

## One day of Freedom : The Observance of the Vietnam Day on 21st January 1947 and its Political Ambience

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**Abstract:** *This paper examines the observance of Vietnam Day on January 21, 1947, in Bengal, situating it within a broader framework of transnational anti-colonial solidarity. Focusing on student-led protests and the role of figures like Sarat Chandra Bose, it explores the intersections of nationalism, internationalism, and factional politics in post-war India. The study highlights how Vietnam Day became a site of symbolic and practical resistance against colonialism and reflects on the fractured responses of the Congress, Muslim League, and Communist Party. Drawing on archival records and correspondence, it reconstructs a pivotal yet understudied moment in Indo-Vietnamese political affinity.*

**Keywords:** Indo-China, Vietnam Day, Sarat Chandra Bose, freedom, volunteer, politics.

Indo-Vietnam relation had been perceived through the lenses of international relations, but its prehistory should be looked through the looking glass of anticolonial resistance's transnational linkages prior to their nationhood achieved. Since 1947, India has consistently endorsed Vietnam's sovereignty, even during a time when Vietnam lacked official diplomatic connections with other nations. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru extended an invitation to Vietnam to participate in the Pan-Asian Conference hosted by India, so establishing India as one of the initial nations to acknowledge the Democratic Republic of Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh's leadership. The camaraderie between the citizens of India and Vietnam emerged from their common experiences under colonial domination. In January 1947, Indian politicians urged the American populace to endorse the Indochinese quest for independence. Shortly thereafter, India became the inaugural nation globally to formally initiate rallies endorsing the Vietnamese revolution. On January 19, 1947, Kolkata commemorated Vietnam Day, and on January 21, hundreds of students demonstrated against British endorsement of French colonialism in Vietnam. The British reaction was aggressive, as soldiers discharged their weapons,

leading to the fatalities of two students. This event is commemorated in Kolkata as 'Red Friendship,' a connection between the Vietnamese and Indian peoples that was solidified in blood. Moreover, in that same year, the inhabitants of Kolkata declined to refuel French fighter jets *en route* to Vietnam, indicating their persistent resistance to French colonial endeavors. Nehru declared that the Indian government will cease its backing for French military operations.<sup>1</sup> Ho Chi Minh's articles in 'International Press Correspondence' (1924-1931) and his correspondence with Jawaharlal Nehru in the 1940s exemplify the profound unity between the Vietnamese and Indian independence movements. Ho Chi Minh, in his writings, underscored India's opposition to British colonialism, accentuating the same aspiration for liberation shared by India and Vietnam. The reciprocal esteem between the Vietnamese populace and Indian figures such as Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru was apparent during the 1940s, especially amid World War II, when Vietnam endorsed the Indian independence struggle spearheaded by Subhas Chandra Bose. Subsequent to the war, India's nationalist leaders meticulously observed the events in Indochina. In 1945, Indian soldiers from the Twentieth Indian Division were deployed in Saigon as part of British operations to disarm the Japanese. India's alignment with Indochina was codified in the 1945 resolution of the All-India Congress Committee, which denounced any endorsement of imperialist endeavors in areas like Indonesia and Indochina. Nehru, despite rejecting a plan to establish a volunteer brigade against the French in Indochina in 1946, expressed sympathy for the Vietnamese cause. Sarat Chandra Bose, however, implored Indians to endorse the Indochinese cause, positioning it within the larger Asiatic struggle against colonialism. This appeal reverberated in India, prompting students to orchestrate protests on January 21, 1947, referred to as 'Vietnam Day.' The protests, encompassing demonstrations and riots in Calcutta, were integral to the wider Indian initiative to express solidarity with the Vietnamese independence cause.<sup>2</sup> Historical analysis of the Vietnam Day and its political implication is still scarce, except from a few like Anjan Bera<sup>3</sup> and Bratati Hore<sup>4</sup> had worked on it, but a multifaceted review is necessary to figure out a movement, which despite being a student protest had manifested various other sides of the Bengal factional and partisan politics under the rubric of internationalism, communalism, and nationalism.

### **Mass Enthusiasm**

By the start of 1947, when Vietnam's national faction started fighting a war against the French colonists, letters started to flood the office of Sarat Bose, brother of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose as well as newspaper editors. A correspondence directed to the editor of 'The Amrita Bazar Patrika,' dispatched by P.A. Calaia, a resident of Helen Bungalow, New-Hope, Post Office Coorg, Nilgiris, provides an insightful perspective on the transnational solidarity emotions prevalent in post-war India. Calaia articulates his aspiration to join

the Indo-Burma Expedition Force to engage in the fight for Vietnamese independence from French colonial domination in Indo-China.<sup>5</sup> In a communication directed to the Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Forward Bloc in Calcutta, Arun K. Bagchi, a 25-year-old ex-soldier from Atharabari, formally articulated his intention to volunteer for a proposed expedition to aid the Vietnamese populace in their resistance against French imperialism. Bagchi, an ex-serviceman with five years of combat experience and extensive training, underscored his enduring affection and ideological allegiance to the values of Subhas Chandra Bose, whom he reverently termed 'Netaji.'<sup>6</sup> In a letter dated January 23, 1947, Vishnu Swarup Bansol, a young volunteer from Dehradun and son of the late Dr. R. R. Pal, wrote to Sarat Bose to proffer his assistance for the Vietnamese resistance against French imperialism. Bansol, an 18-year-old member of the local 'Azad Hind Volunteer Corps' and participant in the Meerut Session, expressed his political dedication and the practical limitations obstructing his rapid engagement. Due to financial difficulties, he solicited monetary aid from Bose, requesting that monies be dispatched through the Congress office to cover travel and subsistence expenses, so facilitating his participation in the next volunteer expedition.<sup>7</sup> All these enthusiasms were for a statement of Sarat Bose regarding his call for volunteers for a medical mission to Vietnam. Simultaneously, assistance for Vietnam transcended clandestine and violent factions. Sarat Chandra Bose issued a press statement congratulating the All-India Students Congress for their recent decision to support Vietnamese forces in their struggle against French imperialism through the provision of student volunteers and material aid. Bose reflected on his earlier appeal to the public, recalling his statement from January 3, where he emphasized that expressions of sympathy and the passing of resolutions were inadequate, as the future of Asia, including India, was being determined on the battlefields of Vietnam. The speaker called upon Indian youth to engage actively in this significant struggle, asserting that it was imperative for young men nationwide to unite in large numbers and sacrifice their lives alongside the youth of Indo-China to establish the basis of Asiatic freedom.

The All-India Student Federation (AISF) adopted a resolution concerning Vietnam, garnering significant commendation. Mao The Chao of the Vietnam Student Federation sent a letter to the AISF in response. Mr. Chao articulated his endorsement of the proposal to deploy a volunteer brigade to Vietnam in his letter. He additionally stated that Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose should be contacted to address the situation. Mr. Chao proposed the dispatch of an immediate medical mission to Vietnam, including essential medicines and a team of doctors, as this is feasible under India's current circumstances.<sup>8</sup> The All-India Student Federation is reportedly in the process of establishing a 'Student Brigade,' which will include general students, university-educated students, and medical students. This group is expected to soon reach out to Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose to coordinate this initiative. The AISF has urged multiple political

parties in India and the interim government to promptly act in facilitating the deployment of a medical mission to Vietnam.<sup>9</sup> The whole issue suddenly caused an interesting situation; away from the mainstream parties like Congress and League. Hindu as well as Muslim students suddenly became too much enthusiastic after a long period of communal tension to enter in an adventure just like the Azad Hind Fauj, whose memory was still fresh due to the Azad Hind Prisoners Deliverance Movement. The previously cited letters show the analogy of emotions. This along with the Bengal Congress leader Sarat Bose's eagerness and Communist student's interest turned into a movement.

### **Observance of the Vietnam Day**

Soon student's fronts planned to organise a Vietnam Day on 21st January 1947. Sarat Bose expressed satisfaction with the Students Congress' decision to designate January 21 as Viet Nam Day. He urged students and the public to commemorate the day with appropriate solemnity and to support the efforts to raise, train, and equip an Indian Volunteer Army in solidarity with the Vietnamese Republican forces.<sup>10</sup> In mid-January, Vietnamese officials formally recognized Indian support. In the meanwhile, All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), All India Students' Federation (AISF) took initiative for the observance of the Vietnam Day.<sup>11</sup> In a correspondence to Sarat Chandra Bose, distinguished Vietnamese diplomat Mai The Chau conveyed profound gratitude for Bose's vocal endorsement of Vietnam's anti-colonial movement. Chau's correspondence, dispatched from the Permanent Delegation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in Paris, highlighted that Bose was the sole Indian leader to adopt such an unequivocal and audacious stance in support of the Vietnamese cause.<sup>12</sup> On January 19, 1947, subsequent news reports indicated that a significant group of Indian National Army (INA) veterans was preparing to depart for Vietnam to contribute their expertise and military experience to the anti-colonial struggle. On January 21, 1947, Hindu and Muslim students from multiple educational institutions collectively orchestrated strikes, assemblies, and processions throughout Bengal and beyond, in protest at the police's gunfire and baton charges against peaceful demonstrators during Viet Nam Day commemorations. The demonstrations occurred in Kajorpatli, Garbeta, Jessore, Siliguri, Jiaganj, Tangail, Narsingdi, Narayanganj, Ishwardi, Chittagong, Berhampore, Silchar, Kirtipasha, Korokdi, Bogra, Dhaka, and Narayanganj. Furthermore, employees in Belgharia and Narayanganj participated in solidarity. Workers independently conducted strikes and meetings at Bengal Chemical, Behala India Electric Works, Behala Municipality, and Ekco Works in Siliguri, Saidpur, Dhaka, and Calcutta.<sup>13</sup>

Who were these common students who took such an enthusiastic approach? Debes Das's novel *Sei Chirokal* gives a glimpse where the main character Akinchan, an unemployed student periodically joined the observance of various days like the Vietnam Day as a drill for the upcoming freedom struggle and

believed that in the observance of the Vietnam Day, had intermixed with the Indian freedom struggle.<sup>14</sup> Everywhere these protestors were the main mobilising force for this movement. Obviously, when escalated these protestors took measures which had offended many. For example, Annadasankar Roy himself had been manhandled by the protestors.<sup>15</sup> Kolkata experienced multiple violent clashes between law enforcement and protesters, with authorities frequently employing gunfire, tear gas, and baton charges to disperse groups involved in demonstrations, road blockades, and efforts to halt vehicles or conduct processions. Demonstrators attempted to impede railway traffic by occupying the tracks in multiple instances. These clashes resulted in nearly 25 injuries, including four bullet wounds, and approximately 100 arrests throughout the city. The College Square area became a significant flashpoint, with police firing on three distinct occasions in response to a series of explosions from country-made hand bombs.<sup>16</sup> A notable confrontation took place in the Mirzapore Street vicinity near the Corporation District Office, resulting in police gunfire that injured three individuals, two of whom were subsequently admitted to the Medical College Hospital. The day's cumulative events illustrated increasing urban unrest and the corresponding state response amid political turbulence.<sup>17</sup> Significant disturbances occurred in South Calcutta when students from Ashutosh College and nearby schools, marching along Ashutosh Mookerjee Road towards a student meeting at the University, were intercepted and cordoned off by police near the Nandan Road crossing. By evening, the situation escalated, prompting the police to employ lathi charges and tear gas to disperse the crowd, resulting in approximately six students sustaining injuries and being admitted to Sambhunath Pandit Hospital. By the afternoon, the police verses student protestors led to such a situation that a student of the Scottish Church College, Sukhendu Bikash Nath died at the Senet Hall stairs during police firing.<sup>18</sup> Approximately 40 individuals were apprehended in relation to the disturbances in South Calcutta. Subsequent reports indicated that Dhira Ranjan Sen, a demonstrator who sustained injuries from police gunfire earlier in the day, died as a result of his injuries at the Medical College Hospital.<sup>19</sup> Sarat Chandra Bose addressed the escalating tension by visiting the affected areas at College Street and Ashutosh Mookerjee Road in the evening. The Communist student organisations took the observance towards the tradition of their partisan performativity, by starting the programme with the remembrance of the 'Lenin Day' and then moving towards the organisation of the 'Vietnam Day'; an interesting move towards the making of the issue into a communist partisan cause.<sup>20</sup> He urged students to disperse and clarified that the Congress had not instructed them to violate the prohibitory orders under Section 144. The disturbances resulted in injuries to multiple police personnel, including a Deputy Commissioner of Police and his orderly, as well as Inspector A. N. Mookerjee, Sub-Inspector A. Ghosh, Sergeant Jones, and a police constable, all of whom sustained injuries during stone-throwing incidents and

confrontations with demonstrators.<sup>21</sup> On January 21, 1947, a hand-made bomb was detonated on the footpath at the intersection of College Street and Mirzapore Street, where a crowd had assembled. Constable Kamakshya Singh of Burrabazar Thana sustained injuries from the explosion and was subsequently transported to Calcutta Medical College Hospital. The police utilized tear gas and lathi charges to disperse the crowd. Subsequently, at approximately 5 p.m., an additional bomb detonated near College Square, leading law enforcement to discharge their weapons. Three individuals sustained gunshot wounds, and several others were injured during the incident.<sup>22</sup> Montesh Kumar Roy and Santosh Kumar Roy, arrested on January 22 for alleged bomb possession, have been remanded to police custody until January 30 for further inquiries. Montesh was reported to have been carrying the bomb at the time of its explosion, resulting in injuries to him. He was receiving treatment at Medical College Hospital.<sup>23</sup> Along with Kolkata, Howrah District Party along with Forward Bloc took special interest in the observance of the Vietnam Day.<sup>24</sup>

Along with Bengal, Pondicherry, still a French colony took the event to express solidarity towards Vietnam as well as the students of Bengal. On 21 January 1947, a significant public meeting occurred at Odiyansalai Maidan in Pondicherry, organized jointly by the French India Labour Federation and the Pondicherry Students' Federation. The meeting adopted resolutions condemning the French imperialist aggression against Vietnam and expressing solidarity with the Republic of Vietnam and its populace in their struggle for national liberation. Student and labor leaders called on the populace of French India to oppose any military actions aimed at Vietnam. A resolution was passed to censure the French India Government for obstructing a planned student procession and demanded the immediate repeal of the law prohibiting public processions without prior permission. Subsequent to the meeting, a cohort of students associated with the Student Congress endeavored to arrange a procession; however, they were obstructed by law enforcement. Eight students were apprehended, while the other participants conducted a sit-in on the streets. The involvement of Mr. V. Subbiah, President of the French India Labour Federation, and Mr. Muthu Pillai, Mayor of Pondicherry, led the Governor to mandate the release of the detained students and to allow the procession to proceed without additional disruption. Mr. Subbiah emphasized the importance of student unity and coordinated action against French imperialism in the quest for democratic rights and civil liberties.<sup>25</sup>

While distant states took their stands on the Vietnam Day, the district student organisations took the issue in some particular districts like Mymensingh, Rangpore, Dinajpore with much enthusiasm. On January 22, 1947, the revolutionary Hindu-Muslim unity in Mymensingh provided the populace with a brief yet significant experience of freedom. For a single day, the authority of the British rulers was undermined as the entire town fell under the control of the general populace. The event represented a pivotal moment in Mymensingh's

history, illustrating the potential efficacy of collective action. The article published in 'Swadhinata' states, 'What we accomplished in Mymensingh for one day can be replicated tomorrow throughout Bengal and India.'<sup>26</sup> On January 22, 1947, railway officers and personnel in Mymensingh initiated a strike, leading to the total cessation of operations, the halting of all train services, and the disruption of the Bly Telephone Exchange. The strike was peacefully called off at 15:00 hours on the same day. A confidential inquiry indicated that members of the Communist Party of India (CPI) affiliated with the B.A. Railway Union in Mymensingh were instrumental in organizing the strike.<sup>27</sup> Student of City College, Amalendu Ghosh died during police brutality.<sup>28</sup> Sarat Chandra Bose delivered a speech to the students assembled on the University lawn. In his speech, he urged the students to disperse peacefully and to direct their efforts towards more focused and productive work for the Vietnamese cause. A substantial number of students commenced dispersing in response to his call. By 7 p.m., the situation had significantly stabilized.<sup>29</sup> On January 22, 1947, students from the Communist and C.S.P. groups conducted a picket in front of two cinema houses in Barisal town. The picketers obstructed public access to the cinema houses, resulting in a significant crowd on both sides of the road and causing considerable inconvenience to passers-by.<sup>30</sup> On January 22, 1947, railway officers and personnel in Mymensingh initiated a strike, leading to a total work stoppage, the cessation of all train operations, and the disruption of the Bly Telephone Exchange. The strike was peacefully called off at 15:00 hours on the same day. A confidential inquiry indicated that certain members of the C.P.I., who were concurrently affiliated with the B.A. Railway Union in Mymensingh, assumed prominent roles in the organization of the strike.

1. Sibaprosad Dutta, T.T. T.T.E.
2. Amarash Choudhury
3. Comrade Mahadeb Saniyal

Sibaprosad Dutta, rather than fulfilling his responsibilities, stayed in Mymensingh to organize the strike. A notable individual from Keyotkhali contributed significantly, although his name remains unidentified. The R.I.O. Mymensingh has been directed to gather his name and submit a report.<sup>31</sup>

At 8:30 p.m. on January 22, 1947, the Bengal Government released a press communique giving an official account of the previous day's disturbances in Calcutta. The communique called the events 'minor' and said that protesters had tried to stop bus services and traffic in several parts of the city. On a few occasions, people blocked off roads and threatened to set cars on fire. The report also listed several attacks on police officers, including one where a Sub-Inspector was struck and had to fire his revolver to keep it from being taken away. A Fire Brigade officer was also allegedly hit with acid, and a police officer was hurt by a bomb made in the country. 25 people were arrested by police during the day,

and earlier reports say that nine people, including protesters and police, were hurt. The communiqué said that by evening, things had mostly calmed down in South Calcutta, but there was still some stress in the University area, which had been the scene of the biggest trouble the previous day. Police had to use lathi charges and tear gas to get rid of the students who were gathering illegally in the area. In a positive ending, the communiqué said that things were 'fast returning to normal.'<sup>32</sup> Along with Amiya Nath Bose, Secretary of the I.N.A. Relief Committee, and the Secretaries of the Netaji Birthday Celebration Committee, Major General Shah Nawaz visited rough areas of Calcutta and told the crowd to leave calmly in a public address. While speaking to the group, Shah Nawaz told them that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's birthday was the next day, on Thursday, and that it was everyone's job to make sure the event was held in a calm and respectful way. His speech is said to have calmed down the crowd, which soon split up.<sup>33</sup> On January 23, 1947, college and school students in Dinajpur boycotted classes in protest against the police firing and lathi charge that occurred during a student procession in Calcutta on January 21, 1947, in observance of Vietnam Day. A procession of 200 individuals was organized, during which participants paraded through the town while chanting anti-police slogans. A meeting (350) was convened by the S.F., C.P.I. in the afternoon at Dinajpur town, chaired by Suniti Kumar Ghosh (Congress) and Upendra from Dinajpur College. In addition to the president, the meeting included Mahendra Sarkar (S.C., R.C.P.I.), Bipin from Dinajpur, Amar Chattopadhyay (S.C., R.S.P.I.), Mantesh from Balurghat, Hrishikesh Vishattacharjee (C.P.I.), Ramesh from Dinajpur, Abani Lahiri (C.P.I.), Nalini from Faridpur, and Byomkesh Ray (B.F., C.P.I.).<sup>34</sup> The event gradually made its organisational legitimacy being monopolised by the communist students, while despite their presence, Congress student organisations failed to take positive position in the event due to the central Congress high command was against it.

### **Manifold Politics of Congress, Muslim League, and Communist Party**

The political high commands of different party took the event differently. The reports referenced the potential establishment of an anti-imperialist union among all oppressed peoples in Southeast Asia, scheduled for discussion on January 23 in Calcutta, coinciding with the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.<sup>35</sup> This new found enthusiasm, mostly among the Bengali communist factions and parts of Bengali Congress youths, caused a typical problem for the nascent Nehru Government at the centre. Nehru was sympathetic towards the Vietnamese anti-colonial movement, but his position against the French colonial government was not as radical as hoped by many. Comrade P. C. Joshi, General Secretary of the Communist Party, stated that India should provide comprehensive support to Vietnam's struggle for independence from French imperialism. He highlighted that in the most recent session of the United Nations General Assembly, Indian representatives

adopted a principled position advocating for the authentic independence of colonial nations. He contended that the Indian delegation should address the Vietnam issue in the Security Council, as it had evolved from a local matter to one concerning peace and freedom across the entire continent of Asia. Comrade Joshi expressed confidence that Pandit Nehru, in his capacity as Vice-President of the Interim Government, would play a pivotal role in garnering international support for Vietnam. He urged the Congress, the League, and all patriotic mass organizations, including trade unions, peasant associations, and student groups, to inform Pandit Nehru that the Interim Government would have their full support if the matter were raised in the Security Council.<sup>36</sup> Despite the escalation of student protests, the League leaders continued to lack a definitive direction or a concrete plan of action. The leadership of the Muslim League in Bengal bore significant responsibility due to their governance of the province. The justification that the directives of the League Ministry were inapplicable to the imperialist white Police Commissioner, Mr. Hardwick, was broadly regarded as untenable. The same Suhrawardy, who previously led thousands of patriots to Dalhousie Square on Rashid Ali Day, did not visit the injured students in the hospital during his tenure as Chief Minister. Joshi's interest towards the issue was easy one, because the Moscow-liners would have supported it as the Vietnam's nationalist movement by then started to show its communist colour. League as a communal party, had been a point of criticism for the communists as well as Congress, so in that sense, supporting the Vietnam cause would serve the Communist party internally as well as internationally.

Meanwhile coming of the Vietnam delegates churned up the issue more, particularly just after the Vietnam Day. January 23, 1947, saw a flurry of activities that symbolized the convergence of Indian nationalist memory and internationalist solidarity. On this day, Burmese nationalist leaders, including Colonel Yan Naing, son-in-law of the former Burmese Prime Minister Dr. Ba Maw, and Bo Ko Ko, a former officer of the Burma Defence Army, arrived in Calcutta from Rangoon at the invitation of Sarat Bose. Accompanied by Rangoon journalist S. Chatterji, they attended the commemorations of Netaji's birth anniversary. Colonel Naing commended the participation of Indian students in the Vietnam solidarity movement and lamented the news of police oppression against student protesters.<sup>37</sup> The wave of solidarity extended beyond students and civil society. On February 1, 1947, Mai The Chau, the Vietnamese representative in India, met with Jawaharlal Nehru in New Delhi to discuss the Vietnamese situation. Nehru is reported to have expressed deep sympathy for Vietnam's cause and assured Chau that Indian doctors wishing to contribute humanitarian assistance to Vietnam would be able to do so, provided they followed the appropriate channels and applied through recognized authorities.<sup>38</sup> Sarat Chandra Bose made his political resistance to the Indian National Congress's new stance toward British imperial policy even stronger. He wrote to Nehru and cabinet members for transport facilities and passports to the

enthusiastic youths, reminding Nehru that the 'freedom of Asia is one and indivisible', but Nehru chooses to follow the policy of non-intervention.<sup>39</sup> Bose quit the Working Committee in protest against its suggestion that the British Government's statement from December 6, 1946 be accepted. This showed how disappointed he was with what he saw as the Congress leadership's growing willingness to make peace with imperial power.<sup>40</sup> J.B. Kripalani in a press meet, expressed his ethical and moral support to the nascent nation of Vietnam and with the Vietnam Day police brutality, he took the position to criticise communist student organisations for the observance of the event without taking any permission from the authorities. Kripalani also criticised the Bengal Government for being 'interested in crushing the enthusiasm and exuberance of youth' just like any foreign government, and advised Congressmen and Congress organisations 'to guard themselves against the temptation to violate restrictions that are necessitated by the disturbed communal situation'.<sup>41</sup> Kripalani, then serving as the President of the Indian National Congress, seems to clear the official position of the party regarding the event. So, Congress was criticising the communists for falling into temptation while the League Government for indirectly perpetrating the atrocity. But while asking the Congressmen to keep themselves away from such 'unauthorised' movements, actually, central Congress Committee had been trying to weaken Bengal Congressmen from taking any initiatives in their favour. So, Sarat Bose's disenchantment from the Congress started from this.

Sarat Bose's sidelining within the Congress made the issue a lost cause, although enthusiasm remained on the loose. A letter from Babu Singh Rajput, General Secretary of the Bijnore Students Congress in Uttar Pradesh, to Sarat Bose on February 5, 1947, called him the 'Commander' of the Azad Hind Party of India. In it, Rajput praised and supported Bose's work to get young Indians and students to join the party's 'last fight for the freedom of India'.<sup>42</sup> In a letter dated March 9, 1947, Satya Pal Dang, writing from Bombay on behalf of the All-India Students Federation (AISF), wrote to Mai The Chau of the YMCA in New Delhi to continue the conversation they had started earlier about how to organize medical aid for Vietnam. This was something that they had talked about informally while the International Youth Delegation was in Delhi. Dang talked about what the AISF did after that to make this charity project a reality. The main thing that made him worried was that Mr. Sarat Bose wasn't responding, even though many student helpers had offered their help for the cause. Also, Dang said that he had met with a number of well-known doctors in Bengal, including Dr. B. K. Basu, who had been on the Congress Medical Mission to China, to talk about how possible it would be to send medical help. He talked about the IMA Executive Committee meeting that was coming up in New Delhi in the third week of March. The Bengal branch of the IMA was going to officially ask for Indian medical aid to be sent to Vietnam at this meeting. At the same time, efforts were being made to involve top medical professionals in

other provinces in order to get more provincial branches of the IMA to support the problem and bring it to the attention of the central level. Dang promised that the AISF would actively gather resources – volunteers, financial donations, and logistical support – to make the trip possible if the IMA approved the plan. At the end of the letter, there was a polite note that told Mai The Chau about these events, urged him to take the right steps, and thanked senior police and intelligence officials, such as G.C. Ryan (Assistant Director, Intelligence Bureau, New Delhi), S.N. Hosali (Bombay), and M.M.L. Hooja (Criminal Investigation Department, Calcutta).<sup>43</sup> Such planning as well as thinking would bear no fruit after all; and no medical mission would reach Vietnam.

The student movement, by then would attract a lot more support from the labour unions, based on which a lot of scholars would consider it as the revival of labour movement. A joint statement was released by Mr. S. A. Dange, Vice-President of the All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) and Executive Committee member of the World Federation of Trade Unions; Mr. S. S. Mirajkar, Vice-President of the AITUC; and Mr. B. T. Ranadive, General Council member of the AITUC. The statement conveyed robust endorsement for Mr. Mrinal Kanti Bose, President of the AITUC, who advocated for a boycott of all French vessels transporting troops and arms to and from Indo-China. The statement specifically addressed the reported movement of two French vessels – the 'Isle De France' and the 'Athos Two' – transporting soldiers and munitions from Toulon and Marseilles to Indo-China. The signatories called upon all dock workers' unions at major Indian ports, including Bombay, Cochin, Madras, and Pondicherry, to promptly take measures to obstruct these ships should they reach any of these locations. The leaders urged trade unions throughout India to adopt resolutions in support of Vietnam's cause.<sup>44</sup> Mr. Bose stated that the government lifted the ban on public gatherings approximately six weeks ago, indicating that there is no rationale for continuing this restriction. He asserted that, according to the government's own declaration, Calcutta had reverted to normal conditions, and what was initially implemented as an emergency measure had now become a standard aspect of administration. He criticized the government's actions as authoritarian and inappropriate for a responsible administration that ought to be accountable to public opinion.<sup>45</sup>

The Bengal Congress, though took a less important position in leading the movement, would take opportunity of this issue to corner League Government for perpetrating police brutality. Mr. Lalit Chandra Das of the Congress addressed the council regarding the police action against student demonstrators during the Viet Nam Day observance on January 21, 1947. The motion underscored the grave circumstances stemming from the unprovoked and unjustified firing and lathi-charges by police against a peaceful and unarmed student demonstration outside the Senate House at Calcutta University. This incident led to the death of one student and injuries to nearly 200 others, including 21 students with bullet wounds, several of whom were young women.

The council rejected Das's motion, with a vote of 34 against 14, highlighting the League Ministry's strong defense of the contentious police action and revealing the political divide regarding the state's response to student-led anti-colonial demonstrations.<sup>46</sup> Despite the escalation of student protests, the League leaders continued to lack a definitive direction or a concrete plan of action. The leadership of the Muslim League in Bengal bore significant responsibility due to their governance of the province. The justification that the directives of the League Ministry were inapplicable to the imperialist white Police Commissioner, Mr. Hardwick, was broadly regarded as untenable. The same Suhrawardy, who previously led thousands of patriots to Dalhousie Square on Rashid Ali Day, did not visit the injured students in the hospital during his tenure as Chief Minister. No senior League leader had, until that point, publicly condemned the police brutality. The public found it challenging to justify or forgive the silence and acquiescence to imperialist bureaucrats. The remarks from Bengal's leading Congress figure, Sarat Chandra Bose, provided minimal reassurance. Bose, in his public addresses, did not condemn the police nor recognize the students' right to resist imperialist repression. He advised students to return home, asserting, 'the fight is not on the streets of Calcutta but in Indo-China.' The Secretary of the Provincial Congress Committee criticized the police violence while advising both students and national leaders to await the results of an 'urgent meeting' before determining subsequent actions. Upon the conclusion of the meeting, no definitive guidance had been established for the at-risk students, the media, or the general public.<sup>47</sup> On January 23, 1947, a resolution was adopted during a Calcutta Corporation session denouncing police repression during the Viet Nam Day demonstrations. The resolution encountered resistance from Muslim League members but was approved by a vote of 25 to 22. On that same evening, an adjournment motion presented by the Muslim League, intended to censure the Punjab Government for the detention of League leaders, was lost.<sup>48</sup>

Following the police repression on January 21, 1947, during the Viet Nam Day student demonstrations in Calcutta, the Calcutta Corporation debated and adopted a resolution denouncing the police's actions. The motion, submitted by Congressman Hirendra Kumar Ganguly, described the firing, lathi charges, and deployment of tear gas against peaceful student demonstrations as 'unprovoked and unwarranted.' The resolution also formally expressed condolences for the students who were injured during the crackdown. In favor of the motion, Labour Party representative Somnath Lahiri emphasized the involvement of both Hindu and Muslim students in the demonstration, underscoring the event's capacity to promote religious unity. Conversely, Muslim League member Mahommed Taufiq contested the resolution, asserting that the students had not been instructed by either the Congress or the League to engage in participation. Labour member Md. Ismail criticized the Muslim League's dissent, noting that Mr. Jinnah had previously supported the Vietnamese cause and questioning the rationale behind

opposing a resolution that conveyed sympathy for students—both Hindu and Muslim—who had endured police brutality.<sup>49</sup> The Executive Council of the Bengal Provincial Forward Bloc passed a motion on February 2 to honor the lives of Indu Bikash Nath, Dhira Ranjan Sen, and Amalendu Ghosh, three students who died during Vietnam Day protests in Calcutta and Mymensingh.<sup>50</sup> The resolution drew attention to the symbolic link between freedom movements in different places and the larger fight against imperialism around the world, especially in Vietnam.<sup>51</sup> An intercepted letter from March 14, 1947, from Subrata Sengupta, Editor of 'The Student' (Bombay), to Nripen Chakrabarti at the Swadhinata office in Calcutta, shows that Indian leftist student groups were still talking to each other about actions to show support for Vietnam. Sengupta said he got a message from M. T. Chau, who was representing Vietnam in India, saying that he had sent five photos and other materials that showed a memorial meeting in Siam where 100,000 Vietnamese people had gathered to remember the Indian students who had died in Calcutta.<sup>52</sup> In the months after India got its independence, there was more political surveillance than ever before. In Calcutta, the police kept a close eye on transnational solidarity activities, especially those that had to do with the anti-colonial fight in Vietnam. A secret document from September 2, 1947, from the Office of the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, Calcutta, asks about when Vietnamese officials are likely to arrive. However, the investigation did not reveal any proof that any Vietnamese delegates had arrived. This shows both how closely colonial intelligence agencies watched and how hard it is for politicians to network in a world that is becoming less colonized.<sup>53</sup>

The student organisations by effecting their unity across organisational identity, although for little time, led to the rise of some new student leaders of Bengal Provincial Student Federation after this; like Gautam Chatterjee and Geeta Mukharjee.<sup>54</sup> The issue served perfectly when on March 1947, representatives of the World Democratic Youth Federation came to Kolkata, Deb Kumar Bose gifted them the bullet that killed a student during the Vietnam Day, making it a sentimental affair.<sup>55</sup> Scholars often consider the Vietnam Day as a day marking one of the important events leading to the revival of labour movement in Bengal, which had been previously backed down due to the rise of communal riots.<sup>56</sup> Although the observance of the Vietnam Day was not a monopoly for the communist student organisations. Asim Roy in his memoir *Ekaler Katha* mentioned that in one side student leaders like Sunil Munshi took the leadership during the mobilisation in the Senet Hall, while Congress students continued their criticism of the communist students.<sup>57</sup> But this precedence would lead to future rifts within the student organisations. The success of the Vietnam Day would be used later on, but by 1960s when the internationalist tendency of the Bengal's student organisations would disperse in different directions. While the traditional group would keep on showing solidarity to any international leftist students, but a new faction would rise as

Guevara-liners who would insist on sticking to the observance of the Vietnam Day.<sup>58</sup> One can say that observance of the Vietnam Day, along with the Rashid Ali Day or the 29th July, provided the Communist Party as well as the student movement with additional impetus.<sup>59</sup> Later on, Communist party justified these momentary student movements away from the Congress' purview.<sup>60</sup> Observance of the Vietnam Day later on became an annual partisan ritual, often leading to police brutality, which later on provided impetus to the mobilisation endeavours of the communist party. For example, the Vietnam Day celebration on 20th July 1974 led to such police brutality, and death of a student activist named Prabir Dutta, leading to demoralisation as well as delegitimization of the Congress Government in West Bengal and its final demise 1977.<sup>61</sup> The newly created Bangladesh's communist student organisation who were known as Moscow-liners also focused on the observance of the Vietnam Day on 1st January 1973, which moved against the new Awami League government.<sup>62</sup> Nationalist periodicals, mostly in favour of Congress, on the other hand, considered the whole phenomena as a hasty decision by the communist organisation who deliberately caused chaos by hurling bombs and bricks to the police.<sup>63</sup>

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