HOMI · MODY

A Many Splendoured Life

A Political Biography by

D. R. MANKEKAR

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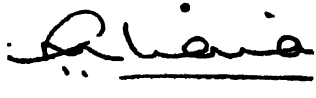
Mr. D. R. Mankekar, a veteran journalist, is bringing out a biography of Sir Homi Mody entitled "A Many Splendoured Life".

Sir Homi is one of the greatest men in our country with his activities in so many directions. He is a great friend of mine and I have known him for a long number of years. He is known as the best after-dinner speaker in India. A very popular man, he has no enemies and is respected by everyone. He is an asset to our country. He has made his mark in business and also as an administrator. During the British days, he acted as Governor of Bombay. After independence, he was Governor of Uttar Pradesh where he made a great name for himself, was highly spoken of and was a very popular Governor.

Sir Homi is keenly interested in sports and was the President of the Cricket Club of India for many years. In appreciation of his valuable services to it, the Cricket Club of India has put up a bust of his which is kept in the premises of the Club. I have great admiration for him and I wish him many long years of useful life.

Mr. Mankekar is doing a great service to our country by bringing the biography of Sir Homi called "A Many Splendoured Life". I do not think anyone can improve on the title. It is a great honour to me to write a foreword to it and I hope the book will be read by thousands of people all over the world.



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A LICENSED JESTER

ONE MAN in this country can, so to say, get away with murder! Sir Homi Mody's secret is that he wraps his home-truths in the soft, titillating velvet of his wit and humour. He drives home his point, even while his victims, carried away by the sheer ecstasy of the moment, cheer him to their doom !

There is an element of decoy and guerilla tactics about the technique, which first disarms the victim and then leads him up the garden path.

For fifty years, Sir Homi has been the "Licensed Jester" on the stage of Indian public affairs. His supremacy still remains unchallenged.

To the extent that Mody muffles his moral in mirth, his style is in the true Birbal tradition.

In this country where our great are grim, incapable of laughter and bereft of a sense of humour, where they are, in this life, too preoccupied preparing for the next, Sir Homi's gift is even rarer.

The levers of success of Mody's public career are, however, as much his unique gift of wit and sense of humour as his pertinacity, blended with a down-to-earth rational approach and backed by thorough "home work". This rare synthesis of virtues gave him an advantage over his adversaries. "You should always know a little more of your subject than the other person," was his advice to budding politicians at a college "parliament".

Sir Homi Mody's biographer is thus verily impaled on the horns of a dilemma. Should the theme of his work be "The Master of Mirth who Clowned His Way to Success ?" Or should it be a straight narrative of an interesting and instructive success story of a serious-minded personality of integrity and courage—a leader who declined to lead, and, certainly, refused to be led, one with a nose that "wunt be led"!

Mody's own preference for the second theme is yet another snag that his biographer has to keep in mind. Every time some one—and every one does !—calls him a "funny man," Sir Homi winces. For he desires that posterity shall carry of him the image not of a

Bob Hope who brought "music hall" techniques to politics, but a constructive statesman who has made an abiding contribution to his country's political life and economic progress.

Nor could one ignore his long and varied record of service to the country, as a city father, as a crusader for the country's industrial development, as a militant champion of Bombay's textile industry, as an outstanding parliamentarian, as a highly competent Minister, as a model Governor of a State.

It can be truly said of Sir Homi that in his eventful public career—still not out !—there is not a major battle which he did not win, in which the weapons used were the human tongue and reasoned eloquence.

This writer has, therefore, striven to strike a judicious balance, weaving both aspects of his personality into the texture of this narrative. And since, in any objective study of Mody's life-story, his irrepressible wit, rollicking sense of humour, sticks out a mile, that unique trait inevitably runs right through it like a thread.

The "tragedy" is that Mody bears the Mark Twain curse. The world has decided he is a "funny man"— and if he has distinguished himself in many an other field too, they seem unconcerned !

Successful politicians and businessmen you can come upon by the score; what's special about it ? But there is only one Mody, meaning thereby the "funny man" in the country's public life.

The public has ordained it so. Sir Homi has, willy nilly, to play up to that part !

Thus, the most serious passages or the profoundest thoughts propounded by Mody in his speeches, to his chagrin, are left in tatters by unwarranted and untimely laughter from his audience. And, then again, if and when—which is very seldom—Sir Homi makes a serious speech sans jokes, it is news and occasion for much head-shaking and concerned comment in the press and among his friends and well-wishers.

Mody once defined the vital role of humour in human affairs. In an interview to a Hungarian humourist and caricaturist, Laszla Schwartz, way back in 1934, Sir Homi deplored that "there is far too little" of humour in India and "as a result, we have such a sad lack of a sense of proportion in politics. For humour is not only meant to make people laugh, but it should function as a great balancing force in human affairs."

And then Mody went on to analyse the problem. He said, "The main trouble with our politicians is that not only do they take themselves too seriously, but they also take their audience too seriously. I don't know which of the two is worse; but the two together is tragic."

Mody attributed this "hypersensitiveness" among Indians to the fact that "for so many generations in the past they have been politically a subject people". There is possibly more to it than that. It is the Hindu "other-worldly" philosophy that treats life in this world as a transient sojourn in the "Vale of Tears", where to laugh is to sin.

With such a philosophy, laughter and frivolity are incompatible, where human greatness is associated with grimness of visage and austere living. And yet, as Mody pointed out in his interview to the Hungarian humourist, "Every now and then, when one of them (politicians) makes proper use of it (humour), there is never any lack of appreciation". Indeed, because there is so much dearth of that divine commodity in this country, there is so much hunger for it among the people.

It would appear that wit, like genius, is born and not made. In Mody's case, at any rate, it was not even inherited—though the Parsis as a whole, among all Indian communities, are endowed with a lively, even boisterous, sense of humour. Mody cannot recall any "funny men" among his ancestors or relatives. Both his father and mother were serious-minded people, not given to much frivolity.

Nor does it appear as though Mody made any special effort to cultivate a sense of humour through a systematic study of humourous literature or maintained a scrap book of jokes and anecdotes. Dickens, W. W. Jacobs and P. G. Wodehouse is as far as he went in the line of "funny books", and that by way of not more than routine reading. His acquaintance with Mark Twain is somewhat distant. Mody insists that wit is a gift. It could not be got out of books. Taken out of books, it becomes laboured, anyway.

In the beginning, however, Mody did try to cram jokes and stick them into his speeches like pistachios in a cake. But soon he had to give up that laborious practice, for the simple reason that he was too lazy to keep it up. Thereafter, he entirely depended

upon his native wit and inspiration of the moment, and that only improved his style by imparting spontaneity to his wit.

Mody's gift lies in his unique capacity to see the funny side of almost every thing that he comes across. His spontaneous wit cascades like a stream down the Western Ghats in monsoon; it is self-propelling and regenerates itself through a process of chain-reaction.

An American dictionary defines wit as "The ready perception and happy expression of unexpected or amusing analogies or other relations between ideas apparently incongruous or unrelated; a sudden and ingenious association of ideas or words causing delight and surprise." According to Jonathan Swift, "Wit in speech is quick in conception and easy in delivery". Mody's gift fits into these definitions like a glove.

A felicity of expression, the light touch that tickles but does not sting, that meets even an adversary in a friendly sporting spirit, is a unique trait of Mody's public personality.

In 1928, Bombay's textile industry was greatly agitated over unfair foreign competition in its home market and demanded Government protection for itself against the menace. But to their chagrin, the textile interests found New Delhi impervious to their cry for succour.

Mody, then Chairman of the Bombay Millowners' Association, persuaded the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, to accept an invitation for a dinner in his honour by the Millowners' Association, at Bombay. Proposing a toast to the Viceroy, on the occasion, Mody referred to an interview that representatives of textile interests earlier had with the Commerce Member, Sir George Rainey, at New Delhi, in these words of good-humoured irony:

"We were very pleasant and persuasive at our first interview with him (Rainey), but when he met us again after the publication of the Government of India's decisions on the Tariff Board's report, we told him in somewhat plain and forcible terms what we thought of him. It must be said to his credit that he took every thing with great good humour. It is true he did not seem much impressed by anything we told him, and I am not sure that he did not actually yawn once, when I was in the midst of what I thought was a most moving appeal. I like to think, however, that Sir George Rainey was concealing behind an unbending official

manner a most engaging personality and a real desire to understand the difficulties."

Mody then turned on the Viceroy himself and complained: "There is a little damsel (Calcutta) dwelling on the banks of the Hooghly who, for some reason, has always claimed a disproportionate share of the attention of the Government of India, even though judicial separation was effected in 1911, and while constancy is a virtue which we all admire, or ought to, it is to be deplored that the Mighty Jove should be so insensible to other claims on his affections."

Yet another example of Mody's felicity of expression is the tribute he paid, some years ago, to C. Rajagopalachari, at a university convocation, at which Mody presided and Rajaji delivered the address. Introducing the chief guest, Mody recalled an episode when "Rajaji talked to me so persuasively, argued so effectively and got round me otherwise so completely that at the end of the talk, I had no views left at all.....and it was not till another day or two had passed that I recovered my original convictions."

In contrast, you have here a sample of the withering sarcasm Mody is capable of, which is nevertheless executed with the Modyian finesse. At the Bombay Millowners' Association's annual banquet in 1929, at which Sir Leslie Wilson, Governor of the Presidency, was the guest of honour, Mody reverted to the subject agitating the mind of the industry most, namely the Japanese dumping of textiles on the Indian market. Mody said:

> "The situation is one which the stoutest optimist might regard with dismay. But, gentlemen, we must not lose heart; there is a ray of hope illuminating the darkness around us. To a question put by Sir Victor Sassoon in the Legislative Assembly, drawing attention to the vast increase that had taken place in imports of yarn and cloth, the Hon'ble Commerce Member is reported to have replied that the Government of India were 'watching developments'.
>
> "I need not say with what relief the industry has received this assurance. Things might easily have been worse; the Government of India might not have been watching the situation at all, and you can well imagine what the plight of the industry would have been under such tragic circumstances!

"As it is, we know that whatever may happen, the Government of India are keeping an eagle eye on the situation; in other words, that they are waiting, like Micawber, for something to turn up. What it is that the Government are precisely waiting for, it is difficult for ordinary minds to appreciate."

The irrepressibility of Mody's sense of humour is best illustrated by the dialogue reported between Mahatma Gandhi and Mody in 1944, following the latter's resignation from the Viceroy's Executive Council, over the issue of the Viceroy's refusal to release the fasting Mahatma, interned in the Aga Khan Palace, in Poona.

Fifteen months after Mody's resignation, Gandhiji was freed by the Government on grounds of health, and Mody met the Mahatma at his temporary Juhu residence. At that moment, Mody's mind was greatly exercised by the worsening communal situation, and he earnestly pleaded to Gandhiji that he must solve the Hindu-Muslim problem in his life-time.

The Mahatma replied: "Don't worry. I shall live up to 120 years." Mody promptly interpolated: "Why did you not tell me that before ? I would never have resigned !"

The Mahatma was convulsed with laughter.

Mody likes to recall how in the mid-forties, during the sessions of the Sapru Committee, set up to thrash out a solution for the baffling political deadlock in India, he sat next to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. Duly awed and subdued by his proximity to the great philosopher, Mody found himself for a while, bottled up. But he could not repress himself for long, and soon started his usual clowning, and to his pleasant relief, the philosopher crackled and "laughed like a child".

Years ago, in the days before the bifurcation of the Bombay State, Mr. Shantilal Shah, then Minister of Labour in the State Government, in a speech described the Government as a "beautiful wife who prepared a variety of choicest dishes for the tax-payer." Speaking at the Rotary Club of Ahmedabad subsequently, Mody exclaimed : "What a pity I did not know earlier that I was the husband of the Bombay Government, otherwise I would have administered proper chastisement for her behaviour in recent years and asserted myself in my house."

At a public function at which Morarji Desai was in the chair and Mody the main speaker, the latter declared: "Mr. Morarji and

I are very good friends, largely because of an understanding we have reached to differ on every conceivable issue under the sun."

At the golden jubilee celebration of Bombay's Taj Mahal Hotel, Mody shocked into mirthquake the distinguished guests assembled by putting forth the daring claim that the Taj had done a signal social service by preventing divorces—he explained, "by providing citizens afflicted with wives unable to cook, with good food, and thus enabling them to keep their wives as pets, instead of being compelled to divorce them!" Mody commended the inscription on an American menu card which read: "If your wife cannot cook, do not divorce her, eat here and keep her for a pet."

But Mody denies that he invented the joke about "Lady Afternoon" which went the rounds of Delhi society when he was the Supply Member of the Government of India.

The story goes that when Sir Feroze Khan Noon, who was a colleague of Mody, gave a luncheon party at his house, the guests found a charming young lady doing the honours. On inquiring who she was, it was explained that she was Sir Feroze Khan's niece. A few months later she became Feroze Khan's wife.

When some time later, Mody gave a party at his house, there were two young girls who were introduced to the guests as his nieces. Thereupon an American, who was present at both the functions, remarked in a rich twang, "Oh, I see, they call them nieces here!"

Mody was in his element, and his wit at its readiest and best, during the 12 years he spent in the Central Legislative Assembly. Right through that long innings, Mody's performance was so outstanding that the Press Gallery soon ran out of their stock of adjectives in reporting him.

"Mr. Mody was scintillating today", or "Mr. Mody was in his best form today" read the press reports day after day. The phrases soon wore out by over-use. Thereupon, reporters settled down to "H. P. Mody was in his usual form today.... kept the house rocking with laughter," or "The otherwise dull proceedings in the Assembly today were enlivened by Mody's sparkling wit and devastating sallies."

Mody's style in the Assembly was summed up by *Commerce* in these words: "A well-reasoned speech spiced with humour, which is his way of seasoning the unpalatable truth for the

ignorant." Homi Mody's style, however, soon brought into currency new terms and phrases—"Homicide", "Modyfication", "Modyisms", "bon homi", and so on.

The term "Homicide" was coined by the Congress and Nationalist benches in the Assembly to describe what they considered a "sell-out" by Mody to the Lancashire cotton interests, when he signed the historic Mody-Lees Pact in the teeth of severe denunciation from the Nationalist Press and platform in the country.

"Modyfication" reflects Mody's ever-readiness to modify his stand and meet his opponent half-way and strike a mutually beneficial bargain. The term acquired a new hue when Mody vehemently criticised the Ottawa Agreement on Empire Preferences, demanded the appointment of a committee to study the Agreement, got on to the committee so appointed and then found himself supporting the Ottawa Agreement which he had earlier denounced bell, book and candle. Thereupon, the Congress benches greeted Mody's final speech with shouts of "Modyfication again" !

"Modyisms" are the Mody brand of witticisms and anecdotage, his devastating, ad-libing interruptions and just the absurd twist he gives to a sentence even as it falls from his lips—the unexpected anticlimax he often manages to work into an idea that explodes like a bomb on the audience. If O. Henry is the master of the "surprise" and the "anticlimax" in the field of short story, Mody is the wizard of the art in the realm of spoken wit.

Thus, in a broadcast on "If I were to Live my Life Again", Mody mentioned a host of things he would like to exchange if he were to re-live his life. He then added, with exaggerated emphasis, "But I would never want to change my life's partner. No, never !" He then impishly added : "I am, of course, making this remark in order to preserve the peace at the home front !"

Replying at a Tata farewell function on his appointment as the Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Mody crackled : "My associations are extremely pleasant with all my colleagues. Not one of them ever differed from me and no one has ever paid the least attention to what I said. In other words, our relations have been most harmonious."

Typical of the "Modyisms" in the field of epigrams are : "Do right and fear no man; don't write and fear no woman"; "Socialism

is Bolshevism with a shave"; "You cannot live on the sweat of your grandfather's brow"; "Having fought a war to end all wars, they have created a peace to end all peace."

Speaking in the budget debate in the Central Assembly in 1933, Mody described the effect of the surcharge on income-tax by relating the story of the Jullunder shopkeeper who submitted to the Income-tax Commissioner: "To pay your Honour's dues, I am practising the utmost economy in family matters. I am disposing of old members and stopping further generation by living alone. Your Honour's will be done."

The havoc "Modyisms" wreak is illustrated by the following Modyian intervention:

The Central Assembly was discussing the highly controversial Child Marriage Bill, in the thirties. Baijnath Bajoria, a fervent Sanatani, was pouring out filibustering eloquence in opposing the Bill—it descended upon the House like the steady downpour of Kerala's monsoon in August, for nearly two hours.

Bajoria's drone had the effect of a lullaby on the House, and many of the Members were half asleep, and even the President was found nodding.

Mody's voice crashed through the somnolence like a spanner on to sheet-glass. "Would you prefer two girls of nine to one of 18?" shouted Mody.

The Hon'ble Members thus rudely shaken back to life and to the proceedings of the House, screamed with uncontrollable laughter. In the ensuing pandemonium, poor Bajoria completely lost the thread of his oration, looked pathetically around and sat down, crest-fallen.

On another occasion, N. M. Joshi, the well-known Labour leader from Bombay, with whom Mody always had a bone to pick, began his speech with the words: "Mr. President, Sir, I don't understand....." Mody promptly pounced upon him: "That's the trouble with you!" amidst a roar of laughter.

Speaking on the 1937 budget, Mody protested against an increased excise on foreign liquor and said, "I smoked and drank before the duties were raised, and I still continue to do so. But I do not know what will happen if the duties are raised further."

'Go in for toddy" shouted Satyamurti.

Mody: "No, thank you. Like everything swadeshi, toddy goes to my head."

During the same budget debate, both Mody and Satyamurti were found pleading for protection for Indian industries. Finance Member, Sir James Grigg, dubbed it a "Holy alliance between Congress and big business."

Mody quipped: "It is really a case of great minds thinking alike—with this difference that I do the thinking first, and Mr. Satyamurti follows a little later."

The term "bon Homi", of course, stands for the friendliness and mirthful spirit Mody exudes wherever he goes.

Those few gladiators who had the temerity to cross swords with Mody, found, to their cost, they could not out-Mody Mody. What can you do with a man who can not only take a joke about himself, but even crack one at his own expense and laugh at himself?

When somebody in the Opposition in the Central Assembly, during the debate on the controversial Indo-British Trade Agreement, named Sir Homi Mody, K.B.E., "Keeper of British Exports," the Bombay knight was the first to laugh and clutch at the sobriquet which he thereafter freely adopted and used against himself.

Referring to the composition of the Committee appointed by the Central Assembly to study the Ottawa Pact, of which he was a member, Mody described the body as a "much benighted Committee, with eight knights and only six gentlemen on it."

On the subject of women, however, Mody is positively "reactionary"—he is never tired of preaching that a woman's place is in the home and the kitchen—a view which he held when he was 25 and a bachelor, addressing the Ladies' Branch of the National Indian Association, Bombay, and which now, at 85, he staunchly stands by.

This was a viewpoint which would not have gone down very well with the militant feminist audience Mody was addressing in 1909 but for the fact that he wrapped his unpalatable treatise in abundant wit, humour and fulsome flattery of the fair sex—and thus got away with it. At any rate, there is no evidence available among the mouldy press clippings of a ripe tomato or rotten egg received on the chin by the guest-speaker of the evening!

"Woman's influence is boundless, her empire over man the most firmly-planted and abiding of all empires.....Man is the Lord of Creation, but woman is the Lord of man", he told his fair audience.

In a speech at a farewell banquet by the UP Cabinet in 1952, Mody divulged his technique whereby his victims come to enjoy jokes at their own expense ! "I say something frivolous and silly which makes them laugh, and afterwards I can tell them whatever I like," he said apropos of his experience of handling students. "I have told them about the loss of discipline, about the loss of ideals and about the loss of a great many things, and they have been extremely friendly and kind to me."

That this technique was consciously evolved is clear from Mody's advice given to the Xavierians some years ago. He told the budding leaders of the country : "I found early in my parliamentary career that nothing went down so well with the House as a touch of humour. Particularly in Select Committees I found a ready or witty retort a most effective weapon. You have no idea of the dreary character of most of the debates. The only thing to do on such occasions was to interject a flippant note or even say something absurd. It was quite effective."

Among a score of chairmanships Mody collected—"as a stamp-collector collects stamps"—he has been the chairman of the Royal Western India Turf Club for many, many years, though he has never won a race and holds an "honourable unbroken record of never having been at the tote window," as he himself put it.

A reporter asked Mody : "Why did you take to horse-racing ?"

Mody replied : "For the same reason I took to politics, banking business, what-have-you. I didn't know a thing about them, and still don't." !

But then Mody was President of the Cricket Club of India, on the strength of being a great cricket-fan. And he even publicly championed the cause of the Pentangular Cricket matches in Bombay at a moment when it was the fashion to denounce them for their communal character.

He was also President of the Sangeet Samaj of Lucknow and of the Bombay Symphony Orchestral Society—being innocent of both Indian and Western music !

Such then is the subject of this biography.

II

EARLY LIFE

AT THE TURN of the 19th century, the Parsis dominated Bombay's landscape. Enterprising and industrious, quick to take to Western education and first to come into direct contact with the British rulers and businessmen, the Parsi community were the pioneers of Indian commerce and industry.

They manned the highest public offices then available to Indians. They took to modern professions and predominated the Bar and Medicine. They prospered fabulously, and soon assumed leadership of the Indian community in the island-city.

They were in the forefront of the city's political and social life. And endowed with a high sense of philanthropy and social obligation, the community spent wealth as freely as it accumulated it, on charity, public works and civic causes and thus carved a niche for themselves in the city's annals.

A new-rich community, the Parsi society in those spacious times, showed a rare zest for life. With neither an ancient nobility nor an exclusive set such as the "100 Boston families" to boast of, the Parsis constituted a heterogeneous society, in which a man with wealth could easily gate-crash into the "Upper Ten".

With few avenues of outdoor entertainment available, in those days—whatever professional theatre was to be found in the city was also pioneered by Parsis—the Scandal Point at Breach Candy was one of the venues for the fashionable to foregather on Sunday evenings. Half a dozen phaetons would roll up and the occupants would flit from carriage to carriage and spend time in pleasant converse, as befitting the Victorian era.

A number of clubs, however, flourished among the community. They ranged from some exclusive ones, with their own coteries, to what was known as the homely "sadri fanas" in the open maidan, where all that was required was a grass mat and a lamp, to form a club! The amusement provided by these "clubs" seldom went beyond a game of draughts or "chaupat", the latter a peculiarly Parsi institution, characterised by a great deal of noise and mirth. The weekly dinners at many of these clubs were

sumptuous and a major attraction.

The Petits, the Wadias, the Jeejeebhoys, the Tatas, the Camas and the Davars dominated the city's industry and business. The first Indian to raise the cry of Swaraj, Dadabhai Naoroji, who came to be known as the "Grand Old Man of India", was a Parsi. He was thrice elected President of the Indian National Congress, the highest honour that the country could bestow on an Indian.

Dadabhai Naoroji was also the first Indian to be elected (on a Liberal ticket) to the British Parliament.. The only other two Indians to sit in the British House of Commons were also Parsis, Sir Muncherjee Bhownagree (Conservative) and, much later, Shapurjee Saklatwala (Communist).

In later years, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, who also had the honour of presiding over the Indian National Congress, became the "Uncrowned King" of Bombay, and bestrode the civic and political stage like a Colossus for three decades. Sir Dinshaw Wacha was another Parsi who adorned the Congress gaddi.

Sir John Malcolm, a former Governor of Bombay, wrote about the Parsis : "There is no body of natives in India so remarkable for their intelligence and enterprise as the Parsis."

It was in such spacious times, in the heyday of Parsi supremacy in the boom town of Bombay that Hormusji (Homi) Mody was born and grew up to adolescence. Of Hormusji's early life, however, according to Mody himself, there is nothing much to write home about.

The Modys were not millionaires, but were comfortably well off and a respected family in Parsi society. Its scions were accepted as "elders" of the community. Indeed, in 1778, Jamshed Bogabhai Mody, an ancestor of Hormusji and a leading Parsi, petitioned to the then Governor of Bombay, William Hornby, to allow the elders of the community to "punish such Parsees as infringe the rules of the religion by beating with a few shoes, agreeable to their crime, which will certainly amend them."

The permission was duly granted by the Governor, with the condition that no other form of corporal punishment be inflicted !

Hormusji's grandfather, Burjorji Rustomji Mody, was partner in the well-known managing agency firm of David Sassoon & Co., which owned Sassoon Cotton Spinning and Weaving Mills in

Bombay's textile district of Parel. His father, Peroshaw B. R. Mody also joined the same firm, first as manager of the Mill, and later, when his throat got affected by the fluff in the atmosphere, he moved to the firm's offices in the Fort, as manager of the Port Canning and Land Improvement Company.

It was a conservative family, with a serious bent of mind. Neither the father nor the grandfather was much interested in politics. The nearest that Peroshaw got to public life was that he was appointed a Justice of the Peace and was also a delegate to the Parsi Matrimonial Courts.

Peroshaw himself was old-fashioned, abstemious and frugal in habits. The family's standard of life was simple. Though quick-tempered, Peroshaw was kind-hearted and a man of restraint, who never raised his hand at his children. Unfortunately, he was a diabetic in the days before the discovery of insulin, and suffered greatly, including the amputation of an arm.

Peroshaw was fond of reading, particularly the English classics. One of Homi's early memories relates to his father's habit of reading out aloud to his sons lengthy passages from famous authors in an oratorical style. At the moment, young Homi, who preferred to play *gilli danda* in the adjacent lane to listening to the English masters, squirmed as he sat through what he considered an "infliction".

Yet, in later life, Mody realised how much he had benefited from those readings from the classics of English literature and politics.

Shirinbai, Homi's mother, lived up to 97. She was on the short side, "a frail and gentle creature", as Mody describes her. He would not literally do a thing without obtaining her consent.

The fairly large family—three sons and two daughters—was brought up in a conservative atmosphere, unlike the present-day Parsi children who are, often, spoilt by parental over-indulgence.

The eldest son, Rustom, became a Solicitor and died of cholera at an early age of 40. Homi's younger brother, Kaikhushroo, was a radiologist at the Tata Memorial Hospital, and died at 76 in London, following a nervous breakdown. Of his two sisters, both unmarried, Aimai died in 1956, past 60, while Ratanbai at 77, apart from a touch of rheumatism, is quite active, and never misses the weekly Saturday lunch with her brother at No. 1, Carmichael Road.

Yet another recollection of Mody's boyhood days is the incident when, following a heated altercation with his father, mustard-tempered Homi, then only 7, stormed out of the house, threatening "never to come back". It was midday, at the height of Bombay's summer. When Rustom came to know of Homi's "walk-out", he immediately rushed out and chased Homi to the Scandal Point, Breach Candy, a quarter of a mile from their residence, on Warden Road.

The irate youngster, by then, was in a mood to be pacified, and persuaded himself to be brought home by the elder brother. But in the process, Rustom developed a heat-stroke. That cured young Homi, once for all, of his itch to run away from home! He felt morally responsible for his brother's serious illness.

Homi's father, however, received him back with affection and without a word of reproach or scolding, let alone any corporal punishment, which normally any boy would have earned for such a dangerous prank. Later Mody was to recall his boyhood days and comment that a little spanking would have done him a lot of good!

From his early days, Homi was noted for his three predominant traits that largely contributed to the shaping of his later career—a fierce independence combined with a sharp temper; a pugnacity that refused to play second-fiddle to any one; and a gift of the gab, larded with a sparkling wit.

Homi first went to a private school at Gowalia Tank. From Gowalia Tank he migrated to Chandanwadi High School, at Dhobitalao, where he won a reputation of being "bright but lazy", and as he himself put it, "not distinguished at anything, apart from the gift of the gab and repartee."

Homi was the tiniest creature in his class, and proved very popular alike with his fellow-boys and the teachers. His class-master, Daruwalla, soon grew so fond of him that he left the entire class in Homi's charge for hours on end, while he attended to his other duties, those of the Librarian of the school.

Indeed, Mody was allowed to take classes and even give marks to his fellow-boys. And then towards evening, Master Daruwalla would turn up to see how his class had fared in his absence, and find everything under control.

His favourite pupil would then ask the teacher how many marks

he should take for himself, and the latter would often leave the matter to Mody's discretion, and Mody would modestly place himself third or fourth in the class, though occasionally he could not resist the temptation of being the first!

The diminutive Homi would also be asked to take the drill. He would then be made to stand on a table, so that the other boys could see him as he went through the motions.

Young Mody thoroughly enjoyed this importance thrust on him. Nevertheless, thanks to his gay sense of humour and a penchant for pranks, he got on extremely well with his classmates. Nor did the "big bullies" of the school bother him—largely because, even though favoured by the mighty, he was never on the side of the angels.

When he reached the Fifth Standard, Homi moved to St. Xavier's High School, where he completed his Matric, at the age of 17. At St. Xavier's, Mody showed great proficiency in English and History, but found no head for Mathematics—Algebra and Geometry.

His proficiency in English early stood out when he won an essay competition when the entrants were asked to write about a town, hill station or city they knew. Mody wrote about his own Bombay, which he knew like the back of his hand, sprinkling it with quotations, praising the special features of the island city. He won the prize money of Rs. 20/- which he invested in buying books.

After his Matric, Mody went to St. Xavier's college, where too he managed to catch the attention of the authorities; but how he managed to do it and came to be put in charge of the class roll-call is a story that deserves to be given in Mody's own words, as told in an article of reminiscences, that he contributed to the College Magazine:

"Being of a retired disposition, I took my seat in a remote corner of the (class) room. But not long was I to be suffered 'to blush unseen', and so one day I was literally dragged out of obscurity into the fierce light which beats upon the holder of power and responsibility. In other words, I was placed in charge of the roll. If ever an honour was unsolicited, it was this.....

"I never sought the dignity; the dignity sought me. And the reason was plain enough. Being a little absent-minded, I often used to forget that there were lectures. The Principal, like the

good friend he was, had tried to cure me of the habit by a bit of advice, not always couched in the choicest of terms. But finding me more absent-minded than ever, he had devised this rather ingenious plan of keeping me to my desk.....

"Nor were the hopes of my classmates falsified. It took me a fortnight to learn the names of all the boys, and during that time, they had pretty much their own way. And they were not any worse after I had settled down a little. If I did not find a boy in the class-room, I assumed that he might be in the corridor; and even if he was not physically in the College, he might be there in spirit, as they say. Besides, I was ever ready to give 'the benefit of the doubt', being of a legal turn of mind.

"So the roll call went on merrily until I was one day unexpectedly pulled up by the Principal. It happened that a poor student whom I had long given 'the benefit of the doubt' had died within a week of his admission into the class. With a twinkle in his eye, the Principal pointed out to me that if the boy had died he could not attend class as well! In those days, psychic philosophers had not yet discovered that the dead returned to the earth. I thought of Hamlet's father, but then he was an exception. So I promised to be more careful, and joined in the laugh at my expense."

Mody himself has described his college days as "the most enjoyable period of my life". He made the most of the opportunities available at college to extract out of it a truly rounded education.

III

BAR LIBRARY PRACTICE

IN THOSE days, much more than today, the highest ambition of most promising young men was to get into politics, and a short-cut to that coveted goal lay *via* Law.

So, irresistibly, on taking his M.A. degree in Literature, Mody gravitated to the Law College, and obtained his LL.B. In 1911, he passed the Advocates' Examination and enrolled himself as an Advocate at Bombay Bar.

And then began, in Mody's own words, a nine-year period of "vigorous Bar Library Practice"—for he soon discovered that his heart was not in the legal profession.

During that vital period of his life, Mody crammed his mind with knowledge, sharpened his wit, chopped politics and generally held forth on national and international affairs. And thanks to his gift of repartee and boisterous sense of humour, Mody always managed to hold an audience.

On one occasion, Mahomed Ali Jinnah, a contemporary of his, was laying down the law on national politics to an admiring group in the Bar Library.

Mody intervened with the remark: "But, Jinnah, you are wrong there."

The future Qaid-e-Azam haughtily snubbed Mody: "You don't understand. You keep quiet."

Mody who never took things like that lying down, flared back: "Mr. Jinnah I would have you know that when I wrote a book on politics, you could not have spelt the word!"

The reference was to Mody's prize-winning essay in 1908 on "The Political Future of India," which won him Rs. 2,000 offered to the winner by a British Liberal M.P., Sir Robert Laidlaw, and was later brought out in book form by a London publisher. Indeed, this book attracted much notice from the British and Indian press and for the first time revealed Mody's aptitude for politics.

During his time at the Bar, Mody rarely appeared before a Bench, and was content with arbitration assignments from time

to time, in which he earned a reputation for uprightness and integrity.

Not being particularly enthusiastic about the legal profession, however, Mody readily accepted when an offer came to him from C. N. Wadia to join as partner in his textile firm—and thereby, Mody stepped into the larger pastures of the country's business and public life.

Many years later, ruminating over the opening years of his career, in an article in *The Sunday Statesman,* Mody wrote: "Long before I thought of earning an income, I interested myself in various institutions, dealing with all manner of problems, from released prisoners to deserted children. Work in this direction gave real pleasure, and I became more and more absorbed in it, with the result that when a professional career opened out before me, I could not give it the undivided attention which it requires of all its votaries. Whether it was in me to achieve success, I cannot tell; but I think it is true that my interests in other directions destroyed whatever chances I had of making good."

In other climes, a man of Mody's literary attainments would have been absorbed in the realm of letters, and indeed carved a niche for himself.

In the prime of his public career, Mody nostalgically told a radio audience that if he were to live again, he would prefer to be a journalist and a writer, even if he had to live in penury. That bespoke his repressed ambition and unsatisfied desire.

Indeed, Mody displayed a flare for literary composition early in life.

Mody's treatise on "The Political Future of India"—a competition to which 50 essays from distinguished Britishers and Indians were entered—made out a powerful case for Indians' right and capacity for self-government.

In that essay Mody expressed the confidence that in fifty years Indians would get unified into one compact nation, and they would be fit for self-government "before the end of the century."

In retrospect, Mody's prognosis, then dubbed over-optimistic by contemporary British opinion, including the Judges Committee, today appears over-conservative! The intervening two World Wars—as wars always do—accelerated India's political evolution at an undreamt of pace.

Mody's treatise was backed by a deep study of the subject and illuminated by a passionate advocacy of his country's cause. In portions it emitted sparks. One passage read:

> The phenomena that are today observed throughout the land are of England's own creation. Does she stand aghast at her own handiwork ? Will she not instead courageously shape and direct the forces she has herself brought into being ? The path of duty is plain, and therein also lies the safety, the prosperity and the honour of England.

Mody then argued, most soberly and without overlooking the difficulties in the way, that it was possible to unite the diverse races of India into one self-governing community.

Mody asserted that religion was not "an indispensable element in the formation of a nation," and the patriot in him expressed the conviction that owing to our modern civilization, "it has come about that religious differences have ceased to be the disruptive influences that once they were," and hoped that "the day is not far distant when our religious differences will be entirely merged in a higher conception of the essential unity of all religions."

At that age, and in those times, such optimism was permissible !

Lastly, Mody was firmly of the view that the people of India have a "community of historical antecedents."

Nevertheless, he did not shut his eyes to reality and insisted that a settlement of the differences between the two great communities was the first step towards the creation of a united India.

It is interesting to note here that the British Press as a whole, with a few exceptions, reacted sharply against Mody's plea on behalf of his country's right and capacity for self-government. Thus, in the course of a hostile comment, *The Pall Mall Gazette* of London refers to the writer of the prize-winning essay as "Mody, from whose essay we learn he is a Parsee, though the fact would not be apparent from his name or from the principles and recommendations of his essay !" This conservative paper evidently expected a better loyalty to the British rulers from a Parsi than that displayed in the essay !

Thus, thirteen years later, when Mody brought out his magnum opus, "Sir Pherozeshah Mehta—A Political Biography", he had already established his reputation not only as a young politician but as a writer of merit.

The most outstanding political personality of the times, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta was one of the founders of the Indian National Congress, in 1885. His sterling work in the Bombay Municipal Corporation—which, despite his multifarious activities on the country's larger stage, remained his main forum all through his long public career—earned him the sobriquet "Joseph Chamberlain of India."

The biography ran to 700 pages and two volumes. Mody laboured over it for five years, amidst a busy life packed with public activities. But it was also a labour of love. The widow of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta had specially entrusted the task to him.

He was writing the life-story of his political hero, after whom Mody seemed to shape his own political philosophy and career—that reasoned moderation and realism which induced him to accept whatever was offered and then agitate for more; that strong preference for the constitutional methods and abhorrence of all kinds of extremism as vulgar; a highly developed pertinacity, that essential ingredient for success in public life.

The biography received a uniformly good press in this country as well as in Britain. But, inevitably, it also provoked controversy over the hornet's nests Mody raised in the book, dealing as it did which personalities and issues still very much alive and of contemporary significance.

One such hornet's nest raised relates to the controversial Surat session of the Congress in 1907, when the moderates, led by Pherozeshah, and the extremists, headed by Lokmanya Tilak, clashed head-on and the session dissolved in a pandemonium.

Dilating upon this sorry episode in his book, Mody took up cudgels on behalf of his hero and castigated the Tilakites in the strongest possible language. To describe the shocking scenes at Surat, Mody quoted at length a report by the famous British journalist, H. W. Nevinson, who was present on the occasion. His report read :

> Suddenly something flew through the air. A shoe !—a Maratha shoe !—reddish leather, pointed toe, sole stubbed with lead. It struck Surendranath Bannerji on the cheek; it cannoned off upon Sir Pherozeshah Mehta. If flew, it fell, and at a given signal, white waves of turbaned men surged up the escarpment of the platform. Leaping, climbing, hissing the breath of fury,

brandishing long sticks, they came, striking at any head that looked to them Moderate, and in another moment, between brown legs standing upon the greenbaize table, I caught glimpses of the Indian National Congress dissolving in chaos.

One Indian newspaper mordantly commented upon this passage in Mody's book: "Mody does not see that Surat was not a personal quarrel or an attempt to wreck the Congress, but the first great trial of strength between the new type of Indian nationalism and the old. The Surat episode is the proof as much of Pherozeshah's short-sight as of the impatience of the nationalists."

Mody then boldly challenged the allegation that the Surat outbreak was a revolt against "autocracy" (impliedly autocracy on the part of Pherozeshah) and convincingly proved that Surat was, if anything, the outcome of the "anti-mendicancy" party which Lord Curzon's reckless ways gave birth to.

"The question has often been asked, what would Pherozeshah have done had he been alive today (1921)?" wrote Mody in his final, summing-up chapter. And he then proceeded to speculate on the interesting hypothesis—and thereby raised another hornet's nest!

Mody claimed: "In his optimism, in his faith in the benefits of the British connection, and in his firm adherence to the methods of constitutional agitation, (Pherozeshah) belonged to the Moderates. In the vigour of his utterances, in the uncompromising independence of his attitude towards questions of principle, and in the tenacity and fearlessness with which he fought, he was a man after the heart of the Extremist. It is impossible to believe that with a leader of such eminence, the Moderate Party would have been what it is today, a sober and healthy element, no doubt, yet wanting in the daring and determination which make for leadership. It is equally arguable whether the Extremist Party could have captured the youth of the nation and won it over to a gospel of bitter antagonism had a leader of Pherozeshah's authority and consummate art in the management of men been alive."

This was another point the nationalist press seized upon. But Mody positively asked for trouble when he added :

That he (Pherozeshah) would have been an uncompromising opponent of Gandhi's political philosophy—barring of course,

its negative aspect of raising the moral tone of the nation by teaching it discipline and self-sacrifice—no one can doubt. A believer in modern progress, he would have refused to subscribe to a doctrine which seeks to cure the ills of society by a reversion to the primitive concept of life; which propagates boycott of a system of education that has produced our greatest men and given strength and reality to our demands, and which is calculated to deliver the energies of the best of India's manhood from such forms of purposeful activities as have made for national progress.

But Mody was no blind Boswell to his hero. Indeed, the iconoclast in him again and again asserted himself during the narrative. Mody pulled no punches when he took Pherozeshah to task for his retreat in the face of the onslaught of extremism. Nor did the biographer forgive his hero for his inexplicable act of resigning from the Presidentship of the Lahore session of the Congress.

He failed wholly to approve of Bombay's "uncrowned king's" stooping to contest an election to the Presidentship of the Bombay Municipal Corporation, when he had been elected unanimously to that honour thrice before, and later on, found extenuation in the thought : "Those who listened to the old leader on the occasion and knew his enthusiasm or active interest in the preparations for according their Majesties a fitting welcome must have readily forgiven him the election he had been persuaded to contest and felt that Bombay had indeed been worthily represented on a great and memorable occasion."

While it was true that Pherozeshah himself thought highly of young Mody as an up-and-coming man, it would not be correct to say that Mody's relations with Pherozeshah were as close and intimate as those of a *chela* with his *guru*.

Actually, Mody came to know Pherozeshah only in the last three years of latter's life, and his contact with the "Lion of Bombay" was confined to attending a few tea parties he gave and, about once a month, his "evening durbars" at his chambers, opposite Rajabai Tower, later occupied by Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, one of Pherozeshah's political disciples.

On latter occasions, every evening, as Mody noted, Pherozeshah would arrive in his chambers, rush to the screened-off enclosure for a wash and immediately exchange his pugree for a cap to hide his

ugly baldness, of which he was so self-conscious. He was fastidious about his looks and clothes and was fond of cosmetics and dyes.

Among those who regularly participated in Pherozeshah's "durbars" were Chimanlal Setalvad, Jehangir Patel, Ibrahim Rahimatullah, N. M. Samarth, D. G. Dalvi and Dinshaw Vacha, who all hung on the great man's lips as he held forth on national problems and laid down the line on various current issues before the country.

It happened that when, in 1913, Mody made his debut on the public platform, with an outstanding speech seconding a resolution on the separation of judiciary from the executive—a burning topic of public controversy even then—Pherozeshah Mehta was in the chair.

Pherozeshah introducing the seconder of the motion stated that though young, Mody was the right person to second it. Mody then delivered a speech full of verve and invective that brought down the house and made the "old man" start out of his chair and congratulate him.

Later, Pherozeshah is reported to have pointed at Mody to his cronies and commented: "Watch that young man, He will go far."

Soon after, however, standing for election, for the first time, to the Bombay Municipal Corporation, Mody sought the support of Bombay's "uncrowned king." The latter, however, would not oblige, on the ground—which, incidentally, did him credit—"They (the other candidates) are all my friends and good men. Whom can I ask to stand down to make room for you ?"

Thereafter, when Pherozeshah was backing his own candidate for the Presidentship of the Municipal Corporation, Mody had to plead that he could not help him because he had promised his vote for the rival, Sir Pheroze Sethna.

Nevertheless, Mody admired unreservedly two political personalities of the time. They were Pherozeshah Mehta and Gopal Krishna Gokhale.

With Mother.

Young Mody with two friends, R. H. Bathivala and H. R. Dadabhoy.

Portrait as a Young Man.

IV

THE STORMY PETREL

THERE CAN be no stronger foundation, nor greater advantage, to a public career than an intensive term in a Municipality.

Those were the days when larger political opportunities were severely restricted, and the best Indian intellect and talent found in the local municipalities an outlet for their public spirit and converted these into a vehicle for community service and forum for their oratory.

With a fine tradition laid down by stalwarts like Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, the Bombay Municipality was particularly lucky in this regard. It was thus that the Bombay civic body early earned the reputation of being the finest and most efficient in the entire country, and attracted the best among the public-spirited and politically-ambitious in the city.

Homi Mody was a member of the Bombay Municipal Corporation for 29 years, which was to him the spring-board to the larger stage of national politics.

For fifteen years or more he, with his group of supporters, who later called themselves the Progressive Party, ruled the roost in the civic affairs of the city. He was a king-maker, without whose assent "not a leaf fell to the ground." He still likes to look back upon that time with much satisfaction.

Mody's pugnacity, mastery of procedure, intensive study of local civic problems, robust common sense, personal integrity and gift of man-management put him at an advantage over his brother-corporators, and soon they began to eat out of his hands.

For over ten years, Mody's well-disciplined Progressive Party was the only challenge to the Congressite Nationalist Party in the Corporation. Mody's two major achievements during his tenure in the Bombay Municipal Corporation were to keep politics out of civic affairs and to give the city a clean municipal administration.

Mody staged his entry on the civic scene with a bang. His maiden speech in the Corporation on April 21, 1913, over a burning local controversy—the utilisation of the land reclaimed by the filling in of the Gowalia Tank—hit the headlines of newspapers

and made oldsters in the civic chamber sit up and take notice.

The Times of India wrote: "It is a long time since any matter has been discussed with such vigour in the Corporation, and speeches reached a high level. The speech of Mr. H. P. Mody, upon which several members congratulated him, showed that by his entry into the Corporation, a most prominent speaker has been added to the body. Mody is a speaker of great fluency."

The powerful landlord interests in the Corporation were campaigning for farming out the reclaimed land in Gowalia Tank for building construction. They claimed that the Corporation had committed itself to their proposition even before the reclamation project was taken in hand. They cited figures to prove that land prices were soaring in the locality and how the Corporation would lose heavily if the land was kept an open ground. They argued that there were plenty of recreation parks in the vicinity of Gowalia Tank, such as the Malabar Hill gardens and the Bandstand garden and Chowpati, to warrant the allotment of another place for the purpose.

Mody tore their case to tatters. He poured ridicule over the statistics of land prices cited by them. He pleaded that the Corporators should not take a narrow view but as reasonable men they should look ahead and consider the future needs of the city. He declared that Bombay had, in the past, been allowed to grow in a haphazard manner without a definite plan. Open spaces had been done away with and huge piles of buildings had sprung upon them. There was not much they could now do about that. But a body like the Corporation should take a broader and enlightened view on the subject of providing recreational facilities to the public. Playgrounds were a blessing not only to the present but to future generations.

The great Pherozeshah supported Mody's viewpoint. The Corporation decided in favour of converting the Gowalia Tank area into an open playground, which it is even today.

These early years may be described as the "stormy petrel" phase in Mody's career, when he bubbled with energy and displayed a phenomenal zest for public life, when his vigilant eye missed no civic problem or grievance, and when no public controversy passed him by.

Indeed, in this phase, Mody's omnipresence in the city's public

life and controversies recalls to mind one of the stories he himself, later, told the Central Assembly. An Irishman landed in New York to find a fight going on. He went up to the nearest policeman and asked him whether it was a private fight or free for all, and whether he could join in !

After seeing a satisfactory end to the Gowalia Tank controversy, Mody turned to the then new menace in the streets of Bombay, namely, the roaring, heavy motor lorry traffic that churned up the roads and raised a dust nuisance. Mody brought up the issue before the Corporation during the discussions of the 1914 Municipal budget. He later moved a resolution demanding a raise in the motor-tax.

Mody declared : "These cars should not be allowed on all sorts of roads, as they were a positive nuisance." He hoped they would be taxed heavily and that cars with steel tyres would never be allowed. "They create noise and disturb peaceful citizens," he said. "No doubt they were essential in these days of industrialism," he conceded, "but they destroyed our roads. They should be taxed heavier than other cars."

His campaign led to the institution of a comprehensive enquiry into the entire question of vehicular traffic in the city and to a revision of the tax structure.

The future champion of Bombay's textile interests found himself crossing swords with a defender of those interests, Jamshetji A. Wadia. During the debates on the 1914 Municipal budget, Mody was provoked by Wadia's special pleading on behalf of Bombay's mill industry into remarking: "Anyone hearing Mr. Jamsetji Wadia getting eloquent on the virtues of millowners would imagine they were a body of philanthropists whose sole purpose in life was to toil from morn till night for the good of the city and its poor."

Wadia took umbrage at these remarks and took Mody to task in a letter to the editor of *The Times of India.* He ended his letter with a quotation from an editorial in *The Times, London,* which read: "Local self-government has mainly passed into Indian hands to make or to mar. Some of the best and most patriotic Indians are earnestly endeavouring to work on truly national lines, and several movements have been started in recent years to develop practical philanthropy, to stimulate self-help and to undertake the many tasks to which the Government agency is not suited. Such efforts are over-shadowed and stunted by the perversion of ideals

preached by the small body of lawyers, doctors, journalists and schoolmasters, which have acquired a superficial western education."

Mody bristled and hit back fiercely. In a letter to the editor of *The Times of India,* Mody retorted: "Greater men than he (Wadia) have had their fling at them (lawyers, doctors, journalists, etc.) and left them unperturbed. But it is really amusing to find Mr. Wadia arrogating to himself by implication a position among 'the best and most patriotic Indians who are earnestly endeavouring to work on truly national lines.' After all, I was right when I said that Mr. Wadia had a peculiar humour of his own!"

Wadia then "asked for more" when in another riposte in *The Times of India,* he concluded his letter with these words: "...But I have no regard for those professional men who having inflicted an injury, knowingly or unknowingly, have not the manhood to express regret, but add insult to injury."

In a final reply in *The Times of India,* Mody clinched the argument with this advice to Wadia: "Try and infuse into your arguments a little more of logic and a little less of personalities."

Incidentally, it was round about this time that Mody saw Mahatma Gandhi for the first time. In March 1914, the latter had returned to India from South Africa for good. The Mahatma's fame and reports of the miracles he achieved through his quaint weapon of Passive Resistance in that country had already preceded him. Gokhale had stated that Gandhi had moulded heroes out of clay. Thus the people of Bombay were all keyed up to see this legendary personality, when in January 1915, a reception was organised in the city in his honour, at which Pherozeshah Mehta presided.

Mody later recalling the event, remarked that Gandhiji's personal appearance, in contrast with the reports of his magic leadership and achievements in South Africa, came to him as a striking anti-climax. Gandhiji was dressed in a dhoti and a long, buttoned-up coat and a typical Kathiawari turban and looked somewhat insignificant. Nor did Gandhiji's speech that evening impress Mody. Many a time, in later years, Mody ruminated over this meeting and wondered how deceptive appearances could be.

When in 1914 the First World War broke out, Mody plunged into the war effort and urged people to subscribe to the War Loan Referring to the "tremendous struggle going on, in which not only

the fate of particular nations hangs in the balance, but the very ideals and principles which govern humanity are at stake," Mody exhorted a public meeting: "He who cannot fight, can personally serve in other ways. He who cannot do that either, can give of his superfluity for the comfort of those that fight for us. But the man who can do none of these things, can at least 'lend' a little. And when the Empire asks us to lend at 5½ per cent to 6 per cent, think how little it is that it is asking us to do!"

In 1915, Mody's political guru, Sir Pherozeshah died. The entire city, of which he was for well nigh four decades the "uncrowned king", went into mourning. Mody in moving speeches told his audiences that the best memorial to the great man's memory was to follow in his footsteps and carry forward his good work and policies in the civic as well as national politics. And it looked as though Mody himself decided to set an example of what he preached. For he ably filled the void left by Pherozeshah in the civic life of Bombay.

A memorial meeting convened by Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, under the aegis of the Parsi Anjuman, held at Town Hall, however, found itself caught in a Parsi domestic controversy and was marred by ugly scenes created by a determined group of Parsis who questioned the right of Sir Jamsetjee to convene the memorial meeting on behalf of the Parsi Anjuman.

During the pandemonium that ensued the two groups clashed with each other, first with words and then with fisticuffs. Mody, as usual, was in the thick of trouble, and for the first time in his life, experienced literally what a "kick in the pants" meant!

The *Praja Mitra and Parsi* reported: "Shortly before 4 P.M. Mr. H. P. Mody came to request the opponents to preserve order as Sir Jamsetjee was coming, and as Mr. Mody turned round to get down the platform, he received a kick in his back and was literally kicked down."

While the dissidents took possession of the hall, the supporters held the scheduled meeting on the steps of the Hall and passed a resolution which recorded the great regret of the Anjuman at the death of Pherozeshah Mehta and recounted his services to the community and the country. Sir Dinshaw Petit moved the resolution and F. Sorabji Talyarkhan seconded it.

In 1915, Dinshaw Wacha was elected by the Bombay Municipal

Corporation to the Provincial Legislative Council. At a function convened to felicitate him on his election, Corporators poured much well-meant but redundant advice on how that veteran should conduct himself and what should be his duties in the legislature! Among these Corporators was Mody, possibly the youngest and juniormost of them.

Wacha himself took it all in good humour. But *The Times of India* was, next morning, provoked into editorialising under the heading "On Sucking Eggs." It wrote: "After the elders of the people had spoken, there rose Mr. Mody ready, as usual, to give lessons in the art of sucking eggs, to congratulate a man who was experienced in public affairs when he was in his cradle, on rising superior to the occasion."

Mody, who had by now made it a life's motto never to take anything lying down from anyone, snarled back at the "Old Lady of Bori bunder" (as B. G. Horniman used to call the newspaper).

"In a leaderette which discourses elegantly on 'the art of sucking eggs', you have given vent to the peculiar humour which you find so irresistible when writing about Municipal matters," wrote Mody. "Undoubtedly, after the somewhat exacting and tiresome labours of enlightening the public as to the course of the war and the conduct of military operations, an editor, like lesser men, must find himself in need of a little relaxation, and it would be ungracious to complain about the form it may occasionally take. But much as I enjoy your efforts in a lighter vein, I am afraid I must object to your putting silly and meaningless phrases in my mouth..... I cannot of course challenge your right to indite humorous articles with elegant headings to expose the follies and foibles of junior members, but as I do not understand the precise significance of the phrase 'rising superior to the occasion', I venture mildly to protest against its being put into my mouth."

In a dog-fight—and he delighted in them—Mody always managed to have the last bite, if not the last laugh.

In June 1917, Bombay witnessed the first open-air mass meeting in its history. It was held in the compound of Ratansey Morarji's residence, to protest against the internment of Mrs. Annie Besant, Dr. G. S. Arundale and B. P. Wadia. By now an active politician, Mody was, inevitably, a participant in such an important event in the city.

It was at this meeting that Mody saw Motilal Nehru for the first time. Mody asked Sarojini Naidu, sitting next to him, "Who is that immaculately-dressed person?" Sarojini replied: "He is Motilal Nehru—a well-dressed, handsome, successful lawyer and well-liked; that's about all!"

At the meeting, Sir Wazir Hassan moved the principal resolution, and Mody was to second it. But to the increasing impatience of Mody, Wazir Hassan went on and on, and then wound up with the suggestion that the resolution might straightway be put to vote. Mody was furious, and when called upon to second the resolution, did so in just three words to demonstrate his displeasure.

About this time, Mody initiated an interesting political controversy in the Press. In February 1915, just before he suddenly died, Gokhale had formulated certain proposals for political reform, which later came to be known as Gokhale's political will and testament. Gokhale's scheme was based upon a wide measure of provincial autonomy. Gokhale died immediately after drafting the proposals, and that such a document existed was known to just three persons—Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, who died a few months later, the Aga Khan and Lord Willingdon—each of whom had been sent a copy.

In October 1916, Mahomed Ali Jinnah, presiding over the Ahmedabad Provincial Conference, presented a scheme of political reforms which to keen students appeared to be the same as the Gokhale Plan.

On August 28, 1917, Mody wrote a letter to the editor of *The Times of India,* under the *nom de plume* "Curious," which for the first time brought to light a blatant case of plagiarism on the part of Jinnah.

"Curious" wrote: "The most cursory examination of the latter (Jinnah's scheme) will show that it is identical, almost word for word, with that which has now been published as Mr. Gokhale's memorandum on reforms. The question naturally arises, was Mr. Gokhale or was the Hon. Mr. Jinnah the author of it ?"

To enable some acute critic to solve the problem, "Curious" put down in his letter in parallel columns the principal points as phrased in each version, and with his tongue in the cheek added: "Could it be that some psychic influence was at work impelling two great minds to think alike and deliver their

message in identical language ?" The two versions in the parallel columns indeed looked identical, word for word, point for point.

With that letter, Mody had set the spark to a controversy that raged in the columns of the Bombay Press for several months. More than a year after "Curious's" letter was published in *The Times of India,* Jinnah thought it fit to come out with a laboured explanation of the "coincidence". He flatly denied that in his Ahmedabad Provincial Conference address he had "passed off some ideas of the late Hon. Gokhale as my own."

"This is false," he asserted, but conceded, "there are a few features and also similarity of language in connection therewith common both to the scheme propounded in the Gokhale proposals, published after his death, and the scheme I suggested as one which might be adopted for the Provincial Government. But the proposals of Mr. Gokhale are not all his own, nor do I claim that all my suggestions are my original ideas. Both are a result of discussions and conferences with many people. I had many discussions with Mr. Gokhale. We exchanged views on his proposals and my own and we took notes at the time.

"It is not therefore surprising if, as a result of this, when each came to put his ideas and proposals as a whole in writing, we used the same expressions and the same language, regarding those points on which we agreed, since when exchanging ideas and taking our notes we should naturally do so in the same phrascology as we were seeking the same formula. Such coincidence, if they can be called so, is not uncommon in politics."

This sophistry provoked S. R. Bomanji, in a letter to *The Times of India,* bluntly to declare: "Every word of this explanation is false." Bomanji added:

> Mr. Jinnah, however, after holding his peace for more than a year after the offence had been detected, has now come forward with a story which is false as it is unjust to the memory of a dead man. Mr. Jinnah now claims to be part author of the scheme and explains the identity of language by saying that he had many discussions with Mr. Gokhale, that he exchanged views on Mr. Gokhale's proposals and his own, and that they both took notes at the time.
>
> I have uncontrovertible proofs in my possession to show that this is not so. . . . Mr. Gokhale commenced to write out his scheme

for the first time on 16th February and completed it on the evening of 17th February. The same evening three copies of it were made and sent to H. E. Lord Willingdon, the then Governor of Bombay, the Aga Khan and Sir Pherozeshah Mehta. Mr. Gokhale died on 19th February....

More than 18 months had elapsed since Mr. Gokhale's death, and not a word had been said by any one about his having left behind him his last political will and testament. Sir Pherozeshah, the only man who, according to Mr. Jinnah, had a copy of the document, was dead, while he was not aware that either H. E. Lord Willingdon or the Aga Khan had a copy, and he had not even accidental means of finding out that such copies existed, the Aga Khan being in England. Mr. Jinnah felt secure that the "coincidence" could not be detected.

To supply a missing link in the episode as narrated here, it may be added that Bomanji's suggestion was that Pherozeshah Mehta's copy of the Gokhale Plan, on the latter's death, fell in the hands of Horniman, who passed it on to Jinnah—the source of the plagiarism.

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Towards the middle of 1917, the War entered a critical phase. In India, the political agitation intensified, following the threat by the nationalist forces to start a passive resistance movement to get the Home Rule leaders, Mrs. Besant and her associates, freed. In London, Edwin Samuel Montagu replaced Austen Chamberlain as Secretary of State for India.

On August 20, 1917, Montagu, on behalf of the British Cabinet, made an authoritative pronouncement naming Responsible Government as the goal of British policy in India. The Declaration read:

> The policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing associations of Indians in every branch of administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of Responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. They have decided that substantial steps should be taken in this direction as soon as possible.

On September 16 of the same year, Mrs. Besant, Arundale and Wadia were released. Montagu toured India in November. Among the many representations and petitions presented to the Secretary of State during his tour of the country was a memorial from the Zoroastrian Association of Bombay. Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy was named chairman of the Parsi Memorial Committee and H. P. Mody and J. J. Vimadalal were joint secretaries.

The memorial, duly presented to Montagu, recapitulated the prominent role played by the Parsi community in India's political, social and economic progress, and pleaded that while the Parsi community did not subscribe to the principle of separate representation, "if political expediency demands the introduction of communal electorates, your memorialists are constrained to ask that its interests may be safeguarded as well as those of other minorities, without impairing the opportunities and facilities of representation which it enjoys at present."

The Government of India Act of 1919, known as the Montford Reforms, was the outcome of the Montagu visit. These reforms introduced a dyarchical system of government in the provinces, where Ministers responsible to the legislatures would administer certain "transferred" departments. The franchise as well as powers of the legislatures, provincial and Central, were widened.

Instinctively a constitutionalist, nurtured in the Pherozeshah tradition of moderation in politics, Mody was entirely in favour of working the reforms for what they were worth, and then asking for more. In contrast, the Congress had denounced the reforms as a "colossal sham."

Commenting upon the Montford scheme as it finally emerged from the Joint Parliamentary Committee, Mody considered the recommendations "a considerable advance upon the Montagu-Chelmsford proposals."

Mody added, "We ought to be grateful to the Secretary of State whose sympathy, statesmanship and Parliamentary experience have been able to defeat the determined efforts of the Government of India to whittle down even the little they had agreed to.... It goes without saying that we must do our best to work it up in a manner which will ensure a substantial advance in self-government at the end of the first period."

Having said that, Mody subjected the scheme to a searching

scrutiny and pointed at "a few disappointing features."

In regard to the Central Government, he remarked: "It is a pity that the practically unanimous demand of the country for some measure of responsibility has not been conceded. One cannot have much confidence in a Government which is utterly irresponsible, which disregards the united expression of opinion of the leaders of every school of politics, as in the case of the Rowlatt Bill; and which weakly allows the Dyers and O'Dwyers to set up a reign of terror in a Province which has played a notable part in the struggle for the emancipation of the world."

Mody was equally dissatisfied with the quantum of fiscal autonomy offered by the scheme, and commented, "Unless India is to have an effective voice in the fiscal arrangements made within the empire, we may find, in practice, our interests subordinated to those of other parts of the empire, as has so often been done."

In the meantime, much water had flowed under the bridge. The war ended, with the Allied victory slogans of *Democracy* and *Self-determination* ringing in the ears of Indians. Whatever might have been the intentions of Whitehall, the Government in New Delhi was now busy forging new and harsher weapons of repression against the rising tide of Indian nationalism. The Rowlatt Act was one such measure, against which the entire country raised its voice. The Congress under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership, threatened to retaliate with a passive resistance movement against the British rule. There followed the Jalianwala Bagh tragedy and Martial Law in the Punjab. This sequence of events overnight rendered the halting Montford Reforms outdated.

As could be seen from his angry comments on Lord Chelmsford's regime in New Delhi in the course of his statement on the Montford Reforms, Mody was equally stirred by the shocking events in the North.

In the civic fields, Mody's next campaign was against rack-renting by landlords exploiting the war-time shortage of accommodation and high prices.

At a public meeting held at Excelsior Theatre, Narayan Chandavarkar presiding, Mody was one of the half-a-dozen

eminent citizens who demonstrated their support to Government's rent control legislation.

The original bill recommended a rent ceiling of Rs. 50 for the purpose of providing protection to tenants against the landlord's exactions. Mody argued that the low ceiling would leave the landlords very much free to exploit the situation, as a very large and vital area of exploitation would still remain untouched. He insisted that there should be no ceiling and protection should apply to all classes of tenants including the middle class who had equally been the victim of the landlord tyranny and high prices.

The Corporation appointed a special committee to study the tenant-landlord situation in the context of high prices, of which Mody was a member. Mody appended a minute of dissent to the Committee's report that sought to confine the protection to the poor and lower middle classes. Mody accused the Committee's majority report of ignoring the existence of "that large class with a fixed income, which has to maintain a certain standard of life and which has been hit very hard already by the greatly increased cost of living."

Mody then sarcastically added, "Some members seem to think that the poor down-trodden landlord was a much-abused individual, who has sought to be robbed of his just dues by those who wanted to turn philanthropists at other people's expense."

Mody had the satisfaction of seeing a Rent Control Act on the Statute Book just as advocated by him, in that the ceiling for protection was knocked out and the measure was also made applicable to shop premises.

Incidentally, in 1920, when Mody applied for a vacancy of a professor in the Government Law College, Mr. Justice Batchelor, Chairman of the Selection Board, enquired of the Board's Secretary whether the applicant was the same Mody who had been so effectively tilting at landlords. "Yes, M'lord," replied the Secretary "Oh, I cannot think of a better man. He is really very smart, and I see a great future ahead of him."

In the 1918 Municipal elections, the Girgaum constituency once again returned Mody among its panel of five members, but this time he was third in the poll, whereas in 1913 he had topped it.

In November 1918, Mody got into another political scrap. The

Sheriff of Bombay convened at the Town Hall a memorial meeting for Lord Willingdon, on the eve of his retirement as Governor of Bombay. Willingdon was quite a controversial figure and provoked much popular antagonism by his high-handed and arrogant ways.

He had particularly offended the Nationalist sentiment when at a war effort meeting of citizens in Bombay, he insulted Tilak, whereupon the Nationalists present walked out of the meeting and Jinnah just stayed long enough to lash out at Willingdon for his bad manners and then followed his compatriots out of the hall.

It must be said to the credit of Mody that at an earlier informal meeting of a few pro-memorial citizens, he had warned that it would not be a wise step as it would provoke hostile demonstrations. But the meeting overruled him, and then he was elected secretary of the Memorial Committee.

When the memorial meeting was convened by the Sheriff at the Town Hall on December 10, 1918, Mody, as a prominent organizer, had to face the brunt of the storm that it let loose in the shape of unprecedented hostile demonstrations.

Indeed, the anti-memorialists, led by Jinnah and Horniman, marched to the Town Hall overnight. When the organizers arrived there the next morning at 8 o'clock to prepare the hall for the evening's function, scheduled for 6 o'clock, and to rehearse plans to keep the anticipated demonstrators out of mischief, they found Jinnah, Horniman and company already in possession, determined to abort the memorial meeting.

Both sides seemed to have turned up at the meeting physically prepared for a show-down. The anti-memorialists alleged that the memorialists had brought "Bhendi Bazar" gangs into the hall.

The tension building up in the hall suddenly broke when a chair hurtled through the air and hit a man in the audience. Thereafter, for a while, it was a free-for-all, in which fisticuffs and broken limbs of furniture had full play, until the Police intervened. The meeting ended in a fiasco.

Kanji Dwarkadas in his book *India's Fight for Freedom,* describes the incident thus:

> About 300 of us, Jinnah's followers, went to the Town Hall, at 10 at night on December 9, so that we could be the first to be admitted in the Town Hall when the gates opened the

next morning. Eventually, we were able to rush into the Town Hall at 8 a.m. and remained there until the police broke up the meeting in confusion at 6 p.m. and threw us out. Thousands of Bombay citizens had assembled on Town Hall steps at about 5 p.m. and stood bravely there in spite of police rowdyism. Jinnah won the day and the Address to Willingdon was not voted.

Indeed, the Jinnah Memorial Hall in the Congress House owed itself to this great popular triumph of Jinnah's, to celebrate which the public of Bombay almost instantly collected Rs. 65,000 at a rupee per head.

Mody's restless spirit sought to introduce a much-desired reform in the Municipal Corporation. In November 1919, Mody moved, seconded by Dr. N. H. E. Sukhia, a resolution in the civic body abolishing the practice of appointing the President of the Corporation and Chairman of its Standing Committtee on the basis of communal rotation. The resolution however met all-round opposition and was defeated.

Before the year was out, Mody found himself in the thick of another public agitation. The Government announced its decision to acquire land at Grant Road for the purpose of constructing a terminal station for the B.B. & C.I. Railway. It involved the displacement of 1,400 families and affected a Parsi colony with a school attached to it, and a widow's home, a Jain boarding school and a Hindu temple. It was also taking away 250,000 square yards of space from the city when land was so scarce.

A meeting of the citizens of Bombay was convened at the Empress Theatre, on a Sunday morning, to protest against the project. Sir Dinshaw Petit presided, and Mody moved the main resolution.

The resolution urged the Governor to reconsider the decision to acquire properties in Grant Road for the purpose of a terminal station, as it would "inflict grave hardships on thousands of people of the poor and lower middle classes, and that if the scheme is not altogether abandoned in favour of an alternative one north of Bellasis Bridge, which does not entail hardship on any large number of people, it should at least be deferred till adequate arrangements acceptable to them have been made for housing those who are affected by the scheme."

In a powerful speech criticising the Governor for launching the scheme "upon an unsuspecting public in a Government resolution of half-a-dozen lines," Mody concluded: "In these progressive times to be told that all the wisdom was centred in the Government was absurd and if the public had been taken into confidence, they might have been able to show some way out of the difficulty."

At yet another public meeting in furtherance of the same campaign, at which he himself presided, Mody took the Improvement Trust to task for propounding "the worst scheme ever" and declared he could not understand "any civilised Government launching any scheme of this magnitude without consulting the people most concerned with it."

The agitation paid off. The Government climbed down, and the scheme was modified and the Parsi colony and school and other institutions were saved from the demolition axe.

In 1921, Mody was elected Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Bombay Municipal Corporation. The Mody grip was immediately reflected in a streamlining of the finances of the Corporation and an increase in its revenue.

Mody's reformist zeal now spread to the sphere of re-organisation and composition of the various committees of the Corporation. And thereby he raised a hornet's nest.

He got a special committee appointed to suggest the names of those who should constitute members of the various committees as also to re-designate their work and to limit their composition to 25, so as to make them more manageable and effective.

Two senior members of this special committee however denounced the whole idea of selecting members and restricting their numbers on the various committees, and appended furious minutes of dissent and dubbed Mody a "dictator."

Joseph Baptista severely criticised the majority recommendations. He considered it wrong to exclude "the old members who are desirous of serving on the reconstituted committees."

Byramjee Jeejeebhoy used even stronger language in his minute of dissent and commented: "'For an independent body like the Corporation to allow such a farce to be enacted, without raising their voice in self-respect or in vindication of the principle of divided responsibility is, to say the least, very demoralising."

In a sarcastic vein Jeejeebhoy remarked, "One member thought

that he and he alone of the seventytwo was born to set the committee system right. He was so much obsessed with the idea of his own particular adaptability to play the part that a very unusual episode has been enacted in the history of the Corporation, the sorry spectacle of a couple of dozen intelligent and independent councillors, barring some noble exceptions, kow-towing to the dictates of one man.... (who) put on a judicial temperament and spoke with such an air of decisive assertiveness and imposed his personality in such an emphatic manner on the new members that amongst some of them 'the wonder grew that such a small head could carry all he knew !' "

Despite opposition from the oldsters, however, Mody pushed his reform through the Corporation—the majority seemed convinced of its merits. "Corporator" in a letter to the *Jam-e-Jamshed* wrote, "To a mind which is anxious to get at the facts, it is no secret that the innovation introduced by Mr. Mody tended to higher efficiency and towards removing the clogs which hindered the wheels of the administration."

V

TIMES OF TENSION

By now, the city, and the country, were in the grip of political tension. Gandhi had taken command of the nationalist movement and transformed the very landscape. The air was thick with cries of defiance and threats of satyagraha.

In November 1921, the then Prince of Wales, later the Duke of Windsor, paid an official visit to the country. The Congress declared a boycott of the Royal visit, and countrywide nationalist demonstrations greeted his arrival in India.

In Bombay there were widespread demonstrations, which however soon degenerated into communal rioting, with Hindus and Muslims joining together to attack Parsis, who had kept aloof from the movement.

The riots lasted well nigh four days, and 53 persons were killed. There was consternation in the city. Gandhiji exclaimed: "The Swaraj I witnessed in the last three days stank in my nostrils." And by way of self-atonement, the Mahatma embarked on a five-day fast. Peace Committees were organised in various parts of the city, representative of the different communities.

Mahatma Gandhi called a meeting of certain leaders of the Muslim, Hindu and Parsi communities at his residence in Laburnum Road, at which Gandhiji took the blame upon himself for what had happened. The meeting discussed measures to bring conditions in the city back to normal. Among the steps suggested were intensive touring by representative leaders of the respective localities of the three main communities, in order to allay panic and infuse confidence among the people.

Accordingly, F. Sorabji Talyarkhan, Homi Mody, S. E. Warden, J. J. Vimadalal, J. K. Daji, Dr. M. E. Pavri and other Parsi leaders motored round the different Parsi mohollas and addressed their youths who were picketing the streets. Similarly Sarojini Naidu and S. G. Banker and others visited the Hindu localities and Umar Sobhani and certain other Muslim leaders went round the Muslim areas.

Finally, on the fourth day of the rioting, a large meeting was

held at Talyarkhan's bungalow, which was attended by some 150 representative leaders of the Hindu, Muslim and Parsi communities, on the invitation of Mahatma Gandhi and Mian Mahomed Chotani. With the riots having at last subsided, the meeting took stock of the situation. The leaders present gave assurances to Gandhiji on behalf of their respective communities that there would be no fresh breach of the peace in the city.

When invited to speak by Gandhiji, Mody was brutally frank. He said the events of the preceding few days had demonstrated that the unity amongst the various communities they had taken for granted, was not deep-rooted enough.

Mody stated that it could not be said that the trouble was started by a few hooligans. The attack had been aimed at a particular community, in the first instance. The provocation for it was the failure of the Parsis, as a community, to join the Non-Co-operation Movement led by Gandhiji and his associates. The Parsis had found themselves unable to adopt, to any considerable extent, the programme Gandhiji had laid before the country. As a consequence, the feelings of the sister communities had been greatly excited against the Parsis.

Mody then assured Gandhiji that the Parsis would never lag behind in their patriotism or passion for freedom. They had made notable contributions to the social, industrial and political awakening of India and, according to their lights, continued to do so. He particularly impressed upon the audience that so far as independence of character was concerned, the Parsis were second to no other community.

Mody further emphasised that the disturbances had been quelled not with the aid of the police or the military, whose hands were pretty full, but largely through the efforts of the leaders of the various communities.

Gandhiji summed up the proceedings of the meeting. He held the Hindus and the Muslims primarily responsible for the disturbances. He said it should have been their duty to protect the minorities and that they had failed in that duty.

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In 1922, the country was passing through an uneasy lull after

the turbulent storm of the Non-Co-operation Movement, and the minds of the constitutionalists among Congressmen, like C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru were turning to ideas of extending freedom's battle to the constructive field of legislatures. By the end of the year, the Swaraj Party was formed to fight the elections to the Central and Provincial legislatures. Simultaneously, it was decided to capture the local bodies.

In Calcutta, C. R. Das himself led the Congress phalanx into the Municipal Corporation. In Bombay, Vithalbhai Patel, the elder brother of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, later to become the dreaded President of the Central Legislative Assembly, was put in command of the Congress forces, charged with the assault on the civic citadel.

Coincidentally, the first general elections to the Bombay Municipal Corporation, under a widened franchise and a more democratic set-up, were held in 1923. The Congress-sponsored Nationalist Party put up an impressive show, capturing 35 out of the 39 seats contested, while three members joined the party after the elections.

Such was the impact on the electorate of the nationalist fervour in the air and popularity of the Congress that Mody who topped the poll in the 1913 elections, now found himself at its bottom, having to fight Congressite rivals. Indeed, there were in this election, with a lowered franchise, quite a few surprises.

But inside the Corporation, the Nationalist Party found in Mody's Progressive group a veritable thorn on its side. The Progressives were not yet a regular party in the sense the Nationalists were. They had not fought the elections on a common party platform. They were assembled together only after the elections to become a cohesive party, large and disciplined enough to frustrate any move by the Nationalists they disapproved.

Indeed, in the very first trial of strength, the election of the President of the Corporation, the Progressive group had the better of the Nationalists. It was a three-cornered contest, in which Mody challenged Vithalbhai Patel, while Dr N. H. E. Sukhia was the third candidate. Mody won with 50 votes, as against Patel's 47 and Sukhia's 5.

Thereafter, for more than a generation, the Corporation proceedings reflected a constant tug-of-war between Mody's Progressives and the Nationalists—which, incidentally, provided exciting "copy" to the local Press and added zest to the civic politics of the city.

Indeed, Mody was the red rag to the Congress bull in the civic arena and the butt of attacks from the Nationalist press and public.

During that eventful and stormy year, Mody himself supplied fuel to the fire by committing perhaps the most unpopular of his many unpopular acts.

He had to be rescued by his wife by a backdoor from an angry mob for insisting upon the propriety of presenting a farewell address to Sir George Lloyd, one of the most unpopular Governors Bombay had known, in the teeth of opposition from the Nationalists. Lloyd was responsible for the deportation of B. G. Horniman, then at the height of his popularity, and later he put Mahatma Gandhi in prison.

Mody himself was no admirer of Lloyd, nor did he have any illusions about the popularity of his regime. But as President of the Corporation it was not for him to take any sides on the issue. It may also be that he looked upon the voting of an address as a mere convention.

His critics, however, charged him with countering the opposition by manipulating the agenda and giving priority to the motion in favour of the address. Thereupon opposition demonstrators invaded the Corporation Hall with a view to forcibly preventing the adoption of the address. Mody defeated the move by adjourning the House and at the next meeting of the Corporation got the motion through. Congressmen promptly held a mass public meeting at Chowpati, at which Vithalbhai Patel presided and moved a resolution protesting against the Corporation's decision to present a civic address to Lloyd "in utter disregard to the wishes of the citizens of Bombay" and demanding the resignations from the Corporation of all those members who had voted for the address.

Mody presented the farewell address to George Lloyd at a grand ceremonial function held at Apollo Bunder. The address praised the "various legislative and administrative measures" carried out by Lloyd, including the one making primary education compulsory in the city. It specially mentioned the rapid development of Bombay and its suburbs and the improvement and extension of transport facilities which, he said, had "marked a momentous epoch in our history."

Mody however did not fail to mention the "occasions when we as a body (Corporation) have had reasons to differ from your

Excellency." But then he took the edge off the statement by conceding, at the same time, "that when any divergence of opinion arose you were actuated by the best of motives in maintaining your Government's point of view."

Nor did he fail to doubt the "wisdom of proceeding, at a time of acute financial stringency like the present, with some of the great schemes of development which have been undertaken," but then immediately softened the criticism with the remark, "But we are confident that when your Excellency's administration is reviewed in the clear light of history, when the mists of present-day controversies have vanished, it will be recognised as a most important period in the growth and development of this town and island and its emergence into a truly Imperial City."

It was altogether not a performance, to say the least, that commended itself to the current popular sentiment. Why did Mody have to do it? Even if he had to do it, was there any need for him to look for and find extenuation for acts on the part of the Governor which had received popular condemnation all round, and which he himself was to denounce a couple of years later!

Nobody dare convict Mody of lack of courage, his sense of propriety and innate constitutionalism were outraged by the very idea of refusing a farewell address to a departing Governor.

Yet another explanation could be that he had a split personality, one part of it, conformist and loyal to the Establishment, while the other, the sensitive rebel and patriot in him, which could not tolerate insults and rebuffs to his national and personal pride.

Then, there was, of course, the impish streak of contrariness in his mental make-up that often prompted him to do exactly the opposite of what was popularly expected of him, if only to assert his individuality!

Mody, however, made up for that sin against popular sentiment. Early in February 1924, Gandhiji was released from jail following an operation for appendicitis. On February 7, amidst much approving applause from all sections of the House, Mody, as President of the Corporation, opened the proceedings with the declaration "An event has occurred which has been hailed with delight throughout the length and breadth of this country and the members of this Corporation join the general rejoicing."

Mody then paid a tribute to the "statesman-like and generous

action" of the Bombay Government for releasing a "political prisoner who has held a unique place in the hearts of his countrymen." He remarked that for the first time in many years the Government and the people had come together in a way they had despaired to see brought about.

Mody also warmly supported a motion in the Corporation in favour of a civic address to the Mahatma. The meeting that adopted the resolution had enjoined that the civic address should eschew all controversial politics. Mody drafted the address himself, and when faced with criticism from the Nationalists that it was colourless, he feelingly declared:

> If they would take away from Gandhiji his acts of political leadership, still there would remain so much with him—everything would remain with him—that he would be remembered long, long after, as the greatest man of the time. If they took away all politics from him, Gandhiji's name would still long be remembered by the future generations in India . . . . Gandhiji has propounded the most extraordinary doctrine that could be propounded even in this unpractical land, that has come from any responsible leader of thought. Apart from Gandhiji's work as a political leader for the last five years . . . countless appreciations of Gandhiji have appeared which have left his right unchallenged on the pinnacle of greatness as the greatest of all human beings.

Mody then added that he would be the last man to follow Gandhiji's politics, but as a personality, he respected him and would always do so and when the proposition for giving him an address came before them he would be the last man to refuse it to one of the greatest men.

And thereby hangs a tale of a "love-hate" relationship between Mody and the Mahatma, illustrations of which we will, again and again, come across in the course of this narrative. Gandhiji held Mody in high esteem for his independence of mind and public spirit.

At the conclusion of his one-year Presidential term, Mody was the recipient of tributes from all sections of the House, including the Nationalists. Indeed, in appreciation of his work in that august post, the Corporators gave the outgoing President a farewell dinner—for the first time in the annals of the Corporation.

In the 1926 Municipal elections, the Progressive Party went to the polls as a party and put out a manifesto addressed to the electorate.

In 1926, the Backbay boil burst. From its very inception in 1922, the Backbay Reclamation scheme was the subject of furious controversy in the city. Its critics dubbed the project as too extravagant and impractical.

As the estimates jumped to nearly four times the original figures, a public agitation snowballed, demanding a thorough investigation into the execution of the project.

As far back as October 1921, the Indian Merchants' Chamber of Bombay had smelt a rat in the Bombay Government's anxiety to reserve the Development Department to itself, instead of making it a "transferred subject", following the introduction of the dyarchical system of government in the Provinces.

At a public meeting held under the auspices of the Chamber on October 24, 1926, Mody had moved a resolution "putting on record its sense of grave dissatisfaction at the refusal of the Government of Bombay to make the Development Department a 'transferred' subject" and characterising that "their action in having treated, and in continuing to treat it as a 'Reserved' subject, as a breach of the Constitution and a usurpation of a function intended by the legislature to be transferred to popular control."

Mody had contended that the subject of development fell under the heads Improvement Trust and the P.W.D., and these were "transferred" subjects, but the Government had given the unit a new name and thus had taken away from Ministers what was given to them by the Legislature.

Many a Governor of Bombay had in the preceding 50 years looked at the graceful curves of Bombay's Backbay and dreamt of reclaiming the foreshore and adding to the landspace of the island. But the staggering costs involved had deterred them. When in 1921 the intrepid Sir George Lloyd assumed the Governorship of the Presidency, he put through an ambitious reclamation scheme in the face of much opposition and criticism of the project.

Lloyd put up before the Government of India an estimate of Rs. 3.65 crores for the project and obtained consent for launching it. Soon however the estimate rose to Rs. 4 crores. After a while that figure further soared to Rs. 7 crores. In order to mollify the

critics, it was announced that the undertaking was expected to yield a profit of at least Rs. 30 crores.

Early in 1925, rumours were once again rife that all was not well with the Backbay Reclamation project. And there was a public outcry for an enquiry into the working of the scheme. At last, the Government asked the Advisory Committee to the Development Department to go into the affairs of the Department in charge of the Project.

The investigations of the Committee revealed an incredible tale of incompetence and recklessness. The Committee found that on a favourable estimate, the project would cost Rs. 11 crores and take 20 more years to complete.

In a statement to the press, Mody referred to the "scandalous state of affairs" which called for prompt and energetic action on the part of the public. He urged immediate appointment of an independent body of experts, which should "investigate the financial and technical aspects of the scheme and fix the responsibility on those responsible for its initiation and prosecution." Mody next demanded that the existing Advisory Committee should be transformed into a body invested with powers of controlling the activities of the Development Department.

At a specially requisitioned Corporation meeting, Nationalists, Progressives and, indeed, all parties, in a united voice, condemned what came to be described as "Lloyd's Folly" and demanded the appointment of an independent committee to enquire into the Backbay Reclamation muddle.

Mody, who moved the main resolution, insisted that the Municipal Corporation, as the most representative and influential body in the city, had a right to pronounce its emphatic opinion and to tell the Government that the Reclamation Scheme would "lead the city to total ruin."

The Corporation, he said, demanded two things: an examination of the estimates and an assessment of the liability and responsibility of those who had placed the public in such a serious plight. Mody however did not want, in the meantime, the work on the reclamation project to be halted.

The outcome of all this agitation was the Mears Committee appointed by the Government. This Committee's report proved a disappointment to the public. The report, which was described

in the press as "wishy-washy," while making a scapegoat of Sir George Buchanan, head of the Development Department, was almost apologetic about the various grave sins of omission and commission committed by various authorities from its very inception.

Mody himself described the report in these words: "The report of the Mears Committee would have commanded greater respect than it seems likely to receive if the Committee had not shown such a marked tenderness for almost every one responsible for the blunders and miscalculations of the last few years."

In January 1927, Mody was elected Chairman of the Bombay Millowners' Association, and thus stepped on the escalator of fame and a phenomenal public career. Though thereafter, much preoccupied with the politics and problems of a textile industry going through a crisis, Mody found plenty of time and energy to devote to civic affairs.

But Mody now operated more as the king-maker, who saw to it that the "right" man was elected the President and generally decided which member should be on which committee. In this controversial role, he was frequently the butt of public and press criticism.

During this zestful phase of his life, Mody seemed to take it all in his stride and, indeed, to revel in tumult. Thus Mody was accused of manipulating presidential candidates, fixing members of committees and generally functioning as a one-man caucus that ran the Municipal affairs of the city.

In the 1929 Municipal elections, Mody's Progressive Party and the Congress Nationalist Party were arrayed against each other for the keenest-ever electoral battle. The quantities of propaganda ammunition the Congress Press expended on the Progressive Party on the eve of the election was at once a tribute to it and an index to the healthy respect the Nationalist Party had for its only rival in the civic poll.

The Indian National Herald wistfully wrote: "There are two organised parties in the Corporation: the Congress Nationalist Party and the Progressive Party. The latter is run on quite original and peculiar lines." Then the paper grudgingly conceded. "That it is well organised for its work in the Corporation, which consists mostly, of resisting progress, is not to be denied. Its members are

not particularly vocal. They are not required to be. Their leader, Mr. Mody, can do all the talking that they require. Nor are they particularly assiduous in their attendance. But when their vote is required, whether for a division on a motion or an election to a committee, they are always at hand, either in the hall or at the end of the telephone."

Mody, as Chairman of the Progressive Party, in a spirited rejoinder to the Congress propaganda against his party, wrote in *The Times of India*: "I have noticed with much amusement the various claims made by the stalwarts of the Nationalist Party with regard to their work in the Corporation.... If today the public are enjoying the benefits of a sound system of sanitation, medical relief, water supply, education and a host of other things, they are asked to thank the politicians who marched into the Corporation under the banner of the Congress some six years ago. One wonders what became of the labours of a long line of distinguished citizens who gave Bombay a municipal administration which was a model to every Municipality in the country, and who made such a brilliant success of what for so many years was the only real self-governing institution in India."

After conceding that "some among the Nationalists had done good work," Mody scornfully declared, "The party as a whole had distinguished itself by nothing so much as by their persistent and offensive attacks on the executive, and by their determined attempts to introduce political considerations into the discussion of civic problems."

On the conclusion of these keenly contested elections, the conservative Anglo-Indian *the Times of India* rejoiced that "the hold of the Nationalist Party upon the Municipal elections in Bombay has weakened," and added, "it will be interesting to examine how far this has been the result of the vigorous opposition encountered by it from the Progressive Party."

In February 1929, the Progressive Party's solid opposition, topped by a powerful speech by its leader, prevented the May Day being declared a Municipal holiday. The Corporation threw out the resolution by 37 votes to 24. Mody characterised May Day as an "occasion identified with riot and bloodshed in Europe."

In April that year, Mody was elected to the Central Assembly from the Millowners' constituency in place of Sir Victor Sassoon,

who resigned. Thereafter, Mody was found flitting between New Delhi and Bombay, but his interest in the affairs of the Bombay Municipal Corporation never diminished.

This was also the year when Mody, in his capacity as the new Chairman of the Bombay Millowners' Association, was put on his mettle as never before. He was faced with a five-month-long general strike in Bombay's textile industry, organised by the Communist Girni Kamgar Union.

Mody's firm yet tactful handling of this crisis in the city's vital industry, and the manner in which he turned the tables on the Communist trade union, brought him to the fore on a new front. Thereafter for wellnigh a decade, Mody was the powerful and indispensable champion of the country's textile industry in the Central Assembly, in the country and in Britain.

A vigilant watch-dog of the efficiency of the civic administration of the city, in 1929 Mody raised his voice against the Nationalists' attempt in the Corporation to vest in itself the power of appointing the Municipal Commissioner who was, under the Act, appointed by the Provincial Government. Mody was convinced that the move would result in lowering the efficiency of the Municipal Commissioner and thus affect the standards of administration in the Municipal body as a whole.

As a member of the Special Committee that recommended the "reform," Mody appended a well-reasoned minute of dissent. He stated, "The whole basis of our constitution would be subverted if one of the three authorities charged under the Act with the administration of the city were to be placed in a position of subservience, which would destroy his utility as an independent authority." The system of three parallel authorities—the Corporation, the Standing Committee and the Commissioner—was the unique merit of the Bombay Municipal Act which, according to Mody, was the feature responsible for the effectiveness of the civic administration of the city.

During the debate on the subject in the Corporation, Mody sought to head off a hasty decision by the Corporation under the Nationalists' pressure by moving an amendment that the recommendation be referred back to the Special Committee for re-consideration, and in the face of clamour from the Nationalist benches, persuaded the House to vote for his amendment.

In his speech Mody pointed out that it would be a grave mistake to copy the Calcutta system where the Commissioner was appointed by the Corporation, as it was a well-known fact that in that city, the system had proved a failure, and was a cause of much weakness and a source of factional politics."

To this day, the Bombay Corporation has a Commissioner appointed by the Government.

Similarly, his high sense of propriety prompted Mody, in 1931, to oppose Jamnadas Mehta's (Nationalist) resolution seeking an amendment of the Municipal Act to enable the Corporation to express their opinion on the appointment of the Governor of Bombay.

Mody said if the House passed the resolution they would look "supremely silly" not only in the eyes of the Government but also of the public, and that he would not be surprised if the Government put the resolution in the waste-paper basket.

Mody sarcastically asked: "Why does Mr. Mehta want statutory powers to enable the Corporation to express opinion on the qualifications of the Governor of Bombay only, and not other high officers and dignitaries, such as the Chief Justice or, for that matter, of the President of the Thana District Congress Committee?"

K. F. Nariman: "Or the President of the Bombay Millowners' Association ?"

Mody: "Or the unofficial captain of the *desh-sevikas*" (laughter).

That was a crushing repartee. It was a dig at Nariman's alleged partiality for the *desh-sevikas*!

By way of diversion from the tension and turmoil of the times, it would be interesting to refer to a *contretemps* that the Corporation struggled to resolve over an invitation to David Lloyd George, the famous First World War Premier of Britain, passing through Bombay, on his way to Ceylon for a holiday.

At the suggestion of Mody, Sir Boman Behram, the then Mayor of Bombay (as the President of the Municipal Corporation was now styled), extended an invitation to the great British Liberal leader to a civic reception at the Corporation Hall. At the last moment, it was, however, discovered that Lloyd George was accompanied by his wife and daughter. How to make amends for the error at such short notice was the problem before the Mayor and his colleagues.

Lloyd George drove straight from his ship to the Corporation, while his family proceeded to the Government House. And while an embarrassed Mayor waited and twiddled his thumbs and the audience killed time, Mody kept the guest of honour engaged in conversation. Meanwhile, Mrs. Lloyd George and Miss Megan Llyod George were rushed to the Corporation Hall from Government House. The British leader took it all in good humour.

The *Free Press Journal* had published a news item from its London correspondent which stated that Lloyd George had advised Mahatma Gandhi to go back home (from London where he was attending the Round Table Conference) and resume the civil disobedience movement and teach the British Government a lesson !

Lloyd George denied having given any such advice to Gandhiji, and was anxious to issue a contradiction of the report, but was reluctant to include the contradiction in his reply to the civic address. Thereupon Mody undertook to get the contradiction published in the Indian Press.

It cannot, however, be denied that whenever any one mentioned socialism or communism, Mody saw red ! In 1936, Jawaharlal Nehru, who had just returned from a tour of Europe and Russia, was elected President of the Congress a second time, at the Lucknow session. In May of that year, he visited Bombay.

Jawaharlal's head buzzed with new and dangerous ideas, and his presidential address at Lucknow was frankly Marxist in tone and content. According to the Congress historian, Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, it "pleaded for pure communism". Mody could not stomach it.

Jamnadas Mehta was then the Mayor of Bombay, when the Nationalist Party initiated a resolution in the Corporation proposing a civic reception to Nehru. Mody decided that a man who talked of such dangerous ideas, should not be given a civic reception. And Jawaharlal was not ! With the help of his Progressive Party vote in the House, Mody saw to it that the motion was rejected by 35 votes to 25.

Mody followed it up with initiating a manifesto, signed by 21 leading Bombay businessmen and industrialists, which warned the Congress that it would put itself out of court with many sections

in the country if its President were to advocate subversive ideas.

It all had the desired effect of cooling the Marxist ardour in Nehru. For thereafter, Nehru's public statements came to be toned down. Mody welcomed the distinct change in the Congress President's views.

Replying to the "Manifesto of Twentyone," Nehru had confessed "to a feeling of elation at the thought that even the casual words that fall from my lips should stir some people up so much."

In the typical Modyian style of controversy, Mody retorted: "I do not see why, as a party to the Manifesto, I should not enjoy a like feeling of elation when I find the Pandit and his friends taking so much notice of the manifesto. After all the denunciation of its authors and attempts to question their representative character, it is refreshing to discover a new note in the Pandit's utterances which, of a sudden, seem to have become more discreet and temporising. No more the downright talk of expropriation and destruction of vested interests."

The statement then warned those who regarded Nehru's views as merely personal and his ideals as distant dreams, and pointed out Nehru's policy as outlined by him was "first, political independence, and then a socialist state, in which vested interests, property rights and motive of profit will have no place at all. Let those whose minds are running in the direction of intermediate stages and pleasant halting places, not forget that they are really buying a through ticket to Moscow."

Nehru in his statement had claimed that he abhorred violence. Mody stated, "I would like to know in which country such a fundamental change in the basis of society has been brought about by a peaceful and bloodless revolution."[5]

Mody then delivered a blow for Capitalism and added, "The capitalist system had much to answer for in the early stages. There is no doubt however that it has been undergoing a continuous transformation and that it is being humanised more and more. There is, in my opinion, nothing incompatible in that system with the ideal of social justice and of levelling of many of the inequalities which exist today."

VI

HIS "FINEST HOUR"

SIR HOMI Mody's "finest hour," according to himself, is the hectic time he had had as Chairman of the Bombay Millowners' Association. When he took over for the first term, in 1927, he found Bombay's textile industry sick and demoralised, what with having to face a crushing double competition from Lancashire and Japan even in its own home market, while an impervious Government looked on.

Mody's first task was therefore to boost up the industry's morale and restore it to normal health which was as much a psychiatrist's as a physician's mandate. Then he turned round to fight the industry's battle on three fronts—with an indifferent Government, with an antipathetic public and with an obstructionist Communist-led trade unionism.

He went to work on this triple task with a zest, energy and strategy that compelled attention all round, and almost overnight, Bombay's textile industry was put on the map.

Thus, in his very first speech as Chairman of the Bombay Millowners' Association, everyone concerned was warned of what was to follow. Addressing the annual general meeting of the Association in March 1927 Mody stated: "A great deal of legislative activity is going on in this country and we are continually being at the mercy of faddists and philanthropists in a hurry to impose Western standards on eastern conditions. It is therefore very necessary that your Association should have continuous representation on the Legislative Assembly where many subjects vitally concerning its welfare are often dealt with."

Either Mody chased crises or crises chased Mody ! For no sooner Mody took over as Chairman of the Bombay Millowners' Association than the textile industry was agitated over the indifference displayed towards its problems by the Government of India.

For the preceding three or four years the Indian textile industry had been agitating for tariff protection against unfair competition from Japan and Lancashire. In 1926, New Delhi had at last appointed a Tariff Board enquiry into the textile industry's

demand, and a delegation, which included Mody, had put up before it a convincing case for protection.

Four months after the Tariff Board's recommendations were handed in, the Government of India had at last announced its decision on them. That decision had summarily turned down the industry's claim for protection against foreign competition, though the Tariff Board's recommendations themselves were halting and fell far short of the industry's expectations.

The Tariff Board had recommended that in addition to the protection afforded by the existing import duty of 5 per cent on yarn and 11 per cent on cloth, a moderate measure of protection should be given to the industry for such period as the labour conditions in Japan continued inferior to those in India.

Even this modest recommendation was not accepted by the Government on the ground that the industry needed no stimulus at the cost of the tax-payer. Indeed, Sir George Rainey, Commerce Member, expressed the view that the Tariff Board report had failed to make out a case for protection for Indian textile industry.

The new Chairman of the Millowners' Association refused to take the gross inequity lying down. In a well-reasoned, uninhibited statement he hit out at the Government of India for its callous attitude. Indeed, New Delhi was taken aback by the new language they were listening to from a hitherto quiescent, almost guilt-stricken, industry.

"One would have thought that a Government which was alive to its duties and responsibilities would have given prompt effect to these modest recommendations made by a committee set up by themselves and presided over by a very capable and experienced Government official," commented Mody. "But with their persistent disregard of the interest of the industry, Government have sat in judgment over the deliberate recommendations of a body of their creation, and turned down whatever they thought was inconvenient."

Mody stingingly added, "As I have repeatedly said, the only use Government have for the mill industry is to tax it and get its support to their loans. When it comes to protecting its interest, Government seem to be weighed down by a thousand and one considerations."

Mody then concluded: "What remains for us now is to place

our case before the country." True to his word, he launched a raging and tearing campaign in the country with the twin aim of winning public and press sympathy for the industry's viewpoint and persuading New Delhi to revise its decision.

The Millowners' Association convened a conference in Bombay of Indian textile interests from all over the country. In his speech welcoming the delegates from different regions of India, Mody bitterly complained: "A more casual and indifferent treatment of a grave problem I have never known..... Government in their wisdom have dismissed in three brief paragraphs all the major recommendations of an authoritative body set up by themselves..... All that the communique does is to misread important findings and recommendations, to set the majority and the minority reports against each other and to dismiss the whole subject in a few casual sentences much as if Government were disposing of the question of a grant for a village well."

Mody declared: Such a treatment of a subject so vitally affecting the greatest national industry of the country can only come from a Government which was secure in the belief that it could defy public opinion with impunity and disregard national interests at will." Mody expressed the hope that when the Viceroy realised the "strength of our case and the seriousness of the situation, he will not allow any false notions of prestige to deter him from doing the right thing."

The Chairman of the Bombay Millowners' Association then appealed to the Press and the leaders of thought in the country "to lay aside all petty differences and lend their whole-hearted support to us if they are satisfied that right is on our side and that anything that hits the mill industry hits the vital interests of the country."

"The conviction is growing that the Department of Commerce and Industry exists for every purpose but that of serving the commerce and industries of India," stated Mody, and asked, "Do Government realise that by the policy they have been pursuing they are alienating completely the sympathy and support of all those elements in society which stand for progress and good Government? Do they know they are losing the goodwill of those classes which in every country form the strongest bulwark of constitutional Government? If the Government realise these things,

I hope they will have the courage to retrace their steps and to identify themselves with the true interests of the mill industry and the country at large."

The conference adopted the text of a lengthy memorial to be presented to the Government of India on behalf of the textile industry of the country urging it to reconsider its decision on the Tariff Board's recommendations.

Simultaneously, the nationalist press took up the cause through news and editorial columns, and soon public opinion in the country was seized of it and the industry's grouse became a national grievance. Meanwhile, the textile lobby got busy in Simla and New Delhi.

There were now signs that this hot-gospelling campaign was making a dent on New Delhi. Within a week, Sir George Rainey was in Bombay for discussions with the textile interests. He went back to Simla after four days' talks, with a promise to present their viewpoint sympathetically to the Viceroy and try and arrange to get Lord Irwin to receive a deputation from the industry.

On July 12, Lord Irwin received the textile deputation in Simla, at which it was reported, the deputation did most of the talking, while the Viceroy listened. The event concluded, significantly, with a lunch given to the deputationists by the Viceroy. Soon after, followed the announcement from Simla revising the Government's decision on the Tariff Board report and making a concession to the industry's viewpoint.

It was a modest victory for the textile industry but a personal triumph for Mody. This was almost the first time that the Government of India had taken back its decision. The Bombay Millowners' Association celebrated the triumph with a grand banquet in Bombay—the most glittering social event the city had ever witnessed—in honour of Lord Irwin.

At the banquet, proposing the toast to the Viceroy, Mody handsomely acknowledged His Excellency's "graceful action in revising the original decision of his Government." "It was a statesmanlike action," said Mody, "and though it fell short of the requirements of the case, we are bound to recognise it and accord to it our warmest appreciation".

But Mody insisted, "I have every hope that when His Excellency fully realises that a great national industry is in serious difficulties . . .

and that it requires to be effectively protected against foreign competition and given every encouragement which an enlightened Government accords to industries which produce wealth and give employment to vast numbers of people.... I have every confidence he will have no hesitation in giving the fullest measure of recognition to the just claims of the industry."

Responding to the toast, Lord Irwin observed, "I am not blind to what has been due to the great mill industry, which is to a great extent, the foundation of Bombay's prosperity, and of that of a great part of the country as well. Vast numbers of people are today supported directly or indirectly by the industry."

The Viceroy then gave some sage advice to the Bombay Millowners: "Your size and importance render your responsibility for the large number of persons from whom you have drawn your labour—it is your business that has created this human concentration and I would ask you to use your influence to the end of bringing all members of your Association to recognise the moral obligation that rests on them in such matters as housing, health and general welfare of their workers."

The immediate outcome was the Yarn Protection Act of 1929, which sought to stem the rising tide of Japanese and Chinese yarns of coarse counts in the Indian markets.

Accepting what was offered, Mody however kept up his agitation for more. Laying down office at the end of his first one-year term in March 1928, Mody in his address at the annual general meeting of the Millowners' Association, drew a gloomy picture of the industry in Bombay.

"In spite of the fact that more and more machinery is being kept idle, stocks continue to be very heavy, and are as much as 48,000 bales over the figure for the same period last year," bewailed the Chairman. "At the same time, prices at which goods have to be sold leave no margin of profit and in many cases mean a positive loss."

Mody was convinced that no definite improvement in the fortunes of the industry was possible until it was protected in its home markets against unfair competition and assisted in its export trade by "facilities which Governments in other countries accord to industries on which the well-being of the people depends."

Mody then warned the Government that until adequate duty

was levied on import of cloth into India, the position of the industry would continue to be serious. He drew attention to the abnormal increase that had taken place in the imports of Japanese cloth.

Thus the struggle for protection for the textile industry was carried on incessantly and on many fronts—in the lobbies and floor of the Central and Bombay Provincial Legislatures and in the columns of the Press.

A striking publicity project was a Bombay textile exhibition-on-wheels, in 1930. A bedecked special train, with each bogey painted in striking colours and converted into a section of exhibits of the wide variety of fabrics produced by Bombay's textile industry—in itself a revelation and education to the authorities as well as public—was sent around northern India, halting at various cities.

At New Delhi, the Viceroy with his Executive Councillors and prominent MLAs, paid a visit to the exhibition, parked at the ceremonial platform. It had a tremendous impact, so much so that prices of northern Indian textile manufactures immediately came down in Delhi.

And through such techniques and the sheer process of repetitive hypnosis, the country and the Government were impelled to recognise the textile industry as a national industry.

By now Mody was considered indispensable by the Bombay Millowners' Association, and after an interval of an year when he was abroad for quite a while in 1929, the Association re-elected Mody as its Chairman, this time voting him a whole-time, salaried incumbent. And Mody took over just in time to plunge into possibly the gravest crisis faced by the industry.

At noon on April 26, 1929, the millworkers of the city went on a general strike, led by the Communist Girni Kamgar Union. The strike lasted for wellnigh five months. The immediate provocation was the alleged victimisation of workers in the Wadia Group of Mills. The Union had demanded the reinstatement of some 6,000 workers who had gone on a lightning strike and had been replaced. The Communist trade union was out to exploit the industry's difficulties at a time when it was going through a depression.

Mody contended that it was an entirely unjustified strike, with a political motivation. And Mody rolled up his sleeves and got ready for a long siege. No quarter was to be given to the strikers. The millowners were persuaded to stand firm.

The Girni Kamgar Union's attitude was equally unbending. And they were preparing for a showdown. The previous year, the Union had launched some 200 hit-and-run strikes. It was now a grim trial of strength between the workers and the employers, on the outcome of which the very fate of the industry seemed to depend. As the strike dragged on from week to week, it affected the trade and commerce of the city, and shook the stock market badly.

In the sixth week of the strike, a deputation of Share and Stock Brokers' Association met the Chairman of the Millowners' Association to discuss the strike situation and explore possibilities of bringing it to an end.

Mody told the deputation that this was not a dispute which could be ended "at any cost" and that a vital principle was involved, namely, whether the industry was to be run by the Agents or its management should be surrendered to labour leaders.

The Union's demands were: (1) reinstatement in the Wadia Group of those workers who went on a lightning strike and dismissal of those who had taken their place; (2) liberty to collect Union funds inside mills; and (3) continuance of the activities of the mill committees.

Mody considered these demands "preposterous" and declared that if they conceded them, there could be no permanent peace in the industry. "There could not possibly be any compromise on an issue of this character," Mody maintained.

In the eighth week of the strike, Mody invited representatives of the Indian Merchants' Chamber, the Bombay Chamber of Commerce and the European Association to a meeting at the premises of the Millowners' Association, to explain to them the Millowners' case on the strike.

He told them the strike was premeditated and politically-motivated and had nothing to do with any grievances or trade dispute. "The Red Flag Union's decision to bring about a general strike," Mody emphasised, "was taken even before the grievances were formulated and placed before the proper quarters, and without consulting other unions." The strike was kept alive through methods of intimidation, violence and terrorisation "on a scale never before known in the history of Bombay."

Mody concluded: "A grave situation exists, and it is the bounden duty of every citizen to see that law and order are maintained

and that no man is denied his right and liberty to pursue his lawful avocation."

The millowners were no more on the defensive. The Millowners' Association took vigorous counter-measures against intimidation and picketing, and a veritable leaflet and poster war raged in the mill areas.

Leaflets countering the Union's charges against the millowners were distributed by the ton. The Union workers replied with confiscating the bundles of the leaflets from the boys engaged to distribute them. Thereupon, gigantic posters, stuck high on the mill walls, proclaimed the employers' case.

On one occasion, the millowners rained down the leaflets in the mill areas from an aeroplane.

As a result, by about the ninth week, sixty to seventy per cent of the workers were back to work. Towards the middle of July, after the strike had been on for eleven weeks, the Government intervened and appointed a court of enquiry. The enquiry opened on July 23.

The Millowners' Association had decided to make a general levy to finance the engaging of a couple of eminent counsel to fight their case before the enquiry court. Since however the process of instructing the counsel was more tedious and time-consuming and less satisfactory, Mody took upon himself the task of conducting the case before the enquiry.

Being fully conversant with the facts and background of the case, Mody's advocacy proved highly effective, in that the court of enquiry's report practically upheld the Millowners' viewpoint.

The report was submitted in September of that year, by which time the strike had begun to fizzle out. The report pronounced the general strike unjustified—"prolonged through aggressive and mischievous propaganda, intimidation and acts of violence"—and blamed the strike squarely on the Communist trade union.

This was yet another feather in Mody's cap as Chairman of the Millowners' Association. With the collapse of the strike, the Girni Kamgar Union's back was broken.

In the meantime, the battle for protection for the textile industry continued without a let-up.

In June 1929, when the Viceroy was on a visit to Poona, Mody once again persuaded him to receive a deputation from the Bombay

Millowners' Association, at which he further plugged his pet theme "the need of protection to a national industry".

The effort, this time, was rewarded with the appointment of G. S. Hardy, a Customs Collector from Calcutta, "to ascertain and report what changes have taken place since the Tariff Board reported, in the volume of imports, classes of goods imported and the extent and severity of external competition with the products of Indian mills."

The Hardy report came out in November of that year. Mody welcomed the report and described it as "fair and satisfactory"—"it brought out very clearly the extent and severity of the Japanese competition in India." Hardy recommended specific duties as against *ad valorem* assessment of cotton piecegoods in India.

The release of the Hardy report was followed up by a conference in New Delhi between the textile interests and the Commerce Member, at which the Hardy recommendations were discussed and the millowners' views thereon presented.

The struggle at last came to fruition in 1930 with the passing of the Indian Tariff Act in the Central Assembly. The measure encountered much non-official opposition during its discussion, which was critical of the Indian textile industry's failure to put its house in order and was concerned about the impact of the tariff on the consumer. The opposition further objected to the principle of Imperial Preference adumbrated in the Bill.

Mody's was the most outstanding speech in the debates on the Bill. He drove home his repetitive claim that the Indian textile industry was a national industry and therefore of national concern, and that Bombay's and India's prosperity was bound up with it.

He retorted to Dewan Chaman Lal, "An industry in which a hundred crores of rupees, very nearly, have been sunk, most of it practically Indian money, an industry which is very largely conducted by Indian brains, Indian energy and Indian enterprise, an industry in which the employment of hundreds of thousands depends, and an industry on the prosperity of which depends the wellbeing of millions of people who are in one way or another concerned with the industry's prosperity. If that is not a national industry, I should like to know what is a national industry."

The oration ended with this peroration : "An industry whose stake in the country and whose importance and national character

cannot be questioned, comes to your door asking for assistance, and I say the House will ponder deeply before it will deny that assistance, which we are pleading for, to the greatest industry in the country."

In 1930, the Civil Disobedience Movement reached its zenith. Touched off by the dramatic 'march to Dandi by Mahatma Gandhi, the Salt Satyagraha had spread like wild fire. In Bombay, at any rate, the Congress was practically running a parallel Government. The situation became even graver after Gandhiji's arrest in the second week of April.

The boycott of foreign cloth and picketing and interdiction of dealers in it were effective. Defaulters were publicly penalised with fine or humiliated. Mills using foreign yarn were also the targets of the Congress boycott.

A system of certification was introduced and millowners were expected to submit to it. The Ahmedabad millowners did. The Bombay millowners, however, demurred. It evoked a storm of censure from Congressites. Mody's claim that the Bombay textile industry was a national industry was flung back into his teeth. Mody and the Bombay Millowners' Association were pilloried for being 'unpatriotic' and refusing to play ball with the Congress.

The Congress move in Bombay was to bring about a split in the millowners' ranks under the guise of the system of certification.

Motilal Nehru was then the Acting President of the Congress, having been so nominated by Jawaharlal, the elected President, on his arrest at the beginning of the campaign. Early in June, Motilal arrived in Bombay, and Mody had several talks with him.

Mody pointed out to Motilal the dangers of any attempt to discriminate between millowners. Motilal listened to Mody patiently and seemed convinced of the soundness of Mody's plea. The conditions for certification as Swadeshi were drawn up liberally, and everything went off smoothly for a while.

Soon afterwards, however, Motilal too was arrested and sentenced. The agreement between the Congress and the Bombay millowners was, thereafter, honoured more in the breach than in the observance.

Meanwhile, the impact of the Indian boycott of foreign cloth was being felt heavily in Lancashire. The Gandhi-Irwin Truce signed in March 1931 thus specifically provided for the disconti-

nuance of the boycott of foreign goods, though it approved "encouragement of Indian industries as part of the economic and industrial movement designed to improve the material condition of India," and added they (the signatories) have no desire to discourage methods of propaganda, persuasion or advertisement pursued with this object in view, which do not interfere with the freedom of action of individuals, or are not prejudicial to the maintenance of law and order."

And ironically enough, while at home he was being attacked for being "unpatriotic" and pro-British in his attitude to the boycott campaign, Mody was found defending and justifying the Swadeshi movement to the British Press in general and to Lancashire textile interests in particular.

The Manchester Chamber of Commerce contended that the Gandhi-Irwin Pact had failed to end the boycott movement. Mody retorted that the Truce only provided for the termination of the boycott as a political weapon. It did not, and was not intended to, provide for the discontinuance of the Swadeshi movement.

The issue was raised in the British House of Commons. A volley of questions was put to the Secretary of State for India, Wedgwood Benn, on the serious position of the Lancashire cotton industry and the effect of the Indian boycott. The Manchester Royal Exchange passed a resolution protesting against the Government of India's economic policy and boycott and picketing of foreign cloth.

In the Commons, Wedgwood Benn stated that the political boycott of British goods in India had practically ceased and pointed out that the depression in agricultural prices had seriously affected India's purchasing power.

Taking up cudgels on behalf of India, Mody in a statement dryly commented, "Lancashire seems to be in danger of losing her head even more than her trade." He added, "She is obviously under the impression that the moment the Irwin-Gandhi Truce was declared her order books should have begun to be filled up and her idle machinery start whirring again. Because this miracle has not happened, she has made up her mind that the Truce is not being honoured."

Mody explained that the Indian was suffering from lack of purchasing-power so that the people had been compelled to ration

purchases of cloth. Nevertheless, he pointed out, imports of cloth from Britain since January 1931 had actually risen while those from Japan declined.

Then Mody sternly declared: "Two things Lancashire must remember: India's right to utilize the instrument of higher tariffs if she feels it necessary in her interests to do so, cannot be challenged. The second point to remember is that the Swadeshi movement has come to stay, that India will increasingly give preference to her own cloth, and that Lancashire and other countries will share the Indian trade only to the extent that Indian mills are unable to supply either the quantities or varieties which the people want."

In 1932, the Chairman of the Bombay Millowners' Association was again found, like Oliver Twist, "asking for more." Now he was pressing upon the Government of India for measures to head off the new menace from Japan stemming from the depreciation of the Yen.

In July, Mody led another deputation to Simla to draw Government's attention to the rapid decline in the prices of Japanese cloth and yarn, and its impact on imports into India. The heavy depreciation of the Yen led to a fall in the prices of Japanese textile manufactures by 25 to 30 per cent, with the result that it became impossible for Indian products to compete with them even in the home market.

In Bombay a number of spindles and looms were rendered idle. Even so, the stocks of cloth and yarn held by mills remained persistently at a high level.

The Government at last conceded the industry's demand for a raise of 50 per cent in the *ad valorem* duty on imported cotton piecegoods other than those of British manufacture.

The growing effect of protection thus wrested from the Government, in increasing doses, combined with the Swadeshi movement in 1930, helped the industry to come into its own.

VII

DEAL WITH LANCASHIRE

A HISTORIC event in Mody's memorable innings at the Bombay Millowners' Association was the Bombay-Lancashire Agreement of 1933, which came to be known as the Mody-Lees Pact, after the names of the heads of the two delegations.

Whereas, in the earlier two instances, related in the preceding chapter, crisis chased Mody, here is an illustration of Mody chasing a crisis and asking for trouble! The Pact at once underlined Mody's courage of conviction and tenacity of purpose.

Those were the days when Lancashire was considered India's Enemy No. 1. The very thought of a deal with the Lancashire textile interests was treasonous. Mody however felt convinced that it was possible to find a *modus vivendi* between Lancashire and India, and that an understanding between the two was essential, mutually beneficial and entirely practicable.

He considered this all the more desirable and necessary at a moment when the Indian constitutional reforms were on the Parliamentary anvil in Britain and the Lancashire commercial interests were a factor to reckon with, who could influence their shape for good or ill.

Mody's idea was to shoot two birds with one shot. He not only sought to smother Lancashire's hostility to India's political demands, but also desired to forge a united front with it in fighting the greater menace of unfair Japanese competition in the Indian textile market.

With the British Government particularly indulgent to Japan at the expense of Indian textile interests, Mody considered it essential to get Lancashire to back Indian textile interests and pressurise Whitehall into agreeing to the Indian demand for protection against the Japanese inroads into our textile market.

He was prepared to enter into a deal with Lancashire whereby India would provide greater scope for British piecegoods in this country in return for their agreeing to purchase Indian raw cotton and join in a united front against Japan. A basic condition for such a deal was, of course, that the Lancashire commercial interests

should refrain from opposing Indian political demands.

On February 25, 1933, the Government of India invited eighteen Members of the Central Legislature to attend discussions in London on a Reserve Bank and a Railway Board for India, preliminary to formulating precise proposals under each head. Mody was among the invitees and participated in the deliberations of the Reserve Bank Committee.

By now Mody was not only a front-bencher in the Central Assembly, but also the founder-president of the newly-constituted Employers' Federation of India, and Chairman and director of quite a few other commercial concerns in the country.

During this London sojourn, a fortuitous event was a meeting arranged by his friends from Calcutta, Sir Edward Benthal and Sir Frederick James, between him and a picked group of influential Lancashire businessmen. At this informal meeting, there was a general exchange of views and Mody was asked to give his reactions to the issues raised.

Mody got up and made some off-the-cuff remarks, in the course of which he referred to political changes in the offing in India and expatiated on the possibilities of building up fruitful and mutually beneficial relations between the Lancashire and Indian textile interests. He bluntly told the Lancashire men that the days when anyone could impose trade terms on India were gone, and that they should recognise that hereafter priority for India's economic interests had to be accepted.

The Lancashire businessmen present were greatly impressed with Mody's frankness, and withal friendliness, with which he spoke at the meeting. They decided that here was a man with whom they could do business.

That meeting led to another significant event. Lord Derby, the Lord-lieutenant of Lancashire, invited Mody to a dinner at which some 18 prominent representatives of the Manchester business community were present. At the dinner, Mody made a speech in which he reiterated his sentiments on the future possibilities of Indo-Lancashire trade relations. Mody was an even greater success at the dinner.

The next thing he knew, Mody was invited to visit Manchester by the Manchester Chamber of Commerce. Mody's visit to Manchester, on July 21, opened with a luncheon given by Lord

Derby in his honour, to which representatives of the principal cotton organisations of Lancashire were invited, and there were informal talks around the table. It was followed by a more formal meeting at the premises of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, at which 200 businessmen were present.

Mody once again spoke plainly to his hosts. He impressed upon them the fact that it was not possible, any more, to reach an understanding in the economic sphere unless Lancashire's attitude towards the political demands of the responsible section of public opinion in India was considerably modified. Faced by a threat from Japan to boycott Indian raw cotton, Mody also pleaded to his hosts that they should use more Indian cotton.

At the end of the meeting, Mody told the Press, "If it were felt in my country that the Lancashire interests could be relied upon to lend their support to a solution of the political problems of India which would be in harmony with the views held in every responsible Indian quarter, and if, moreover, it was made clear that Lancashire freely acknowledged the right of India to frame her policy, whether in regard to tariffs or to any other measure, a situation would be created in which men of goodwill in both countries would be able to cooperate and formulate a basis for future relations such as would be fair and satisfactory for both."

Mody then emphasised that the only "safeguards" which would be of any permanent value to British trade interests "must take the form of a better understanding and of agreements entered into freely by both sides to their mutual advantage." Mody pointed out that India had given a preference to Lancashire it had received nowhere in the world.

At the conclusion of his visit to Manchester, Mody invited a trade delegation from Lancashire to India to discuss common problems and formulate mutually beneficial terms for an agreement between the two parties.

The Lancashire textile delegation, headed by Sir William Clare-Lees, arrived in Bombay on September 11, 1933. Their conference with Indian textile interests lasted one full week, which was marked by much cordiality and a desire for mutual accommodation.

In welcoming the Lancashire delegation, Mody once again exhorted them to use more Indian cotton as proof of their concern to promote India's interests. Mody then put across a bait and

said that India imported large quantities of textiles from other countries. "The question that presents itself is," said Mody, "what share Lancashire can have in that trade and whether any adjustments can be made which might result in advantage to her. I am sure you must realise that Lancashire, in her turn, has got to show her goodwill in every possible way. One way in which she can give them the most tangible proof of her anxiety to further India's interest will be by increasing the employment of Indian cotton in the manufacture of her cloths."

These were tricky negotiations, carried on in the midst of intense suspicion, all round, of the bona fides of the Lancashire delegation and the intentions of the Bombay textile interests. Within the ranks of the Bombay millowners a split had developed over the terms to be offered to Lancashire. The nationalist press was howling at the negotiations like a pack of wolves.

At the end of one week of discussions, the Lancashire delegation and representatives of the Indian textile industry moved to Simla for further conferences between the two parties, so that the Government could be kept *au fait* with the discussions. In Simla, the split among the Indian millowners widened even further.

It was thus that one fine morning, Kasturbhai Lalbhai, the chief critic of the proposed pact, and Mody, its chief architect and champion, bumped into each other at the Delhi Railway Station, rushing to Bombay by the Frontier Mail, to lobby their respective viewpoints with their common constituents.

Kasturbhai beat Mody at the post, in that he rushed straight from the Bombay Central Station to the leading lights among Bombay millowners. By the time Mody got home, changed and drove up to Ness Wadia and F. E. Dinshaw, he found they had already been met by Kasturbhai and converted, and they had made up their minds against the pact. Indeed, the Currimbhoy Group had already given notice to oppose the pact at the Bombay millowners' meeting convened to discuss the matter.

Thus a crisis was developing that threatened to upset the apple-cart. Mody immediately wired to the Lancashire delegation in Simla to suspend the talks, while he went to work on the key figures of the Bombay textile industry. At last, Mody and his group got round Ness Wadia and F. E. Dinshaw. They admitted now that they had heard the other side of the case, they saw the

issue in a different light and were prepared to withdraw their signatures to the motion given notice of rejecting the pact.

Similar lobbying among other millowners at last assured Mody that the consensus was on his side, and then he convened a formal meeting of the Association, at which a majority was obtained in favour of the Pact.

It was all heavy going. Mody had been traduced up and down the country. Various public and private bodies passed resolutions denouncing the Pact and its author. These bodies ranged from the Indian Merchants' Chamber of Bombay to the Society for the protection of Hindu Widows in Bengal! Such were the strong passions imported into the controversy, in which blind prejudice rather than reason and merit ruled.

The Mody-Lees Agreement was signed on October 29, 1933. Under it, it was "agreed that the Indian textile industry is entitled for its progressive development to a reasonable measure of protection against imports of UK yarns and piecegoods." The Pact further agreed that "under present conditions, owing to lower costs and other factors operating in foreign countries, the industry requires higher level of protection against them than against UK."

Under the agreement, the Indian side agreed:

(a) to offer to Lancashire a 5 per cent decrease in the Indian import duty for two years, from 25 to 20 per cent;

(b) not to make fresh proposals with regard to the duties applicable to the United Kingdom imports of cotton piecegoods, if and when the revenue position of India made it possible for the Government of India to remove the general surcharge on all imports imposed in October 1931;

(c) so far as imports of cotton yarns from the U.K. were concerned, the duty might be 5 per cent *ad valorem* with a minimum specific duty of 1¼ anna a lb.;

(d) that the duties on artificial silk piecegoods in the case of the U.K. might be 30 per cent *ad valorem* or 1¼ anna per square yard for 100 per cent artificial silk fabrics, and 30 per cent or 2 annas a square yard for mixture fabrics of cotton and artificials.

It was also agreed that in regard to the Empire and other overseas markets for piecegoods and yarns, any advantages which might be arranged for British goods should be extended to Indian goods, and that India, in markets in which she has no independent

quota, should participate in any quota which might be allocated to the U.K. in respect of overseas markets in which Indian mills lack established connections; and it was agreed that the Manchester Chamber of Commerce should use its good offices to bring about contacts between Indian manufacturers and British houses which were already established in those markets.

In return, the Indian side strongly emphasised the urgent necessity of further efforts in UK to popularise and promote the use of Indian raw material. They welcomed the undertaking that the British textile mission was prepared to recommend effective action being taken and to keep the Indian side regularly in touch with developments.

This understanding was limited in duration to December 31, 1935.

The Mody-Lees Pact was incorporated in the Textile Tariff Amendment Bill—this was the first time in India's history that a private agreement was made part of a Government Bill—passed on February 5, 1934. The agreement was hailed in Britain. *The Times,* London, described the Pact as a "definite achievement of imperial statesmanship," and congratulated Bombay millowners for "opening the prospect of fruitful cooperation between the textile industries of India and England."

But in India, it raised a storm of criticism from the nationalist press and the Congress, who denounced it bell, book and candle.

Indeed, a campaign of calumny was unleashed against Mody himself, for having initiated the Agreement. If in the year 1933 an unpopularity contest were held in India, Mody would have won hands down ! The Congress Bulletin, an illicit sheet published by the Congress "underground", described Mody as "the hireling of the millowners," "an arch-ally of our exploiters," "lackey of Lancashire who feels more for Britain than for Bombay," and a "self-seeker."

Mody remained unruffled. Three years later, reminiscing in an article to *The Sunday Statesman,* Mody referred to the Indo-Lancashire Agreement and ironically described it as his "crowning offence,"—he had negotiated it in the teeth of opposition from many quarters.

"It brought on me a great deal of criticism and abuse for months on end, but I have learnt to take such things philosophically,"

With Lancashire Delegation.

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Viceroy Linlithgow's Council.

he wrote. "I did not think it necessary to answer any of my critics—I would have been doing nothing else if I had attempted the task—and I was sustained by the hope that some day I might have the satisfaction of seeing my critics look very foolish."

Subsequently, Mody did have that satisfaction. Looking back through the pages of history, one cannot help remarking upon the errors human judgments are prone to when based upon passion and blind prejudice.

The Indian Merchants' Chamber by a majority denounced the Agreement. As a result, Mody and Sir Manmohandas Ramji resigned from the Committee of the Chamber. Kasturbhai Lalbhai, the loudest critic of the Pact, resigned from the Millowners' Association, while the textile interests outside Bombay were equally antipathetic to the Agreement.

The provision in the Agreement for a 5 per cent reduction for two years to Lancashire in Indian import duty, from 25 to 20 per cent, was considered by upcountry textile interests and the Indian Merchants' Chamber, as offering "undue price for the goodwill of the two delegations."

In the midst of all this furore in India, Winston Churchill, a bitter opponent of the Indian political demands in May 1934, charged Lord Derby and the Secretary of State for India, Sir Samuel Hoare, with putting pressure upon the Manchester Chamber of Commerce to alter their evidence before the Select Committee.

Churchill made that an issue of Privilege and the Speaker of the Commons referred it to the Committee of Privileges. For it was indeed true that the Manchester Chamber of Commerce had altered their evidence. But it was primarily because of the pressure Mody had put on Lancashire, when he repeatedly impressed on the latter the need for their support to India's political demands in order to create a favourable atmosphere and generate goodwill for a satisfactory understanding between the trade interests of the two countries.

The Manchester Chamber of Commerce had altered their evidence before the Joint Select Committee because they did not want to queer the pitch for the Mody-Lees negotiations then going on in India. The alteration had been carried out following a communication received from the Lancashire Mission in India.

Hoare obtained Mody's evidence from India in order to present it to the Privileges Committee of the House of Commons, with a view to proving that it was not Lord Derby or Hoare, but the Mody-Clare Lees negotiations that had influenced the change in the Manchester Chamber's deposition to the Joint Select Committee.

Mody's statement of evidence to the Secretary of State stated that Mody had insisted from the very first on a change in the political outlook of Lancashire; that through the instrumentality of the Lancashire Mission, Mody had repeatedly urged revision of the Chamber's Memorandum, the general tenor of which was known to Mody; that as a result of the exchange of communications between the Lancashire Mission and the leading lights of the Chamber, the memorandum was modified by a preface and by the way in which the oral evidence was given; and that this change was made possible only by the fact that an agreement had been reached in India.

Indeed, the deposition of the Manchester Chamber had been postponed from time to time and was ultimately tendered only after the settlement was reached in India.

The Privileges Committee, presided over by the Prime Minister, not only rejected Churchill's charge, but gave Mody the credit for the metamorphosis in the attitude of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce. The Privileges Committee stated:

> A new chapter opens with a visit paid to England by Mr. H. P. Mody, Chairman of the Bombay Millowners' Association. Conversations had taken place in London between him and the representatives of Lancashire during the last week of June. These conversations were resumed in July and continued at intervals down to 21st July in Lancashire. The keynote of the conversations and of the speeches that were delivered at a meeting in Manchester on 21st July was the desirability of improving relations between India and Lancashire by cooperation and goodwill. It was felt by Lancashire representatives that Mr. Mody had put his case in such a way as to create an entirely new situation. The "policy of goodwill" began to make converts. Mr. Mody had, to use the words of the Secretary to the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, held out an olive

branch—the first olive branch for many years from Indian opinion. The new situation was met by a decision to send a delegation to India. The object of this delegation which was afterwards known as the Mission, was to attempt to secure a better understanding with the people of India.

In a letter dated 15th June, 1934, Lord Derby wrote to Mody:

"I also regard the India-Lancashire Pact as marking the beginning of a wider movement in the direction of economic cooperation and I am perfectly certain that the goodwill created between English millowners and Bombay millowners, chiefly through your instrumentality, is going to have a permanent and very beneficial effect on both parties.... As you will have seen, the Committee of Privileges has reported and has exonerated both Sir Samuel Hoare and myself. Why Churchill should ever have made his statement passes my belief, but then when you have a discredited politician who wishes to get back into public favour, he is not very particular as to what methods he uses. Churchill has always been to my mind a most unscrupulous politician but I did not think that even he could sink as low as he has done on this occasion."

Not content with raising the issue of breach of privilege, Churchill went for the Bombay-Lancashire Agreement hammer and tongs. In one speech in the Commons he attacked Mody personally. He said "The Bombay millowner, who negotiated the Agreement on the Indian side, got into great trouble with the millowners. He was, I am told, boycotted in some of the Bombay clubs and he has ceased to be the President of the Bombay Millowners' Association."

Mody, who has never taken anything lying down from anyone, hit out at Churchill viciously. Giving unto Churchill that was Churchill's, Mody told the British Press :—

The terminological inexactitudes of Mr. Churchill are bewildering in their variety. As for the statement about my having been boycotted in certain clubs, I would merely say that like the reports of Mark Twain's death, it is grossly exaggerated. It certainly should be news to the clubs in Bombay. The allegations that I have got into trouble with other millowners is

equally ludicrous and as for the presidentship of the Association, I am still occupying that position in spite of my anxiety to be relieved of the burden on account of the acceptance of other responsibilities.

The "other responsibilities" referred to in the statement to the British Press pertained to the offer made to Mody by Tata Sons Ltd., to join them as a Director. Mody had been the President of the Millowners' Association for six years, and he was of the view that he should now make room for another. He had thus accepted Tatas' offer and looked forward to being relieved of his office at the Millowners' Association, but the latter had desired him to carry on until they could find a suitable successor.

About this time, a letter to Mody from "someone at the India Office" read: "Mainly owing to your efforts, a dramatic change in the situation has been brought about, and to those of us who have rubbed shoulders with the Lancashire people in the past and know their mentality, it is almost unbelievable that when they gave evidence a week or two ago before the Joint Select Committee, the Indian delegates had no fault to find with their attitude and actually congratulated them on the tone of the memorandum they presented. Those who have known the diehard attitude Lancashire commercial interests had always displayed towards India, would indeed consider the change a miracle."

Lord Derby himself wrote to Sir Pheroze Sethna, a member of the Indian delegation at the Joint Select Committee, on the happy denouement as follows: "I am glad to think that you can tell him (Mody) that the Manchester Chamber of Commerce has created a satisfactory impression upon you and the Indian delegates and I shall do my best when speaking next week at Manchester, to pay my tribute to the very loyal way in which Mr. Mody has carried out the personal promises he gave me in England. When you see him I hope you will give him my respects and assure him of my profound gratitude."

With the passing of the Safeguarding of Industries Act in 1933, the position for Indian textiles vis-a-vis the Japanese competition appreciably improved. The Indo-Japanese Convention was abrogated, which forced the Japanese directly to negotiate with the Government of India.

About the time the Lancashire Delegation was in India, the Japanese textile delegation too arrived in the country. The Japanese met representatives of Indian textile interests at a conference in Bombay. They were all courtesy and smiles, but would not budge, in the expectation that they would get a better deal from the Government of India. They did get an agreement in New Delhi. The official Indo-Japanese Agreement offered the Japanese a "most favoured nation" treatment in cotton textiles. Mody criticised the Agreement as inadequate to safeguard the interests of the Indian textile industry.

In April 1934, speaking in the debate on the Indian Textile Protection Bill in the Assembly Mody defended the Mody-Lees Pact and said it had already led, in the six months since its signing, to the doubling of purchases by Lancashire of Indian cotton.

Giving the background to the deal with Lancashire, Mody stated that during the talks he had tried to impress upon Lancashire that India would resent any move on their part to settle with Japan or any other power, the problems of the industry in Bombay.

Mody stressed that Lancashire controlled 70 seats in the British House of Commons and underscored the subsequent change brought about in Lancashire's attitude to Indian reforms, as evidenced in their deposition to the Joint Select Committee.

Mody however insisted that the Lancashire-Bombay Pact was "only a side-dish. If you want industrialisation in India, protection is needed. We cannot help it, especially when there is such a serious competitor as Japan."

On March 15, 1935, at the Diamond Jubilee dinner of the Bombay Millowners' Association, Mody had the satisfaction of being able to announce that "the undertaking given to use more Indian cotton had been kept by Lancashire and it is a matter of great gratification to find that Lancashire's takings have reached the record figure of 3,60,000 bales (three times what it was four years earlier)."

Responding to a toast, Lord Brabourne, the then Governor of Bombay, as chief guest at the function, observed: "It has been rather the fashion since I have been in this country, at any rate, for people to make unending and gratuitous attacks on Mr. Mody, but his back is broad enough to carry them. Here again, if I may

make a forecast about the future, I feel certain that of all people sitting around this table tonight, the historian of the future will make a very friendly, a very kindly reference to Mr. Mody when the history of the discussions of the last few years between India and Great Britain comes to be written."

Despite Mody's all efforts, however, the Bombay cotton industry continued to be sick, and a stage was reached, during 1934, when production dropped by nearly 260 million yards, following the failure of many mills in the city. The millowners announced wage-cuts, and, in May 1934, the workers launched a general strike in protest. The strike embraced 51 out of some 60 mills.

Now Mody had the unpleasant task of justifying the wage-cuts in the industry both to the Government and Indian public opinion.

Mahatma Gandhi expressed concern over a renewed threat of strike in an industry plagued by strikes for the preceding five years, and suggested arbitration.

Explaining the position to Gandhiji, Mody wrote on June 2, 1934, that the Bombay mills had been making very heavy losses for the preceding some years, and towards the end of 1932, they had reached a point when the industry had either to reduce the scale of the "dear food" allowance—which had been fixed at the height of the boom, and which had continued unimpaired in spite of the years of depression—or to face a general closing down. Already a number of mills had gone into liquidation, and many more were faced with the same prospect, unless they could reduce costs of production.

Early in 1933, therefore, Mody continued, the decision was taken to reduce the "dear food" allowance, but instead of making a general cut applicable to everybody, individual millowners were given the liberty to effect such cuts as, by agreement with their work people, they found possible to introduce. A number of mills in a position to pay at a fairly high rate, did so, and the reduction in the "dear food" allowance in their case did not amount to more than 12 per cent of the aggregate wages. In the case of the financially weaker mills, however, the cuts had to go further.

The workers who realised that if they insisted upon the old scales of wages, their occupation itself would be gone, accepted the reduction, and the mills continued to work quite a long time,

and would have kept on working "had not certain Communist leaders carried on a violent propaganda with the object of bringing about a general strike. For months they did not succeed, and it was only by methods of intimidation that the men were finally brought out."

Mody further promised if the investigation instituted by the Bombay Government into the wages of workers indicated that "in some cases, the wage cuts had gone too far or that certain adjustments were required to be made," the Association would be "prepared to do what it can to set matters right."

Mody, therefore, pleaded to Gandhiji that intervention at that stage, either through arbitration or in any other manner, was "not calculated to do any good." Mody warned, "We are not dealing with trade unionism in any sense of the word, and we have very carefully to weigh the consequences of any action which might be regarded as a sort of triumph for those whose avowed object is the destruction of all forms of property."

In May 1934, Mody moved from cotton to steel. Tatas appointed him as a director in their firm. But cotton remained his first love, and indeed, with his plate heaped with problems, the Millowners' Association could not relieve him for quite a while.

His incessant battle on behalf of the Indian textile industry on the floor of the Central Assembly continued. He still represented the Bombay Millowners' constituency in the Central Legislature, long after he quit the Millowners' Association's chairmanship.

In April 1936, speaking in the Central Assembly on the new Tariff Bill, Mody complained that every time there was a tariff bill he was accused of intriguing with Government. He described himself as "severely practical" and said his principle was "get what I can, and press for more." He was prepared to take half a loaf instead of none.

"Even a crumb?" asked M. S. Aney.

"Yes, even a crumb," replied Mody, and then went on to explain that the bill was no more than a crumb. It was not intrigue, but the sheer justice of his case that won him his point, he protested.

That also summed up Mody's political philosophy.

On his retirement from the Bombay Millowners' Association,

after six memorable years as its Chairman, *The Indian Textile Journal* paid him a glowing tribute.

Mody's departure "marks the end of an epoch in the history" of the Association, the Journal wrote. "History will show that though he utilised to the fullest the splendid opportunities for leadership given him, it is the millowners who have obtained the greatest measure of benefit from the undoubted abilities of so accomplished an advocate of their cause, and his achievements during the past few years fully justify the faith that has been reposed in him."

Highlighting his special achievements, the article stated: "An ardent protectionist, Mody probably introduced a new technique in the art of securing fiscal props from a sleepy Government. With his emergence as the leader of millowners, gone were the days when merely a resolution was passed invoking the grace of the Government for a weak dose of the fiscal mixture. Matters were allowed to rest and stagnate whether Government complied or not in those 'appy-go-lucky days.

"But Mr. Mody virtually 'spring-cleaned' those rusty methods and planned with the pre-vision of a veteran generalissimo, gingered up a nation-wide campaign for textile protection, unified the millowners from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, screwed up the support of the leaders in other walks of life and awoke the Indian press to delve into his campaign for 'copy' and 'scoops' to the consternation of foreign interests."

When claims for protection became too often recurring, the former universal sympathy gave place to suspicious questioning, and even open antagonism. "It was at this delicate stage," the Journal wrote, "that Mody revealed some rare traits as a masterful tactician and a cautious negotiator, when pseudo-agricultural champions and rural loud-speakers appeared to gain the upper hand. It was only an illusion and he usually carried the day, as he always did, and who could deny what Mody irrepressibly wanted !—even the indolent hinges of the doors of Government have moved in silent response."

During Mody's six-year tenure, the scope of the Millowners' Association's work greatly expanded in various ways. The enhanced prestige and usefulness of the Association during this period brought it a number of new members from outside Bombay and

immensely strengthened its finances, without which the Association would have run into deficits.

Among the reforms carried out within the Association itself were the organisation of more methodical and elaborate statistical compilations and information for the benefit of its members, improvements in the selling organisation and introduction of a price-fixing apparatus and a scheme of trade number registration, a reduction in the fire insurance rates, power costs and in mill assessments and the application of the system of arbitration in piecegoods disputes.

In 1930, when Bombay's textile industry was going through a major crisis, what with a five-month long general strike crippling it, Mody turned down an offer of Ministership in the Bombay Government, as he would not desert the ship at such a moment.

In the October of that year, elections were held to the Provincial Councils. Sir Frederick Sykes, the then Governor of Bombay, was keen on having Mody as one of his Ministers. Since Mody had been named as a delegate to the First Round Table Conference, convened in November 1930, Sykes even offered to hold the appointment in abeyance till after Mody's return from London from the Conference.

Pleading his preoccupations with the troubles faced by the textile industry in Bombay at that time, Mody however declined the offer.

VIII

"MR INDIAN CAPITALIST".

IF MODY had not been snatched away by the textile industry just about the time he was to take wing in public life, what would have been the shape of his career ? It is interesting to speculate.

Here was a politician to the finger tips, duly qualified by talent and training. As *The Indian Textile Journal* put it, "Politics he has always lived for. The political arena had for him the same fascination which the bull ring has for an experienced toreador."

But then what party in the country could Mody have joined ? Not the Gandhian Congress, whose political philosophy and methods, the constitutionalist in him could never stomach. On the other hand, though a liberal by instinct, cast in the mould of Pherozeshah Mehta, he could not fit in with the latter-day Indian Liberals, for whose spineless politics he developed a contempt and whom he considered neither fish, flesh, fowl nor good red herring.

Possibly, however, there was room in those times for non-aligned political personalities in Indian public life, serving as a bridge between a radical nationalism on the warpath and a distrusted and distrustful alien regime—personalities acceptable to and respected by both sides.

Tej Bahadur Sapru and M. R. Jayakar belonged to this category. So did Mody, duly qualified for such a role by temperament, political outlook, acceptability and integrity. Indeed, in the mid forties, Mody exerted himself with a view to bringing the Congress and the Government closer together or resolving the prevailing communal deadlock.

The fact however remained that all through his long public career, Mody was primarily the spokesman of Indian commerce and industry, and thus, inevitably, tended to look at national affairs from the angle of the interests he represented. This obviously did occasionally cramp his political style in public controversies either with the Government or with the Congress.

Thus commenting upon Mody's speech on the Ordinance Bill in the Central Assembly in September 1932, even his admirer,

the Special Correspondent of *The Times of India,* wrote: "Mody was not quite sure of his own mind. It may be that half the time he was thinking of the reaction that his support or opposition to Government would produce in Bombay. As the spokesman of the industry, which is looking forward to continuance of protection accorded to it, he could neither quarrel too much with the Government nor completely alienate the nationalists, some of whom do not exactly love Bombay millowners."

On the other hand, the nationalist *Bombay Chronicle,* on the occasion of the debate on the Ottawa Pact in the Central Assembly, in October 1932, sincerely regretted Mody's predicament. "Mody who is really the finest speaker in the Assembly today and who if he were his own master, would, on the question (the Ottawa Pact) give a splendid lead to the Assembly, must be reckoned out of count, because of the specific circumstances..... With the beggar's bowl in hand on behalf of the Bombay Millowners' Association, one can hardly expect this valiant fighter to offend the Commerce Department on the Ottawa business, with his eyes obviously rivetted to the next budget session when the Government will announce their decision on the recommendations of the Tariff Board."

It was a happy circumstance however that in those days there was much identity of interest between Indian nationalism and commerce and industry.

Throughout the fourteen years he sat in the Central Assembly, Mody represented the Bombay Millowners' Constituency. Even in the Bombay Municipal Corporation, latterly, he was returned from that constituency. Gradually, irresistibly, Mody's role extended and expanded—from cotton to steel, and then on to commerce and industry, as a whole. Thus, he not only took up the brief of Indian cotton, but campaigned for Indian steel and shipping, and did the battle for Indian cement, banking and insurance.

In 1933, he became the founder-President—and remained in that post for over 25 years—of the Employers' Federation of India, of which he was a co-founder with Sir Edward Benthal and Sir Frederick James, two prominent leaders of the European business community in India, and on whose platform met, for the first time, Indian and European employers in the country.

That was followed by his appointment in 1938, as Chairman of Associated Cement and of the Central Banl of India, two premier commercial institutions in the country. He was already a director of Scindia Shipping Company, as also of quite a few other concerns.

Of this, many years later, speaking at a function in his honour, Mody remarked, "I was horrified when I found that I had collected something like 20 chairmanships. The only two things I was able to dodge were the Kennel Club of Bombay and the Aeronautical Society of India. I seem to have collected chairmanships as other people collect stamps."

The day in 1920 C. N. Wadia picked up the young lawyer from his vigorous "Bar Library practice" and planted him in the cotton textile industry of Bombay, destiny took a hand in shaping a career very different from the one Mody, by then having established a reputation as a Municipal Councillor and an up-and-coming politician, was possibly looking forward to.

During the early days of his long tenure in civic politics, Mody gave expression to quite radical views. He had no patience with such "reactionaries" as landlords and millowners! Even an evangelist might have envied his hot-gospelling campaign against rack-renting landlords. In his early speeches, delivered on the floor of the Corporation Hall and elsewhere in the city, one could even discern a tinge of socialistic passion for the downtrodden and the have-nots.

Indeed, for Indian capitalists of the times—one newspaper dubbed Mody "Mr Indian Capitalist"—he was very progressive in his views on matters like industrialisation and working conditions for labour. He would not oppose the 54-hour week when the Government introduced the Factories Bill in the Central Assembly.

In the 1934 budget debate in the Central Assembly, Mody advocated planned economy—shades of the Planning Commission of the post-independence era !—and later, elaborated on the idea in his presidential address at the Employers' Federation, the same year. He observed :

> Some machinery must be created which would give direction and impetus to the scattered forces of Indian trade and industry.

In the forefront of any programme, I would place the compilation of reliable statistics bearing on the economic life of the people. Accurate data of the production cost and market price of the staple agricultural commodities have to be compiled and maintained, and the incidence of land revenue and the burden of agricultural indebtedness have to be assessed with some degree of accuracy.

A census of production of established industries has to be undertaken and some attempt made to ascertain the economies of cottage industries. Directors of industries in various provinces have to be provided with facilities for investigating the possibilities of starting small-scale industries. The Tariff Board would have to be made a permanent organisation and its present cumbrous machinery for the investigation of the cases of particular industries replaced by a quicker and more elastic system.

The next year, speaking from the same platform, Mody called for Government intervention in industries to bolster them. He asked whether the Government of India, "confronted as they are with a new world situation and with the lessons of other countries before them, are applying their minds to the question of the policy they should pursue towards Indian industrial development."

Mody hastened to add, "I am not inviting any wanton or day-to-day intervention in the domestic concerns of the industry. I am here enquiring whether Government have been actively considering what is being attempted in countries like Great Britain and whether their settled policy is going to be one of non-intervention at all costs."

He then declared, "I see a time coming when, for the purpose of safeguarding the interest of well-established industries, something more will be required of the State than an occasional application of a dose of protection."

In February 1936, writing in *Industrial India,* Mody expounded his vision of a balanced economy for India. He reiterated his conviction that "the best solution of some of the difficulties inherent in our economy is offered by small-scale industries, a development which could be greatly facilitated by the spread of electricity and mechanical transport. There would then arise a balanced form

of economy with small or moderate-sized industrial establishments distributed all over the countryside, instead of huge workshops located in a few large urban centres. Industrial workers would not lose touch with rural life and industrial activity would be spread out all over the country, creating a stable class of small capitalists and preventing territorial jealousies. This would avoid concentration in narrow industrial areas and the consequent drawing away of large masses of workers from their ancestral homes."

Indeed, Pothan Joseph in his column "Over a Cup of Tea," in *The Hindustan Times,* commented: "Bombay millowners are fortunate that a man of his [Mody's] personal drive and adroit diplomacy has not, by mischance, become a dangerous leader of the labour movement."

It is quite possible that a personality like Mody's so sensitive and human, so easily roused by injustice and so passionate in advocacy, might well have gone to the other side, had not the millowners early annexed him. But then it is rightly said that a man who is not a socialist before 40 is insensitive; a man who is a socialist after 40 is a crank!

With the politician in him irrepressible, Mody as Chairman of the Millowners' Association, unlike his predecessors, frequently burst into the political arena and intervened in national affairs. In the early twenties, he was an active Home-Ruler. From the day he spoke on a public platform on "The Separation of Judiciary from the Executive," he, as well as others, knew where he was heading.

In February 1928, just about the time he had retired from his first term as Chairman of the Millowners' Association, and still standing at the fork of the road of his career, Mody plunged into the agitation against the appointment of the all-White Simon Commission with his characteristic gusto. He resigned from the firm of C. N. Wadia and Company because it inhibited his public activities.

All this, incidentally, gave an inkling into the working of Mody's mind, at this juncture. But the subsequent offer of a well-charted, secure and lucrative career, after his heart, in the shape of a whole-time, salaried appointment as Chairman of the Bombay Millowners' Association, was too much of a temptation to resist, and put an end to any new ideas buzzing in his head.

At a public meeting held at Cowasji Jehangir Hall in Bombay, Tej Bahadur Sapru presiding, Mody characterised the appointment of the all-White Commission to recommend political reforms in India as a "deliberate insult to India's self-respect." In a statement to the Press, earlier, he had declared, "Lord Irwin must either believe that even the best and sanest elements in Indian politics are utterly wanting in a sense of responsibility or must come to the conclusion that a grave wrong is being done to the best interests of India."

Mody was a member of the Boycott Committee appointed to organise the boycott of the Commission in the country.

In April of that year, Mody was elected President of the Indian Merchants' Chamber of Bombay. This organisation intensely concerned itself in the grave turn events were then taking in the Bardoli taluka of Gujerat, following an enhancement of land revenue, which was considered unwarranted, unjust and burdensome by the peasants of Bardoli.

When the Government decided to enforce the enhanced land revenue, the peasants, under Sardar Patel's leadership, launched a non-payment satyagraha campaign. The Government answered it with repression. This was when Vallabhbhai Patel hit the headlines as a great organiser and leader of men, and an admiring people bestowed on him the title of "Sardar."

The Indian Merchants' Chamber's representative in the Provincial Legislative Council resigned his seat in protest against the Government's repressive policy in Bardoli. As President of the Chamber, Mody extended his good offices to try and bring about a settlement of the dispute between the peasants of Bardoli and the Government.

Mody addressed a letter to the Governor of Bombay, Sir Leslie Wilson, with a view to opening negotiations on the dispute. The Governor replied promptly, and at the latter's instance, on June 22, Mody, along with Purshottamdas Thakurdas and Lalji Naranji, met Wilson in Poona.

Mody acquainted the Governor with the dangerous potentialities of the situation and emphasised the hazards of allowing a local agrarian dispute to develop into a first class struggle between Government and the people. Wilson seemed anxious to retrieve the situation without any fear of loss of face, but some of the senior

officials surrounding him were against any compromise.

The move was for a round table conference between the Governor and a deputation of the Merchants' Chamber, in which Sardar Patel would be included, so that he was able to present to Wilson the case of the Bardoli peasants. But the initiative was frustrated by the Government's stiff attitude. It looked as though the Government was bent on "teaching a lesson" to the rebels of Bardoli.

Incidentally, that was the first time that Mody met Vallabhbhai Patel. Mody had a long talk with Patel about the chances of an amicable settlement. Though the Sardar was unbending on his demands, Mody was impressed with the man who seemed to know his mind and could take and implement decisions. Nor did he appear unreasonable.

Mody could not however take further part in the negotiations as he had to go to England on a private business assignment on behalf of the Scindia Steam Navigation Company, of which he was a director.

Under the rules of the Indian Merchants' Chamber, an office-bearer going abroad for more than a month, had to relinquish his office. Later, it turned out that the Government had to concede to the Bardoli peasants much more liberal terms than those Mody had proposed and the Government had rejected.

In September 1928, Mody carried his battle for the protection of India's economic interests to London. In an article in *The Financial Times* Mody explained to British commercial interests India's economic needs and sought to remove misapprehensions among them generally about India's aspiration to control and foster its economy and, in particular, about the projected Indian coastal shipping legislation, designed to reserve the coastal trade of India to Indian ships.

"Only a prosperous India can continue to be the best customer of Great Britain," he pleaded. "I am one of those who believe that it is only through the advancement of Indian prosperity by a judicious policy of protection and by the management of her currency in her sole interests that the trade between India and England can be established on a stable basis."

He concluded: "What is really required is a clearer understanding on the part of England of the economic needs and aspirations of the Indian people."

The article received much notice in London and raised a heated controversy in the columns of *The Financial Times,* in the course of which most British correspondents expressed hostility and distrust towards India's demand for fiscal autonomy. *The Financial Times* in an editorial found itself unable to agree with Mody's views.

On his return to India in November, Mody emphasised in a press interview the urgent need of "judicious propaganda to dispel the amazing amount of ignorance that prevails in England as to India's economic policy and the political situation." He warned Indian leadership against the unwisdom of ignoring British public opinion in regard to India's struggle for constitutional progress.

Urging an effort to educate British public opinion on Indian problems, he pointed out, "The general attitude of political parties in England was to rely on the judgment of the few who took an interest in Indian affairs and were regarded as authorities."

Back in India, Mody resumed his campaign for the reservation of coastal trade for Indian shipping. At the annual meeting of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, in February 1930, he moved a resolution recording the Federation's support to the bill and declaring that the policy underlying the Coastal Reservation Bill was "not based either on confiscation or racial discrimination as is alleged by interested parties," and deploring "the attitude of speakers on behalf of the Government of India who have thought it fit to endorse the view."

The resolution further urged the Government of India to "devise ways and means of encouraging the participation of Indian vessels in the overseas trade of the country and to take early steps for the development of the shipbuilding industry in India."

Moving the resolution, Mody hit out at the British critics of the Coastal Shipping Reservation Bill who invoked the cause of consumers and "the dumb millions."

He remarked, "Somehow or other, whenever national industries of the country were going to be protected, this bogey of consumer's interests was trotted out as if these people whose business it was to throttle the economic progress of the country were all the time doing so because they felt for the dumb millions of the country and poor inarticulate and unfortunate consumers."

The agitation led to a shipping conference with the Viceroy in New Delhi and negotiations in London with representatives of British shipping interests, the P & O, and the B.I. At one stage, at the shipping conference in New Delhi, the Viceroy was quite ruffled by the angry criticism he had to face from Indian shipping representatives and expressed "disappointment" at the hard line Mody took in his attack against the Government of India's lukewarm policy towards the interests of Indian shipping.

The acute differences between the two parties were settled for the time being, with the passing of the Coastal Shipping Bill in the Central Assembly and with British interests agreeing to yield a substantial share of the coastal trade to Indian shipping.

By now Mody was a veteran of many battles fought and won for Indian commerce and industry on the floor of the Central Legislature and on many another platform in India and England. In 1937, "Mr Indian Capitalist" set out to fight for the cause on a new and vital front.

In June of that year, Mody sailed for Geneva to attend the annual session of the International Labour Organisation, as Indian employers' delegate from India. In his speech at the ILO meeting, Mody put his finger on the weak-spot of that international body when he complained that at the ILO the most casual reference was made to conditions in Eastern countries.

He likened the ILO to a young man in a hurry. "The worst of it is," he said, "that the pace is being set by countries which on account of internal difficulties, have had to resort to very advanced labour legislation and which are seeking now to make a virtue of necessity. For obvious reasons they want the rest of the world to follow them."

He pointed out that the wholesale application to India of the conventions of the ILO is not only impracticable but would be wholly unfair. He opposed the 40-hour week and insisted that the ILO's handling of the problems of Eastern countries should be more practical and realistic than hitherto.

Mody's cogent plea made a great impression on the ILO authorities and was well received in the Indian Press.

The taunt went home. Before the year ended, Harold Butler, Director of the ILO, was in India, in the course of a tour of the Eastern countries, personally acquainting himself with industrial and

labour conditions in the region.

Butler attended the annual meeting of the Employers' Federation of India, held in Calcutta, on December 21. Addressing the EFI meeting, the Director of the ILO recalled Mody's part in the ILO session at Geneva earlier in the year, and observed, "I think I may say without exaggeration that there has never been a more effective employers' delegate than he was."

At a dinner given by Mody in his honour at the Taj Mahal Hotel, in Bombay, Butler confessed that he had come to India with an incorrect impression that this country was backward. During his visit to India, he had found that industrial enterprise in India was of a very high order and compared favourably with most other countries.

Mody soon converted the platform of the Employers' Federation of India into a sounding-board from which he aired his views and thought aloud on the country's current economic and political problems.

Thus his annual address to the EFI in 1936 suggested a revision and liberalisation of the principles laid down by the Fiscal Commission in their application, at a time when the whole world was moving towards a policy of intense economic self-sufficiency. He further urged fostering the growth of small-scale industries through a more active policy of protection so as to establish a proper balance between agriculture and industry.

In his 1937 address to the EFI, Mody reviewed with much satisfaction the working of the new Constitution (just inaugurated following general elections in the country, with popular governments installed in the provinces). Earlier, he had strongly urged upon the Congress to accept office and work the Constitution which, he held, had great potentialities.

Mody then referred with considerable uneasiness the ambitious plans the newly-installed Congress Governments in the provinces were preparing for social and labour legislation, and pronounced the dictum: "The fundamental principle must be that while labour has a right to benefit from our prosperity within limits, it cannot be allowed to destroy or impair the incentive to enterprise which is so largely at the root of the industrial system."

In the 1938 address to the EFI, Mody pleaded for closer cooperation between Government and industries. He said certain

industries, such as armaments, falling in the category of "essential," should be directly set up by the Government or, as in the case of transport and other like industries, receive tangible and substantial encouragement from them.

Mody then came back to his pet grouse and remarked that since the advent of Provincial Autonomy, "labour legislation and schemes had been projected and ideas put forward which could not but be regarded as calculated to retard industrial progress."

On 19th October 1938, Mody was elected Chairman of the Associated Cement Companies, following the death of Sir Nowroji Saklatvala. Three days later, Mody was elected Chairman of the Central Bank of India, Ltd., too, when Sir Phiroze Sethna suddenly died. These added two more platforms for Mody's annual sermon on the country's economic and political affairs.

The ACC, at any rate, needed all the dynamism Mody could impart to it. A new experiment, a merger of Indian cement companies, in its second year of existence, the ACC was locked in battle with the Dalmia group of cement companies that was challenging its supremacy through a reckless rate-cutting war.

Mody's very first address as Chairman of the ACC, on January 6, 1939, at its second annual general meeting, sounded like a battle cry.

He declared, "All I can say of the future is that our Company is well organised to meet any attack on its position, and that the confidence and goodwill we have created will see us through whatever temporary difficulties we may experience through the uneconomic competition with which we are faced."

Mody added, "To put it quite bluntly, the economics of the cement trade are being completely ignored by this amazing and indiscriminate onslaught on the available markets in the country. We have never been, and don't desire to be, a monopolistic concern. Our objective all along has been to serve the needs of the consuming public, regulate production according to demand, and, from time to time, effect a balance between the interests of the investor and those of the consumer by a steady well-directed policy of price reduction, voluntarily undertaken, without any pressure from any interest competing or otherwise."

He then told the shareholders, "We are not content with merely manufacturing a good article; we want to get a wider

and wider public interested in the product, and more and more engineers and builders instructed in its use."

The Capital commented : "Sir Homi has come to the helm of the ACC at a difficult juncture in the development of the industry in India. With characteristic frankness, he has put all the Company's cards on the table and its investors and competitors alike will now know how they stand for the future."

Though negotiations had been started a year earlier, through the intervention of Subhas Chandra Bose, it was not until January 25, 1941, that Mody was able to report to the annual general meeting of the ACC a satisfactory settlement with the Dalmia Group. The main features of the settlement were a joint selling organisation functioning under the existing Cement Marketing Co. of India, Ltd., and the apportionment of 25 per cent of the cement production capacity in the country to the Dalmia Group.

About Mody's skill as chairman, *Indian Finance* editorialised : "If there is one qualification more than any other which fits Sir Homi as the ideal bank chairman, it is his knack of making the right speech on the right occasion. His recent address to the shareholders of the ACC was a perfect blend of matter and manner. Last week he presided at the annual meeting of the Central Bank of India and his review of the Bank's activities was a characteristic performance."

On one occasion, at an insurance shareholders' meeting, over which Mody presided, a shareholder spoke for fortyfive minutes, criticising the affairs of the firm and the small dividend and treatment of the staff, and what was more, he attributed motives to the directors.

Mody's reply took just three minutes and wound up with the words : "And for the rest, Mr M has excelled himself in indulging in warnings, requests, imputations and threats. His warnings will be heeded, his requests considered, his imputations ignored and his threats treated with contempt."

At another shareholders' meeting, the same critic suggested that the Company should send technicians for training to America. Mody replied that his proposition would be considered, but he added, "We had better send Mr M to America so that he may learn how shareholders behave at company meetings."

IX

THE ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

ON OCTOBER 31, 1929, the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, announced a proposal to convene in London a Round Table Conference between representatives of India and those of the British Government "for the purpose of seeking the greatest possible measure of agreement for the final proposals which it would later be the duty of His Majesty's Government to submit to Parliament."

Lord Irwin declared: "I am authorised on behalf of His Majesty's Government to state clearly that in their judgment it is implicit in the Declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as there contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion Status."

The announcement was well received in the country. Indian leaders, including members of the Congress Working Committee, met in Delhi the next day to consider the Viceroy's Declaration. After deliberations, these Indian leaders issued a manifesto which welcomed the Declaration but thought "certain acts should be done and that certain points should be cleared so as to inspire trust and to ensure the co-operation of the principal political organisations in the country."

The Congress Working Committee subscribed to the manifesto, which was signed, among others, by Madan Mohan Malaviya, Tej Bahadur Sapru and Annie Besant.

The manifesto called for an amnesty for political prisoners and the adoption of a policy of general reconciliation in order to induce a calmer atmosphere, and asked for effective representation of the progressive political organisations and predominant representation for the Congress as the largest amongst them. It expressed the hope that the Conference was to meet not to discuss when Dominion Status was to be established but to frame a scheme of Dominion constitution for India.

Mody was all enthusiasm for the Viceroy's Declaration. He had no reservation to make about it. He described it as an "appeal from a statesman and a gentleman to the better mind of India." He took the Indian leaders to task for "quarrelling over the

precise meaning to be attached to the Declaration and the conditions to be imposed which, while they are thoroughly meaningless and uncalled for, are calculated gravely to prejudice the attainment of that goal which all India has in view and the progress towards which depends on the unity and resolution with which India seizes the great opportunity which is now before us."

Not satisfied with the clarifications given by the Viceroy to the points raised by it, however, the Congress ultimately decided to boycott the Round Table Conference.

On November 12, 1930, the Round Table Conference opened in splendour in the Royal Gallery of the House of Lords. Ramsay Macdonald, the then Prime Minister of England, inaugurated and presided over the Conference.

Fiftyseven delegates from British India and from Princely States were invited to participate in the Conference, while 13 British Members of Parliament, representing the three political parties, attended on behalf of Britain.

Mody was invited to the Conference as the spokesman of Indian Commerce and Industry. Among the other Indian delegates were Tej Bahadur Sapru, Srinivasa Shastri, M. R. Jayakar, M. A. Jinnah, the Aga Khan, Madan Mohan Malaviya, C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer, Sir C. Y. Chintamani, Sir Cowasji Jehangir, Pheroze Sethna and Purshottamdas Thakurdas.

At the plenary session of the Conference, Tej Bahadur Sapru boldly belled the cat by propounding a federal system of government for India, and invited the Princes to support him.

The Maharaja of Bikaner and the Nawab of Bhopal offered to come into the Federation provided their internal sovereignty was guaranteed. Jinnah and Mahomed Shafi (the latter representing the loyalist wing of the All-India Muslim League) also welcomed the proposal.

Mody generally approved of the federal system as appropriate for a multi-religious and multi-racial country like India, but felt grave doubts about doing any business with the Indian Princes who always preferred to follow a policy of procrastination in those times.

At the plenary session, speaking for the interests he represented, Mody, to the raising of many British eyebrows, declared: "Political freedom is not going to mean anything to us unless we are free

to regulate our economic and industrial development on the lines which we regard as most conducive to our interests."

"History was full of instances, "he said," of the way in which India's industries, trade and commerce had been neglected or ruthlessly sacrificed, and the surprising thing in the circumstances was not that Indians had done so little, but that they had achieved anything at all." Mody urged that the "fundamental conception of the Conference should be not what could be safely conceded to India but what could safely be denied."

Mody concluded: "Unless India was politically free, she could not be economically healthy, and could not look forward to that sound industrial development without which, when 70 per cent of the population were dependent upon agriculture, her progress must be exceedingly limited, whatever political freedom she might enjoy."

Mody then emphasised the tremendous influence Mahatma Gandhi wielded in India, and the need to bring the Congress into consultation in deciding the political destinies of India.

Mody recalls that Tej Bahadur Sapru played the most outstanding part in the First Round Table Conference, and at the conclusion of the Conference, Ramsay Macdonald winding up the proceedings, paid a glowing tribute to Sapru's contribution.

In contrast to the discord that prevailed among the Indian delegates at the Second Round Table Conference, the Indian delegation functioned at the First RTC as one united, harmonious team. The delegation's common meeting place was 6 Chesterfield Gardens, where they regularly met to decide upon the common line of action before attending the sessions of the Conference.

The Aga Khan, then in the full height of his prestige and influence, was the most influential personality behind the scenes, and proved a constructive statesman and nationalist. Later on, during the war, when he kept away from war-threatened Britain, he fell off grace in Whitehall.

The Aga Khan's own ardour for the British Empire also abated when the British Government failed to recognise his invaluable services to the Empire. In return for them, he had looked forward to the British Government bestowing upon him a temporal realm, possibly in Sind.

Recalling Macdonald's part in the First Round Table Conference, Mody thought the British Labour leader was vague and woolly in his speeches. Wedgwood Benn and Lord Sankey were the moving spirits behind that Conference.

Yet another subject in which Mody took great interest at the RTC was the issue of the separation of Burma from India.

Mody, along with B. Shiva Rao, another Indian delegate, objected to the procedure adopted at the Round Table Conference in bringing the subject of the separation of Burma from India as a *fait accompli* before the Conference, whereas they insisted that the issue of the advisability of such a separation itself should have been kept open for discussion at the Conference.

Ultimately, Mody and Shiva Rao submitted to Lord Russell, Chairman of the Sub-Committee concerned, a minute of dissent to the report on the separation of Burma. The minute strongly opposed any announcement by the British Government accepting the principle of separation without first settling Burma's constitutional position.

As expected, Mody took a leading part in the discussions on the safeguards proposed for the British mercantile community in India in the future constitution. The draft clause placed before the Conference by the British Government read:

> It was agreed that the rights of the existing British mercantile community should be guaranteed, and that for the future, by means of a commercial convention or otherwise, the rights of the British mercantile community in India should be guaranteed as being equal to those enjoyed by Indian-born subjects of His Majesty on the basis of reciprocal rights to be guaranteed to Indians in the United Kingdom.

Mody objected to the clause as it stood. He made it clear that while he was in agreement generally with the principle that there should be equality of treatment between the British and Indian commercial communities, there was one important qualification which had to be imported, and that was that Indian interests should be paramount.

He explained that while there was no intention on the part of anyone to interfere with the ordinary trading rights of the British or any other non-Indian commercial community, there might be cases in which it might be necessary to depart from the

principle of strict equality of treatment. Every country had a right to protect its key industries, and in the case of India, it might be specially necessary to secure control for her nationals of industries which were vital to her national interests.

Mody's remarks provoked a long and heated discussion, and as there were wide divergences of opinion, the Prime Minister suggested that the matter might be left over for further discussion, and that in the meantime, the delegates specially interested in the subject might meet and find out whether an agreement was possible. As a result of the informal discussions, the Conference adopted the following re-worded clause:—

> At the instance of the British commercial community the principle was generally agreed that there should be no discrimination between the rights of the British mercantile community, firms and companies trading in India and the rights of Indian-born subjects, and that an appropriate convention based on reciprocity should be entered into for the purpose of regulating these rights.

Annotating the re-worded clause, Mody later explained to its Indian critics, in a statement in the Press, that the phrase "an appropriate convention based on reciprocity" to be entered into for the purpose of regulating these rights, meant that an understanding would have to be reached between the two countries with a view to defining the classes of cases in which the principle of equality could not be conceded.

"What is claimed is not an indiscriminate right to impose disqualifications but a right regulated by certain conditions to safeguard national interests," said Mody. Mody further explained that by the phrase "based on reciprocity," the drafters had in mind instances of countries which discriminated against India and in whose case India was not prepared to concede even generally the principle of equality.

Mody made it clear at the Conference discussions that while the Conference recognised generally the principle of equality, it did not challenge the undoubted right of India to safeguard her national interests.

At the conclusion of the Round Table Conference, in an interview to the Press, Mody expressed satisfaction with "the considerable measure of success" achieved by the RTC.

"It has obtained for India an acknowledgement of her status and a practical recognition of her claim to be the mistress in her own house," stated Mody. "It is true there are certain safeguards which have been imposed, but I do not think so far—at least—as the Army and Foreign Relations are concerned, these provisional arrangements can be objected to by anybody. In the sphere of finance, however, while a great advance has been made and the control will largely pass into Indian hands, certain reservations have been made which Indian opinion may be disposed to cavil at."

Mody added, "I cannot help feeling disappointed, however, at the circumstance that so many matters should have been left undetermined and that there should have been merely provisional and tentative agreement on so many subjects of importance. From the very nature of the Conference it was impossible to do anything more than lay down the broad lines of the Constitution, but I feel that if there had been greater agreement amongst ourselves, it would have been possible to define more clearly the various issues which are at present left open for further discussion."

Looking back to the event, Mody now expresses the view that at the time of the First Round Table Conference, the different communities in India were closest to a political settlement. "The course of events in India, and even the story of Mr. Jinnah, might have been very different if a little statesmanship had been displayed by the leaders of the warring factions gathered at that Conference."

Within a week of the conclusion of the Round Table Conference, on January 22, 1931, Lord Irwin ordered the release of Mahatma Gandhi and Members of the Congress Working Committee. Shastri, Sapru and Jayakar, returning from the Round Table Conference, persuaded Gandhiji to meet the Viceroy.

The outcome of prolonged talks between the two was the Gandhi-Irwin Truce, whereby the political prisoners were released, the emergency laws abrogated and the Congress suspended the Civil Disobedience campaign.

The Agreement reaffirmed that Federation was an essential part of the scheme for the constitutional government of India, and undertook to take steps "for the participation of the representatives of the Congress in the further discussions that are to take place on the scheme of constitutional reform."

The Karachi session of the Congress, presided over by Sardar Patel, ratified the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and appointed Gandhiji as the sole representative of the Congress to the Second Round Table Conference.

The triumphant Congress was now in a jubilant mood, as the country looked forward with great expectations to the Second Round Table Conference, with the Congress participating in it.

But, in the meantime, two significant developments had occurred which radically changed the prospect for the Congress and the country. Lord Willingdon had succeeded Lord Irwin as Viceroy; and in Whitehall, the Labour Government had been replaced by the National Coalition Government, predominated by the Conservatives, even though old Ramsay Macdonald continued as its titular Prime Minister. Willingdon came to Delhi with a mandate to deal firmly with the Congress.

In contrast to the optimistic atmosphere prevailing at the First Round Table Conference, the deliberations of the Second RTC, convened in November 1931, were charged with considerable tension and bedevilled by the baffling communal problem. Mody did not attend the Second Conference. Jinnah too was not there.

With a Conservative, Sir Samuel Hoare, as Secretary of State for India, the Minorities problem received full play at the Conference, and the progressive elements were overwhelmed and checkmated by the forces of communal reaction.

Gandhiji's protracted labours to obtain an agreement with the leaders of the various communal groups were frustrated. At the end of it all, the Mahatma threw up his hands and admitted "with deep sorrow and deeper humiliation" his utter failure to secure an agreed solution. Gandhiji returned from the Second RTC with empty hands, in the last week of December, to an embittered India.

In Gandhiji's absence in London, the political situation in the country had deteriorated. The new Viceroy had issued a series of ordinances and several prominent Congress leaders, including Jawaharlal Nehru, had been put behind bars.

After a brief, frustrating correspondence between Gandhiji and Lord Willingdon, the Working Committee decided to resume Civil Disobedience. But no sooner had the resolution been passed than the Police swooped upon the Congress Working Committee and arrested all top Congress leaders, including Gandhiji, and the

Congress organisation itself was declared unlawful.

Prior to that fateful meeting of the Working Committee and in preparation for the projected Civil Disobedience campaign, Gandhiji and Sardar Patel had invited leaders of Bombay mill-owners for consultation and to ascertain how far the millowners would throw in their weight behind the struggle the Congress was planning to launch against the Government. The meeting was held at Mani Bhavan, in Gamdevi, where Gandhiji stayed. Mody, F. E. Dinshaw and Lalji Naranji attended it.

Mody frankly told the two Congress leaders that the situation had radically changed since 1930, when the Congress struggle had achieved great success. Now Willingdon's Government had made full preparations to crush any campaign launched by the Congress. As to the millowners, Mody said that they were in no position now to help the Congress in its campaign. Following the Wall Street crash and the world-wide economic depression, the Indian textile industry was in the doldrums, and could not stand the strain of fresh political turmoil.

Gandhiji and the Sardar listened to Mody patiently, though they appeared to be disappointed. Some of the lesser leaders present however fulminated, and Bhulabhai Desai even threatened dire consequences to the millowners.

F. E. Dinshaw, thereupon, sensing the tension in the atmosphere, intervened to explain that Mody was speaking in his capacity as the Chairman of the Bombay Millowners' Association and not expressing his own views when he made the statement.

In the event, Mody proved right. The 1932 Civil Disobedience Movement was crushed with an iron hand. The Congress was outlawed and even normal political activities came to a standstill.

Thus the nation was groaning under the heel of repression let loose by Willingdon's Ordinance raj. In this charged atmosphere, Ramsay Macdonald dropped on the country, on August 17, 1932, the bombshell of the evil-motived, divisive Communal Award that sought further to vivisect the Indian people by splitting away the Depressed Classes from the Hindu community through the accursed separate communal electorates.

At the Second RTC, the Mahatma had warned the British Government that he would resist with his life the dismemberment of the Untouchables from the Hindu community. Now that what

he feared had materialised, Gandhiji, lodged in the Yerawada Jail in Poona, intimated to the British Prime Minister his decision to begin a fast from September 20, noon, to protest against the Award.

Simultaneously, prominent Hindu leaders, under the initiative of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, met in conference in Poona, to hammer out a formula modifying the Award, acceptable to Gandhiji as well as the leaders of the Depressed Classes, particularly Dr Ambedkar, who proved adamant in his stand.

On the fifth day of the fast, a formula emerged which met with the acceptance of all parties. The Depressed Classes were to forego their separate electorates and content themselves solely with the general Hindu electorates (in which, of course, they were already included as well by the terms of the British Award), subject to important safeguards which the caste Hindus were to concede to them.

In the first place, they were to have a specific number of reserved seats (148) out of those assigned by the British Award to the general constituencies in the various Legislatures. In the second place, they were to elect by themselves, four candidates for each reserved seat, the general electorate being confined, in its subsequent choice, to one of these four. The settlement as a whole was to last until altered by common agreement. The Depressed Classes primary elections were to last for a maximum period of ten years.

The Poona Agreement was accepted by the British Government in so far as it would modify the Prime Minister's Award, subject to reservation of judgment on points in the Poona Agreement that fell outside the scope of the Award.

The Depressed Class leaders were happy with the Poona Pact as it secured for them double the number of the seats granted to them in the Prime Minister"s Award, and a measure of representation somewhat in excess of the proportion of their population.

Gandhiji broke his fast at 5.15 p.m. on September 26. Immediately after the termination of the fast, the Hindu leaders met in conference in Bombay and pledged the Hindu community to the removal of untouchability.

"The conference resolves," stated the resolution, "that henceforth amongst Hindus no one shall be regarded as an untouchable by reason of his birth and that those who have been so regarded hitherto will have the same right as other Hindus in

regard to the use of public wells, public schools, public roads and all other public institutions.....It is further agreed that it shall be the duty of all Hindu leaders to secure, by every legitimate and peaceful means, an early removal of all social disabilities now imposed by custom upon the so-called untouchable classes, including the bar in respect of admission to temples."

This dramatic sequence of events had deeply stirred the nation. Mody hailed the Poona Pact as a "great triumph of the caste Hindus as well as Depressed Hindus." He observed, "The caste Hindus' response to the dramatic and heroic gesture had given a signal proof of their capacity for accommodation and sacrifice."

Then Mody paid this glowing tribute to the Mahatma: "Mahatmaji has achieved in a fortnight what generations of social reformers had been unable to do and it may well be regarded as the greatest triumph of his extraordinary career."

Ultimately when the Reform Proposals were announced by Sir Samuel Hoare at the Third Round Table Conference, early in 1933, Mody was one of the first to express his dissatisfaction with them which, he said, reflected a "want of trust in Indians."

At a public meeting held in Bombay on February 8, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, the veteran Indian Liberal presiding, Mody seconded a resolution characterising the Reform Proposals as falling "far short of the demands of the Indian people." The resolution opined that "unless they are materially altered so as to satisfy the legitimate aspirations of India, they will fail to secure harmonious, smooth and contented working of the new constitution nor will they allay the discontent and disaffection so widely prevalent in the country."

The resolution further stated. "In order to secure a peaceful atmosphere for the consideration of the Reform Proposals on their merits, it is essential that all political prisoners should be immediately released."

X

MEETS HIS METIER

MODY TOOK to the legislative forum as duck to water. Mody's skill as a speaker, his debating talent, backed by much erudition, and above all, his charm and sense of humour, in no time, marked him out as the most popular speaker in the Central Assembly. But it was the statesmanly, look-ahead vision he displayed on national politics and economic affairs that compelled attention from all sections of the House, and the way he said it, got him the headlines in the Press.

In this, his non-aligned political stance put him at an advantage. Uncommitted to any particular party ideology, he could bring to bear on every controversial issue before the country, an objective, analytical mind. He could consider it strictly on its merits, and make a constructive contribution to a controversy which both the Government and the Congress were impelled to respect.

But this was also the most "pro-British" phase in Mody's public career. On the one hand, the interests that he represented—first cotton, then steel—required that he should keep on the right side of the Government, having constantly to look up to it for protection and concessions.

On the other, the Viceroy and his Executive Councillors were drawn to him not only by his brilliance and versatility but by the frequent identity of interests discovered between him and the Government on many matters, in a hostile House packed with militant nationalists. The Government greatly valued his dialectical eloquence that could be effectively turned against the powerful opposition.

This suited Mody. His increased influence inside the Government enabled him to get things done and extract concessions for the interests he represented.

The "love-affair" between Mody and the Government was reinforced with the signing of the Mody-Lees Pact—a milestone in Mody's career as well as in his relations with the Government—which *The Times,* London, had described as an act of "Imperial statesmanship."

Mody's record in the Central Assembly during the fourteen years he was its member, was outstanding. Here we will, however, have to content ourselves with dwelling upon the major battles Mody fought on the floor of the Assembly during his long term. Some of his achievements in that forum, on the textile front, have already been dilated upon in an earlier chapter.

In April 1929, when Mody replaced Sir Victor Sassoon as the representative of Bombay Millowners, he came into a House studded with great names in the country's public life on the non-official benches.

The great Motilal Nehru was the leader of the Swaraj (Congress) Party. There was Madan Mohan Malaviya, leading the Nationalist Party. Mahomed Ali Jinnah, S. Srinivasa Ayyangar, M. R. Jayakar, A. Rangaswami Aiyangar, Purshottamdas Thakurdas, Shanmukham Chetty—they were all there. Vithalbhai Patel, the elder brother of Sardar Patel, was the President of the Assembly.

Mody likes to recall how when he first came to the Central Assembly, he consistently failed to "catch the Speaker's eye." Harbilas Sarda's 'Hindu Marriage Bill' was under discussion. Mody made repeated attempts to catch the President's eye, but failed.

Courtesy and convention alike demanded that a new member making his maiden speech should be able easily to "catch the Speaker's eye." After his third vain attempt to speak, Mody accosted President Patel as he walked from the Assembly Hall to his chamber, and remonstrated with him in somewhat vehement terms. Did Patel still remember the defeat he had suffered at Mody's hands in the Bombay Mayoral election ?

Patel threw up his hands and exclaimed "Narayan, Narayan !" —his favourite mannerism—and advised Mody that as a new member he should be patient and wait for his turn.

The next day, however, Mody caught the Chair's eye and made his maiden speech. He warmly supported the Hindu Child Marriage Bill and characterised those seeking postponement of the measure as wreckers. He dismissed religious practices as mere excrescences and did not think orthodoxy could keep back social reform or political progress.

Mody rated V. J. Patel as an outstanding Speaker of the Assembly, who ruled the House with an iron rod, and being

ruthless in his methods, was feared all the more, on that account. Mody recalls how when Patel was first elected President of the Central Assembly, Sarojini Naidu cut one of her silk saris to stitch a Speaker's gown for him!

It was his contribution, in March 1930, to the discussion on the controversial Indian Cotton Tariff Bill that underlined Mody's persuasive and reasoned eloquence and established him as a front-ranker in the House. A full account of Mody's part in this debate has been given in the Chapter "His Finest Hour."

A new facet of Mody's political personality was revealed in the debate on the Simon Commission Report, on July 20, 1930, occasioned by Mian Shah Nawaz's motion of cut in the Supplementary Demand for the Round Table Conference. That marked him out as a man of courage and conviction.

Characterising the Simon Commission "in one way or another, responsible for most of our difficulties," Mody declared with derision, "It was foisted upon us through the insolence of Lord Birkenhead whose tenure of office (as Secretary of State for India) was distinguished by nothing so much as a studied contempt for everyone's feelings and opinions but his own. That superior person now comes forward with warnings and advice to the Viceroy and one can only advise His Lordship to confine himself to the counting house and not seek to come back to the councils of the Empire."

Mody ridiculed the Simon Commission's claim that they had not altered a line of their report and had been "unaffected by the events of the last few months." He commented, "I do not know whether the Commission intends to claim something wonderful for themselves by this air of detachment, much as if like Manu and the ancient law-givers, they were concerned only with the eternal verities and fixed their gaze with unclouded vision upon the future. This air of detachment ill suits the Commission. What, after all, is this Round Table Conference the outcome of, if not of the fact that the country was roused in a manner it had never been roused before by the way in which the Parliamentary Commission had been foisted on the country?"

Mody then appealed to the Government not to give up its effort at conciliating the Congress. "I want them to realise," he said, "that the inclusion of the Congress will certainly give the Round

Table Conference a representative character and will ensure for the decisions of the Conference that calm and dispassionate judgment which are essential if peace is to be restored."

Mody then sagely added, "Apart from the value of conciliation at this juncture, apart from the importance of taking to the RTC all the elements that count in the political progress of this country, it has to be remembered that the success of the Conference will depend not merely upon the unity of those who are asked to go to that Conference, but also, in a large measure, upon the attitude which the Government of India adopt towards the proposals that will be placed before the Conference. I want the Government of India to be a national government, voicing the aspirations of a people who will not be denied self-government any longer. On the attitude which the Government adopt at this momentous juncture, will depend whether India is to remain in the Commonwealth of Nations or may some day elect to go out of the Empire of which she has so long been the strongest bulwark".

Earlier Mody had joined a public statement issued over the signatures of Tej Bahadur Sapru, M. R. Jayakar, M. A. Jinnah, Phiroze Sethna, Ramaswamy Iyer, Cowasji Jehangir, Ramaswami Mudaliar, R. K. Shanmukham Chetty and others, which welcomed the Viceroy's announcement about the proposed Round Table Conference and emphasised the need to enlist the co-operation and participation of the Congress in that Conference.

The statement further appealed to the Government to repeal repressive measures and the Congress to terminate its programme of non-co-operation and civil disobedience and join in a concerted demand on Great Britain "so as to attain that political enfranchisement as to whose fundamentals there is such unanimity and as to whose details we are hopeful of agreement as soon as our organised political parties realise the momentous nature of the occasion and the imperative need to make the best use of it."

By now Mody had become the darling of the Press. "Mr Mody made one of the best speeches of the whole debate" soon became the common refrain of newspaper reports of the Assembly proceedings.

Mody's parliamentary style was best summed up in a dispatch in *The Times of India*, reporting the debate on November 12, 1931, on the motion that the increase of taxation under the Emergency

Finance Bill should run only for the remainder of the year.

The correspondent commented: "Mr Mody has made for himself a position of much influence in the House. He never abusively hurls about allegations of untruth and half-truth and so on, with which some members have been known to destroy the reasonableness of their utterances. He marshals his arguments well. He delivers them with good voice and manners. His personality makes him many friends and carries weight."

Effectively playing his role of the watchdog of Indian commerce and industry, on September 15, 1932, Mody took up cudgels on behalf of Tatas, when a Member brought a motion in the Central Assembly recommending a "thorough enquiry" by the Tariff Board into the affairs of the Tata Steel Works at Jamshedpur. This was two years before Mody joined Tatas as a director.

Mody vigorously defended the management of Tatas and denied the allegations of extravagance and insinuations made by certain members. He proved that the salaries paid to the covenanted staff of Tatas had actually been reduced during the preceding six years by about 50 per cent, while the number of foreign officials had been reduced by more than 60 per cent. The motion was lost without a division.

Mody's part in the interesting debate in November 1932, on the controversial Ottawa Pact, that enshrined the principle of Imperial Preference in India's fiscal policy, got him first bouquets, and later brickbats, from the nationalist press.

During the debate, Mody analysed the terms of the Pact and proved that the advantages accruing to India were not as great as the Indian delegation had imagined. It was a speech couched in moderate language and packed with convincing facts and figures. Adverting to the question of preferences, he observed, "If we want to give preferences, let us do so by all means, but it must be on those articles in which Britain holds an important part of the market and we must see that the burden on the consumer is, as far as possible, eliminated."

Mody however maintained that a scrutiny of the schedule proposed by the Indian delegation to Ottawa showed that, in some respects, there might be a loss of revenue and in other cases, there might be a burden on the consumer.

Mody therefore stated that the Agreement required a careful

examination, and he pleaded for the appointment of a committee to study the Agreement, especially as the Government had not supplied any figures that would enable members to interpret its terms correctly. He, on his part, promised to approach it without bias and if he was convinced as to its advantages, would be its strongest supporter.

Mody's suggestion was accepted by the Government and a committee of 15 including Mody, was constituted to examine the Ottawa Agreement.

The Times of India correspondent in the Assembly, by now an enchanted admirer of Mody, exhausted his repertoire of superlatives in reporting Mody. It was the only speech, he said, in which the Ottawa Agreement was attacked point by point, on its merits.

He then gushed: "There was no prejudice in his speech. There was no political hostility to any nation or class or section. It was a thoroughly well-informed business man's criticism of the Agreement, expounded with the skill of a first class advocate. It enormously strengthened the demand for further inquiry. And further enquiry was all that Mr Mody asked for."

The Hindustan Times correspondent described the speech as "a masterpiece remarkable alike for the matter and manner of it."

Pothan Joseph in his "Over a Cup of Tea" went into raptures over the speech "Mr Mody is a master of political dialectics, and his first trick was completely to disarm suspicion on the opposite side and appear even indignant against those who regarded the occasion as suited for twisting the British lion's tail. On the other hand, like Androcles, he busied himself in pulling the thorn out of the lion's paw, and at the same time, with the aid of anaesthetics he abstracted a few of the Ottawa claws, unbeknown to the lion."

The Assembly Committee appointed to investigate into the Ottawa Pact however reported by overwhelming majority (12 out of 15) in favour of acceptance of the Ottawa Agreement as they found it "definitely in the interests of India." Mody signed the report. And all those who had applauded him earlier, now looked silly. Enraged, feeling let down and led up the garden path, these newspapers now fell upon him with bared fangs.

To be fair to Mody, however, in his speech, which had evoked kudos from the nationalist press, he had made it clear that if on

fuller study of the Pact, he felt convinced about its advantages to India, he would not hesitate to support it. On a closer examination of the advantages and disadvantages of the Pact, he felt convinced that by and large the Pact would be beneficial to India.

Nevertheless, *The Bombay Chronicle* attributed the change in Mody's views to the fact that he represented the Millowners' Association, which "could not afford to displease the Government when it looked up to the Government for protection and bounties."

The Hindustan Times, which had praised Mody's earlier critique of the Ottawa Agreement in superlative terms, now declared, "The moral responsibility of the debacle cannot be dissociated from Mr Mody," and commented, "The trouble with Mr Mody who, by sweet reason constituted himself the friend, philosopher and guide of his lay colleagues, is that he is obsessed by the interests of the Bombay millowners."

The Times of India Special Correspondent was, however, consistent in his praise of Mody. He described Mody's latest speech as an "impassioned address." "He has never spoken better," wrote he. "The opposition speeches he tore to ribbons. The case for the Agreement he supported as strongly. No speaker during the day was so heartily cheered by all sections of the House."

Looking at the performance from another angle, the Correspondent hailed Mody as the saviour of the Agreement when it first came before the Assembly, by getting it sent to the Select Committee as the alternative to seeing it defeated in the division lobby.

On March 31, 1933, the Central Assembly discussed the British White Paper Proposals for Indian reforms. Sir Abdur Rahim's amendment calling for substantial amendments in the Proposals, was carried by the House without a division.

Speaking in the debate, Mody in his characteristic, persuasive style pleaded that if the Government wanted the moderates to work the Constitution, the safeguards must be reduced to a minimum and the White Paper Proposals must be modified in the Joint Select Committee (of the British Parliament). Mody warned the Government that the moderates would be swept overboard by the extremist element in a few years' time, unless his plea was heeded to.

He said the White Paper had failed to secure one of the fundamentals of good government when it failed to eliminate the control of the Secretary of State from the day-to-day administration of the country. He also opposed financial safeguards and demanded that the control of the Reserve Bank should be in Indian hands.

Mody reiterated his scepticism about a Federation, and said he was not prepared to pay an undue price for an alliance with the Princes and was opposed to sacrificing national interests in bargaining for their entry into the Federation.

Apart from Protection, another cause for which Mody campaigned was against the rupee-sterling ratio (18 pence to a rupee), arbitrarily fixed by the Government which operated harshly against India. When the Reserve Bank Bill came up before the Central Assembly, Mody supported R. S. Sarma's amendment for a change in the ratio and demanded devaluation of the rupee before the Reserve Bank came into being.

In August 1934, when the Steel Bill came to be discussed in the Central Assembly, Mody had been just named a Director of Tatas. Mody criticised the proposal to remove the revenue duty on British structural sheets and characterised it as part of a scheme to reduce protection to indigenous steel.

He however declared that his attitude towards the British manufacturer was the same as he showed in signing the Mody-Lees Pact and that he would be "delighted to assist in any new arrangement which would help the British lion to increase in fatness provided that it also helped India to fare equally well or better."

The Bill gave Tata Iron and Steel protection for another seven years, though not exactly in the same measure as before.

The Indian Finance of Calcutta was however severe on Mody and charged him with still being under the influence of the "Mody-Lees spirit," and letting down Tatas, his new masters, and the Indian steel industry, by not insisting upon a continuation of the status quo in the quantum of protection given to the industry. The journal was convinced that Tatas had a good case, and if pressed vigorously, they could have got their way.

XI

THE RAJ'S "BLUE-EYED BOY"

IN NOVEMBER 1934 came the general elections to the Central Assembly. Mody was once again returned unopposed by the Bombay Millowners' constituency. The Congress captured 44 seats, apart from the 14 won by the Congress Nationalist Party, in the Assembly.

Thus, when the new Assembly met in January 1935, for the first time after the walk-out of the Swarajists in 1930, there was a strong, organised and disciplined opposition. The Congress Party was now led by Bhulabhai Desai, the well-known Bombay lawyer and an ex-Advocate-General of that province. Pandit Gobind Ballabh Pant was his deputy leader and S. Satyamurti, the brilliant politician from the South, the General Secretary of the party.

The Congress Nationalists were led by M. S. Aney. And Jinnah, himself returned on an independent ticket (the Muslim League did not contest the elections), formed an Independent Party, comprising a motley crowd, with a sworn Liberal like Cowasji Jehangir as his deputy leader.

It was an impressive House. A galaxy of talents was represented on the Treasury Benches too. The acid-tongued Sir James Grigg was the Finance Member, and the redoubtable Sir Nripendra Nath Sircar, the Law Member, whose mordant wit and intellect earned him the respect of the Opposition.

The first clash between the Opposition and the Government took place within five days of the opening of the new Assembly. It came on January 29, 1935, over the Indo-British Trade Agreement, which had just been signed in London a fortnight earlier, by the Secretary of State for India, on behalf of India, and the Chairman of the British Board of Trade, on behalf of Great Britain.

The Congress Party would have nothing to do with the Agreement, and during the debate, the Opposition speakers tore the Pact to shreds. To Mody, however, the Indo-British Trade Agreement was a logical sequel to the Mody-Lees Pact.

Again taking the middle ground, and amid angry interruptions from the Congress benches, Mody pleaded for a fair consideration

of the Agreement on its merits. He blamed the Government for its failure to consult commercial opinion in the country for the hostility the Agreement had evoked in India. He insisted that the Agreement had not sacrificed the vital interests of the country. The corner-stones of India's fiscal policy, he contended, were protective duties, revenue duties and safeguarding duties. He challenged anyone to show that any one of those corner-stones had been affected.

On the other hand, Mody observed with satisfaction that the time when the United Kingdom could secure economic advantages in this country was past; the U.K. was now making an overture to India and seeking the hand of friendship. He concluded, "the world is seeking economic rapprochement, and it is not for India to reject this overture."

The Opposition was in no mood to listen to him. A resolution demanding the termination of the Agreement was carried by 66 votes to 58—not that under the then prevailing constitutional set up, the legislature had the power really to terminate the Pact; it was no more than a political gesture on the part of Indian nationalism.

The debate on the Agreement however reached a high level. *The Bombay Chronicle* characterised it as "among the best that has been heard since its (Assembly's) inauguration fourteen years ago." Mody's own performance in the debate was described by *The Times of India* as a "first class fighting effort."

The very next week, the Assembly witnessed yet another clash of arms between the Congress and the Government, when the Joint Parliamentary Committee Report on Indian reform came up for discussion. On this occasion however Mody found himself on the side of the angels.

But his speech greatly differed from the Congress speeches, in that it exuded moderation and goodwill, and did not hesitate to recognise the merit of the J.P.C. Report recommendations. It was this strain of constructive moderation in his speeches that appealed to the Government, in contrast to the destructive tactics of the Congress.

Mody moved the following amendment to the Government motion for consideration of the Report:

"This Assembly having taken into consideration the Report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on India reform, expresses

its profound dissatisfaction at the absence of any declaration that the goal of India's development is the attainment of a status equal to that enjoyed by the Dominions, and urges the acceptance of the modifications proposed by the Joint memorandum of the British Indian delegates to the Joint Parliamentary Committee, more specially with regard to the commercial safeguards, defence, elections to the Federal Assembly and recruitment to the Services."

Moving his amendment, Mody conceded that the scheme marked an advance on the present position and said the purpose of his amendment was to suggest improvements in a constitution "whose merits it would be a folly to despise."

He referred to the "disastrous consequences to the peace and prosperity of the land" caused by Civil Disobedience. He thought that even on the worst view of the case, the new scheme offered a considerable advance on the present, and could not possibly "excuse the futility and disaster of renewed Non-cooperation."

Then he went on to criticise the safeguards provided for in the constitution, and remarked, "Safeguards in moderation are a sound element in any constitution. But in this instance, they were being overdone with peril to goodwill, which is the most essential safeguard of all. No amount of safeguards could prevail against a people's sullen resentment, and the omission of all references to Dominion Status or some equivalent term is deplorable."

The Congress Party, once again, with the assistance of the Nationalists and Independents, succeeded in rejecting the JPC Report by 74 votes to 58, while accepting the Communal Award on a motion by Jinnah.

The Congress accomplished the hat-trick when, in the next few days, the Assembly reduced to the sum of rupee one the demand for grant to the Railway Board.

And thus when the Finance Bill for the year was introduced, the Congress was drunk with success, and was getting impatient of criticism.

During the second reading of the Finance Bill, Bhulabhai Desai took issue with Mody and declared he could not see why India could not avoid the import of Rs. 34 crores worth of textiles and produce good enough cloth within the country. "If we could

do it before," stated Bhulabhai, "why should we not be able to do it now, and why should I go and enter into a pact in order that my name may be mortalised or immortalised, for disgrace or for good name, in order that....."

Mody, provoked by this not very sporting reference to him, interrupted: "If the Honourable Member can come to my place, I will teach him some economics."

Desai: " I stand in no need of learning economics from you. It is the last thing I should learn from one who is the glorified secretary of the Millowners' Association and under that guise comes to this House, he himself being not a millowner."

Mody: "I will counter that vulgar statement too."

It was a pretty bad show, reflecting poorly on the Leader of the Opposition. When the heat of the moment subsided, however, Bhulabhai realised his mistake and sent a chit to Mody through the Congress Party Whip, Asaf Ali, to say that he did not mean to offend Mody and that Mody might treat the incident accordingly.

Mody rejected the overture and replied back that he would take an early opportunity of squaring accounts with Bhulabhai.

After these exchanges, Bhulabhai got up in the House, once again, and referred to his earlier remarks about Mody and said that he never meant them to be in the nature of personal offence and that he merely attempted in his speech to controvert the views expressed by Mody.

Thereupon, Mody reciprocated by agreeing to treat the incident as closed.

Later, Asaf Ali approached Mody to get the passage of the exchanges between Bhulabhai and Mody expunged from the official record of the Assembly proceedings. Mody replied that he had no objection, if the President permitted it, but doubted whether it could be done under the rules.

When the Assembly proceedings of that day were published, Mody, however, discovered that the unseemly passage was not there, and wondered how the Congress Party Whip had managed it!

Such a fine record, so constructive and helpful to the Government, sooner or later had to be recognised, and political commentators, both friendly and hostile, were confidently predicting

such a Governmental gesture. On June 3, 1935, came the King's Birthday Honours, with Mody's name inscribed among them, alongside that of Girja Shankar Bajpai, the erudite Indian Civil Servant, then Secretary to the Department of Education, Health and Lands, in the Government of India. Both were made Knight Commanders of the British Empire.

Then followed a hectic period of felicitatory receptions by the vast circle of Mody's friends and admirers. The most important among them was the one held on August 13, 1935 at Ripon Club, founded by Pherozeshah Mehta, Mody's political guru.

Under the first flush of the knighthood, Mody chose the Ripon Club occasion to raise yet another hornet's nest around his ears.

Sir Phiroze Sethna, his close friend and a prominent Liberal, who presided over the reception, made a warmly laudatory speech in which he traced Mody's brilliant career and achievements.

In a sparkling reply, Mody reviewed the great issues that were confronting the country and emphasised the need to work the new constitution. To that end, he advocated the formation of a political group, to be called "Reforms Party," and gave a rallying call to the people "to fight the forces of disruption."

Among those whose interest was roused by this speech was Tej Bahadur Sapru. In a letter to M. R. Jayakar, Sapru wrote: "I was also impressed by Mody's speech. I do not know his address, or else I should have written to him to congratulate him. Will you, if you meet him, tell him how pleased I was to read his speech. Will his new party materialise ?"

The Nationalist Press immediately seized upon this blatant call for an anti-Congress rally.

Mody warned the Liberals and other progressive elements in the country against "the danger of toying with the idea of an alliance with the Congress" and pointed out that the latter was out to wreck the new constitution, not work it.

This was the constitution which had been denounced even by the Indian Liberal Federation, of which Sir Phiroze Sethna, the chairman of the evening's function, was the President.

In the course of his Ripon Club speech, Mody even raised the minorities bogey, and asked: "Are the minorities going to surrender such of the safeguards as have been designed for their protection without an assurance that political power will be fairly and

wisely used by those who acquire it ?"

Then he prodded the commercial and industrial interests, and asked whether they were going to "reconcile themselves to a position of complete dependence on the most advanced political party in the country, without an assurance that its flirtations with the extreme socialist elements will cease and that balance will be held strictly even ?"

Mody even sought to set up the urban interests against the numerically larger rural interests "which are rapidly becoming powerful", and asked would the latter be "allowed to engulf them ?"

The Anglo-Indian Press unreservedly applauded the Ripon Club speech. The Nationalist Press raved against it and dubbed it as a reactionary utterance. The following quip at Mody in *The Hindustan Times* indicated the depth of feeling roused in the country :— "A rat was responsible for delaying the North Bengal Express at Naihati Station, 30 miles from Calcutta for two hours, on 26th December. Mody is now confident he can wreck the Congress programme: if cats may look at kings; rats stop trains, cannot a Knight sabotage nationalism !"

By now a veteran of many such battles, Mody however remained unperturbed by the storm raging around him, and seemed almost to enjoy the fun !

Three months later, at a dinner in his honour by the Bombay branch of the European Association, Mody however seemed to have had second thoughts. He now conceded that the new constitution had failed to satisfy any political party worth its name in India. Referring to his Ripon Club address, Mody explained that he did not have in mind "really a new party, but rather a grouping together for a single purpose, of the various elements which found their way into the legislatures, and which despite their varying creeds and political programmes, were united in their desire to work the new constitution and utilise to the fullest the opportunities provided for the promotion of the national good."

Then, he further added, to mollify his infuriated pro-Congress critics: "It was not in a spirit of hostility to any section, but merely as a statement of fact that I said that there were some extreme politicians in the country who wanted to exploit the

discontent against the new constitution, though much of the present discontent was likely to disappear when power actually passed into Indian hands."

In that latter statement however Mody proved prophetic. For, once the Congress was persuaded to accept office, the Congress Ministers found the effort more than worthwhile, and many of them sincerely regretted their having to resign office in 1939 on the issue of war.

Addressing himself to the Europeans, Mody exhorted them to depend less on safeguards and reservations but more on the goodwill and co-operation of the Indians.

On 17th March, 1936, the Treasury Benches were outraged when Mody, along with Sir Cowasji Jehangir, declined to vote with the Government, and was thus responsible for the Government's defeat by a bare two votes.

Deadly opposed to B. Das's Bill for the repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908, the Treasury Bench sought to take advantage of a thin house for a snap vote on a closure motion. The evil design was frustrated by the two Bombay Members.

The irrepressible Grigg was so furious that he shouted at Cowasji Jehangir, "Why don't you join the Congress ?"

Even the staid Home Member, Sir Henry Craig felt provoked to fish out of his vest pocket a four-anna bit and fling it at Cowasji Jehangir, with the remark: "Here's the admission fee !"

The two Bombay Members' sense of fairplay and parliamentary decorum were outraged by the Government's mean tactics and they felt impelled to frustrate the trick. Later both the Finance and Home Members made amends for their ill-tempered observations.

On 18th March, speaking on the Finance Bill, Mody pounced upon Pandit Pant's earlier argument in favour of protection to indigenous industries to turn it to his advantage and burst into verse :

"Ah! Pant, could thou and I with Grigg conspire,
To grasp this sorry scheme of free trade entire;
Would not we shatter it to bits and then
Remould it nearer to our heart's desire ?"

Grigg was as incorrigible a Free Trader as Mody was an ardent Protectionist.

Pant had earlier advocated the establishment of expert committees, whose duty would be to examine the potentialities of industrialisation in the country and advise in what directions it ought to be encouraged, so that the Government might proceed to help it by a mixture of protection and regulation.

Mody went a step further and pleaded for a revision of the conditions of protection prescribed by the Indian Fiscal Commission in view of the effects of economic nationalism getting hold of the rest of the world. What was needed was a new, definite policy of protection, and a new Fiscal Commission, he urged. "It should lay down what India could do to maintain her position in these extraordinary times and should examine how the protectionist policy of the past few years is affecting the consumer."

Mody also wanted the Tariff Board procedure to be revised and brought on to what he regarded as the far higher level of the speed, effectiveness and industrial value of the Import Duties Advisory Committee in Great Britain.

He then pointed out that there were in India a number of small industries which would not fulfil the conditions of protection prescribed by the Indian Fiscal Commission, but ought, nonetheless, to have protection, because it was in the national interest that they should be encouraged.

Replying to the four-day debate, Grigg remarked upon the "holy alliance" between Pant and Mody, both asking for industrialisation and the latter asking for "more and more protection after less and less enquiry for a longer and longer time."

If wishes were horses, and India's Central Legislature in 1936, were a sovereign body, the British regime would have been voted out of the country not once but a dozen times. Hardly anything important came up before the Assembly in those memorable first few months of 1936 which was not thrown out with a thump by the nationalist opposition.

On March 30, the Assembly threw out the Ottawa Pact. It adopted Jinnah's amendment by 70 votes to 65, which demanded the termination of that Pact and substitution, in its place, of bilateral agreements with other countries, and asked the Government to investigate possibilities.

Mody again took the middle ground and urged not rejection

but a review and revision of the Ottawa Agreement, and asked if India should be deprived of definite advantages in the United Kingdom without compensating gains in any foreign market.

A battle in which fur flew was the debate that took place on the Companies Bill in the Central Assembly late in September.

The managing agency system was one of Mody's "sacred cows." The system was cursed and condemned by all sections of the House. Mody put up a ferocious and gallant fight in its behalf.

Mody exclaimed that even dacoits, perjurers and bigamists excited sympathy but not the managing agents! What had the latter done to incur so much odium? he asked. Mody emphasised that it was the much-maligned system that was responsible for the impressive progress made by Bombay's textile industry and Jamshedpur's steel industry. India's industrial growth owed a debt of gratitude to a small number of business houses. There was dearth of properly qualified directors in the country.

Mody then quipped, "The House knew that Mr. Desai, Pandit Pant and Mr. Satyamurti constitute the managing agents of the Congress Party, but on critical occasions the share-holders in the back benches had their way. That was the proper remedy."

Mody paid a glowing tribute to Sir N. N. Sircar, the Law Member, whom he dubbed the "fountain of wisdom". "His mastery of principles and of every single detail of the Bill has compelled the admiration of everybody who had had anything to do with it," said Mody, "and if his bulk was not already formidable, I would say that he has added greatly to his stature."

About the opposition which had its knife in managing agents, Mody said, "I join in the tributes which my honourable friends have paid to the members of the other side, who did their best to cut our throats but did it from the best of motives."

While Mody's amendment stated that all contracts between a director and a company, however big or small, should be placed before the board of directors, Pant's and Satyamurti's amendments took the extreme line of prohibiting such contracts altogether.

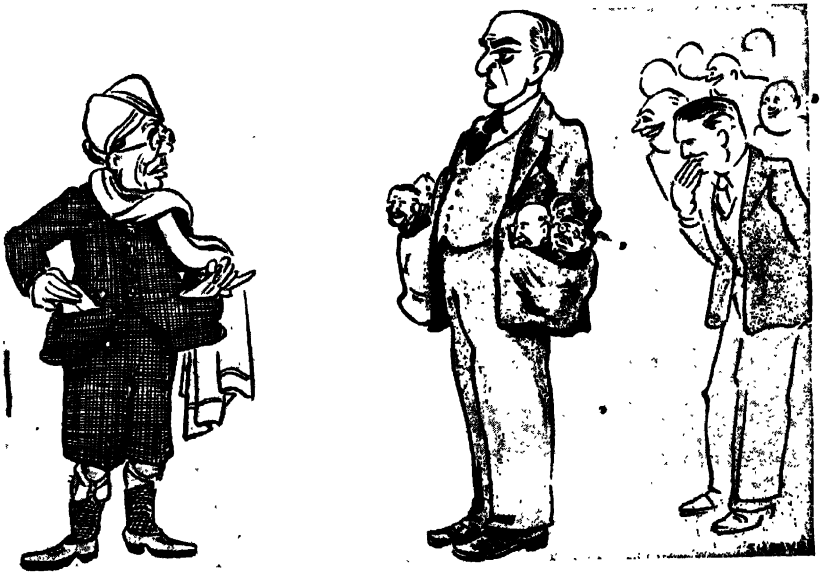
Mody emphasised the impracticability and futility of the extreme and rigid remedy prescribed by the latter two amendments, in that they would fail to check the improprieties committed by directors which was what the amendments sought to plug.

Mody's amendment was finally adopted by the Assembly, while

SWAMINATHAN

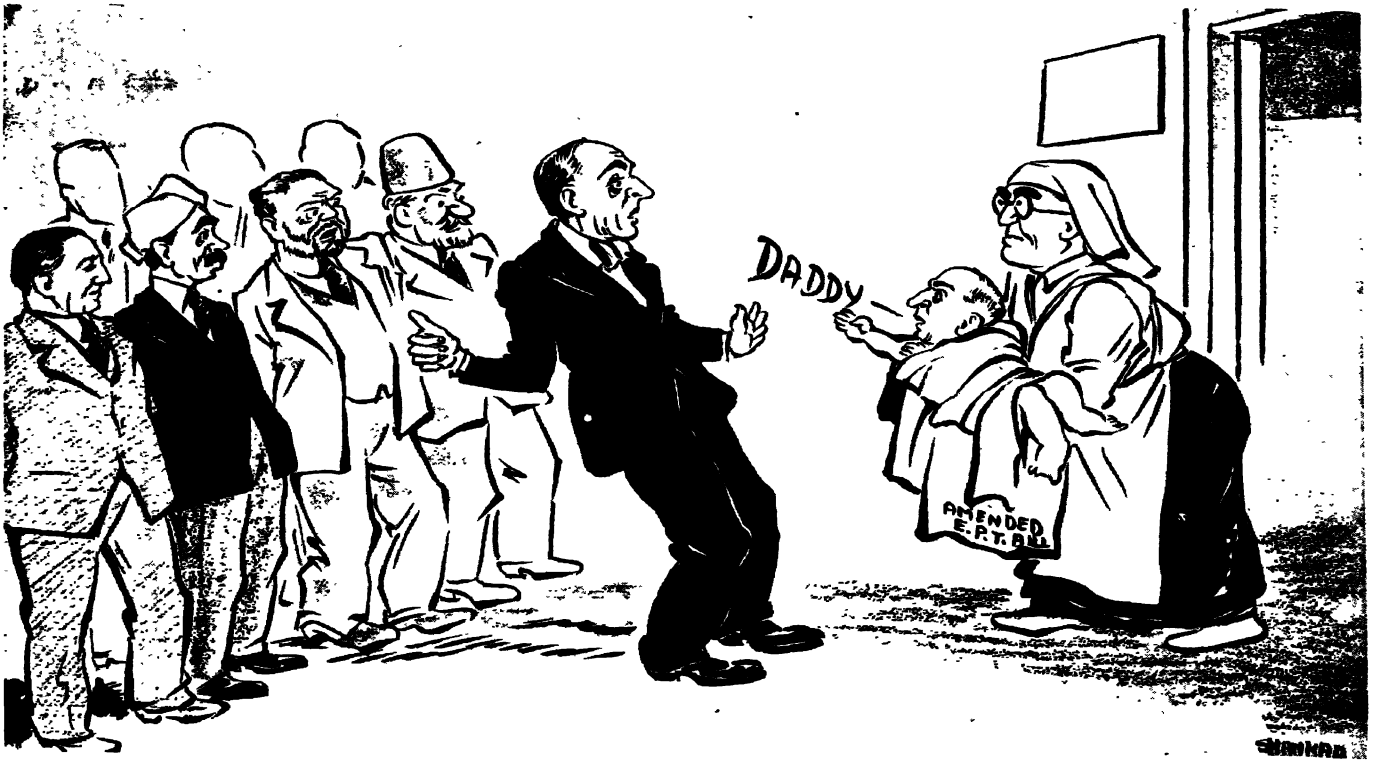
Sir H. P. Mody has resigned from the Independent party.

Protest Against Overcrowding



Mr. Satyamurti complained in the Assembly that Sir H. P. Mody had Government in his pocket.

Thoroughly Mody-Fied



all the others were rejected.

Sircar in winding up the debate expressed satisfaction with the new Company Law that was about to go on the statute book in India which, as a result of the amendment incorporated into it, would prove more efficient and comprehensive than the one prevailing in Britain.

The amiable and good-humoured personality of Mody, when rubbed on the wrong side, could however turn astonishingly ferocious.

Thus, over the Insurance Bill, in September 1937, Mody had a big row with the leader of his own Party, when Jinnah tried to deny Mody an opportunity to speak on a subject on which he had so much to say.

Again, the issue involved was the managing agency system, this time in the insurance business. This was a subject on which Mody had strong views, as was clear from his decisive intervention, earlier, in the discussions on the Company Law Bill.

During the earlier part of the debate, Mody was away and thus could not speak. Now Mody wanted to make a vital point on behalf of the managing agents in insurance, and he found, to his chagrin, the Government whip conspiring with his own party leader, to get through a closure motion.

Mody requested Jinnah not to agree to a closure as he wanted to speak.

Jinnah curtly replied back: "No, no, no. You should have been here earlier to speak."

Mody was furious and retorted: "Who do you think you are talking to. Do you think I am one of your pattawalas?"

And as he spat out the words, Mody unconsciously waved his hand in the direction of the Independent Party members sitting behind in a group. Thereupon, Shaukat Ali, one of the Independents, took umbrage and interjected: "Do you mean to say we are all pattawalas here?"

Mody rebuked the Maulana: "Don't be silly. You know what I meant."

Following this altercation, the next day, Mody was found sitting on the non-party front-bench, "in dangerous proximity to the European Group," as one newspaper commentator put it.

A newspaper in Northern India, however, published an interview

with Jinnah in which the latter was reported to have stated that he had ousted Mody from the party by way of disciplinary action.

Mody spiritedly repudiated Jinnah's claim and told the Press: "The idea that Mr. Jinnah can, at any moment, at his own sweet will, ask a member to go out of his party is fantastic nonsense."

The fact was that Mody was too much of an individualist to fit into any party. But when the new Assembly first met, and Jinnah was going round forming his Independent Party, he had invited and cajoled Mody to join his party, and Mody acquiesced.

Thereafter, the relations between Mody and Jinnah remained strained for quite a while. Some years later, both Mody and Jinnah happened to be sitting next to each other at the annual luncheon of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry in New Delhi. Frederick James who had to leave the lunch table earlier, borrowed Mody's car. At the conclusion of the luncheon, Jinnah offered Mody a lift, and they drove back chatting as though nothing had happened.

The debate on the Insurance Bill deserves to be given some more space here not only because it was one of the most memorable ones the Central Assembly had witnessed, but because it saw strange things happen. Not only Mody fell out with his party leader, but the Congress Party found itself in disarray on the issue.

Bhulabhai Desai was found gingerly defending managing agents, while his leftist partymen vehemently opposed them. Jinnah, on the other hand, mercilessly attacked managing agents, even calling them parasites. Dr Ziauddin Ahmed, an Independent, moved a penal amendment that sought to limit the term of managing agents to three years and their remuneration to a maximum of Rs. 2,000 per month.

Nripendra Nath Sircar, Law Member, himself piloted the Bill, which included stringent provisions, and in Mody's opinion, were likely to prove deleterious to insurance business in the country.

Mody did get his chance to speak on the bill. In the course of his speech he amiably described the Law Member as a fortunate individual—"Every time he sets about cutting the throat of some body, he somehow or the other manages to draw the thanks and plaudits of the victim."

Sircar had earlier referred to the Bombay members—Mody and Cowasji Jehangir—as the big drums defending Big Bombay

Business. His Bombay-patriotism pricked. Mody now loftily retorted: "It is big, it is Bombay and it is business, and that is what counts. If there is big Bombay business, it is more correct to say there is big Bengal buccaneering, of which we had a sample during the Companies Bill discussions and yet another in the present debate."

Mody once again put up a staunch defence of the managing agents, and even had a good word to say for foreign business interests in the line. He felt a whole profession was being maligned because of a few black sheep.

Mody voted against Dr. Ziauddin Ahmed's amendment—and of course, lost his cause this time. The enemies of his friends, the managing agents, carried the day.

When Sir James Grigg presented the 1938 budget to the Central Assembly, on February 28, the Opposition discovered, to their indignation, that, contrary to past practice, the Assembly would not be permitted this time a direct vote on the policy of the Government under the heads "Defence" and "External Affairs".

The Finance Member claimed that under the new Government of India Act of 1935, now in force, it was mandatory upon the Government to exclude the two heads from the Assembly vote.

Mody contested Grigg's view and contended that such an interpretation was not warranted by the provisions of that Act.

When the opposition parties found that the Government was adamant on the question, Bhulabhai Desai, as Leader of the Opposition, on behalf of the Congress Party, the Congress Nationalists, the Independents and the Democrats, announced that they would take no part in the discussion on the budget but that they would throw out the demands for grants without speeches.

Grigg moved the first demand under the head Customs. The Opposition members, without moving any cut motion, challenged a division and defeated the demand by 64 votes to 46. All the other demands too suffered the same fate.

Over 70 items, which normally would have taken a fortnight to pass, were thrown out within a day and a half.

The rejected demands were promptly restored by the Governor-General. The Assembly replied by throwing out the Finance Bill itself. The Finance Bill came back to the Assembly duly recom-

mended by the Governor-General. The Assembly rejected it by 68 votes to 48.

Thus, the year 1938 ended on a note of high tension between the opposition and the Treasury Benches, with the ill-tempered Finance Member adding fuel to the fire.

The year 1939 dawned on India and the world with war clouds banking up the horizon both in the west and in the east.

In the Central Assembly the atmosphere was so combustible that the smallest incident between the Government and the opposition led to an explosion. The former *bon homie* between the two sides of the House was now conspicuous by its absence.

To add to the tensions in the Assembly, Jinnah had just dissolved his Independent Party and formed the Muslim League Party, gathering under his wing most of the Muslim members in the House. He was now on the war-path, determined to play the "third force" role in the struggle between the Congress and the Government, and extract out of it the maximum political benefit for his party and community.

In February 1939, having completed his five-year tenure in India, Grigg presented his last budget to the Central Assembly. The discussion on the Finance Bill this year was, thus, converted by the opposition into a post mortem on Grigg's stewardship of the country during his tenure as Finance Member.

Mody moved an amendment opposing the increased duty on imported cotton. He referred to Mr Aikman's support of the duty on the ground of the need to balance the budget, and quipped, "Mr. Aikman seemed to speak as if he was an additional, temporary, honorary, deputy Finance Member." Then he had a dig at the European Group as a whole who "apparently had no objection to others bearing a tax to balance the budget." As for the Finance Member, Mody said, his maxim seemed to be "A thing of duty is a joy for ever."

Mody contended that the duty in question was a tax on raw material and as such, fundamentally unsound and it would neutralise the protection given to the yarn industry and to cloth. The Finance Member, said Mody, had tried to be clever at deductions, which reminded him of the schoolgirl who tried to establish the sex of five flies from the fact that two of them were on a whisky bottle and three were on a mirror!

Mody's amendment was carried by 59 votes to 44. And for the fifth time in succession, the Finance Bill was thrown out by the Assembly.

Another highlight of the session was the discussion on the Indo-British Trade Agreement, which came up for review and extension at the end of its five-year lease.

Satyamurti moved the rejection of the Agreement on political grounds. This time, Mody supported Satyamurti, though for different reasons. Mody averred that he was as strongly as ever in favour of an understanding with the United Kingdom. The enormous value of the trade of each to the other could not be exaggerated; but a dispassionate consideration of the Agreement had been rendered difficult by the procedure adopted by the Government.

Mody listed the various disadvantages that would accrue to India, particularly to the textile industry, as a result. He concluded that he could not accept an Agreement which involved so much sacrifice to the national industry which was not compensated by advantages to itself or to the agricultural or other interests who depended on it.

Mody's speech on this occasion was so matter-of-fact and unrelieved by witticisms that his friend Frederick James, of the European Group, remarked: "We had a speech this morning from an entirely new Sir Homi Mody, a person who had no spirit left in him—perhaps it is on account of the approach of prohibition in Bombay ! I have never heard him so devoid of jokes and quips and cracks. There was nothing in his speech about whisky or flies or even girls ! I hope he will recover."

The Indo-British Trade Agreement was rejected by a sizeable majority. The budget session came to a close, with hardly any relaxation in the tension prevailing in the House.

XII

TO THE ECHO OF WAR-DRUMS

THE YEAR 1937 saw Provincial Autonomy, under the Government of India Act of 1935, ushered in the country and full-fledged popular governments installed in the provinces. The general elections to the new provincial legislatures took place in February.

The Congress contested the elections and scored clear majorities in Madras, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, Bihar and Orissa. In Bombay, it won 86 out of 175 seats, and in Assam, Bengal and the North-West Frontier Province, it was the largest single party in the legislature.

The Congress, however, demanded, as a condition to accepting office, assurances that the Governor would not use "his powers of interference or set aside the advice of his Ministers in regard to their constitutional activities."

In a press statement, Mody was critical of the Congress attitude in seeking advance assurances from the Governors that they would not use their special powers, which he considered improper, impractical and unwarranted.

Ultimately, on June 22, the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, in a statement made it clear that the "special responsibilities" of the Governor did not entitle him to intervene at random in the administration of the province, and that the Governors would leave nothing undone to avoid and to resolve conflicts with their Ministers.

Satisfied with the assurance, the Congress accepted office in Bombay, Madras, the Central Provinces, the United Provinces, Bihar and Orissa. In the other provinces, Governments had already been formed by non-Congress coalitions.

This denouement occurred when Mody was away at the ILO in Geneva. Mody was very happy over the turn of events and on his return to India, said so in press interviews. But soon he had to pick a bone with the Congress Governments for their undue haste to enact what he considered half-baked social and labour legislation that would hit Indian industry badly.

A "conscientious objector" to Prohibition, Mody then found himself in an argument with Gandhiji and the Congress Government in Bombay Province. . .

At a meeting of the Parsis of Bombay, in June 1939, Mody moved a resolution placing on record its "emphatic protest against the policy of Prohibition as it constitutes a serious interference with the social and religious practices of the Community and as an encroachment on the liberty of the individual for which there is no justification. The policy also will have a ruinous effect on the financial position of the Government."

At the same time, a powerful deputation of leading Parsis, waited upon Mahatma Gandhi. The deputation comprised besides Mody, Cowasji Jehangir, J. C. Koyaji, M. R. Kharegat, A. D. Shroff and Nowroji Saklatwala.

The deputation argued that the imposition of Prohibition would dislocate the trade and the financial and economic structure of the province, and result in hardships to toddy traders and tappers, and would interfere with the religious rites of the Parsis.

Mahadev Desai, giving an account of the talk between Gandhiji and the deputation, in *The Harijan* of 10th June, 1939, stated that the "utmost friendliness prevailed during the discussion." Mahadev Desai's account reported that the deputation pleaded that it was drunkenness that was bad, not drink, and for the sake of a few who drink, why penalise the whole community?.

Mahadev Desai's account read:

"I take two or three glasses of sherry every day and I know hundreds of others who talk of Prohibition but who drink and will do so in spite of Prohibition," Sir Cowasji (an old friend of Gandhiji) told Gandhiji. Gandhiji disarmed him by ultimately reminding Sir Cowasji how he had helped him in the past at various junctures, and how he expected him to stand by him at this.

Mr. Kharegat, a veteran temperance reformer, said: "I do not drink nor am I a dealer in drinks. But this policy will ruin thousands, and I want you to realise your error and do as you did in Rajkot. I would then honour you with all my heart. According to our religion, it is the duty of the host to offer a guest good bread and good wine."

"But," said Gandhiji, "it must be unfermented wine."

Sir N. Saklatwala: "I don't drink and thank God, I have enough property to enable me to pay the property tax. But why should others regulate my life? I tell you, although I don't drink, if some one came and told me I might not drink, he would make my blood boil."

"But," said Gandhiji, smiling, "even so, you do not steal, and yet there is the law against thieving. Would you therefore steal to defy the law?"

Sir Homi Mody, to my mind, summed up the case, which boiled down to this: "We do not believe in prohibition. Why do you tempt us to break the law? We want to be exempted. Drink has become part of our social habit, our daily life, and we want to drink."

Now Gandhiji summed up his reply: "As I told the deputation that preceded you, you have come to the wrong man. There is a wide gulf between you and me. It was Dadabhai Naoroji who taught me prohibition, and the distinction between prohibition and temperance. Individual liberty is allowed to a man only to a certain extent. He cannot forget that he is a social being, and his individual liberty has to be curtailed at every step. I would appeal to you to consider one thing. What is your population? One lakh, at the most, in a population of 35 crores. You have become famous in the world not as residents of Persia but as Indians. I want you to consider not in terms of your one lakh, but in terms of India, not the narrow interest of your community, but of the larger interest of the whole country. How can you interrupt and ruin a noble experiment? You say you cannot get rid of this, so very much you are wedded to it! You are not fair to yourselves there. You have given up so many things. You gave up your langauge and adopted Gujarati, you changed your dress, you changed many of your manners and customs. Why must you then stick to this one infirmity? You may plead your weakness, but for heaven's sake, don't advance the plea of individual liberty. There you have given away the whole case. You have sacrificed much for India, sacrifice this bad habit too. I have seen men and women wallowing in the gutters in South Africa and families ruined."

Sir Homi Mody interrupting: "Where do you see the ruin in India?"

Gandhiji resuming said: "I tell you, I have seen it with my own eyes. There is the tragic case of my own son. Sixty thousand men in Ahmedabad are blessing the prohibitionists. I claim that the moral conscience of the public is with me. The issue between us is the narrowest possible. Do you want to press the question of a few individual consciences to the extent of ruining a whole country?"

"But are there not other evils? There is gambling, for instance," said Mody.

"None so disastrous as this, and this breeds the rest," continued Gandhiji. "But I am for the abolition of gambling too. This evil however ruins the victim's body and soul."

"The same thing would happen if you were to overeat ! You are talking of the 60,000 millhands of Ahmedabad. Why not listen to the appeal of 50,000 Parsis of Bombay ? Drunkenness is unknown amongst us," said Mody.

"Let us assume that, for a moment. It proves that you are temperate. Well then, why will you not carry your temperateness a little further and cooperate in this the greatest of all moral reforms in India ? And remember there is ample provision for those who need drink for their health or religious rites. I suggest your working along these lines and not seeking to ruin the reform".

Of course, neither side could convince the other. The Mahatma was as adamant as ever. And the deputationists came away empty-handed. Prohibition was duly enforced in the Province.

In the meantime, with the pace of political developments in India accelerating, Mody was increasingly getting impatient with any obstacles put in the way of India attaining its prescribed political goal of responsible government under a federal set-up, under the Government of India Act, 1935. The first part of the Act relating to Provincial Autonomy, had already been enforced, and the second, and more important, the Federation part, was to materialise the moment Princely India agreed to come in.

On the one hand, the radicals in the Congress, led by Subhas Chandra Bose, were campaigning against Federation. On the other, the Princes continued to drag their feet on the question. In the second week of June, the Princes and their Ministers met in conference in Bombay, and adopted a resolution declaring as "funda-

mentally unsatisfactory and therefore unacceptable" the terms on the basis of which accession to Federation was offered to the States.

Mody was agitated over this latest development on the Princely front. In a statement to the Press, he warned the Princes: "A few years hence, they might easily get a worse deal," and pleaded for "political unity between British and Indian India, without which the fundamental problems of this country cannot be solved."

Mody added, "Whatever the handicaps and restrictions imposed by Federation may be, the States are coming in, to a certain extent, on their own terms. British India has had hardly any say in the shaping of the final plan. Events are marching rapidly in India and the continuance of autonomous Provinces linked to an irresponsible Centre may soon become impossible. At that stage, a situation may confront the Princes which may not turn out to their liking"—a warning which came true.

By August, the threat of an impending war in Europe was casting its shadow on India. Britain was, at last, grimly preparing to meet the Hitler threat. The preparations began on a large scale and the Neville Chamberlain Government in London ordered Indian troops to be sent to the Middle East and Singapore by way of getting ready for all eventualities.

The Central Assembly had previously declared that Indian troops should not be sent abroad without its consent. The Congress Working Committee, meeting at Wardha, called upon Congress members of the Central Assembly to abstain from the Assembly session as a protest against the dispatch of Indian troops. The Congress Ministries in the Provinces were warned not to assist in any way Britain's war preparations.

In a press statement, Mody deplored the Congress decision to boycott the Assembly at that critical juncture. He conceded that "the Central Legislature has, for some time past, ceased to be frightfully exciting and there is an air of unreality about its proceedings." He added, "The abstention of the largest party from the debates, however, will turn them into a farce which, having once been enacted before, I would not like repeated. I cannot say I am exactly looking forward to attending the next session and spreading myself out on half a dozen benches."

When the Central Assembly met at Simla in August, it looked

like a mockery of its former self. The House was badly depleted and the proceedings were abnormally dull.

Events in Europe were galloping towards the Armageddon.

On August 24, the Russo-German Pact of non-aggression was signed in Moscow.

The next day, the British Government announced the signing of the Anglo-Polish agreement of mutual assistance.

Hitler now took the plunge, by marching his hordes into Poland.

On September 3, Neville Chamberlain announced that Britain was at war with Germany.

On the same day, the Viceroy, through a proclamation, declared India at war with Germany.

The Central Assembly was in session at Simla at the time. But not even a pretence was made by the Government to consult it.

The next day, on September 4, the Viceroy saw Gandhiji, Jinnah and the Jam Saheb of Nawanagar, the then Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes.

Gandhiji assured the Viceroy that his sympathies were with Britain and France, but he could not commit the Congress in any manner, as he had no authority or mandate on the issue from that organisation.

Jinnah desired to consult the Working Committee of the Muslim League before committing himself.

The Jam Saheb offered the unconditional cooperation of the Princes in the war effort.

On September 11, the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow addressed both Houses of the Central Legislature and read a message from the King. He announced the postponement of Federation for the duration of the war, though he stressed that it still remained the objective of the British Government.

The postponement of Federation was meant to placate the Princes and ensure their whole-hearted cooperation in the war effort. Jinnah and the Muslim League had been opposed to Federation, and the decision was expected to be welcome to them.

The leadership of the Congress saw in the British Government's decision an excuse to postpone all constitutional advance during the pendency of the war.

The Congress Working Committee in a resolution expressed sympathy with the democracies and condemned German aggres-

sion, but declared that India could not associate herself freely in a war said to be fought for democratic freedom so long as that very freedom was denied to her, and such limited freedom as she possessed was taken away from her.

The resolution invited the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims were in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that was envisaged, and how these aims were going to apply to India.

The Working Committee of the Muslim League in a resolution expressed deep sympathy with the Allied cause but warned the British Government that it could count on full Muslim support only if the Muslims were assured justice and fairplay in the Congress provinces and a definite assurance given that no declaration about constitutional advance be made nor any constitution framed without the consent and approval of the Muslim League.

On October 17, the Viceroy in a statement quoted the British Prime Minister in regard to the war aims and reaffirmed that Dominion Status was the goal of British policy.

He gave an undertaking, on the authority of His Majesty's Government, that at the end of the war, they would be very willing to enter into consultation with representatives of the several communities, parties and interests in India and with the Indian Princes, with a view to securing their aid and cooperation in the framing of such modifications in the Government of India Act of 1935 as might seem desirable.

He also expressed his intention of setting up a consultative group, representative of the major political parties and of the Indian Princes, which would associate Indian public opinion with the conduct of the war.

Mody's reaction to the Viceroy's latest declaration was, as given to the Associated Press of India, as follows :—

"One very significant fact emerges from it. India's advance towards Dominion Status will be conditioned at every stage by the measure of agreement which may subsist between important political elements in the country. In other words, there will have to be peace at home before peace abroad can bring any striking change in India's political status".

In another press statement, while conceding that the Congress was the largest political organisation in the country, Mody pleaded

that there were elements in the body politic which had a right to exist and be heard, and appealed to the Congress that if it made a "fresh approach to those who stood outside, in a spirit different from that which was in evidence at that time, a greater political cohesion would emerge from such contact."

Mody concluded with a pessimistic note: "As things are moving, all the elements for a major internal conflict some day are there: not merely between community and community, but what is even more dangerous, between class and class."

The Congress High Command met at Wardha on October 23 and rejected the Viceroy's Declaration as an unequivocal reiteration of the old imperialistic policy and decided that the Congress could not give any support to Britain as that would amount to an endorsement of the Imperialist policy which the Congress had always sought to end. As a first step, it called upon all the Congress Ministries in the Provinces to resign.

The Muslim League Working Committee did not clearly reject the Viceroy's Declaration but asked for further discussion and clarification.

Thereupon, Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India, made another statement in the British Parliament indicating the British Government's readiness, if certain conditions were secured, "to associate Indian opinion in a still closer and more responsible manner, with the conduct of the war, by a temporary expansion of the Governor-General's Executive Council."

This offer too failed to placate the Congress, which refused to stay its hand. Accordingly, all the eight Congress Ministries resigned.

On November 1, Linlithgow had a further talk with Gandhiji, Rajendra Prasad and Jinnah jointly and severally, in pursuance of Hoare's latest offer. The Congress insisted upon nothing short of a constitution of India framed by a constituent assembly, without external interference. Nothing came out of the talks.

The 1940 budget session of the Central Assembly opened, with the Congress benches continuing to be empty, while Jinnah made very occasional appearances in the House. The session was engrossed with the controversial Excess Profits Tax Bill, which had greatly agitated the minds of the business community.

Sir Jeremy Raisman, the successor of Sir James Grigg, moved

the bill, and Mody now had to function as "His Majesty's Opposition." He had very strong views against the measure, and launched a vigorous attack on the bill.

He defined the Finance Member's plea for social justice as putting one's hand in other people's pockets. He said he was not against social justice, but the fact was that Indian industry was just recovering from a trying period and the effect of this bill at this time would be to cripple that recovery.

He joined issue with those who claimed that by introducing the Bill now, industry would be relieved from uncertainty and that the Sword of Damocles would be no longer kept suspended over it. He remarked, "It looked as if in order to give relief from uncertainty, they should chop off the head!"

Public opinion was very sceptical about the non-official benches being able to influence the Government on this bill in the absence of the Congress Party in the House.

Roy's Weekly commentator wrote: "In the absence of the Congress Party and the seeming indifference of the Muslim Leaguers, who is there in the Central Legislature at least to bark at the Bill ? Sir H. P. Mody will thunder against it, but I am afraid his thunder will not prevail. What will prevail, at least to some degree of success, is his power to charm the Britishers in private. Was not the Mody-Lees Pact the result of such charming ?"

When the Bill came back from the Select Committee in which he had been included, Mody supported the measure cautiously and turned on his famous charm. He said that as a result of the work of the "much benighted Select Committee—there were eight knights and only six gentlemen on it—more or less substantial concessions" had been obtained.

Referring to the praise freely bestowed on the Bill by the leader of the European Group, Mody twitted, "It was the only thing that a Scotsman gave freely."

Mody said he however would not go to the extent of saying that it was a Bill which could not be improved upon. No normal-minded person liked taxation, but with that reservation he would say that the commercial and industrial classes would not object to the taxation of war profits provided it was war profits that were taxed, and provided that time had been given for the consolidation of the position of industries.

Frederick James, who followed Mody, gave a witty account of what happened in the Select Committee. Referring to the Finance Member, he said, Raisman's motto would be "*suaviter in modo fortiter in re*": but after the Select Committee he would alter it to read "*Fortiter in re suaviter* in spite of Mody."

Then James referred to the two representatives from Bombay as "Laurel and Hardy" (Homi Mody and Cowasji Jehangir), as inseparable, yet as distinct as the Laurel and Hardy of the film fame. They always asked for the impossible; that enabled us to secure concessions, for which they subsequently claimed the credit.

Referring to the minutes of dissent by Mody and Cowasji Jehangir, James said; "The only difference between them is this: whereas Sir Homi composed his Minute of Dissent before signing it, Sir Cowasji signed it before composing it."

The clause-by-clause discussion turned out to be a tussle between Ziauddin Ahmed, who was against Big Business, and Mody. Of this duel, the *Statesman* correspondent wrote:

> The Moslem knight and the Bombay magnate are incidentally the outstanding personalities of the present discussion of the details of the Bill. . . . Sir Homi Mody doubtless found it difficult to speak, as he claimed, without levity or passion in answering Sir Ziauddin, for he asked if the Moslem spokesman had become the self-appointed custodian of India's purse and was out to extract every anna he could from the taxpayers' pockets. But Sir Ziauddin, with another batch of amendments to propose, assured the Assembly with disarming frankness that in the whole of the British Empire there were no better friends than Sir Homi Mody and himself. They might have their little jokes in the House, he added, but they remained nevertheless firm friends.

The Bill was ultimately passed, and during the third reading, Mody gave the House the following summing-up:

> "The battle is over, the ground is being cleared and the killed and the wounded will presently be removed from the field. This is the time to say a word or two about the combatants. The judiciousness of Sir Jeremy, the changelessness of Mr Chambers, the levity of the Law Member, the cuteness of the Commerce Member, the dignity of Mr Datta, the adaptability of Mr Aikman, the jugglery of Mr James, and last but not the least, the mathematical miscarriage of Sir Ziauddin, have all left their impress

upon the Bill. So far as I am concerned, I would certainly have liked the Bill to be Mody-fied a little further. However, the tax is there, and we have got to put the best face upon it".

Mody concluded: "Frankly, I would like to say with regard to myself that it has been with a heavy heart that I have assisted at my execution."

In his reply, Raisman referred to "my friend, Sir Homi Mody to whom I am very grateful indeed not only for the assistance which he has rendered in these proceedings, but also for the many delightful moments in which we have enjoyed his witticisms."

XIII

THE AUGUST OFFER AND AFTER

THE "PHONY WAR" ended in April 1940. Hitler invaded and overran Norway and Denmark. Holland and Belgium surrendered. France collapsed. And the British Expeditionary Force retreated from Dunkirk.

In England, the Government changed. Churchill took over as Prime Minister, and at the India Office, Leopold Amery succeeded Samuel Hoare.

In the meantime, in March, the Muslim League met in Lahore and passed the historic Pakistan resolution, demanding partition of the country.

Mody was then on a holiday in the North-West Frontier. His reaction to the League resolution was : "The idea of a full-fledged Dominion Status for India has now definitely receded to the background." In a press interview, Mody stated that the Lahore resolution had vastly complicated the Indian situation, and he reiterated his view that unless the fundamental differences between the two communities were resolved, India's advance would be held up indefinitely.

In the first week of July, the Congress High Command met at Delhi and adopted a resolution which reiterated its demand for an immediate and unequivocal declaration of full independence and offered Congress cooperation in the effective organisation of the defence of the country on condition a provisional national government was constituted at the Centre, commanding the confidence of all the elected elements in the Central Legislature.

In response, on August 8, the Viceroy offered to invite a certain number of representative Indians to join his Executive Council and to establish a War Advisory Council. The British Government also promised to set up after the war "a body representative of the principal elements in India's national life" in order to devise the framework of the new constitution.

Advance copies of the Viceroy's announcement had been sent to the Presidents of the Congress, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha, and they were invited to meet the Viceroy for discussions.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the then Congress President, however, found in the announcement no meeting ground for the Congress and no scope for further talks. He rejected the offer outright.

The Viceroy continued his pourparlers with Jinnah and Savarkar. Jinnah raised his bid and demanded parity with the Hindus in the Executive Council and the right of veto over Congress entry into the Council. Indeed, he proposed a "war contract" between the Government and the League against the Congress.

Savarkar, not to be outdone, was also extravagant in his demands, though what he said did not count very much, with both the Congress and the Muslim League having now put themselves out of court.

Mody recalls that at that stage Linlithgow was so put out by Jinnah's arrogant demands and crass bargaining tactics and was so anxious for a political settlement that if only the Congress had agreed to come into his parlour, he would have left the League out in the cold and gone a long way to accommodate the Congress.

Mody ought to know, because he was, at that time, very close to Linlithgow, and the latter often discussed his problems with Mody.

With the outbreak of the war, Mody plunged into the war effort with his characteristic energy and zeal. He became Chairman of the Bombay War Gifts Committee. He addressed public meetings and press appeals asking people to contribute to the war fund liberally.

Collection of funds was not easy owing to the attitude of the Congress and the Muslim League towards the war effort. Nevertheless, in August 1940, Mody presented to the Viceroy, on behalf of his Committee, two cheques, one for Rs. 10,00,000 for an Indian Air Force Squadron, and another for £11,000 to purchase a Spitfire for the Royal Air Force.

At an appropriate ceremony in Bombay, Mody handed the cheques to Linlithgow, with the words: "May they play their part in the great task of deliverance to which the whole Commonwealth has resolutely set its hand."

Among the speakers on the occasion was J. R. D. Tata, who made a pointed reference to "political difficulties" which came

in the way of whole-hearted public support to the Defence Loans.

Lord Beaverbrook, Minister for Aircraft Production in Britain, acknowledged the gift with the following message :—

> With the magnificent gift you send us, we shall add two Spitfires to the squadron naming them, if you approve, Bombay One and Two. In sending you my grateful thanks for an act of splendid generosity and comradeship, I speak for all our people now enduring and defying the assault of the enemy. The reinforcements you bring to our front will be a sharp sword flashing in the heart of the battle.

The Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Wavell expressed public appreciation of Mody's war effort.

By March 1941, the Bombay Gifts Fund achieved its target of Rs. 30 lakhs to provide a squadron of aeroplanes for the Indian Air Force. The Committee's Chairman now set a new goal for the funds collected thereafter: firstly, assistance to the Royal Air Force, and secondly, the strengthening of India's defences by the provision of armoured carriers for the Indian Army.

By then, £65,000 had been remitted to the Ministry of Aircraft Production in London, and 12 fighters from Bombay Presidency were already taking part in the defence of Britain.

The collection of the War Gifts Committee had reached a total of Rs. 65 lakhs by the time Mody resigned the chairmanship of the committee on August 18, 1941, to join the Viceroy's Executive Council.

Speaking on "India and the War" to the Rotary Club of Bombay, Mody dilated upon the "tremendous contribution" made by India to the war. He said were it not for the arbitrary and meaningless distinction between martial and non-martial classes, India could provide millions of more soldiers.

Mody then turned to India's defences. The country was much too poor to afford an army on a scale anything like that adopted in Western countries, he said. What India could do however was to have a small but highly efficient and mechanised army together with a network of basic industries, so that at a pinch, the country could undertake the manufacture of planes, warships and tanks and guns.

In November 1940, the Viceroy addressed the two Houses of the Central Legislature and announced that since the major political

parties were not prepared to take advantage of the August offer, His Majesty's Government had decided that the Viceroy would not be justified in proceeding, for the time being, with the enlargement of the Executive Council or the establishment of a War Advisory Council.

The main business before the session of the Assembly was the Supplementary Finance Bill. The Congress members specially attended the session just to throw out the Bill. Satyamurti led the opposition to it on the ground that India was not interested in the war which Britain was waging for her survival.

Mody, on the other hand, maintained, "It is immaterial to me why or how India is in this war. We are in it, and being in it, it is the bounden duty of all of us to see that the war is vigorously prosecuted." He said that war was very near to India's door, and if some disaster were to overtake the British Army, India would forever lose the prospect of that freedom which was within sight. There had been a lot of talk about Imperialism, he said, but he regarded "Imperialism as dead as Queen Anne," and declared, "From this war would emerge a new England and a new concept of Empire."

Then switching on to lighter vein, Mody referred to the emergency war organisations in India which Indian opinion considered a paradise created for a few lucky individuals, and he exhorted the Government to do their utmost to convince the country that the administration was being carried on with all reasonable economy.

The complaints he had heard about the creation of easy jobs on fat salaries, Mody said, reminded him of the elderly general, who returning to office after lunch, invariably met himself going out for tea! Talking of war-time extravagance, he recalled the notice found on the notice-board of an overstaffed Whitehall office, which read: "Members of the staff, embracing ladies, are asked not to loiter in the corridors."

During the debate, Congressmen strongly objected when Ramaswami Mudaliar declared that anyone who did not back the war effort was a traitor to his country. The Commerce Member then quoted a Congressman's opinion that the British were, despite their faults, quite a decent people. Thereupon Mody shouted from his seat, "And who was the traitor who said that?"

Despite Jinnah and his League cohorts remaining neutral, the Finance Bill was rejected, and thereafter, the Congress members walked out, once again.

The year 1941 dawned on a bleak political situation in the country. The Congress was in the wilderness. The Muslim League was clamouring for a separate sovereign Pakistan. In seven provinces Provincial Autonomy had been suspended, following the resignation of the Congress Ministries, and what with war-time restrictions, political activity in the country was completely at a standstill. A band of Liberal optimists however tirelessly strove to break the deadlock.

In the middle of March, at the initiative of Jagdish Prasad, a former member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, a Non-Party Leaders' Conference was convened in Bombay. Tej Bahadur Sapru presided over it. Though invited by the organisers, Mody could not participate in the conference, as he was away in Delhi, at the time, attending the budget session of the Assembly.

On a motion of Nripendra Nath Sircar, the conference passed a resolution stressing that while India should not take advantage of Britain's difficulties in her heroic struggle, it was equally desirable that India's domestic problems should not be pressed to her disadvantage. The resolution stressed the need for an immediate reconstruction of the Viceroy's Executive Council so as to include non-official Indians drawn from important elements in the public life of the country.

Jinnah raised strong objection to the conference resolutions and declared that if the claim put forward by the conference was accepted by the British Government, it would be tantamount to a cancellation of the August Offer and constitute the "grossest breach of faith with the Muslims and other minorities." He stated that the underlying idea of the conference seemed to be to get the British Government, by hook or crook, to denounce and reject the Muslim League demand for the partition of India.

During the debate on the Finance Bill in the Assembly, Muslim League members, taking the cue from Jinnah's statement, vehemently attacked the Bombay Conference resolutions. Mody deprecated the "slighting references" to the Bombay Conference by Muslim Leaguers and declared himself in agreement with a great deal of what was said at the conference.

He felt however that the realities of the situation had been ignored by the conference when it put forward a political demand for a declaration in favour of Dominion Status of the same type as would be enjoyed by other Dominions after the war. Such an unequivocal declaration without qualification and without reference to what happened in this country, did not seem a reasonable demand.

On the other hand, he maintained, what India should demand from the British Government was a pledge that whatever agreed constitution was framed by the political parties in India would be implemented by the British Parliament.

Within a few weeks of the conclusion of the budget session, the war in Europe took an even graver turn. The Axis forces now overran Yugoslavia and Greece, and occupied islands in the Aegean Sea. British strategic positions in the Middle East were threatened. In North Africa, Rommel was sweeping everything before him and approaching the Suez Canal.

The grim war situation prompted yet another effort on the part of the British Government towards resolution of the political deadlock in India.

Towards the middle of May, Linlithgow offered Mody the post of head of the Indian Purchasing Mission in New York. Mody was willing to serve but had to turn down the prize-post for the reason that he did not want to cause his aged mother the pain of separation in such hazardous times. But he did not want to confess his weakness to the Viceroy, as he thought a European would never understand such sentimentalism.

Mody was in Simla at the time. He took Zafrullah Khan, Member for Supply, and a good friend of his, into confidence, and explained to him his predicament. Zafrullah, himself greatly attached to his mother, understood Mody's viewpoint and undertook to get round Linlithgow and help Mody to wriggle out of the situation.

And, thus, while Zafrullah walked up to the Viceregal Lodge on this strange mission, Mody watched from his Cecil Hotel window with much trepidation.

After what seemed like hours, Mody saw Zafrullah returning from the Viceregal Lodge. Zafrullah smiled and waved at Mody and then passed along to his residence.

Mody waited impatiently for a few moments to allow Zafrullah to reach home, and then rang him up to ask him about the outcome of his delicate mission. Zafrullah assured Mody that he had accomplished his task, but advised him to meet and personally explain the matter to the Viceroy.

That led to a significant interview with the Viceroy, on 16th May, of considerable political import to Mody. At the interview, Mody tried to explain why he was not able to accept the Viceroy's offer. Linlithgow listened patiently and said, "Sir Homi, I owe it to you to say how greatly disappointed I am at your decision."

Here was an opportunity for service in a very responsible position for which the Viceroy wanted the best men available, and Mody was declining it for reasons Linlithgow could not appreciate.

After ground had thus been cleared, there took place a discussion of the political situation in the country.

Mody left the meeting in an unhappy state of mind and decided to make a last effort to get round his mother, over the phone, at Bombay, and thought to himself that if she appeared receptive to the idea, he would change his mind and convey his acceptance of the offer to the Viceroy.

When the phone call materialised in the night, Mody explained to his mother, at great length, the circumstances and importance of the Viceroy's offer, and then told her that he had turned it down. The old lady was obviously unable to grasp the import of all that Mody had told her, over the wire. She caught only what he had said at the end of the call, and responded: "Very good; very good."

And that was that, so far as Mody's acceptance of the offer was concerned!

During the discussion of the political situation at that interview, the Viceroy had tried to draw out Mody on his views on the August Declaration and to remove what he considered to be misconceptions in Mody's mind. Mody had many things to say about and against the August Declaration, and did so very frankly. Linlithgow was impressed with what Mody said.

Mody had suggested certain amendments and re-phrasing of the August statement so as to make it more acceptable to Indian public opinion. The Viceroy asked Mody to put his ideas on paper.

In response, on May 20, Mody wrote to Linlithgow a long letter, in the course of which he admitted that a closer study of the August Declaration had led him to modify his views on it, but he still insisted that the Declaration needed to be enlarged and made more precise, "with a view to placing beyond all doubt the intentions of His Majesty's Government."

Mody then put down the political formula he had in mind, which took the shape of a fresh draft declaration to be made by the Viceroy. It read:

> In August 1940, His Majesty's Government authorised me to declare that they would most readily assent to the setting up, after the conclusion of the war, with the least possible delay, of a body representative of the principal elements in India's national life in order to devise the framework of the new constitution, and that they would lend every aid in their power to hasten decisions on all relevant matters to the utmost degree. I am now authorised to state that, subject to a settlement in respect of certain questions regarding which His Majesty's Government have special responsibility, His Majesty's Government would be prepared to implement the agreed conclusions of any such Conference by asking Parliament to embody them in a Statute. Should it unfortunately happen that an agreement is not possible, His Majesty's Government will have to consider, in the light of the circumstances then prevailing, what steps they could usefully take in furtherance of their declared aim of making India a free and equal partner in the Commonwealth at as early a date as possible.

Mody's letter hastened to add that he was not proposing a new Declaration, but only suggesting that a statement of some such character as outlined above might be made by the Viceroy at a suitable opportunity, by way of elaboration of the intentions embodied in the August Declaration.

Mody then went on to point at the difference between his draft and the Declaration of August 4 :—

> 1. It would be the first authoritative pronouncement that, if an agreement were reached between the representatives of various political and other interests, it would almost automatically receive the sanction of His Majesty's Government and Parliament—"I am assuming, of course, that the Govern-

ment of the day would have sufficient authority with Parliament to carry their proposals through."

2. The statement would convey a definite assurance to India that the fulfilment of her political aspirations was entirely in her own hands. This would introduce a much needed sense of realism in the political life of the country, and public opinion would, in time, manifest itself unmistakably if it were to happen that persistence in the extravagant demands made by the various parties were to result in making an agreement impossible.

3. The Declaration, at the end, would carry a warning to the dissident elements that His Majesty's Government were not going to mark time and hold their hands for ever, should political India demonstrate her inability to put up an agreed constitution—"This part of the declaration would commit His Majesty's Government to nothing more than that they would be prepared to consider, in the light of the prevailing circumstances, whether they could usefully assume the responsibility which Indians had refused to shoulder. If, for instance, it were found that the various parties and interests were merely manoeuvring for positions, His Majesty's Government might well see their way to attempt the task of framing a Constitution such as would command the largest measure of agreement."

Mody then suggested the expansion of the Viceroy's Executive Council by the creation of three or four additional ministerial appointments. He suggested this measure because "in view of the attitude adopted by the major political parties, and the position taken up by the Secretary of State with regard to the Resolution of the Bombay Conference, no far-reaching changes seem either possible or calculated to command general support."

"The question for consideration," he said, "is whether the Government should keep on merely waiting on events, or proceed with a reconstitution of the Cabinet, with a view to enlisting the services of some of the best brains in the country, and securing greater efficiency and expedition in the handling of the many difficult problems which have come to the fore at this critical juncture.

"To that end, the Government should straight away create new portfolios, say, of Defence, Munitions and Propaganda. I would

regard the appointment of a Defence Member a stroke of imaginative statesmanship, and if there are any difficulties, either of a constitutional character or in the demarcation of the exact functions of the Commander-in-Chief and the Defence Member, my submission is they should be resolutely overcome."

As regards the Finance portfolio, Mody underlined the strength of public opinion in the matter and suggested an arrangement by which the present incumbent of the office could be constituted Financial Adviser to the Governor-General, while an Indian was appointed Finance Member.

Mody summed up the advantages of such a reconstitution of the Cabinet as: (1) public attitude towards it might be one of greater friendliness; (2) while the enlarged Council would be no more "representative" than the existing one, the inclusion of "non-official Indians drawn from important elements in the public life of the country" (the phraseology used by the Bombay Conference resolution) would strengthen the administration; (3) a large body of unattached opinion, recognising it as a departure from the present constitution, would look upon it as evidence of a desire on the part of Government not to stand still, taking advantage of the deadlock in the country; and (4) the creation of a preponderant majority of Indians in the Council would be regarded with satisfaction by all the non-warring elements in the political life of the country.

Mody next suggested the appointment of Indians as provincial Governors—"there is a fair number of men in this country who can fill the office with distinction, carry themselves with dignity and render full justice to the position."

Finally, the letter urged that the Secretary of State should free the Government of India, in a large measure, from the control which the constitution vests in him, and that regardless of constitutional issues, the Executive Council should function as a Cabinet without derogating from the Viceroy's authority in respect of those matters on which the final decision must be his.

On May 26, Linlithgow replied: "I appreciate the full statement of your views which you have been kind enough to give me. There are difficulties, in my judgment, about many of the points on which you touch. But it is a help to me to know exactly how your mind is moving; and I am glad, too, that the further study

which you have given to the Declaration of last August and statements connected with it has helped to clarify the position."

The Viceroy, however, considered Mody's suggestions interesting and important enough to transmit them to the Secretary of State.

XIV

ON THE WAY UP

ON JULY 21, 1941, Sir Homi Mody's appointment as Executive Councillor was announced.

For a fortnight before the announcement, the Press was agog with speculation. On July 4, the *Amrit Bazar Patrika* Simla Correspondent had already spilled the beans.

Much "home work," spread over at least a couple of months, on the part of Linlithgow, had gone behind the appointment. Actually, so far as Mody was concerned, the denouement could be traced back to the interview Mody had with the Viceroy on May 16, 1941.

On June 19, 1941, Mody received a communication from the Viceroy marked "Personal and Most Secret." The letter offered Mody a Membership of the Viceroy's Cabinet, and the most important portfolio in it. The letter read:

"At the point of pressure that we have now reached in connection with the prosecution of the war and with many important matters that fall to be dealt with urgently by my Government, I have reached the conclusion (and His Majesty's Government agree) that it would be appropriate and desirable that there should be a small expansion of my Executive Council and that certain connected steps should be taken at the same time which would not only ease the strain but result in closer association of non-official opinion in this country with the conduct of war.

"In the result, I am proposing to create three new portfolios in my Council to deal with Supply, Civil Defence and Information. The relation of the expanded Council to His Majesty's Government and Parliament, on the one hand, and to the Legislature, on the other, will be the same as at the present time. But despite that fact (for I am well aware from our conversation, of your anxiety to see a more marked change than is in fact practicable in the present conditions in the general constitutional position), I hope that I may find you willing to accept the proposal which I have now very great pleasure in making to you that you should serve me as a Member for Supply in the expanded Executive Council."

The letter mentioned the pay of Member of the Executive Council as Rs. 5,500 and also pointed out that under the rules and convention laid down, an Executive Councillor could not retain any directorships, shares, etc., in commercial concerns, and hoped Mody would be able to comply with them and accept his offer.

The appointment was to be held "during pleasure" and that in the event of any change proving necessary, the Governor-General would be "at liberty to invite either individual members or whole of his Executive Council to assist him in a reconstruction by placing their office at his disposal."

The Viceroy's letter also announced the setting up of a National Defence Council.

In his typical circumambulatory style, Linlithgow concluded with a request for a reply as early as possible to "the proposition which I have put to you, with the more confidence, bearing in mind the readiness which you have shown in the past to assist me in dealing with the great affairs of state that fall to us today."

The letter was sent through Sir Roger Lumley, Governor of Bombay, on June 21, from Ganeshkhind. In his covering letter, written in his own hand to ensure secrecy, Lumley offered to discuss with Mody the subject-matter of the Viceroy's communication "as early as possible," and enjoined on him the utmost secrecy about its contents.

For Mody, the decision was not easy to make. On the one hand, he was conscious of the Viceroy's gesture in offering him the post. He had already turned down one offer from Linlithgow hardly a month earlier. On the other, in order to accept the offer, Mody would have to sever his many business connections, apart from having to resign from Tatas. The strict secrecy enjoined upon him made it impossible for him to consult his brother directors in Tatas on such a vital issue.

On being acquainted with Mody's difficulties, Lumley, after consulting the Viceroy, got him the permission to discuss the offer in secret with his colleagues in Tatas. J. R. D. Tata himself and brother directors were all in favour of Mody accepting the offer.

The possibilities of turning the war-time boom in the country—India was now the main source of supply to various theatres of war—to constructive channels for broadening the country's

industrial base, were beckoning him to the post.

He was also, however, aware of the political unpopularity he was courting by accepting the offer at a moment when the Congress and the Muslim League had spurned the offer of an expanded Executive Council, and the Government had launched on a policy of repression in the country.

On July 4, Lumley again wrote a long letter to Mody asking him to hurry up with his formal acceptance directly to the Viceroy, as the latter was impatiently waiting for it before making the official announcement.

The next day, Mody addressed his letter of acceptance to the Viceroy. It read:

"Before I proceed any further, I desire to thank you very warmly for the confidence you have repeatedly shown in me, and of which the offer you have made is yet another instance. As His Excellency the Governor must have already conveyed to you, I have pleasure in accepting the appointment, and all I need say is I shall do my best to be worthy of my responsibilities.

"I note from your Excellency's letter that 'the appointment would be held during pleasure.' As I look upon it largely as a call to duty, such a condition would not trouble me. There is one matter, however, which is of considerable importance, and that relates to my many business interests and connections. As, until the announcement is made, I am unable to consult anyone with regard to this, I am not in a position to say anything more than that I would request your Excellency to take the most liberal view possible in exercise of your authority as Governor-General.

"I shall of course scrupulously abstain from taking any part in the direction of management of any trade or business even while retaining a nominal connection with just a few of the interests I represent. May I revert to this matter after the announcement is made?"

Linlithgow assured Mody that he might by all means write to him again after the announcement on "this other delicate question of directorships," and added, "what of course it is essential to avoid is anything which would enable a hostile critic, with the very slightest shadow of plausibility, to suggest any relation between your presence in the Council and the secret knowledge which as a

Member of the Council you, of course, obtain, and the placing of an order or the drawing of benefits from a Government transaction."

The Viceroy then explained the practice prevailing in England, where directorships must be resigned save where they were honorary or in connection with philanthropic undertakings or directorships of private (family) companies. As regards holdings of shares, if a minister had any voice in making a decision in a Governmental contract, he must disclose fully his interest and stand aside while the transaction was going through. In addition, a Minister commonly got rid of any investments which might be affected by an action taken in his ministerial capacity.

A fortnight later, the Viceroy reverted to the subject and greatly regretted that "'having regard to the settled practice, it is clear I have to ask you to resign from Tatas, though I am very sorry indeed that this should be so." He added, "I feel too, on further consideration, there would be grave and serious misunderstanding and even possibly some difficulty arising were you, given our extremely close connection with Tatas over war supply, to retain your connection with the firm during your tenure of office."

The formula proposed by Linlithgow was that Mody should resign all directorships of companies both public and private save where they were (1) honorary, (2) connected with philanthropic institutions and (3) directorships of private (family) companies. Mody might retain his other interests in commercial and business concerns that is partnership, shares, debentures, provided during the term he took no active part in the direction of such concerns, and subject to the acceptance of a convention whereby in every case which related to any concern in which he retained such interest, there should be associated, with any decision taken thereon by him, such other Member or Members of the Council as the Viceroy might specify. In the absence of complete agreement, a decision should be taken in accordance with such instructions as the Viceroy might give.

Linlithgow concluded, "While I would repeat how much I regret the necessity for asking you to sever your connection with Tatas, I hope you will feel that the formula above has been drawn up with every desire to safeguard your interests consistently

with the avoidance of any suggestion of public criticism or misunderstanding."

On July 23, Mody wrote to express gratitude to the Viceroy for the consideration he had given to the question of his business interests and stated, "While I am very disappointed at the conclusions which have been reached, I recognise there is no other course open to me, but to resign from the firm."

As to Linlithgow's proposal in regard to the other interests he might retain, Mody stated that for various reasons, he considered it undesirable that he should have to share his responsibility with other Members of the Government and therefore he would rather sell out his interests, regardless of personal considerations, than put himself in a position which would definitely impair his usefulness.

He proposed to take the necessary steps to that end in the course of the next few weeks.

Mody then sought clarification in regard to certain emoluments he had earned during the year as director of Tatas which became payable some time next year. He hoped there was no question of any constitutional impropriety involved in his receiving the amount at the proper time. The Viceroy assured Mody on the point.

On July 21, an official communique formally announced the expansion of the Viceroy's Executive Council, raising its strength to 12 Members, with a two-thirds Indian majority, and the setting up of a National Defence Council of 30 members, representing both British India and the Indian States.

The communique stated:

> "As a result of the increased pressure of work in connection with the war, it has been decided to enlarge the Executive Council of the Governor-General of India in order to permit the separation of the portfolios of Law and Supply, and Commerce and Labour, the division of the present portfolios of Education, Health and Lands and Indian Overseas, and the creation of the portfolios of Information and Civil Defence."

The new appointments were: Akbar Hydari—Information; Raghvendra Rao—Civil Defence; H. P. Mody—Supply; M. S. Aney—Indians Overseas; Sultan Ahmed—Law; N. R. Sarker—Education, Health and Lands, and Feroz Khan Noon—Labour.

Hitherto, there were four officials and two non-officials, excluding the Commander-in-Chief, in the Executive Council. Now there would be 3 officials and 8 non-officials.

In the British House of Commons, Amery described the Viceroy's Council as a "team of ability and experience, which it would be difficult to rival in India or, indeed, elsewhere."

The appointments received a good press both in Britain and in India, despite a tinge of sullenness in the comment of the Indian Press.

As member for Supply, next to the Commander-in-Chief, Mody bore the heaviest responsibility. The task allotted to him was to mobilise the country's resources to the maximum with a view to feeding and clothing the ever-expanding army. Besides, he had to take care that the pressure on the country's industrial and agricultural output to meet the demands of the Army, did not overstrain and disable its capacity, and that the needs of the civil population were not unduly neglected and that prices were not allowed to soar.

Nine days before the formal announcement, Sir Mohmad Zafrullah, the then Member for Law and Supply, had written from Simla, congratulating Mody and asking for the exact date and time when Mody could assume his new post. He suggested that Mody might take over charge at Bombay on August 18 and then travel upto Simla in his own saloon. He wanted to know when Mody desired the saloon to be at Bombay—"The P.A. and a couple of chaprasis will be at your disposal, together with official stationery, etc.," the letter added.

Girja Shankar Bajpai, then Member for Education, Health and Lands, on orders of transfer to Washington as India's Agent-General, also wrote congratulating Mody and offering him his bungalow "Windcliffe," as also "curtains, chair covers, crockery, etc., all are practically new and not unattractive. There are also two rickshaws." "If you care for any of these things, please let me know and I shall send you a detailed list with particulars," wrote Bajpai.

The Maharaja of Bikaner, Ganga Singh, in a congratulatory message, hoped that "at Executive Council meetings and other occasions you will keep an open and sympathetic mind with regard to Indian States and appreciate especially the part they, with their

vast undeveloped resources, could play in the industrial development of India, and that in the great schemes for developing the supply position of India for this war, you will not forget the States and their industrial possibilities."

Then followed a round of felicitatory functions and receptions for Mody. At a dinner given in his honour by Naoroji Dumasia, MLA, Mody pleaded for tolerance in public life. By tolerance he meant that "they should give others credit for honesty and not try to hound them out of public life."

Speaking of the new Executive Council, he said, "The very fact that for the first time in the political history of the country, Indians would be in a majority in the Executive Council is calculated to achieve far-reaching results. It cannot but be that Indian opinion will be brought home to the authorities in India and Great Britain in a manner that it has never been possible to do before....it is quite possible that out of this modest measure of political advance there might be found the solution of the almost insoluble problem of Indian intransigence which was facing the British Government."

Mody said his first and foremost task in his new office would be to help repel the enemy and make this country safe against the attacks of Nazism. His second task would be to try to advance the interests of the country in every possible way that he could.

Mody added, "I do not think that the public is unaware of the difficulties and complexities of the job facing us, and I do not think that they expect a very great deal from us. We can only do our best and when we have done that, we shall have deserved some recognition from our countrymen."

At a luncheon given by Chunilal Mehta, Mody's sights turned to "the great scope for industrial expansion in India provided there was fair dealing on all sides, capital, labour and the Government."

Simultaneously Mody's fastidious mind was planning his official stay in Simla and New Delhi. On July 21, he wrote to Ramaswami Mudaliar, at Simla, requesting him to "fix up definitely as soon as possible," "Windcliffe" for his residence for the next season. For the current season he preferred to stay at Cecil Hotel. "Barring Members' houses, most places in Simla are just barns, and I would not like to spend six months in one of them," Mody wrote. In New Delhi, he preferred to take the bungalow occupied by Sir Jagdish Prasad on Queen Victoria Road or Sir Abdur Rahim's

house, on Akbar Road.

In another letter, soon after, Mody thanked Mudaliar for his telegraphic welcome to the "sober heights" of Simla, and quipped, "I had a different conception of the place and if your description is correct, I am very disappointed." Then he wanted to know "How many chaprasis do I have—and does a special saloon carry a cook with it always?"

Mudaliar assured Mody that there would be no difficulty about getting him "Windcliffe" in Simla, and No. 1 Queen Victoria Road in New Delhi (as Mody would be the first to take charge). As for a Personal Assistant, Mudaliar recommended Rao Saheb V. Duraiswami Iyer, P.A. to Sir Gilbert Laithwaite. Alternatively, Rao Saheb Jagadisa Aiyar, P.A. to the Commerce Secretary, Sir Alan Lloyd.

Then Mudaliar went on to explain: "The number of chaprasis that a Member normally has is five, including the Jemadar. I believe that two chaprasis will be coming with the saloon. There is no cook in the saloon. Private servants upto ten are allowed free to travel in the saloon. The saloon has got crockery and table linen and refrigerator. So far as chaprasis are concerned, you can certainly take one of your own men and he will be absorbed into the service. The starting pay will be Rs. 14."

Mody promptly replied to Mudaliar: "Considering the extravagant emoluments you pay to chaprasis, I do not think there will be any competition from Bombay House."

On August 14, Mody wrote to Sir Gilbert Laithwaite, Secretary to the Viceroy requesting that he should be named in all communication as "Sir Homi Mody" and not as "Sir Hormusji P. Mody," and Laithwaite replied on August 17 that he had done the needful.

Mody did not allow the grass to grow under his feet. Even before he formally took charge of his portfolio, he was found absorbed in the many urgent tasks in his new post and in correspondence with Evan Jenkins, Secretary of the Supply Department, seeking information from him, and acquainting him with Mody's ideas about how he wanted the Department to be run.

Thus, on July 31, Mody wrote to Jenkins, "But there is one aspect of the Department with which I wish to get thoroughly familiar as early as possible, and that is the way it is staffed, the

way it functions and the degree of authority which the top men in each section exercise. I would also like to know something about the relations of various sections to each other, and the position of the Department vis-a-vis other departments and organisations."

There was a major headache awaiting him the moment he took over. He got a hint of it from Mudaliar. In a letter dated July 30, "Strictly Confidential," Mudaliar apologised for "troubling you with official business even before you have taken over charge, but the matter is so important that I feel I should let you know about it."

Behind this urgent and "strictly confidential" note was the threat by the Top Brass to take over, under the Defence of India Act, the control of the entire textile industry in order to ensure the requisite quantum of production demanded for the war effort. Any such drastic action on the part of the Government would alienate Indian industry and add to the disaffection in the country.

Mudaliar's letter went on to explain the nub of the crisis that the Brass Hats in New Delhi were about to precipitate. "Brigadier Woods is anxious to spread the Government orders on all the mills so that there might be, what he calls, equality of sacrifice. I believe it is as much in the interests of ensuring production as to satisfy a few firms like Buckingham and Sassoons, who feel that some of the textile factories are stealing a march over them and making huge profits on supply to civilians and on their export markets, that this question has become a live issue."

Brigadier Woods, in charge of War Production, had suggested the appointment of an advisory panel of eleven members representing the four millowners' associations to take charge of the internal organisation of the industry for Government war production.

The Commerce Department felt that the "time had not come for the Defence of India Act to be used and, if the advisory panel had not proved satisfactory and Brigadier Wood's negotiations had not resulted in a more equitable distribution of the Government orders, then the negotiations with so big, widespread and powerful an industry as the textile industry should be taken up at a higher level."

The Commerce Department therefore suggested that the negotiations with the industry should now be left to be conducted by the Commerce Member and Supply Member, and that failing

satisfactory result of those negotiations, other steps might then alone be contemplated.

The Commerce Department suggested that "in view of the fact that Sir Homi Mody would be taking charge about the 18th next month and in view of the further fact that his knowledge of the industry is unrivalled and his contact with prominent industrialists exceptionally good, the matter must be left over till he takes charge so that the two Members may jointly attempt at negotiations with the industry, should it prove necessary."

Mudaliar had not been impressed with the argument of equality of sacrifice for the reasons (a) that equality of production from all mills was not possible, (b) that such equality of sacrifice could not be demanded from mills outside British India, (c) that particular mills were so constituted that their machinery could not produce the commodities required by Government; (d) that, in any case, this question of equality of sacrifice in textiles would create a demand for equality of rights for contracts in the other departments of supply like heavy engineering, chemicals, etc., and that unless the Government was prepared for the policy of equality of rights and equality of sacrifices, it would not be possible to throw the burden of sacrifice only on one industry and particularly an industry where the Indian element was in much greater proportion than the British element.

Evan Jenkins, Secretary of the Supply Department, on the other hand, had argued that the cotton textile industry was now finding civil trade more profitable than the execution of Government orders. As India was, for certain lines the sole supplier of the Eastern Group countries, something must clearly be done to ensure that Government orders were accepted and executed. Jenkins recommended the expedient of action under the Defence of India Rules, under which the Government of India could, by an order, require an industry to give priority to Government orders up to a stated percentage of capacity.

Mody wrote to the Commerce Member entirely agreeing with him with regard to the necessity of exploring all possible avenues of inducing the industry to play up. "I have had some discussions on the subject here, and when I see you at Simla, I shall be able to give my views in the matter," he added. And on August 11,

Mody wrote to Jenkins asking him to convene a conference of millowners from all parts of India at Bombay on September 8.

On August 18, afternoon, in Bombay, Mody took charge of his office from Zafrullah Khan, and the same evening left for Simla by the Punjab Mail, in his own saloon. He arrived in Simla by special railcar on the 20th evening.

XV

GO-GETTER IN CABINET

THE SUPPLY Department of the Government of India was the butt of some of the juiciest jokes ever heard in war-time New Delhi. Most of them were born out of the oceans of red-tape and bureaucratic mushrooming in which the Department wallowed.

That leviathan of a department, for example, provoked Mody to retail the joke—that was, of course, before Mody came to head it—about the General returning from lunch meeting himself going out for tea!

Being the set-up where jobs multiplied faster than work, the Department was, possibly, the original inspiration for Prof. Northcote Parkinson's famous Law that enshrined the dictum: "Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion." This was also the set-up where Mody, on taking over complained, they first found the man, then created the post, and then found work for him.

There were quite a few things wrong with the Supply Department. Dominated by old "Koi Hais" and Poonah-Poonah Colonels, who were out of joint with the times, this Department was turned into a close preserve of Britishers from whose top echelons Indians were jealously kept out, at a time when the country's war effort demanded the fullest possible mobilisation of the technical skills and executive talents available in the land.

Their unimaginative approach and tendency to ride rough-shod over indigenous business and industrial interests, made the Department unpopular and distrusted by the sector of Indian society on whom the Department greatly depended for its successful operation. Besides, the Department had become a password for bungling, nepotism and graft.

The new broom went to work. Many a cobweb was brushed away, and with it, much of the smugness permeating the set-up. A long-handled hatchet hacked up the meshwork of red-tape enveloping the place, and put some "jaldi" into the back-and-forth Odysseys of the files. And the White czars of the Department

suddenly realised that they were accountable—to an Indian boss, one who demanded action and results.

Within twelve days of his taking over, the new Member for Supply circularised the following note to his Department:

"Owing to the fact that there are relatively few Indians in important positions in the Department, it is necessary that a special effort should be made, whenever a vacancy arises or a new appointment is to be made, to redress the balance. It is not intended that this should be at the expense of efficiency. On the face of it, it would appear that there ought to be a much larger reservoir to draw from in the case of Indians than in the case of Europeans."

The circular then suggested that the ordinary methods of advertising for positions might be supplemented by some special approach to institutions and organisations which were in a position to make suitable recommendations.

The note concluded, "I will much appreciate it if the Secretary and DGS and DGMP would suggest to me some way by which an objective which I know commands their approval can best be attained."

Mody did not leave the matter at that. He periodically chased it up. Thus, on May 31, 1942, another note stated: "Judging from the number of recommendations made to me for the employment of Europeans, even for non-technical posts, I am not satisfied that the policy of Indianisation is being enthusiastically or energetically pursued by every department."

The note then added, "This may in part be due to the fact that so far as the DGMP's (Director-General, Munitions Production) organisation is concerned, the heads of departments are, for a variety of reasons, not in close touch with the Indian commercial and industrial community, and must therefore find it very difficult to spot the right people."

This special emphasis on the DGMP's organisation arose from its stubborn reluctance to take Indians. Indeed, Mody issued another circular in which he insisted that all senior appointments in the DGMP's organisation, particularly in the Munitions Department, should be made with his approval.

The Director-General of this organisation, Sir Guthrie Russell, with his headquarters in Calcutta, claimed that "Bengal was

different" and that it was not possible to get suitable Indians for senior posts in that region !

In another note, Mody rapped the Directors-General and Directors in the Department for short-circuiting, under the excuse of urgency, the normal procedure of selection of candidates for posts in order to get men of their own choice.

He sternly underlined: "With regard to Indianisation, my views and reasons therefor should be well known to the whole department.....but to my regret, one or two departments of the DGS and the whole of the DGMP's organisation seem unable to find the right type of Indian for reasonable positions except in rare instances. They will have only themselves to thank if I am driven to turn down their recommendations *en masse* in future."

To supplement his Indianisation drive, Mody circularised to J. R. D. Tata, G. D. Birla and other top Indian employers to help him to get the best Indian talents for the Government Supply Department.

In his letter to Tata, Mody said that on assuming charge of the Supply Department, he had found that most of the officers in key positions were Europeans, and he sought Tata's cooperation in compiling a register of Indian technical and administrative talents in the country from which selections could be made, since the ordinary method of advertising or selection had failed to produce the right type of Indian for responsible positions.

Mody obtained the services of K. C. Mahindra from Martin Burn and Co., and K. A. D. Naoroji from Tatas to be sent to New York as members of the Indian Supply Mission there.

Incidentally, an unexpected crisis arose when Mahindra and Naoroji issued a press statement in the United States verging on controversial politics. Lord Halifax, then British Ambassador in Washington, took strong exception to the statement and protested to the Viceroy about it.

Linlithgow demanded the dismissal of Mahindra and Naoroji. Mody argued against such drastic action, as the sacking of two top Indians holding responsible positions in private industry, he pointed out, might create a bad impression in India as well as abroad.

Instead, Mody offered to write to the two gentlemen ticking them off for their indiscretion. Thereupon, the Viceroy desired

to see the draft of Mody's letter to them. Linlithgow did see the letter Mody wrote to Mahindra and Naoroji and was satisfied with it. Thus, the storm blew over.

Next, Mody turned his attention to the jungle of red-tape suffocating the activities of his Department. His note to the Department read:

"It has taken me some time to tread my way through the elaborate statements which have been put up. One statement in particular I have not been able to face up to at all; it is nearly 10 feet in length, and must easily hold the record! The general conclusion I drew from these statements is that the hours seem irregular, and I would like the Secretary to write to Directors-General and emphasise that

(1) a 'spread-over' of more than nine hours should not be permitted, save in exceptional circumstances;

(2) the number of persons through whom a file has to pass should be reduced wherever possible, e.g., senior assistants might submit their cases direct to sectional officers instead of going through the superintendents, and in the case of higher officers, it should not be necessary for more than two of them to handle a particular case."

Mody followed up the circular by convening a conference of the principal officers of his Department to discuss ways and means of simplifying the procedure and methods of the Department.

Nor did the lot of the clerical staff escape his eye. In a circular to the departmental heads, he expressed concern at the pace at which the Department worked. "The question arises whether the pressure can be kept up without regard to the health and reasonable comfort of the large body of workers we have," he wrote.

In particular, he deprecated the continuous long hours the clerical staff were made to work, and exhorted the departmental heads to consider whether any relief could be given either by cutting out part of the routine or by engaging more hands. The circular also insisted upon a system of giving the senior staff leave for short-periods during the year.

No sooner Mody joined the Government than he clashed with Field Marshal Wavell, then Commander-in-Chief in India. The latter fully backed the demands of the "brass hats" for the take-over of control of the country's textile industry to ensure that the

war orders were promptly fulfilled (to which a reference has already been made earlier).

Mody resisted the move. He considered the step unwise and unworkable, and would put up the backs of the millowners and reinforce the anti-Government forces in the land. He was convinced that he could talk the millowners into cooperating with the Government in the matter.

A tense situation developed at the Cabinet meeting. Mody found the entire Cabinet, with a couple of exceptions, ranged against him.

The Viceroy, thereupon, sensing the situation, intervened in the discussion and suggested that Mody should be given a chance to tackle the problem in his own way before taking recourse to the drastic action proposed.

Thus the All-India Textile Conference was convened in Bombay on September 8. It was attended by both Mody, the Supply member and Mudaliar, the Commerce member.

It was not all smooth sailing at the conference, however. The Ahmedabad group stated that they could not be expected to execute war orders as they had been confining themselves to producing finer goods. They would have to introduce new machinery to manufacture coarse cloth which would be very difficult for them to do at that stage.

The millowners at first opposed the Government's suggestion that the rates paid by them in preceding May should be the basis of future contract rates, to be adjusted according to the increased cost of manufacture during the intervening period. Finally they were persuaded to accept it.

Government spokesmen, at one stage, hinted that if the millowners failed to be accommodating, the Government might have to use compulsion. That only invited spirited retorts from the millowners.

For Mody himself the occasion was somewhat embarrassing. Hardly four months earlier he had, at another such conference, pleaded to the Government, on behalf of the millowners, that the former should not grudge them making some money after so many years of depression. Now he was playing a different tune, pleading to the millowners, on behalf of the Government, to reduce prices.

At the outset of his speech, Mody apologised to the textile industry for appearing before them now in a different role. Mody explained

to the conference the predominant position India now occupied as a source of supply of cotton textiles to the Eastern Group countries both in respect of civil and military requirements.

The needs of these countries and of India, he said, had grown rapidly during the last 12 months and the supply position had recently become somewhat acute. He had no doubt that India could and would rise to the occasion and the textile industry would find the means, by voluntary agreement, to solve the problems they were facing.

The conference took some important decisions. The Textile section of the Supply Department, covering purchasing sections and the planning directorate, was moved to Bombay and a director of textiles was put in charge. The director would have technical experts to advise cotton mills on effecting technical changes in order to enable them to work on war orders.

The conference decided upon the appointment of an Advisory Committee representative of the millowners' associations of the country, to advise the Government on the textile supply problem for the distribution of war orders for textiles on a wider basis and suggest an elastic machinery for fixing the prices of war orders.

Discussions at the conference revealed that while there was no difficulty in the past in regard to placing long-term delivery orders with the mills, the Department found it difficult to obtain supplies at short notice, since those mills had accepted civil orders.

It was therefore hoped that marshalling of the resources of the entire industry would be an effective means of obviating the difficulty experienced in the past.

It was further decided to harness the handloom industry too for war orders, especially for bandage cloth.

On the question of supplies and prices of cotton textiles, including yarn for the civil market, the conference concluded that an increase in the production of cloth and yarn was the only effective solution of the problem.

The following month, at the conclusion of three-day discussions in Bombay between the advisory panel and representatives of the Supply Department, a satisfactory decision was arrived at concerning the Government of India's immediate requirements of cotton textiles for war. The arrangement involved the cooperation of all

the mills in the country, thereby ensuring a wider distribution of the war orders.

On the question of long-term policy and the requirements of the Government of India during 1942, estimated to exceed 400 million yards, the panel undertook to assist the Government in procuring supplies upto the limit of the manufacturing capacity of each textile centre.

The result was gratifying indeed. The Indian millowners had at last come round and agreed to cooperate with the Government on executing war orders. In return, the Government promised to look into their special problems and lend a direct hand to solve them.

So far as Mody was concerned, however, it involved much lobbying and cajolery and log-rolling with the millowners. In these behind-the-scenes sessions, he even had to warn them of what they would be in for, if they failed to play ball with the Government.

When the autumn session of the Central Assembly met in October 1941, there were quite a few poachers-turned-game-keepers on the Treasury Benches. Aney was the new Leader of the House, looking self-conscious and awkward in his new seat. Mody was sandwiched between Finance Member Raisman and Feroze Khan Noon, the new Member for Civil Defence.

Mody was the first of the new Members to reply to inter-pellations. The question related to the American Lease-Lend Agreement, and was put by Sir Ziauddin Ahmed. Mody read the reply somewhat hurriedly, but he was back in his element during the supplementaries.

On December 7, the balloon went up in the east. On that day, the Japanese launched a sudden attack on Pearl Harbour. That brought the United States into the war, to make it truly global. The eastern war came like an avalanche. The next day, the Japanese forces occupied Shanghai and overran Thailand and made a landing in Malaya.

Twentyfour hours later, the Japanese navy sank the two British battleships, "Repulse" and "Prince of Wales," off Singapore, thus crippling the Allied naval strength in the Pacific.

On December 29, with the Japanese threat getting closer to India, Linlithgow addressed a letter to Mody in which he discussed plans for understudying major centres of production and building

shadow factories in areas of India less immediately accessible to enemy action than certain of the existing major centres. Rangoon had already taken considerable punishment from Japanese bombers, and the Viceroy considered the matter as "of even more pressing urgency than before."

The Viceroy asked for Mody's views and those of his Department, in consultation with the Defence and Commerce Departments, and for specific proposals on the subject.

"I attach particular importance to the active preparations being made for the removal or understudying of a very considerable percentage of the factories and establishments discharging essential functions in armaments," stated the Viceroy.

Mody now addressed himself to this complex task. In the event, however, nothing much was ultimately done by way of implementation of the blue-prints prepared, as by the time the Government made up their mind, the Japanese aerial threat to India had gradually faded out.

In February 1942, Chiang Kai-Shek visited New Delhi. Mody met the Generalissimo and had a chat with him. In the course of the talk, Chiang emphasised the urgent need for all-out economic help to China.

Mody, thereupon, approached leaders of India's textile industry, in his personal capacity, and pleaded to them to show their goodwill to China in some tangible way. He collected for China 550,000 yards of bandage cloth, in addition to some bales of shirting and sheetings and cash contributions, with which drugs and medicines were bought.

Mody had a soft corner for China. Earlier, in 1937, he had initiated a Mayor's Fund for China in the Bombay Municipal Corporation, reminding the public how much India owed to that country through trade. "This country has in the past acquired enormous wealth through its trade with China and it should be our duty, apart from other considerations to repay a part of the debt," he had said.

About this time, at Ghanshyam Das Birla's suggestion, Mody gave a quiet dinner to Sardar Patel, to which were also invited Pandit Gobind Ballabh Pant, Birla himself and certain other prominent Indian leaders.

Inevitably the discussion at the dinner veered round to the

political deadlock facing the country, and on how to resolve it. Mody was quite intrigued by the Sardar's downright conviction that the Congress should not take up the responsibility of Government at that juncture—a juncture which Gandhiji later summed up in the phrase "a post-dated cheque" to describe the British Government's offer, precipitated by the onrushing tide of Japanese conquests.

Mody found time to tour India's main industrial centres. In the middle of June, he visited Calcutta, where he spent a week, meeting the Committees of the Indian and Bengal National Chambers of Commerce, and discussing with them many points of interest to the Indian commercial community.

The activities of the United Kingdom Commercial Corporation was the main topic of the discussions in Calcutta. The monopolistic position held by the UKCC in regard to markets in the Near East countries and the high shipping priorities enjoyed by it, had been, for some time, the subject of complaints and agitation on the part of the Indian commercial community. Allegations had also been made that the Government of India's Supply Department was instrumental in helping the UKCC in locating supplies, negotiating prices, etc.

Mody assured Indian commercial opinion that his Department did not make purchases on behalf of the UKCC, that the latter purchased their requirements in the open market; that the UKCC having a strong purchasing, distributing and financial organisation, possessed advantages over any other private commercial organisation in India, and that the Government of India were in no way responsible for the influence the UKCC wielded.

If the UKCC enjoyed shipping priorities, it was because it was engaged in supplying goods to Russia and it was part of the war policy that supplies to Russia should be accorded priority. The Government of India assumed, Mody added, that the UKCC's activities would be confined to war time and in post-war years it would not compete with private commercial enterprise.

In January 1943, Mody also visited Madras, where he met the Chambers of Commerce and other organisations and got acquainted with their problems and cleared their doubts and suspicions in regard to the policies of the Supply Department.

Bubbling with energy and new ideas, Mody soon proved an asset

to the Viceroy's Cabinet. At the same time, too independent and original in thinking, he was no yes-man, and could not fall in line with the procedure and conventions of a body which generally waited upon the Viceroy to give the lead and whose members tendered advice only when asked for. Linlithgow was however scrupulously fair and considerate to the Indian Members and appreciated their difficult position.

Thus, when Sir Stafford Cripps arrived in India in March 1942, with political proposals from the British Cabinet, and failed to take the Executive Council in confidence on those proposals, Mody was the first to kick up a row.

The day before, Mody had observed to his colleague Sultan Ahmed that it was queer that they as Members of the Viceroy's Executive Council had still been kept in the dark about the Cripps Proposals. Sultan Ahmed had replied: "They are bound to show them to us."

At a formal meeting at the Viceroy's House, the Executive Councillors were introduced to Cripps and the latter made a platitudinous speech. Cripps kept playing with his pencil but said not a word about the Proposals he had brought with him from London.

Mody expected Ramaswami Mudaliar, as leader and senior-most Member, to protest, but Mudaliar kept mum. Linlithgow noticing the agitation in Mody's face asked him whether he had anything to say, but Mody shook his head, as he thought he should consult his colleagues, before he said or did anything.

As the meeting dispersed and the Viceroy and Cripps left the room, Mody pressed his colleagues to stay on for a while and told them what he thought of Sir Stafford's performance. He made it plain that he, for one, would take strong exception to Cripps' act of omission which he considered an insult to them. Some of his colleagues thereupon murmured agreement.

Maxwell then intervened to offer to go to the Viceroy and convey the strong feeling Mody had expressed on the issue and tried to mend the situation. The Home Member rushed to the Viceroy and apprised him of the development. The latter sent word back that he wished to meet the Members of the Council again after half an hour, on his return from another engagement.

In the meantime, Wavell had left, so that when the Executive

Council met a second time that day, the Commander-in-Chief was not present. The Viceroy now blandly assured the Members of the Council that for want of time Cripps could not unfold his Proposals and that he would do so the next morning.

The next day, Cripps duly met the Executive Councillors for a second time, apologised to them for his default and presented to them the Proposals he had brought from Whitehall.

In passing, Mody recalls how, for some unaccountable reason, Linlithgow kept the air-conditioned room in Viceroy's House, where the Executive Council met, at 34 degrees Fahrenheit. Thus, one or two of the Executive Councillors developed the habit of donning woollen jerseys before entering the room, while others who did not, shivered in the arctic atmosphere.

In the event, the Cripps Mission failed—for many reasons, including sabotage by the Viceroy and the hamstringing of Cripps' freedom of negotiation by the Churchill Government at home, apart from the Congress distrust of what Gandhiji considered a "post-dated cheque on a crashing bank."

It fell to the lot of Mody to lead yet another protest to the Viceroy in October 1942. The Secretary of State for India stated in the British House of Commons: "The present European Members were being retained merely because of the difficulty in finding suitable Indians for the posts." A telegram was promptly addressed to the Viceroy, then on tour, protesting against Amery's statement.

Signed by Mody, Sultan Ahmed, Aney, Sarkar, Ambedkar, J. P. Srivastava and Jogendar Singh, the telegram expressed "considerable surprise" at the statement and the signatories dissociated themselves "wholly with the position taken up by him."

The telegram asserted, "In our considered opinion there is no difficulty whatever in finding suitable Indians for any positions in the Government of India and we have to remind the Secretary of State that if the Congress and the League had accepted the Cripps Proposals, there would have been at the Centre today a wholly Indian Government with very wide powers."

The communication added that Amery's statement was "entirely at variance with facts and constitutes an affront to Indian opinion," and requested the Viceroy to communicate their views to the Secretary of State.

The telegram further called attention to Amery's declaration that he was not prepared, in the present circumstances, to permit interviews with the Congress leaders and enquired "where the Members of the Government of India come in on this policy and whether they have any say in it."

In conclusion, the signatories stated that they felt very strongly that their "position has been rendered extremely difficult by a declaration of this character."

Linlithgow replied fully appreciating their point and said he had immediately telegraphed to the Secretary of State to find out what exactly was said and promised to communicate further as soon as possible.

In June 1942, Mody rode another storm when the U.S. Technical Mission in India, headed by Henry Grady, reported on how to harness, to the fullest, India's industrial resources for the war effort, and came out with far-reaching recommendations.

Among these recommendations were: (1) installation of a War Cabinet; (2) expansion of the Indian Army; (3) bifurcation of the Supply Department so as to set up a separate Production portfolio; and (4) regimentation and rationalisation of vital industries. The War Cabinet was to be composed of Members responsible for Production, Transportation, Communications, Defence and Finance.

The most controversial recommendation of them all suggested a "high-powered control, independent of the established Government agencies, on the American model." Then again, the Grady report was all in favour of mass production.

At a heated press conference, Mody explained the Government's difficulties and attitude towards the main recommendations of the Grady Mission. Mody maintained that the existing machinery of the Government of India was more than adequate to meet the requirements of the war effort demanded of India.

There was a sharp exchange of views between the correspondents and Mody. The American correspondents described Mody's statement as "defeatist," while the Indian nationalist press grabbed at the Grady Report as a handy stick to beat both Mody and the Government with. Even the Anglo-Indian papers in the country were critical of the Government of India's smug attitude towards the Report.

After receiving considerable pummelling from the American and Indian Press and public opinion, the Government of India, at last, relented and announced that they proposed to implement the Grady recommendations "to the maximum extent possible."

The mouse they produced was the setting up of a War Resources Committee of six members, of whom three were Indians. The Viceroy was its chairman, and Mody vice-chairman. The first meeting of the War Resources Committee was held on June 10, 1942, at which Mody presided. The War Resources Committee, however, did valuable work.

It must be added here that while Dr Grady was in India, Mody had established very cordial relations with him. Mody held Grady in high esteem, and there was no question of any personal element entering into the controversy.

XVI

THE CABINET'S DRAFTSMAN

By May 1942, the Japanese had overrun entire South-East Asia. With Indo-China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaya and Burma in their hands, they were on India's border. Some of the Indian cities were already bombed by Japanese aircraft. At that juncture, India was ill-prepared for a full-scale Japanese invasion. Hence, much of the Government's defence plans were confined to a "scorched-earth" policy and preparedness to retreat.

In a series of articles in the *Harijan,* Mahatma Gandhi urged the British to withdraw from India. He was "convinced that the British presence is the incentive for the Japanese attack."

"If the British wisely decided to withdraw and leave India to manage her own affairs in the best way she could, the Japanese would be bound to reconsider their plans," wrote Gandhiji. "The very novelty of the British stroke will confound the Japanese, dissolve the subdued hatred against the British and the atmosphere will be set up for the ending of an unnatural state of affairs that has dominated and choked Indian life."

In answer to a question, Gandhiji wrote in the *Harijan*: "Under my proposal, they (British) have to leave India in God's hands—but, in the modern parlance, to anarchy, and that anarchy may lead to internecine warfare for some time or to unrestrained dacoities. From these, a true India will rise in the place of the false one we see."

After nine-day-long *in camera* deliberations at Wardha, the Congress Working Committee adopted the historic "Quit India" resolution of July 14, 1942, which demanded the ending of British rule immediately. It stated that neither a settlement of the communal tangle nor effective resistance to foreign aggression was possible while British authority continued in the country. On the withdrawal of British rule, "responsible men and women of the country would come together to form a provisional government representative of all important sections of the people of India."

The resolution appealed to Britain to accept the "very reasonable and just proposal," but should the appeal fail, the Congress would

be reluctantly compelled to utilise all its non-violent strength in a widespread struggle, inevitably under the leadership of Gandhiji.

The Viceroy's Executive Council met immediately to decide what action to take in case the Congress actually launched the threatened mass movement while a desperate war on two fronts was on, and it was agreed that Mahatma Gandhi and the top Congress leaders should be arrested.

The AICC met and on August 8 ratified the Congress Working Committee's resolution demanding the termination of British rule in India and sanctioned the launching of a "mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale," under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership.

The Government struck swiftly. Within a few hours of the adoption of the resolution, in the early hours of the morning of August 9, Gandhiji and members of the Congress Working Committee were arrested and detained, and the Congress was declared unlawful.

In the meantime, early in July, the Viceroy further expanded his Executive Council, to raise its strength to 14 (11 Indians), besides the Commander-in-Chief. The Defence portfolio was split up into "War," with the Commander-in-Chief in charge, and "Defence" under an Indian Member. Similarly, War Transport was separated from Communications and constituted into an independent portfolio, under an European, Sir Edward Benthal.

The new entrants into the Council were: C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Jogendar Singh, J. P. Srivastava, Mahomed Usman and Edward Benthal. C. P. however resigned from the Executive Council within a couple of weeks, under the plea that he wanted to remain free to organise forces against any threat to the integrity and position of the Princely States, with whom he was closely associated for many years.

Simultaneously, the appointment of Ramaswami Mudaliar and the Jam Saheb of Nawanagar was announced as representatives of India in the War Cabinet and the Pacific War Council.

Serious disorders followed the arrests of the top Congressmen. With responsible leaders in jail, the mass movement soon went out of control and, in many instances, turned violent. Determined attempts were made to tamper with transport and communications. The Government met the disturbances with ruthless repression.

The Government of India charged the Congress with being responsible for the violent disturbances of 1942. Gandhiji replied that the "leonine violence" of Governmental repression had provoked the masses to run amuck. It was the subject of a fierce public controversy between the Government and Mahatma Gandhi.

By now Mody had become the draftsman of the Cabinet. Thus, in July 1942, when a question was asked in the British House of Commons on the Congress resolution demanding British withdrawal from India, the Viceroy entrusted the task of preparing the answers to Mody.

On July 30, Linlithgow wrote to Mody: "I have just had from Secretary of State the telegram I enclose, which gives the text of the question and answer proposed, and since the drafting is to a predominant extent your own, I would like you to see it, entirely privately, as early as possible. Mr. Amery tells me that it is not, unfortunately, possible to arrange for the Prime Minister to answer the question, but that he will answer it himself. I hope that it may be of value and am most grateful to you (as I am sure are the Secretary of State and the Cabinet) for your helpful suggestions."

The following is the text of the question and answer, based on Mody's draft:—

"Q: What are the present intentions of His Majesty's Government in regard to the political situation in India ?"

"A: The Congress Party Working Committee has adopted, subject to ratification by the All-India Congress Committee, a resolution demanding the immediate withdrawal of British rule from India and threatening a mass movement if the demand is not conceded.

"The purpose of His Majesty's Government with regard to the constitutional future of India was made clear in the draft declaration which Sir Stafford Cripps was authorised to offer on behalf of His Majesty's Government. It proved impossible to secure the support of the principal elements of India's national life for the specific proposals in that declaration and the draft was accordingly withdrawn. Nevertheless, His Majesty's Government stand firmly by the broad intention of the offer....

"The present demand of the Congress completely ignores this far-reaching offer and would, if conceded, bring about a complete and abrupt dislocation of the vast and complicated machinery

of the Government in India. This, at a time when in Russia, China, Libya and other theatres of war, the situation calls for undivided energy, cooperation and concentration of resources of all the Allied Powers.

"No greater disservice to the cause for which the United Nations are fighting can be imagined, and men of goodwill everywhere must refuse to envisage such a catastrophic development in one of the most vital theatres of war.

"His Majesty's Government while reiterating their resolve to give the fullest opportunity for the attainment by India of complete self-government, cannot but solemnly warn all those who stand behind the policy adumbrated by the Working Committee of the Congress that the Government of India will not flinch from their duty to take every possible step to meet the situation.

"The United Nations have bent themselves to the task of fighting the menace which overhangs freedom and civilisation. In this crisis, and in the future after the war, India has a great part to play and it is the earnest hope of His Majesty's Government that the Indian people will lend no countenance to a movement fraught with such disastrous consequences, but will, on the contrary, throw their all into the struggle against the common enemies of mankind...."

It is interesting to trace the modifications carried out by Whitehall in Mody's draft. Among the four changes made in the draft, the first, towards the end of the second paragraph, is the omission of the words "and on the conclusion of hostilities, India will have it within her power to attain the status of a Dominion, with a right to secede from the Commonwealth, if she thought fit to do so."

In the second modification, in the fifth paragraph, Whitehall prefers "fullest opportunity for the attainment by India of complete self-government" in place of "to bring about the attainment by India of her most cherished desires."

The third alteration, in the concluding paragraph, inserts the word "freedom" so as to read "the menace which overhangs freedom and civilisation."

Similarly, Whitehall omitted in the concluding line the words "setting aside their political differences for the moment"—an omission difficult to fathom !

Mody also had a large hand in composing the Government of India's resolution on the Congress decision to launch a mass movement demanding the termination of British rule in the country.

The Government resolution admitted that the Congress had "for long occupied a position of great prominence and great importance," and referred to "the dangerous preparations by the Congress Party for unlawful and, in some cases, violent activities, directed among other things to the interruption of communications and public utility services, the organisation of strikes, tampering with the loyalty of Government servants and interference with defence measures, including recruitment."

Nevertheless, two months later, at a review of the political situation in the Executive Council, Mody urged upon the Viceroy that the British Government should make another attempt at resolving the deadlock in India.

He pleaded, "Once we have put down the Congress, we should have no friends in the country. Everyone expects something to be done. In the circumstances, could not the Executive Council be made wholly non-official and wholly Indian, since that is the very least that is expected ?"

If there was nothing to be done with the Congress and the Muslim League, he persisted, "Let us, at any rate, try to placate the others. Complete Indianisation and the transfer to Indians of the important portfolios of Home, Finance and War Transport, at present reserved, should be the best answer."

Mody once again stressed that either by convention or otherwise the direction of affairs in India should pass from the Secretary of State to the Government in the country.

Everything was fine and smooth in the Executive Council until, in the first week of February 1943, the Viceroy sprang on the Members the disturbing news that the Mahatma had intimated his intention to embark on a fast. It was to be a 21-day fast, to "crucify the flesh," to start on February 9, while in detention at the Aga Khan Palace, in Poona, where he had been lodged by the Government. That was a veritable apple of discord that upset the equanimity of many of them and divided their ranks over how the situation likely to be created by Gandhiji's fast should be handled by the Government.

In a letter dated "New Year's Eve" 1942, Gandhiji had written

to Linlithgow charging the Government with putting out statements about him and his responsibility for the violent disturbances in the country following the Quit India resolution that were "palpable departures from truth." Gandhiji stated he had returned to India from South Africa in 1914 with the mission of spreading truth and non-violence among mankind in the place of violence and falsehood in all walks of life.

"The law of Satyagraha knows no defeat," he wrote. "Prison is one of the many ways of spreading the message, but it has its limits. You have placed me in a palace where every reasonable creature comfort is ensured. I have freely partaken of the latter purely as a matter of duty, never as a pleasure, in the hope that some day those that have the power will realise that they have wronged innocent men. I had given myself six months. The period is drawing to a close, so is my patience."

The letter concluded, "The law of Satyagraha, as I know it, prescribes a remedy in such moments of trial. In a sentence it is 'crucify the flesh by fasting'. That same law forbids its use except as a last resort. I do not want to use it if I can avoid it. This is the way to avoid it, convince me of my error or errors and I shall make ample amends."

Linlithgow sent his reply to the Mahatma's letter on January 13. The Viceroy stated, "I have been profoundly depressed during recent months, first, by the policy that was adopted by the Congress in August, secondly, because while that policy gave rise, as it was obvious it must, throughout the country to violence and crime (I say nothing of the risks to India from outside aggression), no word of condemnation for that violence and crime should have come from you, or from the Working Committee."

The letter stressed, "I well know the immense weight of your great authority in the Congress Movement and with the party and those who follow its lead, and I wish I could feel, again speaking very frankly, that a heavy responsibility did not rest on you."

This strange correspondence, carried on on an esoteric plane, of course, led nowhere. It rather resembled a well-contested tennis rally, in which the ball was interminably lobbed back and forth without a clincher—the ball, of course, being the burden of responsibility for the violent, widespread disorders in the country

following the "Quit India" resolution, flung at each other, between the Government of India and Mahatma Gandhi.

In his final letter, on February 5, Linlithgow reaffirmed: "My view of the responsibility of Congress and of yourself personally for the lamentable disorder of last autumn remains unchanged."

The letter claimed there was evidence that "you and your friends expected this policy (the Quit India resolution of the Congress) to lead to violence; and that you were prepared to condone it, and that the violence that ensued formed part of a concerted plan, conceived long before the arrest of Congress leaders.....If we do not act on all this information or make it publicly known it is because the time is not yet ripe; but you may rest assured that the charges against the Congress will have to be met sooner or later and it will then be for you and your colleagues to clear yourselves before the world, if you can. And if in the meanwhile you yourself, by any action such as you now appear to be contemplating, attempt to find an easy way out, the judgment will go against you by default."

The letter concluded:

"I hope and pray that wiser counsels may yet prevail with you. But the decision whether or not to undertake a fast with its attendant risks is clearly one that must be taken by you alone. I trust sincerely that in the light of what I have said you may think better of your resolution; and I would welcome a decision on your part to think better of it, not only because of my own natural reluctance to see you wilfully risk your life, but because I regard the use of a fast for a political purpose as a form of political blackmail (himsa) for which there can be no moral justification, and understood from your own previous writings that this was also your view."

The correspondence closed with Gandhiji's letter to the Viceroy, dated 7th February, which stated:

"Your letter, from a Satyagrahi's standpoint, is an invitation to fast. No doubt the responsibility for the step, and its consequence, will be solely mine. You have allowed an expression to slip from your pen for which I was unprepared. In the concluding sentence of the second paragraph, you describe the step as an attempt "to find an easy way out."

"That you, as a friend, can impute such a base and cowardly

motive to me passes comprehension. You have also described it as 'a form of political blackmail'.....You say that the time is not yet ripe to publish the charges against the Congress. Have you ever thought of the possibility of their being found baseless when they are put before an impartial tribunal ?"

The letter ended :

"You have left me no loophole for escaping the ordeal I have set before myself. I begin it on the 9th instant, with the clearest possible conscience. Despite your description of it as a 'a form of political blackmail', it is on my part meant to be an appeal to the Highest Tribunal for justice which I have failed to secure from you. If I do not survive the ordeal, I shall go to the Judgment Seat with the fullest faith in my innocence. Posterity will judge between you as representative of an all-powerful Government and me as a humble man who had tried to serve his country and humanity through it."

On February 7, the Government offered to release the Mahatma "for the purpose and for the duration of the fast." But Gandhiji refused to countenance a conditional release—either he should be set at liberty unconditionally, in which case he would give up his intention to fast, or he would launch on his fast in detention.

Thus, forewarned, the Government of India was getting forearmed. The Executive Council, in advance, discussed the steps to be taken when the Mahatma embarked on the fast, and even got a press communique ready for such an eventuality.

On February 10, Mody received a communication from the Viceroy which read :

> I have just heard from Poona that Mr. Gandhi has, I know to your great regret as well as to mine, decided to embark upon his fast; and that he began it this morning at about 8.15. In these circumstances, I am arranging for the immediate release to the Press of a statement that we as Government have drawn up, and also of the printed correspondence which has passed at various times, since last August, between myself (or the Government of India) and Mr. Gandhi. I have printed in the appendix, since I am anxious that the public should see the whole story, his long letter to me of 14th August, which I read in the Council at the time; and I have also included his letter of 23rd September to the Home Department. I am anxious

that you should have this material in advance of its release to the Press, which is not likely to take place before midday or a little later today.

Mody expressed the view that the draft was unfortunate in several respects, and explained why he thought so. There was a general discussion. Linlithgow asked Mody whether he would like to draft the document all over again. Mody agreed and asked for the relevant papers from the Home Department.

Richard Tottenham, Home Secretary, arrived at Mody's house with a mountain of papers. Mody worked on them all the rest of the day. Late that evening, he presented a fresh draft to Linlithgow. The latter accepted the draft but for a few minor alterations in the opening paragraph. The draft was duly approved by the Cabinet.

The 1500-word communique quoted chapter and verse to repudiate the charge that the Government of India was responsible for the violence that followed the Congress adoption of the "Quit India" resolution and laid the blame squarely at the door of the Mahatma and the Congress.

A refreshing departure from the dry-as-dust phraseology of Government documents, this communique was couched in combative terms and argued the Government's case point by point, like a prosecution counsel summing up before the jury.

The communique deplored the use of the weapon of fasting to achieve political ends, and stated, "There can in their (Government's) judgment be no justification for it, and Mr. Gandhi has himself admitted in the past that it contains an element of coercion. The Government of India can only express its regret that Mr. Gandhi should think it necessary to employ such a weapon on this occasion and should seek a justification for it in anything which Government may have said or done in connection with the movement initiated by him and his co-workers in the Congress party."

The communique added:

"The Government of India have no intention on their part of allowing the fast to deflect their policy. Nor will they be responsible for its consequence on Mr. Gandhi's health. They cannot prevent Mr. Gandhi from fasting. It was their wish however that if he decided to do so, he should do so as a free

man and under his own arrangements, so as to bring out clearly that the responsibility for any fast and its consequences rested exclusively with him.'

"They accordingly informed Mr. Gandhi that he would be released for the purpose and for the duration of the fast of which he had notified them, and with him any members of the party living with him who may wish to accompany him. Mr. Gandhi in reply has expressed his readiness to abandon his intended fast if released, failing which he will fast in detention. In other words it is now clear that only his unconditional release could prevent him from fasting. This the Government of India are not prepared to concede.

"Their position remains the same: that is to say, they are ready to set Mr. Gandhi at liberty for the purpose and duration of his fast. But if Mr. Gandhi is not prepared to take advantage of that fact and if he fasts while in detention, he does so solely on his own responsibility and at his own risk. He would be at liberty, in that event, to have his own medical attendants, and also to receive visits from friends with the permission of Government during its period."

The communique then challenged Gandhiji's repudiation of all responsibility for the consequences which flowed from the "Quit India" demand, and stated:

"This contention will not bear examination. Mr. Gandhi's own statement, before the movement was launched, envisaged anarchy as an alternative to the existing order, and referred to the struggle 'as a fight to the finish in the course of which he would not hesitate to run any risk, however great....' Mr. Gandhi stated that there was no room left in the proposal for withdrawal or negotiation; there was no question of one more chance; after all, it was an open rebellion which was to be as short and as swift as possible. His last message was 'Do or die'.

"The speeches of those closely associated with Mr. Gandhi have been even more explicit, and have given a clear indication of what the Congress High Command had in mind in launching their attack—an attack which would, if realised, have most seriously imperilled the whole cause of the United Nations—against Government as by law established, and against the agencies and services by which the life of the country was being conducted—in a period,

be it noted, of exceptional stress and strain, and of grave danger to India from Japanese aggression.....

"If it is claimed that it is not Congressmen who have been responsible, it would be extraordinary to say the least, if the blame were to be laid on non-Congress elements. The country is, in effect, asked to believe that those who own allegiance to the Congress party have behaved in an exemplary non-violent manner, and that it is persons who are outside the Congress fold who have registered their resentment at the arrest of the leaders of a movement which they did not profess to follow. A more direct answer to the argument is to be had in the fact that known Congressmen have been repeatedly found engaged in incitements to violence, or in prosecuting Congress activities which have led to disorders."

The Communique concluded:

"Mr. Gandhi in his letter to the Viceroy has sought to fasten responsibility on the Government of India. The Government of India emphatically repudiate this suggestion. It is clearly preposterous to contend that it is they who are responsible for the violence of the last few months which so gravely disorganised the normal life of the country—and incidentally, aggravated the difficulties of the food situation—at a time when the united energies of the people might have been devoted to the vital task of repelling the enemy and of striking a blow for the freedom of India, the Commonwealth and the world."

Thus, events were heading to a crisis not only in the country but in the Viceroy's Cabinet too.

XVII

THE SEVEN-DAY DRAMA

ON THE QUESTION of imprisoning Mahatma Gandhi and top Congress leaders after the Quit India resolution, there was no difference of opinion in the Executive Council.

As to timing, however, Mody had suggested to the Viceroy that Government might as well await development before taking action. But insistent pressure from the Provincial Governors precipitated events.

Likewise, there was complete unanimity in the Executive Council on the point that the Mahatma and the Congress, and not the Government of India, were responsible for the violent disorders that followed the Quit India resolution. On that issue the Council was not prepared to yield to Gandhiji—the very issue on which the Mahatma embarked on his twentyone-day fast.

It was the more fateful question whether the Government should take the grave responsibility of keeping the fasting Mahatma in detention, regardless of consequences, that found the Executive Councillors sharply divided.

At first, a proposal was mooted that Gandhiji might be released for the duration of the fast on condition that he would not take part in any political or public activities during that period. Mody however expressed himself against imposing any conditions for the release. Finally, it was agreed that Gandhiji should be freed unconditionally but only for the duration of the fast.

When Home Secretary Richard Tottenham communicated Government's decision to Gandhiji at the Aga Khan Palace, in Poona, the latter declined to avail himself of the offer of release for the duration of the fast. "If, therefore, I am released, there will be no fast in terms of my correspondence," replied the Mahatma.

Gandhiji's refusal of that condition brought the Executive Council face to face with a crisis that was banking up since the threat of the fast loomed on the horizon from the beginning of the year.

The Mahatma launched on the 21-day fast at 8.15 a.m. on February 10. That evening, the Government of India issued a Press Communique announcing the development. Accompanying the Communique was the text of a lengthy correspondence that passed between Gandhiji and the Viceroy over a period of six months.

If the announcement of the fast launched by the Mahatma electrified the atmosphere in the country, the revelation of the contents of the letters exchanged between him and Linlithgow injected bitterness and a sense of disgust and impotent rage among the people.

In contrast to earnest pleading by the Mahatma in his letters, the Viceroy's language was positively callous and insinuated unworthy motives against the Mahatma. That pained Gandhiji all the more and precipitated the ordeal of "crucifying the flesh."

In the Central Assembly, Reginald Maxwell, Home Member, declared: "If the Government conscientiously believed that it was right, a fast could make no difference to it."

Thus the political air in the country had been charged with tension when the Executive Council wrestled with an unprecedented internal crisis, inevitably, reacting to the supercharged atmosphere without.

On the fourth day of the fast, Gandhiji began to suffer from nausea, and his sleep was reported disturbed. From this day onwards, the Government of Bombay issued a daily communique on the Mahatma's state of health.

From the fifth day, Gandhiji's condition began to cause anxiety. Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, the well-known Calcutta physician and, later, Chief Minister of West Bengal, arrived in Poona, and was allowed to attend on the Mahatma.

That day, at midnight, the Viceroy summoned an emergency meeting of the Executive Council to decide the line of action if the Mahatma's condition manifested any danger to his life. Linlithgow sought the views of individual Members of the Council.

Mody expressed the firm opinion that Gandhiji, in such an eventuality, should be released unconditionally. He urged very strongly that the Government could not possibly allow the Mahatma to die when it was in their power to save his life by releasing him unconditionally, in which case he would have

broken the fast. He was convinced that the Government should not take the grave responsibility of letting Gandhiji die while in their custody.

M. S. Aney, N. R. Sarkar, Sultan Ahmed, Feroz Khan Noon and Jogendar Singh supported Mody's stand. Ambedkar failed to attend the midnight meeting. Mody's proposal in favour of unconditional release of Gandhiji had a majority of two, when the Council adjourned at 3 a.m., to meet again at 10 o'clock.

But when the Council met again, there was a change in the position and a majority was now found in favour of the view that in no circumstances was Gandhiji to be released unconditionally. Ambedkar (who now attended) and Noon, who now changed sides, voted against Mody's proposal. The official line now was that if Gandhiji did not accept the conditions laid down by Government, the responsibility for whatever happened was entirely Gandhiji's.

Mody thereupon got up and made a brief statement. He stated that the decision just taken was of such serious import that he would have to consider his position as a Member of Government.

The Viceroy immediately interrupted: "Do you mean you are considering whether to continue to stay in the Executive Council ?"

Mody: "Precisely, Sir."

Viceroy: "You must take a quick decision. There is no time to waste."

Mody: "The question of my leaving the Executive Council will however arise only when the Mahatma's life gets in danger."

Aney and Sarkar supported Mody's stand.

In view of the very cordial personal relations subsisting between the two, it was expected that Linlithgow would lose no time in sending for Mody and such of his colleagues who had supported him, for an informal discussion of the issue and seek to smooth out the differences.

Far from attempting any such move, at the weekly interview which Aney had with the Viceroy, the latter expressed the view that if the three Members wanted to resign, they should make up their minds quickly, as any such action taken when Gandhiji's condition became critical, would seriously embarrass the Government.

When a little later, Mody himself met the Viceroy at his

weekly interview, Linlithgow talked of many other routine matters but failed to touch the crucial issue on which they had so acutely differed at the Executive Council meeting.

It was Mody who broached the subject and made it clear to the Viceroy that there was no question of their resigning unless the situation compelled them to do so, namely, the fast developed into a threat to Gandhiji's life. Mody further argued that apart from any other consideration, it would be nothing short of a crime and a disaster if Gandhiji were allowed to die in detention, and that it would arouse such bitterness and resentment that there would be no hope of a reconciliation between the two countries ever afterwards.

The Viceroy who had always treated Mody with marked consideration and friendliness, now made no effort to argue with Mody or to talk him out of his decision.

On February 16, that is, on the sixth day of the fast, the evening bulletin, which arrived at 6 p.m. indicated that there was danger to Gandhiji's life. Mody immediately rang up Aney, Sarkar, Sultan Ahmed and Jogendar Singh (those who had supported him at the Council meeting) and requested them to attend an informal meeting, the next morning, at his residence, to take stock of the situation arising out of the latest bulletin on Gandhiji's state of health.

The next morning when they met, Mody told them that the time for action had come, and that he, for one, had made up his mind to resign. He added whoever wished to join him was welcome to do so, but that it was a matter which each member had to decide for himself and there could be no question of pressure or persuasion.

Aney and Sarkar immediately announced that they would join Mody in the decision to resign. Sultan Ahmed and Jogendar Singh however seemed disinclined and gave various reasons for not wanting to follow suit. The three assenting Members signed a joint resignation letter then and there, as Mody had kept the draft ready.

Thus, on February 17, as the health bulletin reported a further deterioration in Gandhiji's condition—"heart action has become feebler"—the joint resignation letter from Mody, Aney, and Sarkar reached the Viceroy.

Normally, the proper procedure for resigning members to follow would have been to meet the Viceroy, apprise him of the reasons for their decision and place their letters of resignation formally before him. As however the Viceroy was indisposed at the moment, the three Members thought it best to write to the Private Secretary to the Viceroy, Gilbert Laithwaite, and ask him to place before the Viceroy their letter of resignation.

Simultaneously, Mody telephoned to Laithwaite to tell him about their joint decision, and incidentally, to his surprise and amusement he heard from the other end of the wire, Laithwaite saying, "Good, good," when Mody expected some expression of concern, regret or agitation—that was, possibly, no more than an unconscious mannerism on Laithwaite's part!

It was not until two days later, on February 19, however that Gandhiji was informed of the resignation of Mody, Aney and Sarkar from the Executive Council.

The covering letter to Laithwaite, dated February 17, read:

> Last night we received a communication which stated that official doctors were of opinion that Mr. Gandhi's condition is now serious. This creates a situation which, as we indicated to the Council a little while ago, compels us to tender our resignation as Members of the Government of India, and the accompanying letter, which we have to request you to place before His Excellency, conveys our decision.
>
> We had intended to seek an interview with His Excellency before placing our resignations before him, but his indisposition unfortunately prevents us from following that course. It is, we trust, needless for us to state that it is only a compelling sense of duty which has driven us to the decision we have taken, and it is with profound regret we are asking His Excellency to relieve us of our office.

Their joint letter of resignation addressed to the Viceroy, of same date, stated:

> It is our painful duty to inform Your Excellency that we can no longer continue to be Members of the Government of India. The majority decision not to release Mr. Gandhi unconditionally, even when danger to his life accrued from the fast he had undertaken, is one which we cannot possibly support, and as the matter at issue raises a very important

question of policy, we have no option but to tender our resignations.

We are acutely conscious of the embarrassment which the step we are taking may cause Your Excellency and our other colleagues, and we can only say that if our differences had been less fundamental, we would have deemed it our duty to submit to the vote of the majority, as, individually, we have done on several occasions. As Your Excellency knows, we have borne our full share of responsibility for the policy of the Government during a period of exceptional difficulty and ferment, and if we break away at this stage, you will, we trust, appreciate that we must be impelled by a strong sense of what we conceive to be our duty.

We have set out reasons for our action briefly with a view to avoiding any controversial or jarring note, and we conclude by thanking Your Excellency very warmly for the courtesy and consideration you have extended to us throughout the period during which we have had the privilege of being associated with you in the government of the country.

The reply from the Viceregal Lodge arrived within a couple of hours. Laithwaite wrote a direct and separate letter to Mody which, in contrast to the extreme courtesy and consideration shown to him by the Viceroy until then, sounded somewhat curt and betrayed a piqued mind. There was neither expression of regret at the turn of events nor appreciation of Mody's work and services to the Government as Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council.

Laithwaite's letter read:

....I have at once laid it before His Excellency who asks me to thank you for it. He would like to see you at 4.30 this afternoon, and I am writing to Mr Aney and Mr Sarkar to ask them also to be present.

Meanwhile His Excellency asks me to say that he would suggest that the terms of your letter to him will call for reconsideration. He has given no permission to anyone to divulge any detail of what passed inside the Council on this matter. All members of the Council are bound by their oath of secrecy save to the extent that they are specially permitted by the Governor-General.

Nor is there any question of majority or minority decisions. The decision taken is a decision taken by the Council and is the collective responsibility of the Council. It would not therefore be proper for any reference to appear in any letter to majority or minority decisions, to differences of view on any subject inside the Council, or to the views of a particular Member.

It is of course perfectly open to you and to any other member who is dissatisfied with the policy of the Government on a particular matter to tender his resignation on the ground that he is no longer able to support that policy on a particular issue in question. But that is as far in the direction of explanations as it would be proper, given the oath and in the absence of any dispensation by the Governor-General, to go. Perhaps you would be kind enough to let me have the letter modified to meet this point ?

On another but less important point, His Excellency's impression of practice in these matters is that Members wishing to tender their resignation should do so in individual letters addressed to him. There would of course be no objection in the world to the terms of such letters being identical. Perhaps you would care to consider that point also.

If I can be of any assistance I hope you will let me know. I shall be on the telephone all day save at lunch time when I am lunching with Sir Mahomed Usman.

Would you be so kind, as the letter to which I am replying came under your signature as senior of the three members concerned, as to mention the position as explained above to Mr Aney and Mr Sarkar ? For obvious reasons I am marking this letter 'Private and Personal'.

Mody immediately telephoned to Laithwaite and then wrote a letter to say "there is no question whatsoever of any direct or indirect breach of any rules or conventions involved in the letter we addressed to His Excellency. The view we took was that since we were sending our resignations to him, we had clearly to explain why we were resigning, and our letter was not intended for publication at all."

With regard to the Viceroy's suggestion that they should send separate and individual resignation letters, Mody said, "I suggest the resignation be allowed to stand, and if necessary, we can

regularise the position by sending in individual letters."

As arranged, Mody met the Viceroy at 4.30 p.m. the same day, Aney at 4.45 p.m. and Sarkar at 5 p.m.

The Press statement issued on February 18, by Mody, Aney and Sarkar was brief and dignified. It read:

"Our resignations from the Governor-General's Council have been announced, and all that we desire to do is to say by way of explanation that certain differences arose on what we regarded as a fundamental issue (the issue of the action to be taken on Mahatma Gandhi's fast) and we felt we could no longer retain our offices. We wish to place on record our appreciation of the courtesy and consideration His Excellency the Viceroy extended to us throughout the period during which we had the privilege of being associated with him in the government of the country."

Mody's innings at the Supply Department lasted exactly 18 months.

On February 20, Linlithgow conveyed to Mody (and to Aney and Sarkar) a telegram from the Secretary of State for India expressing his "regret at the resignations and his appreciation of the manner in which you have discharged your responsibilities." The Viceroy added he had great pleasure in communicating the message to them.

On February 24, Mody wrote to Evan Jenkins, the able Secretary to the Supply Department, whom Mody rated highly, expressing his "personal appreciation of all the assistance and co-operation" Jenkins gave Mody during his period of office. The letter confessed, "I have found it very hard to leave the job. It interested me a great deal, and I did what I could to be equal to it. My resignation was a very sudden affair—in spite of its looming in the distance as a bare possibility—and I was driven to it by a compelling sense of what I conceived to be my duty."

In a statement to the Associated Press of America, Mody stated:

It has been a hard decision to make. Apart from my work as a Member of the Government, I loved my own particular job, both as Supply Member and as Vice-President of the War Resources Committee of the Council.

I have no leanings towards the Congress, nor am I a follower of the Mahatma. I have all along pursued an independent line

in political and economic controversies. It should therefore be the more easy for my action to be regarded as dictated solely by what I conceived to be my duty.

I had to give up many interests when I joined the Government of India, but I felt there were even wider opportunities for service in the new sphere to which I was called, and it is with a feeling of considerable regret that I have come to the end of a very instructive and useful experience.

The resignations created a sensation in the country as well as abroad. While the Indian Press hailed the action of the three Executive Councillors as patriotic and appropriate, the British Press comment was distinctly peevish.

Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya in his "History of the Indian National Congress" summed up Indian reaction in these words:

"It is true that earlier in its history India witnessed notable resignations such as of Sir S. P. Sinha, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Sir Shankaran Nair, of their Membership of the Executive Council as a protest against the repressive policies of Government from time to time. On the 17th February 1943, however, a week after Gandhiji's fast had begun, India witnessed the most magnificent, the most spectacular and the most timely of these resignations when Sir H. P. Mody and Shris Aney and Sarkar resigned from the Executive Council of the Government of India as a protest against Government's failure to release Gandhiji."

The Hindu of Madras commented: "The resignation is a foretaste of the universal alienation and embitterment that must result if something untoward should happen to Mahatma Gandhi. Will wisdom dawn on the Government before it is too late?"

The Indian Social Reformer wrote : "The crisis is unexpected as people had generally come to believe that nothing would shake the composure of the Viceroy's 'Eleven Indians'. Aney and Sarkar have long been regarded by the public as the most national-minded of a reactionary, or more correctly, subservient Executive Council. Sir H. P. Mody has not been in the public eye, but reports, generally speaking, have marked him as the most independent personality in the Government of India."

On the other hand, *The Statesman* sang a different tune. The Anglo-Indian paper remarked: "Though they had, by implication,

committed themselves in August, and again on February 10, to the tough policy which Government has steadily maintained, illogically allowed themselves, only a week later, on February 17, to be extruded by gusts of popular emotion from office, and they now stand in the wilderness, looking (we think) somewhat foolish."

The Times of India, however, contented itself with the comment: "It is unfortunate that the Government of India, hitherto so successful as a team, with a predominantly Indian majority, did not achieve unanimity in dealing with this matter (the issue of release of Gandhiji on fast)".

The paper also paid a tribute to Mody's work as a Member of the Executive Council. It stated, "As Member in charge of Supplies for the country's war efforts, Sir H. P. Mody had done excellent service for which he deserves the thanks of the public."

Yet *The Times of India* committed a solecism by publishing its London Correspondent's 'reaction-piece' which attributed the resignations to the "pressure which the Congress party members in the Assembly can exert on individuals in various ways".

In a spirited denial of the allegation, Mody stated, "This is an utterly untrue and mischievous suggestion. Not a single person approached me to influence my course of action, and those who know me should have no hesitation at laughing to scorn the idea that after a long public career, during which I have done many unpopular things, and after steadfastly facing the extremely dangerous and unpleasant situation which developed in the country after the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi and other Congress leaders, I should allow myself to be coerced into resigning my office. It only shows how little public opinion in England knows about what is happening in this country."

Soon after the publication of the London dispatch, Sir Francis Low, the then Editor of *The Times of India,* however, apologised to Mody for it. "While I was in Delhi attending the investiture, I discovered on my return this morning, that *The Times of India* had published from its London correspondent—your old friend Byrt !—a message giving certain reasons for your resignation," wrote Low. "I much regret the publication of this message which I would have stopped had I been here. Its appearance was most unfortunate."

The New Delhi correspondent of *The Times*, London, had this ridiculous comment to make on the resignations:

"All the three Members who resigned from the Viceroy's Executive Council are Hindus.... It is not to be supposed that Aney, Mody and Sarkar have approved of Gandhi's new essay in coercion of Government. Apparently, however, where Gandhi's life is concerned, their personal feeling as Hindus for Gandhi and claims of their particular community above them have proved stronger than any other loyalty. It is perhaps not a very good augury for the future of self-government in India....as for Mody, his background is Indian big business, which is strongly pro-Gandhi and pro-Congress".

Among the many reactions was one from H. N. Kunzru and P. N. Sapru which stated: 'In resigning at this stage, they, Mody, Aney and Sarkar, have shown that they place the interest of their country above all other considerations, and they have stood up for the self-respect of India. We congratulate them on their patriotism."

From his sick-bed, Satyamurti, a great friend of Mody's, sent this message: "I expected nothing less from Sir H. P. Mody. He will never compromise the nation's honour."

N. Gopalaswami Aiyanger wired: "Desire convey my warm appreciation of your act which must have the support of all right-thinking Indians. In interests of healthy Indo-British relations, deplore reaction to the present situation of those who have driven you to this step."

A message from Justice Coyaji read: "From one who has acquired isolation to another who has earned the homage of Hindustan. Thanks, oh, Caesar !"

The only person who disapproved of the resignations was C. Rajagopalachari. Meeting Mody shortly after the resignation, Rajaji remarked that Mody should never have resigned even though the provocation was great. He felt that Mody would have been more useful to the country by remaining in office.

On February 25, the Modys left New Delhi for Bombay. They were given a warm send-off by a large circle of friends as also by the officers and staff of the Supply Department.

After passing through a grave crisis, the Mahatma's 21-day fast came to a close, according to schedule, on March 3. Dr. B. C. Roy, who attended on Gandhiji throughout the ordeal, commented:

"The miracle has happened, Gandhiji lives in spite of the fast, the doctors and their fears, inspite of his age and the defective organs."

Reminiscing, many years later, about that difficult period during which he was an Executive Councillor, Mody said, "Some of my colleagues and I did our best to soften the rigour of the measures which were thought necessary by the Viceroy and his advisers to put down disorders."

"But on the question of general policy, as apart from Executive action, I do not think there was any acute difference of opinion," he observed.

He then also added that the steps taken from time to time by the Home Department to put down disorders were not ordinarily brought up for discussion before the Council.

In May 1944, Mahatma Gandhi and other top Congress leaders were released.

Sometime later, when Mody met Sardar Patel, the latter was more than usually cordial.

Mody remarked to him that possibly he did not expect Mody to resign from the Executive Council on such an issue.

The Sardar replied: "Well, I always thought that you would not be found wanting in such a situation."

XVIII

BACK TO PRIVATE LIFE

BEFORE THE month ended, Mody was back in Bombay, picking up the threads of the business life he had interrupted 18 months ago to take up the Membership of the Viceroy's Council.

The Non-Party Leaders' Conference met in Delhi on February 7, under the shadow of the ordeal the Mahatma was undergoing at the Aga Khan Palace, in Poona. Aney and Sarkar attended the conference. But Mody, who was also invited, did not. Instead, he rushed back to his home-city.

No sooner he arrived than he was back in Bombay House, occupying his office-room, as Director of Tatas. He resumed the chairmanships of Associated Cements and the Central Bank of India, both of which had been kept warm for him. He was also given back the Presidentship of the Employers' Federation of India, which Sir Ardeshir Dalal seemed to have held in trust for him during his absence in New Delhi. Similarly, he resumed his many other business connections.

After 18 hectic months at the hub of things, and deprived of the forum of the Central Assembly, which had been his sounding-board for well nigh over a decade, Mody now seemed to take a back seat at a moment when the country's political landscape was undergoing dynamic changes.

Thus, in the next five years, Mody saw the barren innings of Linlithgow come to an end after a record, seven-and-a-half-year tenure. He watched well-intentioned Wavell getting frustrated by Indian political intransigence, on the one hand, and his own inflexibility of mind and the British Government's rigidity of attitude. Then he witnessed the exhilarating spectacle of a "go-getting" Lord Mountbatten cutting the Gordion knot of the Indian deadlock and hustling the bewildered Congress and Muslim League to the partition of the country and the transfer of power at a breath-taking pace, advancing the deadline by 10 months. And finally he agonised over the partition of his country and the ghastly holocaust that followed.

Thus, while deeply absorbed in the problem of the many

business concerns to which he had come back after 18 months, Mody's restless political soul impelled him to intervene, from time to time, in the country's affairs which were in a state of flux.

Wavell took over from Linlithgow in November 1943. Mody came out with an appeal, jointly signed with Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, addressed to the new Viceroy, to turn a new leaf and release Mahatma Gandhi and Members of the Congress Working Committee, then still in detention, and form a national government broadly on the lines of the Cripps' offer.

The statement was a reply to Wavell's plea at a London function on the eve of his departure for India. The Viceroy-designate had spoken of the "great possibilities in front of India, if she can only be induced to take the right road."

"Does His Excellency propose to induce India to take the right road, by keeping the leaders of the largest political party in the country behind bars ?" asked the Mody-Sarkar statement.

They pleaded for a positive policy and suggested an open invitation to Indian leaders to frame proposals for a provisional Government: "It would be both a challenge and an invitation to Indian leaders as a whole to assume the reins of power at one of the turning points of history, and it might well be that such a procedure might evoke what might be regarded as a national verdict," they added.

Wavell, through his first address to the Central Legislature, on February 17, 1944, declared that the Cripps' offer was still open "to those who had the genuine desire to further the prosecution of the war and the welfare of India." But the Congress leaders would not be released as long as the policy of non-co-operation and obstruction was not withdrawn.

Wavell however added a sop to the Congress: "I recognise how much ability and high-mindedness it (Congress) contains, but I deplore its present policy and methods as barren and unpractical." He then made a concession to the Congress by emphatically declaring: "You cannot alter geography.... India is a natural unit."

This last statement infuriated Jinnah who was by now on the war-path, out to extract his "pound of flesh."

In the middle of April 1944, Gandhiji went through a severe bout of malaria, and his recovery proved painfully slow. On

May 6, he was released unconditionally, on medical grounds. Thereupon Mody embarked upon yet another spurt of political activity. In a press statement, he welcomed the release and congratulated the Viceroy for it.

"A breach has been made, at last, in the policy which had reduced India to a political desert," he stated. "Things must not rest with opening of the Second Front; important bridgeheads have still to be established. Is it too much to hope that on the political front as well as on the military, notable developments may be on the way ?"

Mody followed it up with a letter to Gandhiji in which he pleaded, "Do you not think that time is running against us and that the solution of our many problems cannot admit of any further delay ? The complexities of the situation are fully recognised, but it is impossible we can continue to be at a dead-end indefinitely, unless it is thought that, by just waiting on events, the tangle will resolve itself."

Mody added, "A great many people think that the key is still in your hands and that you can create a new situation. The expectation has grown since your release that you will be making an approach of some sort to the Viceroy." Mody then pointed out that even if Gandhiji's approach to Government yielded some result, the more formidable task would still remain, namely the communal deadlock.

"On this account," stated Mody, "I venture to think that the first step to take should be to open the way to discussions with Mr. Jinnah and the League. Here, the issue seems to lie between acceptance of the Muslim demand or determination to uphold the political integrity of India even at the cost of an indefinite postponement of Swaraj."

Mody warned against the tendency to underrate the strength of the Muslim demand for Pakistan. He asserted that there was an increasing number of people who felt that nothing was to be gained by postponing a Hindu-Muslim settlement and that it was "tragic that India should find herself, at one of the most momentous periods of history, without any political status and unable to make any significant contribution to the shaping of the post-war world."

The letter fervently hoped that it might soon fall to Gandhiji's

"lot to achieve a political settlement which would bring peace to India and enable her to attain an honoured place amongst the nations."

Towards the middle of June, Mody had two lengthy interviews with Gandhiji who was convalescing at Juhu, when they discussed at length Mody's earlier letter. Later, Gandhiji sent Mody, as promised, a written reply to his letter.

The Mahatma stated: "I feel that I know the way out, but I am helpless not merely because I am ill but principally because the censorship tightens round me like the coil of a snake. I am taxing God to show me how to disengage myself from that coil. I shall take no hasty step. Before I take any step, I shall certainly correspond with H. E. the Viceroy. As to communal unity, I am wedded to it. All I can say is that I shall leave no stone unturned to make my contribution towards a just solution."

The letter ended: "There is a ring of despair running through your letter. I wish I could induce you to share my optimism. Time never runs against a just cause, especially when it is backed by equally just means. Anyway, you must not despair of me, even though we may not see eye to eye on things of common interest."

Shortly after, Gandhiji told Stuart Gelder of *The News Chronicle*, London, that he could not take any step towards a resolution of the political deadlock unless he was able to consult the Congress Working Committee.

Thereupon, influential leaders of business and industry, such as Mody, Purshottamdas Thakurdas, G. D. Birla, Padampat Singhania, Rahimtulla Chenoy and C. B. Mehta, addressed an open appeal to the Viceroy. They stressed now that Gandhiji had assured that he did not propose to start a civil disobedience movement, they felt there was no longer any reason for the detention of the members of the Congress Working Committee and hoped that the latter would be soon set free.

"The Viceroy and the British Government will otherwise be inviting the criticism that they have no intention of moving towards a settlement," stated the appeal, "and that they are determined to carry on as they are doing, regardless of the country-wide feeling that their persistence in a purely negative policy is against the true interests of India."

Nothing however came out of the appeal, and members of the Congress Working Committee remained in jail.

The two main obstacles to India's political progress were the Congress-League deadlock and the Princes' refusal to cooperate. While on the first issue, Mody kept pressing the Congress to negotiate a settlement with Jinnah, he never missed an opportunity to exhort the Princes to play their part.

On July 21, presiding at a reception to the Jam Saheb of Nawanagar, Mody declared that the Princes did not have much to fear if they only took their place in the polity of India. If they responded to the spirit of the times and fitted themselves into the pattern of India's constitution, their privileges and position were sure to be safeguarded. They must remember that the days of 'ma-bap' rule were over. Feudalism was a thing of the past. To the extent to which the Princes set themselves up as constitutional rulers, they would ensure their future security.

The Jam Saheb, in his reply, acknowledged that Mody's assurance was the first friendly declaration from a responsible Indian leader that no one in the country contemplated their extinction. The Maharaja of Bikaner, present at the reception, also expressed his gratification at Mody's statement.

On July 17, Gandhiji wrote to Jinnah suggesting a meeting between the two to make yet another earnest attempt to resolve the differences between the Congress and the Muslim League.

The ill-fated Gandhi-Jinnah talks commenced on September 9, and dragged on for 18 days, when the effort was abandoned. In Gandhiji's words, the talks ran on two parallel lines, never touching one another.

Following the failure of the talks, a depressed Mahatma, it was reported, contemplated yet another fast "to crucify the flesh." Now we found Mody in a new role—that of consoling and cheering up Gandhiji.

"A fast at this juncture would throw political life again into confusion," pleaded Mody in a press statement appealing to the Mahatma to desist from it. "Whether regarded as a measure of protest or of penance, I can find no justification for such a course in anything that has been happening in the country."

Mody, then, almost in the tones of the Geeta, sermonised to the Mahatma, "Every nation has its trials, and every movement for

freedom its periods of defeat. The situation today throughout the world is so fluid that one can legitimately hope that opportunities for making another effort to advance may present themselves sooner than we expect."

Fortunately, Gandhiji gave up the idea of a fast.

Simultaneously, in another public statement, Mody took up cudgels on behalf of Gandhiji. "Judging from the reactions in certain quarters in Great Britain and India to the recent statements of the Mahatma, some people seem to have funny ideas of a settlement," he hit out. "It has been made clear that there is no question of resumption of the civil disobedience movement and that on certain terms it might be possible for the Congress to participate in the formation of a national government. These terms have been condemned as impractical and it would appear as if, in the opinion of the critics, there was nothing left to do for the British Government but to sit pretty and wait for the next advance."

Mody then declared: "If the British Government really think that India will accept economic development as a substitute for self-government, they are making another of those profound mistakes which have proved disastrous in the past. The classes most directly interested in industrial expansion have made it abundantly clear that they will not barter away the right of the Indian people to be masters in their own house and to take their rightful place amongst the free nations of the world."

Towards the end of the year, the Standing Committee of the Non-Party Leaders' Conference set up a committee to examine the whole communal and minorities question from a constitutional and political viewpoint and suggest a solution within two months. Mody was one of the members of the Committee. That Committee appointed a sub-committee comprising Mody, John Matthai and Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, to investigate the financial implications of Pakistan.

Though Sarkar could not attend its sittings, Mody and Matthai carried out the task set for the sub-committee and submitted a memorandum which pronounced the proposed Pakistan State as viable, "judging solely by the test of ability to (*a*) maintain the existing standards of living and (*b*) meet the budgetary requirements on a pre-war basis but excluding provision for defence."

The memorandum added that if however provision was to be made for (*a*) future economic development on a scale sufficient to raise the general standard of living to a reasonable level and (*b*) measures of defence which might be considered adequate under modern conditions, any scheme of political separation "should, as a necessary pre-requisite, provide for the means of effective and continuous cooperation between the separate States in matters affecting the safety of the country and its economic stability and development. If such cooperation did not exist, the position of both Pakistan and Hindustan might be seriously jeopardised."

The Sapru Committee recommendations however reported against a division of the country and (as a concession to the Muslims) proposed a 50-50 representation in the legislatures for caste-Hindus and Muslims in a united India.

Mody and Matthai appended a minute of dissent to the Sapru Committee report. The minute stated, "Our view is that if the scheme which presupposes the political unity of India is not acceptable to the Muslim community and if the results of the forthcoming elections are to vindicate generally the Muslim League position, separation as a means of ending the present deadlock should not be deplored."

They preferred district-wise separation, with a definite agreement between the Pakistan State or States and India for cooperation in matters of defence and economic development. They also suggested the setting up of an inter-governmental council to which the constituent governments would be bound, by agreement, to refer important matters relating to economic development and defence for mutual consultation before they were put into force.

In a separate statement of his own, Mody observed, "I am not in favour of ignoring the Pakistan demand. If our approach to the political problem of India is to be realistic, we cannot afford to forget the events of the last two or three years." While conceding that a division of the country was to be deplored, Mody insisted that the country should be willing to consider it, if no other basis was forthcoming for a political settlement.

Mody's anxiety for an alternative solution arose also from his conviction that time was of the essence of the Indian political problem. "Matters of great urgency and importance, which may perhaps affect the future of India permanently, are facing us

immediately," he observed, "and it is of the highest importance that the direction of India's affairs should, without further delay, be placed in the hands of Indian leaders who have the confidence of the country."

In May 1945, Germany surrendered and the War in Europe ended. The British Government now decided to make new proposals for India. On June 14, the Viceroy announced that he proposed to set up an Interim Government and convene a political conference in Simla to which representatives of the Congress and the League, and of the Sikhs and the Scheduled Castes, were to be invited.

Mody welcomed Wavell's announcement and thought "close day-to-day association of the representatives of the Congress and the Muslim League in the task of Government would act as a solvent of the acute differences that divide the Congress and the League."

"Speaking from my own experience as Member of Government," he said, "I would say that veto or no veto, a Council composed predominantly of representatives of the Congress and the League would wield enormous authority over the whole field of policy and administration."

The Simla conference opened on June 25, and before long, ran into a major hitch over the procedure of proposing names for the Executive Council. Jinnah now demanded not only parity for Muslims with the Caste Hindus, but also the sole right to nominate all the Muslim Members of the Council.

Agitated over the going-on at Simla, Mody addressed a letter to Evan Jenkins, then Private Secretary to the Viceroy and earlier Secretary to the Supply Department when Mody headed that department. In the letter Mody suggested a way out of the impasse by proposing that the parity of representation accorded to Hindus and Muslims be changed into parity between the Congress and the League. "The Congress and the League should each be asked to nominate, say, five representatives, so that if out of its quota of five, the Congress nominated a Muslim, the balance between the two communities could be restored by the nomination of two non-Congress Hindus."

Mody pointed out that his formula would secure (*a*) equal representation for the Congress and the League and (*b*) equal

representation for Hindus and Muslims. Mody explained, "So long as representation was on the basis of so many Hindus and so many Muslims, the League might say that the Muslim representation should be solely determined by the League, as the most authoritative body of Muslim opinion. If however representation was to be as between the Congress and the League, the latter could not, without abrogating to itself the right to restrict the freedom of choice of the Congress, refuse to accept its Muslim nominee."

Apart from those considerations, Mody submitted that it would be more appropriate to accord representation directly to the two major political parties in the country than to Hindus and Muslims.

Jenkins replied that though the British Government's proposals required parity between Muslims and Hindus other than those of the Scheduled Castes, Mody's formula was not incompatible with parity between the Congress and the League.

The Congress duly submitted a panel of names to the Viceroy to enable him to set up an Interim Government. But Jinnah demanded that the League should not be asked to submit a panel but that its representatives should be chosen on the basis of personal discussions between the Viceroy and himself and that all the Muslim members of the Council should be chosen from the League.

The Viceroy could not oblige Jinnah, and the League refused to furnish any list. The Viceroy thereupon made a provisional selection including four members of the League and a Muslim from the Unionist Party and showed the list to Jinnah. The latter would not look at it.

Wavell now decided that the schemes should not be proceeded with. The Simla Conference, thus, floundered on the rock of Jinnah's intransigence.

"This country's freedom has receded still further in the background due to the intensification of the antagonisms in our political life," was Mody's reaction to the failure of the Simla talks.

Many years later, reminiscing about Jinnah's politics, Mody remarked: "His arresting personality, one may dislike or condemn; but one cannot ignore him. His contribution to the political life of India has been outstanding." Jinnah was a shrewd politician, he said, and had great qualities of leadership. His strength lay in the fact that he said very little and waited on the mistakes of

his opponents, of which he made the fullest use. "Some of the Indian political leaders time and again played into his hands."

Mody however described Jinnah as "superficial, but a very clever advocate, and even in politics he did nothing but play the advocate, scoring points against his adversary. He had no original mind. He was always a lone wolf. Congressmen were, strangely enough, afraid of his tongue and never gave him a fight."

Mody thought Jinnah was "from first to last an individualist and his conception of an independent homeland for Muslims was a logical development of the lone hand he was playing in Indian politics after 1930."

In the early forties, soon after the historic Lahore session of the League had passed the Pakistan resolution, Habib Rahimtoola brought Jinnah as his guest to the Royal Western India Turf Club, of which Mody was the President. They came to the paddock, where they met Mody, and when the horses were off, all three went in for tea.

Jinnah having no use for small talk, the conversation over tea inevitably turned to politics.

Mody asked Jinnah: "How is it that you suddenly thought of Pakistan now? You said nothing about it all these years?"

Jinnah replied: "I did. But who would have listened to me if I had talked of an independent Muslim State some years ago?"

From that remark it was clear that long before Jinnah raised the cry of Pakistan, the idea of Pakistan had germinated in his mind, ready to be put forward at the first favourable opportunity.

On the controversial issue "To partition or not to partition," Mody felt convinced that even if the Cripps Plan had been accepted and partition averted for the moment, it would not have ultimately stopped the militant section of the Muslims from breaking away and setting up Pakistan.

When Mody was a Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, on one occasion, he invited Jinnah and his sister Fatima to dinner. Mody found the sister even more fanatical than the brother. At the dinner table, Jinnah kept speaking of how Nehru and Gandhi had gone back upon their statements.

In the meantime, in England, following a general election, the Labour Party had come into power, with Clement Attlee as

Prime Minister and Lord Pethick-Lawrence as Secretary of State for India.

By the end of August, the war in the East came to an end.

The pace of political developments in India now accelerated. The Viceroy announced elections to the Central and Provincial legislatures to be held at the earliest possible date and then flew to London for consultations with the British Government.

On his return from England, on September 16, the Viceroy declared that His Majesty's Government had authorised him to convene a constitution-making body as soon as possible and to discuss with the representatives of the provincial assemblies whether the Cripps Offer would be acceptable or some alternative or modified scheme was preferable.

In December 1945, general elections were held for the Central Legislative Assembly. The Congress achieved overwhelming success in all the general constituencies, and the Muslim League captured every Muslim seat.

XIX

MODY'S "TREBLE POOL"

MODY'S RELATIONS with the Congress and Jawaharlal Nehru were now at their cordialest. About this time, in a public statement, Nehru expressed great "indignation" with Dutch imperialism in Indonesia, while failing to condemn Stalinist expansionism in Iran and Eastern Europe. Mody immediately remonstrated with Nehru for the omission.

In his letter, he stated:

"In the protests you have made in regard to the policy followed by Great Britain and Holland in Indonesia, you have given expression to the dominant sentiments of the Indian people. It has perplexed me however to find that you have not raised your voice against the policy of cynical, brutal aggression which Russia is following in Iran, and which the Three-Power Conference at Moscow has been clearly unable to check.

"I shall not refer to other countries, Asiatic as well as European, which are being terrorised by the Soviet Republic, but to me it is plain that the events of the decade preceding the war are being re-enacted in another setting. The threat to the Middle East countries is particularly obvious, and yet you have not raised your powerful voice against the developments that are taking place.

"In the years before the war, yours was the one insistent voice which denounced totalitarian aggression and called for an end to appeasement. Surely you who spoke for helpless China, Abyssinia and Spain, can hardly maintain silence in the face of so menacing a situation.....

"I submit that, with your international status and outlook, you cannot refuse to give a lead when the integrity of countries, with which we are bound to have every sympathy, is being threatened....

"I have long been contemplating doing something to organise a protest, and I cannot think of anything better calculated to give expression to the Indian point of view than a word from you. I shall appreciate it if you can send me a line in reply."

Nehru was preoccupied with preparations for the elections to the provincial assemblies. Nevertheless, he did Mody the courtesy

of writing a lengthy and somewhat laboured reply. While protesting that he had repeatedly referred to what was happening in Iran and to the expansionist tendency of the Soviet Union in Europe and Asia, Nehru admitted that he had laid greater emphasis on what was happening in Indonesia.

Nehru gave two reasons for it: firstly, Indonesia was a very clear case of a united people struggling for their freedom, and Dutch and British forces suppressing them. Secondly, because Indian troops were being used there. Also because some of the atrocities committed against the Indonesians were "astonishingly bad."

The letter added:

"While I have criticised Soviet expansionist policy in the West and the East and think that this is a dangerous element in the world situation, there are some aspects of this problem which are not quite clear to me. In Eastern Europe, that is, in Poland and the Balkans, social conditions were very backward and big feudal estates dominated the scene. In all these countries there was a strong movement against these feudal relics.

Soviet Russia has taken advantage of these movements, encouraged them and supported them and has helped them in a large measure to get rid of feudalism. The land has gone to the peasant. In so far as this has happened, it was a progressive step. But the manner of doing it appears to me to have been wrong and in the result, a number of subservient states have been created."

Referring to Iran, Nehru said:

"The present Iran Government, you will remember, was imposed on the country by the British Government when Reza Shah was forcibly removed. It has been a Government not only reactionary but subservient to Britain. Against it, some progressive forces in the country have risen.

Taking advantage of this situation, Russia has brought undue pressure on the Iranian Government and is apparently trying to make it completely subservient to its policy. Apart from the internal aspects of this question, it is very likely to lead to increasing trouble in the Middle East and possibly to war."

As if there was not enough to worry about at home, India now got agitated over the racist persecution of Indians in South Africa. Dr. Malan's Government had imposed new harsh laws on non-

Whites designed to squeeze out Indian inhabitants of that country.

On March 10, 1946, the Aga Khan led a deputation to the Viceroy to demand vigorous action by the Government of India in retaliation against South Africa. The deputation consisted of Mody, Sarojini Naidu, Sarat Chandra Bose (then, leader of the Congress Party in the Central Assembly) and M. H. Hasham Premji.

Addressing the Viceroy, Mody stated that an India free in her own domain and sitting as an equal at the council table of great powers, would flinch from nothing to assert the rights and honour of her nationals in other parts of the world.

"The time has arrived for Your Excellency and your Government to take a determined stand against all that has been happening in South Africa," declared Mody. "No one voice can reach out to the outer world with greater authority than Your Excellency's, and we very much hope you will give decisive expression to the determination of this country not to allow its nationals to be humiliated and ill-treated in any part of the world."

On March 12, the Government of India served notice of its intention to terminate its trade agreement with South Africa, and indicated that economic sanctions would also be applied in retaliation against the ill-treatment of Indians in that country.

In an angry interview to *The New York Times*, a disillusioned Mody asked: "What kind of an Empire is it that is unable to prevent this kind of discrimination among its own people?"

In the meantime, the elections to the Provincial Legislatures had led to Congress Governments in eight out of the eleven provinces, League Governments in Bengal and Sind, and a Unionist-Congress-Akali coalition Government in the Punjab.

With independence round the corner, Mody now advised his own community to take greater interest in the country's affairs.

Presiding over the inaugural meeting of the United Parsi Association, Mody reminded the Parsis that they were no longer in the vanguard; they no longer held leadership in the fields of education, politics, commerce and industry, and their economic position had deteriorated.

He advised them not to continue to maintain a false standard of life and suggested to the youth of the community to take to handicrafts and manual labour, including agriculture. He

Mody as Bombay Governor.

At the Race Course with members of Kher Ministry.

expressed the hope that when freedom came, and when India became self-governing, Indian leaders would not forget the past services rendered by the Parsi community but would give them their due share.

Turning to the Princes, Mody endorsed Sardar Patel's appeal to them to join the Constituent Assembly and stressed that the Sardar had given assurances about their states' internal autonomy.

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It was racing season and Saturday in Poona, and that week-end the President of the Royal Western India Turf Club was in the monsoon capital of Bombay Province. At 11.30 in the night, the telephone rang persistently. The servant announced that it was a call from Bombay.

Mody's first reaction when he got the midnight call was that it was bad news about his aged mother in Bombay, and so he went to the telephone with trepidation.

It was David Symington, Private Secretary to the Governor of Bombay. Symington broke to him the news that he had been appointed Acting Governor of Bombay "with immediate effect," in place of Sir John Colville, who had suddenly flown to England to attend on his sister, seriously ill.

At that hour, still not fully awake, Mody had to make sure he was not in a dream. He then put to Symington some questions that immediately occurred to him, such as the length of the term and whether he would have to give up his business connections.

His term as acting Governor was to be just about 15 days, and he was duly reassured on the other point too. Mody thereupon agreed to take the post. Thus Mody literally became Governor overnight. The next morning, Sunday, the newspapers carried the news. That afternoon, Mody drove upto Ganeshkhind and was sworn in as Governor by Chief Justice M. C. Chagla, who happened to be in Poona that week-end. And there poured into Ganeshkhind hundreds of congratulatory messages by phone and wire. Among them was one which said: "Thank God, your persistent efforts to rise have at last been crowned with success"!

Mody likes to recall how a couple of years earlier a friend jocularly predicted to his mother that one day her son would become

Viceroy! The old lady promptly corrected the friend "No, no. Not Viceroy, Governor of Bombay"—she did not like her son going away from her to Delhi.

Towards the end of his brief tenure, Mody was booked to preside over a Home Guards function. Mody asked Symington to give him some background material and points about the Home Guards for his speech. Symington replied that he did not have to bother and that his speech would be prepared for him. Mody was furious, and told his Private Secretary that either he made his own speech or he would not go to the Home Guards function.

Mody's biggest achievement about this time was to persuade Chief Minister B. G. Kher, Home Minister Morarji and Health Minister M. D. D. Gilder, to attend a race meeting in Poona—the only "treble pool" Mody ever won in his long association with the R.W.I.T.C. as his reputation at the races is one of unrelieved losses!

An occasion to remember was the reception given to Governor Mody by the Mayor of Bombay, A. P. Sabavala, and members of the Municipal Corporation, which in no time lapsed from the solemnity of a formal function into a free-for-all carnival of fun, wit and Municipal reminiscences.

Mody was deeply touched when, as he entered the hall, the entire assembly rose in their seats. He had expected such a compliment only at his funeral, he remarked in the course of his speech.

Mody then referred to the mass violence going on in the country (following Partition) and appealed for a change of heart among the people. He spoke of the "lone figure of the Mahatma fighting heroically against the bestiality of his countrymen", recalled "the splendid achievement of Gandhiji in healing wounds" and described the Mahatma's mission as the "most heroic phase of his life."

Then switching to lighter vein, Mody referred to S. K. Patil, the other staunch Bombay-patriot and civic stalwart, and said "whenever he and Patil met, they had tried to reform each other; while Patil found him a little too thick-headed, he had found Patil a little too tough!"

In October, Mody was the recipient of the Grand Cross of the Order of King George I (of Greece) for his services to the cause of Greek refugee relief, for which he had helped to collect Rs. 10 lakhs.

Independence had hardly been five months old. On January 30, 1948, the "lone figure fighting heroically against the bestiality of his countrymen" was struck down by an assassin's bullet.

At a condolence meeting in Bombay, Mody described Gandhiji as "one of the most inspiring figures in the annals of mankind."

"Mahatma Gandhi ruled through love and died as heroically as he lived," declared Mody. "The country is proud that she gave to the world one who moulded the thoughts of a generation..... It is incredible that anyone should have been mad enough to raise a hand against one of the noblest men who walked God's earth. A mighty influence has passed away and India and the world are infinitely poorer for it."

Mody was away from the country for five months, in Britain and the United States since April 1948. While abroad, the Congress got Mody elected to the Constituent Assembly. The by-election was held on July 9—he still does not know from which constituency —and Mody's was the only nomination.

On July 21, Mody wrote from New York to thank Sardar Patel for nominating him as a candidate. The Sardar replied, "I am sure you will be an acquisition to the Constituent Assembly. When we decided to nominate you, we had not only in mind that a representative of your community should be there and that, as far as possible, a connection with Tatas should be maintained, but also that the Constituent Assembly would benefit by your knowledge of commercial matters, your keen interest in general affairs and your debating talent and good humour."

The Sardar's letter added that Mody's name was being considered in another connection (Governorship of Madras in place of Sir Archibald Nye, who was going to New Delhi as U.K. High Commissioner). "I spoke to Jawaharlal the other day," said the Sardar. "He is going to consult Jehangir (J. R. D. Tata) whether he could spare you. It will, of course, mean your going out of Bombay. You must have heard about it from Jehangir already. I hope it will be possible for you to accept that proposition."

Almost simultaneously, Mody had received an intimation from J. R. D. Tata of the Government's latest intentions about him. Mody now truly found himself in a quandary. Mody was not enamoured of the gubernatorial *gaddi,* under the new dispensation. Nor did he want to hurt Sardar Patel's feelings, whom he held

in the highest esteem; or offend the Government which had been so considerate to him. Then again, he did not want to embarrass Tatas by declining the Government's offer, made to him through J. R. D. Tata.

What Mody went through before saying 'no' to Government is indicated by the following cable Mody sent to J. R. D. Tata from New York:

> Your telegram has made me very unhappy. I do not want the job and I do not like the place. But the way in which your friend (Nehru) has expressed about the importance of office and about my suitability for it destroys the very basis of telegram I had drafted refusing the office. I had said I would have responded to call of duty, leaving aside every other consideration, but this particular position involved no work and responsibility. Now I am told the job is of considerable importance requiring man of highest standing, experience and impartiality. That makes things extremely difficult for me and only way in which I can get out is if you are prepared to say you cannot spare me. If you are not prepared to take that responsibility, you drive me to saying that however important the office and however urgently I am wanted, I am not prepared to serve. Can I afford to say that? Can any man say that? What about shorter term than a year? (Can you say that I would accept it for a year but that Tatas would greatly appreciate it if I could be released in June, as several directors would be away from India about that time?).

Finally, Mody wriggled out of the tight corner, in which feat J. R. D. helped him a great deal. Mody's final cable to Nehru read:

> I would appreciate being released from obligation to accept offer if it can be done without causing serious inconvenience. I would assure you I am deeply sensible of honour done me and sincerely hope you will not misunderstand position I have taken.

While in America, Mody attended the tenth anniversary world assembly of MRA at Riverside, California. In a speech there, he said, that "democracy was suffering from a sort of fatty degeneration" and that the two greatest dangers were class conflict and the problem of reconciling liberty with authority. Yet a third menace to civilisation was the march of science, uncontrolled

by things of the spirit. He declared: "I see nothing else than MRA on the horizon to stop this downward trend of mankind."

Though elected to the Constituent Assembly in July 1948, Mody could not take part in its proceedings until he returned to India in September. He was taken on the Minorities Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly, of which Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was the chairman. At this Sub-Committee, Mody took the stand not to claim separate representation for the Parsi community.

Later, speaking at a Parsi Association's reception in Bombay, he justified that stand on the ground that his community's claims had been more than fully recognised. Apart from his own case, there were Parsi Ambassadors and Ministers. "I think it is handsome recognition by the Government of the services rendered by the Parsi community to the country," he said.

The only intervention of importance by Mody in the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly occurred (February 8, 1949) when that body was sitting as Parliament and was discussing the Banking Bill.

In a provocative anti-capitalist speech, Prof K. T. Shah suggested that qualifications should be laid down for bank directors. He addressed his anti-capitalist remarks to Mody, "the symbol of Bombay plutocracy and capitalism."

It was the smell of powder for an old war-horse. In a style reminiscent of his Central Assembly days, Mody hit the Professor hip and thigh. Mody said Prof. Shah had "raved and ranted" for well over an hour. He wanted to go further than calling capitalists "parasites and drones" but had stopped only because he was out of breath.

The Deputy Speaker intervened to point out the term "raved" was unparliamentary.

"All right," said Mody, "I shall then retain 'ranted'." Mody continued, "I do not know where Prof Shah learnt his particular brand of economics. If his professors were still alive, they must be feeling very depressed, and if they were dead, they must be turning in their graves. The Professor had talked of nationalisation. Why not nationalise all professors ? Perhaps they could do something by controlling and regulating them."

Mody however supported the Banking Bill, as a whole, and said it had been necessitated because of the malpractices of a few banks

in recent years. He hoped that those who spoke of nationalisation of banks would realise their responsibilities. Whatever their opinions might be on the ethics of the policy of nationalisation, it was clear that nationalisation could not come about with their present resources. He hoped that banks would be excluded from nationalisation at least for the next ten or fifteen years.

Mody's speech did the trick. Shah's proposal was dropped.

XX

AT RAJ BHAVAN

It was a Saturday, in March 1949. Mody was at a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Central Bank of India, in Bombay. A trunk call from New Delhi was put through to him.

Mody picked up the receiver to find, to his surprise, Sardar Patel at the other end of the wire. The Deputy Prime Minister was offering him the Governorship of Uttar Pradesh, and pressing him to take it.

Sarojini Naidu had just died, and they, in New Delhi, were looking around for a good and worthy successor.

After his brief innings as Acting Governor of Bombay, Mody had come to the conclusion that governorship under the new order was not his cup of tea. It was indeed for this reason he had declined the governorship of Madras hardly six months earlier.

Mody indicated to the Sardar his reluctance to accept his very kind offer; but he could not argue his point very vigorously over the phone from the board room. He therefore promised Vallabhbhai to fly to New Delhi on Monday and discuss the proposal personally with him.

On Monday, Mody was promptly in New Delhi, trying to convince Sardar Patel that governorship under the new set-up was a shelf on which to deposit aged and senile politicians by way of reward for their past services, and that he, Mody, felt he had still a lot of active life left in him, to be so treated.

Mody however found Vallabhbhai equally adamant in his conviction that a Governor had a vital function to perform, that the post called for high qualifications and political experience and that Mody was just the man for the post.

The Sardar would not take a no from Mody, and passed him on to Nehru. He rang up Jawaharlal and fixed up an immediate appointment for Mody.

Mody met the Prime Minister only to be further lectured to about the importance of the job of a State Governor at that juncture in the country's history, particularly in UP, succeeding as he did a personality like Sarojini Naidu.

Mody was thus prevailed upon to accept the post, and was then passed on to Rajagopalachari, then Governor-General. The latter desired to announce the appointment straightway. Mody requested him to hold his hand, pleading that he had not yet mentioned the matter to his eighty-year old mother.

That evening, Mody telephoned to his mother, conveyed the news to her and got her blessings. The official announcement was released the next day, on April 6, 1949.

Some three years later, speaking to the Progressive Group in Bombay, Mody recalled how, when the Sardar first made the offer of the U.P. Governorship to him, he was very reluctant to accept it.

"I felt I was (already) doing a job of work which provided me with ample opportunities of serving business and public interests," said Mody. "And I had no desire to exchange such an interesting life for one of mere ease and dignity. Besides, according to the canons laid down by Gandhiji, I was obviously the wrong person to occupy the position that was offered to me. To Gandhiji's mind it was essential that the Governor should be a teetotaller, should represent hand-spinning in himself and his surroundings and should live in a cottage, in short, had to exemplify plain living and high thinking in his daily life. I knew I would miserably fail on all these counts."

Mody then recounted how he therefore rushed to New Delhi to put forward the doubts and objections he entertained. "All these were brushed aside by the triumvirate which ruled our destinies and I was told I would be going to a province with great traditions, and that it all depended on me and what I could make of a position of both honour and responsibility. There was nothing to do, then, but to accept the inevitable."

On May 1, 1949, the Governor-designate of Uttar Pradesh arrived, by train, in Lucknow. The entire Cabinet and senior officials of Government were there at the station to receive him. Pandit Pant himself garlanded Mody as he alighted from the train and introduced him to his Ministers and Officers.

At the picturesque swearing-in ceremony, later in the evening at Raj Bhavan, Mody appeared in black achkan and black cap—for the first time in his life—and trousers (not churidars!), and read his 'shapat patra' in flawless Hindi and without faltering

(thanks to assiduous practice all along the train journey from Bombay, with the help of his Private Secretary).

After the swearing-in, in a brief speech, Mody stated: "I have come to this province in the hope that I may be of some service to it. I am following a great and gifted lady and that makes it all the more difficult. But I hope the province will extend me the same regard which it so abundantly showered on her."

At the glittering reception that followed on the spacious lawns of Raj Bhavan, soft drinks were served in wine glasses and the PAC Band was in attendance.

Mody opened his gubernatorial innings in Lucknow with a warm public tribute to Pandit Pant, Chief Minister and tallest leader of the province.

"I have the good fortune of knowing him for a number of years," said Mody, in his first broadcast as Governor, from the Lucknow Station of AIR. "He and I were long together in the Central Legislative Assembly and though we represented different viewpoints on many occasions, I conceived a warm regard for him. Now we are going to be on the same side of the house and I am looking forward to my association with him and his colleagues in the Cabinet."

Mody then added that it was natural that such a complete change of habits and environment as was involved in his appointment as Governor should have occasioned certain doubts and hesitations. "But I have accepted the office in the hope that I may be of some service to this province," he said, "and I count it as a proud privilege to have that opportunity."

Mody soon warmed up to his new post and to UP. He was moved by the affectionate welcome he had received on his arrival, both from the Cabinet and the common people. He was much impressed by the grand reception that followed his swearing—in, and above all, the elaborate, old-world *Lucknavi* courtesy that surrourded him.

On their part, the people took the Modys to their heart, and Sir Homi easily proved the most popular Governor they had for a long, long time.

Recalling his first day in Raj Bhavan, some years later, Mody observed: "At the reception which followed (the swearing-in) I do not know with how many hundreds of people I had to shake

hands and exchange courtesies. When I retired to bed at the end of a tiring day, I felt I was in another world."

Mody then continued in his typical style: "The first few days were spent in dodging the guards on duty, who seemed to be all over the place—and who presented arms on the least provocation—and in familiarising myself with the manifold duties which fall to the lot of the Governor. During this period, the people amongst whom my lot was cast and I seemed to be watching each other and taking one another's measure. It is a curious feeling one gets when he knows that a whole province is critically appraising him and forming its first impressions."

"One of the first things I discovered after I took office was that I was promulgating an alarming number of laws and ordinances," reminisced Mody. "Every now and then I would read in newspapers that H. E. the Governor was 'pleased to order' this, that or the other thing. So I sent for my Secretary one day and told him that I had no recollection of having ordered anything. He smiled and said 'That's perfectly all right, Sir. Under the Constitution, the Minister decides, the Governor orders."

Indeed, Mody's experience in U.P. was very pleasant and satisfying. It could be truly said that he enjoyed his tenure at Raj Bhavan, in Lucknow. For one thing, Pandit Pant, the Chief Minister of U.P., was an old friend of his, and they had always held each other in the highest esteem.

In no time, Mody established cordialest relations with his Ministers, even at personal and informal level, so much so that some of them did not hesitate to seek his personal advice on their ministerial and other problems. Thus, he was able to keep direct contact—without being misunderstood by his Ministers—with the administration and Secretaries of departments.

And as to files—about which he had a bone to pick with the Kher Ministry in Bombay!—the Pant Cabinet sent him every day so many files that he had to sit up overtime to finish them!

And soon, Lucknow's Raj Bhavan passed on from an era of poetic mirth to that of mirthful gaiety. Pothan Joseph wrote in his column: "In the Butler tradition, there will be no more dry humour (in the Government House at Lucknow)!"

Lady Mody carved a niche for herself in Lucknow's social life. She made many friends, zestfully plunged herself in welfare

activity and hosted all the frequent parties, dinners and luncheons given at Raj Bhavan.

She paid a surprise visit to hospitals and found that bed linen was not changed for days on end, because there was not enough of it. She immediately got round Kanpur millowners to donate bales of cloth and blankets to the hospitals.

When she first arrived at Lucknow's Raj Bhavan, Lady Mody was shocked to find the walls of the Raj Bhavan bare. When she enquired about it, she was told that under 'orders from above' the paintings and the statuary had been stored away in the godown.

When next Nehru was in town and lunching at Government House, Lady Mody mentioned to the Prime Minister, the rotting paintings and statuary in the godown while the walls of Raj Bhavan remained bare. On Nehru agreeing with her point of view, the frames and statues were rescued from the godown and mounted in their original places.

Mody could recall just about one instance of difference with his Chief Minister during his three-year term in Lucknow, and on that occasion, Pant immediately saw Mody's viewpoint and made amends.

One morning, while staying in Nainital, U.P.'s summer capital, Mody read in the newspapers that a new Cabinet was being announced that evening, and he had been told nothing about it.

Mody was upset and immediately rang up Pandit Pant at Lucknow and spoke to him somewhat firmly about the impropriety and unconstitutionality of the action. Pant gracefully acknowledged the mistake and the announcement was postponed while the papers were rushed to Nainital for the Governor's sanction.

To Mody punctuality was a passion. This was a bit too tough on the leisurely-paced people of Avadh who refused to be tyrannised over by the clock and whose beau ideal, Pandit Pant, was once reported—apocryphally, of course—to have arrived at his appointment twentyfour hours late!

Speaking of their Raj Bhavan life in Lucknow, some years later, at a public function, Mody stated: "One thing I always insisted on and that was punctuality. I made a fetish of it, and after a while, the worst sinners were broken in. I myself made it a point to be on the dot at every function, and people could almost set their watches by me."

On one occasion, the Modys were giving a luncheon in honour of Rajendra Prasad, then President of the Republic. Promptly at 1.15 p.m., the guests went in to the lunch table, even though the Chief Minister had not arrived. When Pant actually arrived, 20 minutes late, the party had already finished the soup course. He quietly occupied the empty seat waiting for him and rushed through the soup to catch up with the rest of the company.

At formal functions, Mody punctiliously wore his black achkan and black cap, but equally scrupulously avoided the churidars, and preferred plain trousers, instead. Once, Nehru, standing by his side at a public function, looked askance at his trousers going with the achkan. Mody promptly quoted the regulation dress rules which permitted "trousers".

When the M.C.C. was touring India in August 1949, local cricket enthusiasts agitated for a test match to be staged in Lucknow, but the authorities could not accommodate their request. Thereupon Mody sacrificed the Governor's XI fixture in Lucknow to exchange it for a Test match in the city, to gratify the popular desire. The gesture was greatly appreciated by the people, and the U.P. Cricket Association made Mody its patron, and a sports stadium was named after him.

Governor Mody also tried his hand at "Grow More Food." He obtained the services of a tractor and got the back garden of Raj Bhavan all ploughed up with a view to growing vegetables—only to find that there was no water available for the purpose !

Mody's public speeches as Governor always received a good press; they never failed to instruct and entertain. Thus, in his broadcast on the second anniversary of Independence, on August 15, 1949, Mody declared :

"It is a commonplace of politics that no Government in the world which is not actively supported by its people can create anything big or worthwhile. Inefficiency, corruption and factionalism cannot be adequately fought if the people are lacking in character or in active social conscience. A society which passively looks to its Government for the solution of all its problems can never grow healthy or strong. Freedom cannot be secure in the hands of the weak and the helpless. This is a simple truth to which all history bears witness. In what better way then can we celebrate this day than by resolving that we

bury our differences, purify our ranks and tackle the tasks that await us, so that India can march resolutely to the fulfilment of her destiny."

On August 28, the Jhansi Municipal Board presented Mody a civic address, in which grateful reference was made to Mody's resignation from the Viceroy's Executive Council in 1943 when the British Government refused to release the fasting Mahatma. Mody in reply stated he did what his conscience dictated.

Then he drew upon his rich and varied civic experience and advised the Municipal councillors of Jhansi not to confine their activities to meetings and agendas and exhorted them to visit the dwellings of the ordinary people. "You must visit the dwelling of the people every fifteen days. You must form small committees to see things through because only then you will make local self-government efficient. You must try to make the lives of the people cheerful. The provision of elementary schools, hospitals, etc., is not enough. You must see that your city has good parks, music centres and orchestra."

On his way back, the Governor got out of his car and walked along the muddy street of an obscure locality, and accompanied by his staff, visited the homes of people and talked and joked with them. The news of it spread and a crowd of about 2,000 people gathered round him and followed the party.

Similarly, in Lucknow Mody visited such frightful slum areas as the Barajkhana, Nai Basti, the private Ahata of Mahant Ranu Pai and the sweeper quarters of Aishbagh, and put up notes for the improvement of their condition.

Addressing the Kanpur Merchants' Chamber, Mody bluntly said: "Every time I come here I seem to like it less and less. Your sanitation and water supply are far below those of a 'model town' (as the locality was named). If you have good roads I have yet to discover them."

Mody also called upon the business community to throw the whole weight of their influence and resources on the side of law and order and help Government in maintaining the secular nature of the Indian Republic.

He was equally blunt to the Rai Bareilly District and Municipal Boards. In replying to their joint address, Mody stated, "While I appreciate your efforts, I am not sure that I approve whole-

heartedly of your decision to introduce compulsory primary education for girls, which even the Government had not undertaken so far, however desirable such an expansion may be. I venture to think your efforts should be concentrated on consolidating the progress you have made."

On November 4, 1949, Mody presided over the ceremony to receive from England the sacred relics of Saraputta and Moggallana, the two principal disciples of Buddha, for consecration at Banaras, the place where the Buddha preached his first sermon. Mody did so with great aplomb.

He declared, "India has given the world some of its great prophets and thinkers. There was an age in which this ancient land was in the van of civilisation. We got outstripped in the race however, when we continued to dwell in the realm of metaphysical thought and allowed the noble truths uttered by our philosophers to be corrupted by ignoble practices and barbarian customs."

Broadcasting over AIR, on the first Republic Day, on January 26, 1950, Mody hailed the occasion as "one of these moments of time when history is made." He said, "It is a bloodless revolution which in some ways may be said to have opened a new chapter in the annals of mankind. It is an occasion for profound thankfulness to Providence and a solemn resolve that we shall not be found unworthy of the great responsibilities which have fallen on our shoulders."

Mody then took stock of the two years of freedom and commented: "It does not avail to gloss over the fact that nepotism, corruption, intrigue and indiscipline have cast their shadow over our young nation and have created a sense of frustration and disillusionment. It is no use wringing our hands in dispair or looking to the leaders of the nation for pulling us together and setting us on the right path. To the youth of the nation in particular I would say the situation presents a challenge."

On February 2, Mody ceremonially opened the first session of the State Legislature, under the new Constitution. Under the shadow of a life-sized portrait of the Father of the Nation, were gathered 350 odd members of the two Houses of Legislature, and the floor as well as the galleries were packed.

As the Governor, in black achkan, black cap and white trousers,

ceremonially entered the hall at 4.30 p.m., the entire assembly rose to their feet. The Governor was flanked on one side by the Speaker Purshottam Das Tandon, in his buttoned-up handspun woollen coat and dhoti and, on the other, by the Chairman of the Upper House, Chandra Bhal, in ceremonial dress. The Governor was greeted with cries of "Bharat Mata ki jai" and "Jana tantra zindabad". Mody bowed low to the assembly and took his seat.

Mody's address to the joint session took 11 minutes, and ended with the sentence: "May the Almighty bless you and guide you and animate you with no thought other than of doing your best in the service of the people of the State in all your deliberations."

The Governor's address also announced legislative measures for the abolition of Zamindari in the province and land reform.

One of the memorable functions Mody attended as Governor was the Id Milap get-together at Burlington Hotel, in July 1950. In his speech on the occasion he stressed the necessity for such inter-communal gatherings in order to promote the spirit of national unity. Mody commended the Muslims' self-denial during the Ramzan and wished Indians of other faiths too would practise self-denial in other spheres too.

"How would it be, for instance, if we resolved every year not to speak for a month ?" Mody asked, and added, "An Indian speechless would be sight for the gods !" Mody offered to take the lead in a "revolution fraught with such tremendous possibilities. But then who would follow me ? The majority of the Ministers and legislators would find such abstinence far more trying than to be without food and drink."

A glorious gubernatorial innings came to a close on May 31, 1952.

The greatest tribute that could be paid to Mody's Governorship of Uttar Pradesh would be that he was as popular, if not more, when he retired as when, three years earlier, he arrived in Lucknow and was taken to their hearts by the people of the State.

At a state banquet given in honour of Mody and Lady Mody, on 30th May, Pandit Pant paid this glowing tribute to the departing Governor :

"I knew that he was an eminently suitable, accomplished and cultured person, with a penetrating eye, a balanced mind, a correct

sense of perspective and a delectable sense of humour which make an ideal Governor. My hopes have been more than fulfilled. He has been uniformly considerate, courteous and kind. He has never spared himself and helped us not only within the State but also outside.

"We owe a great deal to his guidance, the great influence he commands in many places and the unfailing earnestness with which he has espoused our causes not only in but even out of season. He has been an unerring friend, philosopher and guide. He has grown into a popular figure, widely respected and esteemed all over the State. There is hardly any district which he has not visited.

"Apart from the administrative and governmental affairs, he has taken an active and deep interest in art, literature and sport and in other cultural and social activities. He is a versatile genius and he has varied tastes. He is an accomplished gentleman and leads a full life with a taste for fine niceties. He is impeccable and his ways are methodical. He has been nurtured in the old traditions. He leaves behind a host of admirers and many concrete memorials which will ever testify to the regard and esteem which the people of this State have learnt to entertain for him."

Pant concluded:

"Having done his part well and honourably, and having thus raised the prestige and dignity of his high office still higher, I am sure that he will continue to work for the great country in whose service he has never spared himself. This function today will serve as one of the milestones, and many more will follow".

Deeply touched by these superlative compliments from one who chose his words, Mody handsomely acknowledged the confidence extended to him by Pandit Pant and his Ministerial colleagues. Mody said the moving terms in which Pant had referred to him was "one more proof of the warm personal regard which has always subsisted between us ever since we were colleagues in the Central Legislature".

Recalling their Central Assembly days together, Mody said, "Sri Prakasa (also present at the dinner) was the joker on the Congress benches. I was supposed to be the joker on the Independent benches, and all the statesmanship and debating talent was provided by Pantji".

"What do you know of us?"

'I dare not say anything about ministers," said Sir Homi Mody, at the rally of Provincial Military Education Cadets, referring to the garrulousness of politicians.

Galabo and Sitabo

From Kitchen to Cocktail Bar

In his broadcast talk on "The new Woman," Sir H. P. Mody said, "There has been a startlingly sudden transition from Biking to Hiking, from the kitchen to the cocktail Bar."

His First Lesson

With the U.P. Cabinet

Among the Governors.

Chancellor of the Aligarh University.

Mody then paid this personal tribute to Pant: "I think it is a matter of great good fortune that U.P. should have thrown up a leader of such outstanding stature and personality as my friend Pant....and what is of greater importance to the people of my way of thinking, of his real goodness and greatness of heart. These three years have cemented the bonds between us far more closely than the previous fifteen years and when we are far away and when I recall the many people whose contacts I have made and whose friendship I am proud to claim, I can think of Pantji and of the other Ministers in terms of warmest affection. I hope, Pantji, you will live long to continue to guide this State and that you will have as able and loyal a team of supporters as you would have gathered round you."

Turning to the "delicate" job of the Governor under our Constitution, Mody remarked that one could make a success of it, if he was possessed of common sense and tact. "He has no powers under the Constitution," continued Mody, "and he can make himself felt only if he has carved out a little niche among his Ministers, if he has earned their respect and regard, and if he has made them feel that in their Governor they have somebody to whom they can look for a little advice and detachment of outlook.

"He has to strike a fine balance; either he is oppressed by the letter of the law and by his impotence under the Constitution and decides to submerge his identity completely, or he tries to throw his weight about and come into clash with his Ministers. Either extreme has got to be avoided.

"If I have achieved any success in this position, it is entirely because I have been able to strike this happy balance. I have never inflicted myself or my advice upon my Ministers. I have let them decide for themselves whether on any given issue my advice was worth having, and it is only that kind of relationship that has created a bond of respect, and if I may say so, also of affection between us".

On May 31, the State Government gave a grand farewell to the Modys on the spacious lawns of the Council House. The next morning, they entrained for Bombay and were given an unprecedented public farewell at the railway station.

"It was an unforgettable farewell," wrote one commentator.

"And so many said it with flowers that Mody was buried under flowers from which a Minister had to unbury him before he could board the train." The Modys were visibly moved by the spontaneous demonstration of affection by the cheering crowds. They embarked from Charbagh station, and the entire Cabinet was there, headed by Pandit Pant, who had specially come from Delhi by an earlier train.

The Modys, with their grandson Jimmy, walked to the platform under a canopy of flags. The PAC Band played, as Homi Mody inspected a guard of honour. Mody shook hands with every one, high and low. The train steamed off amid a roar of cheering.

Earlier, there were touching scenes at Raj Bhavan, where Mody and Lady Mody were garlanded by the staff and they shook hands with everyone.

The Pioneer editorially commented:

"From the outset he (Mody) won the confidence of his Ministers. He refused politely but firmly to be a convenient rubber stamp of the Ministry. And because he could say, when the occasion demanded, harsh things with a smile or enliven with a joke—often at his own expense—he was universally popular.

"Angry students demonstrating in Government House against some grievances, imaginary or real, affecting their own institutions, had their faces wreathed with smiles after they had been given a 'taking to' by the Governor. It was personal charm combined with integrity and a genuine love and concern for the common man.....

"What irked him most was 'sloppiness'. This he could not condone either in official or non-official life. His aversion stemmed not from snobbery—he hated snobs—but from a firm belief that sloppiness, sartorial or otherwise, undermined the discipline of a nation and impaired its efficiency. It is to his credit that he did not sacrifice his principles at a time when slovenliness in high quarters is confused with saintliness."

In his farewell broadcast, Mody verily formulated a success-formula for a state Governor.

"There seems to be a good deal of misconception with regard to the position of the Governor," said Mody. "The constitutional limitations on his powers incline many people to the belief that the office is one mainly of ceremonial and dignity, and that outside its

social obligations, there is little to do. This is taking too narrow and technical a view of the matter.

"It is not sufficiently appreciated that there is a fairly wide field in which the Governor can function with advantage to the State of which he is head and that even in the sphere of administration, his duties are not confined to receiving files and reports and signing the papers which are placed before him.

"The extent to which the Governor's influence is felt on the conduct of affairs depends upon a variety of factors, and in particular, on the relations he had established with his Ministers.

"So far as I am concerned, I shall say no more than that my Chief Minister and other colleagues in Government have extended to me a measure of confidence and consideration which have done not a little to make the position of a constitutional Governor acceptable to me.

"I have scrupulously refrained from transgressing the limits of my authority and have left it to my Ministers to make what use they thought fit of such experience and advice as I may be in a position to give. In the result it is with a certain measure of satisfaction that I am able to look back to my three years of office.....

"I attach much value to the social side of life, which is apt to be ignored in the general obsession with politics, and have done what I could to encourage it".

Speaking to the Rotary Club of Lucknow, in the first year of his tenure in Lucknow, Mody had observed: "My own experience is that whether a Governor is regarded as an object of curiosity or sympathetic interest, or as a well-meaning person going about saying nice things and refraining from lecturing or threatening anybody, most people seem to want to meet him or have a look at him. They do not seem to bother about his constitutional position. They still think that as a man above the rough and tumble of party politics, he can take a dispassionate view of problems and grievances. They regard him as a sort of an appellate authority to which to turn for redress.... Altogether, I am inclined to think that whatever a Governor may or may not be able to do, he is certainly in a position to create a pleasant atmosphere and mitigate the asperities of political life."

Here was one who came scoffing to the Governorship—and

stayed behind to become the model to other incumbents and aspirants to that *gaddi*—and went back praising, even defending it.

If his innings with the Bombay Millowners' Association was his "finest hour," his tenure at the head of the war-time Supply Department the most hectic, Mody's tenancy at Lucknow's Raj Bhavan was possibly the most satisfying period of his public life—one of great poise and grace, fruitful and relaxed.

"It is with a certain measure of satisfaction that my wife and I are able to look back upon this period of our life," Mody himself told a Bombay audience.

At a farewell party given to him in Nainital, a lady came up to Mody and exclaimed: "I am afraid, you are going to be the last Governor in pants." Mody's successor was the amply-dhotied K. M. Munshi.

XXI

THE DRIFT TO OPPOSITION

IT IS interesting to trace how from a zealous champion and defender of the new regime after Independence, Mody drifted away, first to the role of a wary but sympathetic cautioner, then on to an uncompromising critic, ultimately to join an opposition party.

Those who have followed Mody's political thinking and ideology over the years, however, would not be surprised that he chose to cast his lot with a conservative party like Swatantra.

Mody has made no secret of his antipathy to socialism. Nor was he ashamed to own he is a capitalist. He had not the least doubt that capitalism could be progressive and humane, have a social conscience, and could deliver the goods where socialism had failed as an answer to the complex economic problems of an underdeveloped country.

On the eve of Independence, speaking from the platform of EFI, Mody assured the new Indian leadership that the protagonists of free enterprise did not ask for the continuance, any more, of the conditions which undoubtedly bred inequalities of income and periodic unemployment.

"They are prepared for a measure of regulation which would ensure a more equitable distribution of the products of industry amongst the various elements constituting society," he declared. "What industry needs is a healthy trade union movement and it should be our duty to encourage its growth by a readiness to meet the just demands and to ensure that the conditions we provide made for contentment and efficiency."

Here was an olive branch from Indian capitalism to labour and readiness to start with a clean slate, if labour would respond in the same spirit, under the new order, following Independence.

In September 1946, the Interim Government was installed in New Delhi with Jawaharlal Nehru at its head. Mody wholeheartedly welcomed the appointment of an Advisory Planning Board by the new Government.

Likewise, Mody praised Shanmukham Chetty's first budget of

Independent India, presented on November 27, 1947. He said it was characterised by "horse-sense and optimism."

"A great many discordant voices are being heard today about the economic pattern India should adopt, and the resultant uncertainty has discouraged enterprise both in industrial and investing field." he however cautioned. "Increased production has been acknowledged on all hands to be the most vital need of the hour and this is hardly the time for the preaching of ideologies. Hard practical thinking and action are required, if the country is to fill up the wide gaps in its industrial set up and to utilise to the full its considerable resources in men and materials."

At a Tripartite Industries Conference held in December 1947—at which Government, industrialists and labour were represented—Mody declared, "If labour play their part, I assure them they will not lack our cooperation. I invite them to collaborate with us in building up an industrial structure worthy of this country."

The outcome of this Conference was the Industrial Policy Resolution to which all the three parties represented at the Conference, attested their signatures.

On February 17, 1948, on the eve of the anticipated enunciation of an economic policy for the country, Mody led a deputation of industrialists to New Delhi. The deputation comprised Ghansham Das Birla, Lala Shri Ram, Badridas Goenka, Biren Mukherji, Kasturbhai Lalbhai, Dharamsi Khatau and A. D. Shroff.

The deputation met Prime Minister Nehru, Deputy Prime Minister Vallabhbhai Patel, Finance Minister R. K. Shanmukham Chetty and Industries Minister Shyama Prasad Mookerji.

Their memorandum to the Government frankly expressed their apprehensions about Government's intentions in regard to their new economic policy and sought definite assurances that that policy would adhere to the general outlines enunciated at the Tripartite Conference and that the recommendations of the Congress Economic Programme Sub-committee would not be adopted by the Government as the basis of their policy.

The Deputation demanded that the Government should, as early as possible, announce a clear-cut policy, once for all, so that they knew where they stood and the current uncertainty ended, which was causing havoc in the stock market and holding up industrial progress.

Nehru assured the deputation that the Congress Economic Programme Sub-committee's report would not be the sole basis of the Government's future economic policy, that the Government's policy would not be such as to hit the industrialists or the investors, and that any nationalisation programme would be undertaken only after circumspection and the fullest consideration of all points of view.

Presiding over the annual meeting of the Central Bank of India, that year, Mody observed, "We want a cessation of internal strife, and conscription, in the national interests, of the best minds in the country, if we are to take our place amongst the leading nations of the world."

Mody sympathised with the Government "battling with stern realities" and again defended free India's first budget against "distorted views." But he hoped the approach to India's economic development would be "realistic and free from the theorising which had been so much in evidence of late."

In the middle of 1948, away in the United States, Mody found American capital lukewarm to investing in India. In an interview to the United Press of America, Mody assured the Americans that the Indian Government was showing a "more realistic" attitude towards industry and capital and was beginning to realise the difficulties in "doing too much in too short a time." Mody called for closer Indo-American relations.

At the end of the year, by then back in India, Mody gave a clarion call to the industrialists of India to shake off their feeling of helplessness and make a fresh approach to the labour problem in a new spirit.

At the annual meeting of the EFI, he stressed the need for unity in their ranks, for the dedication of all their moral and material strength to the development of a stable and progressive Government and quoted Finance Minister John Matthai's recent speech and the Jaipur Congress resolution as among the encouraging factors for the development and expansion of private enterprise.

In a message to the Sardar Patel Souvenir Number of *Mumbai Vartman,* in October 1948, Mody was however critical of Government's policies by implication. He stated, "India is undergoing a lot of teething troubles at the moment. Ailments and complications are varied and the case requires careful handling."

Reviewing the steadily deteriorating economic situation, Mody commented, "Production so vital to the economy of a country, shows little sign of recovery, despite all the concessions given to the working classes and far-reaching changes inaugurated in the relations between management and labour. Indiscipline is rampant and some of the provincial Governments have shown deplorable incapacity for dealing with intransigent elements."

Then going over to the credit side of the balance-sheet, Mody conceded, "It has to be recognised that the internal situation has improved considerably. During the last few months, there has been noticeable improvement in the relations between the various communities and the smoothness and success with which the operation against Hyderabad was carried out have greatly cleared the atmosphere. The Central Government has been manfully battling with problems that confront them, and they are entitled to the support of every section of the people."

In paying his tribute to Sardar Patel, Mody said, "It is singularly appropriate that this Special Number should be dedicated to Sardar Patel whose untiring efforts and resolute leadership have done so much for the cause of law and order and good Government."

Came the gubernatorial interlude in Lucknow, throughout which period, Mody was exhorting the business and industrial interests in his State, and the country as a whole, to extend their cooperation to the Government in its efforts to build up the country's economy and maintain and strengthen the secular character of our Constitution.

On his return to Bombay after three years' absence in U.P. as Governor, at a reception by the Indian Merchants' Chamber, Mody observed with much regret that Bombay had "become a place of blackmarketeers, racketeers and other undesirables." He said three years ago Bombay was a beautiful city; but now it was far from it. It was no longer Bombay the beautiful; it was Bombay the hideous, slums growing everywhere; business morality at a low ebb, of "filth and dishonesty."

Soon, Mody was back in the thick of the country's public life. One of his first achievements on his return to Bombay was to resolve a developing crisis in Bombay racing. The Morarji Government was threatening to close down racing in Bombay, by refusing to renew the licence unless the RWITC agreed to certain terms to be imposed by the Government.

The position was somewhat ticklish. On the one hand, the Government were of the view that there were many irregularities connected with racing which had to be stamped out by various measures the Government considered necessary. On the other, a large body of the members of the Club felt that the increasing control sought to be exercised by the Government had to be resisted.

In his capacity as President of the RWITC, Mody picked up the threads of negotiations with the Bombay Government. He first extracted an assurance from the Government that it would not close down racing, and then in return, undertook to implement certain of the terms proposed by the Government which he considered as fair and safeguarded adequately the interests of the Club and met the viewpoint of the Government.

The settlement removed certain restrictions on the running of foreign horses. The other conditions were an increase in the Club membership from 350 to 600; the entrance fee and stand membership to be raised to Rs. 650 and Rs. 250 respectively; abolition of voting by proxy; two Government nominees to sit on the Club's Committees. The Government agreed to reduce the annual licence fee for racing from Rs. 15 lakhs to Rs. 10 lakhs, depending upon the financial position of the Club from year to year.

In February 1953, at the annual meeting of the EFI, Mody was, almost for the first time, highly critical of the Government's policy towards development of the private sector. He said the Government's attitude created uncertainty and criticised "the flow of labour legislation, irksome control over profits, production and distribution, and the irresponsible opinions indulged by some of those who hold positions of influence."

Mody said he was not against controlled economy but controls had to be reasonable. He also warned private enterprise: "The malpractices which have come to light in the working of some industrial establishments calls for our unqualified condemnation. We can have no truck with those who are out to exploit, by whatever means they can, the undertakings of which they have acquired control, and where the guilt has been brought home, it is clearly the duty of the organisation to which the offenders belonged, to expel them."

In the December of that year, with the tempo of the agitation for

a linguistic division of India rising in the country, prominent leaders of Bombay formed a Citizens' Committee to counter the demand and to work for the postponement of such a division by at least 15 years. Purshottamdas Thakurdas was the president of the Committee, H. P. Mody vice-president and S. K. Patil, J. R. D. Tata, Behram Karanjia and Harshadbhai Divatia were other members.

A meeting of the Committee resolved that if linguistic States were created despite the efforts of the Committee, then the people of Bombay should demand a separate city-state for Bombay.

As far back as May 1947, Mody had remonstrated against M. R. Jayakar and Shankerrao Deo claiming Bombay city for a separate Maharashtra State carved out of the Bombay province and called it "division mindedness." He insisted that if such a division came, Bombay should be made a city-state.

In January 1954, Mody took the initiative for a conference of leading industrialists of Bombay, which decided to take immediate steps for a "more sustained and vigorous" presentation of the viewpoint of industry to Government and the public. The conference stressed the importance of the role free enterprise could play in the economic development of the country and in the attainment of the social objectives which were commonly accepted.

The conference criticised the way in which private enterprise was hamstrung from functioning effectively and the view was expressed that mixed economy could only function when there was "co-existence of state and free enterprise acting as equal and autonomous forces each supplementing and fortifying the other and each functioning within a clearly defined sphere of activity."

The Conference authorised Mody to set up a small committee with powers to carry out the proposed scheme of "effective representation" of the viewpoint of private enterprise to the Government.

At the 1954 annual general meeting of the Central Bank of India, Mody however remarked upon a "notable improvement" of the economic situation in the country during the year. Industrial production was the highest of the postwar period and the supply of foodgrains had definitely improved, leading to gradual decontrol, he observed. "Although the volume of trade was smaller,

the demand for some of the principal exports of the country, which had slackened in the earlier months of the year, had shown signs of revival towards the end."

At the end of the year, from the EFI platform, Mody made a reasoned plea for a greater understanding of the aims of private enterprise. "There has been enormous development, particularly in the public sector, which no one can possibly lose sight of, whatever may be the time-lag in the achievement of targets. India is resolutely marching ahead and providing inspiration to other countries of South-East Asia. In the private sector, I am sorry to say, the picture is not as encouraging. There is still a good deal of doctrinaire thinking in evidence and shifts and changes in policy which have a disturbing effect on the functioning of private enterprise."

Speaking at the Progressive Group's Republic Day luncheon on January 26, 1955, Mody readily conceded that there was a "tremendous upsurge all over India. There was an economic and social revolution and the country was trying to make up in a few decades for the centuries it had lost."

To Mody at least the pace was frightening, but there were people who thought it was slow. The voice of India was heard and her views respected in the comity of nations today. "This was all due to the esteem in which our Prime Minister was held" in the world. There was much purposeful activity on all sides.

Mody however warned: "India's was a big democracy, indeed. But what it had to fear most was a constant encroachment on the rights of the people. There were already signs of that happening. If our democracy was to adhere to the concepts of a welfare state, there was need to strike a balance between the rights of the individual, the powers of the State, and the demands of a just social order."

Moving the economic policy resolution at the annual session of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Mody complained of a "general distrust of the business community arising from the anti-social actions of a few people," and declared, "We have shown we are prepared to advance with the times. We are prepared to lend our full cooperation in all schemes for the advancement of the welfare of our people which appeal to us to be right and reasonable."

At the meeting of the Indian Banks' Association, Mody drew a pessimistic note when he remarked, "One could not but be perturbed at the recent developments involving the economy of the country. Plans were being formulated and schemes pursued, all of which were bound to affect the country's economic set-up. He said some of the most drastic laws known in any country were being pushed through here to bring about the change. Assurances were being given that these laws would be enforced only against the older type of capitalists and monopolists, but he wondered what the future held in store."

Thus Mody's stance was gradually veering round to that of opposition to the Government. And as the Government went left and socialist in its economic policies, Mody turned away and against the Government. Nevertheless, he was no Cassandra, and whenever he saw any good in the Government's actions and policies, he openly acknowledged it.

On January 29, 1956, a group of industrialists met the Prime Minister at his residence in New Delhi for an informal discussion. At this off-the-record conference, Mody was brutally frank to the Prime Minister. Mody referred to the climate of hostility to capitalism being created in the country, and said it arose from a complete misconception of the role of modern capitalism.

Apart from the transformation that had taken place in most countries, he continued, the stringent controls which had been instituted in India in the preceding few years made nonsense of the suggestion that there was concentration of power in the hands of a few people. There was hardly a thing businessmen could do without their having to have a licence or a permit or a sanction. They were not free to produce, buy, sell, distribute, import or export without a multiplicity of control.

Mody complained that despite the Prime Minister's repeated assurances, all manner of industries, such as Cement, Jute, Cotton Textiles, Sugar, Engineering, Banking and Insurance, were sought to be brought within the fold of nationalisation. He drew attention to the departures already made from the 1948 Resolution on Industrial Policy, and stressed that it was essential to state the Government's policy vis-a-vis the private sector in clear, unambiguous terms, so that industrialists would know where they stood and how far they could go.

Mody characterised the Second Five-Year Plan as "much too ambitious"—based on estimates of resources which could not be relied upon, and he criticised the undue emphasis in it on heavy capital goods industries, which imparted an imbalance to the Plan.

Mody finally appealed to the Prime Minister to give private enterprise a chance. However limited the field assigned to it, it was essential that reasonable freedom be given to it to function effectively.

Nevertheless, when the Industrial policy statement of Government was formulated in May 1956, Mody welcomed it as a "realistic and reassuring document."

"It is recognised in a planned economy that the role of the State must become increasingly more important, particularly in a country with inadequate capital resources," he commented in a press interview. "It is also inherent in such a scheme of things that the private sector has to function in consonance with defined objectives and under certain regulations. What is of fundamental importance is that from the viewpoint of democracy and economic progress, the controls should not be too restrictive and vexatious in character and thus defeat the purpose in view."

Mody concluded: "I feel that with the policy now enunciated, industrialists will find it possible to go ahead with increased confidence and make the fullest contribution possible to the development of the country and general well-being of the people."

When the States Reorganisation Commission was set up, the Bombay Citizens' Committee gave evidence before it. In November, 1955, in a strong public statement, the Committee declared that no amount of assurances or safeguards could justify the inclusion of a multilingual city of Bombay into a unilingual state. The statement contended that claims advanced by leaders of Samyukta Maharashtra to Bombay were "untenable and an expression of aggressive linguism."

It argued that with only 43.5 per cent Marathi-speaking people, Bombay could not be considered to be a part of Maharashtra either on grounds of language or culture. Any attempt to coerce the substantial majority of 56.5 per cent of non-Maharashtrian population into the unilingual State of Maharashtra would amount to inflicting "both insult and indignity."

When Bombay was disrupted by Samyukta Maharashtra riots, a public meeting was held in the city, on January 25, 1956, with the Governor, Harekrushna Mahtab in the chair, to condemn the disturbances. Mody moved the main resolution and declared that the rioting had brought disgrace on the city.

The resolution recorded with satisfaction that the authorities and the Police had acted "with great restraint under very provocative circumstances, and affirmed that it was the bounden duty of Government to protect the citizens and adopt swift and firm measures to meet the challenge to civilised life."

The meeting appealed to the citizens to face courageously the ordeal and organise themselves for self-defence and cooperate with the Police to maintain law and order and to suppress the anti-social elements.

In May 1956, when discussions over the future set-up of the State of Bombay reached a crucial stage, Mody organised a representation to the Prime Minister, on behalf of the minority communities of Bombay city, urging that Bombay city be made an independent entity. The representation was signed by 41 representatives of the minority communities of the city.

The memorandum urged that if the proposed bilingual state of Bombay, for any reason, failed to materialise, the only alternative formula would be the three-unit proposal, and in view of Bombay city's "importance, her progressive outlook and her advanced political consciousness," it be given the status of a City State with a full-fledged democratic administration.

The representation concluded: "Whichever formula is decided upon, we would deprecate any solution which would have the effect of keeping alive the prevailing uncertainty and agitation, but if, in the interests of peace and harmony, a provisional settlement becomes inevitable, it should be made clear that no change could be effected therein, except after the lapse of a period of time sufficiently long for passions to cool down and after ascertaining the wishes of the people of Bombay through democratic processess".

In February 1957, Mody stood for election to the Lok Sabha from the Bhilwara constituency in Rajasthan.

Following press reports that he was standing on a Ramrajya Parishad ticket, at a public meeting at Jodhpur, Nehru sarcastically remarked: "A most interesting and novel thing has happened in

Rajasthan where a respectable gentleman has come to seek election on the Ram Rajya Parishad ticket. This person is my friend. I have nothing against him, but the policy of the Ram Rajya Parishad, on whose ticket he is contesting the election, is one which I do not like. He is a good and honest man, but what amazes me is that he should have come all the way from Bombay to contest the election under the shadow of a rank communal organisation. He is not even a Hindu. This is such a novel thing that it should be engraved on a stone tablet to tell posterity that such things happened in India."

Mody at once wired to Nehru to correct him and to say that he was standing as an independent and not as a Ram Rajya Parishad candidate. Thereupon, Nehru promptly apologised to him in a public speech at a meeting in Hyderabad. The confusion arose because Mody's election symbol was the rising sun, which was also that of the Ram Rajya Parishad.

In the event, Ramesh Chandra Vyas, the Congress candidate, defeated Mody, the voting figures being 74,149 and 45,548 respectively—not at all bad for a rank outsider like Mody.

By now Mody's attacks on the Government were becoming more frontal and unequivocal.

While still in the thick of his electioneering, Mody's written presidential address to the annual session of the EFI took the Government severely to task for its "bureaucratic handling" of commerce and trade, and encroachment on functions of private enterprise. He attacked the proposal for state trading and observed that the subsequent extension of the limits of state trading afforded another example of the "snowballing effect of power in the hands of Government."

At the 1958 annual meeting of the Central Bank of India, Mody welcomed "greater responsiveness" on the part of the Government to criticisms made by businessmen and others relating to problems of planned development. He pleaded for greater understanding between the authorities and the business community, because he felt that even if businessmen were conservative by nature, they could "inject a sense of realism into our planning." Mody then expressed doubts about the wisdom of imposing severe strains on the national economy in the name of planned progress.

Nevertheless, addressing members of the FICCI in Bombay, Mody

declared: "We unreservedly accept the social objectives which the country has adopted through its Government and Parliament. We fully accept the obligations cast on us to implement these objectives and help to create a social order in which there shall be equality of opportunities for all and a more equitable distribution of the good things of life.

"But if the implementation of these objectives placed intolerable burdens on those engaged in the production of goods and services, and if the pace was so fast and action so drastic that freedoms which were fundamental to the functioning of a democratic society, were threatened, then it was clearly the duty of the business community as responsible citizens to raise their voice and point out where the country was drifting to," he said.

On June 22, Mody led another deputation to New Delhi to convey the apprehensions of the business community on the various taxation proposals in the Union budget. He warned Finance Minister T. T. Krishnamachari that those measures might react unfavourably on the private sector of industry. Krishnamachari while sticking to his proposals, indicated that the Government was prepared to resolve any particular difficulties or hardships that might be brought to his notice.

As to planning, Mody was of the view that what the country needed was not a bigger, but a better plan—"incentives to earn, save and investment should find their proper place in any such plans for national reconstruction." He urged the FICCI not to concern themselves, at that stage, with the size of the plan, but work for a "better balanced and more scientific plan"—a balanced development of agricultural and all types of industries.

The following February, addressing the Mysore Chamber of Commerce in Bangalore, Mody enunciated the need for a new party to oppose the Congress Government. He criticised the proposal to introduce co-operative farming and suggested that the policy of a new party should be progressive—it might even be similar to the Congress policy, but the question was what means and methods were adopted to implement that policy. There must be a square deal for all, which should assure equality of opportunity for all. It should stand for a good, efficient, businesslike administration which should avoid expenditure on non-productive plans.

• Tata Farewell

Portrait

With Queen Elizabeth.

At a Swatantra Meeting with Rajaji.

With Nehru

With Nehru and Chagla.

With Bulganin and Khruschev.

With Nasser.

With Mrs. Roosevelt. •

With U. Nu.

At Swatantra Meetings

With Gayatri Devi

A Patron of Art

In April 1959, Mody retired from the Presidentship of the Employers' Federation of India, after holding that post for 26 years, from the very inception of the organisation. In his last address to that body, Mody warned labour that there was a limit to the capacity of industry to pay and bigger returns could only come from better efforts. A steady increase in the productivity of labour was an essential condition for bringing about a rise in the standard of living of all classes of the population and notably the wage-earners.

On May 23 1959, Mody finally retired as Senior Director of Tatas—"finally" because twice before, in 1941 when he became an Executive Councillor, and in 1949 when he went to Lucknow as Governor, Tatas had given him farewell parties, and later, he had come back to Bombay House.

On this occasion, too, Tatas gave Mody a grand farewell party at the Taj Mahal Hotel. It was a unique event. In between, with two breaks totalling four and a half years, Mody had been associated with that great Indian industrial house for 25 years.

J. R. D. Tata, Chairman of Tatas, in a moving tribute to Mody said, "Mody's intellectual eminence, outstanding record of accomplishments and service in various fields, and the honours showered upon him were known to all. I would however salute Mody as a great human being and one of the most lovable men one could ever meet. His generosity and loyalty to his friends and to any cause he espoused, his political courage, his almost truculent independence of views, and the legendary wit to which he gave vent as often at his own expense as at that of others, and his irrepressible cheerfulness and refusal to be cowed down by anyone or any event however calamitous, were important and a characteristic part of his personality."

So far as J. R. D. was personally concerned, he would remember and miss Mody as a staunch and loyal friend, ever ready to help and advise and share one's burden.

J. R. D. concluded, "Sir Homi could consider himself as chief adviser of Tatas on any and every subject under the sun for as long as he likes or thinks us worthy of his advice."

In reply, Mody tried to squeeze some lighter vein out of an emotion-packed atmosphere. He said, "As Mr Tata has rubbed in, this is the fourth occasion on which Bombay House is holding

a function in my honour and I was going to say that it looks like being the last until I heard the heartening words of the Chairman (that Mody would retain connection with the Tata charities trusts). The very large numbers in which you have gathered here today prove to me that my impending departure has aroused a great deal of enthusiasm."

Looking back at the 25 years he was associated with Tatas, Mody recalled his early days in the firm under Nowroji Saklatvala's chairmanship when the affairs of the firm were conducted in a patriarchal fashion—"directors did not see much of each other in those days, and naturally life was more peaceful."

Mody then added, "With the advent of our present chairman (J. R. D. Tata), there was a terrific onrush of new ideas and methods, and all manner of American gadgets and devices invaded Bombay House, which got a new look altogether.... And a Lunch Room was also set up, where the directors could daily meet and eat, and exchange ideas. Incidentally, it turned out to be the only place where I have been allowed to talk. When the history of the Lunch Room comes to be written, I hope the part I have played in moulding the character of the table-talk and lifting it to intellectual heights will receive due recognition....

"That brings me to my colleagues, a subject which I am obliged to handle with particular care just now, because not everything about my retirement benefits has yet been settled. When I first came to Bombay House, with the exception of Lady Ratan Tata and J. R. D. Tata, not one of the present directors was there.... But colleagues are like wives. You have to grin and bear them, and it was not long before I came to entertain warm regard for my colleagues and appreciation of their many qualities. I am inclined to think that the future of Tatas is safe in their hands, though what will happen after the elder statesman's restraining hand had been removed, no one can tell!"

Paying a tribute to J. R. D., Mody said, "We have as chairman a most unusual person. He has a very keen intellect, a little too keen; he is so subtle and convincing that he can argue both sides of a case with equal ease and conviction. His versatility is truly amazing, whether it is a blast furnace or an ice-cream freezer, an aircraft engine or a cigarette lighter, he is equally at home with all of them."

In his retired state, Mody is Chairman of the Sir Dorab Tata Trust and of Indian Hotels Company, and a trustee of the J. N. Tata Endowment Fund and of the Lady Tata Memorial Fund.

Now, with less active business life following his retirement from the firm of Tatas, Mody promised himself that he would devote his time to public life "a bit more than before." And indeed, he kept his promise. He plunged into the task of building up the Swatantra Party—which meant more militancy in his opposition to the Government. He became the honorary treasurer of the party.

Presiding over a Swatantra Party public meeting in October 1959, Mody hit out at the Congress Government, referred to the "court at Delhi," and spiritedly refuted Nehru's description of the Swatantrites as "fossils, frustrated individuals, champions of vested interests and reactionaries, whose thinking is of 19th century."

Mody retorted: "The average of the leaders of the Swatantra Party would compare favourably with that of the men who are holding the reins of power today.... They talk of nuclear age and still pin faith in the outmoded concept of socialism that has no relevance to the conditions of today.... We are not frustrated. We have not been in the habit of seeking jobs, contracts and licences. Most of us claim to be, in our own little way, useful members of society, earning an honourable livelihood."

Mody referred to the "loose talk" about our social aims, and said, "In the utterances of certain people who cannot be ignored, is to be found a persistent refrain of hostility to capitalism. They seem to have no understanding of the modern capitalist society, a society in which vast strides towards the attainment of a just social order and wider diffusion of wellbeing have taken place in the course of the last half century. This body of opinion affects to believe that the happiness of the masses cannot be attained except by the uprooting of all that capitalism stands for."

"I wonder if these makers of a new heaven on earth realise that the socialism of their thinking is as outmoded as the capitalism of the 19th century," Mody said. "What is that we are fighting for? We are not fighting for an outmoded concept of capitalism or for the opportunity of enriching ourselves at the expense of the community or for exploiting any class of people or for the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. We unreservedly accept the social objectives adopted by the country."

Campaigning for the Swatantra Party in a hot-gospelling fashion, on January 5, 1960, Mody utilised the Lions Club platform in Bombay to advocate the need of a "middle of the road" party which believed in social justice. "There must be a balanced opposition to the party in power," he said, and dismissed the existence of other opposition parties as of "no consequence"—they were "either reactionary or leaned on the left".

Mody declared that the birth of the Swatantra Party should be welcomed by all democrats and he promised that as a responsible and balanced opposition party to the ruling party, which had grown "callous and indifferent to the hardships of the people," the Swatantra Party would strive to restore many of the liberties taken away by the present Government.

Mody followed it up with a newspaper article in which he critically analysed the proceedings of the AICC session just held at Bangalore and pronounced, "It is difficult to discover a single concrete suggestion for dealing with the many problems facing the country" and concluded, "While the Swatantra Party accepts the concept of planned development, it is opposed to the totalitarian approach adopted by the Government, and regards the targets, priorities and methods of financing the plans as reckless and unrealistic and calculated to land the country in serious difficulties".

In March of the same year, the Swatantra Party held a triumphant annual session in Patna. Mody seconding a resolution, once again refuted the description of Swatantrites as old and frustrated and said, "I am certainly old, but not frustrated. Though old, I am certainly not one of those ancient monuments that adorn the ministerial gaddis in the Centre." He charged the Congress with failing to give the country a clean administration and maintain the standards of efficiency the Britishers had left behind, "during thirteen years of undisturbed and autocratic power."

No more kid-gloves now! At a public meeting in Bombay convened to observe an anti-inflation day, Mody declared that the present Government "with its ideological obsessions and illogicality of its policies," was not at all competent to deal with the situation created by inflation. "One of these days I hope," he said, "the electorate will wake up to find that it is paying too heavy a price for the high living and plain thinking of its masters, and turn to a party which claims to possess a realistic outlook and which will strive its utmost to give the country a clean and efficient administration."

On October 23, 1961, entire Bombay celebrated Mody's 80th birthday. The Press published special articles and editorials, reviewing his long public career and eulogising his services to the country.

In a Mody profile in *Current*, D. F. Karaka wrote, "Mody's secret ambition still is to be a journalist, and his secret desires are to win at the races and to have his club bridge account written in black instead of red!"

But the celebration of Mody's 80th birthday however did not mean his retirement from public life—not by a long chalk! He was still very much in demand not only on the Swatantra Party platform, but at ladies' nights of the Bombay Rotary Club to speak on India's foreign policy, and by the Progressive Group to talk to them on the country's economic problems—but then they all expect him to be "funny"!

In a symposium in the *Illustrated Weekly* on the "State of the Nation", Mody severely attacked the Congress Government's "concentration of authority in its hands to build a monolithic state, and for its socialism, corruption and inefficiency."

At a Swatantra Party public meeting at Chowpati, in February 1962, Mody quipped: "I am rather nervous because if I am not careful the Prime Minister may ask me to go to hell. And, then, I will have to go there on foot, because all the Cadillacs and buses will have been taken away by Congressmen!" The allusion here was to Nehru's recent outburst at a political opponent.

Mody moved the foreign policy resolution at the 1964 convention of the Swatantra Party, held in Bangalore, and flayed the Government's Non-alignment policy. "The most objectionable part of our foreign policy," he said, "was the role of Nehru as a mentor in the world's affairs and fussy interference in matters which do not concern India." And then, he added, "Our foreign policy will be respected only when we fear none."

The last of the institutions from whose presidentship Mody retired was the Cricket Club of India. When in 1965, he relinquished charge after 27 years as its president, the CCI named him its Patron-in-Chief, and placed a marble bust of his on the premises.

XXII

SECRET BEHIND SUCCESS

When you were born, all around you laughed, my son.
while you cried;
"So live your life that when you depart, you will laugh,
while all around you weep.

—*A Persian couplet*

ON SIR Homi Mody's own affirmation, his approach to life is summed up in that Persian couplet.

In the mid-fortier, Mody was among a dozen eminent personalities of different nationalities of the world, invited by Ed Murrow, to participate in an international radio programme, in the series, "This I Believe". They were asked to make a statement of their personal beliefs "of the values which rule your thought and action."

The invitation stated: "What we want is so intimate that no one can write it for you. You must write it yourself, in the language most natural to you. One faces an intensely personal moment when he draws up his will, disposing of his belongings. Even more personal is the testament of his faith. It is this we ask you to write in your own words and then record in your voice. You may even find that it takes a request like this to reveal some of your own beliefs to yourself. If you set them down they may become of untold meaning to others as well."

In this unique introspective essay, offered to radio audiences in the United States and Britain, we find Mody's personal credo put in a nut-shell. The text of the script read:—

"My approach to life is summed up in an old Persian couplet which says: 'When you were born, all around you laughed, my son, while you cried; So live your life that when you depart, you will laugh, while all around you weep.'

"That is my faith and my aspiration. In the little world in which I move and have my being I would wish to be remembered for something said or done which had helped another along. I would deem my life wasted if material success was all I had achieved.

"There is no such thing as calculation in this attitude towards life. I do not cultivate the art of saying or doing the right thing;

in fact, I am somewhat impulsive and abrupt. But I feel happy when I have done some kindness, and I am troubled when some weakness of character impels me to anything petty or unworthy. This consciousness of what does not seem right helps to mould my thoughts and actions.

"I am not religious in the orthodox sense, but I believe in the Divine ordering of the Universe. When I see around me the countless marvels of creation, I refuse to think that life and nature in their myriad forms are the result merely of chemical or biological processes or blind chance. Were Aristotle, Leonardo da Vinci, Beethoven, Shakespeare nothing more than the resultant of the inter-action of chemical elements? Such a view of life would be abhorrent to me.

"I hope I have tolerance of other people's failings and a consciousness of my own. The vast majority of us are imperfect creatures. It would be a depressing business to turn too critical an eye on the faults of our fellow-men and it would rob life of much that it can give. There is a good deal that is likeable in most people, if we can get at it, and who can doubt the world would be a better place to live in if there were more of understanding and tolerance.

"By and large, I believe in free will. If we were to accept the inevitability of all that comes to us, human endeavour would cease to have a purpose. The striving to better ourselves, to better our lot and the belief that we can largely mould our lives, provide an urge which even a fatalist can scarce deny. And yet I know from my own experience there is such a thing as luck, and I do not quite know how to fit that into my philosophy....

"Finally, I would say, I do not take myself too seriously. I can laugh at myself and I certainly laugh at others. Happy in my family and social relations, I go through life, extracting what satisfaction I can from it, and I have much to be grateful for."

Side by side with a pugnacious pertinacity that brooks no obstacle in its way, there co-exists an element of modesty and humility. Likewise, in the midst of a surfeit of material success, one discerns in Mody a constant yearning for the less ephemeral values of the realm of the spirit.

Mody's dilemma is very human when he states he is unable to make up his mind between his firm belief that we can largely

mould our lives and his fatalistic conviction that "there is such a thing as luck." And he frankly confessed, "I do not quite know how to fit that into my philosophy."

Thus, Mody has repeatedly attributed his meteoric success in public and business life to luck and fortuitous circumstances. Speaking at Tatas' farewell reception to him, in an introspective moment, Mody observed: "Success comes to people in various ways, and is not always a matter of merit, and when I think—and I am not affecting modesty—of all the foolish things that I have done through my impetuousness, I cannot but regard what I may have achieved as a matter of happy accident."

Then again: "The only thing I can claim for myself is that I have held fast to certain values and ideals, and I hold that it is not so much what one achieves, as what one is, that really matters; and I would count myself fortunate, if I am remembered ever for some friendly word or deed that had brought cheer to another human being."

He who laughs may not grow fat, but may live longer. And he who can laugh at himself is certainly in no danger of taking life over-seriously. Mental poise and a sense of humour have obviously an advantage over a life repressed by tensions and anxiety neurosis, in that the latter life might be punctuated by duodenal ulcers or cut short by high blood pressure.

The equanimity and the sense of humour which Mody exudes are the cause as well as the effect of that state of being "happy in my family and social relations.... extracting what satisfaction" he could from life.

That brings us to yet another secret behind this success saga—Lady Mody's part in adding the yeast to Homi's private life and public career—whom one Journal described as "unobtrusively efficient in the task of being a successful man's wife."

At Tatas' farewell function in 1959, Mody paid this public tribute to Jerbai:

> Her good sense, her warmth of heart and instinct for doing the right thing have exerted a great deal of influence over me, and I can say that she has been a helpmeet to me in every sense of the word. There is always perfect understanding between us—and even here he could not resist a "Modyism", and added, "and whenever we disagree, she goes her own way, and I go hers."

On one occasion, at a function in his honour, people praised him to the skies, confessed Mody. But when he returned home and talked to his wife for five minutes, his feet were back again firmly on the terra firma !

He once confessed he has a wife who is not exactly a person of few words. She has made more speeches than he himself has ever delivered. "But," he added, "they have all been addressed to me."

Way back, when he was the Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Mody confided to the lady students of Isabella Thoburn College, in Lucknow, "I built a house in Bombay, and my wife took to interior decoration. I have had no peace since then. My furniture was never in the right place. Curtains and colour schemes changed very frequently. But I can assure you, these little differences of tastes and opinion have never led to any unpleasantness. I have always ended by agreeing with my wife."

As an aside, when Jerbai is looking the other way, Mody likes to tell his friends, with an impish wink, how his wife nearly sparked a zenana revolution while Governor's wife in Lucknow, by instigating the wives of taluqdars and nawabs to revolt against being neglected and left at home by their gallivanting husbands !

Lady Mody, at 71, is full of vitality and frightfully busy with social and cultural activities. She is the chairman of Time and Talent Club, and is a very much wanted personality in Bombay society, particularly in the field of welfare and charities.

Herself gifted with a boisterous sense of humour and who subscribes to the conventional proposition that marriage is a 50-50 affair, Jerbai claims that Homi is an ideal husband—"I let him have a lot of latitude in minor things, but on important matters, like spoiling children, I put my foot down."

Parenthetically, Sir Homi's weakness, as Lady Mody confides to you, has all along been pills. He swallows them by the dozen every day. He just can't resist them ! "Whenever in doubt, pop in a pill," would appear to be Sir Homi's motto.

In the absence of any physical exercise whatsoever, he explains, he likes to take the pills—just any pill, suggests Lady Mody—to make up for lack of exercise.

Having come thus far, we cannot resist a reference to Mody's favourite topic in public speeches—women, particularly modern

women—on which subject, on the slightest provocation, he tends to wax eloquent. The journal *Art in Industry,* of April 1947, defended this penchant of Mody's in these words: "His is, above all, a young heart. At 65, his wish is, as always, for the company of youth, especially of the saried sex."

On one of the many occasions he addressed Bombay's Progressive Group, Mody confessed, "The presence of young women, laden with learning and taking themselves seriously, somehow always provoked me into making irreverent or perverse observations. I must say I always found them a sporting lot; they seemed to enjoy whatever jokes were made at their expense"—that however does not appear to be the experience of others!

While Governor of U.P., Mody bluntly told the college girls of Moradabad, "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach—a well-cooked chapati, if you know how to make one, may be a sure passport." He then deprecated military training for girls as "against civilised concepts of women's place in society." "If I were today a young man matrimonially inclined, I would be scared of any girl brandishing a lathi or handling a rifle and looking ferocious and forbidding," Mody added.

Believe it or not, Mody is a great worrier—it is part of his temperament, he confesses, and he has never tried to combat worry. He worries most during idle hours.

For his age, Mody is in fine health, even though "I have never done a stroke of physical work in my life, and if I can help it, I won't walk a yard," he told a newspaper interviewer on his 80th birthday. He never diets and eats anything, though he has preference for plain food. And he drinks "as much as my quota permits me!"

Of old age, Mody commented, "It is an inexplicable feeling, this getting older. Sometimes I feel a little strange. But these things must happen."

If there is one trait, besides his famous wit, that has made a major contribution to Mody's success in public life, it is, to this writer's mind, his happy gift for saying the right thing in the right place and at the right time—which, again, means a fine sense of proportion. "In dealing with men, he practised the high art of suavity which comes naturally to all great salesmen," said a commentator. His speeches are remarkable for their felicity of

expression, originality of thought, a statesmanly vision and a constructive approach. If one were to look for other components of this success saga, one would add his pragmatic realism, horse-sense, dynamism and integrity.

What exactly is this man's political ideology? By instinct and upbringing, a conservative and conformist, Mody's allergy to socialism and such other leftist isms is unconcealed.

One commentator however described him as essentially non-political who "takes status quo to be the best possible arrangement in all spheres of life always." The same commentator added, "He never accepted office till the highest was offered to him. He dresses correctly according to the precepts of successful British business."

Pratap Bhogilal, in an article in *The Times of India,* attributes Sir Homi's unbroken success in life to his "innate and irrespressible capacity to distil mirth from the most unpromising material and to provoke the grimmest of taskmasters into laughter. To him no subject is staid, no situation is impossible."

Mody lived well, earned well, and spent well. He loved good food and wine and gay company. He drank deep at the fountain of life. And now as he looks back, down the corridors of some fifty odd years of a public career, he enjoys the unique sensation—unique because it is given to few humans—of contemplating upon a long and eventful life with quiet satisfaction, much contentment and few regrets.

Mody is 86 today—86 not out—a sparkling, unbeaten innings which, as Neville Cardus once described Bradman's displays well-orchestrated cadence.

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