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Occasional Paper No. 30

**AGRARIAN RELATIONS AND POLITICS
IN BENGAL : SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON
THE MAKING OF THE TENANCY ACT
AMENDMENT 1928**

PARTHA CHATTERJEE

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CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN SOCIAL SCIENCES, CALCUTTA

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ON THE MAKING OF THE TENANCY ACT AMENDMENT 1928

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September, 1980

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AGRARIAN RELATIONS AND POLITICS IN BENGAL : SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON
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I

The object of this paper is to present an argument about the course of political developments in Bengal in the 1920s and its connections with the changing structure of relations in Bengal's agrarian economy. It is, of course, only half an argument, ~~since~~ its full significance can only be grasped when seen in conjunction with developments in the 1930s and 1940s, leading up to the partition of the province in 1947. The present paper only seeks to present some historical material relating to the 1920s, and a treatment of the more complex and evenful period of the 1930s and 1940s must await a separate occasion. Within this limited objective, this paper does not exhaust available material even from sources of a conventional nature : much more evidence can be collected in order to shed light on many of the less emphasised points or to enrich others which have been treated somewhat perfunctorily. But the broad contours of the picture are, it seems to me, sufficiently clear from the material presented here.

The paper also attempts to go beyond this straightforward argument and suggest from the evidence presented a new range of problems for the historiography of modern Indian politics. Much of this is necessarily tentative, being more in the nature of questions which deserve further study, and the treatment too is necessarily more a priori and theoretical than is usual in a historical work of this sort. But the purpose in this particular case is to suggest an analytical framework of somewhat wider range than is currently

* I thank Ujjalkanti Das for his assistance in collecting much of the material used here. I am especially grateful to Hitesranjan Sanyal who was the first to initiate me into the problems of nationalist politics in Bengal. My thanks to Dipesh Chakraborty and my colleagues at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences with whom I have discussed earlier drafts of this paper. Thanks also to the staff of the West Bengal State Archives, the National Archives of India and the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library for their helpfulness.

used in studies of the politics of twentieth-century India.

If one looks at the decade of the 1920s as a whole, the most striking feature in Bengal's politics is the contrast between the remarkable growth in the beginning of the period of a broad nationalist front against British imperialism with roots in local peasant movements in several districts and with a dynamic and united central leadership, and the several splits in this front at the end of the period with bitter differences, acrimony and organised violence marking the relations between the two largest religious groups in the province. It will be argued here that this turn of events had a close connection with the structure of landed property and agrarian relations in Bengal, with the specific ways in which interests relating to the agrarian economy were organised in Bengal's politics and with the political role of the colonial state.

For facility of presentation, I will adopt the device of concentrating on the making of the Tenancy Act Amendment by the Bengal Legislative Council in 1928 which touched upon some of the most controversial issues relating to the agrarian economy and served to bring together in one organised forum the various proprietary and agrarian interests. It thus becomes a good occasion to study the connections between agrarian relations and the sphere of organised politics. By then tracing each of these organised interests through their processes of development and in their interrelationship, we obtain a better understanding of the changes in Bengal's politics from the beginning to the end of the decade.

II

There were three important issues involved in the Tenancy Act Amendment Bill introduced in the Bengal Legislative Council in 1928. In the first place, it brought up the question of the rights of sharecroppers : whether or not they should be recognised as tenants. Secondly, there was the matter of the status of underraiyats. And thirdly, the law had to come to grips with the problem of transferability of holdings.

On the first question, the existing Act did not make any distinction between money and produce rent, and in many individual cases in different districts, settlement officers as well as courts of law had recognised sharecroppers as tenants. John Kerr's Committee of 1923 had decided on the principle that produce-paying cultivators who supplied their own seeds and cattle and themselves ~~chose~~ their crops should be treated as tenants. John Kerr's recommendations, however, created a great stir "among the jotdars and other middle class tenure holders who thought that the Committee wanted to give the status of tenants to persons who do not possess it. This led many landlords to eject their bargadars, with the result that a considerable proportion of the land remained uncultivated for some time. It was apprehended by the landlords that if these produce-payers were given the status of tenants they would succeed in getting their produce rent converted into money rent."¹

Several representations were made on behalf of those who employed sharecroppers. Typical of these was the one by Babu Debi Das Sanyal who, on behalf of a "protest meeting" at Salap in Pabna, argued that these provisions were "sure to bring about the annihilation of the middle-class as also of the widows and orphans who earn their livelihood with great difficulties by the income of bhag-chas and cause a terrible social revolution as a logical corollary." He reminded the "benign Government" which had always been "putting down Bolshevism" that it was now "but helping a social revolution like the one witnessed in Russia by the spread of Bolshevik ideas consequent on the enactment of the said two clauses."² Indeed, the expected opposition to this particular provision regarding sharecroppers was potentially so formidable that the Government first issued a communique disclaiming all intentions of giving bargadars any rights which they did not already possess, and then dropped all provisions regarding bargadars from the Tenancy Bill introduced in the Council in 1925.

The Bill went into Select Committee, and the committeemen, still not reassured, wrote into it a definite statement declaring that cultivators who paid in produce, whether a fixed proportion or a fixed quantity, were not

tenants.³ The Government, in any case, did not proceed with the matter any further and withdrew the Bill.

The Special Committee which drafted the new Bill of 1928 accepted the position that sharecroppers who paid a fixed proportion of the produce (the usual terms under which a bhagchasi, bargadar or adhiyar cultivated the land) were not tenants. However, those who paid a fixed quantity of produce as rent were, according to the Bill, to be regarded as tenants. And bargadars or adhiyars who had been admitted in a document by their landlords, or had been held by a civil court, to be tenants would also be similarly recognised as raiyats or underraiyats. However, the commutation of produce-rents to money-rent was prohibited, since commutations would strengthen the claims of a sharecropper to the status of tenant.

The second problem, regarding the status of the underraiyat, derives from the fact that the existing law, while permitting him to acquire occupancy rights by custom, did not provide any definite safeguards except that his rent could not exceed that paid by his superior raiyat by 25%. The Bill proposed that underraiyats who had homesteads on their lands and had held them for twenty years, or who had been admitted in a document by their landlord to have a permanent and heritable right, would not be evicted from their holdings. They would also have the right to claim recognition, on the payment of a salami, when their immediate landlord abandoned their holdings. Moreover even other underraiyats, who were not thus protected, could only be evicted if their superior landlords could prove that they wanted the land for their own cultivation. Cultivation by bargadars would not, for this purpose, count as cultivation by the landlord himself.

The question of transferability of the holdings of raiyats was really one of legally recognising a phenomenon which was widespread. The landlords' argument against allowing free transferability was that the land would then pass through the usual channel of mortgage and credit to non-agriculturists, and tenants would be reduced to day-labourers. What they wanted, therefore, were sufficient safeguards to prevent this "catastrophe".

The Bill attempted to provide these .

Indeed, the Bill as drafted sought to strike a very delicate balance between the interests of landlords, tenants and undertenants. While the general political climate in the province and the apprehended dangers of incipient agrarian movements made it necessary that certain rights be given to tenants as well as undertenants, it was also well known that there would be severe opposition in the Council to all attempts at curtailing the rights of landlords. As soon as the Bill was introduced in the Council, the East Bengal landholders under the presidentship of Nawab Habibullah of Dacca protested against it on the ground that it took away the rights of zamindars.⁴ A few days later, a Landholders' Conference, presided over by Maharaja Pradyot Coomar Tagore, sent a memorandum to the Viceroy, the Governor of Bengal, the Secretary of State for India, Prime Minister Ramsay McDonald and Opposition Leader Lloyd George, expressing its concern at the proposal to give tenants the right of transferring their holdings.

"Safeguards have been to a certain extent provided in the Bill for the fractional protection of the interests of landlords in providing a 25% transfer fee, and the preemption right of landlords, exercisable in cases of fraudulent transfers. An attempt is now being made to force the hands of the Government to do away even with these safeguards.

"... the landholders humbly beg to point out that more than 4,600,000 out of 4,700,000 tenure-holders, who are also regarded as landlords under the Act, are far poorer than even most of the raiyats who are not in all cases actual tillers of the soil. The inevitable effect of the Bill, if passed, will be to create a new class of middlemen from among moneylenders and other outsiders who are not likely to have sympathy or community of feeling with the actual tillers of the soil."

The memorandum then went on to add :

"...the present occasion is most unsuitable to disturb the peace of a most influential class.... any such serious change of a settled policy is likely to be followed at no distant period by general discontent among a most loyal class of His Majesty's subjects which is undesirable for good government in India and is likely to hasten an agrarian revolution. Agitation regarding this is being worked up by certain self-seeking agitators for political purposes as none of these agitators is an actual cultivator."⁵

III

To better understand the significance of these legislative proposals and to explain the political alignments on those issues, let us briefly note the relevant features of Bengal's agrarian economy at this time.⁶

The most crucial tendency was the fragmentation, over the preceding century and a half, of landed property on such a scale that the entire system of zamindari and tenure-holding proprietorship was at the edge of a crisis of massive proportions. This, however, was still not evident in the 1920s, certainly not on the scale in which the crisis precipitated after the depression and the "no rent" movements of the early 1930s.

Secondly, with the emergence in the late nineteenth century of jute, and later of rice, as commercial crops, the dominant tendency in the sphere of agricultural wealth-making was in the direction of extensive rent exploitation (in most cases on the basis of rights of occupation rather than of proprietorship), and of usury coupled with the trade in rice and jute.

Thirdly, there was a strong tendency towards increased differentiation within the peasantry, with the emergence of a significant strata of substantial peasantry at the top and the immiserisation of a poor peasantry

losing their rights of occupation over the lands which they cultivated. There was, in fact, an increase in de jure and effective transfers of land from the small to the larger peasantry (or to tenureholders with large khas possessions), with indebtedness the usual mechanism for effecting such transfers. However, these did not, in most cases, lead to absolute eviction. Rather the dispossessed peasant continued to cultivate the same plot of land, but with inferior rights and higher effective rents. This process manifested itself in particular in the increase in tenancies paying rent in the form of a share of the produce. There was also a strengthening, rather than a weakening, of various forms of "unfree" labour, which reflected a declining bargaining position of the working peasantry, i.e. the small and landless peasants, vis-a-vis the landlords, whether proprietors, tenureholders or superior raiyats.

However, the tendencies towards a differentiation within the peasantry were, in the early twentieth century, far more advanced in the south-western and some of the northern districts of Bengal, and least advanced in the eastern districts. In the latter, the natural fertility of the soil, abundance of rain water and the adoption of jute as a commercial crop gave the small peasantry a relatively viable economic status, and hence, until the late 1930s, a relatively undifferentiated social character. In consequence, whereas in the western and some of the northern districts, there emerged among landlords - proprietors, tenureholders or superior raiyats - a common interest in subjugating the poor or landless working peasantry, in the eastern districts the vast mass of relatively undifferentiated raiyat peasantry had a stronger basis to unite in common battle against exactions by zamindars and tenureholders. This was to attain a relatively organised political character in the 1930s.

The overall constraints within which these tendencies developed were set by the reality of colonialism. The initial pressure of revenue, deindustrialisation and consequent pressure on land, the lack of nonagricultural avenues of investment, the absence of a growing demand for labour from

the industrial sector - all of these created the conditions for the break-up of zamindari property, and for the growth of subinfeudation, rackrenting and usury as the predominant modes of wealth-making. This also produced the contradiction with official policy of instituting unfettered rights of private property on the one hand, and a faith in the viability of a small-peasant economy on the other. In the sphere of lawmaking as in executive action, there was the permanent assumption that the zamindar was proprietor of his estate; while at the same time there persisted the concern that the raiyat must be protected in his right to cultivate. The contradictions as well as the possibilities of political ~~manoeuvring~~ inherent in this policy were well revealed in the 1928 Bill to amend the Bengal Tenancy Act. *

IV

Let us now turn to take a look at the major organised political forces in Bengal and at the main developments of the decade of the 1920s. A good point to begin the story is with the non-cooperation and Khilafat movements and the formation of the Swarajya Party in Bengal. The controversies over Gandhi's non-cooperation programme, C.R. Das's initial - and formidable - opposition, somersault and ultimate emergence as unchallenged leader of the Congress in Bengal are episodes well described in the historical literature.⁷ Two points of major significance here were, first, the entry into the Congress organisation - at provincial and district levels - of members of the former revolutionary groups, and second, the induction into the provincial leadership of several leaders who had recently conducted local peasant movements aimed against Union Boards or the chaukidari tax, or against settlement operations.

Indeed, the end of the War and the early 1920s brought increasing economic difficulties for the predominantly Hindu middle classes of Bengal - rising prices, shrinking real incomes from rent and the lack of employment opportunities, Criticism of imperialism now became trenchant and the demand for radical action more assertive. The Moderate leadership of Surendranath

Banerjea or Byomkesh Chakravarti began to appear much too gentlemanly and much too loyalist. Even among constitutionalists, the urge was for greater militancy in ideology and programme and for a wider spread and tighter control of the organisation.

Chittaranjan's own political ideas were not marked by any great degree of clarity or consistency. In his preferences regarding the forms of political activity, he was certainly a constitutionalist. He also spoke vaguely, as early as in 1917, of abandoning "the path of European industrialism", of stopping the decay of villages and rehabilitating them.⁸ Yet, he bitterly opposed the non-cooperation resolution in Calcutta and Nagpur and then led the protracted battle against Gandhi over Council-entry. It was, in fact, the fight against non-cooperation, the Council-entry issue and, once that was clinched, the elections to the Council which impelled Chittaranjan to pay attention to the organisation of the party. And here he turned for support to the organised terrorist groups. Although Chittaranjan did not approve of the politics of terrorism,⁹ he found in these groups ready material for building up an organisation of full-time cadres.¹⁰ The terrorists, the Jugantar group in particular, had by that time realised the immense difficulties of continued underground activity and had resolved to take to open political activity under the Congress as a cover for "revolutionary" work. Chittaranjan's offer was, therefore, of mutual convenience.¹¹

Chittaranjan also attempted to link up the provincial organisation with the various local agitations and movements which had grown up in the Bengal countryside, in Midnapore, Bankura and Tippera, for instance, during the year of non-cooperation and the anti-Union Board movements.¹² Specifically, he brought in local leaders like Birendranath Sasmal, Anilbaran Ray and Ashrafuddin Ahmed Chaudhury into important positions in the Provincial Committee and sought to provide central support for local organisations and movements.

A third significant feature of the Congress in Bengal under C.R. Das was the participation in it of a much wider section of the Muslim

leadership, brought into the organisation as a result of the tying up of the Khilafat movement with non-cooperation. In fact, Khilafat had begun in Bengal mainly among the Urdu-speaking non-Bengali section of Calcutta Muslims, with Abul Kalam Azad emerging as the most active leader and with several leading Muslims from northern India such as Shaukat Ali, Saifuddin Kitchlew and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai spending considerable time organising the movement in Bengal. But once the non-cooperation programme became part of the Khilafat struggle, the movement spread far into the countryside in northern and eastern Bengal. The main impetus, it was reported, was provided by the ulama, "mainly belonging to the Farazi sect", and the bulk of the agitators were "itinerant maulavis".¹³ The spread of Khilafat also brought forward a new section of leaders into the political life of Muslim Bengal : Lawyer leaders like Abul Kasem and Fazlul Huq found it different in terms of their personal means of livelihood to accept the non-cooperation programme in toto; they thus lost considerable credibility as leaders belonging to the "extremist" section of the Congress. In their place, there emerged a new line of leaders - organisers of Khilafat and non-cooperation in different districts of Bengal, having strong connections with the religious and social leadership of the Muslim peasantry, many of them maulanas themselves with considerable eminence as religious scholars - men like Abdullahel Baqi of Dinajpur, Maniruzzaman Islamabadi of Chittagong and Calcutta, Akram Khan of 24-Parganas, Shamsuddin Ahmed of Kushtia and Ashrafuddin Chaudhury of Tippera.¹⁴ The depth and effectiveness of this Khilafat-non-cooperation propoganda can be judged from the fact that in the 1921 elections to the Council, when voting was declared to be gunah (sin), there was a very low Muslim turnout, particularly in Rajshahi, Dinajpur and Rangpur, whereas in Chittagong and Noakhali, illiterate grocers, carters, cobblers and shopkeepers who had been put up as candidates in collective mockery of the entire edifice of constitutional reforms, won by huge majorities. In 1922, a conference of ulama at Comilla, attended, it was said, by 10,000, pronounced non-cooperation to be "obligatory" for all believers.¹⁵

Indeed, in his effort to coalesce diverse forces and strands in the politics of Bengal, Chittaranjan had consciously attempted to reach beyond the small coterie of Westernised aristocratic Muslim leaders of Calcutta to wider sections of the Muslim leadership in the districts. But here too, as was his wont, Chittaranjan sought to achieve this in organisational terms - in the form of a Hindu-Muslim pact which, apart from allaying Muslim fears about music before mosques and cowslaughter, provided that 55% of government employment and 60% of membership to local bodies in Muslim-majority districts would be reserved for Muslims.¹⁶ In this, Chittaranjan was following the same ideological tradition which had sought at the time of the Swadeshi movement to create Hindu-Muslim political amity through concepts such as Bepinchandra Pal's "composite patriotism" - products of a strange marriage of religious-communal consciousness with the institutional forms of representative politics.¹⁷

Indeed, although the Pact achieved Chittaranjan's immediate objective of rallying a broadbased Muslim support for Swarajist politics in the legislature and the various elected local bodies - many Muslims stood as Swarajist candidates in the elections of 1923 and the Party scored major successes in the district boards of such heavily Muslim areas as Jessore, Dinajpur and Mymensingh¹⁸ - his own thinking on the subject appears to have been based on a firm consciousness of the distinct communal identities of the two religious groups. The novelist Saratchandra Chattopadhyay gives us a startling insight into the fears and calculations which went into Chittaranjan's move.

Deshbandhu smiled and asked me, "Do you believe in Hindu-Muslim unity?" I said, "No." Deshbandhu said, "But your love for the Muslims is well-known.... Yet, what alternative do we have? Just imagine what will happen in another ten years!" I said, "This doesn't exactly express your love for the Muslims. I mean, the way your face pales at the thought of what will happen ten years from now, it doesn't seem your ideas are very far from mine. Anyway, numbers aren't the only thing. If they

were, four crore Englishmen would never have ruled over a hundred and fifty crore other people. Think of the Namasudras, Malos, Nats, Rajbanshis, Pods - draw them towards you, find for them a place of honour among the people of this country, bring them up as human beings, do something about the unjust and cruel way in which women are treated in society, and you won't have to worry about the numbers on the other side."¹⁹

A year after Chittaranjan's death, the Bengal Pact was already a dead letter and the political leaders of the two communities had moved further and further apart, not unabated by some clever manipulating by a Government determined to break at any cost a broad combination against colonial rule by dyarchy. Already in 1923, Khan Bahadur Musharaff Hussain, a firm loyalist if ever there was one, had proposed in the Legislative Council that the terms of the Hindu-Muslim pact be put into immediate operation and had 50% of government appointments be given to Muslims, to which C.R. Das had to make the rather disingenuous reply that the Pact could be fully implemented only after the attainment of swaraj.²⁰ But the seeds of strife had been sown. The 1924 Bengal Provincial Conference was accompanied by a separate Muhammadan Conference at Sirajganj, organised by the poet Ismail Hussain Siraji, which demanded that the terms of the Pact be immediately put into practice.²¹ After Chittaranjan's death, Sir Abdur Rahim virtually made an open offer to the Government that it could win Muslim support against the Hindu non-cooperators if it adopted a discriminatory policy in favour of Muslims in the matter of recruitment to government service. The Government obliged; indeed, it went even further to actively promote Muslim associations, cooperative societies and even krishak associations in the eastern Bengal districts.²²

The two or three years of growing discord following Chittaranjan's death were marked by a series of communal riots in different parts of Bengal. Some of these, such as the one at Kidderpore in Calcutta on Bakr Id of 1925, were due, according to the Government, "entirely to an unprovoked attack by the Hindus on Muhammadans".²³ Besides, the rioting in Calcutta - there were

three riots in the city in 1926 - was confined to a very large extent to "up-country Hindus and Muhammadans"²⁴ and were undoubtedly influenced by the outbursts of communal frenzy in northern India at this time following the cow-protection and shuddhi movements and the murder of Swami Sradhanand. "A further cause for disunion was supplied by the provocative character of the speeches which were made during a series of Arya Samajist meetings which were held in Calcutta in November 1925, but it is possible that neither community would have realised the extent of the existing disunion if Sir Abdur Rahim had not, in his speech at Aligarh in December 1925, rent the veil and exposed the actual state of affairs."²⁵ It is noteworthy that the most important Muslim leaders of the city made repeated representations to different government officials during and after the riots seeking protection for their community and making allegations against the other : Abdur Rahim complained to the Police Commissioner that "Hindu constables appeared to be siding with the Hindu element", while H.S. Suhrawardy, then Deputy Mayor, "was more emphatic still and went so far as to say...that if things did not improve he would be obliged to exhort his co-religionists to reprisals."²⁶ On the other hand, J. M. Sen Gupta, the Mayor, proposed that he be allowed to raise a volunteer defence party for the protection of mosques and temples, but when the Police Commissioner explained "the necessity...of recruiting these volunteers equally from both communities..Mr. Sen Gupta expressed considerable doubt regarding his ability to provide the necessary Muhammadan contingent."²⁷ The July riots that year over the Rajrajeshwari procession in Burrabazar in the heart of Calcutta saw the not very covert involvement of some of the foremost leaders of the city, "Mr [H. S.] Suhrawardy...was found to be very intimately connected with two men of the hooligan-leader type, namely, Mina Peshawari and Allah Baksh Peshawari.... On the 13th July at a meeting at the house of Sir Abdur Rahim, which was convened for the purpose of considering what action should be taken concerning [the Rajrajeshwari] procession, Mr Suhrawardy counselled strong opposition and his language was such that Sir Abdur Rahim found it necessary to tell him more than once that there must be no breaking of heads.... Mr Suhrawardy...was in fact more than any one else responsible for the resistance of a lawful procession on the

morning of the 15th July which...culminated in rioting and serious loss of life...".²⁸

The Pabna riots in July that year had other, more significant, dimensions. In the first place, it revealed clearly the effects of a new movement to purify Islamic practices among the Bengal peasantry, carried out by people who were described in official circles as "itinerant maulvis" and who, it was officially suggested, had been brought into the arena of organisational mass politics by the Khilafat-noncooperation movements. The chief point of campaign was an appeal to Muslims not to participate in Hindu religious festivals and to insist on the prohibition of music before mosques.²⁹ But on this occasion in Pabna, it was alleged that these maulavis had gone even further and had provoked people to interfere with the immersion of a Durga image at Shibpur and to desecrate Kali images in Kaijuri, Kankia, Shibpur and Ekdanta³⁰, and the Government of Bengal reported that "in the latter part of April and in May the cases of surreptitious desecration of more or less abandoned idols were more frequent in Pabna than in almost any other district in East Bengal."³¹ Indeed, the series of incidents in Pabna in July 1926 began when it was reported that "some idols of Pabna town had been removed overnight from their places of resting and left in a mutilated condition on the public road near the Sitlai zamindar's house",³² - an act which the Commissioner of the Rajshahi division thought had been committed "by some Muhammadan bad characters".³³ In response, the leading Hindu gentry of Pabna town, including Indujyoti Majumdar, the Chairman of the Municipality, held a "secret meeting" in the house of Jogendra Nath Maitra, zamindar of Sitlai, "at which they decided to have the procession with music past mosques in the town at the time of the evening prayer"; intelligence sources also reported that "they had collected and kept concealed lathis, etc., in Hindu shops near the mosque".³⁴ The procession was taken out that evening and there was a clash before a mosque in Khalifapatti.

In the next ten or twelve days the disturbances spread to the countryside and the chief targets were Hindu, particularly Marwari, shops in the village hats of Pabna, Atgharia, Sujanagar and Santhia thana areas.³⁵ A

case was reported of the looting of the house of a Hindu big jotdar near Pabna by his Muslim tenants.³⁶ A few days later, the Commissioner of Rajshahi, touring the disturbed areas, saw much evidence of mob violence on the small Hindu minority in the villages around Pabna: in Char Tarapur, a large village, "the whole Hindu population (said to consist of some 50 families) congregated on the roof of a large two-storied house belonging to the leading Hindu of the village who was also the president panchayat....It was clear that he was too afraid of reprisals to give names [of those who had looted]..."³⁷ He added: "My impression is that the leading Hindus feel that they were wrong in taking out the procession, and that some of them are in danger of prosecution in connection with the incident.... There is no doubt that after the occurrence on the 1st the Hindus were in a panic and feared a general attack by the Muhammadans."³⁸ He also thought it "practically certain that emissaries from the town (not the ostensible leaders) went to the mufassal and incited the disturbances that actually occurred";³⁹ "some maulvis have been preaching religious hatred, and they are at least partly responsible for the recent occurrences."⁴⁰ Later he sent in a more detailed report on the agitators in the countryside: "From the information at present available, it seems likely that there is an organised nucleus of possibly some hundreds of Muhammadans who have come largely from the ohar areas on both sides of the Ganges and who, after looting a house or shop, disperse into the neighbouring villages where they find food and shelter from their fellow Muhammadans and stir them up with tales of desecration of mosques and then with their aid attack some other villages. They have spies and skirmishers to watch for the arrival of any police force, when they again disperse and are sheltered by their co-religionists."⁴¹

As reports went out from Pabna of communal violence in the district, a bevy of leaders of provincial eminence descended on the town with the ostensible purpose either of helping restore the peace or, more directly, of protecting their co-religionists. Asutosh Lahiri, Assistant Secretary of the Calcutta Hindu Relief Committee, arrived with eleven Hindu volunteers and was immediately followed by a telegram from his President, Padamraj Jain,

announcing the departure of Gurkha volunteers from Calcutta "to defend the Hindu hearths and homes".⁴² Dr. J. M. Das Gupta, the Swarajist leader from Calcutta, arrived with eight or nine Hindu volunteers "carrying a gun and revolver with them", and made speeches which were "misunderstood by the Muhammadans who appeared to be excited". Another large team of sixty Hindu volunteers was led by Kiran Sankar Ray, Mohitosh Roy Choudhury, Syam Sundar Chakrabartti, Dr Deva Prasad Ghosh, and Swami Biswananda and Swami Bisuddhanda of the Bharat Sevasram Sangha. J.M. Sen Gupta also came, accompanied by Pratap Guha Roy, and was followed by Mrs Sarojini Naidu. On the other hand a group of fifty Muhammadan volunteers was sent from Sirajganj.⁴³

It is also interesting to note in this context certain aspects of the way the Government chose to handle the situation, for they reveal some important features of the ideological presuppositions on which the colonial state operated and which had an important bearing on the development of the communal situation in Bengal. When the disturbances first showed signs of spreading, Hugh Stephenson, the Acting Governor, put in a somewhat imperious note to be conveyed to the district authorities: "...let the respectable leaders of both communities know that we expect them actively to assist in controlling their co-religionists, and shall be extremely displeased with them if they don't."⁴⁴ When the first prosecutions were about to be brought up in court, the Commissioner of Rajshahi wrote to the Chief Secretary: "The Public Prosecutor here is a Hindu and an old man. I do not think he should be allowed to prosecute....Babu Surendra Mohan Bhaya, Assistant Government Pleader at Rajshahi, is, I believe, a good pleader, but it might be better to have a Muhammadan for the case against the Hindus. Could you arrange to send some good pleader from Calcutta? If so, Babu Surendra Mohan Bhaya or some good Calcutta Hindu pleader might be engaged for the other cases in which Muhammadans will be the accused."⁴⁵ The Government also decided to impose a collective punitive tax - on Hindus as well as Muslims in the Pabna municipal area and on Muslims only in the affected areas in the countryside.⁴⁶ After the taxes had been collected, it was pointed out, first by Debi Prasad Khaitan, a member of the Legislative Council,⁴⁷ and later

confirmed officially, that the Hindus of Pabna town, having more valuable property than the Muslims of the mufassal and thus paying a larger punitive tax, were having to bear the burden of paying compensation to the Hindu families affected by the riots in the villages. The Chief Secretary Whyly noted: "The doctrine of collective responsibility has produced results which were probably not contemplated and will be hard to justify before the public."⁴⁸ But talk of a change of policy put the district authorities in a quandary. Alarmed, the Commissioner wrote: "There was general agreement that [the Hindus of Pabna Municipality] should not be exempted,...It seems to me that it would now cause considerable unrest and resentment among the Muhammadan community if Government were to reverse that decision."⁴⁹ Finally, on Lytton's intervention, a revised assessment was carried out in which the Hindus were to bear only the cost of posting additional policemen and not that of compensation.⁵⁰

In September that year, riots broke out in Dacca city over the annual Janmastami procession.

"The Janmastami procession in Dacca is a time-honoured institution which is said to have been instituted in the time of the Muhammadan government and to have been encouraged by the Muhammadan rulers. It brings in a large number of visitors to the town and stimulates trade and provides employment for a large number of people. It has been the custom to employ Muhammadan musicians and labourers in the procession and wealthy Muhammadans have lent their elephants and horses and given other assistance, while the Muhammadans of the town and surrounding villages have crowded the streets while the procession passed. The processions are managed by the Dacca Basak families, the cost being met from a trust fund created for the purpose and subscriptions."⁵¹

In the tense atmosphere of 1926, however, Islamic purification had become a political battle-cry and the tolerant social customs of a medieval manufacturing town could hardly resist the onslaught. The District Muslim Association led by Habibur Rahaman, a rival body to the Dacca Anjuman led by the Nawab family, claimed with flagrant disregard for the facts of history, that

there had never been any music before mosques "in this ancient city of the Moghuls, the traces of whose suzerainty do still exist to proclaim the power which the Musalmans once held in the capital of East Bengal. Who would believe that the Hindus had ever the audacity of playing music before mosque in this city where the Muslim element was always predominant? Not to speak of the past 200 years, even so lately as 1905, Hindus were taken to task for carrying an idol of Kali with music by the mosque at Nawabpur Road." It then went on to present its own analysis of the recent situation:

"The Hindus never dared to play music before mosques and they never claimed this right till the disturbances in Calcutta in April last, since which event the Hindu Mahasabha and such other organisations are engineering this movement only to create a martial spirit among the Hindus. They have realised this inferiority to the Musalmans in that respect, and in order to make the Hindus feel their helplessness in such communal riots which they knew fully well would be the natural consequence of provoking the Musalmans by playing music before mosques, these Hindu leaders have engineered this movement so that the Hindus in general might get an incentive to ameliorate their condition."⁵²

As the day of the festival approached, tension in the town began to rise.⁵³ At the initiative of the Nawab of Dacca, a meeting was arranged with some leading Hindus at which the Nawab pleaded that music be stopped at prayer time. "The Basaks themselves might have agreed to this but Hindu opinion was too strong for them and they maintained that it would be impossible to take out the procession if restrictions as to music desired by the Muhammadans were imposed."⁵⁴ Indeed, "radical" Hindu opinion could hardly be expected at such a moment to yield a privilege which they rightfully felt was accepted custom.⁵⁵ The district authorities too thought it "unreasonable to impose restrictions that would be regarded by the Hindu community as a prohibition of the performance of the ceremony."⁵⁶ A mass meeting of the Muhammadan population was convened by the District Moslem Association at the Purana Paltan grounds on 6 September at which the Nawab, however, insisted that no opposition should be offered to the processions and advised any Muslim to whom the procession was offensive to remain at home. But the "radicals",

operating through the mohalla sardars of the old Muslim quarters of the town, organised a hartal on the two days of the procession and succeeded in dissuading cartmen and hackney-carriage drivers "from rendering any sort of service in connection with the procession".⁵⁷ The processions on 8 and 9 September passed off with a few minor incidents. On 10 September the Hindus organised a sort of counter-hartal and prevented hackney-carriage drivers from taking passengers. "The hackney-carriage drivers, either under compulsion of their communal organisation, or because they had been made to believe that it was a religious duty, had sacrificed the two best days' earnings of the year and it was natural that they should be exasperated by further interference by Hindu students or volunteers.... Some of the leading merchants [maintained] a sort of lock-out against the cartmen whom they formerly employed. It seems reasonable to believe that it was the picketing against hackney-carriage drivers that started the disorder on this morning.... A number of the incidents recorded seem to have been a series of reprisals between the carriage drivers and the Basaks of Bangahall and Nawabpur...".⁵⁸ It was indeed the Hindu counter-hartal which led to the riots.

Late in 1926, communal trouble stirred up again, this time in Barisal, and now the political clout of organised Hindu communalism in Bengal was clearly brought to the fore.

"Patuakhali is in a locality where there is a large preponderance of Muhammadans over the Hindus, the population being about 5 to 1 in the subdivision and the revenue thana, and about 4 to 1 in the headquarter police-station. In the municipality, however, the communities are almost equal in numbers. In the past there are no records of any disputes on the subject of music before mosques....there was a long standing and well recognised practice under which Hindu processions out of regard for the feelings of the Muhammadans... stopped music for a distance of about 80 yards [from the mosque]."⁵⁹

But a new mosque had come up recently, a few yards down the road from the old one, and the question was whether the same privilege should be extended to the

new mosque as well. The situation, however, was hardly conducive to an amicable solution.

"Latterly as the result of the forces operating in the Indian Moslem world the local Muhammadans began, among other things, to object to attending the festivities connected with certain Hindu festivals and to oppose the performance by Hindus of certain ceremonies in certain places of which the Saraswati Puja in schools was probably the most prominent.... [The Hindus deliberately organised] a procession with music along the District Board road near the mosques in defiance of the recognised practice. There was no religious festival at the time, and the object was merely to annoy the Muhammadans in which object they succeeded."60

In retaliation the Muhammadans at Bakr-Id deliberately sacrificed a cow in the open without making any attempt to screen the ceremony. The Hindus promptly took out a procession at the time of the evening prayer.

The leading organiser on the Hindu side in Patuakhali was Satindranath Sen. A former Jugantar activist, he had participated in the non-cooperation movement and had risen to fame by organising the highly successful Union Board-boycott movement among the overwhelmingly Muslim population in the Laukati Union in Bakarganj. By 1924, he was the principal figure in the Congress organisation in Barisal. With the local dispute in Patuakhali simmering, Satindranath decided to organise a sankirtan procession past the mosques every day, thus defying prohibitory orders and courting arrest. The satyagraha involved organisation at a fairly high level including ties with Hindu communal bodies in Calcutta.

"Nagendra Nath Das Gupta, Secretary of the Barisal Hindu Sabha, has telegraphed to Padamraj Jain of the Hindu Relief Committee, intimating that the Satyagraha at Patuakhali was being continued and that help was needed."61

"Satindra Nath Sen, the leader of the movement, visited Barisal town during the week, and conferred

with all the leading Congress and Hindu Sabha members. He attended a private meeting in the house of Saral Kumar Datta, at which Nagendra Nath Das Gupta, Secretary of the local Hindu Sabha, Narendra Nath Sen, Bijay Bhusan Das Gupta, Sishuranjan Biswas, Tarapada Ghosh, Satish Sarkar ...and several other members of the Tarun Sangha were present. These persons subsequently assembled at the house of Narendra Nath Sen...and were joined by Sudhir Kumar Aich, Haridhan Mani Chakrabartti and more members of the Tarun Sangha. At these meetings the members of the Tarun Sangha were urged to go to Patuakhali and continue the Satyagraha movement there. Satindra Nath Sen also attended a meeting at the Barisal Town Hall on the 14th September under the presidency of Atmananda Brahmachari (i.e. ex-detenu Sasadhar Roy). Exciting speeches are reported to have been delivered at this meeting by Sarat Kumar Ghosh, Satindra Nath Sen, Nagendra Bijay Bhattacharji, Makhan Lal Sen, Ananga Mohan Dam and Satish Sarkar, in furtherance of the Satyagraha movement. A 'Satyagraha Committee' was then formed with Sarat Kumar Ghosh as President, and Nagendra Bijay Bhattacharji and Nagendra Nath Das Gupta as Secretaries. It is thus obvious that the movement is being supported by almost all shades of political opinion in the district.

"Padamraj Jain was invited by Nagendra Nath Das Gupta to visit Patuakhali, ...Padamraj has...deputed Pijushkanti Ghosh, Bhutnath Mukherji, Makhan Lal Sen and Ananga Mohan Dam to study the situation locally. Satish Sarkar of the Karmi Sangha, Calcutta, also visited the district in this connection. ...While holding out the assurance that the movement will not be suffered to collapse for want of funds, Padamraj Jain has expressed a desire that an honourable compromise should be concluded..." 62

The sankirtan procession and courting of arrest continued daily for the next four months, and allegations began to be made by the Muslim leaders that the administration, manned largely by Hindu officers, was being partial to the Satyagrahis. Khan Bahadur Hemayetuddin Ahmed, Chairman of the District Board, wrote a string of letters to senior officials in Calcutta as well as to prominent Muslim leaders in the city, alleging that "the constables, being up-country Hindus, have sympathy with the Sankirtan party and do not act

loyally", and pleading for "an European administration in place of a Hindu Raj".⁶³ Resentment and agitation were also brewing among the Muslim peasants in the countryside, stirred up by the new propagandists who were calling for "the abandonment of certain practices, such as attending the tamashas attached to some of the Hindu festivals, objections to pay certain exactions of Hindu landlords, whereby the expenses of such festivals are met and opposition to the continued performance by Hindus of certain ceremonies in certain places. ...In this movement Patuakhali has shared the prime mover, being a person called Md. Akram, who seems to have become swollen headed owing to the favour which his anti-non-cooperation activities elicited from the then Collector and SDO."⁶⁴

In late November 1926, Blandy, the new District Magistrate, reported that with the exception of Satindranath, the other Hindu leaders were "evidently tiring of the whole show and even Satindra seems anxious for a settlement of the dispute." Satin Sen, he wrote, had been put in a fix : "having started, he cannot stop without losing his outside support, as he says frankly continuity is essential if he is to preserve the sympathy which his movement has aroused."⁶⁵ He was, besides, losing his grip over the anti-Union Board agitation by his anti-Muslim activity, and the opposition to Union Boards as a whole was weakening.⁶⁶ Blandy was, however, still apprehensive. As it was, there were "up-country Hindu volunteers in this district in large numbers....I believe they were collected by the Hindu Mahasabha."⁶⁷ Besides, "the point which I do not like in the situation is that both sides are doing propaganda in the villages....This may lead anywhere and makes it important for the original disputes to be settled. If we could put Satindra away for a spell, the thing would be finished, but I do not see how this is to be done in any convincing manner....On the other hand, if we can put this right without any definite steps against him, we shall deprive him of the halo which, I suspect, he covets."⁶⁸

The fuse blew in March 1927 on the occasion of Saraswati Puja. The District Magistrate had permitted a procession with music at Perozpur, upon which several local Muslim leaders, including Hemayetuddin Ahmed, called for

hartal on the day of the puja. Following the hartal, it was alleged, local leaders and particularly Maulvi Shahduddin, "an outside agitator", "induced large mobs of Muhammadans armed with lathis to assemble and prevent by force Hindu processions".⁶⁹ There was a riot at Ponabalia and Kulkati, and to restore order the police fired, killing 15 people, all Muslims.

Ensued a furore, with Abdur Rahim, Fazlul Huq and Abul Quasem demanding an inquiry into the massacre, and a meeting in Albert Hall, Calcutta, attended by every important Muslim leader, called for the dismissal of the Ghuznavi-Chakravarti ministry.⁷⁰ Muslim anger was now directed against the Government, and against the District Magistrate in particular: Fazlul Huq announced in Barisal, "We have nothing more to fear - to save Islam we will walk over not one but a hundred Blandys and face a hundred thousand bullets."⁷¹ The Soltan of Maniruzzaman Islamabadi wrote: "...it is easily proved how small is the value of Muslim life in the eyes of the ma-bap government of the country....This karbala enacted at Ponabalia by the British Government to uphold the improper obstinacy of the Hindu community is perhaps without a parallel on earth except Jallianwalla Bagh in the Punjab....Moslems! Let your eyes be opened by the butchery at Ponabalia - may you realise how little is the value of your life in the eyes of that government, regarding which as your ma-bap you offered up your all and forgot yourselves."⁷² Another article entitled "Blood for Blood" declaimed: "Blood for blood is the rule of justice and the provision of nature....Hence we ask the Governor of Bengal and the Governor-General of India to-day, what is the exchange for the blood of the inoffensive and innocent sons of Barisal? Will punishment be meted out to the murderer Blandy and his associates? Indeed, I do not believe that on behalf of the British Government in India, adequate punishment will be provided for these murderers. Hence we ask Bengal Moslems, will you wait, depending on the award of the British Government? Have you no duties to-day regarding the provision of punishment for Mr Blandy, the Barisal representative of the British Government?"⁷³

In the administrative inquiry which followed, "no Muhammadan came forward to give evidence except one schoolmaster who is reported to have been

threatened with social penalty for doing so. It is said that Calcutta Muhammadan leaders advised to this effect."⁷⁴ But along with the Government the Hindu community also stood condemned before Muslim opinion: among those who had given information to the police against Shahduddin were "mainly Hindu landlords and talukdars".⁷⁵

The Hindu-Muslim question had now come to dominate the political scene in Bengal, and 1927 was a particularly tense year. There were near riots in Noakhali and Bogra,⁷⁶ an incident of open cow-killing in Kustia (Nadia),⁷⁷ and from Mymensingh, the District Magistrate, reporting on the communal tension there, made these observations :

"...what we are witnessing is the beginning of the break-up of the social and economic supremacy of the Hindu higher castes. The Muhammadans realise that where mere numbers count they must necessarily be a power,...a particular grievance of which one often hears is the refusal of most Hindu landlords and their amla to allow even well-to-do Muhammadan tenants the courtesy of a seat. There is the economic rivalry of Hindu landlords and Muhammadan talukdars or jotedars in this district which is reflected in the keen interest taken by the Muhammadan electors in the fate of the Bengal Tenancy Act Amendment Bill. The growth of Islamic studies has naturally disposed many Muhammadans possessing influence with the proletariat to religious enthusiasm and strict orthodoxy. A sort of religious revival is taking place and Muhammadan Marriage Registrars and Kazis are active in furthering their cause....The wandering maulvi or maulvis from other parts invited to address strange congregations is undoubtedly a person whose influence is not on the side of concord between the communities."⁷⁸

Indeed, in 1927 the Government was sufficiently worried to think of amending the existing law to "deal with itinerant mollas and outside agitators", but finally decided that "it will be difficult to avoid the charge of interfering with religion, and so perhaps the remedy will be worse than the disease."⁷⁹

In 1928, therefore, the sphere of organised provincial politics in Bengal was hardly remarkable for the cordiality of relations between Hindu and Muslim leaders. When the new Tenancy Bill came up for discussion before the Council in August, it was reported that the Swarajya Party had decided to support it since it provided for certain changes in the Act which "the masses had been expecting for a long time". Although there were several landlords in the party, it was said that the Swarajya legislators would take a "reasonable view" of the matter and support the "popular demands" regarding transferability, protection of underraiyats from ejection, etc. Amrita Bazar Patrika expressed this fond sentiment of compromise in the following words: "Despite occasional frictions between the two parties, the zamindars and raiyats have managed to live, on the whole, in mutual sympathy, peace and a spirit of helpfulness.... There is absolutely no reason why all disputes between the zemindars and raiyats should not be settled in a way satisfactory to both sides. Nor can we understand why there should be any difficulty in adjusting the new demands of the one to the oldenjoyed privileges of the other without rousing worst passions on the part of both."⁸⁰ Curiously enough, Sir Provash Chandra Mitter, introducing the Bill in the Council, was saying the same thing when he remarked, "...if this House can settle the conflicting class interests with justice and fairness to all, it will be laying deep the foundation of true nationalism in this Province."⁸¹

The Statesman proved to be more perspicacious when it predicted: "The majority of the Hindu members and many in the Muslim block are either zemindars or permanent tenure holders and as a matter of course they will support all provisions which are favourable to the landlords. The real representatives of those who cultivate the lands are very few in the Council and it will be difficult for them to gain much."⁸²

The tone of the debate and the alignments among different parties and interests were set as soon as the very first amendments relating to the status of sharecroppers came up for discussion. When Tamizuddin Khan moved

that the entire clause laying down the conditions under which a bargadar could be recognised as a tenant be dropped, on the ground that this would rob him of whatever rights he may have acquired under the existing law or by custom. Akhil Chandra Dutt reacted sharply and declared that bargadari was "the most equitable arrangement that one can conceive of between capital and labour... May I ask if there is any other industry where you can find a fairer and a juster share given to the labour than what is given, viz., half to the capital and half to the labour....If you want a Bolshevick legislation, have it by all means. Let us improve the position of the actual tiller of the soil, even by sacrificing all other people. But if you want to have any regard for private property, you cannot rob people of their property, and certainly you cannot give the right of tenancy to a bargadar who has hitherto been looked upon as a mere labourer."⁸³ J.L. Banerjee said, "Let us accept the plain fact that at present we cannot recognise the bargadar as a tenant. And if we cannot do so openly, what is the use of trying to do so by a camouflage - by leaving things uncertain and indefinite?...We are not legislating in vacuo: we are legislating upon a background of past history and custom: and we cannot leave public opinion out of account. Under the existing state of things the bargadars and adhiars are not recognised as tenants, and the legislature and the Government cannot give them the rights of tenants without flouting public opinion....Is only the cultivator of the soil the man who tills the soil with his own hands? Has the bhadralok agriculturist who invests money in land no place in the economy of things? And should not his rights be recognised as much as the right of the man who actually tills the soil?"⁸⁴ This particular motion was withdrawn.

But another motion by Tamizuddin Khan, seeking to recognise a bargadar as tenant if he was recorded as such in a record-of-rights, was defeated heavily, the Swarajist bloc voting with the government. The official and European bloc naturally stuck to the original draft of the Bill, but in spite of this, Amarendra Nath Ghose's motion to include within the definition of a raiyat "one who cultivates by bargadar" (thus precluding any possibility of recognising a bargadar as tenant) lost by only 2 votes. And Jogindra Chandra Chakravarti's motion, strictly delineating the grounds on which a

bargadar would be recognised as tenant to those cases where "he is expressly admitted to be a tenant by the owner of such land in any document executed by him or in his favour and accepted by him", was carried.

The position of the Swarajya party on this question was, therefore, decidedly against the bargadar. When Fazlul Huq moved that the next clause, stating that a raiyat holding land at fixed rent may be ejected by his landlord if "he has used the land comprised in his holding in a manner which renders it unfit for the purposes of tenancy," be dropped, Sir Abdur Rahim, speaking in his support, commented : "The majority of this council in combination with the Swarajists, the most powerful party in the House, have already finished with the bargadars, the cultivators of land....This powerful combination which it is not possible for those who have taken up the cause of the raiyats to resist successfully, have taken away the rights of the raiyats. The proposed measure is absolutely iniquitous."⁸⁵ This, however, was a good opportunity for the Swarajists to take up the popular cause. Defending his party, J.M. Sen Gupta said that although it had been suggested that the Congress party was not standing justly for the rights of the poor men and that it had gone over to the side of the zamindars, actually the party had taken up an attitude which was in consonance with its election manifesto. That meant that as far as relations between landlords and tenants were concerned, the Congress members would see that neither one nor the other was in the slightest way injured. "They would see that during their fight for freedom, and until this fight for freedom was over, the interests of the tenants and the interests of the zamindars should be so adjusted - so reasonably adjusted - as not to create a civil war in the country before freedom was gained." To prove that the Congress was not anti-tenant, they had decided to support the motion to delete the clause regarding ejection of mokrari raiyats.⁸⁶ Fazlul Huq's amendment was carried without a division.

Nevertheless, on virtually every motion involving relations between landlords and tenants, the pattern of voting was consistent. "The Hindu members, Swarajists and non-Swarajists, combined to safeguard the reasonable interests of the landlords while the Moslem members with solitary exceptions

here and there showed a keen desire to further the interests of the ryots." The result was that the original bill was gradually pushed through virtually unamended. "The bill has been drafted in such a way," wrote The Statesman in obvious admiration, "that not a single clause is equally acceptable to both the parties. Any clause that is moved by the Government is objected to either by the champions of the ryots or by the champions of the landlords and a majority on the side of the Government is assured with the help of the other party.... This speaks volumes for the cleverness with which the bill has been drafted."⁸⁷

Amendments directed against the landlord were defeated by wide margins. Asimuddin Ahmad's motion proposing to do away with the right of preemption and the landlord's fee on transfer of occupancy holdings was defeated 22-75. Tamizuddin Khan's motion that there should be no right of preemption lost 25-76. Kasiruddin Ahmad's motion that the compensation amount when a landlord chose to exercise his right of preemption should be 25% instead of 10% was defeated 16-69. The landlord's transfer fee was finally fixed at 20%, after various figures from 0 to 30% were proposed. The final figure was suggested by Ramesh Chandra Bagchi on behalf of the Congress, who said that his party would have preferred a lower figure but it would not have been acceptable to the House as presently constituted. Let the tenants accept this figure for the present; later when the House is "more properly constituted", it could be lowered.⁸⁸ The passing of the provisions on the landlord's rights on transfer of occupancy holdings brought forth a bitter outburst from the maverick Congressman Jitendra Lal Banerjee who said that although the land did not belong to the zamindar, it was still useless to make protests on behalf of the tenants. The combination of the Swarajists, zemindars and government members was far too strong. "But I shall not condemn the Swarajists by words. Their deeds will condemn them. They cannot undo what they have done."⁸⁹ Dr. B.C. Roy, defending the Congress, said that as a party it did not feel that it was time for drastic measures in favour of tenants; there should first be some adjustment outside the Council between zamindars and tenants.⁹⁰

Almost every amendment moved by Moslem members was defeated. The Bill had proposed that the landlord could enhance the rent if the productive power of the land had increased by virtue of projects either wholly or partly financed by the landlord. Azizul Haque objected, saying that this would be disastrous for tenants, and moved that the earlier position, permitting enhancement only on projects wholly financed by the landlord, be restored. The motion was defeated. Tamizuddin Khan moved that the existing right of cultivators to commute produce rent into money rent should be retained, since this conferred a right on bargadars. Akhil Chandra Datta said that the interests of the middle class population of Bengal were involved here, and if bargadars could commute the form of rent at will, the middle classes would suffer. This motion was also defeated 23-62.

One amendment in favour of the underraiyat was passed rather unexpectedly. The Bill had proposed that an underraiyat could not be evicted if he had been in possession of a holding for a continuous period of twenty years and if he had erected a homestead on his land. Nausher Ali moved that the conditions be set at twelve years or a homestead. No one having called for a division at the proper time, the motion was carried despite government and Swarajist opposition.⁹¹

Another clause in the Bill had proposed that an underraiyat could be evicted if the landlord required the holding for building a homestead, or for cultivation by himself or by members of his family or by "hired servants". An explanatory clause said that "hired servants" would not include bargadars who supplied their own cattle and plough. Satyendranath Roychaudhury moved that this explanatory clause be deleted. Jitendra Lal Banerjee supported him, saying that underraiyats had already been given some protection and the Government should not cut the raiyat at the same time. Several Muslim members opposed the motion on the ground that it would lead to large-scale replacement of underraiyats by sharecroppers. The motion was carried 51-34 because official members remained neutral.

Two other amendments in favour of underraiyats, moved by Muslim members, were defeated. The Bill proposed that the rent of an underraiyat could be enhanced by contract provided it did not exceed the previous rent by 4 annas per rupee. Fazlul Huq moved that this be reduced to 2 annas per rupee, thus making the maximum rate of enhancement the same as in the case of occupancy raiyats. The move was defeated 27-39. Ekramul Huq moved that an underraiyat could be ejected only if he used the land in such a way that it "substantially reduces the value of the holding", and not just if he "renders it unfit for tenancy" as the Bill stated. This motion was lost 17-59. On the other hand, two motions directed against the underraiyat were defeated more narrowly, with the Swarajya bloc voting against the underraiyat. J.L. Banerjee moved that the underraiyat's holding should not be transferred at all, instead of "with the consent of the landlord" as in the Bill. This move was defeated 32-52. Akhil Chandra Datta's motion that "no entry in a record of rights finally published shall raise a presumption of correctness as to the customary occupancy right of an underraiyat" lost 34-43.

An interesting feature of the voting on amendments affecting relations between raiyats and underraiyats was that the Muslim bloc upheld the cause of the underraiyat found an unexpected ally in certain big zamindars such as the Maharaja of Mymensingh, the Maharaja of Cossimbazar, Bijoy Prasad Singh Roy and the Raja of Nashipur. This reflected the old antagonism between the zamindar and the substantial raiyat. On questions involving relations between landlords and tenants, the Swarajya members had generally looked after the interests of the rent-receiver, defending as they were the rights of proprietors and intermediate tenure-holders who constituted a large part of their supporters. When it came to the underraiyat, however, they were concerned with the non-cultivating (and absentee) raiyat who had sublet his holdings and was in all probability in a professional job in a district town or the metropolis.⁹² However, this defence of the absentee "bhadralok" raiyat vis-a-vis his underraiyat necessarily went in favour of the jotdar as well, since legally most jotdars held land as occupancy raiyat. The rising power in the village of the substantial raiyat peasantry was

something about which zamindars at this time had become seriously concerned, as evidenced, for instance, in the statements of the British Indian Association or the Landholders' Association cited earlier. Hence, their combination with the supporters of the rights of underraiyats against those of the jotdar.

VI

The pattern of voting on the various amendments revealed three distinct blocs - one, a Muhammadan bloc including one or two isolated Hindu members; two, the Swarajya bloc, comprising most of the members elected from the non-Muhammadan seats allied with a few landholders, nominated members and some elected from various organisations; and three, the official and European bloc. In fact, the voting by blocs was so consistent that it is not difficult to identify the members in each bloc. (Table 1)

The divisions between the members of the House according to the kinds of amendments moved are shown in Table 2. It is clear from the voting patterns that the Muhammadan bloc identified above generally voted in favour of the bargadar and underraiyat, and for the tenant against the landlord. The Swarajya bloc, on the other hand, generally voted against the bargadar and underraiyat, and in favour of the landlord against the tenant. The official and European bloc generally opposed any amendment to the original draft of the Bill.

TABLE 1. Voting blocs on the Tenancy Bill, 1928

I. The Muhammadan bloc and allies (21 members) :

Syed Mahamud Afzal (Bakarganj)

Asimuddin Ahamad (Tippera)

Kasiruddin Ahamad (Rangpur)

Emaduddin Ahmed (Rajshahi)

Partial Support (8 members):

Khwaja Nazimuddin (Bakarganj)

Abdur Rahim (Calcutta)

A.F.M. Abdur Rahman (24 Parganas)

Table 1 (continued)

Syed Nausher Ali (Jessore)	Muhammad Solaiman (24 Parganas)
Syed Mohammad Atiqullah (Mymensingh)	Jitendralal Banerjee (Birbhum)
Nurul Huq Chaudhuri (Noakhali)	K.C. Ray Chaudhuri (Nominated Non-official)
Azizul Haque (Nadia)	
Syed Maqbul Husain (Chittagong)	Rebati Mohan Sarkar (Nominated Non-official)
Ekramul Huq (Murshidabad)	
A.K. Fazlul Huq (Dacca)	Hafizur Rahman Chaudhuri (Nominated Non-official)
Muhammad Ismail (Mymensingh)	
Abdul Karim (Burdwan)	
Abul Kasem (Burdwan)	
M. Ashraf Ali Khan Chaudhuri (Rajshahi)	
Muazzam Ali Khan (Pabna)	
Tamizuddin Khan (Faridpur)	
Azizur Rahman (Mymensingh)	
Shamsur Rahman (Khulna)	
Syed Abdur Rauf (Jessore)	
Nagendra Narayan Ray (Rangpur)	

II. The Swarajya bloc and allies (42 members):

Ramesh Chandra Bagchi (Malda)	<u>Partial Support</u> (7 members):
Pramathanath Banerjee (Calcutta)	Sashi Kanta Acharya Chaudhuri (Dacca University)
Promotho Nath Banerjee (Midnapore)	
A.C. Banerjee (Calcutta)	Badridas Goenka (Bengal Marwatta Association)
Sasi Sekhar Basu (24 Parganas)	
P.C. Basu (Burdwan)	Bijoy Prasad Singh Roy (Nominated Non-official)
Sarat C. Basu (Burdwan)	
Surendra Nath Biswas (Faridpur)	Bhupendra Narayan Sinha (Burdwan Landholders)

Table 1 (continued)

Bejoy Krishna Bose (Calcutta)	<u>Partial Support</u> - continued
Subhas Chandra Bose (Calcutta)	S.C. Bose (Calcutta University)
Jogindra Chandra Chakravarti (Dinajpur)	Abdus Sattar (Chittagong)
Jatindra Nath Chakrabartty (Rangpur)	Satyendra Chandra Ghosh Manlik (Noakhali)
Bijay Kumar Chatterjee (Bankura)	
Harendranath Chaudhuri (24 Parganas)	
J.M. Das Gupta (Calcutta)	
Akhil Chandra Datta (Tippera)	
Amulya Chandra Datta (Hooghly)	
Amarendra Nath Ghose (Mymensingh)	
Jogesh Chandra Gupta (Dacca)	
Prabhu Dayal Himatsingka (Calcutta)	
Debendra Lal Khan (Midnapore)	
Mahendra Nath Maiti (Midnapore)	
Jogendra Nath Moitra (Bogra-Pabna)	
Tarakanath Mukherjee (Hooghly)	
Sris Chandra Nandy (Murshidabad)	
Hem Chandra Naskar (24 Parganas)	
Ranjit Pal Chaudhuri (Nadia)	
Surendra Nath Ray (24 Parganas)	
Kumud Sankar Ray (Faridpur)	
Radha Gobinda Ray (Bankura)	
Mamatha Nath Roy (Howrah)	
Bidhan Chandra Roy (24 Parganas)	
D.N. Roy (Jessore)	
Kiran Sankar Roy (Dacca)	
Satyendra Nath Roy Choudhuri (Bakarganj)	
Sachindra Narayan Sanyal (Rajshahi)	
Naliniranjan Sarkar (Mymensingh)	
Nagendra Nath Sen (Khulna)	
J.M. Sen Gupta (Chittagong)	
P.N. Guha (Nominated Non-official)	

Table 1 (continued)

- Sarada Kripe Lala (Chittagong Landholders)
- Ananda Mohan Poddar (Bengal Mahajan Sabha)
- Satish Chandra Sen (Bengal National Chamber
of Commerce)

III. Official and European bloc with allies (37 members);

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| E.G. Abbott (Indian Jute Manufacturers' Association) | <u>Partial Support</u> (2 members) |
| J.M. Blair (Nominated Official) | Altaf Ali (Bogra) |
| B.E.J. Burge (Nominated Official) | Khorshed Alam Choudhury
(Bakarganj) |
| A. Cassells (Nominated Official) | |
| Nawab Ali Chaudhuri (Exec. Council) | |
| D.J. Cohen (Nominated Non-official) | |
| A.J. Dash (Nominated Official) | |
| T.W. Dowding (Indian Mining Association) | |
| J. Campbell Forrester (Presidency-Burdwan) | |
| J.H. Fyfe (Bengal Chamber of Commerce) | |
| M.C. Ghose (Nominated Official) | |
| A.D. Gordon (Indian Tea Association) | |
| G.P. Hogg (Nominated Official) | |
| W.S. Hopkyns (Nominated Official) | |
| F.E. James (Presidency-Burdwan) | |
| N.R. Luke (IJMA) | |
| L.T. Maguire (Anglo-Indian) | |
| A. Marr (Exec. Council) | |
| O.S. Martin (BCC) | |
| E.T. McCluskie (Anglo-Indian) | |
| C.C. Miller (BCC) | |
| Provash Chandra Mitter (Exec. Council) | |
| Muhammad Abdul Mumin (Nominated Official) | |
| W.H. Nelson (Nominated Official) | |
| Percy Parrott (BCC) | |
| W.D. Prentice (Exec. Council) | |

Table 1 (continued)

R.N. Reid (Nominated Official)
 F.A. Sachse (Nominated Official)
 H.E. Stapleton (Nominated Official)
 H.W. Thomas (Calcutta Trades Association)
 W.C. Wordsworth (Presidency-Burdwan)
 J.G. Drummond (Nominated Non-official)
 R.N. Gilchrist (Nominated Non-official)
 Pranendra Narayan Chaudhuri (Expert Nominated)
 Mahendra Nath Gupta (Expert Nominated)
 Musharraff Hosain (Minister)
 Abdel Karim Ghuznavi (Mymensingh)

TABLE 2. Voting Pattern on Tenancy Bill, 1928

	1	2	3	4	5
	Elected Muhammadan	Elected Non-Muham- madan	Landhold- ers, Organisa- tions and Nominated Non-offi- cials Hindus	Nominated Non-offi- cials Muhamma- dan	Official, European and Anglo- Indian
	Total 39	46	18	3	38
<u>Motions</u>	<u>No.</u>				
Pro-bargadar	1	21	1	2	16
	2	21	0	2	0
	3	23	0	4	24

Table 2 (continued)

	1	2	3	4	5	
	Elected Muhammadan	Elected Non-Muham- madan	Landhold- ers, Organisa- tions and Nominated Non-offi- cials Hindus	Nominated Non-offi- cials Muhamma- dan	Official, European and Anglo- Indian	

	Total 39	46	18	3	38	
<u>Motions</u>	<u>No.</u>					
Anti-barga- dar	1	2	37	6	1	0
	2	2	33	8	2	22
	3	3	40	7	1	0
Pro-landlord	4	4	34	10	2	21
	5	3	37	12	2	28
	6	1	33	4	0	0
	7	0	33	7	0	0
	8	5	40	8	2	1
	13	5	36	8	2	22
	14	5	39	13	3	16
15	5	32	9	2	20	
16	4	35	11	1	27	
Anti-land- lord	4	15	1	0	1	0
	5	15	0	1	1	0
	6	20	1	4	2	18
	7	25	4	1	3	26
	8	18	1	4	1	29
	13	17	2	1	1	0
	14	16	2	2	0	4
	15	15	1	0	0	0
16	16	1	0	0	0	

Table 2 (continued)

		1	2	3	4	5
		Elected Muhammadan	Elected Non-Muham- maddan	Landhold- ers, Organisa- tions and Nominated Non-offi- cials Hindus	Nominated Non-offi- cials Muhamma- dan	Official, European and Anglo- Indian
Total		39	46	18	3	38
<u>Motions</u>	<u>No.</u>					
Pro-under- raiyat	9	18	0	3	1	5
	10	14	1	1	0	0
	11	18	5	10	1	18
	12	17	2	8	0	16
Anti-under- raiyat	9	3	31	5	0	0
	10	3	27	5	1	21
	11	0	31	0	0	0
	12	1	32	0	1	0

[Source : Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings, Vol.30, No.2,
13th Session, 1928/

Notes : 1. The motions considered for this table are listed in Appendix 1.

2. The official bloc generally voted against any amendment to the original Bill. The only exception was Motion 9 on which it remained neutral. However, on that motion, 5 European members, viz., J. Campbell Forrester, F.E. James, W.C. Wordsworth, E.G. Abbot and J.H. Fyfe, voted in favour of the underraiyat.

Table 2 (continued)

On Motion 8, E.T. McCluskie (Anglo-Indian) voted against the official bloc for some unknown reason. On Motion 14, 4 non-official members - Fyfe, James, Thomas and Wordsworth - went against the official whip.

3. Several nominated non-officials, both Hindu and Muslim, voted consistently with the official bloc. The pro-bargadar and anti-landlord votes in Columns 3 and 4 must, therefore, be interpreted with reference to the official vote on those motions. However, the two pro-bargadar votes on Motion 2 came from K.C. Ray Chaudhuri and Rebati Mohan Sarkar; the anti-landlord vote on Motion 13 and the pro-underraiyat vote on Motion 10 also came from Rebati Mohan Sarkar. The heavy pro-underraiyat voting in Column 3 on Motions 11 and 12 was helped by the vote of the big landholders.
4. In Column 2, the single pro-bargadar vote was that of Jitendra Lal Banerjee. The anti-landlord votes included Nagendra Narayan Ray (in every case), J.L. Banerjee (on Motions 13 and 14), Surendra Nath Ray, Prasanna Deb Raikat and Satyen Ghosh Maulik (on Motion 7). The last-named, however, held the position that **the landlord's** fee should not be forfeited at all; hence his vote against Motion 7. The pro-underraiyat votes on Motion 11 included, besides Nagendra Narayan Ray, big zamindars or their spokesmen like Sris Chandra Nandy, Satyen Ghosh Maulik and Sachindra Narayan Sanyal. .

Of the 21 members in the Muhammadan bloc, 17 were from the east and north Bengal districts. Their consistency in supporting the raiyat against the landlord is easily explained, for in eastern Bengal this meant supporting a relatively undifferentiated peasantry, predominantly Muslim, against the Hindu zamindar. And their support for the cause of sharecroppers and undertenants is also not difficult to explain, for given the agrarian structure in much of eastern Bengal such peasants with inferior tenancy rights, constituting in any case a very small part of the agricultural population, were mainly employed by zamindars and tenureholders on their khas lands. The principal target of attack of the Muslim legislators was always the zamindar, and their support or opposition to various motions indicate an attempt to rally the entire peasantry against the zamindar. Indeed, these compulsions of electoral politics were so clear that even such illustrious members of the Anglo-Muslim social set of Calcutta as Sir Abdur Rahim and Khwaja Nazimuddin spoke and voted on behalf of Bengal's oppressed tenantry.

The Swarajya bloc and its supporters, on the other hand, consisted of (a) highly successful Calcutta-based professionals and businessmen, such as Dr. Pramathanath Banerjee, Sarat Chandra Basu, Dr. J.M. Das Gupta, P. D. Himatsingka, Jogesh Chandra Gupta, Dr. Kumud Sankar Ray, Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, Kiran Sankar Roy, Naliniranjan Sarkar, J.M. Sen Gupta, Ananda Mohan Poddar and Satish Chandra Sen, (b) big landlords, such as Harendranath Chaudhuri, Debendra Lal Khan, Taraknath Mulcherjee, Sris Chandra Nandy, Hem Chandra Naskar, Ranjit Pal Choudhuri, Surendra Nath Ray and Saroda Kripa Lala, and (c) district organisation leaders, usually landlords or professionals and often with terrorist connections, resident mainly in east Bengal district towns - men like Jogendra Chandra Chakravarti, Akhil Chandra Datta, Amarendra Nath Ghose, Jogendra Nath Moitra, Satyen Roy Choudhuri, Sachindra Narayan Sanyal, Nagendranath Sen. Besides, the Swarajya bloc often received the support of landlords and businessmen such as Sashikanta Acharya Chaudhuri of Mymensingh, Bijoy Prasad Singh Roy of Chakdighi, Bhupendra Narayan Sinha of

Nashipur, Satyendra Chandra Ghosh Maulik of the British Indian Association, and Badridas Goenka of the Bengal Marwari Association. The overwhelming majority of members in the Swarajya bloc were, therefore, first and foremost defenders of what they termed "the middle classes of Bengal", i.e., the rentier classes. Consequently, as far as undertenants and sharecroppers were concerned, they were unhesitatingly in favour of the rights of landlords, whatever their position in the hierarchy of proprietorship.

VII

One aspect of the changing political scene in Bengal can be highlighted by focusing upon the consequences of the passing of the Act in one subdivision of southwestern Bengal, viz. Contai in Midnapore. Midnapore had from the time of the non-cooperation and anti-Union Board movements of the early 1920s experienced a gradually broadening mass movement under the aegis of the local Congress organisations. These movements were at this stage being led by a rising group of the richer peasantry, for whom the objective was to establish a position of leadership and social command over the village. They were agitated by the increasing tax burden on villagers. They were vocal in their grievances against zamindars who would try to enhance rents without performing any of their duties regarding improvement of the conditions of cultivation or of village life in general. Areas such as Contai and Tamluk in Midnapore had sent to the Council local leaders who had established their political careers in course of their participation in these local mass movements. Indeed, Promotho Nath Banerjee from Contai and Mahendra Nath Maiti from Tamluk had been elected to the Council by defeating influential local zamindars who had enjoyed the support of the provincial Congress organisation.

Yet, on the occasion of the Tenancy Act amendment, Promotho Nath Banerjee voted with the Swarajya bloc on every motion. When he came back to Contai after the Council session, he faced a barrage of questions on his actions in the legislature. The episode is very revealing in terms of the

light it throws both on the organisational gap between the provincial and subdivisional levels of the Congress leadership, and on the kinds of political forces which were by now becoming dominant in the Bengal villages.

The two central points in the debate in Contai regarding the new Tenancy Act concerned the 20% landlord's fee on transfer of holdings and the landlord's right of preemption. Neither of these rights was customary in the Khasmahal areas of Contai, areas outside the jurisdiction of the Permanent Settlement where the government had entered into direct settlements with raiyats, and even in those areas where there were revenue-collecting zamindars, the customary charge on transfers was between 2% and 10%.⁹³ It was only natural, therefore, that all strata of the raiyat peasantry, but more particularly the richer section which was the one most involved in land transactions, would be agitated by these restrictions on their freedom to buy and sell land.

In September, Promotho Nath Banerjee wrote three articles in Nihar, a Contai weekly, attempting to defend his actions in the Council.⁹⁴ His basic plea was that the Swarajya Party in the Council being dominated by zamindars ^{and} their representatives, it was impossible to do more than what had been achieved by way of protecting the interests of prajas. Several landlords had demanded upto 36% as transfer fee, claiming that in many east Bengal districts the prevailing rate was as high as 50% or 60%. After much debate within the Party (with Promotho Nath, on his own evidence, trying his utmost for a reduction of the rate), J.M. Sen Gupta had intervened and forced the acceptance of a 20% fee. The right of preemption given to the landlord was a corollary of the former right, since most sale deeds recorded a figure much lower than the amount actually paid and if the landlord did not have the right to buy such land by offering 10% above the recorded sale value, he would be done out of his rightful claim to a proper transfer fee. Another argument which Promotho Nath said had influenced a number of legislators was that both Marwaris and Englishmen were planning to buy up large tracts of agricultural land and unless "the zamindars and the middle class of Bengal" had such a legal right to prevent sales to undesirable persons, "all Bengalis

would eventually be reduced to the status of day labourers". Having given these explanations for what had happened in the Council, Promotho Nath admitted that the ordinary tenant would suffer as a result of some of these provisions of the new Act. But the responsibility for this he put squarely on the tenants themselves. "Had the tenants of Bengal elected people from their own class, and not from the party of zamindars, then a measure inimical to their interests would not have been passed. Tenants would do well to learn a lesson from this and be careful in future."

Promotho Nath's arguments were rebutted in the columns of Nihar by Surendranath Das of Thakurchak (Kalageshia). Promotho Nath, he said, had not been a nominee of the BPCC when he stood for election, and he was under no obligation to the Swarajya Party to obey its whip. Jitendra Lal Banerjee, although a member of the Swarajya Party, had nonetheless opposed the Bill and there was no reason why Promotho Nath could not have done the same. In the meantime, land prices were going down as a result of the burden imposed upon the tenant by the new Act, and Birendranath Sasmal, "though betrayed by his fellow workers and disgusted with the greed of the leaders", must now direct a movement in the interest of tenants.⁹⁵

From June 1929, Birendranath Sasmal, revered leader of the anti-Union Board and non-cooperation movements in Contai and Tamluk and a prominent lieutenant of C.R. Das, who had earlier resigned from active Congress politics after his differences with the BPCC leadership in Calcutta, advertised for several weeks in Nihar⁹⁶ his wish to hold meetings at different places in Contai in order to inform people about the implications of the Act. He asked those who were interested in having him speak on this issue to contact him directly; he would bear his own expenses for travel. This unusual method of organising meetings itself suggested that Birendranath did not have the support of the organisation on this matter. A letter from "An Inhabitant of Patashpur" to Nihar⁹⁷ put the question quite bluntly: "The ordinary tenants of Midnapore have been greatly harmed by the new Tenancy Act Yet we hear nothing from those who on the slightest pretext hold meetings to proclaim loudly their patriotism and love for the people. For several weeks now

Birendranath has issued appeals in Nihar for people to organise meetings for discussing the Tenancy Act. Time was when only the slightest hint from him would send scores of people rushing out to distribute leaflets, sound the drums and organise meetings. Today repeated appeals from him will not rouse them from their slumber. Is this proof of their love for the people?"

In October, Birendranath held a meeting in Contai where he criticised the Swarajya Party for having sided with the government in passing the Act. He objected to the Act mainly on two grounds : the 20% transfer fee and the right of preemption. The Swarajya Party, he said, should have opposed the Bill. Promotho Nath attempted to defend the Party by claiming that whereas the government bill had originally proposed a fee of 25%, it was the pressure exerted by the Congress which had brought it down to 20%.⁹⁸

Promotho Nath then turned the argument around to the question of the rights of the sharecropper; all owner-peasants, he argued, had reason to be thankful to the Swarajya Party. In his Nihar article, he gave this a communal colouring, emphasising that the Muslim members had proposed to give occupancy rights to bargadars "in their communal interest". It was to counter this communal move that the Hindu members, "although a few of them were sympathetic towards the bargadars", had opposed the amendment.⁹⁹ At the Contai meeting in October 1929, Promotho Nath used this example to prove that blind noncooperation was not necessarily a good thing: "Had the Swarajya Party, as Birendrababu would want it, opposed the government at every step, then bhagchasis would have got a right to land, and one shudders to think what a calamity this would have been for the people of Contai."¹⁰⁰

However, Pratap Guharay, another lieutenant of C.R. Das and disaffected Congressman, who also spoke at this meeting on behalf of Sasmal, took issue with Promotho Nath. The Swarajya Party, he said, should have confronted the government with an alternative Tenancy Bill. If the government refused to accept it, the Swarajya members should have walked out of the Council and started an agitation, even a civil disobedience movement, against the government on this issue.¹⁰¹ The reaction of Nihar's

correspondent to this suggestion, however, leaves no room for doubt as to the sort of interests which had now come to dominate organised public opinion in the subdivision. Had the Swarajya Party, wrote Nihar, walked out of the Council the government draft would have been passed in toto and along with the measure giving tenurial rights to sharecroppers. "A conflagration would then have resulted among zamindars, the middle class and labourers in Bengal. By what method Pratapbabu would have quenched that fire, I am at a loss to understand Different interests of different classes are involved in the question of the Tenancy Act. The zamindars' interests do not conform to the interests of the middle class tenants (madhyabitta), while the interests of the madhyabitta are inimical to those of the labourers. It is beyond my modest powers of comprehension to decide whether it is at all possible to have mass civil disobedience where all these mutually contradictory interests will be included."¹⁰²

VIII

* Let us now try and put this assorted material into a single explanatory scheme. Given our present understanding of Indian politics in the period of the nationalist movement, one kind of argument immediately suggests itself. This argument would run roughly as follows. At the beginning of the 1920s, largely because of the leadership provided by Gandhi, the various scattered and isolated movements against colonial rule were brought together into the fold of a single all-India organisation. Gandhi was able to forge the necessary alliances, bring into the organisation leaders at the provincial and district levels who in turn picked up leaders and working cadres at lower levels. This vertically integrated organisational structure, aggregating within itself a tremendously large range of sectional interests, ensured that with each great movement launched by the Congress support would be mobilised from the grassroots. These were the moments when the Congress made itself felt as the mass organisation of the Indian national movement. At other times however, Congress leaders at each level were engaged in furthering narrower sectional interests, using the power and patronage they derived by virtue of

being Congress leaders, mobilising sectional support for sectional demands, and thus creating the endless factional disputes in every region and at every level of the organisation.

✓ Here the argument would move into somewhat less certain ground. It would be asserted that although the goals of mobilisation, and the institutional forms of mobilisation, were modern and related to conditions brought about by the British presence in India, the basis on which Congress leaders built their support was for the most part related to structural elements which, long pre-dated colonial rule and which were in some way or other "parochial" — caste, religious community, linguistic group, locality, etc. As a result, the sectional interests which became prominent in the various factional disputes were in fact caste or religious or linguistic interests, and support was mobilised by faction leaders on this basis. Hence the divisions in the national movement.

It is possible to add greater substance to this argument by locating the sources of these divisions more firmly in the material structures of society. It is possible, for instance, to analyse the changing structure of agrarian relations during the period of British rule, to identify classes and strata which, with the general stagnation in levels of productivity, or with increased commercialisation of agricultural products, or with the spread of irrigation in certain pockets, either rose or fell in economic power and thus made new claims to social and political power or attempted to cling to earlier privileges. One could then connect these classes and strata to the more "parochial" social groupings — religion, caste, etc., show how far the groupings on the two bases — one economic and the other cultural — overlap, and thus go a long way in achieving some consistency between the empirical facts of political mobilisation on a "parochial" basis and the theory of politics as a reflection of material structures.

In the case of Bengal in particular, the argument would be fairly straightforward. C.R. Das's Congress of the early 1920s was a classic case of the broad front against colonial rule — a carefully built and meticulously

maintained series of alliances : the propertied and professional Calcutta aristocracy, the various terrorist groups, the rural bhadralok with small rentier interests, the peasant leaders conducting no-tax movements in the districts, and the new Muslim leadership brought in through the Khilafat movement. The unity of this front lasted precisely as long as the groundswell of anti-British agitation could be sustained, and it fell to pieces as soon as the Swarajya leaders immersed themselves in the more mundane business of Council politics, municipal politics, district board politics, etc., i.e. with the process of "interest articulation" (to borrow a term from the functionalists who have theorised about precisely this kind of politics) instituted by a colonial government. In such an institutional set-up, the interests articulated were inevitably of a sectional nature. Relate to this the main structural features of the agrarian economy in Bengal, and the major antagonism in provincial politics between the Swarajist and the Muslim leaders, or the lesser antagonism between the provincial Congress leadership and the peasant leaders in the districts, become so obvious as to require almost no further explanation. For the contradiction between the zamindari and intermediate tenure-holding land interests on the one hand, and the tenant or raiyati interest on the other, was being articulated more and more vociferously by the 1920s, and in eastern and northern Bengal this stratification in the agrarian structures was said to coincide very largely with the Hindu-Muslim communal division, while in western and south-western Bengal this divide corresponded roughly, if not as spectacularly, with the distinction between the predominantly upper-caste bhadralok elite and the middle-caste cultivating peasants. The course of Bengal politics in the decade of the 1920s and the politics of the Tenancy Act Amendment described above appear, therefore, to fall into a fairly neat pattern. *

The explanation would be satisfactory were it not for the evidence of the several communal riots cited above. For this evidence, if studied carefully, points to processes and structures of politics quite outside the domain of explanation covered by the present argument. And more significantly, there also exists evidence to suggest that these altogether different structures and processes interacted in important, and often quite

unanticipated, ways with the more familiar sphere of provincial politics. It thus appears necessary to go beyond the range of currently accepted explanations into a new set of historical problems.

Let us state some of these. In the first place, no matter what the evidence is on factional bickerings within the Congress alliance after C.R. Das's death, or on zamindar-praja tensions in eastern Bengal in the 1920s, or on government manipulations to aggravate Hindu-Muslim differences, it still remains a historical problem to explain the sudden outburst of communal passions in 1926. A careful reading of the evidence, both from official reports of the time as well as from the memoirs and reflections of contemporary political activists, suggests that it would be simplistic — indeed, incorrect — to treat this just as a conflict within the elite brought down to the masses through the attempt by rival leaders to mobilise support for their respective sectarian interests. On the contrary, the evidence clearly indicates that these outbursts of mass political violence — both rural and urban, albeit in different ways — had their own structure and dynamics, and in interacting with the sphere of organised provincial politics they significantly affected the strengths, actions and goals of political leaders operating in the latter arena.

To take another example from the material presented above, the debate in Midnapore over the Tenancy Act Amendment showed considerable dissensions within the ranks of a Congress organisation which in the days of non-cooperation had set one of the most glorious examples of sustained and united mass action. And these new differences were clearly related to issues of agrarian relations. It is also clear from the evidence the dominance which the representatives of the more substantial peasantry had acquired over the Congress in Contai (and for that matter in adjacent Tamluk). But the contrast between the massive solidarity of the anti-Union Board and no-tax agitations of 1919-23 and the jotdar-dominated Congress vying for control of the District and Local Boards requires explaining. It would not do simply to assert that the substantial peasantry, riding the crest of a successful anti-government mass movement, managed to capture power in the

District Congress and then proceeded to direct the organisation towards the pursuit of their narrow class interests. For there was a resurgence of united mass action during Civil Disobedience and the Salt Campaign without this requiring or causing any change in the social character of the Congress leadership in the region.

Indeed, it appears that the wellsprings of these sudden anti-state and anti-authority mass upsurges lie dormant within certain latent structures of social relationships, activated at certain specific conjunctures in the historical process but otherwise remaining quite indiscernible amongst the network of relations commonly referred to as the material structures of society. It is to locate these latent structures, and to discover the nature of the conjunctures at which they are suddenly activated, that must form the task of a new historiography of modern Indian politics. Such sudden and unanticipated mass action — both violent and otherwise — has been part of much of Indian history down to the present day, and the evidence is now overwhelming that such phenomena cannot be fully explained by conscious political activity operating within the structured confines of organised material interests. (It is tempting to note here the phenomenon of the "wave" which in the Indian elections of 1977 or 1980 totally upset the carefully computed arithmetical projections of politicians and pundits alike — computations based on such redoubtable structural criteria as caste, religion, vote banks, and so on.) Indeed, this is the problematic whose solution would give us a clue to discovering the social roots of populist politics which is so much part and parcel of the politics of colonial and post-colonial societies.

A starting-point in this analysis will be the distinction between two spheres of politics which may be called, respectively, the "organised" and the "unorganised" spheres.¹⁰³ Organised politics is that which is conducted through the institutional processes of the formal state machinery. In this particular case, organised politics is the politics of the Councils, municipalities, district boards, etc., the politics of parties, associations, Anjumans, trade unions, the politics of representations, deputations, memoranda, of congresses and conferences, of editorials and press releases.

Together they constitute a world of power relationships where power is exercised or challenged in a recurrent, ongoing and relatively permanent process of formalised institutional procedures. This is so not merely in the narrow sense of a constitutional system, for challenge to established authority by extra-constitutional means may also have a formal institutional character in the shape of a formal revolutionary authority, formal procedures of decision-making and execution and at least the concept of an alternative form of political process and state organisation.

The world of unorganised politics, in normal times, lies outside the formal institutional arena of organised power relations. The crucial element here is the existence, whether explicit or latent, in the social beliefs of the people of the idea of a community — a social collectivity in which the whole is larger than the sum of the individuals constituting it. In its origins, such a community always grows on appropriate material foundations, but it may continue to exist in the consciousness of a people long after those material bases have been superseded. Here, as an element in social consciousness, the sense of a community may be sustained by a host of activities connected with various economic, religious or cultural institutions. But as a political entity, it normally lacks a tangible institutional form, until at certain conjunctures it is suddenly activated into what appears as spontaneous and, in contrast to the structured institutionalised process of organised politics, unorganised collective political action. At such moments, the community is very much an expression of power relationships, both in the sense that collective action is directed towards, and is often a reaction to, the structure of organised power relationships, and because within the community individual action is subordinated to a structure (even if entirely imaginary) of collective communal authority. *

Let us look once again at our evidence of the communal riots in Bengal in 1926-27. The connections with the sphere of organised politics are direct and immediate in the case of the Calcutta riots. They also appear somewhat atypical in the context of the politics of Bengal proper, for the riots were in the main confined to migrants — Hindus and Muslims — from

northern India. Many of the underlying ideological structures here - the beliefs, sentiments, the stereotypes, the rumours - were directly affected by the prevailing political climate in northern India. Yet, no matter how remote those structures from the concerns of Bengal politics, such incidents in the metropolis were, by the sheer fact of physical proximity, immediately and inevitably drawn into the vortex of organised provincial politics. Our evidence shows the direct involvement of prominent politicians, both in the precipitation of the riots and in the efforts at peace-keeping. Indeed, it is difficult to define a sphere of unorganised political life for the city of Calcutta, for by the 1920s there was little that was entirely outside the purview of organised politics. Research at another level of analysis would probably show the continued importance of institutions such as the mosque, the bazar, the bustee-owner, the employer-moneylender-sardar, the athletic clubs, the puja committees, etc. in sustaining the sense of community among different sections of the city's inhabitants,¹⁰⁴ but at least from the period of noncooperation and Khilafat mass politics, all of these had developed regular and permanent linkages with the world of organised politics.

In the case of Dacca too, what emerges from the evidence is organisation rather than spontaneity. The opposition to the playing of music was organised, so was the hartal by carters, musicians, carriage-drivers. Equally organised was the boycott of carriages which led to the riots. Indeed, the Dacca riots in many ways appear to be a direct result of conflict within the world of organised politics in the city -- the conflict between the aristocracy and the politicians for leadership among the Muslims and the conflict between the moderates and the "radicals" within the Hindu leadership. On each side the radicals raised the call of religion to mobilise popular support against the moderates, the organising points being the mohalla sardars, the shops, the students' hostels - social or economic institutions but within direct reach of those operating in the arena of organised politics.

The Patnakhali and Pabna riots, on the other hand, truly point to

the existence of an entirely different world of politics. They also show some of the linkages between the two worlds. There were in Barisal, for instance, respectable and established leaders like Hemayetuddin, Chairman of the District Board, loyal to government and a typical "representative of the Muhammadan community" walking the corridors of organised politics. On the other hand, there was Shahuddin, the "outside agitator", the "itinerant and self-styled maulavi" preaching a more pristine faith and demanding purer religious practices. It is the activities of men like Shahuddin which need to be studied at greater depth in order to throw more light on this little-known world of unorganised politics. For Shahuddin's authority in leading a mob of "riotous" people clearly did not derive from any recognised position of leadership in the structure of organised politics; it did not apparently derive from any dominant position in the local economic hierarchy either, for he is described throughout as an "outsider". His claim to authority was on behalf of a collectivity, a collectivity larger than the mere sum of the individuals participating in a specific political act; he spoke as the voice of a community threatened from outside and requiring action by its members to save it from danger. Shahuddin clearly does not appear as a mobiliser organising support among the masses in order to promote sectional interests in the world of organised politics.

Consider Pabna and the phenomenon of unorganised politics appears in sharper relief. Here too there were itinerant maulavis preaching purification, leading to the surreptitious desecration of idols. But more than that, once the violence began, it spread from village to village over the next ten or twelve days. And the evidence of a small group moving through the countryside, carrying out raids, finding shelter with the villagers, suggests a jacquerie — an entire rural community combined for violent action. Consider also some of the targets of violence - overt as well as surreptitious - and we get an inkling of some of the underlying structural foundations of mass community action. The targets mentioned in the reports are the house of an absentee Hindu jotdar, hats, Marwari shops, idols worshipped in the houses of Hindu landlords. One can see how in drawing the boundaries of a community in the

peasant consciousness, in locating the enemy, in perceiving the sources of supposed threat to the community, it is the agrarian structure which fixes the broad outline.

Should it seem that this sort of unorganised communal politics was something unique to the religious organisation of Islam, it is possible to cite evidence to the contrary. Communal action of this kind is not necessarily confined to a religious group (the usual sense in which the word "communal" is used in India), nor is this sort of consciousness necessarily constituted by the set of beliefs characteristic of any particular religious denomination. The sense of community we are talking about, and political action in the supposed cause of this community, are characteristics of a peasant community for whose members their very existence and subjective identities are indissolubly tied to the land which they cultivate and who perceive themselves as organic parts of a larger social unity -- the community. It is membership of the community which gives them their identity, which lays down the rules by which they can use the land, either as co-sharers and mere possessors of the jointly owned (real or mythical) communal land, or as equal and free members of a community of equal and free peasant proprietors. Although the material basis on which the peasant community originally grew may have undergone considerable change, as an element in ideology such a sense of community, however defined in particular political contexts, can possess a very real existence in the social consciousness of the peasantry. Consider, for instance, the following reports from western Bengal at roughly the same period : Midnapore at the time of the anti-Union Board movement, an area and period intensively studied by Hitesranjan Sanyal.¹⁰⁵

"You are aware that in Contai the Union Board members had, in most Unions, refused to work and Tehsildars had to be appointed to collect the chowkidar's pay. It was found that very few people paid the tax preferring to hand over, of their own accord, utensils, etc., to the distraining officer.... The principal cause was undoubtedly the unscrupulous propaganda carried on by the non-cooperation party headed by Mr. B.N. Sasmal.... it is abundantly clear that it is impossible to work the

Act in Contai."¹⁰⁶

"I have been very much impressed by the strength and combination of the feeling against the Union Boards. I am convinced that it is not all shouting, but that the people will resist, to their utmost and in any manner that they can, the establishment of the Boards. There is practically no one in the whole thana, ... on whom we can depend for whole-hearted work in connection with the Union Boards. Those, who had been persuaded to try and set the Boards a-going, have been effectively muzzled or compelled to change their views by social pressure, boycott and ~~intimidation~~. A distinct campaign of terrorism is going on and the victims are so afraid that in spite of all inconveniences they are unwilling to come to court..... . As regards the people themselves I find that they are determined not to pay the Union rates ... unless and until Mr. Sasmal tells them to do so.... Their one cry is that their brothers in Contai and Mr. Sasmal have asked them to stand firm in their fight against the Union Board, and unless the latter tells them to do so they will not accept the Boards under any condition."¹⁰⁷

"The attitude of the people throughout was respectful. ... But there is beneath it all a stubbornness which is unusual and which springs from the belief, however it might have been inspired, that these Boards mean extra taxation which they are not prepared to pay."¹⁰⁸

"It is reported from almost all Unions that people are holding meetings in private houses and resolving not to pay taxes and to let their properties be attached and removed by the Tehsildars. They have also settled not to supply labour for removal of the articles and not to buy them.... The Sub-Inspector of Panskura personally went round with the President of the Panskura Union Board, Babu Krishnananda Das, to collect taxes. Even prostitutes refused to pay taxes and shut up their doors."¹⁰⁹

There was considerable organisational effort in Midnapore to promote the agitation against Union Boards, as Sanyal has shown in such detail, but the massive response -- a collective response -- could not have been entirely a product of organisation. It is at such moments that peasant consciousness perceives in organised political authority -- the formal machinery of the state and its representatives -- an external threat to the peasant community, and there occurs

this spontaneous collective resistance to authority. In this basic sense, the "communal" disturbances in the countryside of Pabna or Bakarganj were no different from peasant resistance to Union Boards in Midnapore.

The evidence of the east Bengal riots also brings to the fore other important aspects of the linkages between the structure of organised politics and unorganised politics at the level of the peasant community. Obviously, the incidents noted here were those which became linked in some way or another with the world of organised politics, for it is from the latter that all our information here is obtained. There probably occurred numerous other instances of unorganised political activity which were never recorded at any level of formal politics. But these particular recorded instances suggest that various elements in the organised sphere attempted to use, control, manoeuvre, appropriate or put down such activity, firstly, according to their own interests and, secondly, on their own terms. Thus, there were loyalist "communal" leaders trying to retain their usefulness to the government by controlling their constituencies and at the same time seeking to maintain their reputation with their supporters for being able to get things done. There were "moderate" politicians urging restraint on all sides and assisting with great sincerity all official attempts to maintain the peace. And there was the "radical", more ideologically committed mass agitator, drumming up popular resentment against the government, directing the agitation into organised channels, mobilising demonstrations of mass support at such places and occasions as to put maximum pressure on the government. And, of course, there were the representatives of the official state machinery, trying to preserve law and order, identifying men who could control some recalcitrant part of the population, isolating the trouble-makers, breaking up the opposition, conceding on minor matters in order decisively to regulate the large ones, and generally seeking to keep things going with the least trouble and at the least cost. But these political exponents from the organised sector would not always be able to retain control of the whole situation, to keep the game to their own terms. Often they would be pushed from their chosen paths, be forced to take up positions they would not otherwise have taken. These would be the situations where the "normal" or "stable" structure

of transactions between the organised and unorganised worlds of politics is disturbed, where the course of events seems to take quite unexpected turns.

Consider once more the period 1926-28. The nature of the stable structure of political authority which had hitherto prevailed in most of the districts of eastern Bengal is indicated by the kind of moves made in a situation of growing communal tension by the Hindu leadership in the mufassal towns. The district and subdivisional towns in eastern Bengal were the seats of bhadralok social authority based on landownership, education, professional standing and access to the official bureaucracy. This upper-caste Hindu landlord dominance was often reflected even in a numerical superiority within the municipal areas, in sharp contrast to the breakdown of population by religion in the east Bengal countryside. Our evidence shows that Hindu reaction was invariably more aggressive and provocative in the urban areas - in Pabna, in Barisal and in Patuakhali. (The fact that Satindranath Sen chose to forsake the support he had built during the Laukati anti-Union Board movement for what was frankly a Hindu communal satyagraha is significant.) What was unexpected was the suddenness and the spread of Muslim reaction in the countryside. That this reaction was unanticipated and quite in contrast to the "normal" state of things is evident from the Pabna reports. Indeed, if it is stated as a general observation that this particular period in Bengal's history saw the last concerted effort by the landed Hindu bhadralok to protect as a class their economic, social and political dominance, it would be a formulation quite in keeping with the evidence we have of the politics of the period.

It is this effort which was reflected during the Tenancy Act debate in the undisguised support of the Swarajya Party for the privileges of the landlord. It was also a reflection of the social dominance of the landed and the literati that they should so command the provincial organisation of a political party which had already found secure bases of support among the peasantry in many parts of the countryside. The only dissenting Hindu voices were those of Jitendra Lal Banerjee, elected from Birbhum where the agrarian economy was dominated by the middle and small raiyats, many of them

upper-caste themselves, and Nagendra Narayan Ray, Rajbangshi leader from Rangpur. The other possible dissenting voices could have come from Midnapore but there, as we have seen, things had worked differently.

✓ The autonomous strength of unorganised politics really left its mark in this period on the behaviour of the elected Muslim leadership. The riots of 1926-27 had made it clear that the peasantry of eastern and northern Bengal was now prepared to strike against zamindari domination. Given the social composition of this peasantry, the ideological form in which the collective interests of the community came to be defined in peasant consciousness was that of a community united by religion and separated from its enemies by religion. But the material issues were land, tenancy, rent, abwab, interest rates, rights of ~~transfer~~, rights of preemption. In 1928 it was abundantly clear to all who wished to act as representatives of the Muhammadan community in the elected organs of government that there was only one possible stand on the tenancy question — unequivocal opposition to the zamindar and support for the proja. The history of Muslim politics in Bengal from 1928 to 1937 clearly shows that this was a case where a populist stance was not so much an instrument of mobilisation from the top, but a response to the pressures of an autonomous world of unorganised politics below.

We have not, of course, produced any evidence here on the basis of which we could hazard a hypothesis about the mechanics of this autonomous sphere of politics. To do this we would need to know much more about the social ideology of the peasantry in eastern Bengal, about the activities of the so-called "itinerant maulavis" who emerged in this period as a sort of organic leadership of the Muslim peasantry, about the channels and modes of communication through which information about developments in provincial politics filtered down to the village and those through which news was passed from village to village. We would then know if what we have called unorganised politics also has an identifiable structure and how far unorganised politics is really unorganised. But for this we must have data of much the same level and range as that collected by Hitesranjan Sanyal for Midnapore or Bankura or Hooghly. This research has not yet been conducted

for any of the eastern or north Bengal districts.

One broad generalisation does, however, emerge if we take into consideration a major difference between the agrarian structures of eastern and western Bengal. A detailed study of the agrarian structure in different regions of Bengal clearly reveals¹¹⁰ that a process of differentiation from below was already well-advanced among the peasantry of the western districts of Bengal; the peasantry of most of the districts of eastern and northern Bengal, however, retained up to the late 1930s a relatively undifferentiated character, the overwhelming bulk being small raiyat peasants. This is at least prima facie evidence to explain why Muslim peasants in eastern Bengal, socially distinguished as peasantry by a common religion, could throughout the first half of this century continue the sequence of sporadic political actions as peasant community united against authority, whereas in western, particularly south-western, Bengal the massive peasant resistance against the colonial state machinery disintegrated in several organisational splits as incompatible sectional interests began to make conflicting demands. This, of course, is only suggestive evidence of the most rudimentary sort, for nothing can be asserted with any great conviction until we know more about the social ideology and processes of ideology-formation among east Bengal peasants.

I have emphasised here the autonomous strength of the sphere of unorganised politics by which people in large agrarian societies make their presence felt in their relations with the formally constituted authorities of the state. This analytical perspective springs from the conviction that politics in a country such as ours is unexplainable solely within a structure of formally organised material interests and periodically mobilised support groups. At the same time, however, it is necessary to state the inherent and inevitable limitations of such autonomous action at the level of unorganised politics. In most cases, such action occurs sporadically and spontaneously within an otherwise stable situation of transactions between organised state structures and peasant communities, whether identifiable in distinct social forms or merely latent in social consciousness. And more often than not, such sporadic defiance of authority is apparently followed simply by a return to

the earlier situation of normalcy. Such is the story of the innumerable instances of peasant revolts in Indian history. Sometimes, however, the organised structure is found to adjust itself to this impact, to reorient, often reorganise itself in order to neutralise, and even appropriate, the social power inherent in the unorganised opposition. This, broadly speaking characterises the populist politics practised by ruling classes which stand on insecure social foundations. But never is unorganised politics of this kind able of its own to replace one formal structure of state authority by another.

Secondly, it is also necessary to point out the social distance between the two worlds of politics in the colonial setting of British India. The formal institutions of politics in colonial India, especially after the constitutional reforms of the twentieth century, were explicitly based on principles of bourgeois government. Thus the foundations of law and government in India became the associational principles of contract, equality before the law, representation, etc., the theoretical basis for all of which is a political society composed of free and equal individuals, all social differences among whom are irrelevant in the eyes of the state. When such institutions of representative government were grafted on Indian soil on the basis of a widening franchise, extraordinary innovations had to be made in order to fit the representative principle with the peasant-communal character of political authority in much of rural India (a somewhat grotesque example of which was cited above in connection with the imposition of a punitive tax after the riots in Pabna). The resultant injury to the laudable principles of representative government was one, perhaps the least regrettable, consequence. Of greater historical import was the necessity imposed on a vast section of society to deal with the formally constituted political authority through an agent, a go-between, a "representative" familiar with the ways and manners prevalent at the seats of organised power. The mode of political authority institutionalised in the formal structure of state power in colonial India created a distance with the rest of society which could not be bridged even by the "democratic" demonstration of majority support, as was shown in our present case by the experience of the Congress

councillors from Contai, or later on by the experience of Krishak Proja leaders after the elections of 1937, and as has been shown since in the experience of electoral democracy in India : the need for "representation" by the elite has not disappeared. Perhaps this is particularly so in the case of Bengal, where the weight of a metropolis on the society, polity and culture of an entire people is far greater, and indeed of a different quality, than anywhere else in India.

The 1920s, therefore, marked the closing of the era of elite dominance on the old basis. It was not simply a case of one elite group being challenged or replaced by another. The old basis of so-called bhadralok domination was now no longer tenable; the whole system of zamindari and intermediate tenureholding landownership had reached a stage of irreversible crisis. The 1930s were to see entirely new trends in the ideology and politics of the middle classes of Bengal : the growth of a new generation torn apart from all roots in rural society, a generation distinctly urban in interests and outlook; a "radicalisation" of the political ideology of this generation, a more abstracted search "from the outside" for agents of political action among the masses, the emergence among the middle classes, in however inchoate or ineffective forms, of a new style of vanguardist politics. At the same time, there were new attempts to appropriate what was distinctive in the opposition to the old structure of authority, giving rise to new methods of mobilisation by politicians operating in the organised political world and to a new politics of populism. It is the tension between vanguardism and parliamentarism which forms the most interesting and historically significant aspect of the history of organised politics in Bengal in the 1930s and 1940s. But this requires separate treatment.

APPENDIX 1

List of motions considered for analysing voting pattern in Table 2

1. Jogindra Chandra Chakravarti's motion proposing that a bargadar would be recognised as tenant only if he was expressly admitted as a tenant by the owner of the land in a document executed and accepted by the owner.
2. Tamizuddin Khan's motion proposing that a bargadar should be recognised as a tenant if he was recorded as such in the record-of-rights.
3. Amarendra Nath Ghose's motion proposing that the definition of a raiyat should be extended to include "one who cultivates by bargadar".
4. Azizul Haqu's motion proposing that once there was an enhancement of rent, there ought to be no further enhancement for 25 years (instead of 15 as in the Bill).
5. Ekramul Huq's motion proposing that if a holding was transferred to a co-sharer raiyat or relation, then no salami need be paid.
6. Mahendra Nath Maiti's motion proposing that a transfer fee ought to be paid to all co-sharers even if this was not correctly stated in the deed of transfer.
7. Akhil Chandra Datta's motion proposing that if the landlord's fee was not collected within 12 years (instead of 5 as in the Bill), it would be forfeited by the government.
8. Satyendra Nath Roy Choudhuri's motion proposing that the time limit for forfeiture (in motion 7) was to be calculated from the "date of service of notice" (instead of the "date of deposit" as in the Bill).
9. A.K. Fazlul Huq's motion proposing that the rent of an underraiyat could be enhanced by contract provided it did not exceed the previous rent by 2 annas per rupee (instead of 4 annas as in the Bill), thus making the maximum rate of enhancement the same as in the case of the occupancy raiyat.
10. Ekramul Huq's motion proposing that an underraiyat could be ejected only if he used the land in such a manner that it substantially reduced the value of the holding (and not merely if he rendered it unfit for tenancy, as in the Bill).

11. Jitendra Lal Banerjee's motion proposing that the underraiyat's holding could not be transferred at all (instead of "with the consent of the landlord" as in the Bill).
12. Akhil Chandra Datta's motion/ "no entry in a record of rights finally published shall raise a presumption of correctness as to the customary occupancy right of an underraiyat." proposing that
13. Asimuddin Ahamad's motion proposing to do away with the right of preemption and the landlord's fee on transfer of occupancy holdings.
14. Tamizuddin Khan's motion proposing that there should be no right of preemption.
15. Kasiruddin Ahamad's motion proposing that the amount of compensation to be paid to the tenant in the case of a landlord exercising the right of preemption should be 25% (instead of 10% as in the Bill).
16. Tamizuddin Khan's motion proposing that there should be no landlord's fee payable for subletting a raiyat's holding.

FOOTNOTES

The following abbreviations have been used below :

<u>BLC</u>	<u>Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings</u>
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
GB	Government of Bengal
GI	Government of India
IB	Intelligence Branch
NAI	National Archives of India
NMML	Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
Poll.	Political Department
<u>RAB</u>	<u>Report on the Administration of Bengal</u> (annual)
WBSA	West Bengal State Archives

1. "Tenancy Problem in Bengal", The Statesman, 28 July 1928.
2. GB Legislative. Papers relative to the Bengal Tenancy (Amendment) Bill, 1925. B. C. Roy Papers. NMML.
3. However, a forlorn minute of dissent by Asimuddin Ahamad still demanded
 - (i) that bargadars and underraiyats should be given occupancy rights, and
 - (ii) that landlords should get not more than 5% transfer fee for entire holdings and nothing for part transfers, and should not enjoy the right of pre-emption. Asimuddin's dissent previsited the position to be adopted in 1928. Report of the Select Committee on the Bengal Tenancy (Amendment) Bill, 1926. GI Legislative. File 312/26. NAI.
4. The Statesman, 8 August 1928.
5. The Statesman, 16 August 1928.
6. A detailed examination of agrarian structure and the various tendencies and constraints operating in Bengal's agrarian economy will be found in Partha Chatterjee, "Agrarian Structure in Pre-Partition Bengal" in Perspectives in the Social Sciences II (Calcutta : Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

7. See Rajat K. Ray, "Masses in Politics: The Non-Cooperation Movement in Bengal, 1920-1922", Indian Economic and Social History Review, 11, 4 (Dec 1974), pp. 343-410; J.H. Broomfield, Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth-Century Bengal (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1968), pp. 131-281.
8. Prithwis Chandra Ray, Life and Times of C.R. Das (London : Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 86. Later, when he had become a supporter of the Gandhian programme of non-cooperation and rural constructive work, he was more forthright : "To me the organization of village life and the practical autonomy of small local centres are more important than either provincial autonomy or central responsibility; and if the choice lay between the two, I would unhesitatingly support the autonomy of the local centres ... I maintain that real Swaraj can only be attained by vesting the power of Government in these local centres ... I think that the work of organizing these local centres should be forthwith commenced." But in the same speech he also pleaded strongly for entering the Councils. Presidential Address, Indian National Congress, Gaya, 1922. Ibid, pp. 257-91.
9. The novelist Saratchandra Chattopadhyay was once travelling with Chittaranjan to Barisal by boat. He had asked Chittaranjan about the opinion regarding the revolutionaries. Chittaranjan replied, "I sincerely admire many of them, but their activities are dangerous for the country ; they will take the country back by at least twenty-five years. Besides, the trouble is that this thing will not be over even after we have Swaraj; it will, in fact, become more belligerent and we will have a civil war even on minor differences. Saratbabu, I detest violence and bloodshed from the bottom of my heart." Saratchandra Chattopadhyay, Swadesh o Sahitya (Calcutta; Sriguru Library, 1933), p. 53.
10. In 1924, 28 ex-detenus or political ex-convicts were office-bearers of the BFCC, and 21 such persons were elected from Bengal to the AIOC. "Note regarding the association of Congress with terrorism in Bengal". GI Home Poll. 3/10-A/35. NAI.

11. Jadugopal Mukhopadhyay of Jugantar says in his Biplabi Jibaner Smriti (Calcutta : Indian Associated, 1957), p. 479, that Chittaranjan had asked them not to engage in any violent action for at least a year; this was accepted at a meeting of various terrorist groups. However, lest the workers get "completely carried away" by the Congress programme, separate underground organisations were maintained outside the Congress.
12. On this, see Hitesranjan Sanyal, "Dakshinpaschim Banglay Jatiatabadi Andolan - I", Shaturanga, 38(1976-77), 1, pp. 1-26.
13. In 1922, when the Government of India suggested that the Provinces think of utilising the services of maulavis "for propaganda on Muhammadan questions", the Government of Bengal promptly replied that it would be "an expedient of doubtful value. The Khilafat agitation has been too prolonged and has gone too deep to make it worth while trying to organise these men now for a counter-attack ..." . C.W. Gwynne, Deputy Secretary, GI Home to J. Donald, Chief Secretary GB, 30 May 1922. J. Donald to S.P.O' Donnell, Home Secretary GI, 3 Aug 1922.GB Poll. File 326/22 WBSA.
14. Peter Hardy has described this kind of Muslim leadership, conducting vigorous agitational politics among the Muslim masses of northern India, as follows : "It is not easy to define this Muslim underground, except negatively. It was poor rather than rich, respectable rather than ruffianly, school-educated rather than university- or college-educated, traditionally-rather than modern-educated. It was drawn from the lower middle class of a pre-industrial society, printers, lithographers, book-sellers, teachers, retail shopkeepers, skilled craftsmen and petty zanindars, men literate in the vernacular, able and willing to read the large annual output of Muslim devotional literature in Urdu. Politically they were unorganised and lacking in sense of direction, but, as the 'anti-cow-killing' riots of the eighteen-eighties and nineties, the Cawnpore mosque disturbances of 1913 and the Khilafat movement of 1919-22 showed, they were quick to be seized by religious passion." The Muslims of British India (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 169.

15. See Rajat K. Ray, "Masses in Politics", op. cit., pp. 394-6. In Nilphamari (Rangpur), the main agitator was said to be "Maulavi (self-styled) Sherajuddin, a firebrand of Parbatipur in Dinajpur district, a wahabi, I believe". DM Rangpur to Commissioner, Rajahahi Div., 1 Jan 1922. Reports of chaukidar-boycott in Tangail and Islampur in Mymensingh include the names of mullas who were said to be the main agitators and a whole list of Muslim non-cooperation volunteers in different villages. IB, weekly consolidated report of Mymensingh for the week ending 14 January 1922. GB Poll. File 14/22. WBSA.
16. For details about the Hindu-Muslim Pact, see Ujjalkanti Das, "The Bengal Hindu-Muslim Pact", Bengal Past and Present (forthcoming).
17. Bipinchandra had visualised a federal India in which the units were to be the religious communities - Hindu, Muslim, Christian, aboriginal. Rabindranath Tagore in 1905 had wanted a swadeshi samaj headed jointly by a Hindu and a Muslim. The Bangabasi suggested in 1908 that the adherents of different religions should "each form a party of their own" and then cooperate among themselves. See, Sumit Sarkar, The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908 (New Delhi : People's Publishing House, 1973), pp. 422-4.
18. RAB, 1923-24, p. v.
19. Saratchandra Chattopadhyay, Swadesh o Sahitya, p. 50-51.
20. RAB, 1923-24, p. i.
21. RAB, 1923-24, pp. vi, xi.
22. Shila Sen, Muslim Politics in Bengal, 1937-1947 (New Delhi : Impex India, 1976), pp. 56-65; J. H. Broomfield, Elite Conflict, pp. 268-74. In 1914, the Government had thought that one-third was "a fair share of ministerial appointments in each district for Muhammadans"; in July 1925 it was found that Muslims held 30% of such posts in the Dacca division, 35.4% in Chittagong and 27% in the Presidency division. It was then decided "to take measures to ensure that there shall be in the future a sufficient proportion

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of Muhammadans in certain of the higher services...; that this proportion shall be fixed not necessarily in accordance with but on the basis of population; that with regard to the subordinate appointments a sufficient share is allotted to the Muhammadans to encourage the education of the community and to prevent the monopoly of public employment by any one class or community." L. Birley, Chief Secretary, to Commissioners of Dacca, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Presidency Divisions, 28 October 1925. GB Poll. File 3M-1, Progs. B213-14, Dec 1926. WBSA.

It was also suggested that in western Bengal the following percentages should be prescribed for Muhammadans : Bankura 15, Hooghly 25, Howrah 25, Birbhum 33¹/₂, Midnapore 15, Burdwan 25; where Muslim candidates of good qualifications were not available, "full use" was to be made of "recognised Muhammadan Association for making vacancies known." L. Birley, Chief Secretary, to Commissioner, Burdwan Div., 11 June 1926. GB Poll. File 3M-1, Progs. B213-14. Dec 1926. WBSA

As part of the same policy, District Officers began at this time to take an active interest in the Muhammadan Associations. In Dacca, for instance, there were two main associations - the Anjuman, controlled by the Nawab family, and, in the opinion of the District Magistrate, the only body "representative of the Muhammadans of the city and district as a whole", and the Dacca Moslem Association which did not "differ fundamentally as regards questions of policy from the Anjuman". The Officer suggested : "It would certainly be more convenient to have only one such recognised association... The most satisfactory solution would have been the amalgamation of the two associations. Attempts were made to effect this after the last Jannastami processions but they failed." H. C. V. Philpot, District Magistrate, Dacca, to Commissioner, Dacca Div., 9 May 1927. GB Poll. File 8A-5, Progs. B451-61. Sept 1927. WBSA, The District Magistrate of Midnapore was of the opinion "that the Muhammadans of Midnapore require strengthening and encouragement rather than weakening... it would be a good thing to get [the Branch National Muhammadan Association of Muhammad Khoda Nawaz] to disband itself and to amalgamate it with the District Muslim Association which is run by the Suhrawardis." G. H. W. Davies, District Magistrate, Midnapore to A.W. Cook, Commissioner, Burdwan Div., GB Poll. File 8A-1, Progs. B393-406. Aug 1925. WBSA.

23. GB to GI Home, 22 July 1926. GI Home Poll. File 205/26. NAI.
24. Senior officials were convinced that the communal trouble in Calcutta was entirely a matter concerning the north Indian population in the city. "It is intolerable that we should have this constant trouble from Madan Mohan Barman and Swami Biswananda, and be unable to do anything against them because they always keep in the background when the actual trouble comes. It corroborated the view which we have been expressing all the time that as far as Hindus go in Calcutta the whole of the trouble originates with up-country men." Note by L. Birley, 17 Oct 1926. GB Poll. File 516/26. WBSA.
25. J.E. Armstrong, Commissioner of Police, Calcutta, "Report on the Calcutta Riots of April 1926". GB Poll. File 174/26. WBSA.
26. J. E. Armstrong to L. Birley, Chief Secretary, 4 April 1926. GB Poll. File 174/26. WBSA.
27. J. E. Armstrong, "Report on the Calcutta Riots of April 1926". op. cit. It is also interesting to note that Hindu propoganda during the riots showed a strong affinity with the sorts of slogans raised by Hindu communal opinion in northern India : "You say that no one will be able to live in Hindusthan, except in amity with the Hindus. Let the lathi in your hand prove this Teach a lesson to these traitors and ungrateful people who hate the gods and the Brahmins. The youth of Bengal should so behave that the eight crores of Muhammadans in India may be taught a lesson." On the other hand, Muslim propoganda tended to harp on the duplicity of Hindu politicians in dishonouring the Hindu-Muslim Pact : "A truce existed between the Bengal Hindus and the Muhammadans to the effect that the one party should not attack the other, but the Bengal Hindus have treacherously joined the Marwaris ... Mussalmans, beware ! Do not spare the traitors ! In retaliation for the murder of one Muhammadan the heads of 100 kafirs should be taken ... Secret murder must be avenged by secret murder. Do not kill children or women". Leaflets quoted in Armstrong, "Report".
28. GB Chief Secretary to GI Home, 5 August 1926. GI Home Poll. File 209/26. NAI.

29. In Pabna, too, as elsewhere, local custom had permitted processions with music to pass certain mosques on specific festive occasions, but in May 1926, Roushan Jedayet, a periodical published from Hadal (Pabna), urged that there should be no music before any mosque at any time. Petition of Radhica Bhusan Ray (Zamindar, Tarash), Jnanada Govindo Chowdhury (Zamindar, Tantibond) and others to H. L. Stephenson, Acting Governor, 18 September 1926. GB Poll. File 317/26. WBSA.
30. Petition of Radhica Bhusan Ray and others. GB Poll. File 317/26. WBSA.
31. A. N. Moberly, Chief Secretary GB to Home Secretary GI, 17 August 1926. GB Poll. File 317/26. WBSA.
32. N. Ahmad, District Magistrate, Pabna, "Report on the Pabna Disturbances". 24 July 1926. GB Poll. File 317/26. WBSA.
33. W. A. Marr, Commissioner, Rajshahi Div., to A. N. Moberly, Chief Secretary, 25 July 1926. GB Poll. File 317/26. WBSA.
34. Report on Case No. 15/26 by T. Meerza, Superintendent of Police, Pabna, 2 July 1926. GB Poll. File 317/26. WBSA.
35. Telegram from Commissioner, Rajshahi Div., to GB Poll., 7 July 1926; N. Ahmad, "Report on the Pabna Disturbances". The Commissioner was quite alarmed by the incidence of looting: "It is feared that, now that this looting has begun, it may spread to other hats ... It is essential to have a fairly large force here as quickly as possible to nip the hat-looting in the bud ... Now that this outbreak of hat-looting has begun it is difficult to predict what the outcome will be ..." Marr to Moberly, 5 July 1926. He later conjectured: "What gave the original impulse to the looting was probably the false rumours of looting that came from Hindu sources on the 2nd and 3rd [July]. This put the idea of looting into heads already excited, and as Pabna was a centre of hat-looting in 1917-18, the see fell on good ground and looting began and spread rapidly". Marr to Moberly, 25 July 1926. GB Poll. File 317/26. WBSA.

36. Marr to Moberly, 6 July 1926. GB Poll. File 317/26. WBSA.
37. Marr to Moberly, 9 July 1926. GB Poll. File 317/26. WBSA.
38. Marr to Moberly, 4 July 1926. GB Poll. File 317/26. WBSA.
39. Marr to Moberly, 4 September 1926. GB Poll. File 317/26. WBSA.
40. Marr to Moberly, 9 July 1926. GB Poll. File 317/26. WBSA.
41. Marr to Moberly, 10 July 1926. GB Poll. File 317/26. WBSA.
42. Ibid.
43. N. Ahmad, "Report on the Fafna Disturbances". GB Poll. File 317/26. WBSA.
44. Note by H. L. Stephenson, Acting Governor, 7 July 1926. GB Poll. File 317/26. WBSA.
45. Marr to Moberly, 10 July 1926. GB Poll. File 317/26. WBSA.
46. To this, the Muslim leaders, predictably, objected: "...since the Mussalmans of the town did not do anything to break the public peace in spite of the gravest provocation by the Hindus and as the Muhammadans of the town suffered most at the hand of the Hindus, their mosque desecrated and damaged and some of them seriously wounded...the Government be moved to exempt the poor Muhammadans of the town and its suburbs from the imposition of punitive tax like the Hindus in the mufassal". K. R. Wasimuddin Ahmed, Secretary, Anjuman-i-Islamia, Fafna to Commissioner, Rajshahi Div., 31 August 1926. GB Poll. File 317/26. WBSA.
47. Actually the anomaly was pointed out by the Marwari Trades Association and the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce, both of which argued that those suffering at the hands of the rioters should be exempted from paying for the posting of additional police. Petitions from the Secretary, Marwari Trades Association to the Private Secretary to the Governor, 25 July 1926, and from the Honorary Secretary, BNCC to the Chief Secretary, 6 Aug 1926. GB Poll. File 317/26. WBSA.
48. Note by W. D. R. Prentice, Chief Secretary, 4 December 1926. GB Poll. File 317/26. WBSA.
49. Marr to Prentice, 20 December 1926. GB Poll. File 317/26. WBSA.

50. There is in the files a somewhat ridiculous, though quite revealing, example of the absurdities which inevitably follow from applying rational-bureaucratic principles of liberal government to a population legally classified and demarcated into ethnic compartments. It had been decided to exempt Christians from the payment of punitive tax. S. N. Roy, Deputy Secretary, Home, pointed out : "...when exemption is given to a class like the Christians on the basis of their religious persuasion, I do not think the Brahmos can logically be left out of the exemption. We have had a petition from them". To this, Prentice replied: "I think we might adhere to our previous orders and not admit further claims. If we go by the census tables we may have to exempt Buddhists and Animists because they are not Hindus... I think it is not desirable to complicate matters further. But Lytton finally decided: "Exclude Brahmos and Buddhists". Notes by S. N. Roy, 23 December 1926, and W. D. R. Prentice, 24 December 1926 and 4 January 1927. GB Poll. File 317/26. WBSA.
51. A. H. Clayton, Commissioner, Dacca Div., to A. N. Moberly, Chief Secretary, 4 October 1926. GB Poll. File 501/26. WBSA. The artist Paritosh Sen gives a long and vivid description of the procession as he remembers seeing it as a child in Dacca. Zindabahr (Calcutta : Papyrus, 1979), pp. 66-68. "Nowhere else in this subcontinent could one have seen such a gorgeous, immense and spectacular event. One could see in this procession the extraordinary artistry of those magic hands that had created the world-renowned muslin. For two days this intricate multi-coloured pageant, constantly shifting and changing, would pass before my eyes like a huge tapestry. It was like looking through a kaleidoscope. The active organisers were Hindu, but quite literally the procession was for all to join".
52. A. M. A. Hamid, Honorary Secretary, District Moslem Association, Dacca to the Hon'ble Member, Poll. Deptt., 8 October 1926. GB Poll, File 501/26. WBSA.

53. Three telegrams reached the Writers' Buildings in Calcutta. The Secretary of the Anjuman Islamia warned: "Custom in Dacca no music before mosques at all times. Muslim feeling high". Raja Janakinath Roy of Bhagyakul asserted: "...annual Jannastami procession continued from time immemorial to pass with music without any restriction". The Nawab of Dacca was conciliatory: "Custom in Dacca has been no music before mosques any time but Muhammadans will make concession for Jannastami only provided no music before prayer time". Telegrams from the Secretary, Anjuman Islamia, to the Private Secretary to the Governor, 3 September 1926; Raja Janakinath Roy to the Governor, 5 September 1926; Nawab of Dacca to the Governor, 1 September 1926. GB Poll. File 501/26. WBSA.
54. Clayton to Moberly, 4 October 1926. GB Poll. File 501/26. WBSA.
55. Indeed, soon after the Calcutta riots in April, there had been a minor incident in Dacca in front of the Amligola mosque following which, at a meeting called by the Nawab of Dacca at Ahsan Manzil, leading Hindus of the town including Sarat Chandra Chakrabarti, Rai Bahadur Peari Lal Das and Dharendra Chandra Roy, made a public apology. This, it seems, rankled in the hearts of the more radical section who repudiated this act by their supposed representatives. Note by H.C.V. Philpot, DM Dacca, 2 Oct 1926. Also, Syed A.F. Sharfuddin, Honorary Secretary, Dacca District Anjuman to the Chief Secretary, 20 Oct 1926. GB Poll. File 501/26. WBSA.
56. Clayton to Moberly, 4 October 1926. GB Poll. File 501/26. WBSA.
57. Ibid. The District Moslem Association claimed that the Muslim leaders called to the meetings with the District Magistrate - implying, in particular, the Nawab of Dacca - were not representative of the community on such a question, and quietly sidetracking the question of custom altogether, argued: "...it is not sufficient to consider only custom in arriving at a decision on a point which is so seriously agitating the minds of the leaders of the Hindus and the Musalmans all over India, totally ignoring the religious point of view about which the Musalmans present were not competent to give any opinion nor has this association any such right,

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except the learned Ulemas." A. M. A. Hamid, to A. K. Ghuznavi, 27 August 1926. The Chief Secretary commented: "Some one seems to have been undermining the Nawab's influence -- Hakim Habibur Rahman is very probably at the bottom of the trouble in the hope of discrediting the Anjuman." The Acting Governor agreed: "It looks as if the Nawab's hand was being forced...". Notes by A. N. Moberly, 2 September 1926, and H. L. Stephenson, 3 September 1926. Hindu leaders, on the other hand, alleged that the mahalla sardars, operating under the leadership of Saiyed Abdul Hafez, Khan Bahadur Zahirul Haque, Khan Bahadur Zahiruddin Ahmed and others, had sidestepped the rightful authority of the Nawab. They also alleged: "The public will find it difficult to believe that the leader of the Mahalla sardars and the Mahalla Sardars themselves had no knowledge of the collections and distribution of lathis and pointed iron bars and even daggers by the Mahalla men -- a fact which was so well known throughout the town." Petition from Ananda Chandra Roy, Revati Mohan Das, Sarat Chandra Chakrabarty (respectively President, Vice-President and Secretary of the People's Association), Mohendra Lal Roy (President, Bar Association) and B. K. Ganguli (President, Hindu Sabha). GB Poll. File 501/26. WBSA. Paritosh Sen remembers: "Once, as the procession was passing our neighbourhood mosque, hundreds of Musalmans pounced on it with sticks, spears and stones. In an instant, thousands were fleeing like chicken trying to escape being run over by a car. Many Hindus who had come from outside were hurt. Yet, although we lived in a preponderantly Muslim area, the handful of Hindu families were not touched. Needless to say, preparations for the riot had been made beforehand, under incitement. But until normal conditions were restored our Musalman neighbours supplied us with the necessary provisions of life." Zindabahr, p. 68.

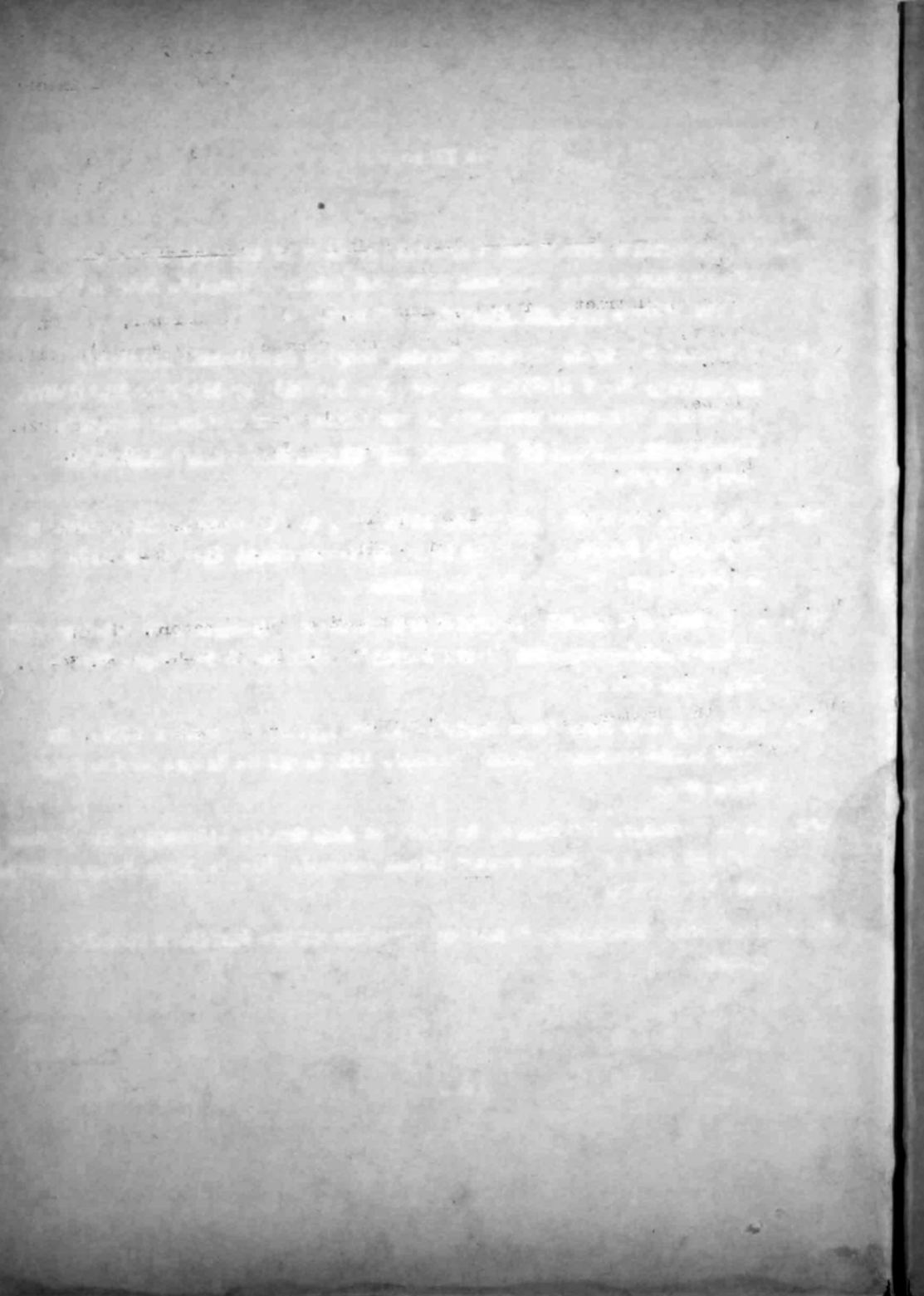
58. Clayton to Moberly, 4 October 1926. GB Poll. File 501/26. WBSA. This impact of the new politics of organised mass agitation on long-standing economic relations between communally organised occupation groups in the trading towns became a distinctive aspect of communal politics in Bengal. "...the economic boycott which began early in April and was one of the chief causes which contributed to the Dacca disturbances still persists in Calcutta. It is reported that the Marwaris who have hitherto depended upon local Muhammadan dyers have imported a number of Hindu dyers from their own country. The boycott of Muhammadan handsmen, coachmen and syces still continues...". A. N. Moberly to J. Crerar, Home Secretary GI, 23 September 1926. GB Poll. File 516/26. WBSA.
59. GB Press Communique, 19 January 1927. GB Poll. File 500/26. WBSA.
60. Ibid.
61. IB, CID, Weekly Consolidated Report of Bakarganj for the week ending 4 September 1926. GB Poll. File 500/26. WBSA.
62. IB, CID, Weekly Consolidated Report of Bakarganj for the week ending 18 Sept 1926. A leaflet, issued under the signature of Nagendra Nath Das, Secretary, Hindu Sabha, Barisal, declaimed: "O Hindu, the son of Arya, where are you? Your religion is to-day persecuted. The Hindu inhabitants of Patuakhali ... have started Satyagraha against an unjust order. Animated by the ideal of Patuakhali, all Hindus should to-day support the inhabitants of Patuakhali with contributions of men and money... . The peculiarity of the Hindu is that the Hindu may renounce his earthly existence, but he can never give up religion. The forefathers of the Hindus have renounced even empires for religion, but they never renounced religion... . We have become forgetful, impotence has come over our national life, and is creating inertia among us, the descendants of that glorious race. O sons of Aryas! renounce impotence, rouse the strength of self again, give up weakness of mind, arise, awake and accept the benign blessings of God...". GB Poll. File 500/26. WBSA.

63. "We want no favour, no preferential treatment, but bare justice, and cry for an European administration in place of a Hindu Raj. The criminal administration of a district like Bakarganj should not be so entirely under the Hindu officers, almost all of whom are anti-Muhammadan. You know me, Mr. Emerson knows, Mr. Bell knew, and I think all the European officers who were here, will testify how I have acted all along and supported the authorities, put down my own people, but I can no longer do it for the injustice which is being done to us by the authorities here... Here is Hindu Raj pure and simple. The secretary of the Hindu Sabha is calling the Hindus to arms, and no notice is taken of it." Hemayetuddin Ahmed to Nawab Ali Chaudhuri, Member, Executive Council, 7 September 1926. "The DM is a Hindu, so is the Additional ... we need a strong European District Officer here just at present and an European additional". Hemayetuddin Ahmed to Sir Abdur Rahim, 7 September 1926. "The Hindu Government Pleader Rai Bahadur Gonesh Chandra Das is reported to be an office-bearer and adviser of the local Hindu Maha Sabha ... It is becoming hard for a loyal self-respecting Muhammadan to support the Government any longer". The files also contain a statement showing the sentences passed on satyagrahis arrested and produced in court: trying magistrate P. C. Acharji usually ordered fines in the range of Rs 30 to Rs 120 and imprisonments of 3, 6 or 10 weeks, while A. Halim ordered fines between Rs 50 to Rs 120 and prison terms of 6, 15 or 16 weeks, GB Poll. File 500/26. WBSA.
64. Report by E. N. Blandy, DM Bakarganj, 7 December 1926. GB Poll. File 500/26. WBSA
65. E. N. Blandy to A. N. Moberly, Chief Secretary GB, 20 November 1926. GB Poll. File 500/26. WBSA.
66. Report by Blandy, 7 December 1926. GB Poll. File 500/26. WBSA.
67. Evidence by Blandy in Ponabalia Riot Case. GI Home Poll. File 11/IX/27. NAI.
68. Blandy to Moberly, 20 November 1926. GB Poll. File 500/26. WBSA.

69. GB to GI Home, 5 April 1927. GI Home Poll. File 11/~~IX~~/27. NAI.
70. Forward, 10 March 1927.
71. S. C. Taylor, SP Barisal to F. J. Lowman, DIG, IB, 7 March 1927. GI Home Poll. File 11/~~IX~~/27. NAI. Fazlul Huq added: "Until Blandy is absolved of the charge against him, we will treat him like a dog, even worse than a dog, and I will write his name on the walls of my lavatory and strike it with a broomstick three times a day".
72. Soltan, 9 March 1927, Translation in GB Poll. File 134/27. WBSA.
73. Abul Mozaffar, "Blood for Blood", Soltan, 14 March 1927. Translation in GB Poll. File 134/27. WBSA.
74. Telegram from GB to GI Home, 17 May 1927. GI Home Poll. File 11/~~IX~~/27. NAI
75. Taylor to Lowman, 7 March 1927. GI Home Poll. File 11/~~IX~~/27. NAI.
76. GB Poll. File 189/27. WBSA.
77. GB Poll. File 140/27. WBSA.
78. Quoted in A. N. Moberly, Chief Secretary GB to H.G. Haig, Home Secretary GI, 4 November 1926. GB Poll. File 516/26. WBSA.
79. Notes by W.D.R. Prentice, Chief Secretary, 14 February 1927 and 4 April 1927. GB Poll. File 117/27. WBSA.
80. Anrita Bazar Patrika, 10 August 1928.
81. The Statesman, 8 August 1928.
82. The Statesman, 12 August 1928.
83. BIC, 30, 2(13th session, 1928), pp. 21-22.
84. *ibid*, pp. 29-30.
85. *ibid*, p. 152.
86. *ibid*, p. 154.
87. "Political Notes", The Statesman, 19 August 1928.
88. The Statesman, 24 August 1928.

89. BLC, op.cit., p. 560.
90. ibid, pp. 563-64.
91. The Statesman, 22 August 1928.
92. This concern was clearly reflected in Jogindra Chandra Chakravarti's motion seeking to remove the differences between raiyats holding at fixed rates from before and after the Permanent Settlement. The Bill had proposed that those raiyats who had obtained "fixed rent" kabuliyats after the Permanent Settlement should not have this right any longer but should pay a rent which was fair in relation to similar lands in the same village. Jogindra Chakravarti's motion to continue the existing rights was supported by the Swarajya and Muslim blocs, opposed by the official section and the big zamindars, and was carried 43-41.
93. Nihar, 9 April 1929.
94. "Frajawatta Ain Pranayan Sanparke Kayekti Bhitarer Katha", Nihar, 18 September, 25 September, 2 October, 1928.
95. Nihar, 3 December 1928.
96. From 25 June to 30 July 1929.
97. 13 August 1929.
98. Nihar, 12 November 1929.
99. Nihar, 18 September 1928.
100. Nihar, 12 November 1929.
101. Nihar, 19 November 1929.
102. ibid.
103. This is not the place to attempt a more rigorous theoretical elaboration of these distinctions. A more detailed discussion has been attempted in Partha Chatterjee, "Agrarian Relations and Communalism in Bengal, 1926-1935" in Ranajit Guha, ed., Subaltern Studies : Writings on South Asian History and Society (Delhi : Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

104. For an earlier period and a specific section of the city poor, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Communal Riots and Labour : Bengal's Jute Millhands in the 1890s", Past and Present (forthcoming).
105. Hitesranjan Sanyal, "Dakshin Paschim Banglay Jatiatabadi Andolan", Chaturanga, 38, 1 (1976), pp. 1-26; 38, 3(1976), pp.183-207; 39,1(1977), pp. 68-83; "Congress Movements in the villages of Southwest Bengal", Proceedings of the Sixth European Conference on South Asian Studies (Paris, 1979).
106. A.W. Cook, District Magistrate, Midnapore, to the Commissioner, Burdwan Division, 3 November 1921. GB Local Self-Government (Local Boards). File L.2U-5. Progs. 36-49. July 1922. WBSA.
107. D. L. Dey, SDO Ghatal, to District Magistrate; Midnapore, 20 October 1921. GB Local Self-Government (Local Boards). File L. 2U-5. Progs. 36-49. July 1922. WBSA.
108. Report by S.N. Ray, Joint Magistrate, Midnapore, 1 November 1921. BG Local Self-Government (Local Boards). File L. 2U-5. Progs. 36-49. July 1922. WBSA.
109. S. C. Mazundar, SDO Tamruk, to District Magistrate, Midnapore, 21 October 1921. GB Local Self-Government (Local Boards). File L. 2U-5. Progs. 36-49. July 1922. WBSA.
110. See Partha Chatterjee, "Agrarian Structure in Pre-Partition Bengal", *op.cit.*



12. NRIPENDRANATH BANDYOPADHYAY : An Enquiry into the Causes of the Sharp Increase in Agricultural Labourers in North Bengal (*Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XII, No. 53, December 31, 1977)
13. ARUN GHOSH, comp. : Research Notes and Documents Collected by the Late Prodyot Mukherjee
14. AMIYA KUMAR BAGCHI : Choice of Techniques and Technological Development in Underdeveloped Countries : A Critique of the Non-Neoclassical Orthodoxy (*Cambridge Journal of Economics*, June, 1978)
15. PARTHA CHATTERJEE : On the Scientific Study of Politics : A Review of the Positivist Method (*The State of Political Theory : Some Marxist Essays*. Calcutta, Research India Publications, 1978)
16. RUDRANGSHU MUKHERJEE : Trade and Empire in Awadh, 1756-1804
17. SHIBANI KINKAR CHAUBE : The Ethnic and Social Bases of Indian Federalism
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