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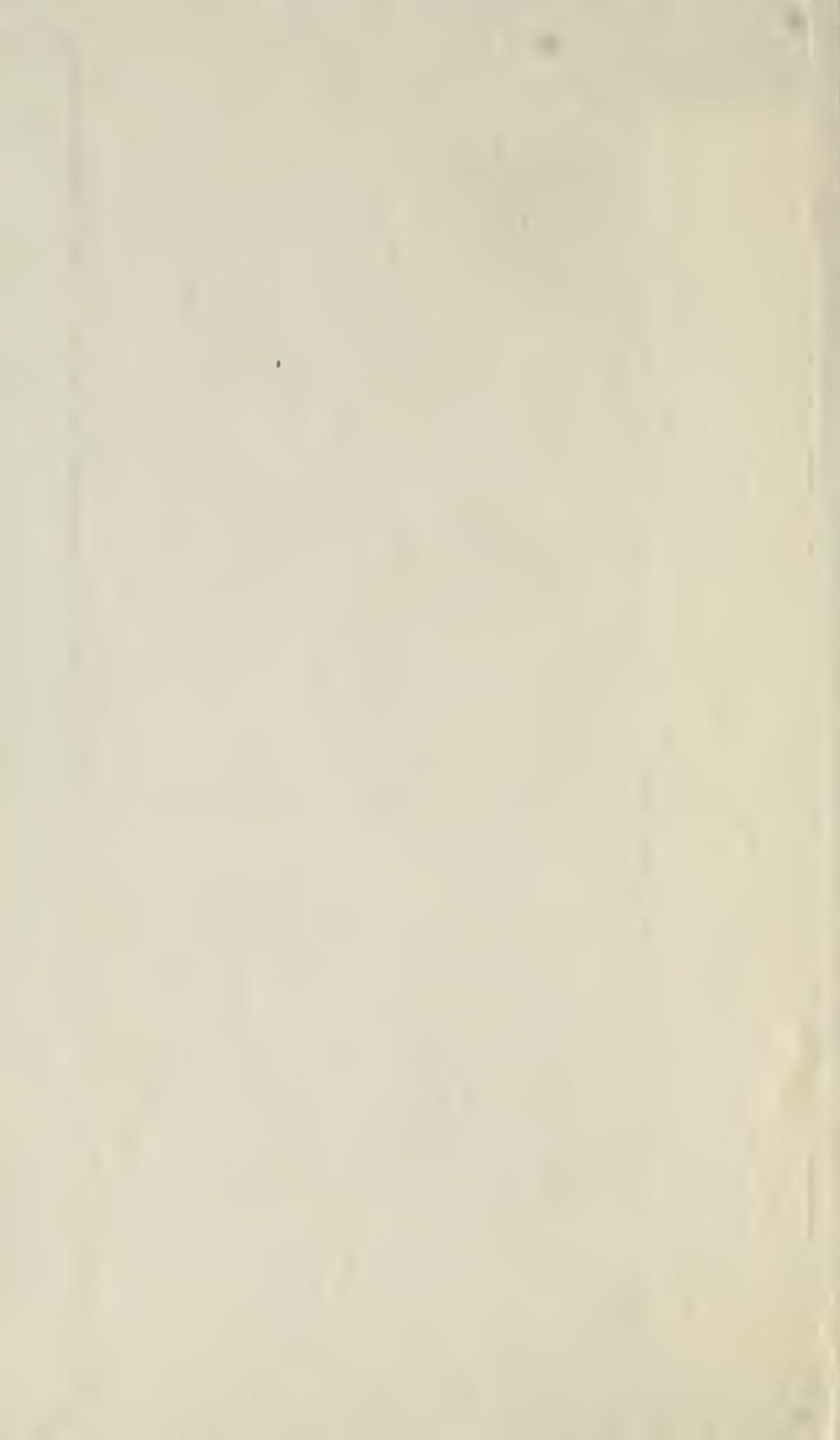


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BRIEF

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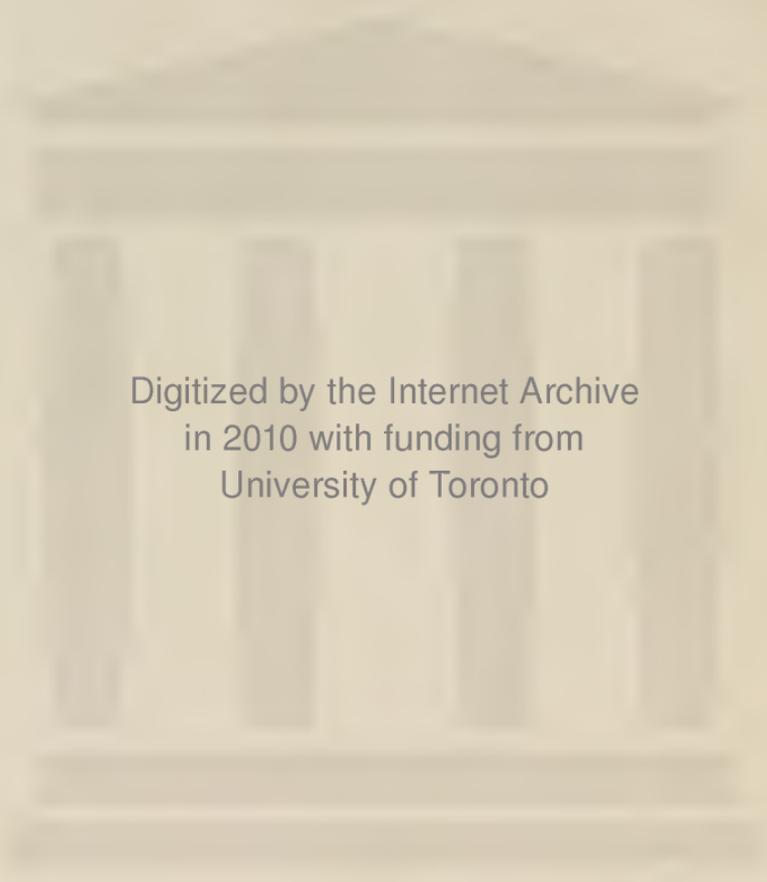
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Short Report of -
HINDU MAHASABHA
RELIEF ACTIVITIES

DURING

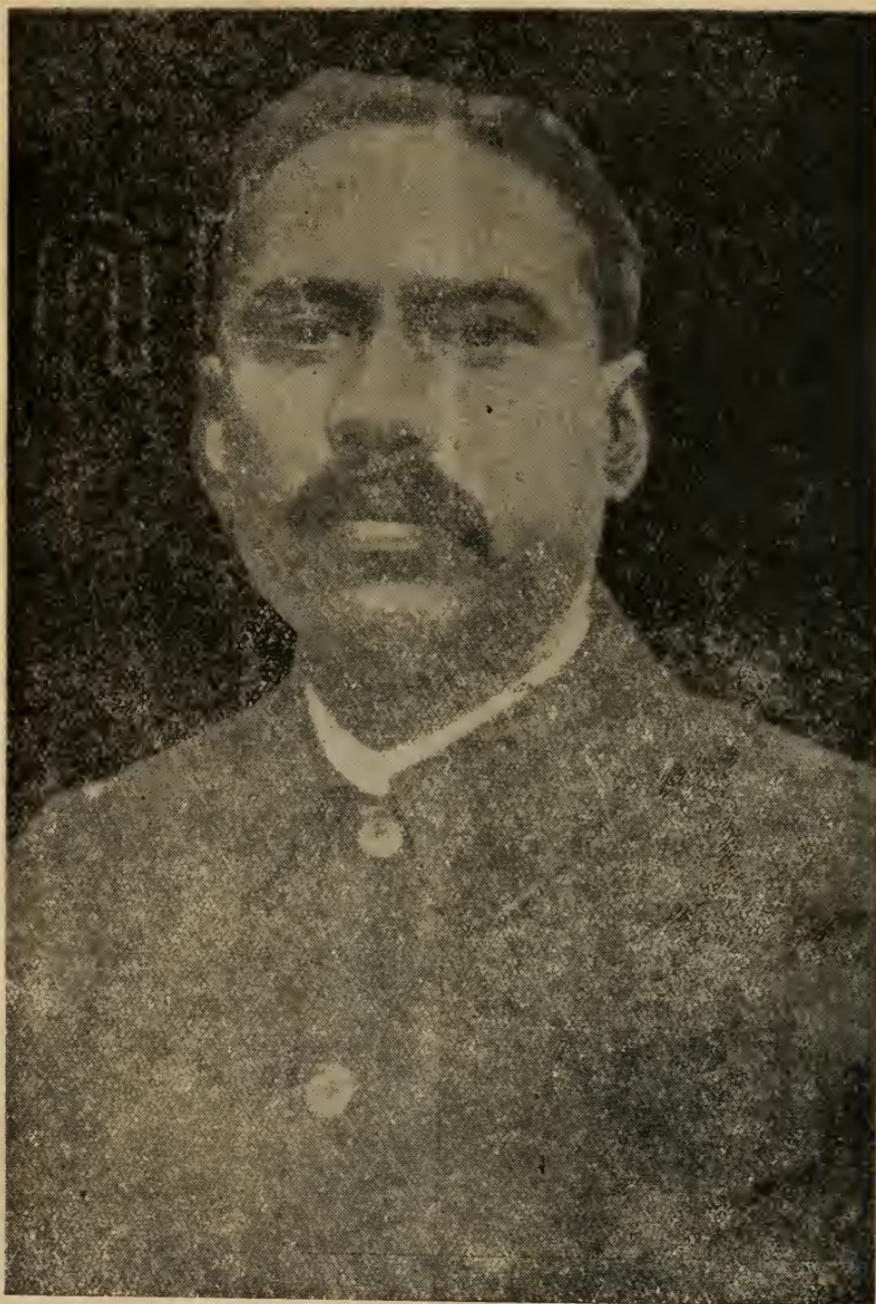
“Calcutta Killing”

AND

“Noakhali Carnage”



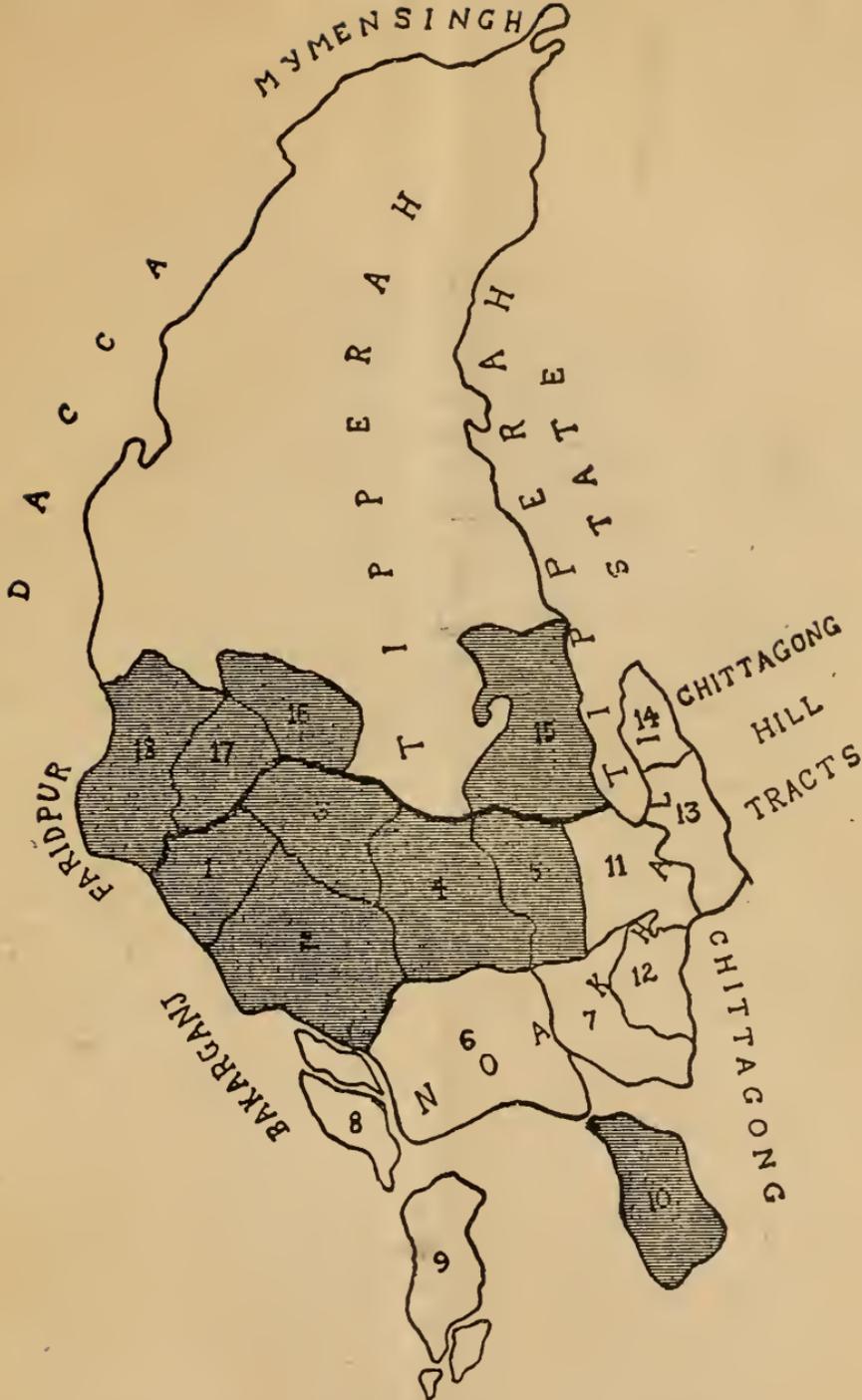
Mrs. Surabala Majumdar,
wife of Dr. Pratap Chandra Mazumdar
who was murdered by the Hooligans.
Nearest relation of Rajendralal Roy.



Sj. Rajendra Lal Roy Chowdhury (President Noakhali District Hindu Mahasabha ; President Noakhali Bar Association), who died a martyr's death in his village home fighting almost single-handed against thousands of armed hooligans.

rescuing and shifting stranded Hindu families immediately to safer zones of Bangabasi School and Mahasabha Office premises and Oriental Home. from the dangerous areas of Entally, Antony Bagan, Hayet Khan Lane, Park Circus, Phears Lane, Ultadanga, Muraripukur, Bagmari, Narkeldanga, Rajabazar, Manicktolla, Metiaburuz, Kalabagan, KidderPore, Howrah, Pilkhana etc. Sj. Ashutosh Lahiry, General Secretary, All India Hindu Mahasabha rendered yeoman's service in similar rescue works in N-E Calcutta. The working committee could not meet earlier than the 27th of August for the insecure conditions prevailing in the City and all traffic having, meanwhile, been closed. In pursuance of the decision of the working Committee held on the 27th August, several Committees were formed..... one for Salvage Operations, second for Relief and Defence and third for collecting data regarding the inaction and connivance of the Police and the Government during the riot and another for taking steps to enable the victims to obtain compensation from the Government for the loss of properties by fire and looting and also for the injuries. Forms were printed in prescribed forms by the Mahasabha Office and were distributed free to the sufferers of the City. A separate arrangement was made to look after those who were wrongly arrested on flimsy or no charge and through the untiring efforts of those Lawyers who are still working, many of those unfortunate victims were able to secure their release.

The main Centre was opened at Bangabashi School premises accommodating thousands of refugees. They were provided with clothes and rations contributed by the Government as well as the private citizens of the town. Medical aids were also arranged in each Centre. These Centres continued several months. Committees were formed in North Calcutta and East Calcutta for the Calcutta Riot. The refugees have gone back in large numbers of Manicktolla and also to Ultadanga and the Mahasabha has been maintaining even now several guards for the protection of the property of these refugees in those areas.



BAY OF BENGAL
MAP OF NOAKHALI & TIPPERAH
 Affected areas shaded

Percentage of Muslim population in the affected areas of the
 Noakhali and Tipperah districts!

NOAKHALI DISTRICT:			TIPPERAH DISTRICT:		
1.	Raipur Police Stn	89.9	15.	Chauddagram Police Stn.	83.2
2.	Lakshimpur do	84.6	16.	Hajiganj do	83.9
3.	Ramganj do	80.7	17.	Faridganj do	83.3
4.	Begamganj do	79.4	18.	Chandpur do	73.2
5.	Senbag do	84.5			
10.	Sandwip do	78.2			



MAP OF BENGAL
Muslim majority districts shaded

Names of districts with percentages of Muslim population

1. Noakhali	81'2	9. Rajshahi	74'7
2. Tipperah	77'1	10. Bogra	84'0
3. Chittagong	74'6	11. Malda	56'9
4. Dacca	67'3	12. Dinajpur	50'1
5. Mymensingh	77'4	13. Rangpur	71'3
6. Faridpur	61'3	14. Murshidabad	56'5
7. Backerganj	72'3	15. Nadia	61'2
8. Pabna	77'1	16. Jessore	60'1

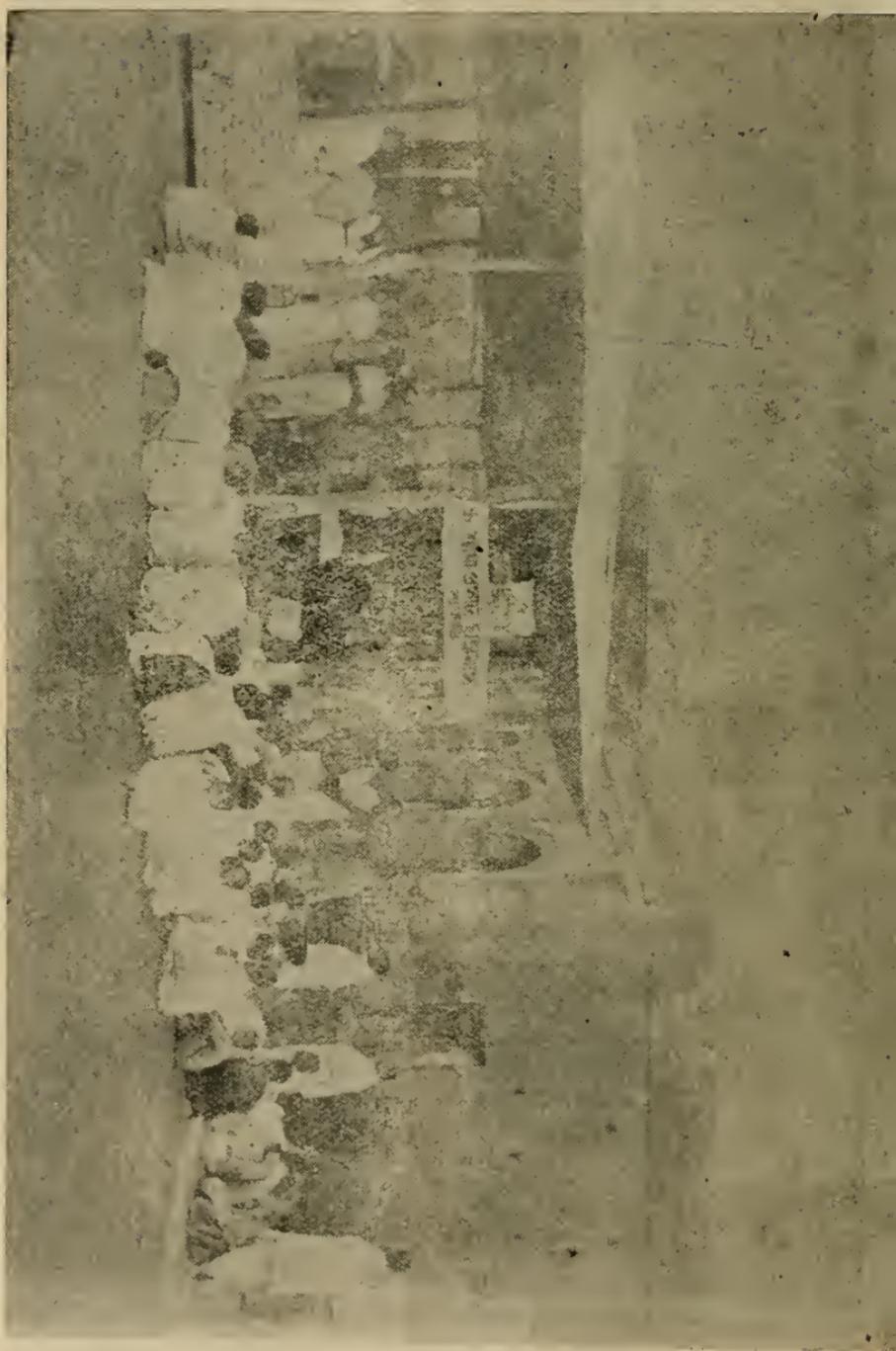
The following are the Hindu Majority areas in Bengal:
Cooch Behar State ; Hill Tipperah State.

11 Districts—Chittagong Hill Tracts; Jalpaiguri; Darjeeling
Khulna; 24 Parganas (including Calcutta); Hooghly;
Howrah; Midnapore; Burdwan; Bankura; Birbhum

NOAKHALI CARNAGE

The whole attention of the Hindu Mahasabha was however diverted towards Noakhali in the middle of October when the news of the barbarities perpetrated on the people there reached our office. Sjt. Ashutosh Lahiry, General Secretary, All India Hindu Mrhasabha went to Chandpur immediately receiving the news of the Noakhali events. The affected areas were then inaccessible to the public. Dr. Syamaprasad Mookerjee, Sjt. N. C. Chatterjee and Pandit Narendranath Das along with other workers of Hindu Mahasabha flew to Comilla and entered the affected areas with military escorts. A Plain was immediately requisitioned and it was despatched to the affected area fully loaded with rice, chira, bread, milk, biscuits, barley and medicines. This was followed by the despatch of other large consignments by train. The Working Committee met on the 7th November and arranged for continued systematic relief work. About a lac of people fled from the affected areas of Noakhali in the end of October 1946—some as actual sufferers and some panic-stricken. Bulk of these people came to Calcutta and were given protection in about 60 Centres in the City and its suburbs of which the Centres shown in Appendix "A" were opened and conducted by the Mahasabha directly. These Centres gave accommodation to the refugees numbering about 25,000. Besides Medical Aid, rations, clothes, garments, chadars, blankets etc were given to them. Mahasabha also helped other Charitable Organisations engaged in such works in the City with large quantity of blankets, clothes, garments etc., worth about Rs. 75,000/- for distribution amongst the refugees, given shelter by them. A considerable number migrated also to Assam and Agartola in Tripura State and also in Nabadwip in Nadia District.

The Hindu Mahasabha had to organise a Volunteer Corps for escorting safe the victims of the riots both at the Howrah and Seal-dah Railway Stations. Some of them are still working to help the refugees in their return journey. Batches of volunteers worked in



A Photo of "Shyamaprosad Chatrabas" at Bajapiti

Si. N. C. Chatterjee working President B. P. H.M.S. is addressing the public

Sjts. N. C. Chatterjee, Working President, Bengal Provincial Hindu Mahasabha, D. N. Mookherjee, General Secretary and Nagen-dranath Bose, Asst. Secretary proceeded to the affected areas in the Districts of Noakhali and Tipperah to contact the people who were still living there to fix upon a line of action for the repatriation of the people who left their homes. On consulting Mr. Larkin, the then Relief Commissioner and also local leaders, Sjt. N. C. Chatterjee considered the Zonal Settlement to be the best method of restoring a sense of security amongst the panic-stricken people and of persuading them to return to those villages. Accordingly, steps were taken to start centres at Bamni in P. S. Raipur, Dalalbazar in P. S. Lakshmi-pur, Paikpara in P. S. Faridganj. It was found that some people coming back to these Centres. The Hindu Mahasabha was approached by the people of other different places to build sheds for the refugees and to proceed with the Zonal Settlement, in other places. Accordingly, Sjt. M. L. Biswas, Secretary, B. P. H. M. S, Major P. Bardhan, Medical Secretary and Sjt. J. N. Banerjee, Treasurer were sent to the affected areas where Centres were opened at different places to carry on relief works (**Appendix "B"**)

A well equipped Hospital of 25 beds has been opened at Lakshmi-pur in memory of Late Sjt. Rajendralal Roy of Karpara Presendent, Noakhali District Hindu Mahasabha by Sjt. Sanat Kumar Roy Chowdhury Vice-President B. P. H. M. S. Dr. Subodh Mitra is placed in-charge of it. Mobil Medical Units are attached one to each Centre and are being run by efficient Medical Officers (**Appendix "C"**) Sjt. N. C. Chatterjee with Sjt. Dharendra Kumar Ghosh. Atulya Charan De Asst. Secretary and others visited the area for the third time and opened "Shyamprasad Chatrabas" at Bajapti amidst great enthusiasm.

Although repatriation is very slow, still it is expected that if other Organisations follow this line of action, a good number of the refugees may come back to their homes.

The Relief works done and undertaken by the Hindu Mahsabha may be broadly divided under the following heads:-

- (1) Rehabilitation work for those who are not willing to go back to their villages (**Appendix D**)
- (2) Educational Relief such as supply of books, providing funds for examination fees, starting Students' Home etc. (**Appendix E**)
- (3) Agrarian and Vocational Relief (**Appendix F**)
- (4) Supply of clothes, blankets and utensils and other necessities of life (**Appendix G**)
- (5) Women's Homes (**Appendix H**)
- (6) Medical Relief (**Appendix C**)
- (7) Supplementing other sister organisations with help of cash and kind including individual relief and marriage expenses (**Appendix I**)
- (8) Legal Defence of innocent and poor Hindus (**Appendix K**)
- (9) Protecting and feeding the refugees (**Appendix-L**)
- (10) Zonal Settlement for repatriation.

In order that the funds contributed by the generous public may be well administered, Dr. Mookerjee appointed a firm of Incorporated Accountants, M/S. P. K. Mitter & Co. to take full control of the collections. The Cashier appointed by the said Accountants receives all collections and deposits the same to Banks. The Relief Committee meets every day for prompt action on all applications for help. The members of the Relief Committee pass written orders on such applications for relief and the Cashier of the Relief Fund issues cheques to the applicants in the mofussil and pays cash to those who come to the office to receive the grants. These receipts and disbursements are entered by the Accountant specially appointed by the said Firm for this purpose. These accounts are also being audited regularly by the said Firm.

Notwithstanding this great catastrophe, it is a matter of satisfaction to the members of the Relief Committee to see a keen sense of fellow-feeling now awakened amongst all Hindus in every Province of India.



· Hospital opening (Lekshmpur)



;

the Workers of Bajpiti R. R. Hindu Mahasabha Camp.

APPENDIX "A".

1. Bangabasi College premises.
2. City College Relief Camp, 25, Mirzapur St.
3. 28, Pratapaditya Place.
4. Entally Relief Centre.
5. Beliaghata Hindn Mahasabha Relief Centre,
6. Jorasanko Relief Centre.
7. Haridas Saha Bazar, Upper Circular Road.
8. Kashipur (Narain Hous
9. Belgharia (Seals Garden House)
10. Barisha.
11. Behala, Abhoy Vidyalankar.
12. Budge Budge.
- 13 Provincial Hindu Mahasabha Office,
162, Bowbazar Street.
14. Howrah.
15. Sukea Street.

APPENDIX "B"

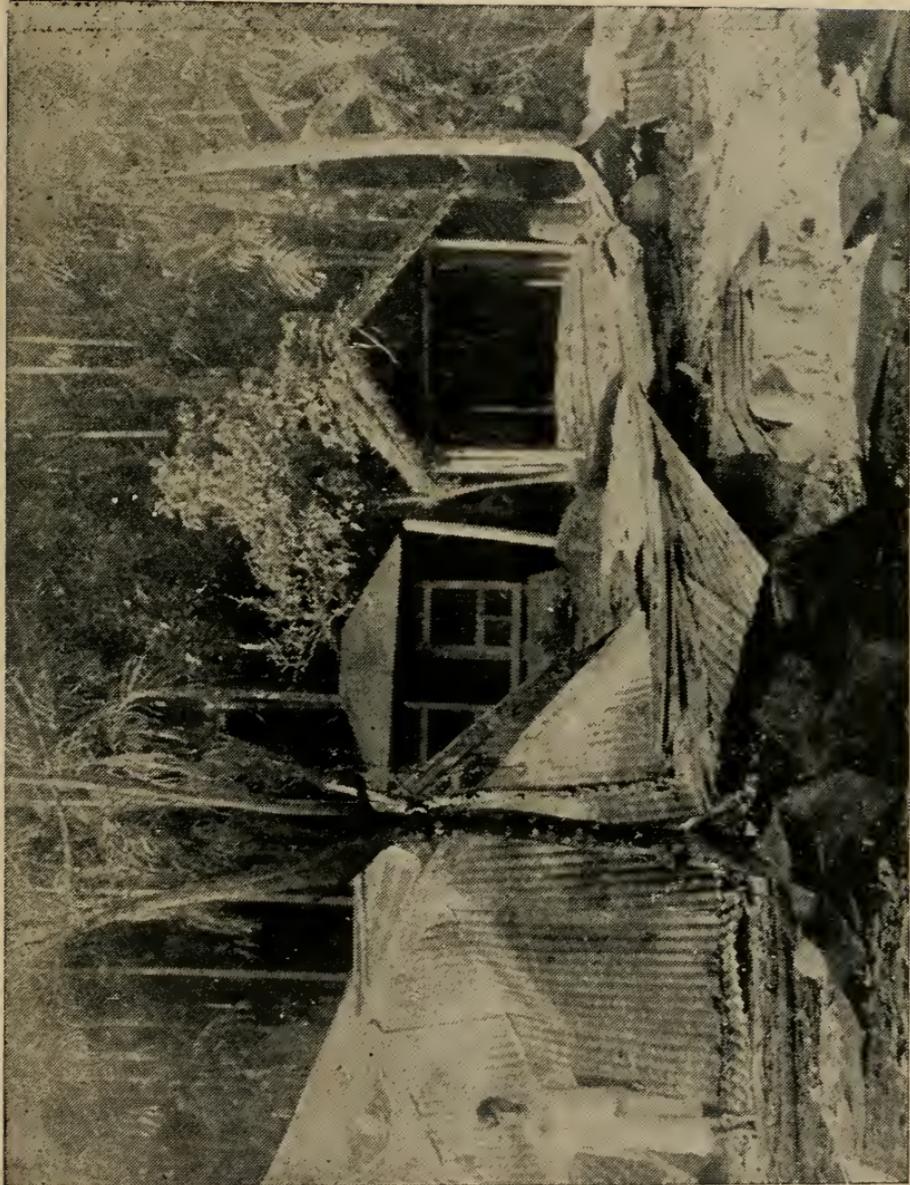
Hindu Mahasabha Relief and Rehabilitation Centres

CHANDPUR & NOAKHALI

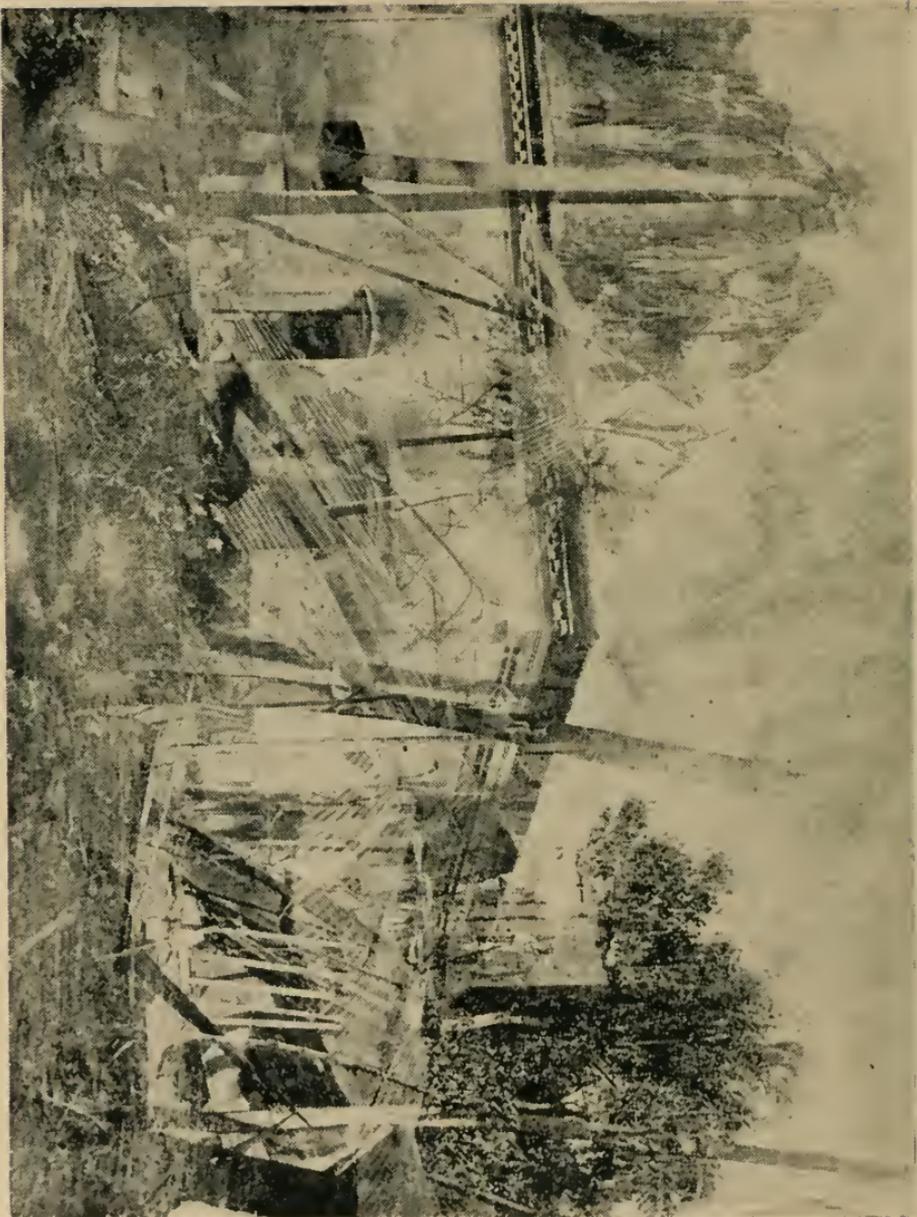
C/C. Sj. Jibesh Ch, Deb Pattanayak

C.M.O. Dr. Jogesh Ch. Sur

Centres	Officer-in-Charge
1. Bajapati (Chandpur Sub-division)	Sj. Sreenath Pal Choudhury
2. Barali do	Swami Bhaktananda
3. Paikpara do	Sj. Nakul Chandra Choudhury
4. Gupti do	„ Ramesh Chandra Sen
5. Choumohani (Noakhali)	„ Satya Ranjan De
6. Dalalbazar do	„ Karunamoy Ghosh
7. Charpata-Raipur-Bamni (Noakhali)	„ Amiya Bhattacharjee
8. Khilpara do	„ Indranath Chakrabarty
9. Duttapara do	„ Upendra Kumar Naha
10. Karpara do	„ Surendra Kumar Das
11. Lakshmipur do	„ Jyotsna Kumar Dutta Roy
12. Panchgaon-Jayag do	„ Ajoy Kumar Dutta
13. Nacri do	„ Chittaranjan Das
14. Narayanpur do	„ Benoyendra Guha Roy
15. Chandpur (Tipperah)	
16. Khajuria do	



Nabasudra Bari (Chandpur) 98 Houses



House of Babu Ajendralal Roy (Karpara) 48 Houses

APPENDIX "C"

HOSPITAL & MEDICAL UNITS

<p>1. A well equipped hospital for both out-door and indoor patients of 25 beds opened in memory of Late Rajendralal Roy Chowdhury of Karpara, President, Noakhali District Hindu Mahasabha. 200 out-door patients receiving medicines and medical aid daily. Five M. B. Doctors, five qualified nurses employed under the management of Dr. Subodh Mitra, M. D. An approximate monthly cost of up-keep of the hospital has been estimated to the extent of Rs. 3,000/- per month. ... It has invested Capital out-lay.</p>	<p>36,000/- 45,000/-</p>
<p>2. Mobile Medical Units attached to each relief centres have been working under efficient Doctors with an estimated cost of Rs 200/- for each unit per month for one year besides free supply of medicines received from various sources.</p>	<p>24,000/-</p>
<p>3. Individual medical relief from Provincial office to Noakhali and Tipperah refugees at Calcutta.</p>	<p>174/-</p>
<p>4. Purchase of an Ambulance Car.</p>	<p>8,437/14/-</p>

APPENDIX "D"

Rehabilitations for the refugees unwilling to go back to their homes.

<p>1. 35 Weavers families were provided with looms and other necessaries settled at Sonarpur. Messrs. Bengal Cotton Cultivation Ltd., have undertaken to make the above provision.</p>	
<p>2. 111 persons of Noakhali and Tipperah have been provided with cash grant to re-start their small business at Calcutta Rs.</p>	<p>2,000/-</p>
<p>3. To individuals from Mahasabha Office direct including rebuilding of houses</p>	<p>155/-</p>

APPENDIX "E"

Educational Relief to the helpless Students of Affected Areas of Noakhali and Tipperah

	Rs.	As.	P.
1. Examination fees, and cost of books supplied.	955	0	0
2. Students Home at Bajapti and Dalalbazar. 100 boys for one year @ Rs. 30/- per boy per month.	36,000	0	0
3. Grants to primary schools attached to each Centre @ Rs. 100/- per school for one year	14,000	0	0
4. Monthly grant for 15 H. E. Schools in the affected areas @ Rs. 100/- per school per month for one year.	18,000	0	0
5. Individual students grants	1,393	0	0

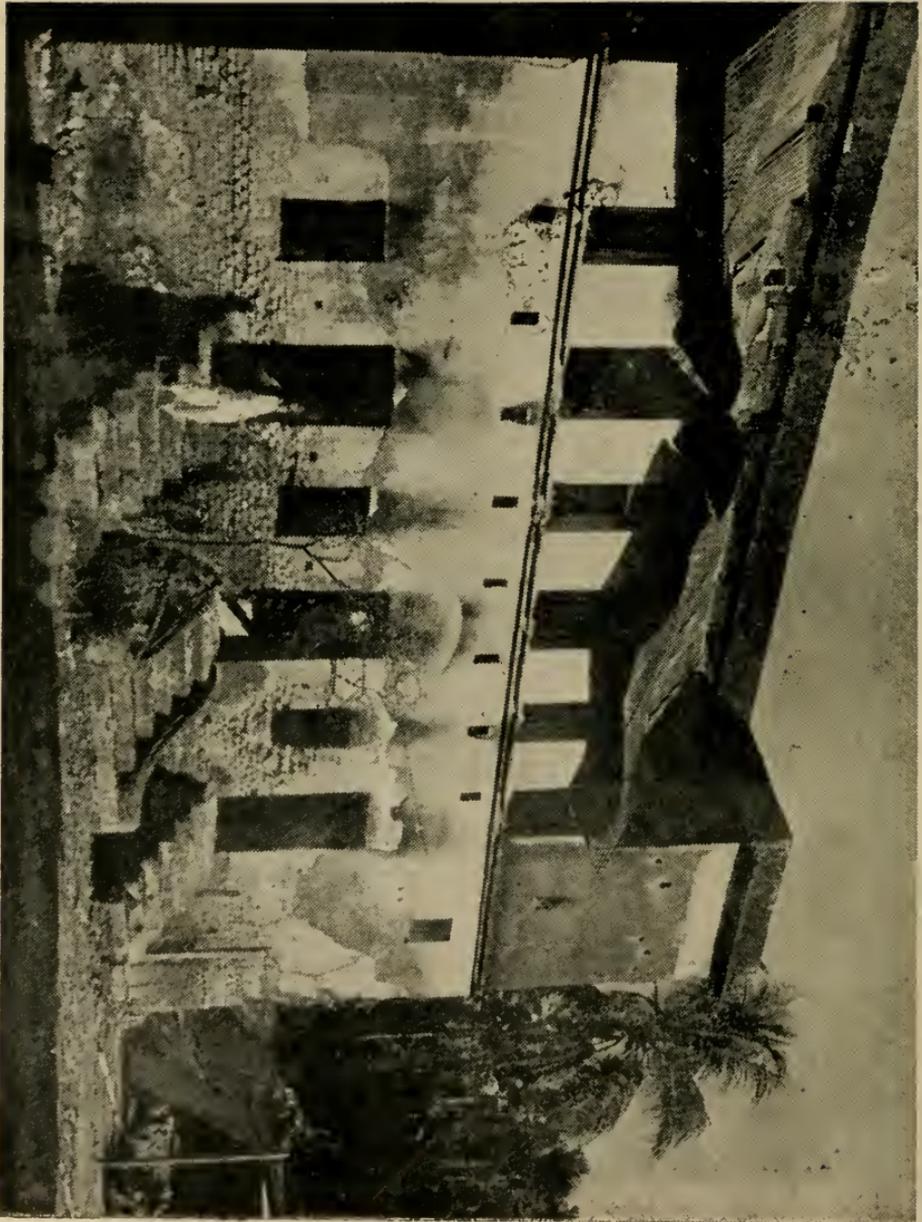
APPENDIX "F"

AGRARIAN AND VOCATIONAL RELIEF.

1. Agricultural implements—such as tractors, spades, cattle etc.	50,000	0	0
2. Looms, tools and plants for the weavers, carpenters, fishermen, potters, smithies etc.	50,000	0	0



Hindu Mahasabha Relief Centre [Bamni]



Thakur Bari [Chandpur]

APPENDIX "G"

Expenses incurred by cloth purchase.

	Rs.	As.	P.
(1) Distribution of new clothes, chadders, blankets, garments and utensils etc. by purchase.	31,366	12	0
(2) Distribution of old clothes 9500 pieces			
Old garments. 15000 -do-			
(3) Distribution of new woolen blankets			
(received free) 500 -do-			
Garments and Jarsis. 5520 -do-			

APPENDIX "H".

Women's Home

Arrangements made for one home at Noakhali and one home at Chandpur with accommodation of 50 helpless women Victims in each home for one year approximately	36,000	0	0
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APPENDIX "I".

Supplementing other sister organisations with help of cash and kinds including miscellaneous grants for individual Relief and Marriages etc.

(1) Paid to Dr. Nripendra Bose of Comilla for the depressed Classes.	6,500	0	0
(2) Paid to relief Co-ordination Committee at Choumohani through Sj. K.L. Dalal	5,000	0	0
(3) Paid to Lady Abala Bose.	1,500	0	0
(4) Paid to relief Co-ordination through N.K. Mitra.			
(5) Individual relief and marriage expenses.	2,176	0	0

APPENDIX "K"

LEGAL DEFENCE OF INNOCENT AND POOR HINDUS.

Legal defence of innocent and poor Hindus at Chandpur and Noakhali (for six months.)	Rs. 3,300/-
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APPENDIX "L"

Protecting and feeding the refuses at Calcutta; Sealdah, Goalanda, Chandpur, Chowmohani, and other places.	60,830/12/3
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COMMITMENTS

(1) Mobile Medical Units.	Rs. 24 000/-
(2) Students Home.	36,000/-
(3) Primary school grants.	14,000/-
(4) School grants (H.E.)	18,000/-
(5) Agrarian and Vocational grants, Agricultural implements.	1,00,000
(6) Looms, tools etc.	50,000/-
(7) House building grants.	2,00,000/-
(8) Hospital expenses.	36,000/-

Total disbursement up to 31 Jany. 1947.....1,62,886/-

Commitments made upto 31st Jany, 1947 4,78,000/-

Total Receipts 9,16,320/-

Debendra Nath Mukherjee
General Secretary.

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CALCUTTA

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NOAKHALI TIPPERAH TRAGEDY

The tragedy of East Bengal, particularly Noakhali and Tipperah, is known to all. Mahatma Gandhi has declared that he would not hesitate to bury himself in the villages of Noakhali if the cause of peace requires such a sacrifice. While the conscience of the modern world is groping for light in this devastated area, we, his humble followers scattered over this vast sub-continent, must play our part in bringing relief and assurance to the helpless and the distressed. The Noakhali Relief, Rescue and Rehabilitation Committee (15 Clive Row, Calcutta) has been doing as much service for the sufferers as it possibly do, in co-operation with the Bengal Provincial Relief Committee. I appeal to all sons and daughters of India, irrespective of caste, creed and political affiliation, to send contributions to that Committee so that its humanitarian work may continue undisturbed.

Sachin Kripalani



NOAKHALI RESCUE, RELIEF & REHABILITATION
COMMITTEE : 15, CLIVE ROW : CALCUTTA

Three centuries ago Francois Bernier, a Frenchman by birth and a physician by profession, spent twelve years in India. In a letter to Colbert, the famous French statesman, he gave a very enthusiastic account of the riches and the natural attractions of Bengal. "The country", he wrote, "produces rice in such abundance that it supplies not only the neighbouring but remote States *Bengale* abounds likewise in sugar, with which it supplies the kingdoms of *Golkonda* and *the Karnatic*,. . . *Arabia* and *Mesopotamia* and even *Persia* In regard to valuable commodities of a nature to attract foreign merchants, I am acquainted with no country where so great a variety is found There is in *Bengale* such a quantity of cotton and silks, that the kingdom may be called the common storehouse for these two kinds of merchandise, not of *Hindoustan* or the Empire of the *Great Mogul* only, but of all the neighbouring kingdoms, and even of Europe." The letter concluded with a reference to the proverb in common use among Europeans in India in the seventeenth century, "that the kingdom of *Bengale* has a hundred gates open for entrance but not one for departure."

Within 90 years of Bernier's departure from this land of the "Pagoda Tree" Bengal came under the rule of the East India Company. The battle of Plassey took place in 1757. The *Dewani* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was granted to the Company by the puppet Emperor of Delhi, Shah Alam II, in 1765. In 1770 Bengal was visited by one of the worst famines known to history. One-third of the entire population died of starvation and disease. Cultivation decreased as a matter of course; even in 1789 Lord Cornwallis could describe Bengal to the extent of one-third as "a jungle inhabited only by wild beasts." But the new British rulers of the country collected taxes from the famished peasants with criminal callousness. Warren Hastings observed that "the net collections of the year 1771 exceeded even those of 1768."

So Bengal, the land of milk and honey, became with the advent of British rule the land of starvation and misery. With the introduction of Permanent Settlement in 1793 began an

agrarian and political revolution which has not yet exhausted its force. The interests of the actual cultivator were totally ignored and he was placed completely at the mercy of the zemindar. At the same time the old zemindars, who took a hereditary interest in the welfare of the ryots, were replaced by a new class of landholders intimately connected with the Company. In the words of Vincent Smith, the well-known diehard civilian-historian, the new zemindars were "selfish, greedy speculators, indifferent to everything except their own immediate pecuniary interest." As supporters of British rule they became a political force of great importance. They served their British masters well by exploiting the peasantry and also by upholding reactionary principles in society and politics.

The first half of the nineteenth century saw the steady impoverishment of the cultivator in Bengal. Land was losing its fertility, and the pressure of increasing population was leading to sub-division and fragmentation in alarming haste. There was no remedy against the oppressive exactions of "selfish, greedy" zemindars, for the first Rent Act was not passed till 1859. The rapid decay of industries made it impossible for the peasant to take up alternative or subsidiary occupations. Montgomery Martin wrote in 1838: "Under the pretence of free trade England has compelled the Hindus to receive the products of the steam-looms of Lancashire, Yorkshire, Glasgow, at mere nominal duties while the hand-wrought manufactures of Bengal and Bihar, beautiful in fabric and durable in wear, have had heavy and almost prohibitive duties imposed on their importation to England." In 1828 a distressed widow of Bengal, who used to support a family of six from her income from her *charka*, found herself in a desperate situation on account of the import of cotton yarn from England, and wrote to a newspaper, "I was told that all the people of England are rich but now I find that there must be women in England who are poorer and more unfortunate than we, who cannot sell their yarn in their own markets and send this to India to be sold so cheaply here to our utter ruin. I beg to draw the attention of the spinners there to my petition and request them not to send their yarn to this country". But the cry of distress from rural areas as the cottage industries died out could not certainly move the British industrialists into

sentimental humanitarianism. The heartless and cruel policy of crushing Indian industries could not be deviated from its course by widows' petitions and beggars' cries. This policy was so successful that the population of Dacca, the seat of the Muslin industry, was halved in 16 years (1813—30). This rapid decay of Bengal's prosperity was partly responsible for the beginning of Indian labour emigration to British colonies. Between 1834 and 1838, 25,000 indentured labourers went to Mauritius, the majority of them being from the Bengal districts of Burdwan and Bankura.

During the second half of the nineteenth century Bengal began to suffer from political injustice in addition to economic strangulation. The story of the part played by Bengal in India's struggle for freedom is too well-known to be repeated here. As soon as the educated Hindus of Bengal began to protest against the political and economic exploitation of India, they incurred the displeasure of the British Bureaucracy. Lord Dufferin declared that the British Government would not "be content to allow this microscopic minority to control their administration of that majestic and multiform empire for whose safety and welfare they are responsible in the eyes of God and before the face of civilization." When the 'microscopic minority' began to show unmistakable signs of strength and determination, Lord Minto created a gulf between the two principal communities in India by granting separate electorate to the Muslims.

The partition of Bengal and the introduction of separate electorate were well-planned measures for crushing the Hindus of Bengal. Sir Bampfylde Fuller, Lieutenant-Governor of East Bengal and Assam, openly described the Muslims as his "favourite wife." The favours conferred upon this "favourite wife" did not, however, improve the condition of the Muslim peasantry. They starved as they had been starving for more than a century; the favours of the Government were monopolised by a very small class of educated Muslims, whom wealth and political influence gradually estranged from their humble co-religionists.

The anti-Hindu policy deliberately and systematically pursued by the British Government for about half a century

reached its logical conclusion in the constitution framed in 1935. According to the Census Report of 1941 the non-Muslims constitute 45.7 per cent. of the total population of Bengal; deducting Christians and "others," the Hindus must be taken to constitute 45.1 per cent. of the population. It may be noted in passing that the figures from which these percentages were deduced were, in the opinion of the overwhelming majority of the Hindus who had anything to do with the Census or watched its operation, far from correct, and there has been a considerable manipulation for reducing the number of non-Muslims with the obvious purpose of injuring their political interests. However, even the official figures were not given due weight in the case of the Hindus. They were given only 80 seats in the Bengal Legislative Assembly composed of 250 members. Instead of getting weightage as a minority they got less than their share calculated on the population basis. The Muslims got 119 seats and found steady support from 30 Europeans. This arrangement totally excluded the Hindus from the sphere of Provincial administration. The Muslims became the rulers of Bengal as subordinate partners of the British Government.

During the last ten years (1937-46) Bengal has been governed by Muslim Ministries. /Except Mr. Fazlul Huq's last Cabinet which held office for about a year (1942-43) and was turned out unconstitutionally by the Governor, Sir John Herbert, no other Cabinet included any representative Hindu Minister./ The Muslim Ministers systematically injured the economic and cultural interests of the Hindus. High posts and lucrative contracts were given to a small class of educated or even half-educated Muslims, but nothing was done to relieve the distress of the Muslim peasantry. No step was taken for the abolition of the zemindari system. Several millions of Muslims were killed by the Great Famine of 1943, and Bengal was then ruled by a Muslim League Ministry with Mr. Suhrawardy, the present Chief Minister, as the Minister of Civil Supplies. The Muslim cultivators of jute were left to the merciless exploitation of the European merchants in return for their political support. These broad but inconvenient facts were kept concealed from the Muslim masses by skilful propaganda. The paid and subsidized emissaries of the Muslim League told the ignorant peasantry

that their sufferings were due to the machinations of the Hindus. They were assured that nothing but the establishment of Pakistan could liberate them from economic exploitation by the Hindus. Religion was invoked in support of this political programme: Islam was to be kept free from the contagion of Hindu idolatry. Open declaration of these and similar reprehensible sentiments, frequently violently anti-Hindu in spirit and language, went on unchecked for several years.

Such propaganda reached its climax during the elections held in the winter of 1945-46 and secured for the Muslim League its phenomenal electoral victory. Those Muslims who remained unconvinced were forced to vote for Muslim League candidates; intimidation and persecution succeeded where propaganda failed. When the elections were over Mr. Suhrawardy formed a Ministry composed of his personal followers among the Muslim League members of the Bengal Legislature. He could not secure a single Hindu Minister except Mr. J. N. Mandal, whom Mr. Jinnah has recently sent to the Interim Government to work as a "sentinel" (to quote Mr. Jinnah's significant expression) of the Muslim League. With the support of the European Group in the Legislature Mr. Suhrawardy began his final campaign against the Hindus. Most of the key posts under the Government of Bengal were given to Muslim officers or European officers known to be friendly to the Muslim League. The ground was thus prepared for the inauguration of Pakistan.

The story of the crusade against the Hindus, which began on the 16th August and is still continuing, is but partially known outside the boundaries of Bengal. Mr. Suhrawardy has issued Ordinance after Ordinance to gag the Press in Bengal. In all his public statements he has tried to minimise the gravity of the situation. One instance will suffice. On the 17th October he declared at a Press Conference in Calcutta that "the disturbances" had "definitely" been "stopped," though as a matter of fact villages in Tipperah, a district adjoining Noakhali, were being burnt, men forcibly converted *en masse*, and women abducted and dishonoured. Very few European officers, if any, were beyond playing the League game. Mr. P. D. Martyn, a former District Magistrate of Noakhali and now the Secretary of the Political Department, was present at the above-mentioned

Press Conference and prompted the Chief Minister to make that false and mischievous statement. Mr. McInerny, whom Mr. Suhrawardy sent to Noakhali as District Magistrate after the outbreak of the crusade, came out with a statement which deliberately sought to minimise the tragedy, and was certainly inaccurate, if not false, in every detail. General Bucher's first public statement was made even before he had paid any visit to the devastated villages, many of which are still closed to his troops, not to speak of the unarmed relief workers. The Governor of Bengal, whose inactivity has been censured even by that unbending champion of the Bureaucracy—*The Statesman*,—sent to his superiors at Whitehall hopelessly inaccurate reports about the sufferings of the Hindus in East Bengal. Thanks, however, to Mahatma Gandhi and Acharya Kripalani this Anglo-Muslim conspiracy to keep the rest of the world uninformed and ignorant about the sufferings of the Hindus of Bengal has failed. The resolutions of the Congress Working Committee and the statements made by the President of the Congress and Mahatma Gandhi from day to day have focussed the attention of all provinces on this communal plague-spot of India.

The "Great Calcutta Killing" began on the 16th August—the "Direct Action Day" of the Muslim League. *The Statesman* wrote editorially on the 20th August under the heading "Disgrace Abounding":

"The origin of the appalling carnage and loss in the capital of a great province was a political demonstration by the Muslim League Maintenance of law and order is any Ministry's prime obligation But instead of fulfilling this, it (*i.e.*, Mr. Suhrawardy's Ministry) undeniably, by confused acts of omission and provocation, contributed rather than otherwise to the horrible events which have occurred in retrospect, its conduct before the riots stands open to the inference—not only by its political opponents—that it was divided in mind on whether rioting of some sort would be good or bad.'

The Hindus, of course, were quite unprepared for this unprovoked attack, unimaginable in its suddenness and ferocity, on their life and property. It was only after two days of unrestrained murder, loot and arson that they were able to make

effective resistance. The Congress Working Committee resolution of the 31st August contains the following statement:

“After the initial orgy of murders, loot and arson, the Hindus and others retaliated and indulged in reprisals wherever they could and a large number of Muslims were killed.”

From Calcutta the “Direct Action” spread to East Bengal, where the Muslims constitute the overwhelming majority in the population in every district. Dacca was almost immediately affected; Noakhali and Tipperah suffered next. In all these districts the Muslim peasants were excited by false propaganda systematically carried on by men representing or speaking in the name of the Muslim League. Ignorant villagers were told that the Hindus had killed almost all the Muslims living in Calcutta and they were urged to kill their Hindu neighbours in retaliation. In Noakhali the leader of this crusade was a prominent Muslim Leaguer of the district, who was a member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly for several years (1937-45). The Muslim Ministries which were in power during this period allowed this man complete immunity against all laws, full freedom to preach *zehad* against the Hindus, and means to organise local hooligans under his leadership.

Noakhali is a small district in the south-east corner of Bengal. It has an area of 1,658 square miles. It is inhabited by 1,803,937 Muslims and 406,261 Hindus. The scene of “Direct Action” embraced six Police stations covering a total area of 790 square miles. These six Police stations (Raipur, Lakshmipur, Ramganj, Begamganj, Senbag, and Sandwip) are inhabited by 996,455 Muslims and 220,507 Hindus. It is clear that this overwhelming numerical superiority of the Muslims places the Hindus absolutely at their mercy. Several other factors have intensified the helplessness of the Hindus. They do not live in large numbers in compact and isolated villages. Apart from exclusively Muslim villages there are mixed villages in which a small number of Hindus live side by side with their Muslim neighbours. Under these circumstances it is quite impossible for the Hindus to defend themselves if the Muslims fall upon them. Moreover, most Hindu young men, specially those belonging to the educated classes, live in Calcutta or other towns where they earn their living; they are not usually avail-

able for defending their families and Hindu neighbours. Finally, most of the Police officers in the district (including the Superintendent of Police) are Muslims, and the Hindus cannot rely upon them for adequate protection. Even the Presidents of the Union Boards are usually Muslims, and they have seldom desisted from using their power and influence to injure the Hindus.

It would be wrong to say that the Muslim peasants living in the villages of Noakhali are ferocious or criminal by nature. They are as simple and kindly as their brethren anywhere in India. Perhaps for that very reason their ignorance and fanatic devotion to religion can be easily exploited by designing self-seekers. These peasants live miserably in bamboo huts with hardly more than a meal per day. Land does not yield as much as they require, for it is steadily losing fertility, and owing to constant subdivision and fragmentation most of them have to depend on very small holdings. There is no industry worth the name in the Noakhali district. Thousands of Muslim peasants used to go to Burma every year to earn their living as hired labourers; but the fall of Burma in 1942 deprived them of that occupation. The Great Famine of 1943 killed many of them; some of those who survived had to sell their land, homes, and even cattle and utensils. Their bitterness was skilfully exploited by the propagandists of the Muslim League. The Hindus, specially the zemindars and the merchants, became the target of their virulent attacks. The starving Muslim peasants were asked to kill rich Hindus and to loot their property. They were told that they would enjoy untold blessings in Pakistan, but Pakistan could not be established before the extermination of the Hindus. Islam was proclaimed to be in danger because the Hindus openly performed their religious ceremonies. Hindu women, whose cultural level is generally much higher than that of their Muslim sisters, and who are on that account coveted by the Muslims, were to be a natural booty for the warriors of the League.

In analysing the political, economic, social and religious factors which led to the catastrophe in Noakhali we must emphasize two important points. In the first place, Noakhali is the

citadel of Muslim bigotry and the largest Mullah-supplying district in Bengal. In a recent article *The Morning News* of Calcutta, an organ of the Muslim League, laid special stress on this point in estimating the importance of Noakhali from the standpoint of the party it represents. For years the Mullahs of Noakhali have been exciting the ignorant and fanatic Muslim peasantry against the Hindus. They have received political and financial support from the Muslim Ministers and legislators, who have systematically tried to bank on the blind orthodoxy of the masses. Secondly, thousands of Muslim peasants from Noakhali take to the sea as lascars in British mercantile shipping. The war hit them hard when German and Japanese submarine campaign was in full vigour. Many of them, as well as others dislodged from their homes by the Great Famine of 1943, joined the various war services. A good number of them learned the use of fire-arms. When they lost their jobs at the end of the war, they tried to avert the impending economic crisis by violence and lawlessness. They put themselves under the banner of the League, which alone could protect them from the consequences of their lawless activities, procured fire-arms from sources not unknown to their political leaders, and made full use of their arms and military experience against their unarmed and inoffensive Hindu neighbours.

The nature of the catastrophe which fell upon the Hindus of Noakhali on the 10th October last was described by Acharya Kripalani, after an extensive tour in the affected area, in a statement at a Press Conference in Calcutta on the 26th October. He used the following words:

“The attack on the Hindu population in the districts of Noakhali and Tipperah was previously arranged and prepared for and was the result of League propaganda—it was absolutely communal and one-sided; the authorities had warnings of what was coming beforehand; the Muslim officials connived at the preparations going on, and a few encouraged; the Police did not function during the riots, there being no orders to fire except in self-defence; there were very few miscreants, if at all, from outside: and there have been many cases of forcible marriages and religious conversion *en masse*.”

That the attack was pre-arranged was openly admitted even by Lt.-Gen. F. R. R. Bucher at a Press Conference in Calcutta. He added—and he was in no mood to overstate, as we know—that the extent of murders, arson, forcible marriages and abductions could not be calculated.

The Congress Working Committee Resolution of the 24th October contained the following statement:—

“Reports published in the press and statements of public workers depict a scene of bestiality and medieval barbarity that must fill every decent human being with shame, disgust and anger. Deeds of violation and abduction of women and forcible religious conversion and of loot, arson and murder have been committed on a large scale in a pre-determined and organised manner by persons often found to be in possession of rifles and other fire-arms.”

Mr. Shamsuddin Ahmad, a prominent member of the present League Cabinet of Bengal, openly said in a public meeting in the affected area in Noakhali:

“In Noakhali there was no mutual slaughter. It was the majority community who attacked the minority community who in some cases only resisted.”

On the 20th November Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar made a statement in the Council of State, in which he tried to minimise the gravity of the situation in Noakhali by saying that “between 200 and 300 innocent persons lost their lives” in that district. This statement was at once opposed by his eminent colleague Dr. Rajendra Prasad, who said:

“.....I cannot say that things were any worse in Bihar than in Eastern Bengal for more than four or five weeks.”

Several weeks have elapsed since the beginning of unspeakable atrocities in Noakhali. Even now isolated murders are being committed, houses are being burnt, and thousands of Hindus marooned in Muslim areas are being prevented from seeking shelter in safe zones. The number of innocent and helpless men, women and children murdered by the hooligans has not been, and will probably never be, ascertained. Thousands of persons were forcibly “converted” to Islam, *i.e.*, were made

to recite the *kalima* or the Muslim creed and to take beef on pain of death. Thousands of houses were looted and burnt. Flourishing markets were reduced to ashes. More painful than anything else, many Hindu women were abducted and dishonoured. Some of them, including married women and mothers of children, were forcibly given in so-called "marriage" to Muslims. No attempt has hitherto been made to ascertain the number of these unfortunate women. The Hindus in the affected area are so panic-stricken even now that Mahatma Gandhi himself—the great apostle of love, forgiveness and cool courage—hesitated to advise them to return to their devastated homes. The deliberate policy of Mr. Suhrawardy's Government not to apprehend the miscreants has made the restoration of peace impossible.

The atrocities inflicted on the Hindus of Noakhali were repeated in the neighbouring district of Tipperah immediately afterwards. Almost the whole of the flourishing sub-division of Chandpur, consisting of several Police stations, was devastated. Murder, arson, conversion and molestation of women went on unchecked for days together. The worst sufferers in this area were probably the Namasudras, a "Scheduled Caste" community sunk in ignorance and poverty. As a result of the quick succession of "Direct Action" operations in the districts of Noakhali and Tipperah the Hindus in all the Muslim majority districts of Bengal are now trembling for the safety of their life, honour, faith and property.

Our immediate task is to rescue those Hindus of Noakhali and Tipperah, specially Hindu women and girls, who are still in the hands of the hooligans, and to provide food and temporary shelter for those Hindus who have left their homes. Several Relief Organisations are doing this work, in spite of troubles created by Muslim Leaguers and the unhelpful attitude of the Bengal Government. But immediate relief is not enough. Whatever may be the exact number of Hindus killed, wounded, converted, abducted, dishonoured, it is not too much to say that every Hindu living in these two districts has been affected directly or indirectly. Many of them have been economically ruined. Thousands cannot go back to their villages until houses are built for them. Thousands, again, cannot go

back to their old homes on account of the hostile attitude of the local Muslims, which, in spite of the repeated assertions of Mr. Suhrawardy and some of the officials that all is quiet in Noakhali, still persists. Many people will require free food and medical assistance for months to come. Girls rescued from the clutches of the Muslims will have to be given in marriage. Hindu cultivators will have to be given assistance in recovering their lands from Muslim encroachers. On the whole, not less than three lakhs of people will require assistance in one form or other for many months to come.

For the Hindus of India as a whole the tragedy of Noakhali is at once a warning and an inspiration. It is a warning because everything valued by the Hindus has been sacrificed at the altar of communal frenzy which now threatens to engulf the whole of India. It is an inspiration because it calls upon the Hindus to defend the best elements in their culture and civilization and to sacrifice themselves, if necessary, to uphold the traditions beckoning them from the past. Hinduism and Hindu society have passed through similar disasters and emerged out of prolonged periods of agony more chastened and purified. Out of the dark night of political humiliation and religious persecution was born the great Maratha people. A century of suffering led to the re-birth of the great Sikh people. Fortunately for the Hindus, Shivaji and Guru Gobind Singh are not mythical figures buried in the dusty pages of learned historical treatises; they are living forces inspiring our daily life. Their footsteps were followed in his humble and limited sphere by Rajendra Lal Roy Chowdhury, who died a martyr's death in his village home fighting almost single-handed against thousands of armed hooligans. His fight in defence of faith and family honour was, in Acharya Kripalani's significant words, "the nearest approach to non-violence."

But the problem which confronts the Hindus of Bengal at this critical hour is neither local nor accidental. It is a problem which vitally concerns the whole of India. Mahatma Gandhi himself has openly declared: "The question of East Bengal is not one of Bengal alone. The battle for India is to-day being decided in East Bengal". In Bengal, the

cradle of Nationalism, a most insidious challenge has been thrown to the nation's yearning for freedom. This challenge comes from Communalism and Imperialism in unholy collusion. It must be accepted at once by every true nationalist, irrespective of colour, creed and political affiliation. With a teeming Muslim population sunk in ignorance and poverty Bengal offers the Imperialists and their Indian allies the best chance to bolster up Pakistan in its ugliest possibilities. If the Anglo-Muslim conspiracy to crush the Hindus of Bengal comes out successful, the British soldier and the British merchant will govern Bengal through their Muslim puppets, and "Quit India" will remain but a cry in the wilderness. Let every son and daughter of India realise the significance of the storm now sweeping over the fertile plains of Bengal and her unhappy people forced into starvation, misery and humiliation by unscrupulous administrators. Let the last fight for freedom begin and reach its climax in this devastated delta. It is in Bengal that the British laid the foundation of their Empire in India. Let Bengal be the scene of their exit.

Once again we ask all Indians—Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Parsis, Buddhists, Animists,—all Indians belonging to all political parties,—all Indians who want to live freely in a resurrected India,—to accept the tragedy of Noakhali as a challenge to everything which every decent man or woman holds dear—faith, freedom, humanity and civilization. We appeal to them all in the name of our great country and our great destiny to contribute their mite for saving the victims of Anglo-Muslim conspiracy in East Bengal. Let the sufferers of Noakhali and Tipperah—thousands of men, women and children, wounded, maimed, dishonoured—feel at this supreme hour of distress that they are not alone and helpless. Let them feel the warmth of active sympathy coming from all parts of India. Let them be assured that they are soldiers of freedom on the march and behind them stand millions ready for the last sacrifice.



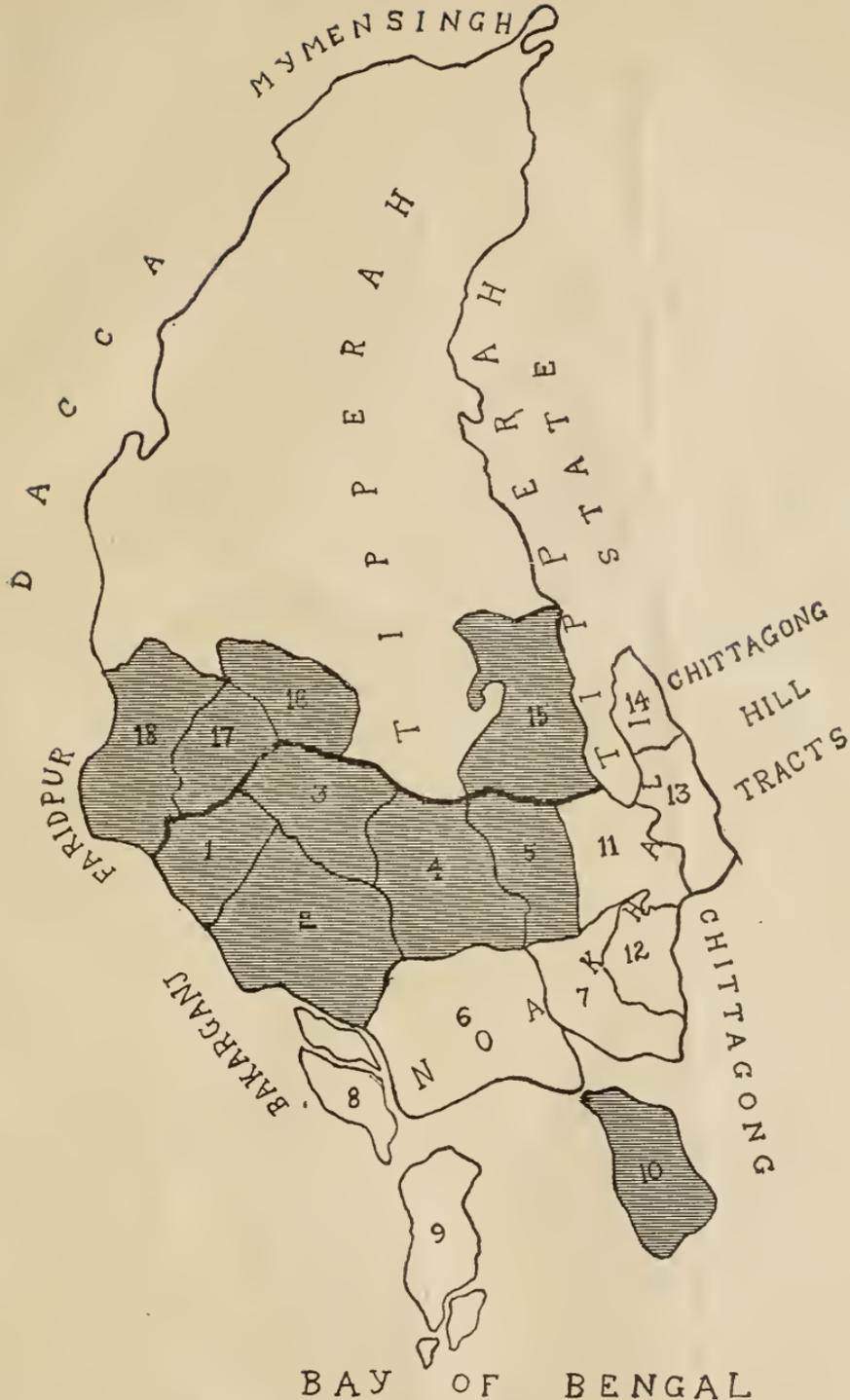
MAP OF BENGAL
Muslim majority districts shaded.

Names of districts with percentages of Muslim population:

1. Noakhali ...	81·2	9. Rajshahi ...	74·7
2. Tipperah ...	77·1	10. Bogra ...	84·0
3. Chittagong ...	74·6	11. Malda ...	56·9
4. Dacca ...	67·3	12. Dinajpur ...	50·1
5. Mymensingh ...	77·4	13. Rangpur ...	71·3
6. Faridpur ...	61·3	14. Murshidabad ...	56·5
7. Bakarganj ...	72·3	15. Nadia ...	61·2
8. Pabna ...	77·1	16. Jessore ...	60·1

The following are the Hindu Majority areas in Bengal:
Cooch Behar State; Hill Tipperah State.

11 districts—Chittagong Hill Tracts; Jalpaiguri; Darjeeling;
Khulna; 24-Parganas (including Calcutta); Hooghly; Howrah;
Midnapore; Burdwan; Bankura; Birbhum.



MAP OF NOAKHALI & TIPPERAH

Affected areas shaded.

Percentage of Muslim population in the affected areas of the Noakhali and Tipperah districts:

Noakhali District :

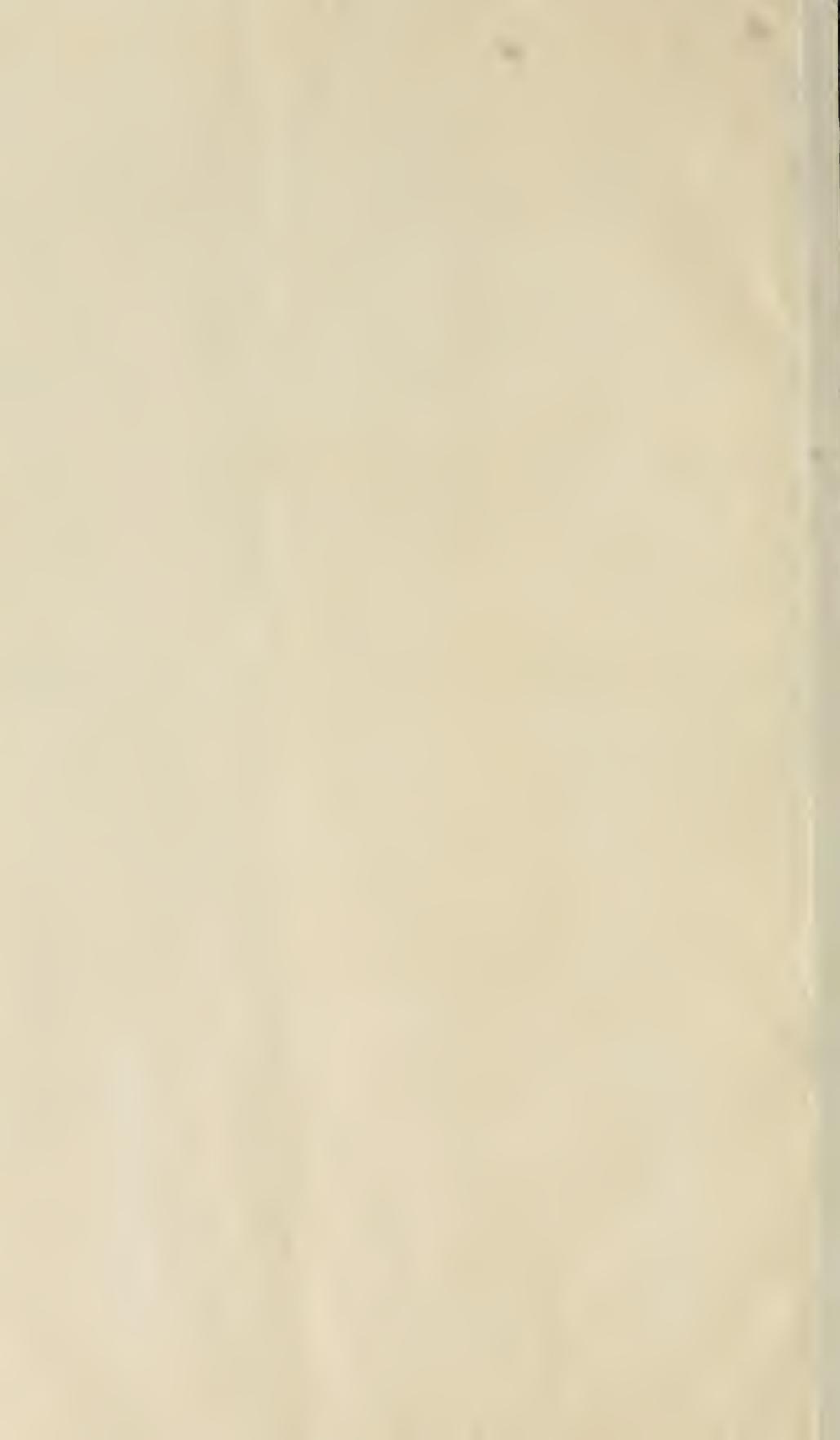
Tipperah District :

1. Raipur Police Station	89'9	15. Chauddagram Police Station	83'2
2. Lakshmipur Police Stn.	84'6	16. Hajiganj Police Station	82'9
3. Ramganj Police Station	80'7	17. Faridganj Police Station	83'3
4. Begamganj Police Stn.	79'4	18. Chandpur Police Station	73'2
5. Senbag Police Station	84'5		
10. Sandwip Police Station	78'2		

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