect. Linlithgow judged that by 'judicious' censorship, Govt was able to suppress malicious rumours, see letter Linlithgow to Craik, dt. 21st Mar 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 337. The press reaction was described as satisfactory - with only two Muslim papers classing the dead Khaksars as *shahids*, while the 'Hindu press' criticised its Muslim pendent for encouraging the Khaksars. Craik to Linlithgow, dt 22nd Mar. 1940, *ibid*, f. 314

⁵³ Here, the Khaksars concerned were from Sindh. 'Volunteer Movement in India - Khaksars', IB report dt 7th Aug. 1940, in IOR, L/PJ/8/678, see ff. 10-11.

possibility of removing them due to the antagonism that any clash or bloodshed within a mosque would cause.⁵⁴ The Khaksars made this into a regular strategy. But temples and gurdwaras also functioned often as temporary HQ or training grounds for other movements, as both sides knew full well the implications should the executive interfere in the internal business of religious bodies. In many cases, such arrangements were based on an active partnership with or silent sympathy by the religious authorities; but in the case of the Khaksars local maulvis were supposedly less than happy about it.⁵⁵

A point repeatedly raised in the official correspondence after the incident was the 'superior' organisation and military discipline and the resulting danger exhibited by the Khaksars.⁵⁶ This motivated the DM to advocate the use of gunfire more freely⁵⁷ while the Punjab Governor started relying on tear-gas squads to bring down 'recalcitrant' Khaksars even in public places - a method used for the first time in India to arrest eight Khaksars in a Lahore bazaar in March.⁵⁸

Beyond the actual campaign itself, the Khaksar agitation upset notions of the stability of the Government and undermined the aspired-to Muslim unity at the critical time just before the ML session at Lahore. The 'riot' complicated things in at least two ways: it threatened the holding of the Muslim League session and to split the already divided Punjabi ML. The ML session at Lahore

⁵⁴ In early April there were said to be about 80-100 men left in some of the major mosques in Lahore, see L/PJ/8/680, f. 281.

⁵⁵ Craik implied strongly that even the local maulvis wanted the Khaksars gone from their mosques but were powerless to effect this.

⁵⁶ IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 432. The possible military connection is an interesting one. Official sources claim that there were a considerable number of ex-soldiers in the Khaksars. See Letter from Penna Lall, secy UP Govt., to E Conran-Smith, dt. 7th Oct. 1939, IOR, L/PJ/12/680, f. 432. The Khaksars also seemed to attract disillusioned members of other bodies (Congress, Ahrars, Red Shirts, see below). See also the petition to the Viceroy to withdraw the ban on the Khaksars by one subedar, a veteran of the Mesopotamia campaign, who collected 1,019 signatures from Lahore residents. Petition from Fazal Muhammad, Farukh Ganj, Lahore to the Governor-General in India, New Delhi, dt. 15th April 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 244-255.

⁵⁷ The DM advised that in future it would be necessary to keep Khaksar bodies at a safe distance (by opening fire if necessary), since police armed only with lathis were no match for their dangerous weapons. For an account of the confrontation see the report, dt. 20th Mar. 1940 of the DM, FC Bourne. Bourne had previously been Chief-Secy to Craik. The Superintendent, Gainsford, recovered but lost an eye, while the Deputy died in the hospital. See IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 328-332, and f. 267.

⁵⁸ Craik successfully argued the necessity of tear-gas squads that should be set up all over India afterwards and the Viceroy and Secretary of State were similarly inclined. The Viceroy was especially worried about losing his police commanders and administrators to violent incidents. See letters by Craik to Linlithgow, 22nd Mar 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 312-318. See also Extract from private letter of Linlithgow to Zetland, dt. 25th Mar 1940, in *ibid*, f. 298.

did take place however, passing the famous Lahore Resolution, and it also demanded the revoking of the ban on the Khaksars while simultaneously expressing sympathy for all the victims (Khaksars and police) and called for an impartial investigation into the incident while promising to take further action afterwards. The resolution was moved by Jinnah from the chair with no room for discussion or seconding. It was a political master-stroke pacifying - for the moment - all factions of the League, the Khaksar sympathisers and the Sikander faction - while clamping down on any dissension that would have arisen from a debate. Not a small amount of politicking was done before-hand to ensure this relatively benign outcome.⁵⁹ Before the clash, Jinnah had attempted to smooth things over between the Khaksars and the Government and started acting as a go-between, apparently trying to avert a further rift in his own party which was already straining under opposing factions, and without alienating those sections of society sympathising with the Khaksars.⁶⁰ The Punjab ML was split into, simplistically put, a pro-Sikander moderate section (Sikander then being a member of the AIMLWC) and an anti-British section opposing him. The Lahore incident brought these divisions out more clearly with some Leaguers (and section of 'the public') taking up a decidedly anti-Sikander and, at times, pro-Khaksar position.⁶¹ The agitation, it was further-

⁵⁹ Sikander Hyat-Khan, the Premier of Unionist-reigned Punjab, and the Indian Government had been very apprehensive about the impact of the clash on the session. Jinnah refused to postpone the session, however. To forestall more drastic resolutions, a (carefully limited) enquiry was to be held into the incident. Sikander had threatened to resign from the League along with all his followers should a resolution unfavourable to his Government be passed. See Craik to Linlithgow, dt. 21st March and another letter on 22nd March 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 339- 342, 312-317, see ff. 312-13.

⁶⁰ Linlithgow reported after a talk with Jinnah that the ML and conservative Muslims were anxious to avoid a serious confrontation between the Punjab Government and the Khaksars. Jinnah had met with Mashriqi after the ban was promulgated and promised to try and intercede on behalf of the Khaksars. Cf. NAI, Home, Poll, 74/6/1940-Poll(I), ff.19-23. See also telegrams between the new Khaksar *amir* Nami and Jinnah in June/July in IOR/L/PJ/12/680, ff. 139, and Jinnah's statements to the press and newspaper articles, for instance report in the *Hindustan Times*, 29th June 1940, 'Mr. Jinnah and the Khaksars - Prepared to bring about settlement'; and text of statement issued by Jinnah to the press on 9th May 1940, in *ibid.*, ff. 139-136. For Mashriqi's rendering of this see letter by *idem*, dt. Vellore jail, 23rd Aug. 1940, in NAI, Home, Poll, 74/1/40-Poll(I) &KW, ff. 80-81. In his statement, Jinnah emphasised that the ML had no power over the organisation and had to intervene purely on the point of view that it was mainly a Muslim body. He issued the statement since numerous telegrams 'from influential persons' had urged him to negotiate with the Punjab Govt. on behalf of the Khaksars. See for another element in Jinnah's strategy below.

⁶¹ Craik to Linlithgow, dt 22nd March 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 312-317; and Craik to Linlithgow, 23rd March 1940, *ibid.*, f. 309-311; and another letter between the two on 24th March 1940, ff. 304-307, see also f. 326 regarding the different factions. A number of persons involved in the Punjab Government had sympathy for the Khaksars, two MLA's had actively belonged to the organisation but had resigned as the confrontation shaped up. See Secret and personal letter from HD Craik to Lord Linlithgow, dt. 8th March 1940, *ibid.*, ff. 343-346, 343-44. A number of people called for Sikander's ousting. Earlier on, the AIMLWC had censored Sikander for indiscipline in respect to

more feared, might give the Congress an angle to criticise the Unionist Government.⁶² For a while, Sikander's Government and the Punjab ML seemed to hang in the balance over the Khaksar agitation. Some leaders were convinced that the whole Khaksar agitation was an attempted coup d'etat by a faction within the League.⁶³

Jinnah played a difficult game at this point: he seemed to share the belief, or at least said as much to Craik, that Mashriqi was 'hardly sane, immune to reason and dangerously fanatical'. But the Khaksars themselves could be put to good work in the field of social service just like the thousands of Congress volunteers were, he stated, as there was no reason the Muslims should not have an equal number of volunteers for such tasks. This might be achieved once he could find some sober men to assume control of the Khaksars.⁶⁴ Craik and Jinnah thought, rather optimistically, that Mashriqi's days were done and that he could simply be supplanted.

The casting around for additional volunteers mirrors the search of the Mahasabha at this point for an eligible volunteer organisation - but ML as well as HMS were hampered in these attempts by their lack of mass mobilisation, and their attempts in this direction tended to stagnate. The ML's National Guards were hibernating at this time⁶⁵, leaving the League again with just the rump body of Muslim League volunteers as self-sacrificing workers. On the other hand, Jinnah had to tread lightly - the League's idiom and urban base had been trumped by the agrarian appeal of the Unionists time and again⁶⁶, and Jinnah tried his best, it would seem, to not alienate either his prospective recruits nor the local political strongmen.

party politics. Phillips Talbot, *An American Witness to India's Partition*, New Delhi, Sage: 2007, pp. 75-76.

⁶² Linlithgow to Zetland, dt. 21st March 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 299-301.

⁶³ Sikander, Craik, Jinnah and others within the Unionist Government were sure that the Khaksar incident was an one instigated by interested parties within the League in an attempt to topple Sikander or at least undermine his sway. Linlithgow to Zetland, 29th March 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 285; see also Secret and Personal letter by Craik to Linlithgow, 22nd April 1940, *ibid*, see f. 229. The Nawab of Mamdot (chairman of session), Mian Abdul Aziz, Barkat Ali and KL Gauba mentioned in this connection.

⁶⁴ He agreed with Craik that the military side of their operations, from drilling to sham fights, was dangerous. Talk between Jinnah and Craik, reported by Craik to Linlithgow, letter dt. 25th March 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 294-5. The Muslim League volunteers were, not very different in this, apart, maybe, from the mock wars.

⁶⁵ See below for details.

⁶⁶ For a concise and accurate summary of the underlying dynamic that fuelled the Unionist Party in the Punjab, see for instance Ian Talbot, 'British Rule in the Punjab 1849 -1947', esp. pp- 208-212.

At the tea party of Sikander where all of this was discussed, the other man present was Nawab Bahadur Yar Jung⁶⁷, who attempted to place himself as the man in the middle - a Khaksar leader with sympathies for the Government, and thus a potential candidate to replace Mashriqi. But a strong section among the Khaksars was opposed to his leadership as he was seen as Sikander's man (or an infidel).⁶⁸ Jinnah and Bahadur Yar Jung both pressured Sikander to rescind the ban on the Khaksars, and Sikander, rather harried, negotiated with Jung in Mashriqi's place. British officials were prepared to drop the ban only if drilling, carrying arms were given up and Mashriqi removed as the leader, and Sikander seconded these notions.⁶⁹ The Khaksar second tier had different notions.

A flurry of secret meetings of Khaksar leaders followed the arrest of Mashriqi.⁷⁰ New appointments were made, among them a new temporary Amir in Mashriqi's place⁷¹, and the strategy discussed resulting in an ultimatum by the Khaksars to the Government to rescind the ban and make way for negotiations. Should these fail, Mashriqi's orders commanding 30,000 Khaksars and 1,300 Janbaz to Lahore would be implemented by mid-April.⁷² In the long run, the juggling for position among the second-tier leadership became intense and was probably one of the reasons for the slow decline of the movement while Mashriqi was in jail.⁷³

⁶⁷ We have encountered Bahadur Yar Jung above in connection with the Hyderabad Khaksars. See there for details.

⁶⁸ Craik to Linlithgow, 31st March 1940, ff. 290-291. Craik stated that the conditions under which a ban on Khaksars could be rescinded: there should not be any drilling, no arms, and some 'trust-worthy' people would have to be in command (i.e. Mashriqi would have to go). Craik to Linlithgow, dt. 3rd April 1940 IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 282-3. See also letter by Craik to Sikander Hyat-Khan, bid, ff. 276-7.

⁶⁹ Craik to Linlithgow, 3rd April 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/680 f. 281.

⁷⁰ The first was in Peshawar where a new hour zero was planned for 19th March. Another meeting was in Meerut on 28th March, and one more in Delhi the very next day with a core of people attending all of them plus local leaders. See reference below.

⁷¹ Dr. Muhammad Ismail Nami, the *Idara Ullia-e-Hind*, a homeopathist from Icchra and close ally of the Allama, became the new amir, appointed by Mashriqi upon his arrest and affirmed at the Delhi meeting. He ordered a Khaksar march on Lahore to continue the agitation unto the last man alive, since the Govt would not accept the leadership of Mashriqi (this was in line with earlier orders by Mashriqi). 600 Khaksars were reported on the move shortly after. See IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 236, 243, 239.

⁷² A police informer claimed that in the Meerut meeting, the possibility of terrorism of individual Khaksars and the option of assassinating Sikander were discussed. The source's reliability is somewhat unclear. On suspected terrorist acts by Khaksars, see Craik to Linlithgow, dt. 3rd April 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 282-3; and summary of a note dt. 20th April 1940 by the CID, Punjab, ibid, f. 231-234.

⁷³ The three main leaders at this time were Mian Ahmad Shah, Dr. Muhammad Ismail Nami and Bashir Ahmad Siddiqi who gave instructions for clashes on 17/18th April, see IOR, L/PJ/680, f. 232-3. Siddiqi was a former Congress member, then Ahrar, before he joined the Khaksars (see below).

The Khaksar campaign simmered on and the Government became restive by late April as no solution to the menace was in sight and new jathas were massing in Rawalpindi mosques amidst fears of further violence.⁷⁴ To pour oil on the fire, the Shahidganj judgement was about to be pronounced, and with it the staying order on Sikh building activities would lapse, making a merger of troubles past and present likely. Finally, with a new CD movement seemingly imminent, Sikander worried that his police, bound up with chasing Khaksar jathas around the Punjab, could not devote enough attention to the Congress threat - all because the Punjab Government had been left alone with the issue while other governments had declined to ban the body then.⁷⁵ Renewed clashes took place from the 17th, not only in Lahore but now at different cities and towns in the province, as a reaction to the communiqué of the Punjab Government which publicised their conditions for the withdrawing of the ban of the Khaksaran. These street-fighting spectacles took the form of small groups of Khaksars emerging from mosques and attacking the police on the scene. The clashes were at times witnessed by thousands of spectators perched on the rooftops of Lahore.⁷⁶ The Khaksars did not always put up a fight, the individual jathas and their commanders - despite the orders by the leaders of the movement issued from their position in UP or NWFP through direct communication or published appeals - sometimes ran away from the police or surrendered peacefully. Many of the Khaksars came from outside, and had by then been playing hide-and-seek with the police for over a month. Some seemed tired by this time. Some batches agreed to depart quietly, usually with their fares being paid as a number of them claimed to be destitute. Khaksars like other volunteers were unpaid workers and long absences from their own home makes it seem unlikely that a majority of these men had very stable jobs or immediate responsibilities, many had to have been self-employed small-time businessmen or unemployed.

Later on a variety of Khaksars leaders would issue orders on their own accord claiming differing degrees of authority to speak for the Khaksars. See 'Note on the Khaksar Movement', dt. 27th Feb. 1941, NAI, GoI, Home, Poll, Appendix to F. 105-N/40.

⁷⁴ Cf. IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 274. These Khaksars were coming from the Frontier Province and other places in small groups making it nearly impossible to police their influx and congregated and merged into larger jathas in the mosques.

⁷⁵ IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 239; and Letter by Craik to Linlithgow, *ibid*, dt. 22nd Apr. 1940, ff. 226-227.

⁷⁶ See letter by Craik to Linlithgow detailing all the confrontations dt. 22nd April 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 222-229.

The method of issuing orders from the sidelines was one which a number of Khaksar leaders adopted in this and later struggles, and some of the incoherency in action and the very wide range of reactions of jathas under pressure stems from the peculiar model of building up a strictly hierarchised, army-like organisation with many of the commanders being absent while the lower strata were broken up into semi-autonomously functioning units and the 'non-commissioned officers', one is tempted to call them, on the spot, acting as they see fit in. The divergence was further compounded by 'freshmen' Khaksars being sent to Lahore as reinforcements in the ongoing cross-border campaign carried out to harry the local Government. Still, the relative obedience to orders is striking: the jathas moved when they were told to, emerged from the mosques on command or kept a low profile as long as no orders arrived. The police encountered problems especially when faced with men from the NWFP, they claimed.⁷⁷ The fanciful racial stereotypes about Frontier men apart, in Lahore city a strong Khaksar contingent stemmed from the NWFP and the face-off was more intense within city limits.⁷⁸

The actual agitation was a far cry from the 30,000 soldiers that the leadership had envisioned. Some jatha leaders scheduled to go to Lahore backed down after reports of the initial clash for fear of arrest (and were dealt with harshly after)⁷⁹. New orders were put in effect during the agitation that Khaksars who disobeyed orders by not going to Lahore would be 'discharged'.⁸⁰ All the orders

⁷⁷ To the chagrin of officials, one of the NWFP Khaksar leaders used the mosque for delivering public speeches.

⁷⁸ All in all, 107 NWFP Khaksars were arrested in Lahore during the first days (only 7 of the UP, and none from Punjab). Another 215 arrests in and around Lahore over the next month were almost evenly distributed between UP and NWFP Khaksars. Summary of a note dt. 20th April 1940 by the CID, Punjab, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 231. According to my best estimate (the official records are contradictory), there were all in all 339 arrests between the 19th March and 10th April, with 114 people coming from the NWFP, 127 from UP and 8 from Punjab. Agitations outside Lahore, especially in Rawalpindi, were sometimes staged exclusively by small batches of local men, including what police called 'bad characters'. During the whole agitation, some 1,700 Khaksars were arrested. See Reuter telegram 'The Khaksar Movement in India', dt. 7th June 1941, Simla, containing a brief summary of the agreement and subsequent events: IOR/L/I/1/628, f. 14. Officials stated that some 2,643 Khaksars (among them quite a number of locals) had disassociated themselves from the movement during this time Craik to Linlithgow, 22nd April 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 229. See also 'Volunteer Movement', 7th Aug. 1940, in IOR, L/PJ/8/678, f. 11.

⁷⁹ Cf. a telegram, from API correspondent(?), Qureshi to Lahore with information from an informer regarding a 'secret conclave of 200 Khaksars in Peshawar' which had decided that action should be taken on the 19th April, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 259. The Salar of Mabreach (?) was degraded for indiscipline, when after the second clash at Lahore, his jatha declined to go to Lahore for fear of being arrested, see *ibid*, f. 239.

⁸⁰ Summary of a note dt. 20th April 1940 by the CID, Punjab, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 223-234.

and will of the leaders, the relatively stringent implementation would be unthinkable without official Khaksar newspapers. *Al-Islah* reserved a special column for orders from HQ and all Khaksars were supposed to follow the journal avidly.

The 'Aligarh Nazi Cell', the Khaksars and the Question of Fascism

Before we conclude this section, we shall have to make a detour to consider events at Aligarh. After the raids, HQ was shifted to Aligarh. The Khaksar presence led to further worries over the so-called 'Aligarh Nazi Cell' started around 1935. A German, Dr. Spieß had headed the 'Nazi cell' for some time, and in 1937 there were public reports drawing attention to the 'brown shirt' troops one of the teachers, Abdul Sattar Kheiri, had organised for the Prophet's birthday.⁸¹ In 1938, there had been a serious clash between Aligarh students and police for which the 'Nazi propagandists' were held responsible. Around the time of the shift of the Khaksar HQ, a renewed activity among the students of Aligarh and some professors said to have strong pro-German leanings and spreading propaganda started preparations for support of the agitation against the Punjab Government. In Aligarh some 500 students had already joined the movement.⁸² In 1941, *The Radiance*, a pro-Khaksar journal, was started from Aligarh. Its editor was one of the students, Nussan Hasan, while Obeidullah Durrani, Amir Hassan and Rafiq Ahmad, teachers at Aligarh University, helped run the paper and had close contact with the inner Khaksar circle. Amir Hassan, a junior lecturer and Muslim League member, had come to notice when delivering a lecture on Hitler and his admirable dedication to Germany in November 1939 (something that would not have drawn much notice

⁸¹ See 'Consideration of the steps to be taken to combat Nazi activities in Aligarh University', in PCJA, 1939/II (= NAI, Home Poll, F. 21/65/39) [no ff. nos]. Kheiri was described here as a 'red-hot' Nazi who supposedly received funds from German firms. Both *The Statesman* (in 1937) and the *Bombay Chronicle* carried articles on the cell. For details on Kheiri, see below. The other active members of the cell were stated to be: Mirza, who, like Kheiri, had a German wife. He was head of the Ecology Department, had studied in Germany in the late 1920s and had attended the Nazi Party Congress at Nürnberg in 1938. He was reported to deliver pro-Nazi lectures to students numbering several hundred in 1938/39 (one of these lectures was published as a pamphlet of the University Muslim League Publication series, entitled 'Modern Germany - A lesson to India'). Then, Zafarul Hasan, professor of philosophy (also claimed to have a German wife). And Abid Ahmad Ali, a lecturer in Arabic.

⁸² Information by Jinnah passed on to Craik, see Craik's letter to Linlithgow, dt. 25th March 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 292-297, see f. 294.

before but at this point was politically not opportune). He was also the one who organised the agitation on behalf of the Khaksars among Aligarh students during the 'Punjab riots'. In a raid on the houses of Aligarh teachers, no incriminating material was found except at the residence of Abdul Sattar Kheiri and his German wife. Their paper, *Spirit of the Time*, carried mostly advertisements by businessmen with known Nazi connections, some of whom were actual members of the foreign section of the NSDAP (especially in Bombay and Calcutta)⁸³. Some of the articles emphasised the similarity between Islam and Nazi ideology.⁸⁴ The trajectory of the 'Kheiri brothers' Abdul Sattar and Abdul Jabbar is among the more fascinating ideological journeys. Starting out as scoutmasters in Beirut before the Hijrat movement, they worked with the Central Powers during the Great War to incite a revolt in India, then travelled to the Soviet Union and worked as ardent Pan-Islamists and returned to Berlin some time in the late 1920s.⁸⁵ Abdul Sattar and his wife were interned until the end of the war in connection with the Aligarh raid.

Claims of a Khaksar-Nazi connection were raised in Congress circles around the outbreak of the Second World War.⁸⁶ The Khaksar ban had been welcomed in the press with reference to the Fascist structure or the 'family resemblance' of the Khaksars with Nazism or their suspected Fifth

⁸³ See MSA, Home (Spcl), 830(I), 1939 and *ibid*, 830-A, 1939. See also 'Consideration of the steps to be taken to combat Nazi activities in Aligarh University', PCJA, CPI List, 1939/II which analyses the circulation of the paper: it was received per subscription mostly by Germans and Muslims in India and abroad, the number of copies being a mere 250 in 1938. It covered Germany, Syria, Egypt, Turkey. In Japan, Mahendra Pratap received copies, in England one copy went to Chatham House, and one copy went to Switzerland. The German, Italian and Japanese Consulates also received copies.

⁸⁴ PCJA, CPI List, 1939/II. See also De, *Khaksar Movement*, Vol. II, p. 77. Shan Muhammad has tried to claim that the Aligarh teachers and Kheiri in particular were hapless victims of the Government's paranoia. See his *Khaksar Movement in India*, pp. 97-112, and pp. 149-157, one of the many blatant whitewash jobs in Muhammad's book (who also liked to claim that the Khaksars were strictly non-communal, benign nationalists). While the paranoia of the Government is undoubted, the connections between certain German agents and some of the anti-Imperialists in these circles went deeper than mere opportunism - the Nazis were one among the viable (because successful) movements personifying some transcendental, universal law (see the discussion above).

⁸⁵ See Majid Siddiqi, 'Bluff, doubt and fear: The Kheiri brothers and the colonial state, 1904-45', *Indian Economic & Social History Review*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1987, pp. 233-263. Abdul Sattar Kheiri and his brother Abdul Jabbar Kheiri during the Great War went to Istanbul where they worked for the Indian Independence Committee before they fell out with Har Dayal, who had been sent there by the German authorities. The Kheiris claimed that Hardayal was anti-Muslim and impossible to work with. After the war they both travelled to the Soviet Union, only to return to Berlin and work for the Pan-Islamist movement that used the former prison camp for Orientals at Wünsdorf as their headquarters. See on the camp Heike Liebau, 'The German Foreign Office', in Franziska Roy et al (eds), *When the War began We Heard of Several Kings*, pp. 96-129. Abdul Sattar Kheiri became one of the (relatively few) ideologically committed Fascists. Kheiri died in 1945 impoverished after his long detention during the war.

⁸⁶ Raja Narendra Nath, a respected Congress leader of Lahore, put his name to a pamphlet of compiled

Column activities resounded in most press reports.⁸⁷ A rumour had become prevalent in the Punjab that the organisation was secretly funded by one of the hostile powers, supposedly Nazi Germany, to act as a Fifth Column in India.⁸⁸ Malcolm Darling, after interrogating enemy aliens in 1940, believed that the Khaksars were actually funded by German sources.⁸⁹ The theme of Fascist and especially Nazi links of the Khaksars was one that was raised time and again by officials, and more so, the Congress. When the former *Reichsbank* chief Dr. Schacht visited India in 1939, it was claimed he had donated several thousand rupees to the Khaksars, and Nehru urged the Secretary of State to investigate the matter.⁹⁰ It was not the only moment of deep suspicion, though.⁹¹ Mashriqi retained a curious double discourse regarding the supposed fascist antecedents of his group: he distanced himself from the Nazis whenever such accusations were raised and offered support for the British war effort, but he never disavowed his claim that he had briefly met Hitler on his Tazkirah 'world tour' in 1926, where, Mashriqi boasted he found that Hitler had read Mashriqi's work, hence the assertion that 'Herr Hitler' took the inspiration for his movement from the Allama – a bold twist on the old impact-response model of colonialism.⁹²

extracts of Mashriqi's utterances (assembled around the time of the Punjab riots in early 1940), and in this accused the Khaksars of adhering to the cult of violence and Mashriqi himself of wanting to 'crush the Hindus [to] start once again the Mohammedan domination on Hindustan', an assessment shared generally by the Congress and the wider nationalist press. An exhaustive note on the Khaksar Movement - By an Old Congressman, in IOR, L/PJ/8/680. The pamphlet was actually compiled by the editor of the 'Tej', Deshbandhu Gupta, but for greater effect was brought out under Narendranath's name, see also letter by Craik to Linlithgow, dt. 8th April 1940, in *ibid*, f. 268-9.

⁸⁷ See the various reports in IOR, L/I/1/629, ff. 7-13. Such notions were expressed in the *Ajmal*, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *The Tribune*, *The Times of India*, *The Leader*, the *Hindustan Times*, *The Bombay sentinel* (of course), *The Tribune*, *The Sind Observer* and similar Congress-leaning or majority nationalist publications. The *Inquilab* toed a line in which they criticised the concrete Khaksar activities and the ascribed lack of control over their own 'excitable elements' while expressing some sympathy. While the *Sai-Ful-Islam*, a pro-Muslim league Tamil by-weekly, claimed that the Khaksars were an un-Islamic movement as Mashriqi claimed to have non-Muslim members and the ritual of blood pledges went against the tenets of Islam. The 'ulama generally praised the Government for the ban.

⁸⁸ The report made it into some newspapers and a question to this effect was raised by a Congress MLA in the Assembly in April 1939. The Government of India could find no supporting evidence at the time. The newspapers initially carrying the story were the *Daily Telegraph* 'Semi-Military Movements Funds', and *News Chronicle*, 'Foreign Cash for Frontier Movement?', both dt. 19th April 1939. For the Assembly question and Govt's answer, see IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 461- 467, 458-459, see especially the telegram from Gov-Genl to Secy of State for India, Simla, 19th May 1939, in *ibid*, f. 458. Questions about funds came up repeatedly, and in 1939 it was claimed that the Khaksar had received no less than Rs. 17 lakhs from the Nazi Party and had taken the spade as a symbol in reference to the Nazis, whose labour corps famously used the same.

⁸⁹ Secret and Personal letter by Craik to Linlithgow, dt. 23th April 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 237-238.

⁹⁰ 'Note on the The Khaksar Movement', IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff. 461-2. See also 'Nazi and Fascist Propaganda'

The extent of the alleged Nazi connection of the Khaksars themselves or the Aligarh cell is not easy to assess.⁹³ The question of actual Nazis is one repeatedly suspected but never proven to such an extent that the Government was able to prosecute the Khaksars on this count. In the context of the war, there were serious fears that even if it did not constitute a Fifth column now it might become just that in due course.⁹⁴ Mashriqi himself denied the claim hotly in 1939/40, saying that his was a peaceful movement.⁹⁵ The most lucid statement in this respect may be that of the under-secretary to the Indian Government, Olver, a sceptic of the Khaksar-Axis connection, who wrote:

It seems to me undeniable that the Khaksars, in common with, and perhaps to a somewhat greater extent than the various other communal volunteer organisations [this included the Congress movement] in India, are pervaded with a spirit which closely resembles the spirit of, for instance, the early days of Nazi Germany, particularly in their worship of physical fitness, discipline and arising out of that force, as ends in themselves. That the Khaksars look with admiration on some of the totalitarian features of the Nazi regime is also [...] undeniable; but I think that this follows [...] from their general philosophy, and also results in a certain correspondence of outward forms.⁹⁶

The common explanation for such phenomena is a reference to reactions to modernity, in which the peripheral societies react to blue-prints transferred from the 'originating' society, this Weberian

ganda in India', in *Bombay Sentinel*, 25th July 1939 in *Bombay Sentinel*, 13th July 1939, in MSA, Home (Spcl), 830(1), 1939, ff. 63, 67-68, see esp. ff. 67-68 on Dr Schacht's activities in Bombay.

⁹¹ See below.

⁹² Just to complete the show of eclecticism it may be pointed out that Mashriqi also put out that he had met Einstein and his wife and had in-depth discussions with him, based on the mathematics which Tazkirah had taken as a basis but gone beyond- See Amalendu De, *Khaksar Movement*, Vol. I, p. 27-28.

⁹³ The colonial Government was extremely nervous at this point about 'enemy aliens', Axis propaganda and possible Fifth columnists. Their own analysis of the situation is naturally warped by this. Apart from the famous Berlin broadcasts, there were extensive activities of a handful of Nazi agents in India, links with Indian businessmen who had NSDAP memberships, subsidised agitators, such as in the case of the 'Faqir of Ipi', or propaganda funded by the Nazis as in the case of the Iranian Saif Azad and his papers *Iran Bastan* and *Salar-e-Hind* along with 'autochthone' admirers of Fascism after the onset of the war. See the paper 'Lokhandi Morcha' [Iron front] by the 25-year old Madhva Kashinath Damley from Yawat, Poona. Cf MSA, Home (Spcl) 830(1), esp. ff. 83-87, see also the Lokhand Morcha article 'The Institution of the House of Fasci & Corporations', dt. 27th July 1939, in *ibid*, ff. 87-90. For the *Salar-e-Hind*, cf. 'Nazi and Fascist Propaganda in India', in *Bombay Sentinel*, 25th July 1939 and 'Nazi and Fascist Propagandists in India - More revelations of Their Mischievous Activities', in *Bombay Sentinel*, 13th July 1939, MSA, Home (Spcl), 830(1), 1939, ff. 63, 67-68, and 65-66.

⁹⁴ These claims were made by two German internees, Schulz and Baron von Ehrenfels, both held at the Ahmednagar camp for enemy aliens. Ehrenfels claimed he had the information from Dr. Oswald Urchs, an important Nazi agent in Calcutta. See 'Note on the Khaksars', dt. 28th May 1940 in NAI, Home Poll., 111/40, f. 95. See also 'Nazi and Fascist Propagandists in India - More revelations of Their Mischievous Activities', in *Bombay Sentinel*, 13th July 1939, esp. p. 9. See also statement by Maxwell on 2nd Feb. 1942, NAI, Home, Poll 21/10/41, annex A.

⁹⁵ Mashriqi in a speech at a Khaksar camp in Gujarat on 24th June 1939, re-iterated in *Al-Islah*, dt. 31st

rendering being obviously reductionist.⁹⁷ The overt references to Hitler and Mussolini that get recorded due to the particular attention the colonial state or researchers pay them tends to overlook the plethora of legitimising claims raised by political actors. While actors such as Mashriqi had rather specific tastes, even his citation of the SS together with the Sokols (who, for all their Social Darwinist impetus went through different political phases but, in the end, strove for a democratic Government) reveals an eclecticism that is neither random nor is it based on some 'misunderstanding' of ideologies by spectators in far-off countries (which would continue a line of argument about 'colonial mimicry').

This finally brings us to the question of fascism.⁹⁸ I tend towards an appreciation of the fuzzy realm of tendencies, some of which ultimately fed into Fascism or 'National Socialism' - including militarism, discipline, anti-individualism coupled with an emphasis on the necessity of the individual as a part of the organicist whole, strong leadership tending towards a fascination with dictatorship and radical nationalism - taken together this almost reads like a Fascist Minimum already. The problem is that fascism, despite its chimeric nature, easily becomes an analytical singularity which distorts everything around it by the pull of its gravitational mass. Theories on 'generic' fascism' can state that something is or is not-yet Fascism. Its proponents try to eliminate the time-bound, 'non-essential' features of Fascism – which are precisely those features and characteristics we are here mainly interested in.⁹⁹ Bosworth rightly guarded against ideal-typical definitions of

July 1940 (before the settlement of Khaksars and Punjab Govt.), See NAI, Home, Poll., 33/8/40, f. 21.

⁹⁶ Note by JL Olver, 17th Oct. 1943, NAI, Home, Poll, 28/5/43, ff. 20-21.

⁹⁷ See below.

⁹⁸ On relevant studies regarding youth engaged with (the continuum) of Fascism, see for instance: Michael H. Kater, *Hitler-Jugend*, Darmstadt 2005; Arno Klönne, *Jugend im Dritten Reich: Die Hitler-Jugend und ihre Gegner*, Köln: PapyRossa, 1999; Alfons Kenkmann, *Wilde Jugend: Lebenswelt grossstädtischer Jugendlicher zwischen Weltwirtschaftskrise, Nationalsozialismus, und Währungsreform*, Essen: Klartext, 2002; Thomas Koebner et al (eds), 'Mit uns zieht die neue Zeit'. *Der Mythos Jugend*, Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1985; Jürgen Reulecke, 'Hat die Jugendbewegung den Nationalsozialismus vorbereitet?' Zum Umgang mit einer falschen Frage', in: Wolfgang Krabbe (ed.), *Politische Jugend in der Weimarer Republik* (Dortmunder Historische Studien, Bd. 7), Bochum: Universitätsverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer, 1993, pp. 222-243. Eve Rosenhaft, *Beating the Fascists?* Walter Laqueur, *Die deutsche Jugendbewegung: eine historische Studie*, Köln: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1978 (in English: *Young Germany: a History of the German Youth Movement*, New York: Basic Books, 1962).

⁹⁹ A prominent exponent of this approach is Roger Griffin who sees Fascism as a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism, from which he tries to eject all 'non-essential' elements of Fascism, for him these are interwar peculiarities like leader cult and paramilitary style. See Roger Griffin, *Fascism*, Oxford et al: OUP, 1995, see esp. chp 1; see also Stanley Payne for the attempt to define a

Fascism since they extract the phenomenon from its context.¹⁰⁰ I propose that we might find it analytically more helpful to look at the specificity of this moment and the fascination radiating from certain elements that can be associated with fascism and the discarding of others. Hanna Arendt's observations regarding notions of politics, progress and scientific thought in the nineteenth and twentieth century are pertinent here (especially since her analysis seems to foreshadow something like Foucault's genealogy)¹⁰¹. By focussing on a diverse, even chaotic conglomerate of influences and ideas without prescribing any linear, teleological development, we can see these debates as constituting a field of force that actors in India could selectively interact with because of the affective recognition established through conditions that even if not strictly alike were recognisable and interlinked in a self-consciously globalised world.¹⁰² Examples provided by movements such as the Black Shirts and Sokols (as a movement exhibiting features of tribal nationalism not unlike some of the focus on morality and inwardness of the Indian nationalists), but not limited to them congealed into discursive clusters of successful/dynamic movements in an interconnected world that could serve as models also thanks to the positivist notions of the laws of history and progress.

'generic' form of Fascism which for him is especially marked by a rejection of rationalism, materialism and egalitarianism, replaced by a philosophical vitalism, idealism and the metaphysics of the will. Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995. For a concise summary of some of the debates, see Kevin Passmore, *Fascism: A Very Short Introduction*, New Delhi et al: OUP, 2002. For Passmore's own definition of Fascism, see Passmore, *ibid*, pp 23-32.

¹⁰⁰ RJB Bosworth, 'Introduction' in *idem* (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, Oxford et al: OUP, 2009, pp. 1-7. We are here concerned with something I have described as an interwar *Zeitgeist*, i.e. all those 'non-essential' traits of Fascism. The *Zeitgeist* approach was popularised by Zeev Sternhell but has attracted much criticism for its teleological hypothesis of Fascism as a quasi-necessary outcrop of ideological and psychological elements that were already in place around the turn of the century, the fusion of which merely waited to happen to become Fascism. See Zeev Sternhell with Mario Sznajder, Maia Ashéri. *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, see esp. the introduction (pp. 3-35, esp. pp. 3-11 for his analytic outline). For a slightly revised argument and summary, see also his 'How to Think about Fascism and its Ideology', *Constellations*, 15, 3, 2008, pp. 280-290. Sternhell's precise reading of Fascism (a revolutionary organic nationalism, anti-materialism, anti-rationalism and anti-individualism coupled with economic liberalism and a metaphysical cult) is tailored to Europe and of limited value here. Moreover, the *zeitgeist* theory of Sternhell privileges unduly the pull of Fascism over other strands of contemporaneous thought. There is no intrinsic dynamic necessitating the rise of Fascism out of the multitude of a conflicting romantic Utopianism, social-Darwinistic dystopia etc. See for a similar argument Kevin Passmore, 'The Ideological Origins of Fascism before 1914', in Bosworth (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, pp. 11-31.

¹⁰¹ See the discussion in chp. 3.

¹⁰² In the realm of ideas we could think of the influence of imperialism itself, race thinking, scientific thought, positivism, and in terms of socio-political factors the specific form of colonial administration, the education system, urbanity, the (however haphazard) industrialisation, the changes in the

Returning to the main branch of the Khaksars, there was much activity in their circles generally after the initial Punjab riots. The local ML began campaigning aggressively against the Khaksars in some localities, and the strong opposition from local ML activists caused defection in such cities as Bihar; in Muzaffarpur half of the members resigned after a leaflet campaign against the movement.¹⁰³ But the Khaksars also attracted some new prominent members. In early 1940, Yusuf Haroon, son of Sir Abdullah Haroon, joined the Khaksar movement. He said during a speech in Karachi that the ML realised democracy should be ended and that it was already dead in Europe.¹⁰⁴

We shall not go into the details of the subsequent months in Punjab or dwell much longer on the Khaksars, though their later career is instructive in many ways. In summary, the Khaksars kept up a campaign for the release of Mashriqi and the withdrawal of the ban. The Punjab Government had finally had enough in mid-June 1940 and had the mosques cleared of the remaining Khaksars within by an open-handed use of tear-gas and employing exclusively Muslim police officers.¹⁰⁵ The move elicited less criticism than many officials had feared.¹⁰⁶ Sikander himself was anxious to get the ban on the movement withdrawn as his government alone bore the brunt of the Khaksars' attention, divided the Muslim community and he had to contend with pressure from among his

agrarian political economy that are so deeply linked to 'modernity' (and colonialism), the change in life cycles of which the extended phase of 'youth' is such a striking example, the rise of nationalism and its legitimising frameworks, its specific forms of mobilisation and popular appeal, as well as the atomisation of society that did not pass India by to name but a few. See Arendt's detailed tracing of the changes wrought in the twentieth century in different countries in relation to party systems, ideologies, the break-down of class society, etc. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Part Two esp. See also the preceding chapters.

¹⁰³ Bihar Chief Secy's Report for 2nd half of Feb and idem for 1st half of March, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, ff.318, 302.

¹⁰⁴ Sind Fortnightly Report for first half of March 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 303. The Haroon family was later on deeply involved with the MNG and the Pakistani Defence League. The Haroon family became extremely important not only in the Khaksar movement but also the Pakistani Defence League and a variety of other groups. They were wealthy industrial entrepreneurs. Yusuf Haroon partially bank-rolled the Khaksars.

¹⁰⁵ AJV Arthur, recently made first-class Magistrate, previously served as Deputy Commissioner in Multan, Attock and Murree, described the events in his memoirs, stating that 1,000 police were involved in clearing the mosques simultaneously surprising the Khaksars, while 2,000 troops were stated around the city. Cf. CSAS, Arthur Papers, AJV Arthur, MBE, DL, ICS/RH, 'Memoir of a District Officer in the Punjab, 1938-1947', p. 12.

¹⁰⁶ Tenaciously, *Al-Islah* published a call from the Salar-e-Khas Hind to the effect that all Khaksar officers should complete their preparations and not wait for any settlement. If the Khaksar movement was going to die, he wrote, then why should not every believer die by cannons and guns since the body had to die some day this way or that, ending with 'O soldiers of God! The holy Quran is demanding sacrifice from you'. *Al-Islah*, 31.7.40, in NAI, Home, Poll., 33/8/40, f. 21.

own.¹⁰⁷ A Khaksar agreement with the Punjab was reached by the end of August 1940: the ban in Punjab and Delhi would be withdrawn against assurances that the movement would remain law-abiding. The Khaksar demand for withdrawing the ban on drilling generally was quietly dropped. Mashriqi remained in jail where he kept trying to smuggle letters out containing orders to his followers and spread 'false rumours' about the number of Khaksars in jail and what he described as an abysmal state of health.¹⁰⁸ This resulted in the 'June agitation' of 1941, a planned Khaksar satyagraha to be commenced after Friday prayers in various cities resulting in the ban of the Khaksars in many provinces.¹⁰⁹ The interesting part about this is the stringent preparation by Government, BBC and Reuters for a possible international incident should that the Axis powers propagandistically exploit a ban on Khaksars.¹¹⁰ Neither a Khaksar clash nor much international press happened, though. But the Khaksars had attained some international recognition from 1939 on.¹¹¹

If the UP and Punjab campaigns with the subsequent arrest of Mashriqi mark the pinnacle of the movement, the abysmal end to the June agitation was the beginning of end of the movement. By late 1940 Khaksar numbers had markedly increased, from an estimated 11,786 to 23,949 in early

¹⁰⁷ See letter from Craik to Linlithgow, dt. 3rd April 1940, IOR, L/PJ/12/680, ff. 281-283, see ff. 281.

¹⁰⁸ Almost all of the 1700 arrested had been freed by then excepting some 50. See for instance Reuter telegram 'The Khaksar Movement in India' dt. 7th June 1941, Simla, containing with a brief summary of the agreement and subsequent events, IOR/L/I/1/628, f. 14.

¹⁰⁹ Al-Islah of 16th May published orders for Khaksars to assemble, uniformed and with belchias, in mosques in Delhi, Lahore, Peshawar, Hyderabad and Nagpur after the Friday prayers on June 6th to effect the release of Mashriqi. Cf. Telegram of GoI, Home Dept to Secy of State for India, Simla, 5th June 1941, IOR/L/I/1/629, file 431A, f. 1-2. On 5th June the GoI released a statement authorising all local Governments to ban the Khaksar movement in their states, which Madras, Bengal, Bombay did while other governments arrested the Khaksar leaders in their localities. The Government saw the Khaksar satyagraha merely as a precursor to more aggressive forms of resistance and feared a prolonged campaign on the model of the Punjab agitation. An all-India approach to the 'Khaksar menace' was needed, the GoI felt. See below.

¹¹⁰ Press statements and the like were prepared should any clash ensue if the issue be taken up in the Middle East, particularly Jerusalem, or in Germany. See IOR/L/I/1/629, file 431A. Amin al-Husainis was the 'Grand Mufti' of Jerusalem until mid-1940 when he had to go into exile. His contact and cooperation (or 'collaboration') with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany is one of the topics making for intense debates among scholars of Fascism outside Europe. See the references in the introduction. See esp. the rather even-handed monograph of René Wildangel, *Zwischen Achse und Mandatsmacht - Palästina und der Nationalsozialismus*, Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2007

¹¹¹ *The Scotsman* (Edinburgh), the *Christian Science Monitor*, London, and other papers reported on them (often as a proto-Fascist movement), while *The Illustrated London News* was discouraged from publishing an article on the group. IOR/L/I/1/629, file 431A, ff. 60, 62, 63-66.

1940, with the biggest membership in the UP, and stark increases in Bengal and Bihar whereas the numbers in NWFP remained relatively stable.¹¹²

The Khaksar movement underwent a number of changes afterwards. The Khaksar leaders under Mashriqi struck out on different paths afterwards, some coming closer to the Congress, others the ML or local bodies.¹¹³ To bypass ban, Mashriqi gave the Khaksars a new outfit as a purely religious organisation.¹¹⁴ This was accompanied by a stark change in their appearance: Khaksars now went clad in white kurtas (but maintaining the red cloth badges), carrying the Quran instead of belchas, and rather than exercises in military drill, practised namaz as a form of quasi-military discipline by prescribing that all Khaksars perform the movements of prayer in perfect rhythmic unison. The practice of public floggings was kept - now applied as a punishment for those who did not 'keep step' in the prayers.¹¹⁵ In later years, Mashriqi focussed on averting partition by staging a Khaksar satyagraha against both Gandhi and Jinnah, but the move met with little response at a time when partition was all but a foregone conclusion.¹¹⁶

The Khaksar episode highlights the tensions surrounding volunteer movements, relations to high politics and provides for a rather extreme case of a volunteer movement that differs significantly from others but nevertheless exhibits many continuities and, ultimately, still has to be seen within the same continuum of a larger discourse regarding progress and national efficiency and the practices derived from such tenets by politicised actors, including Mashriqi's positivist world-view which led to a search for transcendental communal evolution with material results and the

¹¹² The actual numbers are as follows: UP: from 6,738 to 13,855; NWFP from 3,438 to 4,601; Bengal 1,400 to 4,026; Bihar 210 to 1,467. See IOR, L/PJ/8/678, f. 10.

¹¹³ Other turned away and formed groups of their own, which looked much like the Khaksars but without the in-bred 'defects' of the former - at least that is what Ghazanfar Ali Shah claimed, an important former Khaksar leader. See 'Request from Agha Saiyed Ghazanfar Ali Shah of Lahore for Govt. support for his proposed 'Khadim Movement' to be organised on the lines of the Khaksar Movement', in NAI, Home, Poll, 28/4/43-Poll(I), see esp. ff. 5-8.

¹¹⁴ These orders were meant for the duration and areas of the ban, which lasted till 1942 when Mashriqi was released, but after renewed trouble the organisation was banned until the end of the war.

¹¹⁵ See Almashriqi's orders published from Vellore jail, NAI, Home, Poll, 74/1/40-Poll(I) & KW, ff. 19-22. He called his members now Islam Sipahis (or Dharam Sipahis for the handful of Hindus who had joined the movement at one point or another) and changed the designation of ranks too.

¹¹⁶ Mashriqi came up with many a scheme to avoid partition. In 1945, he planned to set up a constitutional body to beat the British at their timetable and thus make sure India would set her own terms of freedom. See Mashriqi to Mohan Lal Saxena, dt. 20th Sept. 1945, NAI, Home, Poll., 28/4/45-Poll(I), ff. 21-24.

disciplinary regime. More than that, the Khaksars play a fundamental role in the shaping of colonial attitude to which we shall turn now.

Wartime Regulations Regarding Volunteers

During the war and armed with the DoIR, the GoI had better grounds to implement an All-India solution to a phenomenon that had worried them for some time and now seemed fast to become an acute threat. The general agreement was that the Punjab trouble had only reached such proportions because the Punjab Government had been forced to act on their own and could be singled out for attack. The Khaksar agitation demonstrated how All-India organisations could keep campaigns going by a steady influx of people from outside while the agitators might reside anywhere. Discussions about measures to tackle the threat of the Khaksars and 'similar' bodies commenced in April 1940 and local governments were asked for their statements.¹¹⁷ In August, the GoI introduced an All-India ban on military drill and uniforms by non-official bodies.¹¹⁸ The notification was designed 'to prevent the growth of 'private armies' and to stop militaristic activities on the part of non-official volunteer organisations that could only result in disturbing the public peace and interfere with the security of the country',¹¹⁹ especially if said bodies should acquire cohesion and military proficiency.¹²⁰ The wearing of uniform was wont to give the impression to 'the ignorant public' that the bearer wielded authority and could legitimately use force.¹²¹ The Government introduced the Civic Guards which, they declared, should now be considered the only legitimate

¹¹⁷ 'Proceedings of the Departmental Committee convened to consider the question of action on an All-India basis in regard to the Khaksar and similar volunteer organisations', 4th May 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/678, ff. 62-67. For a summary of the replies of the various states, see NAI, Home, Poll, 74/3/40, ff. 8-9 and the letter by Tottenham, addl. secy to GoI, dt. 30th July 1940, in *ibid.*, ff. 10-12.

¹¹⁸ See notification in *The Gazette of India*, Simla, 5th Aug. 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/678, ff. 20-21.

¹¹⁹ Press note on Subclause 1A, Home Dept, New Delhi, dt. 22nd Sept. 1944, IOR, L/PJ/8/679, f. 26; for the order see *ibid.* f. 23. Next to official bodies, a handful of other organisations were exempt from the ban. Among those were the boy scouts as well as some of their nationalist pendants (the Seva Samiti scouts, the Hindustani Scouts and the St. Johns Ambulance Brigade), betraying the immense concern of colonial administrators to ban drill for any nationalist organisations but treating the 'pure' social service organisations very differently.

¹²⁰ 'Departmental Committee convened to consider the question of action on an All-India basis in regard to the Khaksars and similar organisations', 4th May 1940, IOR, L/PJ/8/678, ff. 62-67, see esp. comments by Conran-Smith on *ibid.*, ff. 63.

¹²¹ Official note, Bombay Home Dept, 1942, MSA, Home (Spcl.), 1017-E, 1939-1943, f. 65.

channel for the people's desire to organise and defend themselves, energies hitherto misdirected into joining non-official bodies.¹²² But both Congress and ML had made it clear that they would boycott the Civic Guards and set up their own civil defence organisations.

Other problems remained. It could be hard to distinguish what was and was not 'military drill'.¹²³ And while public drill could be banned, drilling on private grounds was difficult to tackle. It was then decided in cooperation with provincial governments that the police would not interfere with drilling in buildings or on private lands as long as no arms were used, on the other hand marching in columns whether with or without uniform would be considered military drill and was thus banned.¹²⁴ It was the public display, the awe and spectacle of organicist discipline to which military marches by nature were geared that the colonial state wanted to keep a lid on, and not the physical exercise behind it. Reacting to the ban, many organisations fell back on schools and religious buildings for their exercises and camps. The RSS relegated their big camps to the Princely States to avoid confrontations. Fundamental problems of definition soon emerged: what exactly was military drill as opposed to ordinary physical exercise?¹²⁵

The uniform issue was even trickier. The Government was wobbly on the question - they did not like to see unofficial organisations in uniforms, but could not lay down clear rules banning all kinds of uniform dress - a shirt and shorts of coordinated colours could, after all, be a 'uniform'. If problems of determining the 'resemblance' to a uniform came up, these should be referred to GoI.¹²⁶ The exemption of scouts organisations created yet another set of problems. The distinction

¹²² Press Communiqué regarding the ban, dt. 5th Aug 1940, NAI, Home, Poll, 74/3/40-Poll(I), ff. 162-166 and NAI, Poll. Dept, Poll, 31(2)-P(S)/40, ff. 70-72, see f. 72.

¹²³ Official notes dt. 25th June 1940 and 3rd July 1940, NAI, Home, Poll, 74/3/40-Poll(I), ff. 18-19, 23.

¹²⁴ See Official note, Home Dept. (Spcl), dt 7th Nov. 1944, MSA, Home (Spcl.), 1017-E, 1939-1943, see esp ff. 205-206; see also Letter of DM, Nasik to Home Dept (Spcl), Bombay, 16th Aug. 1944, (referring to the Conference of Provincial Representation on 29-30th Aug. 1940), cf. MSA, Home (Spcl.), 1017-E, 1939-1943, f. 198.

¹²⁵ IOR, L/PJ/8/678, ff. 23.

¹²⁶ See on the discussion for instance, official note, NAI, Home, Poll, 74/3/40-Poll(I), ff. 34, 39-41. The Home Members and advisers to Governors decided that wearing of the notorious 'Sam Brown belts' even without a uniform should be discouraged. For provincial governments, this came to mean that Sam Brown belts and badges would usually invite action by the Government. See Letter from Commissioner of Bombay to the Secy to GoI, dt 9th July 1942, MSA, Home (Spcl.), 1017-E, 1939-1943, ff. 53-54, reminding the Government of its own letters and regulations as a new dispute came up regarding the Muslim National Guard uniform in 1942 (see below), and the note cited above.

between genuine scouts and groups merely adopting the mantle of an innocuous movement was, when in doubt, to be assured by imposing an age limit on members of the body in question.¹²⁷ In short, the whole order created much confusion, local implementation varied starkly, and in some ways the order actually weakened the stance of the Government when it became clear that the Government was unwilling to face up to the consequences that would result from a stringent implementation of the order and resulting bans of organisations.¹²⁸

Civil Defence and Self-Defence

This became abundantly clear when the government had to deal with a defiant march in Cawnpore in August 1940 by armed Seva Dal volunteers together with Akali Fauj, Mazdoor Sena and Ahrars, all armed, marching in file, wheeling and turning to shouted military commands en route and led by mounted Seva Dal volunteers, while 50,000 spectators watched on (or so the papers claimed).¹²⁹ The ban on drill came at a time when the GoI was embroiled in negotiations to forge some sort of cooperation on the basis of enlarging the Executive Council after the Congress' refusal to cooperate in the unilaterally declared war.¹³⁰ The GoI feared that the INC might use the ban as a pretext to commence their next Civil Disobedience campaign - after all, Nehru himself had led the Cawnpore procession and the Congress announced immediately that they would boycott the Civic Guards and would set up, instead, National Guards.¹³¹

¹²⁷ NAI, Poll. Dept, Poll, 31(2)-P(S), 1940, ff. 67-69; for initial proposal cf. ff. 5-7. On the question of 'genuine' scout organisations against those who merely assume that mantle to continue their dubious activities, see *ibid*, esp. f. 68.

¹²⁸ The Secretary of State opined that the orders went beyond the initial recommendations by the committee appointed to look into the matter and that the ban as it stood now was perhaps not altogether wise. See IOR, L/PJ/8/678, ff. 41-41b.

¹²⁹ See '50,000 Witness Rally at Canwpore', *National Herald*, 13th Aug. 1940, NAI, Home, Poll 467/1930, f. 25. A description of the Cawnpore incident can be found at IOR, L/PJ/8/678, ff. 23-25, 39-40, and esp. telegram from Governor-General to Secy of State for India, dt. 15th Aug. 1940, in *ibid*, ff. 44 for the details of the march and participants. A number of instructors' and ordinary Congress-organised volunteer camps were being held especially in the UP at this time also. The Government decided to let the 'Cawnpore affair' slide so as to not upset the current negotiations. Soon after, however, the CWC - during its Wardha session - issued new orders instructing volunteers to keep up their usual activities and routine notwithstanding the ban, and the Government felt moved to take some action. See below.

¹³⁰ See Resolutions of the Council of the National Liberal Federation dt. 25th Aug. 1940 for the demands raised in this connection (including the portfolio of Defence minister and the promise of Dominion status immediately after the war), IOR, L/PJ/8/678, ff. 28-29.

¹³¹ See below.

Still, the Government did not see many alternatives. The volunteer bodies organised for 'disciplined force' on military lines constantly exposed the hollowness of the state's claim over the monopoly of power with possible critical consequences, as it normalized the challenge to sovereignty - especially at this point when the Government wavered between a strong-handed 'state of exception' and conciliatory gestures which made them look even weaker. The GoI realised the tendency of volunteer bodies to normalize violence and a state of perpetual crisis geared to highlight the incapacity and impotence of the Government's intervention in body-politics.

The Swadeshi campaigns habitually challenged state power as they took over functions of the state in an attempt to displace and replace it with parallel institutions. Carl Schmitt famously declared that it was none but the monopoly of power to declare the state of exception that was the true marker of sovereignty.¹³² The State with its declaration of the DoIR had basically (once again) declared the state of exception in a starkly visible fashion. All (British) colonial authority readily exemplifies the state of exception or what Arendt called the 'rule by decree'¹³³ and contemporaries perceived this very clearly. Volunteer bodies challenged colonial sovereignty by their displays and actions of supplanting official organs and functioning as an extra-legal force of law and order in a 'crisis' and habitually claimed that the state was not capable or not willing of fulfilling these functions adequately. Both Benjamin and Agamben see the law as mere (metonymic) shell for forces that perennially dissolve law and order.¹³⁴ Benjamin highlighted the violence necessary to uphold law and constantly, and by the exercise of it, undermining its own basis. This holds especially true in a colonial context where the legitimacy of government is perennially disputed.

The volunteer then is akin to Carl Schmitt's 'partisan' as the figure emerging in turmoil to tear

¹³² Carl Schmitt, *Politische Theologie*, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1993 (6th ed., orig. ed. 1922).

¹³³ See on imperialism, the government by decree, Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, esp. pp. 243-245.

¹³⁴ But Benjamin conceived of the *Entsetzung* (dissolution) of law through social forces, whereas Agamben primarily traces the sense of self in the realm of the state's boundaries (for a discussion, see Agamben, *The State of Exception*, Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2005, esp. pp. 52-64). Agamben in turn based his discussion and his concept of 'bare life' on Benjamin's earlier analysis of the force to uphold law and the force of law (or the law-making violence and the law-upholding violence) which, by constantly breeding counter-violence, undermined its own basis. See Walter Benjamin, 'Zur Kritik der Gewalt', in Benjamin, *Gesammelte Werke* Vol I, pp. 342-361, Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 2011. See also Agamben, *Homer Sacer - Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998. Benjamin's observation seem quite apt especially in the context of these volunteer bodies. But the anti-colonial nationalist movement poses a special set of problems with its fuzzy boundaries of movements exhibiting characteristics of the aspiring proto-state.

down all established order in an asymmetrical field of force. His characteristics are the ones displayed by the volunteers *par excellence*: irregularity, political engagement, mobility and terrene [*tellurisch*] character.¹³⁵ Seeing these bodies as geared to appropriate sovereign functions, it becomes evident that the viable and desirable methods for this would constitute a broad continuum of actions – including and not least a form of paramilitary mobilisation.

But let us return to the the specific developments: The decision to continue the Seva Dal activities despite the governmental ban was taken at the AICC's Wardha session, where the Congress expressed incomprehension regarding the intention and actual scope of the ban.¹³⁶ In Wardha, the CWC also proclaimed that non-violence did not apply to matters of national defence. Coupled with its call to organise villages for self-defence, this caused much initial confusion. The complicated manoeuvre was achieved by 'absolving' Gandhi of the responsibility for the Congress programme and activities.¹³⁷ It was later clarified that non-violence would need to be lifted for pragmatic reasons, and only if all civil authority should break down. The INC proclaimed schemes for 'self-sufficiency and self-protection' as the Government was 'incompetent and incapable' to organise the defence of India, and naturally this would have to be spearheaded by volunteers leading the masses.¹³⁸

Despite the noises made by the Congress, there was no clear line regarding the 'volunteer question'. The INC had never had actual control over the multitude of local bodies in the Congress

¹³⁵ On the partisan, see Schmitt, *Theorie des Partisanen - Zwischenbemerkung zum Begriff des Politischen*, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1963.

¹³⁶ The Government order, as far as the AICC was concerned, was unclear in its reach and implementation. The SD according to this reading was not military as such but merely disciplined and nationalist (as they were pledged to non-violence and did not wear a uniform that could actually be mistaken for a military uniform). See IOR, L/PJ/8/678, see ff. 38, 23-24, 25-27, 14. See, for the Congress response to the Press statement by J Nehru dt. 7.8.1940 (i.e. one day before the proclamation of the Quit India movement), in NMML, AICC; G-7, 1942, f. 53.

¹³⁷ See *The Statesman*, 'Congress Break With Mr. Gandhi's Policy', 23rd June 1940, p. 7. Gandhi, of course, by that time did not hold any official position in the INC. He believed that if India could expel the British, Japan would have no reason to attack her and did not want to get mixed up in hostilities. As to the confusion over methods: one instance of this is the letter to the genl. secy, AICC, dt. 11th June 1942, by one Sudhir Chandra Banerjee, who was involved in the organisation of a Congress Janarakshaya [sic, Janaraksha?] Samity in Dacca. In a very round-about way, he asked whether people from other parties who did not subscribe to the creed of non-violence could still join the samiti since a united, national defence was the need of the hour. See NMML, AICC, G-16, 1942-46, ff. 55-56.

¹³⁸ AICC, G-19, 1942-46, see f. 35.

orbit, the situation by the late 1930s was much more chaotic with the increased proliferation of such bodies and the absence of a strong central body or a central board.¹³⁹ Some of the Congress ministries had spent sizeable amounts of money on 'their' volunteer bodies but from an INC enquiry, it can be seen that reorganisation was mostly localised and haphazard if functioning at all.¹⁴⁰ Quite some of those who did reorganise, did so on the lines of the Dal, though, which speaks to the pull the body exerted at its best. The theme of the potential adverse effects of an organised group within the local Congress committees exerting too much power and interfering in elections was apparently one reason for the reluctance of many PCCs. The crux of the matter was how much control the parent body could exercise. Not organising was, however, more dangerous than organising - the Wardha session ordered that stringent steps to bring those bodies as existed back under a 'uniform' control, discipline and training and appointed a committee to draft new rules and a programme. The committee consisted of Vallabhbhai Patel, RS Patwardhan, Iftikaruddin, one Red Shirt representative and RS Pandit (who had drafted the enquiry).¹⁴¹ The inclusion of Patel, who by his own profession ran away from all youth, is emblematic of a (more conservative) section of the Congress that had started to take an interest in volunteers in the 1930s. Thus, Patel became one of the chief organisers of the Dal in Gujarat, together with Mridula Sarabhai and Morarji Desai¹⁴². While the 'left' (the radical, sometimes more progressive and less communal sections) had been organising youth for a while, more and more bodies sprang up at this stage that were calling for the defence of the Hindus and India.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Nandini Gooptu has in this context noted for UP that the Congress ministry phase and its attempts at control and demobilisation for the sake of law and order, gave further impetus to volunteer bodies being organised, and while many Congressmen were involved in some capacity, such bodies were not under Congress control. And while the Congress membership decreased sharply in those years, volunteer bodies grew. See Gooptu, *Politics of the Urban Poor*, esp. pp. 411-415.

¹⁴⁰ Only in Gujarat, Maharashtra and UP were these efforts well under way and coordinated.

¹⁴¹ See interim report of RS Pandit on the Congress Volunteer organisation, NAI, Home, Poll., 74/17/40-Poll(I), Appendix II. See also *The Statesman*, 'Congress Break With Mr. Gandhi's Policy', 23rd June 1940, p. 7

¹⁴² On Sarabhai, see below. Cf. MSA, Home (Spcl), 800 (93), 1935, f. 201.

¹⁴³ See MSA, Home Dept, (Spcl), 800 (93), 1935, Report by DM, Ratnagiri. dt. 31st March 1939, f. 269; 207, Weekly Confidential Report, DM, Satara, dt. 20th July 1938, *ibid.*, f. 213 (199). Generally, in many places in Maharashtra, a Rashtriya Seva Dal (National Volunteer Corps) served as the volunteer organisation at this time. The need of military training for violence was highlighted in these groups in the late 1930s. In Bombay itself, the socialists controlled the volunteer corps with Minoo Masani and Meherally in charge. See *ibid.*, the collected reports.

Maybe to draw in recalcitrant factions, because of the war and the prospect of a mass campaign the volunteer organisation was opened up to non-Congressmen and appeals were made to join on a common platform. This suited the left with their united front policy just fine. The CPI worked hard on a united front with an idea to co-operate especially on military training in practical terms.¹⁴⁴ The only condition for becoming a volunteer was the adherence to peaceful means. Judging by the correspondence, these calls had a certain effect, and people wanted to join the INC for the sake of having *some* defence organisation¹⁴⁵ The AICC had decided to set up a National Defence Force, as a counter to the Civic Guards, and to step in should serious disturbances break out. But this force, apparently, did not take root except at Allahabad where some centres were opened.¹⁴⁶ The relationship with the SD was unclear but some suggested that the Dal should function as the kernel of this force.¹⁴⁷ Nehru put his foot down at this and urged a strict separation since the principles of the use of force in emergencies and the non-violence of the Seva Dal would breed conflict. But the inherent ambiguity and differing views on the nature of the Dal lingered on, kept up by pressure 'from below', and came to the forefront of Congress concerns every now and then. Sometimes, these themes overlapped: at a time when the INC sought greater control over its volunteers, disciplining and authoritarian tendency went together with the desire for militarism: for instance, the secretary of the UP Dal lamented that erroneous notions of 'civil liberty and right to criticise' had appeared in the Dal and the 'military touch' needed to be reintroduced. He advocated setting up a 'public Court Martial' for volunteers disobeying orders but met with little response.¹⁴⁸

The fear of Japanese aggression escalated as the war progressed, and the colonial state as well as

¹⁴⁴ See the article on the oral interview with Mirajkar and Ranadive, in AG Noorani, 'Making of a Thesis', *Frontline*, Vol. 29, No. 08, 2012 (<http://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl2908/stories/20120504290809900.htm>; accessed 23rd April 2012).

¹⁴⁵ NMML, AICC, G-16, 1942-1946, ff. 55-56. And 'Volunteer Movement in India', IOR. L/PJ/8/678, 2nd part, see f. 6.

¹⁴⁶ 'Volunteer Movement in India', IOR. L/PJ/8/678, 2nd part, see ff. 4-5. The same report noted that a captain of the seva dal arrested carrying a revolver and in the company of a gang alleged to have been on the way to commit dacoity. Cf. *ibid*.

¹⁴⁷ Namely Mahmud uz-Zafar wanted to see an SD elite within the National Defence Force, see 'Volunteer Movement in India' 1940, ff. 5-6.

¹⁴⁸ 'Volunteer Movement in India', 1940, IOR. L/PJ/8/678, 2nd part, see f. 5. The National Defence Force scheme stated that 1 lakh volunteers should be raised and 25 lakh Rupees for expenses. Later on, this force (which was later manned mostly by INA personnel) was effectively merged with the Seva Dal as the ex-INA officer Shah Nawaz Khan took the helm of the Dal. See below.

Indians all but expected an invasion by 1942. The latent fear became acute after the fall of Singapore and Burma, where British troops and administrators fled the country leaving the civilian population at the mercy of the Japanese. It was expected that they would behave similarly should the same happen in India and the wide-spread evacuations at very short notice forcing people out of their homes without adequate arrangements, the 'molestation' of women and the perceived 'incompetence' of the administration all added to the sense of impending doom.¹⁴⁹ Nehru, one of the few people within the Congress uncomfortable with the tendency to proclaim that the Fascists/Japanese were no worse than the British, went publicly against the pervasive apprehension and sometimes millenarian expectations attached to a Japanese or rather INA invasion under Rashbehari and SC Bose¹⁵⁰, when he denounced any hopes of salvation by the Japanese in early April 1942 and stated he would oppose Bose and his 'dummy force under Japanese control'.¹⁵¹ In many instances of letters addressed to the AICC by old Congress hands or sympathisers, people expressed their dissatisfaction with the Congress line of refusing to arm the country and work with the Government, of having failed to really mobilise and prepare the people, and leaving the country open to invasion through this obstinacy.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ See See AICC Draft Resolution on the evacuation in Lower Burma, dt. 29th April 1942, Allahabad, in NMML, AICC, G-19, 1942-1946, ff. 33-37. In the Eastern part of India the only real preparation for an invasion seems to have consisted in a 'Denial Policy' and preparing a scorched earth scenario. See Srimanjari, 'Denial, Dissent and Hunger: War-time Bengal, 1942-44' in Biswamoy Pati (ed.), *Turbulent Times*, pp. 39-66. Denial Policy here refers to attempts by the colonial authorities, especially in the Eastern areas, to confiscate modes of transports (including boats)

¹⁵⁰ In Orissa, people put up Congress flags believing this would protect them from air raids, in Bengal silver swastikas were minted in reference to Nazi insignia to bestow security in the event of an invasion. The Japanese Premier, Tojo, played to the gallery when he proclaimed on a broadcast in mid-1942 that, if the Japanese army had to go up against the British, heavy civilian casualties would be unavoidable, making it very clear that it would be a better for the Indian people to get rid of the British themselves. See Srimanjari, 'Denial, Dissent and Hunger', pp. 44. For Congress flag and swastikas as talismans see *ibid*, p. 49-50, and Biswamoy Pati, 'The climax of Popular Protest: The Quit India Movement in Orissa', in *idem* (ed.), *Turbulent Times*, pp. 1-38.

¹⁵¹ Both speeches quoted after MO Mathai, *My Days with Nehru*, Delhi et al: Vikas Publishing House, 1979, pp. 58-59. In his speech in Delhi, Nehru referred to all those who thought he should not provoke the Japanese who would exact revenge when (not if) they invaded India.

¹⁵² Many of these letters by 'ordinary' Congress members are fascinating. See the letter by an old Congress worker, Ram Rawat [?], Bhadr PCC, Ahmedabad (who joined the INC in 1908 at the Surat session). He accused the Congress of merely trying to maintain its monopoly of representing the people by Quit India so as to be able to negotiate with the future conquerors, and thus only exchanging one slave-owner for the next. He wanted the Congress to employ the assistance of Soviet Russia and immediately start a comprehensive defence scheme based on the villages even though the INC had, he stated, always neglected the actual preparation of the people for any kind of revolutionary work since all they did was propaganda and philanthropic work. See another letter in Urdu by one Kheir Baksh (rest of signature illegible, and signed by a number of other people) who complained of the duplicity of Congressmen who called on people to defend the country in case of

The Communist 'People's War' made use of this set of arguments to discredit Gandhi and the Quit India movement: it was an open door policy to the Japanese Fascists, PC Joshi exclaimed.¹⁵³ The long-standing allegation that the CPI line was completely out of sync with popular sentiments might need a more close analysis in the light of instances to the contrary. At any rate, both Congress and Communists called for the establishment of People's Defence Committees after the first air raids in mid-1942.¹⁵⁴ The People's Volunteer Brigade (PpVB) and Air Raid Practice (ARP) were part of such umbrella committees. Refugee Relief was being set up - often jointly by ML and CPI. The Congress initially boycotted all such endeavours but as the arrests due to the Quit India movement set in, leftists and Communists at times took over the local organisations in places like Bombay and thus we also find later the ever shape-shifting Congress and Communists working together in the PpVB. Bombay especially was active - and complicated - in this respect.¹⁵⁵

The AISF tried to keep a united front policy along with the New Policy by attempting to initiate discussions rather than implement the new line overnight.¹⁵⁶ It did not avail them much, it seems, for when they called a 'United Front Students Conference' in April 1942, even the high command of the AISF had to admit that they did not meet with the response they desired or expected and had to be transformed into an AISF conference on national defence.¹⁵⁷ The AISF then tried to get back

invasion while people had no weapons, and often not even lathis. The authors called on the Congress to cooperate with the Government in recruiting, training and arming people. See AICC, G-19, 1942-46, ff.67-77. and ff. 149 (faulty numbering)-150. See also letter by Young Men's Association of Chathanad-Polla, Travancore, *ibid.*, ff. 99-100, sd. KN Dutt and VA Soolapani, joint secretaries of the YMA, dt, Alleppey, 16.6.1942, *ibid.* f. 99-101.

¹⁵³ Editor (PC Joshi), 'From Gandhiji's Gamble - Who Gains?', *People's War*, 5th July 1942.

¹⁵⁴ The first two targets in India were Cocanada, where once the Seva Dal had come into being, and Vizag in Madras. The raids led to panicked evacuation of the affected towns. The Communists claim that the Madras Government only stoked the panic by advising people in madras to evacuate the town, and local officials (a district police officer, for instance) told a crowd that the Japanese would land on the whole East Coast and he was sending his family away. 'Never again this! - Experiences of the First Air Raids', *People's War*, 5th July 1942.

¹⁵⁵ The PpVB in Bombay owned no less than four motor cars and an ambulance car. Its secy was also the secretary of the BomPCC. The body was investigated (and its building which also housed the Congress office temporarily seized) in 1942, but documents and office were returned later (1942/1943). MSA, Home (Spcl), 1110(3)-II,1942, Part B. Bombay was acknowledged by AISF to be the avantgarde in the efforts. See *ibid.*, ff. 35-36, and AISF Circular No 33/42 'Bombay Students Lead Us', *ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ See NMML, Delhi police, 5th inst, F. No.1 on the AISF in 1942. See especially the circular to PSF and DSU office-bearers in early 1942.

¹⁵⁷ AISF Circular no 12/42, 'How goes the conference' dt 30.4.42, sd. Ramesh Chandra, Genl Secy, in NMML, Delhi police, 5th inst, F. No.1, [no ff. nos].

to their game by organising ARP in coordination with the respective authorities including the PpVB, asking their entire membership to join the PpVB, and making plans for the setting up ARP training camps and colleges, classes and so forth as well as provide part and whole-timers to these schemes and Propaganda Squads.¹⁵⁸ They also called for an extension of military training in higher education and special measures for 'war-time education' in an attempt to keep educational facilities open and further the discharge of patriotic duties through them. Attached to their draft resolution was the 'Red Army Marching Song' and one can only imagine the cringing of officials as AISF students went around in ARP uniforms singing 'Comrades the bugles are sounding, Shoulder your arms for the fray... Rulers who sit in high places, What gives them power on the land? Cartridges, rifles [sic], bayonets, All are the work of our hands.'¹⁵⁹

Despite its unevenness and the multiplicity of (competing) bodies and groups involved, the groundswell in popular participation in defence measures exhibits a striking level of mobilisation. In Ahmedabad, the Congress stated, that beside the (local) lokseva volunteers (numbering some 1,500 and trained in fire-fighting, ARP, first aid et al), some 10,000 people helped with patrols and night watches.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ AISF Circular 16/43, 'Draft resolution for May Conference', in NMML, Delhi Police, 5th inst, F. No.1, ff. 9-12.

¹⁵⁹ AISF, Circular 18/42, dt. 12th May 1942, 'Draft resolution of Students' War-Time Demands', NMML, Delhi police, V. inst, F. No.1, ff. 13-14. The AISF was an important tool - together with the magazine 'The People's War' - to propagate the new line, and extensive notes on what each speaker had to say during public lectures can be found in the archive. See Points of Speech for Speakers on the War of Liberation, in NMML, Delhi Police, V. inst, F. No.1, ff. 17-19. The Viceroy's National War front tried to appropriate the AISF (and, apparently their Delhi broadcasts, but the Federation forbade their members from cooperating. Meanwhile the comrades agitated for the release of all political prisoners in an attempt to find a 'national' line compatible with the Quit India momentum. See NMML, Delhi Police, V. inst, F. No.1, ff. 26-27, 30, 31-32, 34-35. Despite such attempts, by autumn 1942 the Federation was basically bankrupt and unable to raise even the Rs. 250 they needed for their regular expenses. By 1943, the CPI began their slow U-turn and abandoned the People's War line.

¹⁶⁰ Such figures are usually vastly exaggerated, but even if we half the number it still remains quite impressive. See, NMML, AICC, G-7, 1942 [ff no. illegible, f. 2?].

Karo ya Maro

The onset of a Civil Disobedience movement was awaited at any minute from 1940 on.¹⁶¹ Various organisations, from the CSP to the Forward Bloc, the Akalis and Kisan Sabhas clamoured for the campaign to take off soon.¹⁶² Gandhi, trying to channel the wide-spread discontent, had started an individual satyagraha campaign that lasted until December 1941¹⁶³ - the suspension was a reaction to the Japanese offensive and the Cripps Mission.¹⁶⁴ The AICC sanctioned the third round of all-India satyagraha under Gandhi's benign dictatorship on 8th August 1942 and arrests of the high command began the next day. The Congress elite had left behind only the vaguest general instructions (Gandhi was yet to work out the actual programme) which became re-interpreted as the movement went on. It was thus up to lower level leaders or 'the people' to act according to their own lights, but Gandhi had set the ground for something qualitatively different, an end-game of Empire, when he called for 'Do and Die' and an 'open rebellion'. An apocalyptic mood seemingly gripped substantial parts of the population, and the 1942 *kranti* was portrayed by some as the 'last struggle' of the Congress, given the advancing Japanese forces, Axis air raids, food shortages and a sense of the impending collapse of the Empire.¹⁶⁵ In the initial phases, educational institutions seemed to have made up the vanguard of the movement in certain areas, and students were

¹⁶¹ Repeated rumours that CD would be declared in May, then Sept. 1940 circulated for instance in the Punjab. See above.

¹⁶² From among the CSP, some leaders called already in 1940 for 'autonomous mass action' on the lines of no-tax and no-rent campaigns even if Gandhi was against it as soon as CD would be declared, to transform the Congress into a revolutionary body and adopt a militant programme (Cf. NDC, SPPAI, Vol, LXII, 8th June, No. 22, p. 310, and 24th August, No. 33, p. 495 for instance). The Congress leadership could have hardly been oblivious to the fact and the apparent unruliness was probably another reason Gandhi delayed a decision and tried to channel energies into individual satyagraha..

¹⁶³ When, during the individual satyagraha, the supply of voluntary jail-goers was dwindling, a number of Ahrars were hired to shout anti-war slogans. According to Police intelligence, these Ahrars were hired 'well know criminals' who were promised financial remuneration for an estimated week-long jail term. NMML, Delhi Police Records, V. inst, ff. 66, 5

¹⁶⁴ After the AICC had demanded the prospect of independence in exchange for cooperation in the war in July 1940, and Linlithgow's August declaration offered merely Dominion status, Gandhi had started individual satyagraha consisting of hand-picked leaders shouting anti-war slogans and getting arrested.

¹⁶⁵ Gandhi had stated that the movement would not be called off due to individual acts of violence. His call to leave India to God or to anarchy was perceived quite literally. See Biswamoy Pati on pralaya - the belief that this age was coming to a close and wholesale destruction would be preceding the remaking of the world. Lower rungs of Congress leaders, for instance, told tribals that the British Raj had already ended. See Pati, 'The climax of Popular Protest', see esp. p. 9 (on pralaya), p. 24-25, 28 (on the belief that the British Government had already or was about to collapse and calls for the wholesale destruction of the British empire and, at times, the murder of figures of authority). See also Sriranjari, 'Denial, Dissent and Hunger', see p. 41.

once more one of the main target groups of nationalist agitation as the intelligentsia and torchbearers of the revolution.¹⁶⁶ When 'ordinary' Congressmen (or others) took over the helm of local movements, messages and propaganda gave a more radical impetus to the movement.¹⁶⁷ Hardiman has described Ahmedabad city functioning under a parallel nationalist government in 1942 – led by a young Congress socialist styling himself the shahersuba who organised ward *nayaks* and a *varna sena* are the idioms and the organisational style popularised by the volunteer movement.¹⁶⁸ In the later stages, cadre-based underground cells continued the 'rebellion'. The former *Volunteer* author RR Diwakar was one of those underground workers - as were many other volunteers.¹⁶⁹ As established Congress methods suffered in their effectiveness from the severe and early interference by the authorities, the more offensive tactics came to the forefront: next to the classic sabotage, highly organised arson became a widespread means of protest in Bombay for instance.¹⁷⁰ A variety of *senas* under different names featuring the general set-up of the organised volunteer bodies were set up all over. The spontaneous 'jathas' (often referred to as 'mobs' or armed 'crowds' or in urban areas more likely as 'hooligans' or 'riff-raff') that marched on official buildings, attacked symbols and carriers of authority also were not new, but the scale of such incidents was unprecedented. The

¹⁶⁶ This sweeping statement, of course, has to be qualified. Pati pointed out that in Orissa it was almost without fail the students who first started protests in their educational institutions and carried those outside. See Pati, 'The climax of Popular Protest'. In Bombay, students were among the hardened protesters and kept up pressure in the initial phase, and were portrayed as pillars of the struggle from the second half of August. See Jim Masselos, 'Bombay, August 1942: Re-readings in a Nationalist text', in Biswamoy Pati (ed.), *Turbulent Times*, esp. pp. 83, 86-88, 95-96.

¹⁶⁷ On the re-interpretation of Gandhi during the 1942 movement when many believed (and were made to believe) that all acts were sanctioned, see Pati, 'The climax of popular protest', esp. p. 13. After the arrest of the first rung of Congress leaders, the Congress Socialists, for some time and in some places, basically became the Congress and then the Congress underground. See, for instance, a report of a casual Communist Source to Delhi Police, August 1943, in NMML, Delhi Police, 9th inst, F.no 150, 71-72.

¹⁶⁸ See Hardiman, 'The Quit India Movement in Gujarat', in Gyan Pandey (ed.), *The Indian Nation in 1942*, Calcutta: KP Bagchi, 1988, see pp. 89-95, also the appendix, esp. pp. 116-117. Compare with the designations of the Seva Dal in the Appendix.

¹⁶⁹ On Diwakar, see Vinita Damodaran, 'Azad Dasta and Dacoit Gangs: The Congress and Underground Activity in Bihar, 1942-1944', in Biswamoy Pati (ed.), *Turbulent Times*, p. 130. Overall, the later incarnations of Quit India were less exhibitions of mass protests and became more cadre-oriented and based on secret cells (a number of them having nothing to do with the INC at all but resulting from local efforts based on the war conditions in 1942-43). See esp. *ibid.*, pp. 118-119, 125-129 on the functioning of the azad dastas as 'shock troopers' and local guerilla training camps. The prominence of cutting of telegraph wires, railway lines and similar organised attempts to hinder transport and communication systems were already well established in 1919/1920 and in the (re-)enactment of semi-ritualised (and pragmatic) forms of destruction we can see something like an established script at work. Jim Masselos, 'Bombay, August 1942', see esp. pp. 84-85.

¹⁷⁰ Masselos, 'Bombay, August 1942', p. 97.

activities and movements of these armed 'gangs' or 'bands' - at times crossing long distances over several days¹⁷¹ - show the coming together of the jatha, the army and volunteer brigades.

Apart from regional aerial attacks, collective fines, draconian jail sentences and police 'excesses', systematic rape was apparently one form of subduing the 'uprising' in certain parts on top of the wide reports on (spontaneous) molesting of women by British soldiers. Calls for women to arm themselves and learn how to defend their 'honour' became much more pronounced as a result.¹⁷²

The point here is not to go into the plentiful details and research on the Quit India movement, but to briefly highlight the broad-based mobilisation it meant on the ground. Without proposing simplistic teleologies, this mobilisational groundswell did not simply evaporate and should be seen in congruence with later events. (Communal) riots, clashes with authorities and collective action are typically based on neighbourhood organisation and (at least) a symbolic demarcation of territory. Volunteer organisations had helped establish the popular template for structuring such local groups during the war.

To Murder Jinnah, or the Modular Form of Volunteer Organisation

During Quit India, two individual Khaksars tried to assassinate Jinnah, who used this instance to claim that Mashriqi had gone pro-Congress.¹⁷³ More interesting than the attempts themselves, is the background of the first individual, a Khaksar by the name of Rafiq Sabir Mozangvi, who used

¹⁷¹ Pati, 'The climax of Popular Protest', esp. pp. 23-25.

¹⁷² Pati, 'The climax of Popular Protest', pp. 24, 30 and Srimanjari, 'Denial, Dissent and Hunger', pp. 55, 60.

¹⁷³ The CID did not believe that these were ordered hits. The assailant sought an interview with Jinnah and got angry when Jinnah attempted to throw him out. Jinnah stated that he used to be a great friend to the Khaksars but believed Mashriqi had turned pro-Congress during his jail term and had somehow incited the assailant. See NAI, Home, Poll, 17/4/1943-Poll(I), f. 5. On the INC-Khaksar co-operation see also note by the DIB on the Khaksar Movement [update], dt. 27th Dec. 1939, NAI, External Affairs Dept., Near East Branch, 208-N/41, 1941, esp. ff. 6. There were persistent rumours about some negotiations and understanding between Rajagopalchari and Mashriqi during the latter's time in Vellore jail. Intelligence noted that Khaksars were joining hands with the satyagraha campaigns of the Congress (1939). See *ibid.*

to own an electrical repair shop partly financed by his brother. He gave up his shop eventually and whether he joined political movements because his business plan did not work out or whether he gave up the shop in order to become politically more active, is unclear. He was an Ahrar in 1930 and was convicted for Congress-related activities (in the CD movement), he left the Ahrars in 1935 (we remember, the same year of the Shahidganj affair in which the Ahrars failed to take a prominent part) and joined the Itihad-i-Millat for a spell in 1935, but left either that year or two years later (his own information and that of Intelligence are at odds) to now sign up with the Muslim League (if it was 1937, as we might suspect, it would coincide with the Congress ministries which led to feelings of victimisation in the Muslim community). Another two years later, in 1939, he joined the Khaksars, who were at the height of their popularity and embroiled in the Lucknow struggle. Mozangvi became one of the *Janbaz*, but having consecrated his life to the Khaksars, he embezzled funds from the organisation. He went on to open a series of small business ventures, none of which seemed to work out, only to be forced to flee Calcutta, his last place of residence, after a theft. Mozangvi himself said about his patchwork political career: 'In all these changes in my political preferences, my only consideration was the policy governing the actions of the particular [group] concerned at the time.'¹⁷⁴ Assuming that the time-line is not simply coincidental but did have something to do with the events we have noted earlier, it appears that popularity and an action-oriented program were what drew this individual to the various groups he joined.

Mozangvi's career, if haphazard, does not seem illogical but must in fact be considered emblematic of the associational flexibility displayed by a wide range of volunteers who were not firmly committed to one particular party (these were probably rather a minority). For those people who joined movements on the merit of individual campaigns or grievances, they would naturally join whatever vehicle seemed most apt or likely to address the issue.¹⁷⁵ The other important factor is the pre-eminence of locality, mohalla-based mobilisation. A good example here would be Ambedkar's

¹⁷⁴ NAI, Home, Poll, 17/4/1943-Poll(I), f. 5.

¹⁷⁵ Two other cases in point are a Khaksar worker who used to be a Red Shirt and another Khaksar leader, Bashir Ahmad Siddiqi of Peshawar, who had been a Khilafatist and Congress worker from 1919 on. He was then Nazim-e-Ala, later Salar-e-Khas of the Punjab. Cf. IOR, L/PJ/8/680, f. 285. The number of individuals we can trace like this is relatively small, for obvious reasons but they stand in lieu for the wider dynamic.

Samata Sainik Dal which had their stronghold in Nagpur among the local Mahar community and especially boys and young men. A participant in his memoir recalled that all the Mahar boys had attended the RSS shakha before the SSD was set up, but then collectively switched to the new body. They even organised an attack with lathis on the local RSS lads in a move to assert their control over the local territory, specifically the school ground where both bodies were conducting their drill at that time.¹⁷⁶



*Ambedkar with volunteers of the Samata Sainik Dal in Bombay [s.a.; from Vasant Moon, *Growing Up Untouchable*, p. 64]*

This is not merely a form of instrumentalisation but, I would argue, an outcrop of the Congress inscribing from early on the view - generally in line with broad anti-Imperialism - that even while they represented the nation, they also represented all shades of opinion. As such, all nationalism

¹⁷⁶ The Samata Sainik Dal (army of equality) was established by Ambedkar around 1927. The Dal was supposed to safeguard the interests of the dalits and do social service. It was based on local Dalit and neighbourhood networks. The only extensive documentation of the body, to the best of my knowledge, is the autobiography of Vasant Moon. Discipline and attendance was strictly enforced as in other bodies. Moon states that since a great number of Dal volunteers had received training in the UTC, they had some idea about military organisation. The structure mirrored that of other Dals replete with military-style insignia and ranks. Boys had short lathi sticks, young men cudgels with metal rings (to which, Moon recalls, blades could be attached when necessary). Particularly striking is maybe this reflection of Moon: ‘After many years I read a biography of Hitler. He also had taken out parades in the streets of Berlin. However, *I felt* the parades of the Dal were closer to those of the Russian soldiers. Seeing the military maneuvers [sic] of Russian soldiers [...] in films, I always used to remember the Samata Sainik Dal.’ See Vasant Moon, *Growing Up Untouchable in India. A Dalit Autobiography*, (translated from the Marathi by Gail Omvedt, with an introduction by Eleanor Zelliott), Lanham et al: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers 2000 (2nd ed.), tales of the SSD meander through the narrative but see esp. pp. 7, 43, 59, 68-70, 72.

was a unitary broad-based movement and any vehicle, any party served in their own way towards that common goal. The many instances of RSS volunteers or Hindu nationalists seeking blessings from Gandhi or other leaders with whose policies they might have problems in detail points to this unified vision as well as to the general view of leaders who - as avatars or at any rate above the ordinary man and masses - stood for more than mere politics, becoming in their own life-time symbols of nationalism itself. For most young people the initial introduction to nationalist activism was through physical fitness. As the outer system was almost identical in many different movements, it was all but accidental which one any individual might join, based on neighbourhood, class, caste and community networks (mostly feeding into the choices as they were inscribed upon the neighbourhood structure until the late 30s and 40s), friends who were already active, teachers, family etc., i.e. social factors, not political ones. As such, the dalit boys joined the RSS in our example of Vasant Moon (before they had their own group); the 'Chittagong children' joined the 'terrorists' through the Congress front and so on. Quite a number of people traversed the available political terrain and encompassed Congress, Communist, and revolutionary affiliations.¹⁷⁷ Generally, then, the choices of political affiliations might have been for the *gros* of politicised workers at the lower level very pragmatic and contextual - a complex constellation of factors from the social and family environment to political exigencies and importance/successfulness of certain bodies at specific points of time. Once mobilised, many seemed to stay mobilised.¹⁷⁸ There was a stark overlap in organisational structure and rhetoric and mobilisation through group activities from lectures to physical exercise and parades that these groups had in common. An individual changing

¹⁷⁷ A good example is the memoirs of Shekhar Ganguly, *A Satyagrahi, A Revolutionary, A Communist*, New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1995. The largest part dealing with the CP is quite careful to protect the party image, but what makes the memoirs interesting is the circumstances under which Ganguly joined the different movements, the nexus between revolutionaries and religious figures (see pp. 28-29) and the paraphernalia of the story that allow us a glimpse of the factors that made for transferring allegiance (for instance pp. 22-25). Ganguly started out as a school boy joining symbolic anti-Government activities, then formed a Tarun Sangha with a physical fitness club and a library with some other boys. This was done under the covert instructions from a local revolutionary. The secret arm of the Tarun Sangha provided for physical training, firearms- and bomb-making training and undertook some small dacoities. Ganguly then joined the Rippon College in Calcutta. He got arrested after a dacoity and became a Communist under the influence of his co-prisoners at Naini Central Jail, and joined the CPI after his release.

¹⁷⁸ Carey Watt has talked of the creation of the 'modular man' through the burgeoning associational culture of the 1910s. See Watt, *Serving the Nation*, see esp. 109-116. The natural corollary to this is, however, the modular form of organisations themselves. This is especially stark in the 1920s to 1940s, when volunteer organisations, as we have seen time and again, follow very streamlined models in terms of structure, ideals and aesthetic/style.

from one to the other, while giving up the immediate social network of the group, would have a relatively familiar grass-root level framework in most other organisations he might have joined.

The RSS and other Hindu Bodies During the War

The HMS attempted a peculiar double-discourse during the war: On the one hand they cooperated with the Government and drove attempts to come to a mutual arrangement, and, implicitly professing their loyalty, demanded from the Government that Hindus should be armed and trained for guerilla warfare to help the Government in the defence of India. On the other hand, people like Moonje and Savarkar made it very publicly clear that this was purely strategic and would help to train Hindus to their maximum military capacity.¹⁷⁹ While Moonje and others had pressed for militarisation for a long time, the cry was taken up more forcefully and openly from 1939 in resolutions on militia schemes and attempts to weld together pre-existing bodies (from the Akalis to the RSS).¹⁸⁰ In 1942, the HMS, again, demanded that Government take more pro-active steps for the defence of India - they wanted National Militias to be set up (so did everybody else) but their communalism turned the defence of India into something more ominous. The HMS wanted to 'raise and equip national Militia for preventing ravages caused by possible air attack, anti-Hindu hooliganism and internal commotion.' And these defence parties should be equipped with arms by

¹⁷⁹ Vinayak Damodaran Savarkar was elected president of the HMS in 1937 and launched his programme to turn the HMS into a political party to rival the INC and ML. He sought a closer alliance with the government during the Second World War. For one, the HMS wanted en masse enrolment of Hindus in the armed forces and to position itself in such a way as to get its members into the governmental bodies. In 1939, the Working Committee decided to set up Militarisation Boards to accelerate Hindu enrolment. The necessary militarisation of Hindudom and industrialization of India was proclaimed as a goal by Savarkar in 1940. See *Presidential Address at the 22nd Session of the Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha, Madura 1940 AD by Swatantryaveer VD Savarkar*, printed by VG Ketkar, Lokasangraha Press, Poona and published by SR Date, secretary Maharashtra Prov. HS, Poona [1941], see pp. 33-39. On the failure of HMS and Govt to come to a closer understanding due to a number of circumstances, see the official correspondence in IOR, L/PJ/8/683 and Nandini Gondhalekar and Sanjoy Bhattacharya, 'The All India Hindu Mahasabha and the End of British Rule in India, 1939-1947', *Social Scientist*, Vol. 27, No. 7/8, 1999, pp. 48-74, esp. pp. 54-56.

¹⁸⁰ The idea of a Hindu Militia was most decisively aired by Moonje. A resolution to this effect was passed by the AIHMS in 1939. See [a high-ranking Sabha member, possibly Dharam Vir] to BS Moonje, dt. Fairfields, Ferozapore, 27th Oct. 1939, NMML, Moonje Private Papers, Subject File, ff. 1, 2. The author states that all the existing bodies should be brought under a uniform control. There were, he claimed, several Dals and Sanghs in the Punjab, the total membership of which amounted to some 50,000 (including the RSS, Atma Sangh, Mahabir Dal, Seva Sangh and Akali Dal). He said that while 'I cannot think of any one man of the calibre of Alama Mashriqi' the Hindus might have a council of select individuals to control the body.

the Government.¹⁸¹ Predictably this is where the youth movement came in.

The HMS had trouble building up a youth wing of their own even though they realised the need. With the onset of the war and the adoption of the Pakistan demand by the ML, a number of groups were started in the orbit of the HMS or Savarkar who attracted a very personalised following by then. At the same time, the Hindu right exhibited tremendous nervousness not only regarding 'the Muslims' but also vis-à-vis the communist 'fashion' among the Indian Youth.¹⁸² Mahasabhaites set up a number of groups around this time while a number of similar bodies were formed 'from below'.¹⁸³

Before the war, an Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Yuvak Sangh (HYS) with an annual Hindu Youth Conference existed in the HMS orbit.¹⁸⁴ The Hindu Students Federation which was very active around 1947.¹⁸⁵ The objects of the HYS were the removal of untouchability (Savarkar had called for a campaign on these lines), promotion of the 'glorious ideals of Hindu womanhood', cow-protection, an aggressive shuddhi campaign (and communal harmony), consolidation of Hindu

¹⁸¹ There were a number of other demands as to defence arrangements from relaxing the Arms Act so that Indian could procure rifles and 'shoot down' invaders to support the Government by 'guerilla warfare' or the time-honoured demand to grant India freedom in exchange for her full cooperation. See AIHMS resolution at its Lucknow session, 1st March 1942, IOR, L/PJ/8/683, f. 78.

¹⁸² In 1940, Shyamaprasad Mookerjee warned against what he described as a wide-spread fashion among Indian youth to admire communism at the expense of national and religious feeling. See Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, [speech at the] 'All India Hindu Youth Conference, Madura 29th Dec. 1940', in idem, *Awake Hindusthan*, Calcutta s.a., quotes from pp. 63-65.

¹⁸³ There is an abundance of examples. Take for instance the locally inspired attempt to organise a secretive 'Hindu Rashtriya Sangh' in 1939 in Delhi, which was meant to become part (or an armed wing of) the HMS. See Delhi Police Records, II inst., F.No. 8 (Hind-59, pt. I), 1939-47, ff. 1-22.

¹⁸⁴ Both Moonje and Savarkar were involved with the organisation and it is implicit in the correspondence that instructions would be given through the HMS programme to the Conference/ Hindu Yuvak Sangh and their activists understood themselves to be part of the HMS or its zone of influence. See corr. of Moonje with members, organisers and others re the Hindu Youth Conf. in Private Papers, BS Moonje, Subject file 53, vol I, see esp. ff. 120, 146.

¹⁸⁵ Meaning All India Hindu Young Men's/ Youth Association, it was set up around 1936/7 apparently. But an All India Hindu Youths Conference had been in existence under the aegis of the HMS since 1935 (see letter by Jangathan to president Hindu Yuvak Sabha, s.a., NMML, BS Moonje Private Papers, Subject File 64, f. 104). The name of the HYS is reminiscent of the multitude of Young Men's Christian Association or the various Young Men's associations (Naujawan Sabhas) that sprang up from the early 1920s. On the Hindu Students Federation, president of which was Prof. Deshpande, see NMML, HMS Papers, C-147 of 1947, especially the constitution which reproduces almost verbatim that of the HYS (ibid, ff. 16-23); for some its activities see Deshpande's letters, esp. idem to Nehru, dt. 30th May 1947 (ibid., f. 4). Deshpande took prominent part in an HMS workers' training camp of the same year (see below), and was briefly arrested (apparently) in the connection with his speeches but released in mid-May 1947 (see ibid, f. 13). Deshpande was also involved in

youth into an 'organic' body to defend Hindu 'interests' whenever necessary and the promotion of physical fitness by establishing military schools and volunteer corps.¹⁸⁶ From now, youth groups would be set up as direct appendages and 'private armies' of the HMS.

The Ram Sena was one of these bodies. It was formed as 'Hindu Militia' at the Calcutta HMS session (December 1939) to infuse military spirit into the Hindu youngmen, safeguard Hindu interests, to urge all Hindu volunteer bodies to merge into a single body and carry out all HMS orders with military discipline.¹⁸⁷ Moonje was appointed its C-in-C - apparently causing some young enthusiasts to confuse Moonje's military school with the Hindu militia, for which they can hardly be blamed.¹⁸⁸ The Ram Sena seems to have initially received substantial success in the recruiting and Moonje, despite his age, undertook extensive propaganda tours.¹⁸⁹ But Jagannath Prasad Verma, who was the chief organiser of the body, died in mid-1940.¹⁹⁰ Prof. VG Deshpande, who later became the president of the Hindu Student Federation, succeeded Verma.¹⁹¹ In the Sena's natural habitat, Nagpur, the chief commissioner even tried to win the Ram Sena for the Civic Guards, arguing that since Congress boycotted the body, if the Hindus did too, it would be

the Ram Sena (see below).

¹⁸⁶ Constitution of the HYS, see NMML, HMS Papers, 22, no ff. nos [22 pp.]. The body was officially entirely autonomous of the HMS. The definition of a Hindu and the goals of the defence of Hindu race and culture employ the language of Savarkar (the definition of 'A Hindu' is a quote from Savarkar's *Hindutva*).

¹⁸⁷ See the constitution of the Ram Sena, in HMS Papers, C-190 [s.a.]. The Ram Sena was to carry out the orders of the Hindu Mahasabha 'to strict Military discipline.' Eligible for membership were 'Hindu youths' between 20 and 52, physically fit for the purpose. Members of the Sena automatically became members of the HMS. A separate branch, the Bal Sena, would take in children and youngsters between 10 and 19 years, who were exempt from HMS membership. The Sena was to have a committee guiding it, and all appointments of Sena officers were to be made in consultation with the local Hindu Sabha president. Like the Congress, the Ram Sena had a four anna membership fee. For the pledge, see Appendix 'Pledge of the Ram Sena'. See also DIB note on the 12 most important youth movements: IOR, L/PJ/12/666, file 90/47, ff. 29-30.

¹⁸⁸ See letter by Sudhir Kumar Ghosh, C/o Dibrugarh District Club, Ltd., Dibrugarh, Assam, to the principal, Bhonsle Military School, Nasik, dt. 7th Jan. 1940, NMML, BS Moonje Private Papers, Subject File 64, f. 150.

¹⁸⁹ Judging by Moonje's correspondence, the group seems to have been off to a promising start. See for instance letter by Prof. VP Jani, MA, Principal Sarwajanik High School, Jakhlaw (Lalitpur), UP to Moonje, dt. 18.3.40 in NMML, BS Moonje Private Papers, Subject File 64, ff. 138-139. See also the letters by Verma, Moonje's organiser (for instance *ibid.*, f. 128) and the numerous other letters by individuals or institutions (see *ibid.*, f. 92, on the establishment of a branch of the Ram Sena and the appointment of a provincial organiser in Berar).

¹⁹⁰ After the session, Moonje received letters from people wanting information on the body or asking for guidance to set up one branch in their locality. See especially the letter by MV Ganapati, Advocate, Madras to Dr. Moonje, dt. 5.1.40, in NMML, BS Moonje Private Papers, Subject File 64, f. 153-154. See also letter by a Sergeant in the UTC (f.147), a letter from the Punjab Bharat Sevak

captured by the Muslims.¹⁹² Responding to the Governmental ban on military drill, Moonje observed it need not bother them as it was meant for the Khaksars, but they should hold their drill on private grounds and away from curious eyes, and desist from taking out processions.¹⁹³ The drill was the usual lathi drill, gatka and military drill. The Government thought that the ban did hinder the development of the Sena.¹⁹⁴ The Ram Sena seems to have ceased functioning between 1942-45 in all provinces except UP, where the membership was 6493. In Madras there were allegedly 6150 HMS volunteers.¹⁹⁵ The Sena was conceptualised as the 'constructive work' element in the HMS contemporaneous programme, constructive meaning in the Sabha reading as founding stone of the Hindu nation.¹⁹⁶

At the same time, Moonje made use of his supply of trained military men from his Bhonsala school to supply military men to local Hindu Sabhas for training. These workers - in some cases eminent 'public men' - would then in turn start their own mohalla defence committees.¹⁹⁷

In October 1946, Shyamaprasad Mookherjee, the AIHMS president, announced the inauguration

Sangh (f.149), also ff. 143-144, f. 171. Moonje also received a great influx of letters requesting enrolment in his Bhonsala School at this time (see his correspondence in this file). On the abortive attempt to re-start the movement (see *ibid*, f. 4), see Moonje's correspondence with GV Subba Rao, editor of the *Goshti*, and secy of the local Sabha at Bezwada (see esp. ff. 83, 82, 62, 56-57 47, 44). Subba Rao had vied for the job of organiser of the Ram Sena as early as 1940; see his letter to Moonje dt. letter dt 10th Aug. 1940, NMML, Private Papers, BS Moonje, Subject file 53, vol I, ff. 23-24 and *ibid*, ff. 8-9). Moonje had objected to his person on the ground that he did not speak Hindi but in 1943 was willing to give Rao a chance since he had been unable to obtain any other capable organiser, he said. This came to nothing, though.

¹⁹¹ Deshpande was Deputy Chief Organiser of the Ram Sena in 1940, see Circular, sent by Deshpande to Moonje, dt. 1st Aug. 1940, in Private Papers, BS Moonje, Subject file 53, vol. I, f. 118. See also Subject File 64 and NMML, HMS Papers, C-147. The handful of recurring names and the stark dependency on individuals may be indicative of the relatively small circle of 'organisers' the Sabhaites could apparently draw on. Like the ML, longer-term grass-root organisation was relatively new to the Sabha at this point.

¹⁹² See Deshpande, genl secy, AIHMS, National Militia (Ramsena) branch to BS Moonje, Nagpur, 31st Aug. 1940, Private Papers, BS Moonje, Subject file 53, vol I, f. 94

¹⁹³ Moonje to to Kripanath Sinha, Nagpur 27.8.40, Private Papers, BS Moonje, Subject file 53, f. 62.

¹⁹⁴ IOR, L/PJ/12/666, file 90/47, ff. 29.

¹⁹⁵ In mid-1940, there were branches in Bihar (2155 members), CP (1500 members), Nagpur and a few smaller towns and districts which the IB overlooked. By 1941, the membership in Bihar was down to 735. (Yet, at the same time in Bihar 2,766 Hindu Sabha volunteers were reported.) In Bombay there were 80 volunteers; in UP 1335. IOR, L/PJ/12/666, file 90/47, ff. 29.

¹⁹⁶ Resolution of the HMS Working Committee of 9th May 1943, New Delhi with VD Savarkar presiding, 'Intensive Programme', NMML, HMS Papers, C-61 [1943], f. 14. Moonje referred to the Ram Sena as the chief 'constructive work' that was necessary, see Moonje to Mr Krishna Narain Seth, genl secy, Unao Hindu Yuvak Sabha, Mauawan, Dt. Unao, dt. 9th May 1940, NMML, Private

of the Hindu National Guard. This was to replace the abortive Ram Sena.¹⁹⁸ The body seems to have shown real activity only in 1946 and was meant as a 'disciplined body of youths, who would fearlessly defend the rights and interests and the honour of their womenfolk in the supreme crisis that threatened the very existence of Hindus in Bengal.' The Guards were to protect Hindu, 'rehabilitate' the abducted and organise mohalla defence committees. The scheme included training provisions were made for a specially trained 'emergency battalion' to be sent to areas affected by violence and strengthen local 'Hindu Defence Units'. The Sabha wanted 10,000 trained men in the initial stages (with an allowance of Rs. 20 p.m. for all cadres) and establishment of emergency battalions in every district. Soon after, cooperation with and enrolment of Sikhs, Gurkhas and Buddhists was encouraged. The total expenditure was estimated at no less than 20 lakhs.¹⁹⁹ No comprehensive survey for the time after 1946 exists, so the membership and success of the body is open to speculation at this point.

The RSS, as has been mentioned, came now under closer purview as well. When the Punjab Government announced their ban on military drill in 1940, the RSS, too, perceived this as a ban on their organisation as such. In response to the Khaksars in the province, the RSS, which had only started operating in the Punjab in 1938, organised more vehemently. Dharam Vir, editor of the 'Hindu' and the son-in-law of HMS leader Bhai Parmanand, was in charge of the provincial organisation. From only 1,500 members in 1938/39 the RSS had grown to more than 8,000 members by

Papers, BS Moonje, Subject file 53 Vol II, f. 197.

¹⁹⁷ See letter from Hindu Sabha Shahajahanpur, Bhagwati Prasad Mathur (genl secy) and Sardar Darshan Singh to the Officer Commanding, Dr. Moonje's Military School, Nasik, 16th May 1940. Moonje had visited the area in early May and had advised them to obtain a 'sergeant' for training their workers. The sabha was willing to bear all expenses and wanted someone capable of inspiring the workers who would all be 'most respectable people - Advocates, Vakils, business men and public men. They will then start their own Mohalla troops.' Cf. NMML, Private Papers, BS Moonje, Subject file 53, vol I, f. 42.

¹⁹⁸ One can safely assume the reference is to the opposing bodies of Congress and Muslim National Guards and not to the French Revolution.

¹⁹⁹ To raise more funds, the proceeds of SP Mookherjee's book 'The Great Calcutta Killing - Who is Responsible?' was earmarked for the Hindu National Guards Fund. IOR, L/PJ/12/666, file 90/47, ff. 30. The group started work in Calcutta with ambitions to spread all over India. In November 1946, the provincial HS promised funds for the Guards, and a scheme for training and recruitment was drawn up. The aims and objectives included promotion of Hindu culture *and* communal harmony, to build up Hindu Defence against 'future aggression', defend the honour of Hindu women and to help the rehabilitation of Hindus in predominantly Muslim localities, and to ensure the safety of Hindu residents by organising mohalla defence committees.

early 1942 with a stronghold in Lahore where it operated 12 branches.²⁰⁰ The 1940 ban muted their activities as the RSS kept tiptoeing around the ban on drilling, but by 1942, when the fear of disturbances and invasion was rising and the Cripps mission indicated that India's future would be decided soon, their activities and enrolment increased at a time when this was the case for all volunteer groups. And the RSS went again on daily parades, held weekly manoeuvres with lathi drill followed by lectures and occasional training camps.

The body was eyed with much distrust by officials since Savarkar, Bhai Parmamand and other Sabhaites - described as the RSS' parent body - as well as Dharam Vir were said to have pro-Japanese agitation.²⁰¹ The Akali leader Tara Singh worked closely with the HMS around this time in an attempt to forge a Hindu-Sikh front.²⁰² Anticipating disturbances, a number of leaders called for such an arrangement. BS Moonje, for instance, at the 26th anniversary of the Indraprasath Gurukul in 1942²⁰³ announced that military training would be given to all the students and Arya Samajis from the surrounding areas - courtesy JK Birla who happily bore all expenses²⁰⁴. The Arya Vir Dal and the Hindu Mahasabha Dal would receive training like the Akalis, and all these bodies combined could face any impending danger. Moonje urged Hindus to demand a 75 per-cent army

²⁰⁰ Other branches existed at Amritsar (500 members in 1942), Jullundur, Rawalpindi, and Multan, Montgomery along with other districts. See NDC, SSPAI Vol. LXIV, No 15, dt. 11th April 1942, p. 193.

²⁰¹ Dharam Vir and one Prof. Vishv[a?] Bandhu Shastri were said to conduct pro-Japanese propaganda, and due to a shared Asian culture, the Japanese were not actually foreign invaders. The HMS pressed a decidedly Pan-Pacific/ Pan-Asiatic line in practical terms also: Japanese delegations were invited to the HMS session in 1933, in 1935 a Burmese 'terrorist', Bhikshoo Ottama had been made president of the HSM session (at the instance of JK Birla). HMS members undertook tours to Japan as late as 1941 and Savarkar and Shyamprasad Mukherjee (Working president of the AIHMS) both professed pro-Japanese sentiments on occasion. NDC, SSPAI Vol. LXIV, No 15, p. 194. On KM Munshi's tour advocating 'Akhand Bharat' in the Punjab, see NDC, SSPAI Vol. LXIV, No 15, p. 193-4.

²⁰² The SAD stance regarding the HSM had been oscillating until this point. While occasional attempts at closer cooperation had been made (notably by Gian Kartar Singh), the pro-Congress faction (under Udham Singh Nagoke) viewed these extremely unfavourably. Moreover, Akali-led campaigns to convert low-class Hindus to Sikhism antagonised the Sabha. Nevertheless, these two parties were thrown together by circumstance and forged a close working arrangement. Akalis and RSS would work together during the disturbances leading up to and during partition. Around 1941/42, the Akalis were looking for other partners as their relations with the INC became increasingly strained.

²⁰³ The Kanya Indraprastha Gurukul had been opened by Swami Shraddhanand at Delhi in 1923, a few years before he was murdered. Afterwards, the Gurukul was shifted to Dehradun. On this and his murder, see Nonica Datta, *Violence, Martyrdom and Partition. A Daughter's Testimony*, New Delhi et al: OUP, 2009, pp. 2, 51. For an overview of the Gurukul branches, see also Fischer-Tiné, *Der Gurukul-Kangri.*, pp. 78-85, esp. 80-81.

²⁰⁴ Birla also helped arm the Akalis. See below.

representation and to train themselves like the Khaksars to defend 'their rights'.²⁰⁵ The shift from the defence of life and property to honour and rights was an open door for unchecked extra-judicial measures, of course.

Golwalkar's general appreciation of the German example in their dealings with the Jewish population also sat uneasily with a Government at war with the Axis.²⁰⁶ Despite the professed sympathies with the German or Italian model of a sizeable segment (not only) of the Hindu Right, many hurriedly explained now that they had nothing to do with either. Savarkar, in his 1940 presidential address on the militarisation of Hinduism, loudly denounced all 'Isms' and pledged support to the British while making sure the message of pure strategic reasoning behind this was unmistakable. He argued that Bolshevism, Fascism, Nazism, Republicanism and 'Parliamentarism' were all just different embodiments of the same basic motivating factors of states to dominate and conquer others, and all the powers engaged in the war including Britain acted only in their own interest and self-aggrandisement.²⁰⁷ But seen in context, this stance was not so far away from many Congressites and especially the CSP who described the war as a conflict between rival imperialist powers. Savarkar maintained that armed struggle against tyranny in such a crisis would be the natural choice but Indians were too disorganised to seriously attempt this, and further, the HMS was not a platform able to discuss such options (with the obvious implication that less public platforms of course were welcome to try). He tried to reign in the 'youthful workers' of the Sabha especially who were itching for a fight by pointing out that the HMS would serve the country best by pursuing its goals of militarization and industrialization through its cooperation with the colonial Government. Anything else would be to the detriment of the Hindu nation.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ NDC, SSPAI, Vol. LXIV, No 14, 4th April 1942, p. 173 .

²⁰⁶ Golwalkar, *We or the Nationhood Defined*, Nagpur: Bharat Publ., 1939. In his foreword to *We*, Golwalkar explained that his book was largely an adaptation from *Rashtra Mimansa* ('reflection on the nation'), by Ganesh Damodar Savarkar, brother of VD Savarkar.

²⁰⁷ He went on to claim that Hitler was no human monster just because he was no Democrat like Churchill, and Nazism had in fact saved Germany, while Bolshevism seemed to suit the Russian conditions. Savarkar, *Presidential Address at the 22nd Session of the Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha, Madras 1940 AD by Swatantryaveer VD Savarkar*, printed by VG Ketkar, Lokasangraha Press, Poona and published by SR Date, secretary Maharashtra Prov. HS, Poona [1941], see pp. 33-39, for quote see p. 45.

²⁰⁸ Savarkar, *Presidential Address*, pp. 57-59. The Mahasabha maintained their aloofness from the movement that would be the Quit India campaign which Savarkar argued in 1940 was at best a stunt to win the next elections.

The Government, after its notification of 1940, asked all governments in 1943 to provide information on whether the ban was implemented in all localities in a uniform manner. Of course, it was not. The response to the RSS varied widely in different provinces. Tottenham noted that the RSS, while being basically a 'Mahratta problem' was seen with 'equanimity' by the Bombay Government while CP was keen on taking 'drastic steps' against it.²⁰⁹ Certain Indian States, most notably Baroda, seemed to provide a safe haven for Sangh camps and drill and most Indian rulers, after a tour by Golwalkar, had agreed to host training camps of the Sangh which were however limited to 600 people to 'conceal the true strength', the police stated. Golwalkar had issued a notification after the initial ban to all branches to stop military drill henceforth, but, intelligence suggests that behind the scenes, RSS organisers were very keen to revive military training unhindered and hence focused on Hindu Princely States to avoid head-on confrontations with the British government.²¹⁰

While some of the Sangh leaders advocated a policy of keeping in the spirit of the Governmental ban while others defied it openly. Especially in UP, Meerut and Benares, military activities continued, and the Benares branch started military sham fights.²¹¹ By comparison, the Khaksars under Mashriqi adopted a similar stance but bans and scrutiny were applied in that case quite stringently, while the RSS functioned relatively undisturbed until well into WWII when the authorities felt a need to curtail all uniformed and armed groups, more so where an Axis connection was feared.

²⁰⁹ Tottenham, sd. 21st April 1944, NAI, Political Dept., Political, 190-P(S), 1943, ff. 117-118.

²¹⁰ IB, Extract from daily report No. 36, dt. ? March 1943, received from CI Officer, Central Provinces and Berar, NAI, Political Dept., Political, 190-P(S), 1943, f.1.

²¹¹ In Amritsar a local leader (hailing from Nagpur) had been prosecuted for seditious speeches, and the branches there experienced a marked drop in attendance. In other places like Delhi and Burdaun, defiance to the ban on uniforms and other orders also continued. Note on the RSS, sd. 30th Nov. 1943 (4/12 L/3.70-D), in NAI, Political Dept., Political, 190-P(S), 1943, ff. 26, 27.

The Crescent, the Star and the Sword - The Muslim National Guards

Before we return to the major political shifts in the late 1940s, we have to fill in a one more essential piece of the puzzle,²¹² the militarised ML volunteer group, the Muslim National Guards (MNG). The body was organised when India already had a number of like bodies, from the RSS to the Khaksars. The League could no longer avoid the age of mass - and hence volunteer - movements. The League had its volunteer wing which resembled that of the Congress before the Seva Dal - an ad-hoc body doing service at the League sessions and acting at the behest of the local committees. Mass mobilisation in those days was not the League's strong point. But after the catastrophic failure at the polls in 1937, the League had some serious soul-searching to do, and it put in place a number of schemes and committees (such as a sub-committee for women with branches in all major provinces) to overhaul its structure. From 1937, first under the lead of the Raja of Mahmudabad, the League grappled with the setting up of a volunteer corps, schemes were drafted, sub-committees held but nothing much came of these plans due to a variety of circumstances and delays, first the communal situation, then the Khaksar trouble in Punjab which made the actual founding such a group infeasible.²¹³

The committee of April 1939 consisted of Raja of Mahmudabad (who had the initial notion of setting up the MNG to get unemployed youth off the streets²¹⁴), and a number of notables among them Yusuf Haroon (MLA, Sind, formerly associated with the Khaksars) and the aristocratic Currimbhoy Ebrahim, who became one of the organisers of the Guards in Bombay.²¹⁵ The 1939

²¹² There are myriad of such organisations springing up around this time, self-declared Hindu and Muslim bodies, that will have to be omitted here.

²¹³ It was the MLWC at Lahore in 1940 which discussed the National Guards. An AIML resolution had called for a body of volunteers but in view of the Khaksar trouble such a move was thought inadvisable at that point. The topic of the Khaksars made for such disagreement among those present that the meeting 'broke up in confusion' according to Intelligence. See NDC, SPPAI, Vol LXII, 29th June 1940, No. 25 p. 365. An earlier group under MAS Ispahani existed around 1938 chiefly in Bombay but had fallen into inactivity by the time the scheme was reconsidered.

²¹⁴ Markus Daechsel, *The Politics of Self-Expression* [kindle edition].

²¹⁵ The other members were: Mian Ziaud Din (NWFP), Sayyid Amjad Ali (Punjab). A further committee to draft constitution and rules was held a few days later. See for the inaugural: Sir Currimbhoy Ebrahim, chairman, Bombay Provincial MNG Organizing Committee, *The Bombay Chronicle*, 26th Aug. 1940, MSA, Home Dept, (Spcl), 1017-E, 1939-1943, f. 15. Ismailbhoy Currimbhoy Ebrahim (1906 - 1975) was the son of Sir Currimbhoy Ebrahim, 1st Baronet, and his second wife. His father had been a

scheme for the Guards aimed at no less than to 'mould and coordinate the Mussulman community of India and build a nation out of it', which, it stated, at present did not exist. It would be the 'motive power behind the Muslim national move.' The Guards were supposed to do so by enrolling human 'material' from a class of people who so far had shunned all 'field work' and been content to 'theorise from their arm chairs', i.e. educated and professional classes of Muslims.²¹⁶ Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the Scheme demanded as a qualification among other things literacy. These people would be trained and disciplined and given work within their own area of expertise and benefiting the 'Muslim National Uplift'²¹⁷ This combined the scientific, professionalised endeavours of a developmental imagination with an avantgarde idea for a volunteer body that was nevertheless hoping to include at least seventy-five percent of Muslims 'including the bluest blood' of the community. While, as such, it was not a youth body as such, it was nevertheless aimed at the ubiquitous amorphous 'young man' - the young, urban professional to be precise. The Guards were to overhaul the antiquated social, economic and political system of the Muslims in India in a uniform and disciplined manner and infuse a 'concrete Muslim League sense'. The minimum age was 18 and pledges of loyalty and obedience were to be rendered upon enrolment. A member of the Guards had to be a member of the ML as well and must not belong to any other political organisation, as the ML was keen to infuse their ideology through the volunteers and the nation-building Guards would double as party campaigners as it was hoped their presence would 'raise the tone of our elections' once it was properly set up, marking the conflation between nation and party that the League and the Congress shared. The ML, like other groups, was intent to keep a tight leash on the body and prescribed that the ML aims were those of the MNG, too.²¹⁸

The scheme distinguished between active corps and reservists, in line with military institutions everywhere. The reservists were to be those who could not participate in all the MNG activities (especially the military drill) owing to disability or old age. We find the by now familiar military

merchant and mill-owner in India and China, Justice of the Peace as well as president of the Anjuman-i-Islam and Mahomedan Educational Conference Bombay.

²¹⁶ 'Scheme', MSA, Home Dept, (Spcl), 1017-E, 1939-1943, f. 9 (p.4).

²¹⁷ See *ibid*.

²¹⁸ 'Scheme' [for the Muslim National Guards], MSA, Home (Spcl), 1017-E, 1939-1943, ff. 3-10.

setup.²¹⁹ The Guards were not to displace the Muslim League volunteers who had become a (small) provincial body doing odds and ends for the party - and this was supposed to stay the same, while the Guards would be the real strength and India-wide builders of a Muslim future in India.²²⁰

The eventual constitution of the Guards in Bombay did not spell out the avant-garde and developmental aspects in so many words, but fell back on the rhetoric of an army-like organisation bound to obey and be disciplined. But most features of the scheme were upheld with an added emphasis on defence, physical culture and social service as well as compulsory attendance at such ubiquitous symbols such as flag hoisting.²²¹ The Guards would work towards the uplift of the Muslim community socially and physically and would maintain peace and order. To the active and reservist corps a juvenile corps was added. A stronger mohalla focus was added by stating that it was the duty of every Guard to maintain friendly relations with people in the neighbourhood, to share their joys and sorrows and help them wherever possible. The attendance of Friday prayers was also made obligatory. Parades and monthly flag salutations were added to the list. A veritable military micromanagement of personnel was added, revealing the need of the ML to closely control the group



Uniform of the Muslim National Guards, cf. MSA, Home Dept (Spcl.), 1017-E, 1939-1943.

- meaning the Guards would have a striking percentage of non-commissioned officers. Specific duties were spelled out for every group, from lance-corporal to captain.²²² More specific rules for

Provincial Guards were to be formed by provincial Leagues. The uniform consisted of grey milit-

²¹⁹ The Scheme aimed for the existence of one unit (500 men) in every district. But in the meantime, a nucleus unit of a minimum of 25 men was permissible. Every provincial headquarters was to have a fully qualified military man (naval forces included) as adjutant. All provincial units would answer to a Provincial Commander, and the commanders to the 'Commander in Chief'. He, in turn, was responsible to the Salar-e-Azam at the apex who would oversee the efficiency and policy of the MNG. The salar-e-azam would be ex officio the president of the ML.

²²⁰ 'Scheme', MSA, Home (Spcl), 1017-E, 1939-1943, ff. 3-10.

²²¹ Secret Circular, Assist. Director, IB, Home Dept., GoI, 31st May 1944, NMML, Delhi Police Records, V, inst., F.No. - 66, f.18. See Constitution *ibid.*, ff. 23-27.

²²² There would be one lance-corporal for every four Guards, one corporal for every two lance-corporal, one corporeal for every two lance-corporeal, one sergeant for every four corporals, one lieutenant to every two sergeants, and one captain to two lieutenants or more; above that the district commander, and above him the salar-e-suba of Bombay city. He was answerable to the Provincial commander, who would answer to Working Committee of the ML.

ary-style tunic with star and crescent on the breast, trousers, laced shoes and a lathi; in contravention of the GoI orders, marks of rank for officers were also introduced, as was the cross belt. The name 'volunteer organisation' becomes - as with the Khaksars - arbitrary for the Guards: joining up was voluntary, indeed, but leaving was less so. One could 'resign' but if the superior officer detected any misdemeanours or compromising of the goals of the League or Guards, he would not accept the resignation but punish the offending member. Other offences included irregularity, negligence of duty, absence from parades or lectures, falsehood and lack of respect or obedience.²²³ For every single member a 'history sheet' would be maintained, every member had to sign the pledge and possess an identity card. When not in uniform, a Guard would wear a specific arm band to identify him as a member - for instance when he would visit the mosque.²²⁴ The continued identification of the Guards - rather than other volunteers who would shrug off their uniforms and become part of the masses, marks the strong identity the MNG were to have. Finally, rules laid down, much like the Dal, that the Guards would not interfere in politics.

The Guards were initially especially active in Bombay Province.²²⁵ In the early 1940s there was a stringent move to open recruiting centres, by 1942 there were four in Bombay alone and some ML dignitaries strived to attend opening ceremonies and the like in an attempt to boost the group.²²⁶ Most of the Guards' early disputes with Government concerned not what they did but how they presented themselves and what they wore while doing so.²²⁷

²²³ The nature of punishment was extra drill or demotion, it was to be suitable and establish 'an example to others'.

²²⁴ Constitution of the MNG - docket sheet, 1701-5, MSA, Home (Spcl), 1017-E, 1939-1943), no ff. nos (7 pp). It adopted some time in 1944, after the All India framework had been approved. It was probably drawn up in collaboration with Sayad Hashmalli Inamdar, the then provincial commander of the MNG.

²²⁵ In Bombay, as noted above, the volunteer movement was overall quite strong and tended towards the political left.

²²⁶ Cf. MSA, Home (Spcl), 1017-E, 1939-1943, ff. 17,19,21 (secret political abstracts). Their HQ were near Crawford Market in the centre of the city.

²²⁷ The Government had grown ever more apprehensive about paramilitary formations and fell back on bureaucratic nitpicking about details of permissible clothing and activities. The constitution aroused comments as far as the Guards' intention to 'keep the peace' was concerned once again an encroachment on state functions by a 'private army'. A discussion about the uniform of the MNG in Bombay in 1942/43 fills a very large file. See MSA, Home (Spcl), 1017-E, see esp. - for some of the more interesting back and forth in the correspondence: ff. ff. 23, 27, 33, 41, 43 (for Currimbhoy's diplomatic and icy politeness in his dealings with colonial officials). See also Begmohamed to Sladen, secy, GoBom, 7th Oct 1942, *ibid*, f.95. After the question about belts and pockets on the MNG uniform had finally been settled, a new dispute over the same issue broke out the next year.

These negotiations, again, reveal the extreme reluctance of the State to pass orders which would antagonise the League and lead to trouble, while the tone of negotiation depended much on the head of the MNG. While the MNG tried to avoid an all-out conflict, they seemed confident of the position of relative strength and would confront officials through the proper channels when deemed necessary. The MNG was not yet strong or threatening, and the Government freely acknowledged that it knew very well the League did not want to cause trouble. It was really from 1944 that the Guards began to expand rapidly, and the rapport between the Government and the League began to crack. Membership outside Bombay city was not impressive in 1944.²²⁸ Overall, there were a reported 40,000 MNG in India around 1940.²²⁹ The actual activities of the Guards were mostly limited to urban areas, when the Guards took out parades for ML meetings or big events, doing work for elections, crowd control at public meetings and conferences. As such, they were not really very different from the earlier Muslim League volunteers (who had a negligible permanent membership of c. 3,000 compared to the more striking and martial Guards). If social service happened, it was of a mohalla-based nature and spontaneous rather than organised. The Guards also took part in religious processions, such as Moharram, as uniformed assistance. Generally, the MNG kept in line with the regulations and avoided confrontations with the Government.²³⁰ Let us look at a concrete example to ascertain its scope.

As the government got increasingly apprehensive about 'private armies' as they were now regularly referred to,²³¹ repeated circulars regarding the breaches of the ban on drilling were served in the connection of RSS and MNG.²³² One of these was inspired by the December conference of the AIML in Karachi in December 1943. A new branch of the MNG was formed before the ML con-

²²⁸ In Godhra town (Broach/Panchmahals): 70; Ahmednagar city: 432 and in the canton 75; Belgaum: 20; in Poona 125; in Kurla (BSD) 25. Appendix to Official note, HD (spcl), dt 29.11.1944, MSA, Home (Spcl), 1017-E, 1939-1943, f. 258.

²²⁹ As before, these figures are notoriously unreliable. But one must also keep in mind that the the MNG like many similar organisations were event-base and membership fluctuating.

²³⁰ Official note, HD (Spcl), dt 29th Nov. 1944, MSA, Home (Spcl), 1017-E, 1939-1943, ff. 255-257 (41-43).

²³¹ Letter to Liaqat Ali Khan, general secy, AI ML from Vishnu Sahay, ICS, joint secy to GoI, New Delhi, 24th June 1944, IOR, L/PJ/8/679, ff. 34[?].

²³² Government Circular 28/3/43-Poll(I), dt 26th May 1943 (re the RSS) and 1st Jan. 1944 (re MNG), NAI, GoI, Home, Poll., 28/3/48.

ference was held, and, after a months' military training (unchecked by the Sind Government), 800 of them were marching armed with lathis in a grand procession through the city ending in staged drill exercises at the ML pandal. Their leaders armed with unsheathed long swords gave military commands, obviously quite unperturbed by the Governmental ban, while some 4000 spectators looked on. The internal reappraisal of how this incident could happen, revealed that an order had been served afterwards but it was thought that Guzdar, the Sind Minister for Law and Order, would overturn the same as he belonged to the ML. No official actually claimed that the local authorities should have intervened as a riot and possible all-India repercussions would probably have ensued, and a similar display at Delhi during an April session by the ML had therefore also been allowed to take place.²³³ Yusuf Haroon, close aide of Jinnah, and then MLA in the Central Legislative Assembly, and Guzdar were seen sporting MNG uniforms themselves; but all in all local officials made light of the affair: while the external volunteer batches were well disciplined, the local Guards were described as unkempt, slouching, chatting and smoking during the parade and not exactly creating a militant or military impression. One member of the War Staff described the scene as a 'comic opera'.²³⁴ The debate whether the Guard uniform was a uniform was also repeated once more. But there was little doubt that the outfit of Jinnah's personal guard was of a military nature. Still, the Home Department pointed out that while the local authorities tended to try and avoid direct confrontations with RSS or MNG, the latter led an existence based solely on displays at large ML meetings or events and seemed to be dormant for the rest of the time. The Viceroy was advised that Government wanted to avoid any confrontation with the ML except on the 'most urgent and compelling grounds'.²³⁵

With the change in the local power structures, the control over local government was slipping away rapidly and military displays kept catching the authorities unawares, much to their dismay.

²³³ CID Sind report dt. 29th Dec. 1943, sd. DFP Reid, 28th Dec. 1943; General Staff Branch (War Staff) to GoI, Home Dept. through War Dept. dt. 3rd Jan 1944; Official note by SJL Olver, dt. 21st Feb. 1944, NAI, Home Poll 28/2/43, ff. 21, 5, 26-29.

²³⁴ Personal and secret letter from Major-General Godfrey Hind to Lt-Genl. H. Finnis, 1st Jan. 1944; and Hind to HQ NW Army, 1st Jan. 1944, also Extract Fortnightly Report dt. 12th Jan. 1944 from the Governor of Sind to the Viceroy, NAI, Home Poll 28/2/43, f. 8, 9, 12.

²³⁵ Tottenham, addl. secy GoI, Home, to GEB Abell, dt. 20th Jan. 1944; note by the IB, sd. G Ahmed, Dy Director, dt. 10th May 1944 to Home Dept, GoI (Mr Vishnu Sahay), NAI, Home, Poll 28/2/43, ff. 15-20; 41.

The attempts by the Central IB to go behind the back of local Special Branches due to undue political influence by Ministries over the latter added to the confusion.²³⁶ At any rate, the Viceroy and sections of the Home Department were less than amused by the 'comic opera'. Fears that the MNG might develop into something like the Khaksars, who were still fresh on everybody's minds, made the Government twitchy.²³⁷ Trying to maintain its hold, the GoI promulgated an additional *Camps and Parades (Control) Order* in 1944 in response to the events and its concern over both MNG and RSS activities in such camps. This was initially to take the form of yet another addition to the DIR 58. It was meant 'to prevent secret gatherings at which breaches of the orders may occur' and to ensure that no private camps and parades by political or communal organisations were held.²³⁸ To this end, powers were now granted to prohibit or restrict camps, parades, meetings and assemblies.²³⁹ The organisations that were specifically targeted were the Khaksars, the INC bodies, MNG, and HMS/RSS.²⁴⁰ The Government believed it had a 'salutary' effect but the implementation was haphazard and control difficult. The 'comic opera' displays of the MNG or the relatively marginal bodies turned into something more sinister as the end-game of Empire approached. We find that smaller bodies further decline while the big players - Congress, MNG, RSS, and the Hindu Mahasabha sponsored bodies - win more members. The Khaksars, for instance, dwindled (a mere 5,000 members were left in 1946 and less than a thousand in 1947) - Mashriqi advocated to keep India strong and united and, for a while, fought against partition in his own inimitable way.

²³⁶ See Official Note by JA Thorne, Home Member, sd. 12th May 1944; official note by IB, HD, sd. D Pilditch, Director, 22nd May 1944, NAI, Home, Poll 28/2/43, f. 43, 44.

²³⁷ Note by Tottenham, Summary by Home Dept., GoI, 24th Feb. 1944, NAI, Home, Poll 28/2/43, f. 33.

²³⁸ The Government proclaimed that it did not mean to interfere with any legitimate activity but would suppress impartially 'the dangerous tendencies which are inseparable from any concerted attempt by non-official political or communal organisations to usurp the functions that are proper to the State, and to the State alone.' Press note on Subclause 1A, Home Department, New Delhi, dt. 22nd Sept. 1944, IOR, L/PJ/8/679, f.26.

²³⁹ The DM's permission might be required before such activities could take place, and restrictions or banning of the camp/meeting could thus be enacted in a timely fashion. The inspection of camps was also made possible under these powers.

²⁴⁰ From Home Dept. to all Provincial Govts, New Delhi, 20th Sept. 1944, No. 28/3/44-Poll(I), IOR, L/PJ/8/679, f. 22. CP and Punjab (familiar as they were with such trouble) as well as individual DMs in cities with high communal tension wanted a complete ban on all uniforms to be able to deal decisively with undesirable movements, but the GoI opined that too many exceptions would have to be made. See official note, 7th Nov. 1944, MSA, Home (Spcl.), 1017-E, 1939-1943, see esp ff. 206-208.

The Long Year of 1946

The last section dealing with the long year of 1946, that is 1945 through to early 1947. This will be merely a cursory glimpse of some fragments and events, strictly through the *organisational* lens of a few volunteer bodies in order to highlight structures and continuities rather than politics, the victims or memory. Justice cannot be done to the multi-layered complexities on the ground, the dynamic of localities, the cold-blooded calculations about demography, the interplay between locality and high-level politics, or the complicity of officials - and it is not attempted. The rich literature on partition with all its arguments and disputes will not be reiterated here. The election campaign of 1945 served as a backdrop to the communal tensions that now escalated into the onset and (sometimes long-standing) preparation for communal 'civil war' in India. During the campaigning 1945/46, all the parties went all out to garner support in the elections that would determine the future politics of India.²⁴¹ Mobilisation for all eventualities reached a new high. From March 1946, under the Cabinet Mission Plan, the future of India was being discussed. After the failure of the plan, the Congress-led interim Government took over in September, while Cyril Radcliffe locked himself in a room to draw the future boundaries of India and Pakistan.²⁴²

An overview of volunteer organisations for the first half of 1946, a conservative estimate of the *permanent* membership of the 12 most important All-India bodies alone at 413,000 in British India. Many of these bodies saw a massive influx in later 1946 and 1947, some almost doubling their membership and, additionally, commanding a substantial membership in the Princely States.²⁴³ In April 1947, the new Viceroy, Mountbatten, hardly a month 'off the boat', was 'amazed' to learn of these numbers and inclined to ban such organisations altogether. The Punjab, then, had just lived through another attempt to ban 'private armies' - in an attempt to grapple with the

²⁴¹ On the election campaign, see Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, pp. 126-173 for an overview of Sind, Bengal, Punjab for local dynamics and voting patterns. Also, Talbot, *Provincial Politics and the Pakistan Movement: The Growth of the Muslim League in North-West and North-East India, 1937-1947*, Karachi: OUP, 1990, pp. 71-78 (on Bengal) and pp. 94-100 (Punjab). In both regions students and *pirs* played an important role for electoral mobilisation.

²⁴² On the Cabinet Mission Plan, see Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, esp. pp. 174-191; and Sarkar, *Modern India*, pp. 426-432.

²⁴³ See IOR, L/PJ/12/666, f. 4, for the overall membership and ff. 6-17 (table). A summary is reproduced in the Appendix, 'Membership in the 12 most important volunteer bodies in early 1946'.

League-led agitation against Khizr's government and a reaction to Golwalkar's tour in late 1946 where he had inspected parades of some 25,000 swayamsevak.²⁴⁴ But the resulting agitation of RSS and MNG, which brought the city to a stand-still, saw the ban withdrawn before the week was out.²⁴⁵ The problem of the growth of private armies was discussed and shelved at the governors meeting, to be considered with the Indian leaders at Simla.

The INA Trials and INA involvement in volunteer organisations

1945/46

But let us go back and pick up the story in 1945: News of the forays of the INA under the late SC Bose had been silenced to the amount possible in India, but the trial of three INA officers in Delhi resulted not only in wide publicity and sympathy for the sorry heroes but also in riots. The Congress could not have but expressed their basic sympathy with the 'idealistic men and women' and Nehru did so, while expressing in his usual diplomatic terms his criticism of their political goals and alliances. Nehru's quiet critique exemplifies left-wing sections of society who did not subscribe to the wide-spread view that 'my enemy's enemy is my friend', but is not representative overall.²⁴⁶ For the most part, the INA members were simply national heroes.²⁴⁷ Nehru stated that he was not 'quite sure ... as to how far the formation and activities of this Army had been justified keeping in view the wider scheme of things...' but he had no doubt that those enlisted had

'done so because of their passionate desire to serve the cause of India's freedom: also if, owing to some technical interpretation of military law, large numbers of them received severe sentences, it would be a tragedy for India... So, quite apart from the political background, I was convinced that everything should be done to save these young men and women.'²⁴⁸

[... for] 'whatever they were as individuals, [they] became symbols of India's struggle for freedom, and because of this the people of India, with an amazing unanimity, stood by those

²⁴⁴ Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, pp. 231-239.

²⁴⁵ IOR, L/PJ/8/679, see esp ff. 1-4, 9.

²⁴⁶ For his attitude on the INA see for instance MO Mathai, *My Days with Nehru*, see pp. 58-60.

²⁴⁷ Maybritt J. Alpes. The Congress and the INA Trials, 1945–50: A Contest over the Perception of 'Nationalist' Politics, *Studies in History*, 23, 1, n.s. (2007), pp. 135-158. Alpes analyses mainly the nationalist responses through the lens of newspapers. On the trial and the interrogation of INA soldiers as well as the categories of 'white, grey and black' soldiers (denoting their level of pro-Axis conviction and potential danger) see Gajendra Singh, 'Between Self and Soldier: Indian Sipahis and Their Testimony during the Two World Wars' [PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2009], chp. 5, see esp. pp. 126-139, 143-148.

²⁴⁸ Nehru's foreword to Shah Nawaz Khan's book *My Memories of INA and its Netaji* [Delhi, 1946], in NMML, AICC, F.No.60, 1946, ff. 39-41.

symbols and sought to protect them.²⁴⁹

Nehru did then help with organising funds for INA defence, rehabilitation and relief. He realised that the Indian officers in the regular Indian army might feel enormous hostility towards the men, but that the Congress was adamant about the men not being re-instated in the army, was due mostly to the doubts as to their allegiance of people like Nehru himself. Already during the trials, there were rumours that Nehru intended to pursue the INA men as instructors for volunteers - or maybe that was wishful-thinking.²⁵⁰ After the trials, some rumblings and agitation grew amongst sections of the INA, and Nehru feared that they might form a body of their own 'which would not exercise healthy influence on public life.'²⁵¹

All these considerations may have played a role later. At any rate, in 1945-1946, a re-organisation of the volunteer corps and a department for the same were being debated at length in the INC.²⁵² Reorganisation schemes were being implemented from below. Various Azad Hind Seva Dals²⁵³ and other bodies still existed, independently of the Congress (in Bengal, Patna City) or organised by them.²⁵⁴ In 1946, the question of the continued bans on military training was also raised again.²⁵⁵

The sentiments regarding the INA trial united India for a short while. The INA was famously set

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Alpes, 'INA trials' p. 139.

²⁵¹ Nehru, 'Draft Note for the cabinet on the INA', in idem, *Selected Works*, 2nd series, Vol. 1, pp. 360-363, see esp. 362. The other members of the Defence committee included Congress prominence such as Bhulabhai Desai, Asaf Ali, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Jugal Kishore and KJ Katju. The socialist Asaf Ali argued later that the Congress support for the INA was entirely dictated by the immense public feeling. See Alpes, 'INA trials', p. 143.

²⁵² Suggestions for revised schemes of the Seva Dal also came in from various quarters from 1945. One such scheme (1945), provided a very long, detailed list of subjects. It was drawn up by Madan Mohan Shah(?), Volunteer Organiser, Bihar PCC, meant as a resolution for the CWC as a resolution. See NMML, AICC, G-16, 1942-46, f. 43-44. It deals with training that was to include Platoon Drill, Lathi Drill, Signalling, Patrolling, Crowd Control and 'intellectual' training. Among the 'special subjects', we find First aid and Ambulance, Band and Signal Squads, and the formation of 'Iron Guards'. Other people wrote to Nehru with schemes that looked even more like an army proper.

²⁵³ Meaning: Free/Independent Indian Service Army.

²⁵⁴ See for letters and correspondence with a number of these bodies with Nehru, NMML, AICC, G-16. In Hardikar's home province, the Karnataka Rashtra Seva Dal was started in 1944, blessed by NS Hardikar and modelled on the HSD, to bypass the continued ban on the Seva Dal. SK Patil (president, Bombay PCC) was active in trying to get a body started earlier in 1945, see NMML, G-16, 42-46, f. 37.

²⁵⁵ Even in 1946, Seva Dal members were still arrested under the continued ban. Cf. NAI, Home, Poll., 22/50, 1946. See also NMML, AICC, F.No. 54, 1946, ff. 1, 3.

up with disregard for communal or caste identity.²⁵⁶ The campaign and rioting that accompanied the trial was also a harmonic cross-communal undertaking.²⁵⁷ The INC sat on the fence with regard to the agitation, but a number of communists participated. But most of the trouble, officials thought, was due to 'irresponsible students'. Military vehicles were burnt, traffic stopped, European buildings and cars set on fire.²⁵⁸ The cross-communal sympathy the INA aroused was not to last, though. INA men and women soon became valuable human commodities as a scramble for incorporating them into volunteer movements set in, heightening the fear of the military preparations of the other community. One of the constant worries of volunteer organisations who aspired to an ever higher degree of coherence, discipline, training and uniformity within their ranks was the lack of 'trained' and qualified officers, local leaders and instructors. The long-standing gaps were partly filled with trained military personnel who were employed as more or less official trainers for volunteer organisations, such as the Seva Dal and the MNG. The influx of returned soldiers overall led to more skilled personnel being available for volunteer organisations, and more research needs to be done on their help to impart physical training, fighting skills and superior organisation.²⁵⁹ The INA played an increasing role in the affairs of volunteer organisation after 1945 and in the realm of social organisation overall - not always for the better.

From the middle of 1946, ex-INA men were busy in Bengal and the Punjab, and in [1946/]1947 were helping to train Congress volunteers, the RSS Sangh, and the Muslim League National Guard, while in August ex-INA Sikhs were active in organizing attacks of

²⁵⁶ See the memoir of Rohini Gawankar, *The women's regiment and captain Lakshmi of INA: an untold episode of NRI women's contribution to India's freedom struggle*, New Delhi: Devika Publications, 2003.

²⁵⁷ Sumit Sarkar also speculated about a link between the IAN trial and the Bombay Naval strike in early 1946, See Sarkar, *Modern India*, p. 411.

²⁵⁸ Sanjoy Bhattacharya's *Propaganda and Information in Eastern India 1939-45 - A Necessary Weapon of War*, Richmond: Curzon, 2001, see fn. 23 of the conclusion, pp. 218-19.

²⁵⁹ Many military men without jobs etc. became instructors etc. of volunteer movements (see below). On the fear of the government regarding the de-mobilization of soldiers, see Sanjoy Bhattacharya and Benjamin Zachariah, "'A Great Destiny': the British Colonial State and the Advertisement of Post-War Reconstruction in India, 1942-45", *South Asia Research*, 19, 1999, pp. 71-100. Kamtekar has pointed to the explosion of the state apparatus due to the war. Indivar Kamtekar, 'A Different War Dance: State and Class in India 1939-1945', *Past and Present* 176, 2002, pp. 187-221. Regarding the increase of police etc. and the transformation of the colonial 'night watchman state' into a vigilante, interventionist state, cf. Dietmar Rothermund, 'Die Anfänge der indischen Wirtschaftplanung im Zweiten Weltkrieg' in Peter Halblützel, Hans-Werner Tobel, Albert Wirz (eds), *Dritte Welt: Historische Prägung und politische Herausforderung. Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag von Rudolf von Albertini* (= Beiträge zur Kolonial und Überseegeschichte 24), Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1983, pp. 81-94.

their co-religionists on the Muslims in the Punjab.²⁶⁰

The solution to INA employment problem was then a curious one - demobilisation by re-mobilisation. One might suspect that it seemed critical (to Nehru and maybe others) to channel not only youths' but also the INA's energies into constructive channels. Seen from a distance, the fate of the remainders of the INA came full circle: its founder was initially a youth organiser who gained his first experiences in 'military' organisation with the Seva Dal, and later on the army he built came back to train its spiritual parent body.

Under the INA's Enquiry and Relief Committee (Allahabad), a Volunteer Corps was organised with two ex-INA men in charge of organisation and training (Colonel AB Singh and Lieut. Jagannath). All training was to be carried out 'on I.N.A. lines and the I.N.A. officers will work as instructors, to inspire those 'sterling qualities' instilled by Netaji into the INA into the Indian youth.²⁶¹ AB Singh, the organiser of the Relief Committee became the right hand man of the later GOC of the Congress Volunteer Corps, Shah Nawaz Khan of the INA trials, blurring the lines between Relief Committee and volunteer body. Various local Congress Committees – rather than asking for the much-sought-after instructor of earlier years – now would ask for 'some I.N.A. officers' to train their volunteers.²⁶²

Major General Shah Nawaz Khan²⁶³ submitted a scheme to the CWC to re-organise a central

²⁶⁰ Mary Doreen Wainwright, 'Keeping the Peace in India, 1946-1947: The Role of Lieutenant General Sir Francis Tuker in the Eastern Command', in Wainwright and C.H. Philips (eds), *The partition of India - Politics and Perspectives 1935-1947*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1970, see p. 131. See also Swarna Aiyar on INA involvement in the training and atrocities perpetrated by especially Sikh jathas (and Ahmadiyya defence) in the Punjab: "'August anarchy": The partition massacres in Punjab, 1947", *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (special issue), 1995, pp. 13-36, see esp. pp. 29-30, 32. See below.

²⁶¹ 'Note on Azad Hind Volunteer Corps', NMML, AICC, G-13, 1946, f. 103. See for the full quote Appendix. See Announcement of 26th Oct. 1946[?], NMML, AICC, G-13, 1946, f. 19. See *ibid*, f. 21 for the pledge.

²⁶² For example the Jessore DCC, 18.10.1946 to the Genl. Secy. AICC, Allahabad, in NMML, AICC, G-13, 1946, f. 13.

²⁶³ Shah Nawaz Khan had been recruited to the INA as a Japanese POW. Bose selected him to command a guerilla regiment that was to form the vanguard for the invasion of India, which was dubbed the Subhas Brigade by the soldiers (see Sugata Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent. Subhas Chandra Bose and India's struggle Against Empire*, Cambridge, Mass/London: Harvard University Press, 2011, p. 252). Khan was one of the three officers court-martialled during the INA trials at the Red Fort. On Shah Nawaz see the short compiled autobiographies of the 'Delhi Three': *The I N. A. Heroes Autobiographies Of Maj. Gen. Shahnawaz, Col. Prem K. Sahgal, Col. Gurbax Singh Dhillon Of The Aazad Hind Fauj*, Lahore: Hero Publications, 1946, see esp. pp. 1-50 on his background and

Volunteer Corps, which became, with many changes on the way, the Hindustani Seva Dal. Khan became head of the new Congress Volunteer Department from July 1946. The department would have separate sections for women, and minor boys and girls. The monthly expenditure for the Seva Dal was upgraded to some 1500 rupees p.m. (counting only the recurring expenditure) and the pay scales for the office-bearers were significantly increased.²⁶⁴

Khan's constitutional draft relegated the Congress President to the post of Chief Officer, while the GOC was invested with all the actual power – from training to appointments. INA men would be the principle advisers and instructors of the reorganised Dal.²⁶⁵ A number of PCCs objected to the centralist features of the draft,²⁶⁶ which was described as ‘autocratic and impractical’ and going against the wishes of some PCCs, since it would rob the Dal of the local initiative that it was founded on.²⁶⁷ Interestingly, this initial draft mirrors the draft scheme for the Azad Hind Volunteer Corps, which is designed in a centralist fashion, and which – in turn – is a more or less exact copy of the organisational set-up of the INA.²⁶⁸ In the final version of the new constitution, the decentralised features were kept intact but many elements from Khan's draft were also incorporated. Other than the training for disciplined service by peaceful means and village uplift, the defence

recruitment to the INA. Khan joined the INC after the INA trials and was later elected to the Lokh Sabha in 1952 and held a range of governmental posts in post-independent India.

²⁶⁴ NMML, AICC, F.No. 60, 1946, ff. 47, 57. The amount stated is the one given as the suggested imprest amount of the SD account.

²⁶⁵ The GOC was also responsible for uniforms, drill schemes etc. He could appoint 1 of 4 members of local volunteer boards and together with these four then appoint a GOC and Dy GOC from outside their midst. All appointments including advisers, instructors and local officers were to be made by the AI GOC on request by the provincial GOC. See Circular No. 6, 01.10.1946, sd. Shah Nawaz Khan to all PCCs, in NMML, AICC; G-13, 1946, ff. 43, 47+49.

²⁶⁶ Khan held an All India Volunteers' conference (of provincial representatives of the different volunteer corps) on 25th Sept. 1946 in Delhi with Hardikar and Nehru present. SK Patil, an important player in the volunteer movement in Bombay and head of the Bombay PCC, complained to Nehru that the conference had been irregular and Khan was basically forcing an unwanted centralisation on the organisation. See NMML, AICC, G-8, f. 5. Cf. also AICC, G-13, 1946, f. 9.

²⁶⁷ It is these latter feature that various provinces protested against, especially Bombay. SK Patil, President, Bombay PCC, to Pandit Nehru, New Delhi, 10.10.1946, in NMML, AICC, G-13, 1946, ff. 9, 11.

²⁶⁸ There was a ‘Member in Charge’ who would oversee the HQ of the AHVC and there would be a Provincial Dept, the Training Dept, The Publicity & Records Dept., the Supply and Finance Dept and the Children and Women section. The Provincial HQ would be a mirror of the organisational structure of the central HQ and *all* officers would be appointed by the Member in Charge of the Corps in consultation with the presidents of the PCCs. See Azad Hind Volunteer Corps, Organisation Chart, NMML, AICC, G-13, 1946, f. 105.

from anti-social elements and the function of peace brigades (taken from the Second World War) were incorporated into its constitution.²⁶⁹

The constitution apart, Khan's diplomatic skills do not seem as developed, and the envisioned militarised centralisation of the Dal and his behaviour apparently caused irritation and recalcitrance among the PCCs at times.²⁷⁰ Shah Nawaz instituted new headquarters in Allahabad²⁷¹. The immediate problem facing the new corps was were once more the stubbornly localised and independent bodies, often organised by Congressmen, and virtually indistinguishable from the Congress save for the all-important factor of party control. The leadership feared that this would weaken the corps if allowed to go unchecked, furthermore many of these corps were described as 'uncontrollable' and it was feared that their energies might be misdirected into 'wrong channels' in an overall volatile situation. Having ample experience with volunteers, Sarabhai strove hard to make Congress-affiliated student organisations who had their own corps 'fall in line'.²⁷²

With the practical considerations surrounding the impending 'transfer' of power and the influx of INA personnel, the SD was even more stringently identified with a civilian army. A number of letters arrived at the AICC office seeking admission to the militia. One Krishna Chandra Chowdhury, a 24 year old Calcutta University graduate from Serampore wrote in 1946 to Nehru: 'Learning from some reliable source that you have decided to recruit some military for working our country, [I] beg most respectfully to offer myself...'²⁷³ Satyendra R Shukla, General Secretary, Agra Students' Congress, wrote in December 1945 that he had learnt from a nationalist daily that

²⁶⁹ See Notes of meeting on 19.07.1946 signed by Mridula Sarabhai and BV Keskar, NMML, AICC, G-13, 1946, f. 121. The constitution now included the defence against 'anti-social elements'. Provinces would do their own appointments, but on the local volunteer board would have one member appointed by the GOC. The Provincial GOC and lower-level corps may have advisers who 'should be generally trained I.N.A. men or women'. It was also laid down that the Volunteer corps shall stay aloof from internal party politics to make sure that they would not get involved in power struggles where they might tip the balance. NMML, AICC papers, G-13, ff. 93-95, AICC papers, F-60, 1946, f. 61 ff; and for the finalised rules: AICC papers, F.-70, I, 1946-7, ff. 55-61.

²⁷⁰ On the constitutional debate, see below. See for instance letter from Kaliphada Mukherji, secy. Bengal PCC, to J. Nehru, 12/13th July 1946, NMML, AICC, G-13, 1946, ff. 129-131. See on the Bengal body at this time also NMML, G-16, 1942-1946, f. 15-16.

²⁷¹ These were chosen by Mridula Sarabhai, who had earlier helped with the organisation Dal under Patel's aegis. She ran all the day to day business of the organisation.

²⁷² Letter from Mridula Sarabhai to Shah Nawaz Khan, 6th Aug. 1946, NMML, AICC, G-13, 1946, f. 97-101.

²⁷³ NMML, AICC, G-13, 1946, f. 7.

an INA training camp had been started in Allahabad. 'As we are also going to organise some students on the basis of the INA, will you please be able to furnish us full particulars about it.'²⁷⁴

Thus, the INA became the latest model for organisation after the Red Fort trials.

The Meerut Congress Session 1946 - INA and Seva Dal

The 1946 Meerut Congress Session was to be organised, and the crowds controlled, by a blend of Seva Dal and INA, amounting to some 3,500 Congress volunteers, 500 female volunteers and 1000 INA personnel.²⁷⁵ Shah Nawaz Khan was conductor of the Instructors' Camp as well as the 'G.O.C. Hindustani Seva Dal', based at Swaraj Bhawan in Allahabad (the AICC office) and Mridula Sarabhai the General Secretary. At headquarters, Khan ran things the way he had envisioned for the entire organisation: strictly centralised, and Sarabhai soon complained about the organisational confusion and that nothing could be decided without Khan (who kept being absent from HQ)²⁷⁶.

The INA personnel were commanded by their own officers, while the overall command of both groups was to be a joint one (as usual under the direction of the Reception Committee). Khan wanted special treatment, accommodation and provision and as much as 70,000 Rupees in 'pocket money' for his INA men (all denied by Nehru). The INC president also felt compelled to point out that it 'should be explained to [the INA men] that we cannot treat the general public in the way the army or the police usually treat them.'²⁷⁷ In a speech during a meeting of representatives of the

²⁷⁴ Satyendra R Shukla, to unknown, 26th Dec. 1945, NMML, AICC, G-16, 1942-46, f. 27.

²⁷⁵ Cf. Note by Nehru (to Shah Nawaz Khan?), AICC papers, F.No. - 60/ 1946, ff. 63-65. According to one of the organisers, Raghuvveer Narayan Singh, the 'lady volunteers' were counted extra. This means a total of 4,000 volunteers plus INA instructors/corps. See *ibid*, letter (Hindi) by RN Singh, *ibid*, ff. 14-15.

²⁷⁶ Mridula writes from camp that new problems coming up daily that can only be decided by Khan or Hardikar – she had been under impression that local GOC had freedom to sort admin out but he found that this was not the case. Mridula Sarabhai to Shah Nawaz Khan, 17th Oct. 1946, NMML, AICC, F.No 60, 1946, ff. 27, 29.

²⁷⁷ J. Nehru, to [?], 1st Oct. 1946, NMML, AICC, G-13, 1946, f. 41. In the end, clothing and blankets were provided for the INA men, but the normal volunteers too got some amenities unheard of before. In the end, Nehru ordered Patel to pay some money from the INA funds to the INA volunteers. The Chairman of the Reception Committee was then authorised to pay Khan as much as Rs. 30,000 in advance. See letter by Nehru to Vallabhbai Patel, 25th Nov. 1946, in Jawaharlal Nehru [general ed. S Gopal], *Selected Works*, Second Series, Vol. 1, New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, Teen Murti House, 1989, pp. 355-356.

Congress Volunteer and PCCs, Nehru outlined the form the Seva Dal had taken and should take in the future: during the war, especially in UP, hundreds of thousands of villagers had to be trained to defend the localities from (Japanese) invasion and internal threats such as dacoits, but this programme could never really be implemented (due to the ban). Now millions of Indians and especially villagers should be enlisted, not only (and one could read, not so much) to achieve Independence but to serve the villages, provide education, organisation, hygiene, i.e. the old Gandhian Congress programme. He warned that this could not be achieved top-down but only 'if the masses themselves take up this cause.'²⁷⁸ This vision of a decentralised, village-based educational volunteer corps was a far cry from what Khan (and arguably Nehru) had in mind.

The INA men took over a lot of the Dal training, finally filling in for the notoriously absent instructor. There were about 200 of them training the other volunteers for the 1946 AICC session and also throughout the province.²⁷⁹ The Muslim League and other 'Muslim bodies' were highly disquieted at the thought of INA men training Congress volunteers and the advantages the Congress body would thus gain over their own organisations. For instance, the UP Muslim Student Federation sent out a letter requesting the Delhi leader of the MNG, Anwar, to help in reorganising the 'almost defunct' body of MNG there.

I cannot impress on you too strongly the urgent need of organizing a defence force of the Muslims of the U.P. The militant Hindu Sangh, and the Congress volunteer organisations now being trained by men and officers from the I.N.A. have become a serious menace to the existence of the Musalman.²⁸⁰

The Muslim League indeed took steps to win individual (Muslim) INA officers and generally to have army men training MNG volunteers, for instance in Delhi.²⁸¹ The presence of servicemen and ex-soldiers from this point on is one noted time and again.

'Direct Action Day' and After

In July 1946, the Congress rejected the Cabinet Mission Plan, and, as Jalal argued, Jinnah's posi-

²⁷⁸ See NMML, AICC, F.No. G-64, 1946, ff. 32-35.

²⁷⁹ Note by Raghuvveer Narayan Singh [undated], in NMML, AICC, F.-No 60, 1946, ff. [7-11]

²⁸⁰ Zahair Siddiq, General Secy of UP Muslim Students Federation, Allahabad, to Kurshid Anwar, Organiser, Muslim National Guards, c/o Central Office of the AIML, Faiz Bazar, Delhi, NMML, Delhi Police Records, V. inst., F.No. - 65, f. 29.

²⁸¹ NMML, Delhi Police Records, V. inst., file 65, f. 93.

tion within the ML Council was endangered.²⁸² Under these circumstances and with mounting popular sentiments, Jinnah called for 'Direct Action' on 16th August 1946. HS Suhrawardy was the Premier of Bengal at the time and, it is reported, instigated much of the excitement by his speech at the maidan following which 'mobs' of Muslims set out to close down Hindu shops. One Ghulam Sarwar, an ex-Leaguer, became notorious for his brutality in those days and was said to commanded a group of ex-soldiers and Muslim National Guards.²⁸³ The Hindus in Calcutta were, however, well prepared. They had organised weapons and a defence system in anticipation of the trouble. The setting up of civic guards, vigilance or defence corps in mohallas was nothing new, of course, but funds were flowing more freely and such measures showed greater cohesion. The apprehension and fear of those days maybe difficult to comprehend fully. A 'Muslim friend' wrote to Nehru weeks before about a 'whispering campaign' about a 'battle for Calcutta' supposed to become 'the bloodiest battle in India's history', any and all means would be deployed - even a rather science-fiction-sounding 'bacteriological warfare' was mentioned.²⁸⁴

When recruiting to defence corps based on neighbourhood network took place in the run up to Direct Action Day, the groups could build not only on pre-existing social structures but also organisational experiences, a ready-made rhetoric and, often, semi-military training.²⁸⁵ The preparations that took place are then neither original nor spontaneous but a continuation of one of the important strands of mobilisation from the 1920s on.

The Calcutta Killings sparked off a chain of communal violence across India, the best-known being Noakhali six weeks later. Local reports here as well as later during partition time and again emphasise the organised, semi-military bearing of the mix of ex-servicemen and 'the mob' as well

²⁸² On Jinnah in respect to the Cabinet Mission Plan and the question whether Jinnah was pressurised into calling for 'Direct Action', see Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, see esp pp. 191-213. See for a somewhat different interpretation of the situation, Anita Inder Singh, *The Origins of the Partition of India, 1936-1947*, Delhi et al: OUP, 1991 (1st ed.1987). pp. 142-144; and David Page, *Prelude to Partition*, pp. xvii-xxi.

²⁸³ Suranjan Das noted the presence of 'goondas' in much of the trouble, not always a helpful analytic category - just like volunteer the goonda is a situational term, at best. On the preparations by inhabitants for Direct Action day. Cf. Suranjan Das, *Communal Riots in Bengal 1905-1947* (Oxford University South Asian Studies Series), Delhi et al: OUP, 1993, see esp. pp. 177 passim.

²⁸⁴ Copy of letter by a 'Muslim friend' of Nehru's from Calcutta, Park Circus, to Nehru, 21st May 1947, IOR, R/3/1/90, f.305.

²⁸⁵ See Joya Chatterjee, *Bengal Divided*, see esp. pp. 233-240 for the continuities of electoral campaigning, local agitation, the importance of volunteer agitation and the Calcutta Killings. See on Calcutta and Noakhali also Suranjan Das, *Communal Riots in Bengal*, pp. 159-206.

as the influx of 'outsiders'.²⁸⁶ It has been argued that the riots (especially Calcutta itself) was the result of the scheming and calculations of politicians coming together at some point with popular support²⁸⁷ or that the riots constitute a zone marked by local dynamics growing out of the communal tension and general situation, i.e. the impending British departure, the retreat of the colonial state, disillusionment among the police force and loss of regard for authority.²⁸⁸ These questions can be approached and synthesised by looking more closely at the volunteers. The role of volunteers during the wave of violence and murder in 1946-1947 has been noted in most studies, even though a closer analysis of the structures behind the organisations is often missing. In the short remainder of this study, we will address some of the continuities and the complicated intermediate zone volunteer bodies inhabited.

The entire nationalist movement, its big campaigns, mass rallies, processions - were a lesson in organised disregard for the official authority. Responding to the permanent state of exception that was colonial law, nationalists had long since taken to declaring their own exceptions and national crises that demanded the taking over of such functions as the state was deemed to fulfil only insufficiently or with malevolent intent. The volunteers (as anti-colonial partisans²⁸⁹) embodied this response. The systematic training for 'self-defence', the established hierarchical structures of volunteer bodies, the intense neighbourhood anchorage of many of these bodies, all mediated between 'the masses' and leaders by establishing structures that had been, during the war, aimed at the defence of neighbourhoods against external threats and could now, with the unprecedented mobilisation, be turned to defending against internal chaos and, finally, 'the other' quite easily as the conflation of both these threats had been edged into the volunteer's (self) description since the 1920s,

²⁸⁶ See Sulagna Roy, 'Communal Conflict in Bengal, 1930-1947: Political Parties, the Muslim Intelligentsia and the Pakistan Movement' [unpublished PhD thesis, Trinity College, Cambridge, 1999], esp. chp. 4, section 4.

²⁸⁷ The trope that politicians were to blame was one that reverberated through the narratives of witnesses and perpetrators at this point and with reference to partition violence as well as in official accounts.

²⁸⁸ Suranjan Das emphasised the role of political parties and organisations for the riots in Calcutta and after. See Suranjan Das, *Communal Riots in Bengal 1905-1947*, New Delhi et al: OUP, 1993. Sulagna Roy, on the other hand, stressed the erosion of British authority and lack of confidence among the police force which, in combination with intense communal feeling over the impending British withdrawal. The Police, it has been claimed, was demoralised among the police force after the severer criticism levelled against police excesses during the INA 'riots' and therefore did not intervene earlier. See Sulagna Roy, 'Communal Conflict in Bengal, 1930-1947', chp. 4.

²⁸⁹ See on the possibility to understand the volunteers in this framework, above.

or earlier. But the volunteer must not be seen as a fixed sociological category, the volunteer is whoever is mobilised in the flux of events. As an in-depth localised study has not been undertaken here and the absence of a firm grounding in specific dynamics is missing, the volunteer has to be mostly treated as a mirror for larger trends.

After August 1946 in particular, the long-standing tensions regarding the non-violence of volunteers came internally and publicly to the forefront of the discussion within the Congress. Disciplined volunteers were now more urgently needed than ever, and the practical question of communal strife and conduct imploded the veneer of idealistic Congress rhetoric about non-violence. Mridula, after receiving numerous letters of Congressmen seeking guidance and asking about the interpretation of non-violence and self-defence, asked Morarji Desai to take a stance about what people should do to save the life and property of citizens. Could Congressmen join the official 'Nagarikdals' set up as assistant police? Congressmen were asked to organise and protect people 'by any means', yet the government placed restrictions on lathis, thus forcing people 'to develop highly skilled brutal means of resistance from whatever material of daily use they possess.' It might be advisable – in the interest of the national moral values – for the INC to give out lathis. Since taking over the government, 'Congressmen do not appreciate our insistence on non-violent resistance., noted Sarabhai'.²⁹⁰ These concerns were reiterated in a number of letters by Congress workers to the Congress leaders, one example being the Gujarat Sevadal²⁹¹, another member of the Calcutta Shanti Sena seeking clarification over statements by Nehru that the volunteers should remain non-violent, against Shah Nawaz who said the corps would fill the gap that would emerge once the British army would withdraw.²⁹² - all of them, in essence, asked for the Congress to make exceptions to the creed of non-violence and become pragmatic.

²⁹⁰ NMML, AICC, G-13, 1946, f. 85.

²⁹¹ The latter is instructive as it develops over multiple pages the dilemma in a series of questions stating that volunteers should be non violent but that most Seva Dal workers were 'simple men'. What should they do if faced with an attack? Run and leave it to others or face it violently? But if they did not face an attack, did they not fail in giving a lead and doing their duty to defend their countrymen? See NMML, AICC papers, G-13, 1946, ff. 87-90.

²⁹² Letter by B. Samal to Jawaharlal Nehru, 10th July 1946, in NMML, AICC, G-13, 1946, f. 115, 117

In the mean time, other organisations had been planning warfare for a considerable amount of time. The volunteer organisations, long described by the colonial state as 'private armies', now tended to fill that brief, with the exception that there was nothing 'private' about them - they stood for the competing claims of different communities and as these relations deteriorated,, the volunteer organisations - sworn to protect the community and offer defence - kept step. The mohalla now became more and more a semi-fortified, sometimes gated, zone under the control of a neighbourhood watch responsible for its protection, often paid for by a fearful middle classes. The model was already well established by previous activities in national campaigns (then against the colonial apparatus²⁹³) and, on the volunteer side, the multiple and regular camps being held by all volunteer bodies and their habit of installing night watchmen and turning the volunteer camp into separate zones under their own territorial control fused the idea of Boy Scouts/ military camps and neighbourhood neatly. Publicly, the rites and exercises of campaigns and the experience of defence groups during the war, would now come in handy for the patrolling of neighbourhoods to protect against attacks. What was happening then was an activation of the publicly enacted rituals that volunteer organisations at least helped popularise. This is not to claim volunteer organisations are the *cause* of any of these things - they were merely the most visible and semi-permanent expression of a forms of mobilisation that had gained wide currency.

We will here in an exemplary fashion look at some of the 'preparations' for 'defence' that were going on in Delhi. An overview of volunteer organisations in the city reveals that most bodies were small at the time and kept - on the surface – in line with the official bans until quite late. The biggest body by far was the RSS with 2000 volunteers in urban Delhi, another 565 to 750 in New Delhi and and more branches on the surrounding areas.²⁹⁴ In the whole Delhi zone there were an estimated 25000 swayamsevaks - negligible numbers in comparison. The Sangh tried to keep up their physical training by breaking up the shakha into smaller groups who would train in schools,

²⁹³ See Nandini Gooptu, *The Politics of the Urban Poor*. Gooptu makes notes of the street activities of local volunteers for some campaigns including the building of barriers against the police and similar preparations.

²⁹⁴ They were also the only group with significant ties in the hinterland, with small shakhas of 20-50, 500 in the rural areas surrounding Delhi. These small rural groups typically had between 15 and 40 members, in Shahdara PS there were a 100 members.

mandirs, dharamshalas and katras. The HQ had been shifted to Kamla Bhavan at Sabzimandi (the area where the HMS HQ was located). The Seva Dal and MNG both had about 600 members. They held parades in an on-off manner,²⁹⁵ but kept up physical exercise session and keeping order at meetings. The Azad Hind Volunteer Corps of the Forward Bloc had around 200 members. So did the Ahrars, the Arya Vir Dal had about 225 members, the Mahabir Dal 125 (recently increased from 35). All other bodies had less than a hundred: the Khaksars 50, the Akali Dal (officially) 50.²⁹⁶ The All-India Hindu Sabha Swyam Seva Dal, organised by HMS with their HQ at the HMS' Sabzi Mandir, had only 25 people.²⁹⁷ These numbers, apart from being unreliable, tell us little, though. A look at the structures and forms that mobilisation took is instructive.

The MNG overall had perked up under the new, dynamic leadership of Siddique Ali Khan of Nagpur²⁹⁸ and a radical element was added when Major Kurshid Anwar was appointed second in command, he tried to reorganise the military exercise of the Guards and on his tours through the country declared that the Congress and its allies wanted to eliminate the Muslims and Pakistan could only be achieved through mass terrorism, hence people should prepare for civil war.²⁹⁹ The ML guided the MNG activities closely with regular meetings between Guards and the chairmen of the AIML 'Committee of Action'.³⁰⁰ In October 1946, yet another constitution was introduced, this

²⁹⁵ It seems that whenever a batch of any group got arrested, all groups ceased doing parades for a while. we may assume that at this point, getting into unnecessary trouble with the police did not help anybody's agenda.

²⁹⁶ There were any number of smaller bodies. An Inderprastha Sevak Mandal, for instance, had about 50 members - their sole activity seems to be to dispose of dead Hindus; the Jamiat-ul-Ulema had about 33.

²⁹⁷ They did lathi and physical training, but wore no uniforms. Their aims were to protect the civil rights of Hindus and improve their physique. Their flag was that of the HMS: a saffron with a swastika. Cf. 'Monthly Report on Volunteer Organisations in the Delhi Province for month ending 31st Dec 1946', Delhi Police, II inst, Hind-54, s no. 11, ff. 8-11. These numbers are not exactly impressive but then, neither are they very reliable. The given numbers fluctuate so sharply from report to report that the overall impression is that of a police service in transition and scrambling to keep up with the events around them. We notice that in late 1946/1947, the police reports change markedly. Orderly typed reports are replaced by handwritten notes, often based on 'casual source reports' instead of regular informers and undercover officers. At any rate, the numbers stated in 1947 were much higher, and a multitude of new bodies sprung up.

²⁹⁸ See Ian Talbot, 'Crowds, Ceremonials and State Symbolism. The role of the Muslim National Guards in the Pakistan Movement', in idem, *Freedoms Cry: The Popular Dimension in the Pakistan Movement and Partition Experiences in North India*, Karachi: OUP, 1996, pp. 64-65.

²⁹⁹ IOR, L/PJ/12/666, ff. 20-21. In Bengal, the Guards apparently tried to infiltrate and take over the Bengal Home Guards around this time, it was claimed.

³⁰⁰ Private meeting of subar salars of the MNG, at AIML office, Delhi, dt. 7th Oct. 1945, NMML, Delhi Police Records, V inst., F. 109.

time taking away the provincial control over the local bodies and centralising it - either with the AIML or with the 'Committee of Action' in case of any more calls for direct action by the League. By 1945/46 the Delhi MNG was infringing on the regulations of the 1944 orders - but tacitly.³⁰¹ It undertook extensive recruitment activity, parades and camps with drill exercises in mid-1947, and in secret meetings preparations were made for fighting the Hindus.³⁰² In Delhi city, something between 1,200 and 600 MNG volunteers existed in 1946.³⁰³ The corps there was under control of Manzur-ul-Haq, and the League complained that organisation was lacking and Haq was being inactive.³⁰⁴ Next to parades, Guards attended Muslim Student League functions and organised pilgrimage camps. Police described them as being formed for self-defence during communal riots specifically, and said that other communities looked upon them as a dangerous and violent body. Sometimes, counter bodies were set up just to keep an eye on the activities of the Muslim League and Guards, such as the 'National Volunteer Corps' Delhi which consisted mostly of young Sikhs and existed to prepare for any attacks.³⁰⁵

A new wave of training classes in lathi and dagger 'play' by various people not necessarily connected with the Guards or like groups were opened in 1946/47. Girls were also drilled regularly now without the gendered discrimination that had been for so long a part of volunteer organisation. Miss Fatima Jinnah and Begum Liaquat Ali Khan visited some Muslim Girl schools exhorting the

³⁰¹ They took care to hold parades privately though. In mid-1947 orders were given to hold rill and parades at night and keep a look out while doing so. See Extract CID, daily report, 28th May 1947, NMML, Delhi Police, V, F. 62, f. 47.

³⁰² See 'strictly secret' report in NMML, Delhi Police Records, V inst., F. 109, f. 78 about meetings in various mohallas by MNG workers.

³⁰³ NMML, Delhi Police Records, V inst., F. 109, ff. 80-81. According to Delhi Police, the total number of MNG volunteers for mid-1946 was 6,145 with 3,295 in the 'Reserve Forces' in Delhi Province.

³⁰⁴ NMML, Delhi Police Records, V inst., F. 109, f. 58.

³⁰⁵ 'National Volunteer Corps, General Instructions for Volunteers', NMML, Delhi Police Records, III inst., F. No. 9, see esp. f. 8. The rules stated the usual insistence on obedience, discipline and the saluting of officers. It also prescribed that no volunteer was allowed to make any public statements regarding the Corps without sanction and no information regarding the strength of the Corps was to be given out. Special provisions were made for the care of wounded volunteers and their family. Any suspicious activity of the ML was to be reported to the area commander. Every volunteer was obliged to help a Hindu or Sikh in distress even at the cost of his life.

students to resist the division of the Punjab and Bengal at 'all costs'.³⁰⁶ A MNG auxiliary force of women was set up but seems not to have taken off in a big way in Delhi³⁰⁷.

The worries about control by the ML were not unwarranted. Parallel bodies had started to spring up. In Delhi, MNG volunteers would accuse the Committee of Action to not live up to its name.³⁰⁸ Further trouble arose since the ML did not give sufficient funds, leading to resentment.³⁰⁹ In May 1946, four Delhi MNG volunteers had gone in a batch of 15 to Lahore, where they joined up with some local volunteers and some from Amritsar. The Delhi volunteers were basically from two mohallas and we may assume they knew each other.³¹⁰ Two of the Delhi Guards went with the local volunteers in a truck to a Hindu neighbourhood where they threw altogether eleven incendiary bombs at the houses. The residents (being prepared) almost immediately opened fire on them. Rioting between local Hindus and Muslims followed this act in a pattern by then well established. When the police arrived, they opened fire on the 'mob', injuring two of the MNG while the rest escaped in the truck. The group repeated the manoeuvre the next day in a different neighbourhood, albeit with less bombs, again followed by communal riots in which fire-arms were also used. The Guards took no part in the fighting itself, escaping instead to the next location where they once more started fires, helped this time by some local Muslim shop-owners who stabbed two Hindus when the Guards started setting fire to their houses. All the Guards involved left Lahore the same evening, only to return five days later and once again, for two days, embark on their extracurricular activities with varying numbers of accomplices from among their ranks (50 and 11). When four of the Delhi volunteers were later charged, the ML ad-hoc committee refused to help them.

The Delhi MNG organisation then went directly to Liaqat Ali Khan and tried to get the committee

³⁰⁶ Source Report, dt 20th May 1947, NMML, Delhi Police, V inst, F No 109, f. 76-77. Lady Haroon was one of the women prominently involved in these schemes. See NMML, Delhi Police, V inst, F No 66, f. 84. Lady Haroon was overseeing the 'women's programme' at that time which was geared to the training of women in mohallas and schools.

³⁰⁷ NMML, Delhi Police Records, V inst., F. 109, f. 55.

³⁰⁸ CID Daily Report, 28.5.1947. NMML, Delhi Police Records, V, f. 62, f. 49. In May 1947, the Delhi MNG wanted to start a civil disobedience against the wearing of kirpans by Sikhs with the goal of either restricting the allowed kirpan length to one foot or allowing Muslims to wear swords. The Ad-hoc Committee tried to stop this to not waste man-power at a time when the when Pakistan was at stake, it was claimed. This led to a long-standing dispute between volunteers and the committee. NMML, Delhi Police Records, V inst., F. 109, f. 1. See the repeated reports on the planning and organisation in NMML, Delhi Police Records, V, f. 62, see esp. f. 63.

³⁰⁹ Report, Jaganath, dt. 23rd May 1947, NMML, Delhi Police Records, V, f. 62, f. 37.

³¹⁰ Most of them hailed from Bara Hindu Rao, where both MNG and the Ahrars were very active.

to hire a lawyer for the accused.³¹¹ To think that this was entirely unauthorised, would be overstating things, though. The salar ul-Haq had, earlier in May, called some Guards from Lahore to instruct his volunteers in the manufacture of bombs. When local disturbances (apparently they went on an expedition there, too) broke out, the batch left for Lahore, before being called back by ul-Haq to pass on the gained knowledge. Whether or not the ad-hoc committee was aware of this, is open to question - much depended on local dynamics. It was around this time, that the MNG volunteers decided on their own to disband the ML Committee's 'Mohalla Peace Committees' and bring the mohallas under their own, direct control.³¹² On the other hand, volunteers obtained prizes for 'courage' when they got into a clash with swayamsevaks at a train station where both groups intended to help refugees.³¹³ On other occasions, MNG volunteers were arrested for proceeding in a lorry with firearms and ammunition to Gurgaon³¹⁴ after communal trouble had started there.³¹⁵ Already in May, reports of professional attacks carried put by officials acknowledged to be men in the service of surrounding Sikh States had been commenced in that area.³¹⁶

This pattern is one we find with great regularity in 1946 and 1947 involving different (volunteer) groups of Hindu or Muslim background. A small 'task force' of an organised group - not seldom meaning a batch of volunteers - would indulge in some premeditated violent activity and riots would almost invariably follow in the heated atmosphere. That the people concerned are 'outsiders'

³¹¹ Delhi Police, V inst, F No 109, ff. 7-18 for notes and information on the case., see esp. the source reports on ff. 7-10, dt. 26th May 1947., SP, SI, CID, and the report on the Delhi Ad-hoc Committee meeting, dt. 12th June 1947, DSP, CID, at *ibid*, f. 11.

³¹² Report by Jaganath, DSP, 21st May 1947, NMML, Delhi Police Records, V inst, F.No. 62., ff. 31-32.

³¹³ NMML, Delhi Police Records, V, f. 62, ff. 42-43 and for the clash, f. 41 (53) (Extract from the CID Daily Report for 24&25.45.47).

³¹⁴ For some of the longer-standing local trouble between Meos and Ahirs, see IOR, R/3/1/90, f. 276.

³¹⁵ This, apparently, once again caused dismay among the central Muslim League and the Ad-hoc Committee. NMML, Delhi Police Records, V inst., F.No.62, ff. 58, 59. The MNG considered the the 'Ad-hoc Committee' of the AIML as conservative, moderate and only hindering their efforts.

³¹⁶ There was, for instance an attack by a Faridkot group under supervision of a Muslim Subedhar on a Lahore settlement in which service firearms and incendiary bombs were used and the group escaped in their station wagons. This was followed by a fresh round of disturbances within the city. In May these incidents spread to Gurgaon districts with the service personal coming mainly from Alwar and Bharatpur to help the Hindus in those areas. See report in telegram by Governor Punjab to Viceroy, dt. 18th May 1947, IOR, R/3/1/90, f. 293. The situation got so bad that arrival of such troops caused immediate concern among local Muslims. See *ibid*, f. 299. See also f. 341 for the trouble spreading to Gurgaon, usually in the form of foray parties of pickets posted at the state boundaries. See on other incidents also IOR, R/3/1/90, f. 314. See also IOR, R/3/1/90, f. 333. On the involvement of the Princely states in partition violence, see Ian Copland, 'The Master and the Maharajas: The Sikh Princes and the East Punjab Massacres of 1947', *MAS*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 2002, pp. 657-704.

or at least partly from elsewhere is also not unusual. In fact, in the accounts of partition and the large communal riots of the 1940s, the 'outsiders' are generally held responsible for the mayhem. But in many cases, and particularly in the case of spread-out volunteer groups, these could rely on local infrastructure, manpower and necessary 'intelligence' to know which neighbourhoods, which houses to attack. These incidents were mostly staged with the specific aim to incite riots and force decisions in certain regions to change the demography of places with an eye on the boundaries that would eventually be drawn.

The MNG salar Haq was arrested by June 1947 in the context of the Guards' involvement with riots in Gurgaon. Small campaigns by the MNG were undertaken for his release. Their wrath was especially directed at Sardar Patel for disallowing the Delhi Muslims to send 'help' to Gurgaon. The more dynamic and administratively capable Rafi Qureshi then became the new Salar. A courier system was implemented to evade the interception of letters. The system worked also between neighbouring cities so as to intensify the network and keep 'troops' at the ready in case of any trouble.³¹⁷ Taken with the rumours about incidents at other cities and the general fear, retaliatory action for incidents in other cities also became a regular pattern.

The MNG HQ was situated in Jama Masjid at the time, and they would hold receptions there as well in great displays of armed volunteers standing guard outside.³¹⁸ There are reports about poems being recited which called on the Muslims to break the skulls of their enemy and suck their blood, before a Guard commander exclaimed that if Manzur-ul-Haq was not released within two months, they would break open the jail gates themselves.³¹⁹ The MNG had local Salars in nearly every ward of Delhi and also in one of the big *bastis*. The Guards, as other similar groups, were also heavily involved in weapons smuggling and storing, keeping them hidden and handy for a 'time of

³¹⁷ The system of personal delivery helped merge local network of the MNG, which now encompassed Meerut, Gurgaon, Lahore, Amritsar into an organised whole. Such measures had already been adopted by other bodies - noteworthy Congress bodies - during campaigns to avoid censorship and gather intelligence.

³¹⁸ Casual Source Report, dt. 21st June 1947, NMML, Delhi Police, V inst, F No 109, f. 75.

³¹⁹ NMML, Delhi Police, Vth inst, F No 109, ff. 52-53. The poems were by Irfanul Haq Shibli of the Bazm-e-Pakistan, for the one quoted he had been prosecuted earlier.

need'.³²⁰ The Delhi Police recorded this immense trend to smuggle arms into and through Delhi but seemed incapable of stopping it - some local officers conspired in the efforts, tipping residents off about impending house searches.³²¹ Secret meetings in neighbourhoods, headed at times by MNG officers, laid down the defence plans and told the members to be ready to fight the Hindus in the coming disturbances. In June 1947, after it became clear that Delhi, Ajmer Sharif and Agra would not be part of the proposed state of Pakistan, the local Khaksars and the MNG worked together in hoarding and distributing firearms. Mashriqi, in undaunted grandeur, promised *he* was 'ready to sacrifice' three lakhs of volunteers, and the MNG issued a plea for sending volunteers and firearms to Delhi, stating 'We have decided that in Delhi there would either remain Hindu and Sikh or Muslims.'³²²

The heavy involvement of the RSS in violence during this time is quite well known. In May 1947, officials noted that the RSS was 'a thoroughly dangerous organisation, in Lahore its members had been engaged in arson and murder and it is known that they are part of dangerous plans of a communal kind.' There was an influx of RSS workers from Delhi into Gurgaon district in considerable numbers.³²³ Reports suggested that their brief was surreptitious training in the use of locally manufactured weapons to attain physical fitness, and to to insinuate themselves into government factories in the mid-1940s.³²⁴ The systematic planning of shifting the demography one by one is documented in some of the surviving circulars sent by RSS to their followers, detailing the demography of contested areas and how much of the population would have to be eliminated or driven out for the area to 'change sides'³²⁵

³²⁰ Multiple reports like this were recorded by the police, see for instance, NMML, Delhi Police, V inst, F No 109, f. 78.

³²¹ Whether all these reports are reliable, is open to debate. See Strictly Secret Report by DSP police, CID, [24th or 25th July 1947], in NMML, Delhi Police, V inst, F No 109, f. 78. The level of participation by 'official' organs in the preparations and carrying out of riots is by now quite well known. See the numerous instances of fairly high officials helping or organising violence during Partition recorded in Ahmed, Ishtiaq, *The Punjab Bloodied, Partitioned and Cleansed. Unravelling the 1947 Tragedy through Secret British reports and First-Person Accounts*, Karachi et al: OUP, 2012.

³²² NMML, Delhi Police Records, V inst., F.No. - 62, f. 72 ff.

³²³ 'Top Secret. War staff. Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh', IOR, L/WS/1/748, file 1312, f. 5.

³²⁴ The apparent infiltration of factories was undertaken with the intention of gaining recruits and eventually to establish a formed RSS Sangh body within the factory - the Ammunition Depot at Chheoki was known to have about 50 to 80 of them in 1945, according to the War Staff. Finally their brief was to be prepared to interrupt railways etc. communication when called upon to do so.

³²⁵ See the appendix to the *RSSS in the Punjab*, Karachi: Superintendent, Government Print., 1948, reproducing a circular from the Lahore RSS.

Nehru's hostility to the RSS, whom he referred to as 'these Fascists' was duly noted. But Nehru was described as a mere figure-head in the INC - the real power lay with Vallabhbhai Patel who was closely mixed up with the RSS and would never allow them to be banned.³²⁶ Nehru wrote to Patel that the disturbances were well organised, and he believes '[t]he Hindu bands seemed to owe allegiance to the R.S.S. It seems to me clear that the R.S.S have a great deal to do with present disturbances not only in Delhi but elsewhere [meaning especially Gurgaon].' He expressed misgivings concerning the appointment of special magistrates and special police that, it turned out, were accused by various people to be instigators of the disturbances or noted RSS members. Even though many of the ring-leaders were well-known and the Delhi Police had files and lists of names, they did not do anything for days after riots broke out. 'But after my first experience [of being rebuked by Patel for meddling in Police affairs] I did not interfere at all in this business though it seemed to me all wrong.' Nehru felt that these events were more than 'just' communal disturbances but an attempt 'of certain Sikh and Hindu fascist elements to overturn the Government, or at least break up its present character' and backed by public opinion. He indicated his suspicion that the Delhi Deputy Commissioner, Mohinder Singh Randhawa, did not intervene earlier due to his own sympathies.³²⁷

The Akalis are another group notorious for their involvement, though, strangely their organisational set-up (the Akali Sena and Shahidi Dal) have not elicited study, as far as I am aware. There is no space to go into those intricacies here, though. Numerous other bodies could be named. Quite

³²⁶ 'Top Secret. War staff. Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh', IOR, L/WS/1/748, file 1312, ff. 2-6. For Nehru's comments see *ibid*, f.7-8: 'Report by Lord Ismay, 8th Oct. 1947'. The view that Patel was deeply involved with the RSS is common, see also 'Hindu Mahasabha & RSS Sangh, TS SLO NEW Delhi, SF/NO/300 - 17- Nov. 47, in *ibid*, f. 12.

³²⁷ Nehru to Vallabhbhai Patel on 30th Sept. 1947, in Nehru, *Selected Works*, 2nd series, Vol 4, pp. 110-114. The RSS later charged with taking a very active and prominent part in the partition violence. Analogies between the genocide of the Jews in Germany and the RSS-Sikh attempt to exterminate Muslims from certain localities were repeatedly used. See for instance, Govind Sahai, Parliamentary Secy to the UP in *The Hindustan Times*, 23.01.48 and Shastri, UP Home Minister, in *The Pioneer* of 29th Jan. 1948, *People's Age* of 15th Feb. 1948; and *The Statesman*, 6th March 1948 as cited in Zaidi, *The New Nazis*, see esp. p.10. Curran recorded that Hindus mostly remember the RSS for the help to refugees, providing help and, at times, safeguarding passage through the killing fields of Punjab and setting up camps, which earned them lot of respect and sympathy. See Curran, *Militant Hinduism*.

some among the Hindu right tried to forge alliances with the Akalis at this point³²⁸ or brought together socialists, RSS and old revolutionaries for the purpose of 'defence'.³²⁹

It would be worthwhile to give a step-by-step account of the preparations, especially those pre-dating 1946, to avoid any sweeping or generalizing statements and focus on the neighbourhood defence committees and the motives, nature and scope of preparations, and the breadth of mobilisation. But this is beyond the present study, and could well be the subject of a separate book.

That volunteers participated in the riots is almost tautological. People who were active and drawn into organisations concerned with self-defence *were* the volunteers by definition. Volunteer is not and cannot be an analytical category in this context - it is a broad brush-stroke capturing those who were organised in sizeable and hierarchical forms of activism. The term 'Volunteer' relies on analysis to tease meaning out of it for any given situation. The volunteer and the 'goonda' - unsharp masks as they are - blurred into one at this point, depending on the (communal) point of view.³³⁰

³²⁸ The National Youths (or Rashtriya Yuvak Sangh), Delhi, another of the HMS satellites, had been started in 1946. They were self-described Savarkites and set up to safeguard the geographical unity of Bharat Varsha 'at all costs', along with conducting shuddhi, cow protection etc. The Yuvak Sangh was one of many bodies complaining about incidents in Peshawar, which had become a site symbolising the oppression of Hindus in a Muslim majority city under Congress rule. This did not stop them from approaching people like Gandhi and Abdul Gaffar Khan, however. See letter based on a resolution of the Sangh, to Abdul Gaffar Khan by Mohan Lal Chibber, s.a. [June 1946], NMML, Delhi Police Records, II inst., F.No. 9 (Hind-59/P I), 1946, f. 7 and overleaf. Mohan Lal Chibber, BA, Income tax practitioner, Chaori Bazar, Delhi, secy. National Youths (Delhi) to private secy to Mahatma Gandhiji, Panchkun Road, New Delhi, 21st June 1946, NMML, Delhi Police Records, II inst., F.No. 9 (Hind-59/P I), 1946, no ff. nos.

³²⁹ Puroshottamdas Tandon, speaker of UP Legislative Assembly, who had always oscillated between socialism and Hindu nationalism, inaugurated the Hindu Raksha Dal in July 1947 in Delhi. Dr. Vinod Bihari of the Forward Bloc who presided over the meeting of about 40 consisting of lower middle class and workers mostly. Tandon claimed that Jinnah had established Pakistan as a springboard for establishing Muslim rule throughout the country. To counteract the scheme it youths should be trained 'in the use of arms and in military science'. It was reported that Forward Bloc, Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) and Communists extended their support to the corps and some RSS men were contacted, too. Reports suggested that a number of old 'revolutionaries' were behind the move. See Casual Source Report, sd. Kaviar Singh, 21-7.47, in NMML; Delhi Police Records, II inst., F.No. 25 (Hind-74), 1947, f. 3; Note from A.S.I. (RSS) Delhi, 26.10.1947, in NMML; Delhi Police Records, II inst., F.No. 25, 1947, f. 7; see also Circular Memorandum, dt 3.12.1947 at ibid f. 8.

³³⁰ The involvement of 'goondas' in volunteer groups was noted. But such descriptions always throw open more questions than they answer. In Parbani district, Hyderabad, for instance, one Azam Ali Khan, the local salar, was described both as a vakil and 'bully' who brought his followers into the movement, which was therefore dominated by 'roughs and bullies' and adopted a military and aggressive style. Cf. NAI, GoI, Political Dept, Political, 31(2)-P(S)/40, 1940, f. 29. There is usually a clear line drawn between (good) 'volunteers' and ('badmash', bad) goondas. The goonda, as far as

Neither would it be accurate to say that by merely looking at the volunteers anything drastically new can be revealed about the nature of the riots. They were supported by, impacted on and existed within the fold of their parent organisations, religious networks, face-to-face mohalla contacts which in turn were based on community, caste, class. These factors came together in unique constellations every time and as such, we can see social service and the hoarding of weapons as not two distinct realms of activities but within the same overarching mode of organising to which an analysis of networks can be applied.

What a closer study of volunteers could provide is a complication of the (implicit or explicit) distinction between the highly organised violence of military personnel and their 'jathas' and 'ordinary', 'spontaneous' 'mob' violence, as well as the repeated pointing to 'outsiders' or invaders as the principal source of the heaviest trouble. Both are not easy to maintain. Outsiders were helped by and merged with their local counterparts where affiliations (by social or political networks) existed. Ex-army men trained volunteers, volunteer organisations in themselves had set up an autonomously functioning semi-military line of operations normalized and written into the collective consciousness by highly visible repetition of uniformed marches with military commands, display of martial arts, uniformed service and mock wars. Organised violence and 'crowd violence' should, then, be seen in the same framework not because volunteers changed social organisation in some miraculous way but because volunteer groups are the most visible and traceable outcrops of a changed mode of organising that was given some of its defining characteristics in the early radical nationalism of (roughly) the turn of the century. This is not an attempt to teleologically read history. Some of those blue-prints, we can call them mnemonic imprints or rites, were at work in later organisations which were set up under a set of unique and specific circumstances (and could have worked out differently under other circumstances or in

public opinion was concerned, was (and is) the epitomized socially deviant and criminal, idle, sybaritic and violent character. But by the 1940s, goondas were known to be hired as private army by politicians or for 'special' services. Moreover the goonda and the volunteer could easily merge into each other especially at this time - depending on one's perspective. It was at this stage that 'lumpenlements', and as such from a middle class perspective undesirable elements – the ones the Congress deemed necessary to organise 'self-defence' against - that got organised and desirable, or at least required, now. In some places, the people joining or local leaders were 'bullies' and 'roughs' to start with, who brought their gangs into the movement.

merging with other influences). More importantly, all these forms reveal something beyond the mere actions and statistics. It points to a functional, deeply embedded structure of ideal-typical organisation (the civilian soldier) which grows out of nationalist concerns (disciplined nation-building), time-bound ideal(-ogical) hegemonies, and systems of belief and, in turn, affects them.

Conclusion

A number of themes pertaining specifically to the Indian nationalist movement, but also a wider popular political imagination that was inter-national have been highlighted in this thesis. These revolved around the nation-state at the point where those notions intersected with contemporaneous ideas of progress, development and the human condition itself, since the nation-state became the principle agent for and object of these central concerns in the 'modern age'.

The Indian nationalist movement(s) was engaging intensely with the rapidly changing landscape of the 'world forces', from the fin-de-siècle obsession with degeneration and transcendental renewal to a Hobbesian post-Great War landscape, from the Russian Revolution and a socialist fashion to the attractions of dictatorship and the Second World War. The wider intellectual horizon and political imagination of the time exhibited various strands that were part and parcel of the 'modernist', often utopian imagination and that Indian actors had to contend with: positivist, universalist notions of progress based on scientific analysis, to fears over decadence and the triumphalist notion of the possibility of self-willed human anthropogenesis or social evolution brought about by efficiency, moral self-reform, physical fitness and self-sacrifice for the greater good, a transcendental end-point of history or an organic national entity. This study sought to place India in the wider context of a shared modernist imagination that transcends national boundaries. Actors on the subcontinent appear here neither as recipients of a 'western' modernity nor as essentially different proponents of an "alternative modernity". In line with this, colonialism and specific political programmes and the large anti-colonial campaigns have been sidelined somewhat to make room for smaller events that serve to highlight structures and continuities as well as ruptures in nationalist discourses and practices. The discourse that was developed in the earlier twentieth century, with its arguments about efficiency, obedience, discipline and corporeal (or somatic) nationalism, bled into later concepts and had become inbuilt into the structures of a political grammar.

More specifically, in relation to the historiography of South Asia, this thesis is concerned with the problem of anti-colonial mobilisation beyond the rhetoric of leaders, instead studying intermediary political actors and movements, many of which have hitherto not been documented at all. Secondly, in studying these movements, it is possible to discern a common grammar of the movements, which strongly calls into question the received idea that 'paramilitarism', or its specific form of mobilisation in India were to the 'right' of the political spectrum. Thirdly, and following from this, the thesis shows why a study of movements and ideas at the same time is important. From these three points of approach, this study is thereby able to conclude, firstly that mobilisation is far from what is conventionally understood by non-violent or 'Gandhian' or controlled. The (para)militarisation of society dovetailed the rise of more radical forms of anti-colonialism and contributed to the British sense of loss of control over India. Secondly, the left and right of Indian politics shared a faith in a mobilised society aimed for control not merely at an external level but by attempting to prescribe a set of (semi-)transcendental 'duties' for the mobilised populace (of which the volunteers are the most organised and visible) to discipline their energies. More mobilisation necessitated more control – not always with predictable outcomes. The society that had been mobilised to create a state by invoking the nation-building process would thereafter have to be demobilised and controlled to cope with state building in an orderly manner (if there was to be a democratic system of government). We have not considered the post-Independence demobilisation of volunteers here though this would make for another interesting inquiry. Thirdly, a set of ideas about the power of youth and of the mobilised and paramilitarised society permeated the legitimating vocabularies of all parties, taken together with pre-existing socio-economic and/or communal tensions this particular form of mobilisation was apt to create vicious circle of deterrence and counter-mobilisation in which groups evoked the necessity of (preparations for) 'self-defence'. The perspective of perpetual mobilisation on semi-military lines and with a corresponding political rhetoric permeating the mainstream (Congressite) nationalist movement on a (sometimes) subterranean level provides an alternative angle to investigate the violence erupting especially in the 'long 1940s' (the period from the Second World War to Independence).

We have centrally focussed on a certain number of volunteer movements which ideal-typically comprised of 'virile' groups of youth. To study such groups, the discursive formations surrounding Youth and volunteers needed to be analysed. We have highlighted that Youth was a constructed category referring to certain social functions that were inscribed with notions of renewal or revolution as it perpetually links the present to a chimeric and malleable future, in which the youth 'of today' will have grown up and will be challenged, in turn, by the youth of tomorrow. As such, it symbolised like nothing else perpetual movement and change, insecurity as well as hope. Youth both symbolised modernity and became a contested site for the construction of 'the modern' and the future.

The related category of volunteer organisations served as a practical laboratory, a somatic heterotopia in which the volunteers' body became both a tool to bring about and the locus of the race for scientific efficiency that was seen as the most important building bloc of the nation. Despite the constant emphasis on spiritual and self-development, individual progress was not mainly an end in itself, but the volunteer (standing *pars pro toto* for the 'masses') was seen as part of the organic machinery that was the nation. Constructing the national utopia(s) quite literally out of the bodies of volunteers (or martyrs) was not an abstract, metaphysical undertaking but a practical project in mass mobilisation and nation-building, which became more urgent with shifts in the adult franchise, the norm of mass campaigns as pressure mechanism and, finally, the expected eventual departure of the British. The growth of volunteer organisations by and large kept pace with these developments - and with the concomitant communal competition and claims over territory and representation.

While the body of the volunteer was the site of experimentation in national control. Not least in this arena, the nationalist movement(s) as shadow state(s) evolved a micro-physics of power in line with contemporary notions of ideal citizenship and attempted to exercise such power over an exemplary slice of the populace. Meanwhile, the volunteer fulfilled (ideally) multiple other, prac-

tical functions. He (or she) was the principal carrier of the practical propaganda embodied in *seva*, a self-propelled political bill board with the potential to reach out to 'the people', the magnet that was meant to draw more bodies into his/her organisation each of which presenting their own vision of the nation *in vitro* (a function especially important in the case of parties as support of larger sections of the populace became decisive for electoral success and political legitimacy). At the same time, the volunteer was the ordering unit to control those (potentially threatening and unruly) 'masses'. The volunteer was of the people and yet above them as he had committed himself to self-improvement and national discipline. He was situated at the intersection of the visions and strategies of the political elite and the demand and aspirations of the populace. He (more seldom she) was envisioned as both soldier and civilian, a vehicle to render the entire nation into a disciplined army. Due to the internal contradictions, the grass-root nature of such bodies and the haphazard organisation despite often grand aspirations by leaders, as well as the tug-of-war between locality and centre, or rank and file and the apex of any given group, it is natural that volunteer bodies also became sites of subterfuge, indiscipline and rebellion, a phenomenon parent bodies feared as it exemplified their loss of control over the mobilised population conceptualised at times as 'civilians in uniform'.

All (aspiring) modern nation-state revolve(d) around the question of the monopoly of violence. The contemporaneous definition of a nation-state mostly referred to a multi-dimensional list of cultural characteristics as its legitimising myth of origin. But the primordial distinction between a state and an aspiring state comes back back to the question of (the legitimate use of) violence. The police or military as executive of the state's will is one of the essential characteristics demarcating it as a sovereign entity. It is therefore unsurprising that Indian nationalists should be so concerned about the physical and social capacity for discipline, efficiency and the defence of the nation from threats internal and external. But in this context, the national(ist) volunteer also emerges as the (paramilitary) partisan with all the potential problems.

From the 1920s, when armed youth movements were set up, they would become part and parcel of

the looming threat posed by the Other. The preparations for defence created a vicious spiral of highly visible, and often communalised mobilisation, which created a looming phantasmagoria of potential violence. The Second World War marked not only the growth of the state apparatus but also the expansion of 'civil defence' at the home front as air raids and the fear of invasion became part of daily life. The extent of this mobilisation had a significant impact on the communal conflicts to come. In highlighting the structural dimension of mobilisation as offering a template and framework for communal defence, the volunteer movement that organised mohalla and village defence for the war could now apply the same structures against the communal Other in the sharpening conflict regarding the 'vivisection' of India.

The Seva Dal has served as an example for a Congress group that was centrally but ambiguously engaged with tropes surrounding militarism and 'self-defence', thus highlighting certain trends of nation-building itself. The multitude of organisations were set up along common lines and exhibited a similarity in rhetoric, jargon and structure. This trend could blossom due to the supra-political self-image of a united Youth front and the concept of the civilian soldier with all its disciplinary implications.

We have outlined the merging of world views that could easily combine Social Darwinism, eugenics, transcendental evolution and world brotherhood, non-violence and militarism and their practical applications. While hopes for a future of world brotherhood and free nations were at the forefront of many debates, often the same debates were underpinned by notions of the immediate threats posed by global re-armament, emasculation and degeneration. The streams were simultaneous and intertwined. In the imagined bright future of a free India, the citizen had to play the role of a sleeping militia to safeguard the interests of the 'motherland' against internal and external threats. The obedient and self-negating soldier-volunteer became the model of the ideal citizen. The prevalent focus of the nationalist movement on inwardness, purity, the idea of building the nation from the inner self to the outer world, from the individual up into an organic whole, also made for a homogeneity in style and form (if not content) among these corps that is remarkable.

The aesthetics of physical embodiment, of desirable traits became fetishised and aesthetic signifiers came to ensure the validity of political action. Selflessness was a quintessential characteristic of this aesthetic.

This connects to wider debates about labels such as cosmopolitanism, totalitarianism, fascism, communism. I have stressed the importance of not over-determining the engagements on the ground with the -ism that look clean-cut and neat only through the telescope of hindsight. It is important not to misunderstand such trends a half-hearted colonial mimicry but account for the true reach of a methodological framework used by contemporaries to make sense of the world in a search for universally recognisable principles. The overwhelming feeling among contemporaries themselves was that there truly was a 'spirit of the times' with a new dawning social order, also referred to as 'the world forces' and concomitant necessity of 'world-mindedness' and the widespread utopian (or dystopian) perception of a contingent confluence of factors placing mankind at the threshold of something new and extraordinary.

The applicability of 'fascism', 'totalitarianism' or other labels is not what is centrally at stake here – we were rather concerned with a critical historical inquiry to unearth certain 'subterranean' streams in the Indian nationalist movement and the popular political imagination. But there is at times a significant overlap with the continuum out of which totalitarianism grew or features of totalitarian movements especially when considering the aspiration professed by actors involved in the volunteer movement to mould their subjects, make them into absolutely obedient and 'selfless' subjects or mere parts of an organic national entity.

We have then attempted to combine an approach focussed on the practical as well as discursive disciplinarian tools of the nationalist movements, its underlying aspirations as a state-in-the-making and to connect this up to wider, at times global developments to contribute to a newer historiography grappling with the global aspects of history, the circulation of people, ideas and

goods and which cannot be easily bracketed as either intellectual history/discursive analysis versus social history, or subaltern versus elite perspectives.

Appendix

A note on sources and methods

There are two main categories of materials drawn upon for this study: the first, surveillance material collected and generated by the state (police, intelligence organisations, the local and central Government's Home departments), and the second, generated by the youth organisations and their parent bodies themselves. A third category is the large corpus of contemporaneous writing connected to the theme of youth, uplift or progress of the nation or individual communities and the role of youth therein. A fourth is a (rather thin) corpus of (often retrospective and selective) autobiographies or reminiscences in interviews by former members of youth organisations.

Much of what is available in terms of source material on the youth movements is due to close surveillance by agents of the state that has left us detailed accounts of meetings, rituals, the pictures and banners carried through streets, and summaries of speeches and intercepted correspondence. What they do not allow is to get a clear idea about the kind of young people who attended, their background, their aspirations or motives. Usually the intelligence files are concerned with the higher echelons and the leadership of organisations. (A partial exception to this are the so-called 'goonda files' maintained by the Calcutta Police).¹ Mostly the reports filed under categories such as 'Youth Movements' in the 1910s and 1920s focus on left-wing and student meetings, which were seen as potentially close to terrorism. In the later 1930s and in the 1940s, the focus was more on 'communal organisations' (including the Congress and the Muslim League), in connection with disturbances or potential disturbances. There is a strong overlap in these records between the categories 'youth organisation' and 'terrorist organisation', and therefore between 'youth/ volunteer organisation' and 'illegal organisation'. In later years this is due to the Government's concern about quasi-military outfits, or drilling exercises (with or without weapons) that were a common feature of youth organisations. Under the Defence of India Rules during the Second World War, wearing of uniforms and drilling became illegal.²

The organisations' own records, particularly the larger and (semi- or temporarily-) legal organisations such as the Congress and the Muslim League, are sometimes quite voluminous. Here again, you find correspondence between the leadership of parent organisations and the leadership of their respective youth organisations, resolutions, rules, constitutions etc. but less on the membership. It is ironically harder to get a feeling for what the membership was like from these records than from the surveillance material of the state's agencies. Other important material consists of leaflets, pamphlets, newspapers etc. published by these organisations (some of which also make their way into intelligence files).

The lacunae and tendentious emphasis of various sources should be noted: volunteer organisations tended to highlight their own efficiency, capacity, successes etc, with the consequent problem that participants at the level of the rank and file are less well documented. On the side of the government, the dangers posed by youth organisations, especially where semi-military training or the seeming copying of the insignia of authority play a role are emphasised. Newspapers are event-fixed, with notifications about meetings, public marches, displays predominating. At the day-to-day level, there is often little to be found on organisational and structural backgrounds.

In the 'colonial archive', that is in official government sources, national youth organisations are, naturally, *a priori* a source of danger, an unhealthier because more passionate outgrowth of that

¹ See Debraj Bhattacharya, 'Kolkata "Underworld" in the Early 20th Century, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 39, No. 38, 2004, pp. 4276-4282. ;see also his manuscript, 'Colonial Surveillance and the Goonda Problem' [manuscript draft, c. 1999]. Both Bhattacharya and Das attempt to treat the *goonda* as as a distinct sociological category (the professional rowdy), a distinction which I attempt to complicate substantially in the course of this study (see esp. chp. 5)

² See Chapter 4.

supposedly pubescent form of nationalism occurring in the colonies at the time - as opposed to the healthy patriotism of, say, citizens of the British Isles. Accordingly, if and when youth organisations turn up in the official documents, they do so because they have attracted attention as particularly prone to fanaticism, violence or terrorism or the tendency to organise in a semi-military fashion, which was the worst of the plethora of groups because they committed the double crime of threatening the government and masquerading as the executive of a 'shadow state', a possible future government.³

The Ahmedabad Pledge, 1921⁴

With God as witness I solemnly declare that,

- (1) I wish to be a member of the National Volunteer Corps,
- (2) So long as I remain a member of the Corps I shall remain non-violent in word and deed and shall earnestly endeavour to be non-violent in intent since I believe that as India is circumstanced non-violence alone can help the Khalifat and the Punjab and result in the attainment of Swaraj and consolidation of unity among all the races and communities of India whether Hindu, Musalman, Sikh, Parsi, Christian or Jew.
- (3) I believe in and shall endeavour always to promote such unity.
- (4) I believe in Swadeshi as essential for India's economic, political and moral salvation, and shall use handspun and handwoven khaddar to the exclusion of every other cloth.
- (5) As a Hindu I believe in the justice and necessity of removing the evil of untouchability and shall on all possible occasions seek personal contact with and endeavour to render service to the submerged classes.
- (6) I shall carry out the instructions of any superior officers, and all the regulations, not inconsistent with the spirit of this pledge prescribed by the Volunteer Board or the Working Committee or any other agency established by the Congress.
- (7) I am prepared to suffer imprisonment, assault, or even death for the sake of my religion and my country without resentment.
- (8) In the event of my imprisonment I shall not claim from the Congress any support for my family or dependents.

The CONGRESS SEVA DAL - Aims and Objects⁵

The name of the Congress Volunteer Organisation will be "Congress Seva Dal".

The objects of the Congress Seva Dal shall be :-

- (1) To instil the qualities of self-discipline, self-sacrifice, self-reliance, simplicity, service, tolerance and aptitude for corporate and co-operative work and life in youths, so that
 - (a) they may be trained for organised and disciplined national service according to the policy and objectives of the Congress,
 - and (b) become ideal citizens of a Free India;
- (2) To promote national unity by rendering service through the constructive programme to all persons irrespective of caste and creed;
- (3) To improve the health and physique of the Indian people through physical culture and training and
- (4) In times of emergency to act as a peace and relief brigade and undertake to protect the life, honour and property of the people.

³ See on the framing and naming of threats by the colonial state the classic analysis of Ranajit Guha, 'The Prose of Counterinsurgency', *Subaltern Studies II*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983, pp. 1-42.

⁴ It can be found, for instance, in a collection at NMML, AICC Papers, File No. 70 (Pt. I)/ 1946-47, f. 13.

⁵ NMML, AICC Papers, File No. 70 (Pt. I)/ 1946-47, ff. 65-66. This is a short version of the actual Rules and Constitution of the Dal.

The Working Committee will put one of their members or any other person in charge of the work of organising Seva Dals in the country.

The member or person will have a board of five qualified persons to advise him in his work. The member or any other person in charge will do the work of co-ordinating, supervising and guiding the Provincial Seva Dal organisations. He will also help the provinces to evolve and work out all measures which are and will be found common to all Provincial Dals, such as the training of volunteers, the technique of organisation, the drafting of the volunteers' pledge, the procedure regarding flag salutation, the question of a common uniform and such other subjects.

The Provincial Congress Committee shall appoint every year or at the end of every defined period, as may be provided in the rules, a Provincial Board, which will be in sole charge and be responsible for the volunteer organisation and movement in the Province. The G.O.C. of the P.C. Dal will be an ex-officio member of this Board. One of the Secretaries of the P.C.C. will act as the Secretary of the Board.

The Provincial Volunteer Board will appoint a G.O.C. for the Provincial Congress Seva Dal, with the approval of the member or person in charge of the All-India Volunteer work, and whose appointment will be for a period of three years.

The Congress Seva Dals will be composed of three sections: Children (Bals), boys and girls (Kumars and Kumaris) and adults (Proudhas).

[note: *Bals* or *balikas*, i.e. girls - were children from 7-12 years; *kumars/kumarikas* 12 - 18 years, and above 18 were *proudhas*, usually called *sainiks*, -- FR]

The Volunteers' Organisations shall hold aloof from party politics within the Congress, and no officers will be entitled to hold any elective post in the Congress organisation, but they are free to exercise their right of vote. This rule may be relaxed in the case of the primary village committees at the discretion of the Provincial G.O.C.

Volunteers must not expect any payment. Their work will be honorary, but while-time officers and inspectors may be paid.

No Congressman shall organise or join any Volunteer Dal other than the Congress Seva Dal.

The Provincial Volunteer Board shall frame rules for carrying out the volunteer work in the Province, not inconsistent with the rules framed by the Working Committee in this behalf.

The Provincial Volunteer Board is authorised to raise funds to meet the necessary expenses with the consent of the Provincial Congress Committee.

The Seva Dal troops⁶

| Unit | Strength | Officer |
|-------------|----------------------------|--|
| Dasta | 11 members | Nayak |
| Company | 10 dastas (112 people) | Subedar; asst. officer: Nayab Subedar |
| Battalion | 4 companies (450 people) | Sardar, asst. officer: Nayab Sardar |
| Regiment | 3 battalions (1352 people) | Hazari, asst. officer: Nayab Hazari |

⁶ Cf. 'General Rules of the Dal', NMML, NS Hardikar, Private Papers, File 63, ff. 13 - 21.

| | | |
|-----|---------------------------|---|
| Dal | 4 regiments (5410 people) | Dalapati, asst officer: Nayab Dalapati |
|-----|---------------------------|---|

At the apex: a Supreme Officer Commanding or GOC (in the eyes of the volunteers often: Hardikar as *senapati*; as per the rules Nehru or Shah Nawaz Khan as GOC)

The Seva Dal Training - Preliminary Course⁷

I Drill

Elements of drill should be taught thoroughly. Prof. Manikrao's (Jummadada Vyayamshala, Barodea) pamphlet on 'Sangha Vyayama' is recommended.

II Physical Training

Hindi physical exercises should be made compulsory. Attention should be paid to riding, swimming, running, cycling, jumping, wrestling etc.

III Signalling and Signs

Flag and whistle signalling and symbols. Bugling should not be ignored

IV Spinning

Effective knowledge is necessary so that members or associates can spin yarn that can be woven, carding should be taught whenever possible [this item vanished in later versions of the training course].

V First Aid and Sanitation

should be taught compulsorily, first principles of sanitation should be impressed on the minds of learners

VI Duties of the Volunteers

General Instruction with practical demonstration should be given, such as Civic Guards, Social Service, Ambulance, Constructive Work, propaganda etc.

VII Village Organisation

This should be a subject by itself. Panchayat and its place in India's life-system. System and its disappearance, special judicial panchayats under British rule and their defects.

VIII History

- i) Indian History - Hindu period, Moslem period, the British period
- ii) Congress, Congress history, its construction, objects and methods
- iii) Economical history - short narrative about the exact state of affairs in India from an economic point of view

XI Hindustani

X National Songs

Vande Mataram is compulsory

XI National Flag

The necessity and importance of National Flag for India should be impressed and respect for it should be created in the minds

⁷ This is an abbreviated and collated list. Individual items varied, were added or vanished, but the core of the training remained relatively stable ever since Hardikar had laid it out in 1923/24, though its expanded massively in the 1940s and the post-independent period. See 'The Course of Training', *The Volunteer*, July 1926; pp. 168-169; also NMML, NS Hardikar, Private Papers, File 63, ff. 13 - 21. See also Congress Seva Dal, *Manual Training* (CSD Manual No. 5), [s.l. s.a.]; and idem, *Training Camps* (CSD Manual No 6), Delhi: Navin Press, 1956 (2nd rev. ed).

The Khaksar hierarchy⁸

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Amir | Dictator |
| Idara-e-Alia (-e-Hind) HQ) | Khaksar headquarters (also the commander of the |
| Salar-I-Akbar/ Salar-i-Zila | District Commander |
| Salar-i-Idarah-i-Makaziya | Assistant District Commander |
| Salar-i-Ala | Commander of twelve Jamaat. |
| Sar Salar | Commander of three Jamaat. |
| Salar-i-Mohalla | Commander of one Mohalla |
| Salar-i-Idarah | Assistant Commander of a Mohalla |
| Janbaz | A special unit of Khaksars, people who have put |
| their | life at the disposal of the organisation. |
| Pakbaz | Senior Janbaz, someone who has put life and entire |
| | property at the disposal of the organisation, and |
| | signed the 'blood pledge' |
| Khaksar | a regular sipahi/ private |

The Azad Hind Fauj/ Volunteer Corps⁹

'The I.N.A under the guidance of Netaji S.B. has acquired certain sterling qualities such as discipline, self-sacrifice, self-reliance and national brotherhood. It is desirable that full advantage of this should be taken to instil the same qualities in the youth of the country. It is with this main object that the organization of an Azad Hind Volunteer Corps on country-wide scale is considered a necessity. After the 1942 struggle a strong inclination has developed amongst the youth to organise themselves and to obtain training as a result of which numerous independent and in some cases uncontrollable [sic] volunteer organizations have sprung up all over the country. It is absolutely necessary to harness this countrywide patriotic urge for the achievement of our national goal. It is feared, unless it is immediately undertaken, these energies may find an outlet in wrong channels, which would rather hinder our struggle than assist it.'

Pledge of the Ram Sena¹⁰

'I [name] pledge on my word and honour, remembering God, I hereby declare that on enlisting, as a member of the Ram Sena, I shall serve my Hindu religion and my people and my country to the best of my capacity and shall bear all sacrifices involved cheerfully without demanding any compensation for any kind of loss or injury suffered in the discharge of my duties as a member of the Ram Sena giving first consideration to my duties in preference to all other considerations of life. I shall loyally and obediently carry out all orders of my superiors in the Sena.'

⁸ Indian Police Collection MSS Eur F161/164 pp 34, IOL&R

⁹ 'Note on Azad Hind Volunteer Corps', in NMML, AICC, G-13, 1946, f. 103.

¹⁰ Constitution of the Ram Sena, in NMML, HMS Papers, File C-190 [s.a.].

(Selection of) Volunteer Organisations in British India, 1940¹¹

Hindu

| Name | Brief Particulars | Affiliation if any | Uniform | Drill Etc. | Weapon | All-India strength | Regional strongholds |
|--|---|----------------------|---|----------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|---|
| Arya Vir Dal | To safeguard Hindu interests [in Bihar: ...particularly to safeguard Hindu women from Muslim goondas] | All India Arya Samaj | Sometimes Khaki Shorts, white shirt, red flag | Ordinary drill | Lathi | 1945 | - <u>UP</u> : 1,125 - <u>Bihar</u> : 610 |
| Hanuman Vyayam Prasharak Mandal | Physical culture Association. Reported to have branches all over India | not known | not known | | | not known | |
| Mahabir Dal | Object:- to foster the Hindu religion and to promote inter caste unity and to defend Hindu places of worship and institutions | Nil | Khaki uniform with a badge | Ordinary | Lathi | 13,094 | - <u>Punjab</u> : 11,000 - <u>UP</u> : 1,818 |
| Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh ¹² | Training Hindu youths to defend Hinduism and the Hindu community | Hindu Mahasabha | Khaki shirt, black shorts, black cap | Military drill | Lathi | 19,337 | - <u>Bombay</u> : 19,633; - <u>Bombay city</u> : 1300; - <u>CP</u> : 6000 |
| Rashtriya Ekta Dal Gainti Fauj | Object:- to propagate the Order of Shri Ved Bhangwan 1) Life in Kaliyug depends on | Nil | Khaki Pugree, shirt and knickers black rifle hoses and boots. | Training | Gainti (Spade) and Kulhari (axe) | n.a. | <u>Punjab</u> : 3000 |

¹¹ Collated information from Volunteer Organizations in British India. Statement A (Regional Distribution) + B (Organisations of All-India Importance), 1940, in NAI, Poll. Dept. Poll, 31 (2) – P(S)/40. Note: As this table is compiled from two distinct sets of tables, there are slight incongruities in the description etc., in these cases the description from Appendix A has been used as it is the more elaborate. The uniform can vary for different provinces (the Bangiya Seva Dal for instance wears ammunition boots, khaki shorts and putties). The regional distribution also lists various uniformed volunteer corps of labour unions. The table is a selection that leaves out some smaller groups, hence the total is higher than the individual numbers stated.

¹² For reasons best known to the colonial compiler the Hindu Sabha youth corps is included here with 254 members in Bihar

| | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|-----|-------|----------|-------------------------------|------|-------------|
| | unity 2) Military Education and physical culture 3) Religious reforms | | | | | | |
| Agni Dal | Object:- to counteract the Khaksar organization and to organize the Hindu community | Nil | Khaki | Marching | Thar-sool, Kulhari, and dangs | n.a. | Punjab: 500 |

= Total Strength Hindu: 34,376

Muslim

| Name | Brief Particulars | Affiliation if any | Uniform | Drill Etc. | Weapon | All-India | Strong-holds |
|--|--|-----------------------------|---|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------|---|
| Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam (also: Jaish-i-Ahrar-Islam) | Rstd. 1937: Object:- to assist the Majlis to carry out a programme of civil disobedience | All India Majlis-i-Ahrar | Red Shirt and A(man?) ullah caps | Squad Drill | Sometimes carry sword | 6,270 | = Punjab: 3420 - UP: 2,427 |
| Jamiat-ul-Ulema | religious | All India ~ | Nil | Nil | Lathi | 283 | Bihar: 188; NWFP: 50 |
| Itti-had-i-Millat (Blue shirt Volunteer Corps) | Rstd. 1935. Object:- To restore the Shahidganj Mosque to Muslims and create an awakening in them | All India Itti-had-i-Millat | Blue shirts and blue flags | Squad Drill | Sometimes carry swords | 805 | = Punjab: 105 - UP: 700 |
| Khaksars | Rstd. 1930. Object:- To organize Muslims for social service and to prepare them to attain Swaraj sooner than Congress. | All India Khaksar Party | Khaki Uniform [s.t. khaki coats, belts, puttis] | Ordinary and route march | Belchas | 23,123 | Punjab: 8000 - UP: 9,868; NWFP: 3,438 |
| Muslim National Guards | Ostensibly to safeguard Muslim interests/ Political and | Muslim League | Green [or grey] shirts/tunics, Khaki | Ordinary Squad Drill | Stout lathis | 38,199 | - UP: 15,780 = Bihar: 10,706; -NWFP: |

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|---------------|------------------------------------|--|-------------------|-------|-----------------------|
| | communal organisation | | trousers | | | | 10,700 |
| Muslim League Volunteer Corps | To safeguard the interests of the Muslim League | Muslim League | Green | Ordinary Squad Drill [s.t. lathi drill, or merely parades] | Lathis and knives | 2,697 | <u>Bombay</u> : 2,455 |
| Ghazi Corps | Object:- to do anti Khaksar, anti Qadiani, and pro-Ahrar programme | Nil | Khaki Shirt, salwars and white cap | Ordinary | Kulharis (axe) | n.a. | <u>Punjab</u> : 350 |

= Muslim Total: 72,223

Sikhs

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|-----|---|--------------------|--------|-----|--|
| The Akali Sena i.e Akali Regiment | Object:- to do social service to the community, to inculcate true spirit of Sikhism and to check the tide of Atheism among the community | Nil | Turban of light blue color, iron Chakhar, Khaki Shirts and shorts | Military formation | Kirpan | 820 | - <u>Punjab</u> : 500 - <u>NWFP</u> : 200 - <u>Sind</u> : 80 |
|-----------------------------------|--|-----|---|--------------------|--------|-----|--|

Miscellaneous

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|----------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|--|
| Hindustan Scouts | Object:- to train Boy Scouts for service to humanity irrespective of caste and creed and make arrangements at public fairs and festivals etc. | Nil | Green turbans khaki shirt and shorts | Ordinary formation and marching | Lathi and Knives | 6,490 | <u>Punjab</u> : 5000 ; <u>Bengal</u> : 1000 |
| Congress-Volunteer Corps | Propaganda work for the Congress and to keep order at meetings/ to help the executive | Congress | Khaddar Shirt, short and Gandhi cap | Drill | Lathi | 1299 (55 women) | Bengal: 655 (55 women); |
| Hindustan Seva Dal ¹³ | To train people for national service and | Congress | Blue Khaddar shorts, | Squad and Lathi drill | Lathis | 31,483 | - <u>UP</u> : 30,352 |

¹³ Some of these bodies function under slightly different names, but within the same framework. Included here is the Gujarat Prantik Seva Dal.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------|--|---|--|--|------|-----------|
| Youth Leagues | swaraj and to propagate physical culture | white khaddar caps & socks for males and white blouse for females | | | 5281 | UP: 4946; |
|---------------|--|---|--|--|------|-----------|

= Total Miscellaneous 58,823

Grand Total: 166,242

Distribution of Major Volunteer Organizations (Mid – 1946) in Provinces¹

| Province | RSS | MLNG | Akalis | Khaksars | Congress Volunteer Organization | Red Shirts | Azad Hind Dal | Mahabir Dal | Hindu Mahasabha Volunteer Organization | Sainik Dal | Ahrars | Hindustan Red Army | Total |
|---------------|---------|--------|--------|----------|---------------------------------|------------|---------------|-------------|--|------------|--------|--------------------|---------|
| Bengal | 100 | 3,500 | – | 100 | – | – | 3,372 | – | – | – | – | – | 7,072 |
| Bihar | 3,428 | 2,235 | – | 576 | – | – | 2,715 | – | 141 | – | – | – | 9,095 |
| Bombay | 19,477 | 7,480 | – | 131 | 29,952 | – | – | – | – | 1065 | 507 | – | 58,612 |
| CP | 30,074 | 2,909 | – | 412 | 939 | – | 2,151 | – | 275 | 4500 | – | 1000 | 42,260 |
| Delhi | 2,500 | 500 | – | 53 | – | – | 200 | 80 | – | – | 200 | – | 3,533 |
| Madras | 7,103 | 14,244 | – | 314 | – | – | – | – | 6150 | – | – | – | 27,811 |
| NWFP | 595 | 11,108 | – | 1,168 | – | 12,751 | – | 215 | – | – | 215 | – | 26,052 |
| Punjab | 22,000 | 10,000 | 90,000 | 600 | – | – | – | 15,000 | – | – | 600 | – | 138,200 |
| Sind | 4,900 | 3,500 | 150 | 375 | 918 | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | 9,843 |
| UP | 10,225 | 36,062 | – | 8,767 | 26,011 | – | – | 1,623 | 6554 | – | 1623 | – | 90,865 |
| Total | 100,402 | 91,538 | 90,150 | 12,496 | 56,820 | 12,751 | 8,438 | 16,918 | 13120 | 5565 | 3145 | 1000 | 413,343 |

¹ IOR, L/PJ/12/666.

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¹ Ali Raza has provided access to this series for me, for which I am indebted to him as I was unable to go to Islamabad myself.

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